

EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

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Tolerating the intolerable

Students must take holistic view of A&M practices



JAMES FRANCIS
opinion editor

The Odyssey is a Greek epic poem detailing the wanderings of Odysseus in the 10 years following the fall of Troy. No one can be sure if Odysseus ever made it through College Station, but the thought of the University coming to a standstill makes student wonder what disastrous events could have caused its downfall.

The year is 2007. A&M has become a nationwide mecca for pure-bred collies. Its multi-million album-selling choir group, The Hoopmasters, have garnered another Grammy nomination for their hit single, "Wannabe Aggie," and students now can park in the W.A.P. Beutel Health Center high-rise garage only \$35 an hour.

This is what the future holds for A&M if certain aspects of the faculty and student body do not change. Although most of the aforementioned is said in jest, people do not realize even the most ridiculous situations could result from rampant ignorance and misunderstanding that occur every day at this school and throughout this city.

To those readers who have not come to the realization there exists an Aggie Odyssey: Understand it is a reality, and the details reach beyond students complaining about tuition and parking problems.

The true definition of "Aggie" is defiled on a daily basis — this puts the "odd" sound in the word "odyssey." If Aggies do not lie, cheat or fail, nor do they tolerate those who do, the reason remains as to why students allow certain problems to persist.

One of the biggest perplexities surrounding A&M is its students' behavior toward issues such as religion and sexuality. On this campus, there are Catholics, Baptists, and beware, even heists. Religious beliefs are personal, and students should not have to worry about others' attempts to convert or condemn them.

Since one of the founding beliefs of most religions is to love and treat others with respect, denouncing someone else's religion displays ignorance, which in turn, causes people to respond in a similar, inappropriate manner.

Then there is the issue of homosexuality. A student's sexual orientation does not make the person, especially in the stereotypical manner in which many people think. If it did, gay men would be having sex at the feet of Sul Ross for exhibitionism, and all heterosexual men would be yelling "dyke" and "fag" at students who look "alternative" and outside the norm of wranglers and T-shirts — this simply is not the way things go.



As with religion, it is not one person's job to degrade another for the simple fact he or she is attracted to members of the same sex. Furthermore, there are too many accepted practices and beliefs that get into students' minds without them attempting to dig deeper, not for scandal or to go against the status quo, but to find out all the facts.

Do not let the fact there are minority students enrolled in the University blind you into believing A&M is multicultural or diversified. With racial separations in fraternities, sororities, scholarship awards and personal bigotry, this University has a long way to go in proving it can be "family-oriented."

Do not ignore the drove of students who travel to Northgate every weekend (or weekday), get intoxicated, have vehicular accidents and become hospitalized for one or a mixture of these two bad elements. There is a drinking problem on this campus, as on campuses nationwide, but when students forget they are here to receive an education, it becomes all too easy to head to Northgate to drown the troubles of daily life.

And do not forget the double standards of respect displayed. Students are called two-percenters, t-shirts and other less than respectable names for showing apathy toward a mascot, traditions such as Silver Taps and organizations such as the Corps of Cadets.

But the students who ridicule others are the same students who flaunt their profane pots at Bonfire shot, the same students who take tequila shots before heading out to the ever-spirited Midnight Yell and the same students who whoop and cheer when others are made to perform 100 pushups for saying the word "elephant."

Change can come about only when students stop looking straight ahead and make an attempt to question and go around some of the accepted practices at A&M. Although there is more than one problem to correct at the University, students should concentrate on obliterating the troubles of this "world-class" facility by joining forces to make the school deserving of the proud title it boasts.

Texas A&M is a good school. Students come from all over the nation to attend A&M for its traditions and quality education taught by its competent, sometimes extraordinary, professors. But if students and faculty keep a blind eye to the inappropriate activities that go on at this campus, there will be no hope for redemption.

James Francis is a junior English major.

CLEAN CUT?

Despite new initiatives, the promise to eliminate profanity at Bonfire is questionable.

In attempt to answer concerns about profanities worn on Bonfire pots, campus leaders had a heated discussion at a Bonfire Advisory Council meeting Monday. Bonfire leaders enthusiastically agreed to a one-week ultimatum to clean up the situation and make "substantial progress" to avoid University intervention.

The buzz word at the meeting was "progress." Conveniently, no one could define what measurable results would constitute "progress." In the end, Head Stack John Gallemore, Vice President for Student Affairs J. Malon Southerland and Bonfire Adviser Kevin Jackson will make the judgment exclusive of other campus leaders.

It seems that if distinct goals cannot be defined, then true progress will never be achieved, especially in the time frame of one week.

It is highly doubtful that Gallemore, Southerland and Jackson will subject Bonfire to the unbiased scrutiny of University administrators Monday. Whether or not the situation has been rectified, they surely will boast "substantial progress." The tradition of Bonfire would otherwise be in severe jeopardy, since the University would have no other option than to discontinue it.

While some Bonfire workers are blaming The Battalion for the events now unfolding, the animosity is a simple case of targeting the messenger. The duty of a student newspaper is to report the truth, and no one can deny the existence of profanity on those pots.

Unfortunately, the sentiment at yesterday's meeting could be best defined by the laughter of a female Bonfire representative when the issue of sexual harassment was discussed. A potentially productive session was reduced to several unanswered

questions and weak explanations.

Although the leaders seemed confident the problem could be "fixed" in the span of one week, the strategy they are endorsing is questionable. Claiming that "Aggies lead by example," Bonfire leaders are betting that workers will imitate their superiors, who do not endorse profanity on pots.

However, these leaders never have endorsed this behavior, and it is naive to assume a few meetings and a handful of determined students will effect change.

Gallemore and other Bonfire leaders are sincere in their opposition to the profanity, but the constraints they face in enforcing this regulation are insurmountable.

As for the redpots, they are too absorbed in the important task of maintaining safety to worry about what is written on the pots. No one will argue with safety, especially after the two injuries at Saturday's cut. An ax to the foot should never be of minor concern.

At one point in the discussion, a redpot offered a snide suggestion to put a fence around stack site and check everyone at the gate.

Obviously, the magnitude of this problem extends beyond any easily monitored behavior.

The group mentality found at the root of this vulgar behavior cannot be remedied in seven days. The chain of events following the first reported hazing incident surely illustrates this.

A tradition as widely embraced as Bonfire should represent the most redeeming qualities of Texas A&M students, especially with opening of the Bush Library just around the corner. It is never too late to enact change, but the decision to represent A&M must be embraced by every individual working on Bonfire, not just a concerned minority.

More liberals at A&M would improve student body diversity

At the corner of University Drive and Spence Street, by the Zachary Building, as one is leaving campus, there is a sign which indicates no left turn.

While very few motorists are prone to follow the sign's instructions, it is a command Aggies seem happy to obey. Texas A&M University, however, is a school which refuses to turn toward the left.

In fact, from the looks of it, A&M must be one of the most right-wing places in the country. From the clothing Aggies wear to the values they profess, the vast majority of A&M's students are conservatives.

While having a campus full of right-thinking students does contribute to A&M's unique atmosphere, it also leaves A&M lacking. A&M needs more liberals. It is the only solution to this school's overwhelming homogeneity.

In these parts, "liberal" is a dirty word. Any student who espouses liberal sympathies is bound to



JOHN LEMONS
columnist

be met with disdain or an argument that goes something like this:

• Liberal student — "We need to limit access to guns by enacting stronger gun-control laws. By banning some types of guns and creating waiting periods to check for criminal records, we can help keep guns out of criminals' hands, thereby protecting the children."

• Typical Aggie — "You pinko, leftist, tree-loving, tax-raising hippie! Guns aren't the problem. What America needs is more electric chairs, so we can use them on criminals and sissy-boy liberals like yourself."

Obviously, A&M is not a very liberal-friendly place. This is surprising, because A&M has many qualities to attract liberals. First, A&M has socialized medicine. Every student at A&M is guaranteed health care at the A.P. Beutel Health Center. All students have to do is go inside, get questioned if they are pregnant and wait to receive treatment from the clinic-assigned doctor of their choice.

More importantly, there are a host of causes on this campus an individual might think liberals would be lining up to crusade against. After all, some of the activities that occur on campus should be enough to tick off liberals of all shapes, sizes and

varying degrees of open-mindedness.

Consider Bonfire. Certainly, clear-cutting local woods and burning between 5,000 and 7,000 logs grates on the nerves of some environmentalists, yet there exists little open opposition to Bonfire on this campus.

Within the past few years, there has been no real organized movement against Bonfire. In fact, the last memorable attack against A&M's great burning idol occurred about five years ago from a group that called itself Aggies Against Bonfire (AAB). AAB actually went out to the Bonfire site to protest. It made for an interesting controversy on campus.

Today, the strongest opposition against Bonfire comes from the Aggie Bonfire — Dumb as Dirt Homepage (<http://www.isc.tamu.edu/FLORA/tpf/bonfire2.htm>). The page vividly describes the excesses of Bonfire. Although the page is interesting and amusing, Web pages do not constitute liberal activism.

The make-up of A&M's yell leaders should be enough to make any feminist mad. After all, there never has been a female yell leader. Despite this fact, there are no cries of sexism from A&M's chapter of the National Organization of Women. Likewise, there are no demands to elect a female yell leader.

Frankly, this campus' feminists must be content with the current yell-leader glass ceiling.

A&M is home to the soon-to-be-opened George Bush Presidential Library. Although President Bush was never aligned with the very right wing of the Republican party, he was still a Republican. Surely this must irk some liberals on campus.

A&M needs more liberals, not because they are right — err correct — but because they add a different perspective. While A&M prides itself on its unity, it is a university — a place where a diversity of opinions come together to be discussed.

It is this dialogue between liberals and conservatives that seems to be missing as of late. After all, when was the last time the College Republicans had a public debate with the Aggie Democrats?

This is a place where liberals could thrive, or at least be more vocal. The result would be a school where conservatives and liberals alike benefit by hearing all points of view.

For now, much like their precious spotted owl, liberals represent a very large endangered species.

John Lemons is an electrical engineering graduate student.



MAIL CALL

Bonfire vulgarity disgraces University

I was appalled to read about the latest in a long line of incidents that show exactly how insensitive some A&M students can be.

Using a University-sponsored vent such as Bonfire to display such offensive language is disgraceful and truly disgusting. How can students be allowed to mean themselves and others this way?

A "boys will be boys" attitude, frequently used to excuse such rude behavior and sexual assault, is unacceptable.

Given that the site is in public view, it is clear the University should take action to remedy this situation immediately — especially when world leaders and

dignitaries shortly will have access to this campus for the Bush Library opening.

Surely they would not think highly of the association between such vulgarity and a University-sponsored event. These students should be able to accomplish Bonfire without disgracing themselves and the University.

It would seem to me their colleagues and University officials should ensure they do.

Sonia R. King
Graduate student

Unfounded articles take aim at Bonfire

I wish the writers of The Battalion would figure out Highway 6 runs both ways.

It seems ignorant people are employed by The Battalion. Without research, the writers' comments are unfounded and have little meaning. You do get readers, not by insightful literature, but by tabloid literature.

Bonfire always has been this way. Profanity always has been a part of Bonfire. Bonfire provides an outlet for stress, where a person can scream at workers profanities that would never be said in public.

If you think what is written on the pots' pots is bad, maybe you need to hear just one grode story.

But then you might be writing for weeks about that profanity. Mandy Cater should research before she writes.

In her column, she wrote, "In recent years, however, another less-spirited practice has jaded the 'pot'-wearing tradition."

Dorm leaders do not change their pots when they get them. Profanities written on the pots have been there for approximately 10 to 25 years.

At least The Battalion staff came out to one Bonfire activity, although taking pictures does not mean you worked on Bonfire. See you when it burns.

Edward Citzler
Class of '99

Meaning of tradition loses its stronghold

As I sit back and listen to the messages continuously voiced by the secular world, I become more and more astonished by what I hear.

The loudest of the voices at Texas A&M seem to be for tradition, yet in practice, the "traditions" are changed according to

will be in the name of a word that has lost its meaning — "tradition."

Paul Duke
Class of '00

Profanity, like life, should be accepted

Rampant vulgarity. Gasp. Oh no. I get chills just thinking about it.

C'mon, you overly sensitive people, all we are doing is having a little bit of college-style fun. Fun is at least as important a Bonfire tradition as pride and our burning desire to beat the hell out of t.u. (gosh, I hope no one was offended by that).

So if this means we are conformists, then I'm sorry, but I had better not see you at any parties just because other people showed up before you did.

As for the sexual-harassment aspect, what is the latest, mind-staggering number of complaints, anyway? One? Sorry, but no dice.

I will personally buy lunch for the men or women who have been flagrantly accosted by a hat or other inanimate object. I will, of course, look into the mental health of anyone making such a claim. Do household appliances make fun of you as well?

I apologize to all those who will be shocked by this announcement,

but it needs to be said.

Life is offensive. Deal with it, and let us have our fun. In the immortal (and only slightly distorted) words of the Bloodhound Gang song: We don't need no whiners, let the Bonfire burn. Burn Bonfire, burn.

Tim Dewees
Class of '01

Davis-Gary women forgotten in Bonfire

In response to Michelle Voss' Oct. 15 Lifestyles feature:

Voss forgot to mention the women who pioneered female participation in cut, stack and load: the women of Davis-Gary.

D-G women were the first females to go into the woods, handle an ax and take down trees as efficiently as the rest of them.

When D-G was a male dorm, the men had a reputation of being red-ass. When women moved into D-G, they fought hard to keep up the D-G tradition of building the hell out of Bonfire.

Davis-Gary women cut with Moore Hall. Amidst the traditional wake-up of the males of Northside Quad rings the powerful female voice of the women of Davis-Gary.

Virginia Guerrero
Class of '99