

PERSPECTIVES

Don't be cruel

Proclamations of Clinton's guilt are popping up as frequently as Elvis sightings



**CALEB
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columnist

As a result of the parade of lewd allegations against President Clinton, some Americans have taken the position that where there is so much smoke, there must be some fire.

To these somewhat hasty citizens, the constant media coverage of accusations against the president is evidence in and of itself that he is guilty of them. It is surprising that these sage pundits do not conclude by the same reasoning that Elvis lives.

After all, there have been many reported sightings of the King, and where there is that much smoke, surely there must be a hunk-a-hunk of burning love.

The truth is the unbelievable amount of rumors of Presley sightings do not contribute one iota to the hypothesis that Elvis lives.

And, to be fair, neither does the incredible bulk of allegations against Clinton confirm that he ain't nothing but a hound dog.

A district judge in Arkansas recently had the courage to realize this when she determined the much-publicized Paula Jones lawsuit was not solid enough to be favored with a jury trial.

Instantly, the judge was met with criticism from camps around the country. Feminists deplored her refusal to punish sexual harassment.

Religious leaders intoned their deep disappointment in the moral corruption of an American society that allows adulterous presidents to get away with unspeakable sexual predation. And anchors on CNN seemed visibly stunned that they were suddenly covering the case-that-never-was.

These reactions were not surprising. They are the reactions that have greeted every new report that President Clinton is a loose womanizer who likes to — well, you know the stories.

However, a cautious contingent of the American population, a small minority represented admirably by the Arkansas judge in the Paula Jones case, refuses to allow so much smoke to cloud time-honored principles of justice.

They prudently lean on the cornerstone of American jurisprudence, the principle that an accused criminal is innocent until proven guilty, and they per-

ceive no reason why the president should not be afforded the same right. Until a fire is conclusively discovered, no amount of smoke will convince these cool-headed citizens that Clinton and his employees used to — well, you know the stories.

But notice how quickly these "innocent until proven guilty" believers are disparaged by their "smoke, therefore fire" counterparts.

The message to the judge in Arkansas and those who agree with her decision is discouraging. Americans seem to believe that if you are not against Clinton, then you are for him — that if you believe in holding legal plaintiffs to a rigorous burden of proof, then you must be unburdened by any sense of conscience or morality.

Thus, feminists conclude that because a judge adhered strictly to the legal definition of sexual harassment, then she must be in favor of sexual propositioning.

And others among us seem to think that the person who reserves judgment about Clinton's exploits until all the facts are available must be in favor of adultery and illicit sex.

Be reasonable. The presumption that suspected criminals are innocent does not imply that the deeds for which they

are suspected are not crimes.

And neither do those who do not condemn Clinton because of insufficient evidence necessarily condone the actions of which he is accused. The presumption of Clinton's innocence does not change the despicable immorality of marital infidelity or sexual assault.

Many (but admittedly, not all) who reserve judgment about Clinton's guilt believe strongly in the wrongness of the acts for which he is suspected.

But these important truths have become obscured by the frenzy of media attention on the supposed Clinton scandals. Social commentators have made a huge hullabaloo over the fact that the president's popularity ratings have not been damaged by the allegations against him.

You can see them on television, with wrinkled brows and dark demeanors, speaking in sad, hushed tones about the death of American morality.

Or you can hear jubilant libertines conclude from political polls that people just do not care anymore about sexual misconduct or adulterous affairs. The American people are okay with a president who sleeps around, they conclude triumphantly.

It's the economy, stupid, they proclaim. Americans just care more about

money than morality.

May I offer an alternative explanation for at least some of Clinton's ratings? Perhaps the explanation is that a good deal of the population is waiting until the smoke clears to decide if there is a fire.

We are not home-wreckers, we hate all forms of sexual harassment, we deplore adultery, and we believe in holding the presidency to the dictates of morality.

But we also have a profound and reverent regard for the practice of thinking the best of someone until you know to think otherwise.

A person is innocent until he or she is proven guilty, not until they are rumored guilty.

Justice should be blind to the virulence or variety of rumors surrounding a suspect, but this does not mean that we should be blind to injustice once it is proven.

So when we cautiously presume that Clinton is innocent until he is proven guilty, try not to step on our blue suede shoes. After all, we are only being as fair toward him as you would expect us to be toward you.

Caleb McDaniel is a freshman history major.

STUDENT LIFE

Fish Camp offers opportunity to learn about traditions, life at A&M

There is nothing greater than giving back to the university one holds so close to the heart. One of the best opportunities Texas A&M has to accomplish this goal is by participating in Fish Camp.

In 1954, YMCA director Gordon Day began the tradition by taking a few new cadets camping in order to teach them the many Aggie traditions.

This camp has evolved into a four-day camp, run by approximately 900 student counselors, 72 student co-chairs, 8 directors and 24 Fish Co. members, which touches the lives of over 4,200 incoming Aggies each year.

Fish Camp is designed to aid the transition from high school to college and specifically to A&M.

Fish Camp serves as an optional program for incoming freshmen intended to establish friendships, learn about residence halls or apartment living, meet student leaders, become familiar with Aggie traditions and learn about A&M campus life in a very relaxed atmosphere.

In short, it is the most popular activity in which A&M students participate to give back to this University.

Fish Camp gives incoming "fish" a look at what is to come in their years of Aggieland. It is the counselors' responsibility to make sure that these freshmen start off their college careers on the right foot.

A&M has a lot to offer all incoming freshman. It is a school rich in student involvement and even richer in tradition.

Fish Camp's toughest job is to give the freshmen reassurance that they will be not only accepted,

but that they will succeed as well.

Fish Camp '98 Co-chair David Taylor said, "The attitude and love that a counselor shows through their words and actions will change the freshmen's lives forever."

The cornerstone of every Fish Camp is the "D.G." which stands for discussion group. During D.G. time, counselors pair off into small groups with fish both to get to know the freshmen and to discuss all that being a student at A&M entails.

Counselor Kelly Feavel commented, "A key D.G. goal is to get the freshmen motivated about being a part of this university and for them to love A&M as much as every counselor does."

Fish Camp also gives Aggies a chance to mold the future of this university. It is difficult to understand the scope of the impact that every counselor has on the freshmen, yet the words and actions of those involved will serve as a direct reflection in A&M's near future.

Fish Camp is one of the finest traditions Texas A&M has to offer. It serves as a learning institution for the incoming freshman and furthermore it proves an unparalleled leadership experience for many students.

It is also one of the most noble gestures an Aggie can perform, for those involved receive nothing except the gratification of motivating the incoming freshman class.

Fish Camp is a great experience for everybody involved, however the wonder of this tradition is seen each year when the new crop of freshmen arrive on campus. It is their attitude and outlook that will one day run the campus. Fish Camp ensures that A&M will continue to be the best university on the planet.

Mickey Saloma is a senior journalism major.



**MICKEY
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columnist

STUDENT LIFE

Students must strive to uphold Aggie Code of Honor on campus

"Aggies do not lie, cheat, steal or tolerate those who do."

What? At times it feels as if I must attend the little 40-acre school in Austin where the arts of lying, cheating and stealing are properly taught in the freshman handbook.

Texas A&M has always had the ability to feel pride in its student body for the honor and integrity it displays, however, these ever-so-valuable attitudes and ideals appear to have been lost by some of our students and faculty.

Although the problems here at A&M regarding dishonesty etc. are mild, they do, in fact, exist.

We have signs in our libraries warning students of the dangers of leaving their belongings unattended and security systems to cut down on the risk of theft because the administration cannot trust the student body.

The University Police Department has a program to engrave bicycles so that when they are stolen they might eventually be recovered and returned.

In addition, the officers dress in tactical gear as their regular uniform, and when they pull over students, the officers strategically locate themselves around students cars in case we degenerate try any "funny stuff."

Our University is forced to

have a special policy on scholastic dishonesty, and some professors have had such negative experiences with students they feel they have to mention the policy in their course syllabi.

I have one professor who repeats and notes the scholastic dishonesty policy on every assignment she makes.

In addition, A&M has a tenured professor under felony indictment on several different charges.

The problems referred to here at A&M are mild, yet they are similar to the problems faced by America as a whole.

On the national scene, our president has faced too many allegations to count, yet has maintained the highest public approval rating in history and a prominent Aggie and former Cabinet member is under indictment for 18 counts of lying and one individual conspiracy charge.

One common attitude seems to be ever present in all of the problems mentioned above whether faced by A&M or the nation in general. If a problem doesn't directly affect us then we usually aren't too concerned that it happened.

As mentioned earlier, the problem here at A&M is indicative of a much larger problem faced by the nation. In a larger percentage of American homes than ever before, the ideals of honor and integrity are not taught, and some parents no longer provide a positive example for their children to follow.

The problem here may be just that simple. Recently, reelected yell

leader Brandon Neff shared this sentiment with me, "We are one of the largest universities in the world, and students are coming here from all over the nation and the world. Some from homes where parents did not take the necessary steps to ensure that these children learned of the virtue associated with being honorable and trustworthy. Fish Camp is not mandatory, nor is the Corps and it is hard for an institution to instantly replace a lifetime of examples with some new ideals."

While the problems faced by the nation are the result of apathy and may never be resolved, here in Aggieland we could choose to take control of our collective destiny and what happens on our campus.

Aggies have traditionally been able to pride ourselves on our unified determination to hold ourselves to a higher standard of honor and integrity.

Aggies are recognized all over the world for our accomplishments and our reputation as honorable and decent people.

With that ever present reputation and identity comes an intense responsibility, and it is incumbent upon each of us to hold ourselves to a higher ethical standard while helping others to realize the importance of simply being honest and trustworthy. All the while we must maintain the hope and objective that the A&M legacy can continue to be proliferated through the actions of generations of Aggies to come.

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**LEN
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MAIL CALL

Land mines necessary for national security

I agree with McDaniel that land mines often do harm innocent non-combatants. Where our ideologies part ways is on the issue of national security. McDaniel made no reference

to our soldiers, marines, airmen or sailors stationed in a place called the Republic of South Korea.

The DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) that lies roughly along the 38th parallel is pertinent to national security. Many people may not agree with this, but I suggest they ask those who live on danger's doorstep.

Although I was not stationed directly on the DMZ, I lived only a few kilometers away for more than a year, and I believe those "stinky" land mines have a distinct deterrent effect. I also left behind many Korean friends who felt the same way. Land mines are also a more "efficient" way of protecting one's perimeter, border, or avenues of approach without additional troops being assigned.

This is something our government is keenly aware of in light of the reduction in forces of the recent past.

In a perfect world it would be possible to eliminate land mines, but as long as we stand on lines such as the 38th parallel it does not seem likely.

*Gabe Hernandez
Class of '00*

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