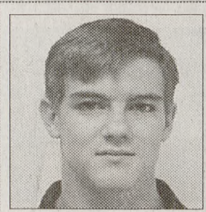


Mirror, mirror on the wall

13 year-old's suicide comes as glaring reminder of dangers of focusing on external appearances



CHRIS HUFFINES
 columnist

On Sept. 27, a young girl from England followed a fatal overdose of painkillers. Kelly Yeomans would normally have added her name to the morbid list of suicide victims if not for the reason she had done so. Yeomans was literally teased to the point where she calmly and rationally contemplated, and then took her own life.

The 13-year-old was slightly overweight. She could have been described as, at most, chubby. Because of this, however, she had her own little mob of tormentors, 15 the night of her death, who threw salt in her face, dumped her clothes in the garbage and pelted her house with stones and then butter and eggs, the ingredients for a cake.

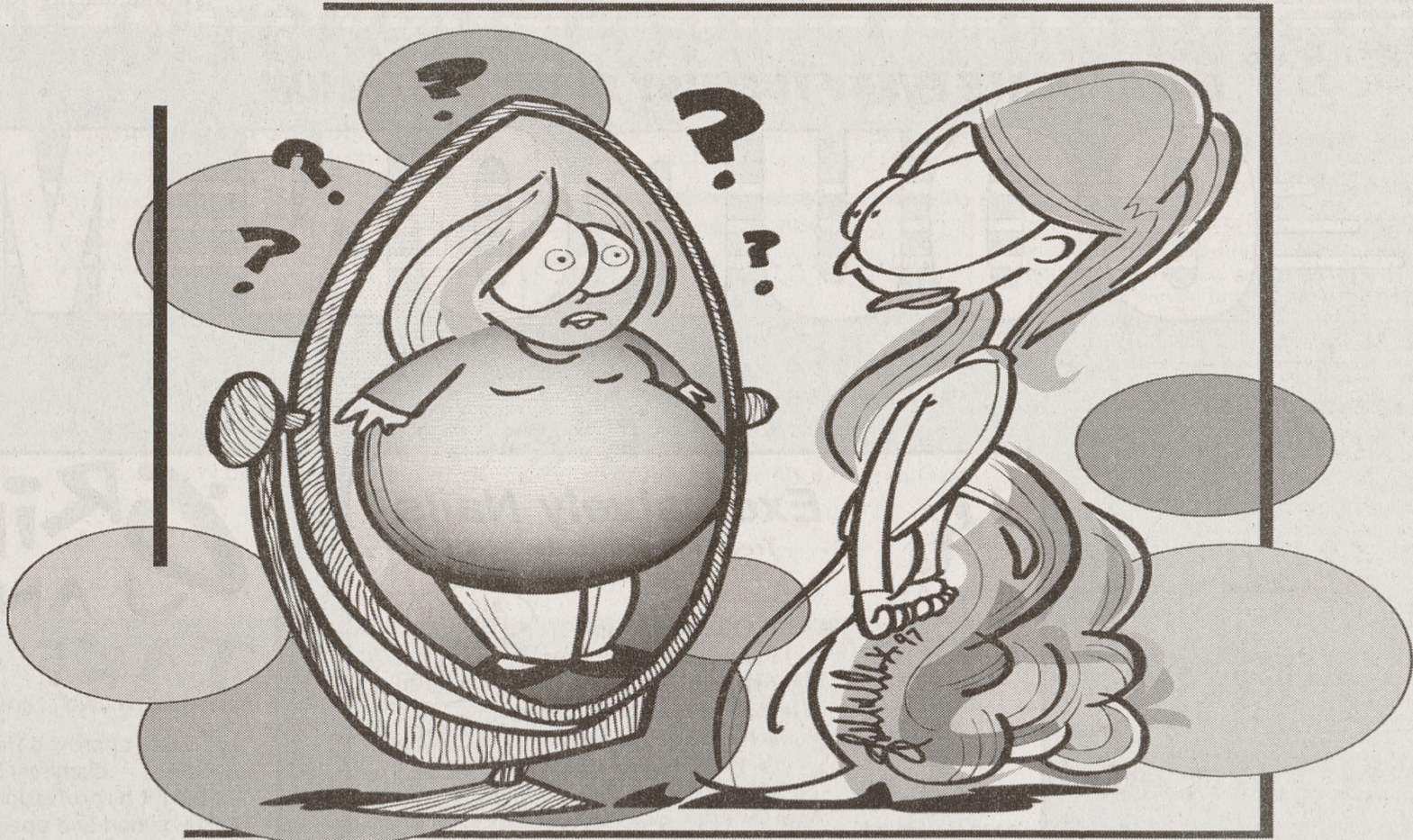
As callous and insensitive as Yeomans' tormentors were, the questions remain: How can a normal girl be so sensitive that teasing could drive her to suicide? Everyone who has been in junior high school (and if you're here, hopefully you

have) knows that teasing happens, and that it can drive people into depression and can damage self-esteem. With the maturity that coming to college brings, students realize that those immature little weasels who teased them earlier in life were simply trying to improve their own self-worth by dragging everyone else down around them.

But why is this such a problem in society? Why have people become so sensitive about how they look that it overrides every other redeeming feature they have? Society's obsession with physical appearance has become dangerous. In years past, it was just an interesting paradox.

Women, who had fought so passionately for and won so many rights and freedoms, were willingly, almost religiously, submitting to the slavery of physical appearance. But now, people are dying, by their own hands.

What can people do about this? What can one student at Texas A&M do? Simply and clearly, students can break the stereotype. They can do what they have always done and refuse to concentrate on appearance to the exclusion of everything else. One person is a rebel. Forty thousand people make a movement. The majority of a society is 'normal.'



Society defines normal as underweight and attractive. Society has forced women into a role where physical beauty is a god to be worshipped, not the

secondary condition that it should be, because most people seem to believe that is the way it should be. The power to change these

destructive stereotypes rests with the next generation. Our generation has the power to redefine normal into an ideal that does not lead to

depression and suicide.

Chris Huffines is a sophomore speech communications major.

Students overlook various advantages in attaining a healthy exercise regimen

Well, it's October in the Rec Center. This is the time of year when the last of the undedicated trickle out and the true fitness fanatics finally have room to breathe.



KENDALL KELLY
 columnist

There are three groups that students fall into when it comes to neglecting exercise. The first and most popular group is the "I'm too busy" crowd. Students who fall into this category can usually be found in the MSC, Koldus or sprinting back and forth between the two. Other members of the "I'm Too Busy" crowd are not just the very involved, but the very studious. They too claim that they are too busy to take care of their bodies. Their daily exercise usually consists of a few brief jogs between the computer lab and the library. As fast as this crowd goes, one would think they would be sufficiently trained for the Tenneco Marathon very soon.

The second group of exercise neglecters are the many, the proud and the clueless. If you fall into this category, you avoid exercise altogether simply because you are uneducated about it. Women of this group might say things such as, "If I work out, I will be big and bulky like a guy," while men say things such as, "The machines are only for girls." Clueless exercisers are often those who display the matching sports bra and biker shorts, which probably cost the same amount as the Stairmaster they are trying to figure out how to use. These are the same people who think they should work out on bikes at level 500 until they virtually undergo cardiac arrest.

The third group of exercise neglecters are people who are doing well have even purchased a pair of athletic shoes within the last five years. Most of you who fall into this category are in the "I just don't give a flip" arena. You've been to the Rec Center maybe once and it was most likely during your freshman orientation tour. Exercise is not an aspect of your life and frankly, you cannot understand why something as ridiculous as running is considered a hobby. If you have been faking a healthy lifestyle and know it, what can you do about it? The first thing you can do is nothing. Keep up what you are doing and you too could be the victim of the No. 1 killer in America, cardiovascular disease. For those of you who have identified yourself as a member of any of the aforementioned groups, however, there are three things you can do to counteract negligence to start paying attention to the body.

#1: Enroll in a kinesiology class for a grade. If you are unmotivated, then this gives you no choice — either show up or fail.

#2: Treat your exercise regimen as a class. If you do not want to be enrolled in a class, then make the time you set aside for exercise as important as a class. This means that no matter where you are during your designated work out time, excuse yourself and head to the Rec Center. This may sound a bit harsh, but people do the same thing when they have a class or a meeting — it's called commitment.

#3: Work out with a friend. Having a workout partner is one of the best ways to motivate oneself about making exercise a daily part of life. You can burn off calories while catching up with a friend.

Long-term benefits are more fulfilling than a Power Bar. Exercising and practicing

an active lifestyle increases chances by 50 percent to maintain low blood pressure, according to the American Heart Association.

I spoke with one elderly gentleman who shared with me the long-term benefits he discovered through making exercise a daily part of his life. Bart Braden, a 64-year-old war veteran and a part-time student at Texas A&M, took up running over 30 years ago and currently enrolls in two aerobic running classes each semester. Since then, he has lost nearly 50 pounds and boasts that the only thing in his medicine cabinet is a bottle of aspirin, expiration date 1963, and a box of tissues that has turned yellow from lack of use. But Bart wasn't really interested in telling me about his bronze medal he won at the Senior Olympics last month or that he was a charter member in the Texas A&M Roadrunners Club. Why does he take exercise so seriously? "It keeps me sane up here," he said with a smile, knocking his head with his fist.

While I listened in awe, Bart told me about a 77-year-old woman pole-vaulter who cleared four feet, nine inches in 91 degree heat, and that the only duties of the EMTs during the six days of events were treating allergies. If there were more people such as Bart and his fellow participants, there would be less excuses, greater health nationwide and a significant decrease in the Medicare budget. It is oxymoronic (emphasis on the "moron" root) that as body-conscious and weight-obsessive as our country is, the leading cause of death is cardiovascular disease. What should be empty are nursing homes and hospital beds, not the Student Rec Center.

Kendall Kelly is a junior Spanish major.

Focus on beauty alienates women

Cookies are evil. Chocolate is Lucifer. Cheesecake is venial sin. Calories are death.



MICHELLE VOSS
 columnist

Like Alice in Warped Wonderland, the mass media distorts reality, trapping women in a never-ending psychological nightmare. Through society's looking glass, the modern woman perceives herself as overweight, unattractive and incapable of achievement without physical beauty.

Just last week, a 13-year-old British girl took a fatal overdose of pills, no doubt to kill the pain of her existence. After enduring taunts of "fat" from fellow classmates for three years, Kelly Yeomans committed suicide because she could not handle the abuse any longer. A gang of teens gathered outside of Yeomans' home and threw a block of margarine through her window, shouting abuse about lard and fat.

Women today have an obsession with superficial appearance. This modern epidemic is a direct result of powerful images and words that alienate women from themselves.

Contemporary culture is vindictive toward nature's role for the female body. Starving themselves, lipo-sucking out their fat and stair-stepping to nowhere, women deprive their bodies of fetus-feeding fat to conform to societal standards. As a result, menstruation cycles go out of wack, calcium deficiency runs down the woman's body and hormones go crazy.

Society no longer respects womanhood. Actually, society no longer respects motherhood. Nature gave women more fatty tissue than men for the simple reason that women carry babies — shocking, we know. If an anthropologist, a thousand years from now, unearths an issue of Cosmo or Vogue, he or she might wonder why advertising campaigns feature concentration camp survivors. As twinkie crumbs fall onto the pages of haute fashion magazines across the world, women today wish someone could just give Kate Moss an M&M.

Models are simply pre-pubescent girls in a state of arrested development. The only role these bony, underfed girls can play is drooling, heroine-addicted euro-trash. Looking like their panties are too tight, the twigs of fashion pull six-figure salaries and endure the hardships of lounging around with pouty faces. Women in ads look like vulnerable victims, frail kittens with their appetites scared away. There is no celebration of the female form. Rather, the fashion waifs look like trans-gender, unisex, 13-year-old boys — in a word, ugly.

In stark contrast to the freakish poster-girls of today, visions of women in past eras were positive. Once considered ideal, the voluptuous Marilyn Monroe graced movie screens with her smoldering sensuality, winking and blowing kisses. Botticelli painted fertile women, glorifying the goddess-like qualities of the female form. Depicting women as nurturers, Mary Cassatt painted plump and rosy women with a glowing warmth. Now, we no longer regard women with soft and curvaceous figures as ideal.

Today, happiness is not the goal, but thinness. Perhaps the social message is that thinness equals happiness. Fear of social rejection compels women to stock their shelves with piles of styrofoam rice cakes, gallons of slim-fast and prepackaged goulash. Herds of calorie-phobic women base their social worth upon their weight, believing somehow that 20 extra pounds lessens their value. Leagues of diet-queens such as Oprah and Jenny Craig lead the daily crusade against fat. Hurray, they can wiggle across a room without splitting their size-eight cocktail dress. And sure, they lead healthy lifestyles, abstain from fudge, run eight miles at dawn and drink two gallons of water every hour. Clap, clap, clap... their kidneys are clean. But we can not neglect the inside, what lingers beneath the skin. Women need to develop an appetite for freedom. Rebel against mainstream images that deny nature and stifle women. Rather than feed off of social propaganda, build a self-image that is uniquely your own.

Michelle Voss is a sophomore English major.



MAIL CALL

A father gives thanks for his son's survival

On Sept. 13, my son Zack Washburn, was severely injured in an auto/pedestrian accident in College Station. He was in intensive care at St. Joseph Regional Health Center for several weeks before being transferred on Oct. 7 to Warm Springs Rehabilitation Center in San Antonio. I would like to take The Battalion for publishing articles re-

Columnist abuses power with abortion

In response to Joshua Hill's Oct. 13 "A Swift satire of abortion" column: Hill's satire on abortion does not give the issue of abortion the degree of seriousness and thought that it deserves. The involved laws surrounding this issue are based on such complex topics as the point at which life begins, the civil rights of both the mother and the child and the morals of we as people and as a country. These topics require people to both educate themselves on the technical subject matter involved and to do a lot of soul searching within their religions and value systems (as well as knowing the intricacies that each proposed law entails). I for one, have taken this issue very seriously, and I find Hill's absurdities within his column to be unintelligent and belittling of the subject. I would have liked to have known Hill's reasons for being against abortion, and more specifically, the law in question. Instead, he childishly challenged others in a battle of satires while making no genuine points. Hill is obviously against abortion, but his "shock-appeal" tactic of challenging it was both disgusting, and it eludes the complexities of abortion that we all must consider. Columnists harbor a powerful position, since they have the

power to be catalysts of important thoughts, including religion and politics. I believe that Hill, and all columnists, should handle this responsibility in a dignified and mature manner.

Chris Fox
 Class of '98

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:
 The Battalion - Mail Call
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 Texas A&M University
 College Station, TX
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 Fax: (409) 845-2647
 E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu
 For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.