

THE BATTALION

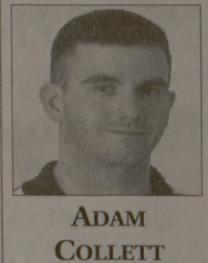
OPINION

Tuesday • April 21, 1998

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STUDENT LIFE

Practice of throwing 'Sbisa balls' in cafeteria must be eradicated



**ADAM
COLLETT
columnist**

Sbisa balls are care-fully folded up napkins own back and forth by al residence groups at Sisa Dining Hall, mostly during dinner. Although the practice is first during football/Bonfire season, it does happen fairly regularly throughout the rest of the year.

By policy, the Department of Food Services doesn't permit such behavior at any time during the year, but in practice they have made only intermittent efforts to stop it.

In their defense, they already have the demanding job of serving meals a day to several thousand students and should not be blamed with babysitting duties. We should question whether the practice needs to be stopped in the first place.

After all, throwing napkins is, in theory, harmless. But it is still an annoyance to the many people who eat there, and it often becomes dangerous because it involves

throwing much more than napkins. For those reasons, the Department of Food Services should take strong action to halt the practice entirely.

To accomplish that, the Department should attempt to understand why some students do it in the first place.

After talking with students, there seem to be two primary reasons: expressing one's hall spirit and expressing one's affection for a member of the opposite sex.

As for hall spirit, Stan Hudson, a resident of Walton Hall, said, "That's why I eat at Sbisa. That's why I have a meal plan."

Another Walton resident said, "I come to eat with everyone else because of the Sbisa balls. We [Walton] have the biggest table out here."

Although none of the men admitted to using napkin throwing as a way to flirt with women, some women who were being thrown at that night had their own opinions.

According to Jessica Miller, Class of 2000, "They love us but they're too immature to come talk to us."

Paige Moore, also of the Class of 2000, said, "It's definitely flirting."

Then, of course, there's the tradition argument. Numerous students cited that they do it because it has always been done that way and it is "good fun" or

"good bull."

It is in the name of tradition that the practice is tolerated by many students who don't participate themselves.

Some cited that they didn't mind as long as they weren't hit, while others expressed they actually enjoyed watching.

Despite this, Sbisa balls are bothersome to many customers and can be dangerous.

One student said, "It's kind of weird to have something hit you in the back of your head and not know where it came from."

Another customer said the annoying part was having a napkin land in your food.

Sbisa ball supporters laugh at the suggestion that the practice is dangerous. But being hit with a tightly wadded piece of paper thrown at close range and high speed is not exactly a light tap.

"I have big welts on my arm," said Kimberly Koehler, a sophomore from the Woodlands. And unfortunately, it's not just napkins that are being thrown.

Deborah Rogers, the facility manager for Sbisa, has received complaints from students who have been hit with objects wrapped up in napkins.

One student said they saw

shrimp being wrapped up and thrown, while another said silverware had actually been thrown on occasion.

In the course of one meal, I was nearly hit twice with a whole baked potato loosely wrapped in napkins and thrown with a great deal of force.

Silverware and whole potatoes being thrown should be a red flag that the situation is out of hand.

Unfortunately, many of the students who get wrapped up in the mini arms race that begins with napkins simply cannot understand this is unsafe.

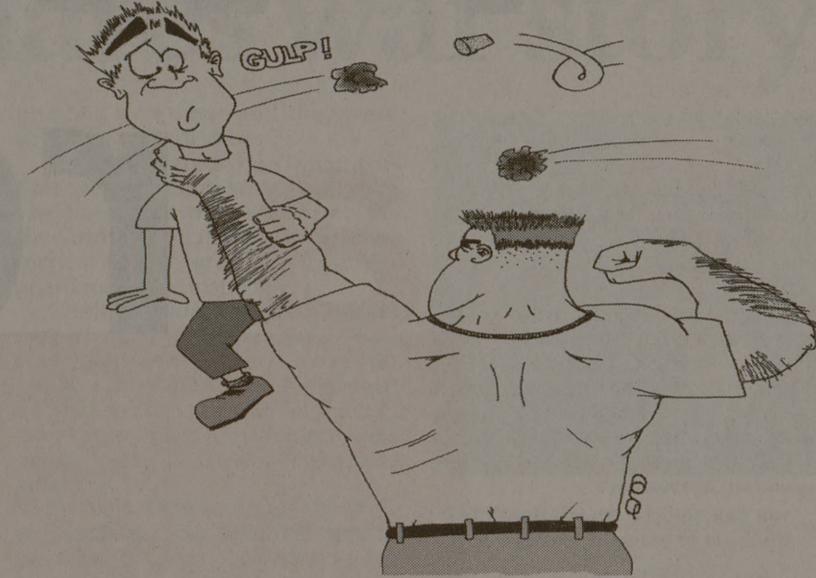
Because there are even a few students out there who have no concept of the distinction between harmless horseplay and reckless rowdiness, all are at risk.

And as if annoyed and endangered customers weren't reason enough, errant Sbisa balls often land on one of the food serving lines, contaminating the food and diverting staff attention from serving customers.

"Between taking care of customers and running the facility, it's the last thing we need," Rogers said.

By virtue of tradition, many of the questionable and quirky privileges that A&M students enjoy go unchallenged.

Students at other campuses



would be thrilled to have the band marching through campus at midnight or to be allowed to build a 55 foot Bonfire.

Every privilege has a corresponding responsibility. Students would do best to monitor themselves by finding other ways to express their hall unity or to court members of the opposite sex, ways which do not involve inconveniencing others.

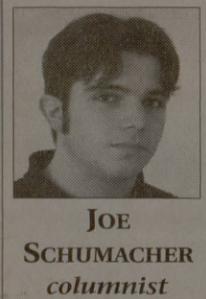
If in the end they prove unable or unwilling to monitor themselves, it will be incumbent upon Food Services to do it for them.

The right of a few to a tradition and a playpen for immature behaviors does not supersede others' rights to an annoyance and injury-free meal. The practice simply has to go.

Adam Collett is an educational administration graduate student.

CAMPUS CONNECTION

Creating A&M arts program stands to benefit entire campus



**JOE
SCHUMACHER
columnist**

For the most part, Texas A&M University is known primarily for its technical fields such as engineering, agriculture and business. Although these and many other programs are highly esteemed, A&M wishes to compete with other top schools, the improvement of its liberal arts program is vital.

First, let's dispel the notion that the liberal arts department at Texas A&M is mediocre. Although the liberal arts department may at times be overshadowed by other departments, it still has several achievements worth mentioning.

Two doctoral programs, political science and economics, both placed 34th nationally in a survey done by U.S. News and World Report. The doctoral programs in English, sociology and psychology also placed in the survey.

Additionally, our philosophy department has professors of national and international acclaim, and our journalism department has been accredited for years and

continues to be. These are just a few of the achievements that the College of Liberal Arts department has earned.

While these achievements show A&M is well on its way to improving its status in liberal arts, it is still lacking some of the necessary components. One of those is having an arts department.

There have been some arguments against the development of an art department at A&M. One concern is that A&M is known for its technical fields, not its arts or social sciences.

Another point of opposition is that there are schools in Texas that have strong arts programs, such as the University of Texas. So one can only wonder if it will be beneficial to the taxpayers to provide funding for an arts program when an excellent one already exists elsewhere.

However, the current program is seeking an endowment that would remove the burden from the taxpayers. The endowment could be established in as little as two years.

With the lack of an arts department at this institution, this university's liberal arts program is not complete.

According to Leanne South, the communications coordinator for the College of Liberal Arts, "The College of Liberal Arts wants to enhance the arts academ-

ically to offer students a true liberal arts education."

An arts program will provide business and engineering majors a chance to explore interests in other fields they currently do not have access to.

South said an arts program will allow students of all majors to benefit from the "intellectual and artistic achievements of humankind."

There are many potential students who are attracted to the uniqueness of this campus but are forced to go elsewhere to pursue their majors.

An arts program would make A&M more marketable to these students as well as potential students from different areas of the country, other countries, different ethnic groups and different social backgrounds. These students would contribute new and exciting ideas to this campus.

Student Body President Laurie Nickel said by "improving programs that A&M is not known for, it can preserve its uniqueness while also achieving the benefits of a strong social science program, such as diversity."

Currently, plans are underway to combine the theater arts and music departments to form one new department which, as of yet, is still unnamed.

The department would not only focus on per-

forming arts, but also on the technical aspects of music. Other fields that would benefit would be business and psychology. With the addition of a music department, A&M could develop a program in music production and psychology, a music therapy program.

There have been previous attempts to strengthen the arts program.

In the '60s the Century Council addressed this issue. In the '80s there was Target 2000, again with an emphasis on strengthening the arts.

The Higher Education Coordinating board has granted planning authority. Many different facets, such as students and faculty, are behind the proposed department. There is great interest by students in this project. A&M needs to take advantage of this momentum to move in the direction of making this a top 10 university.

Strengthening of the liberal arts department is essential to improving A&M as a center of learning. A strong arts program is a characteristic of a top 10 school.

Along with its academic benefits, an arts program would contribute to the "other education" upon which A&M prides itself.

Joe Schumacher is a junior journalism major.

PERSPECTIVES

Pedestrians, bicyclists cause unnecessary traffic dangers

I am the driver Aggie. I spend my days looking for parking spots which Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services claims exist.

I find my morning drive to school frustrated by construction which never ends, traffic lights that are too short and trains that are 100 cars long.

But my enemy is not the administration nor the Department of Transportation. It is the non-driver Aggie.

So maybe it is not that dramatic, but as a driver, I do find the walkers and bicyclists on campus to be a bit annoying at times.

It is bad enough trying to get around campus without having a fear-no-Evel-Kneival-daredevil bicyclist calmly dart in front of my massive machine of mobile steel a.k.a. car.

I hate to break it to all the pedestrians and bicyclists, but despite popular belief, cars are not able to stop on a dime, not even for a good Aggie. And it may come as quite a shock to many out there in Aggieland, that paved streets were actually created for cars.

Humans are allowed to walk on streets at certain places called crosswalks. That is right, repeat after me — crosswalks.

And while the majority of Aggies out there understand the purpose of crosswalks, they continue to ignore them and prefer to play chicken instead.

So, here is a quick physics lesson for all the non-science majors out there.

According to Newton, all actions have an opposite and equal reaction.

What that means is when a car hits a person, the person hits the car with the same amount of force.

The car just withstands the force better.

I am not trying to crude or harsh, but after going through the pedestrian/bicyclists gauntlet day after day, someone has to say something ... think a little.



**MANISHA
PAREKH
columnist**

I will admit it. I can play chicken with the best of them.

I too, at times, have been known to cross the road where there is no crosswalk.

But I also make sure to look both ways and check to see if there is a whizzing machine more than ten times my size hurtling at me before I step out onto the road.

Call me crazy, but I prefer not to become roadkill. But, hey, that is just me.

Apparently, I am in the minority.

So, as a fed-up member of the driving population, I decided to do a little digging and find out why normally law-abiding, polite, conscientious Aggies would act like they could withstand a collision from a car and come out without a scratch.

And I have come up with two possible conclusions.

My first theory is that these "Aggies" are actually planted by the Corps to test the mental agility of Corps and non-Corps alike. These testers hide behind bushes, trash cans, and statues, stalking their next subject.

Then, without warning, they leap out (or ride out) into the road and see whether they manage to make safely across or whether they need to be scraped off of the concrete. Those drivers who are deemed mentally agile are allowed to go about their merry way.

Drivers who are not agile are quickly recruited to run the bus system on campus in order to maintain maximum inefficiency and lack of service.

My second theory is that people who walk or ride out into oncoming traffic simply do not care if they get hurt. They do not care if they give drivers heart attacks. They do not care if they are breaking the law or putting themselves and others in danger.

After much consideration, it appears that my first theory has to be correct.

After all, if the second theory was correct, it would mean that certain pedestrians and bicyclists are just plain dumb. And that could not possibly be true, right?

Manisha Parekh is a sophomore journalism and psychology major.



MAIL CALL

Religion must have basis in objective truth

Response to Manisha Parekh's April 16 column:

Parekh is touching on a very relevant issue in today's culture: How can religion and science coexist? However, she misses the very foundation upon which such a discussion should be based, namely, truth. Religion cannot exist without a basis in objective truth. Any religion that is completely subjective

should be rejected as false.

Christianity is solidly based on objective truth, on actual historical events and communiques that were recorded and continue to be supported by scientific evidence.

Parekh states that "Creationism is an idea that is solely based upon the Bible." Parekh may dismiss the incredible historical phenomenon of the Bible if she so chooses, but Creationism's support is hardly limited to God's written word.

Ideally, science cannot exist without a basis in objective truth either. But to those of you whose religion is science, let me point out two things.

One, science is conducted by humans. You know that you are fallible. Your friends know, even if you don't, that your logical conclusions dance on the strings of your biases.

Two, look at science throughout history. Every generation thinks it has got the world down cold. Finally, a generation without unscientific bias. People who are striving to in-

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