

LONE STAR LOWDOWN

If you build it...

Nolan Ryan's minor league baseball plans should include calling College Station home

Former major-league fireballer Nolan Ryan and his son recently announced their intent to purchase a minor league baseball team and move it to Texas. Because I am a baseball fan, this announcement made me happy: the more baseball in the Lone Star State the better. However, the Ryans' intended choice of a host city, Austin, seems much to be desired. The team's more logical home is right here in the Brazos Valley.



ADAM COLLETT
columnist

The first reason has to do with baseball culture. Minor league baseball is an entirely different creature than the major league variety. Cheap tickets, cozy ballparks and crazy promotional stunts bring out a certain crowd that would never bother to set foot in a big league stadium.

More importantly, the transience of minor league players (who are frequently promoted, demoted, or traded) means that the focus is on the team itself, and not some overpaid prima donnas.

Because of this culture, Austin makes no sense. Minor league teams transplanted into more metropolitan areas tend to have good attendance and support at first, but then trail off. The well-to-do (and dare I say, tea-sippin') crowd becomes infatuated with the team much as a child does with a new toy. But as we all know, today's new toy quickly becomes tomorrow's closet clutter.

On the other hand, an area with a better rural base and a more laid back daily pace is much more in keeping with the minor league spirit. College Station, with its proud rustic engineers, soldiers and farmers combines with blue collar Bryan to create the perfect backdrop for a team.

Although minor league teams typically don't belong within big city limits, having the bright lights relatively near is key to securing a balanced fan base. Bryan-College Station is central to and a day trip's distance from the major metropolitan areas of Dallas-

Fort Worth, San Antonio and Houston. And we're within shouting distance of the smaller but active college towns of Austin and Waco.

The team would also benefit from synergy with the existing tourist economy. Greater BCS already has several bona fide attractions in the Messina Hof winery, the Bush Library and our own tradition and sports-rich campus. A little further away (30 minutes south on Highway 6) lies Washington on the Brazos, site of the drafting of the Texas Declaration of Independence and first constitution, and home of the annual Texas Independence Day festivities. And don't forget the Texas World Speedway.

Because it is not uncommon to find a single A or double A ballclub sharing a field with the local college nine, the team already has a fantastic facility in Olsen Field. I even bet the raucous Raggies (the devoted fans who taunt the opposing teams at Aggie baseball games) would latch onto and support just as fervently the new addition to the family.

Best of all, the team has several great name possibilities. If we wanted to emphasize local ties and feed off of A&M's sports culture, who would be better cousins to the Aggies than the BCS Farmers? Broadening our scope a bit and giving more ownership to the surrounding communities, we could name the squad the Brazos Valley Lone Stars.

However, for the best of both worlds (local ties and Texas pride) the obvious choice is the Texas Independence. In addition to jumping on the collective sports name bandwagon (a la the Utah Jazz and the Tampa Bay Lightning), we would be paying homage to the nearby birthplace of the state and contributing to the ruggedly individualistic pride of all Texans. The name Independence would also give a nod to the spirit of the George Bush Library, whose namesake it is to be remembered, is a big baseball fan and even played for Yale.

Are you listening, Nolan? Convinced yet? If not, remember one final thing: College Station is a hell of a lot closer to Alvin than Austin.

Adam Collett is an educational administration graduate student.



LONE STAR LOWDOWN

True environmentalism means considering global perspectives

I have always been intrigued by the environmental movement, but not because of an interest in the sometimes hocus-pocus field of environmental science or even a desire to protect the health of the environment.



STEWART PATTON
columnist

Heck, I don't watch out for my own health — one more railroad and that Sea-Doo is mine! I like the environmental movement, because at its best, the movement has been a shining example of people of different backgrounds fighting against the interests of big corporations and big government for the good of all, even the complacent.

At the other end of the spectrum, however, environmental protection organizations can be just as self-serving and malicious as the groups they fight against.

The most recent example of just such an organization in Texas is the Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund.

The SBLDF was formed several years ago to protest the building of a low-level nuclear waste dump at Sierra Blanca in Hudspeth County in southwest Texas.

This group of lobbyists and activists has redoubled its efforts since the Texas legislature passed a resolution earlier this month to begin work on the site.

Instead of promoting a true environmental ethic, the SBLDF is a political organization in environmental clothing spouting the age-old "not-in-my-backyard" philosophy detrimental to progress.

A true environmental ethic includes the belief that man should peacefully coexist with the earth without polluting rivers and land or destroying rainforests.

Such an ethic teaches humans to think globally: Man should consider the impacts of his actions on the earth as a whole instead of considering only his narrow personal interests, like making a buck.

On the extreme side of this ethic (right next to Al Gore) is the Gaia hypothesis, which holds earth is a living creature deserving of worship because she has created humans and can destroy them just as easily.

While the Gaia hypothesis takes the environmental ethic to the point of absurdity, the SBLDF errs in the opposite direction.

The SBLDF wants us to believe that they are trying to protect the environment by discouraging the building of a nuclear waste dump in their hometown.

If the SBLDF is successful in their quest, however, then some other town in Texas will bemoan the fact that their town is the new chosen site for the dump.

Instead of thinking globally and considering the good of all involved, the Sierra Blanca activists have come down with the adult version of Zackly disease: their rhetoric sounds exactly like their opponents'.

By arguing that the Environmental Protection Agency is wrong to have chosen their town as the site for the dump, the SBLDF echoes the thinking of the factory owner who dumps his waste into a river because it is cheaper than proper disposal, or the corporations and governments who slash-and-burn rainforests instead of revitalizing used farmland.

But isn't it only natural to want to protect your hometown? Of course.

If the SBLDF activists were true environmentalists, however, they would be able to transcend personal interest and realize that their hometown has been selected from dozens of sites as the most suitable for nuclear waste storage in Texas.

A true environmental ethic would think globally and realize that nuclear waste must be dumped somewhere, so why not in the most suitable site?

So they should just sit back and do nothing while nuclear waste is dumped in their backyards? Absolutely.

Since environmentalists lost the fight against nuclear power plants (the United States has over a hundred in operation), environmentalists must accept that the waste produced must be dumped somewhere, and Sierra Blanca is the most suitable place for it.

A true environmental ethic in this situation would teach that Sierra Blanca should be the brave soldier who jumps on the hand grenade to save his buddies.

In the words of Greenpeace, a true environmental ethic teaches us to "walk softly on the earth." Since nuclear waste must be dumped somewhere, residents of Sierra Blanca should realize that their town is the area most suitable to a little stomping.

Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing who speak with the tongues of environmentalism but think with the thick heads of selfishness.

PERSPECTIVES

Punishments should include prisoners giving back to society

For years, American taxpayers' money has been wasted on those who have committed crimes against society. Taxpayers have paid for everything including the criminals' housing, medical bills, education and food. In return, we have received nothing.



MICKEY SALOMA
columnist

The current trend is to label prisons as correctional facilities. However, another term, detention center, is a more description for what prison should mean to incarcerated individuals.

The number of people returning for multiple stays in prison has increased at an alarming rate. Prison has served as nothing but a holding pad for many convicts.

Many prisoners have even expressed how they prefer prison to the real world because they get heat in the winter and three meals a day. Sadly enough, prison life can be better than somebody's normal freedom-filled life.

Counseling is available to most prisoners in this country, but the counselors' advice is often neglected, and prison ends up serving as more of a hotel than a rehabilitation center.

The demand for a better justice system is being heard by government officials. Prison's purpose as a deterrent for people to not commit crimes has failed.

Many convicts are released each day wanting to continue the lives they led before their incarcerations. They want to continue to abuse drugs, steal, molest or rape.

It is time to correct our judicial system one way or another. This can be done in a variety of ways such as implementing a life sentence without any possibility of parole in every state.

The problem with most solutions is that any such laws would not be implemented for a long time since it seems passing legislation can drag on for years.

The best solution to make our prison system a success is

by having the criminals give back to society while they are being detained. Making license plates is just the beginning. It's time to break out the chain gang. Georgia has been doing it for years. In Texas and other states, prisoners clean the highways and do countless other things to beautify their communities.

Prisoners should be forced to do something similar to the Big Event everyday. They can paint, clear land and even help out on the construction of things such as buildings and roads.

Working to clean up the community will not necessarily amend the community they committed a crime against, however working provides the prisoners with several necessary tools that they could find helpful once their detention is over.

By doing different odds and ends for the community, the prisoners will learn a trade. This could give them the experience necessary to find a skilled job once they are released from prison.

Working also builds a sense of pride. By helping to rebuild the community, the prisoners will have a strong sense of accomplishment and pride that will also be extremely useful once they are released.

The advantages of this "Prisoner Big Event Everyday" are endless. The advantages are good for the community as well as the prisoner.

If you look at this idea cynically, you could at least realize that this something is good they can do for society before they continue to commit more crimes against the very same society.

If you look at this positively, you could see a more intense prison labor system as a tool of rehabilitation for both the prisoner and society.

Taxpayer money is seen as wasted on the living expenses of prisoners, the best way to possibly see it as a gain is by helping them help not only their community, but themselves as well.

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