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CAMPUS CONNECTION

Hands off

Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue loses its features through polishing tradition



JOHN LEMONS
columnist

Three students were blinded last week as they attempted to walk by the Academic Building. The student lost their vision when they walked directly at the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue on a sunny day. In response to the accident, A&M University administrators are warning students not to polish the statue. Last week, nobody was blinded by the statue, but it could have happened. Sully, after all, has been shining brightly lately. On a bright day, he leaves everyone in his vicinity not wearing sunglasses squinting. Sully has taken on that golden, reflective appearance because somebody is polishing him. Polishing Sully with abrasives damages him. Students need to stop polishing Sully and start taking care of him before they ruin the statue.

Sully is not a magic lamp. If you polish him, a gem will not appear to grant wishes. Nonetheless, ever-wild Aladdin's seem intent on making Sully reflect like a mirror.

The fact Sully is not supposed to shine like a penny probably comes as a surprise to many students. After all, Aggies have been polishing Sully since the '40s.

Sully, like all bronze sculptures, is not designed to be polished. Compare Sully to the other sculptures on campus. He is the odd man out. All of campus' other sculptures — Gen. Rudder, the Cain Victory Eagle, the Archneck, etc. have a rich brown finish. That is not a mistake, they are supposed to look that way. That finish is called a patina. It is a protective layer, and the color the sculpture's artist chooses.

Catherine Hasted, Curator of the J. Wayne Stark University Center Galleries, said polishing has stripped Sully of his patina. She said it is obvious that many of Sully's features have eroded away since the statue's placement on campus in 1919.

"A lot of the detail in his coat is gone," Hasted said.

"His hairline is receding." So, polishers are not only destroying Sully's features, but they are also making him go prematurely bald. No amount of Rogaine can restore Sully's hair. Perhaps, the Traditions Council can look into investing in a hairpiece for the balding statue.

The problem is many students do not understand the damaging effects of polishing Sully. When that ignorance is combined with the tradition of polishing the statue, it is easy to see why Sully is in peril.

Aaron Ffrench is chair of the Old Main Society, a student organization that works to protect important structures on campus. Ffrench said the Old Main Society is working on creating a video to inform students on how to protect campus' statues.

"I think the biggest problem is it has been ingrained into their heads that this [polishing Sully] is something for freshman to do," said Ffrench.

This problem with polishing Sully raises an important question. Do traditions serve us, or do we serve traditions?

Traditions are an important part of this university. But, they are not so important Aggies have to adhere to them at the expense of common sense. There are times on this campus tradition goes so far it overrides clear thinking.

For example, students have tried to use tradition to justify hazing other students. This is foolish. When traditions become dangerous or cause damage, they must go.

Polishing Sully may be a tradition, destroying him is not. Apparently, campus has forgotten the lesson it learned after the Gen. Rudder statue was damaged by students polishing him in 1994.

While the polishers may have good intentions, their actions are ruining A&M's most revered statue. Nobody wants to see a big featureless lump of bronze in front of the Academic Building.

So, look at Sully, but don't touch. And whatever you do, don't polish his nose off.

John Lemons is an electrical engineering graduate student.



STATE OF THE UNION

Reversal of gay-rights law marks step in right direction

On Tuesday, March 10, Maine voters not only did something that state legislators would not do — they did it. With about 33 percent higher than predicted, Maine's new gay-rights protection law was overturned by a 52 to 48 percent margin in a state with a long history of supporting liberal causes.

The law added "sexual orientation" to the list of those issues protected by LD 1116, the Maine Human Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion or other personal traits.

Signed into law by Gov. Angus King last year, it would have been illegal to discriminate in employment, housing, public accommodation, credit and other instances based on sexual orientation.

Maine voters set a commendable precedent, and voters nationwide should follow their lead. While laws preventing harassment and violence against homosexuals are needed, forcing people to embrace and condone homosexuality is intolerable.

There are two major problems with gay-rights laws — they legitimize a destructive and immoral lifestyle, and they infringe upon the precious religious freedoms of those whose moral beliefs state homosexuality is wrong.

Gay-rights protection laws are simply public statements that there is no right or wrong, and anyone with traditional moral values should be prosecuted and fined for their beliefs.

In the case of Maine, the city of Portland used gay-rights ordinances to defund the Boy Scouts, a private organization which does not allow homosexuals to become Scoutmasters.

Portland's Deering High

School took advantage of gay-rights laws and held a "Diversity Day," which invited a lesbian couple to talk to children about the "joys of a homosexual relationship" and urged children to explore homosexuality. Coincidentally, Christians were not invited to participate in "Diversity Day."

Not only are gay-rights laws used to indoctrinate children with a liberal, pro-homosexual agenda, they also legitimize a destructive "lifestyle." A study by doctors Paul Cameron, William Playfair and Steven Wellum finds the average lifespan of a homosexual male is only 41 years.

Although studies of human sexuality show homosexual men comprise less than two percent of the population, the Centers for Disease Control report they made up approximately 55 percent of new AIDS cases from 1995 to 1997. Taking two percent of the population who make up 55 percent of those with an insidious disease and calling it a positive lifestyle choice is dangerous and misleading.

Heroin addiction, alcoholism and other permissive, destructive lifestyles do not deserve special protection under the law, and neither should homosexuality. Although homosexuals certainly are not rotting, pedophilic bogeymen as some stereotypes insist, their permissive and destructive lifestyle should not be condoned and certainly not protected by the law.

Unlike race, age, sex, ethnicity and skin color, for which discrimination is wrong and immoral, sexual orientation is a personal behavior and not nearly on the same civil-rights plain as physical and ethnic attributes.

On a more personal level, gay-rights laws like the one shot down in Maine seriously trample on the religious freedoms of those who know homosexuality is wrong. Religious freedoms are among our most precious.

America may be the only nation where people can worship as they please and fulfill the tenets of their faith without

heavy-handed government interference. That is, until gay-rights laws are adopted.

Landlords are forced by the state to rent to homosexuals, regardless of their personal values and a family could not fire or refuse to hire a nanny because she promotes lesbianism to their children.

Those who know homosexuality is wrong and will not rent to or hire homosexuals because of their lifestyle have their rights shoved aside to accommodate a destructive, out-of-touch political agenda. Animal-rights activists do not prevent those of Jewish faith from eating kosher foods and businessmen of Hindu faith are not forced by the government to sell beef.

Likewise, employers and landlords who believe in morality and clean living should not be coerced by an oppressive and intrusive state law into hiring or renting to people who mock or violate their beliefs.

Laws such as these do not protect actual rights, they destroy the rights of families and law-abiding citizens. In an era of escalating drug use, out-of-wedlock births, divorce and crime, gay-rights laws are a step in the wrong direction. Instead of assaulting religion and morality, government should promote the traditional values which made this nation strong.

Citizens of states which do not have gay-rights protection laws should fight moral relativists to keep it that way; and those in states with these laws should repeal them.

Gay-rights laws are a symptom of the larger disease of moral relativism destroying society. Legitimizing and forcing acceptance of a deadly, destructive, immoral lifestyle is wrong.

Congratulations, Maine, for standing up to the vocal minorities who attempted to force citizens to accept their immoral lifestyle. Hopefully voters nationwide will take the hint and take back their nation.

Donny Ferguson is a junior political science major.

CAMPUS CONNECTION

Small businesses hurt by off-campus Aggiebucks system

It has always seemed that the unwritten purpose of Texas A&M's administration is to find new and creative ways to, in some small way, add to the general Dante-ish melting pot that is A&M.

However, students must sometimes choose the lesser of two evils. This is the case today with Aggiebucks. Aggiebucks are being expanded off-campus at the expense of small businesses and students, a situation which should not continue.

Originally, Aggiebucks were a convenience for students while on-campus. Then, the off-campus bookstores, understandably upset that the MSC Bookstore offered to take Aggiebucks and they could not, lobbied the state legislature to the point a law was passed requiring A&M to offer Aggiebucks off-campus.

That's right, a handful of bookstores talked the state congress into passing a law. Since then, only the bookstores, McDonalds, Disc-Go-Round, CD Warehouse, and Inspirations have offered to take Aggiebucks.

Small businesses around campus do not have deep enough pockets to cover the large investment it takes to offer Aggiebucks. For just one reader (the thing the card gets swiped through) and associated peripherals, an initial investment of almost \$2000 is required. That's not counting the monthly upkeep fee.

The administration, trying to keep this cost off students, forces the business to pay all of these expenses, without using any money from student fees or making a profit.

Kelly Tatum, store manager for the Northgate Freebird's, says many local businesses cannot spare the cash to make such a large investment on Aggiebucks, even if they would like to offer the service for their customers.

To add to this, stores such as CD Warehouse that have invested in Aggiebucks do not show a dramatic payback from using Aggiebucks. Their good fortune at



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having corporate pockets to dig into for the cash is not paying back as promised.

Another problem with Aggiebucks is they do not seem like "real" money. Once the bill is paid, Aggiebucks are just a number, not money going out. This makes students less responsible with Aggiebucks than they would be with real money.

Aggiebucks become easier to use, which benefits stores with Aggiebucks, while hurting stores without the system. Students may be short five bucks, and be able to make it up with Aggiebucks, a purchase they would not have been able to make without Aggiebucks.

Finally, and most importantly, the bookstore lobby in this case means University policy is being defined by local business, not by the administration. As was mentioned earlier, it has always seemed the University has its interests slightly awry: the University ahead of the students.

But at least the administration has student interests somewhere near the top. Local businesses only care for the students as customers. This law sets a dangerous precedent, taking the power to choose how to help students from men and women chosen and paid to help these students and giving it to men and women who are paid only to make money for their business. Students' interests are at least present for the University.

Aggiebucks are a good idea. Local business has twisted that idea into a ridiculous parody of what it once was, forcing the University to choose between obeying the law and hurting the students it is here to serve. Fortunately, the University is trying to correct the problem by negotiating with a local bank to run off-campus Aggiebucks and lower the prices. The fact remains though, this situation would not have occurred were it not for the selfish lobbying of the off-campus bookstores.

Chris Huffines is a sophomore speech communications major.



MAIL CALL

Focus on appearance due to male attitudes

Michelle Voss made a good point in her Feb. 27 column. Women should work to "publicize role models for young women who

have accomplished great tasks." Let's be honest, though, and look at the issue of feminine accomplishment versus appearance through the eyes of Charles Darwin.

Based on his work in *Origin of Species*, let's use "survival of the fittest" as our governing model. Women who have the greatest capability to appeal to men are the women who will ultimately fulfill their procreative desire to bear children.

Since a woman's physical appearance weighs heavily on most men's criteria for courtship, it is in fact men who are responsible for the stringent media portrayal of the feminine figure, not women as Voss suggests.

How, therefore, do we change

men's attitudes toward physical appearance? Whoever has the answer to that question undoubtedly will be worth a lot of money, as she has the capability to usurp the multibillion-dollar global cosmetic industry.

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Class of '97

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