

The sound of a clock ticking echoes off the walls of the cramped Moore Hall residence. The hour hand lurches toward 11 p.m., against the will of the room.

Sharing the uneasy silence, three men sit hunched over, partly in frustration, partly in shame. Finally, one lifts his head and shouts, "Oh God! We are not funny tonight!"

By AMBER BENSON  
Special to *The Battalion*

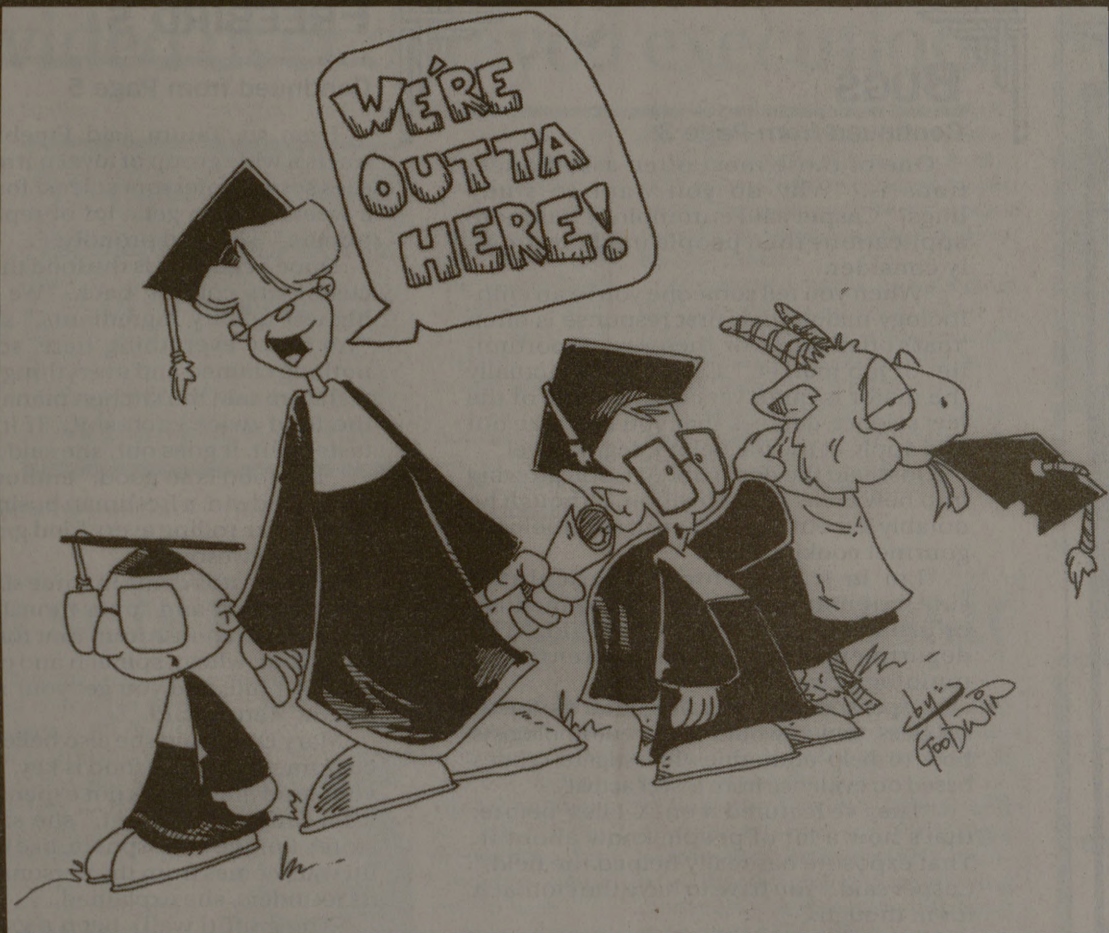
John Lemons, Ed Goodwin and David Hoffman need to be funny. Tonight they are ending three years of what they like to call "Constructive Criticism for Today's Campus" by writing the final two weeks of their daily comic strip, Ewe Hall.

Ewe Hall, known for its hilarious take on campus issues and unlikely celebrity endorsements, will make its last appearance in *The Battalion* on May 8.

The comic strip began its run in the fall of 1995 when Lemons, a graduate student in electrical engineering, teamed his own quirky sense of humor with the wit of friend David Doyle and the artistic talents of Goodwin, a senior management information systems major. After Doyle's graduation in 1996, Hoffman, a junior biomedical science major, joined the team. Together, they have led the student body through a raucous journey of campus capers and pop culture as seen through the eyes of their two Odd Couple narrators, Todd and Neal.

Every Sunday night, Lemons, Goodwin and Hoffman pile into Lemons' residence hall and begin the process of creating the comic. Inspiration, when not conspicuously absent, stems from anything from current events to other cartoons.

"Love Is, Family Circus," Hoffman said with sarcasm, "that's where we get our cut-



ting-edge ideas."

Actually, the three said they strive for one thing. "To make ourselves laugh," Lemons said.

The men share a symbiotic relationship when it comes to a strip's creation. Concepts and punch lines ricochet off the walls like the two-year-old Starburst that Hoffman found in the couch. That free flow of ideas, Goodwin said, is essential to writing a funny strip.

"It's checks and balances, just like the government," Goodwin said, "and about as effective."

Some of their best comics, the trio agreed, are the ones that got away.

"One time we tried to say we did the cartoon in invisible ink," Lemons said. "The editor didn't think that was funny."

But the Venus Corps Trap, Traditions that Failed and Ewe Hall Cigarettes were funny enough to see print and get some students seeing red. So were the guest appearances from Johnny Cepheid, Dr. Ray Bowen, Student Body President Curtis Childers and Board of Regents Chair Mary Nan West. But even a casual reader of Ewe Hall knows that nothing is sacred, especially if you occupy the space below or above it

in the newspaper.

"The public loves the comic wars," Lemons said of Ewe Hall's notorious habit of knocking the other comic strips that run in *The Battalion*, "but we only like to do it if they fight back."

Their fellow cartoonists aren't the only people the three encourage to avenge themselves. The sincerest form of flattery for these men is the angry Mail Call letter.

"I've been disappointed," Hoffman said.

"We've only gotten four Mail Call letters our entire career. We must be doing something wrong."

But judging from the number of Ewe Hall strips posted on residence hall doors and pinned to bulletin boards all over campus, it could be inferred that the strip resonates with its audience, providing a dose of well-needed humor on a campus that is known for taking itself too seriously.

As they finish their reign as Kings of the Comics, the three encourage aspiring cartoonists to try to tarnish their legacy.

"Hopefully, there will be a better comic strip to replace us," Goodwin said.

"Yeah, right," Hoffman said. "What are the chances of that?"

Unique environment, good food make College Station's Freebird's a traditional eatery for all to enjoy

By KATY LINEBERGER  
Staff writer

It's a weekday afternoon, and Inez Reyna is sitting on a stool in Freebird's World Burrito unwrapping the foil-covered concoction in front of her with sincere pleasure. Graffiti covers the wall behind her, and the front end of a Harley-Davidson motorcycle bursts through the bricks, frozen in action. Yet, the Northgate restaurant's unusual decor is not distracting the senior English major from the jumbo-sized burrito she's eating.

Like many other Aggies, Reyna is a regular here, stopping in about once a week. "This place is so cool," she said above the boisterous beat of popular music. "I love the atmosphere and the food."

For the hundreds each day who flock to Freebird's, those qualities have helped establish the restaurant as a College Station landmark. General Manager Nema Tatum said her eatery is always packed, and she sees some of the same faces up to four times a week.

"We're unique, we're different, we're fun," she said with a cheerful grin. Across the room, chicken and steak sizzle invitingly on a grill, and a dozen customers in line anxiously await their turn to order burritos. For around \$5, the patrons can feast on a large tortilla filled with generous portions of meat, beans, rice, cheese and a variety of "freebies and extras" wrapped neatly in aluminum foil and made to their specifications.

The offbeat restaurant's story begins, fittingly, in California. In the mid-1980s, Freebird's founder, Pierre Dubé, was a student at the University of California at Santa Barbara. He opened a "hole-in-the-wall" stand with his roommate to sell roasted chicken, said Dubé's wife, Mary, Freebird's controller and a 1994 Texas A&M graduate. At night, the roommates began making burritos with the leftover meat pieces. The burritos became very popular and were soon the main product, she said.

The friends-turned-business-partners then conducted a marketing survey of the 20 biggest colleges in the country and chose College Station as the site for their next venture, which opened in 1990.

Freebird's, which takes its name from the title of a song by rockers Lynrd Skynrd, quickly established itself in the local market. In fact, the restaurant owner's wife said the popularity soon became more than the small store could handle, with up to 500 customers a day by store manager Tatum's estimation. A second location, on Texas Avenue near Target, opened last year.

"We also wanted to reach another market, the community at large," Dubé said. "Northgate can be kind of intimidating to non-students. There's really not good parking."

PLEASE SEE FREEBIRD'S ON PAGE 6.

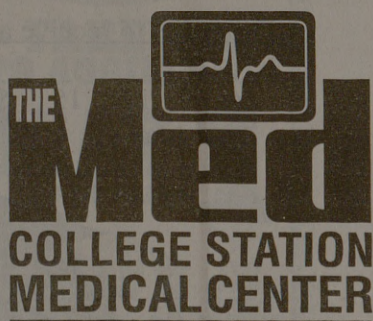
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When we moved to Rock Prairie Road in College Station in 1987, we became Humana-Brazos Valley. After we joined the Columbia system, we chose the name Brazos Valley Medical Center and later, Columbia Medical Center.

Now, with new focus on local management and local involvement in the health of our community, we've changed our name again to better identify us with our location. Most hospitals are named after their location, even those which serve multiple towns or counties. We asked lots of local people (business leaders, members of the health care community and our employees) for recommendations. They all said make it local, make it short and make it permanent. Our Board of Trustees selected College Station Medical Center for obvious reasons: it was local, short and permanent.

We're proud of the 67 years we've spent providing healthcare to families in this area. And we're proud of our state-of-the-art facility on Rock Prairie Road. And, after the new wears off, we think you will agree that we finally found a name that will last.



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