

# Healthy choice

Vegetarianism offers ecologically responsible lifestyle alternative

Put down that chicken wing. Vegetarianism is a nutritionally, ethically and ecologically possible lifestyle. It is an alternative diet that benefits humans, animals and the planet Earth. Presently, about 20 million Americans are vegetarians, proving the myth that a mere change of the diet can make a difference.



ALISON LACKEY  
 columnist

teins and other harmful ingredients. When picking up that triple cheeseburger with extra bacon, one is consuming more agricultural chemicals, industrial pollutants, antibiotics and hormones than a vegetarian likely will be eating.

The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) fact sheet reports that consumption of these chemicals can result in pneumonia, childhood meningitis, gonorrhea and salmonella.

Salmonella is a frightful word that millions of Americans know far too much about because of continual call-backs of meat from grocery stores and fast food chains. This means that salmonella could be kicking it at a nearby fast food store.

The PETA Eating for Life Internet site reports approximately 9,000 Americans die annually from food-borne illness. On the same note, The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that up to 40 percent of poultry sold in the U.S. is infected with salmonella. Chicken, anyone?

In 1990, Dr. Dean Ornish conducted a study on 30 patients with advanced heart disease. Ornish reported after putting patients on a completely vegetarian diet, chest pains subsided and cholesterol levels substantially dropped.

According to PETA, patients' cholesterol levels dropped at a rate comparable to that of patients taking cholesterol-lowering drugs, without side effects. Also, the Journal of the American Medical Association reports that a vegetarian diet can prevent 97 percent of coronary occlusions.

Many people adopt vegetarian diets for ethical or religious reasons. Bryan Pease, author of *Responsible Veganism*, argues that living life without consumption of animal products gives individuals "a clear mind, a vigorous body and an indomitable spirit." "Vegans," by the way, are strict vegetarians who eat no dairy products or anything else even remotely connected to animals.

In this day and age of modern farming techniques and mass production, animals often are inhumanely confined and restricted. These days, the idea is to mass-produce as quick and as cheap as possible with little regard for the suffering of the animals.

For example, in PETA's article, "Factory Farming: Mechanized Madness," it is reported cattle are castrated, dehorned and branded without anesthetics.

Another example, is the cruel punishment of calves killed for veal. They are taken from their mothers immediately after birth and denied their mother's milk. Then, they are placed in small wooden crates, about 22 inches tall, where their growth is inhibited as they endure severe pain. All of this is done to make their flesh tender for the humans that consume them. The United Animal Defenders, Inc. reports that one out of every 10 calves dies in such a confinement.

For many, an important reward of a vegetarian diet is the commitment to reduce animal confinement by not eating meat. This commitment, in combination with health benefits and responsible ethics allows eaters to help themselves and help others.

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Vegetarianism often is seen as a hemian lifestyle that robs eaters good-tasting meals. This simply is not true. One can find information and tasty recipes through organizations, via the Internet, bookstores and libraries.

So, why go Veggie? America's growing concern with obesity and health improvement has produced numerous healthy heart diets. Perhaps one of the most important heart smarts has been the reduction and development of vegetarianism in our society. A diet consisting of no animal products is a viable solution to improving health. Every day, 4,000 Americans suffer heart attacks because of high cholesterol levels. Moo, cluck and pork are heavily laced with cholesterol, and therefore outstanding suppliers of heart attacks, heart disease and cancer among other illnesses.

Plant foods, unlike animal products, contain no cholesterol. However, chili-dogs and cheeseburgers have gobs of fat, concentrated pro-



# Conservative A&M campus shelters students from reality

Texas A&M, a long-time bastion of conservatism and good ol' Southern values, is an institution that breeds students with moral character. This is the most important contribution that A&M makes as a university, but also the most limiting in terms of preparing students for the real world.



MEREDITH HIGHT  
 columnist

Since many students come from small towns or from solidly conservative suburbs of Houston, Dallas or San Antonio, the indoctrination into the world of A&M, (including the strong religious presence and the typical small town Texas feel of Bryan-College Station) often is not difficult.

For others, though, the homogeneous nature of A&M can lead to the feeling of living in a sheltered environment that does not include the same problems as most other universities, or for that matter, the world outside of B-CS. This could be called "the bubble."

The bubble is at once the best and worst thing about A&M.

The bubble prevents students from facing the challenge of being exposed to people who do not all profess the same ideology, or come from different backgrounds.

Aggies tend to be personally, spiritually and morally more conservative than most other college students.

In fact, the Christian atmosphere rivals that of many private colleges. Local churches overflow with students, and many are in the process of building or have built additions to their facilities to accommodate this influx of worshippers.

Breakaway, an inter-denominational Praise & Worship / Bible Study packs in 2,000 students every Tuesday night during the academic year. The conservative Christianity that is on fire at A&M is a genuine phenomenon.

It would be difficult to argue that young people embracing Christian principles is a bad thing. Many consider it a true blessing that such faith is alive and well at a public state university. Indeed, it is something to be lauded.

However, when personal faith becomes the reasoning behind not respecting others beliefs, this conservative nature reveals its ugly side — narrow-mindedness. Along with Christians, Muslims and Jews are also a part of the student body and deserve respect for their beliefs.

Many students whose faiths have never been questioned or tested, because of the normalcy of fervent Christianity and the protection of the bubble, may experience a bit of culture shock when exposed to the workplace, or another environment that is not necessarily welcoming of open expression of religious faith.

The conservatism does not end with moral values, though. Politically, there seems to be one acceptable train of thought. "Liberal," "Democrat" and "feminist" are practically bad words here.

Anything outside of the mainstream norm is considered radical. Student protests almost are nonexistent. At many universities, protests almost are rites of passage into college life.

Take the ruling on the *Hopwood* case, which forbade Texas universities from admitting students or offering scholarships on the basis of race. At the University of Texas, Jesse Jackson showed up to aid in the student protest of the ruling.

Granted, the *Hopwood* case began at the University of Texas, and that university is known to champion the most liberal of causes. But in all honesty, would Jackson ever set foot on this campus to join in a protest? That ruling affects A&M's admissions just as much as U.T.'s, but no substantial protest ensued here after the ruling came down.

At the same time, however, at least A&M does not have to deal with the kind of senseless protests that can occur. At Pennsylvania State several weeks ago, a riot involving thousands of students, apparently for no other reason than to get drunk and have a good time, caused \$150,000 worth of damage.

A&M does not have to deal with students participating in that kind of senseless behavior.

Overall, though, A&M is the place to be if a student wants to develop his or her moral character. What is important to keep in mind, though, is that the real world does not always count moral character as the top priority.

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## MAIL CALL

### Circus story neglects facts

Well, *The Battalion* has done it again. It was nice to finally see mention of the brutality and animal abuse brought to the Texas A&M campus by the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus on the front page of Thursday's paper. However, the opening paragraph is incorrect and reflects that reporter failed to do his job and cover the whole story.

"... [A] small protest" did not

begin the second night of the circus.

In fact, I was present with approximately 20 others on Tuesday night, from 6:30 p.m. until the storm broke after 7 p.m. The group of concerned people included A&M students, faculty, area high school students and community members, gathered together to help publicize the horrible conditions that the circus forces upon wild animals, the training methods used and the inexcusable death of animals forced to perform unnatural acts for cheap entertainment.

On Wednesday night, another similar-sized group was present by 7 p.m. Given the size of B-CS and the spin presented by circus spokespersons such as Joel Heidtman, this was quite a large number of people.

I applaud John Ridenour's efforts, but, despite what Ringling Bros. and naive members of the Bryan-College Station community would like to think, he was hardly alone in protesting the brutal treatment of circus animals.

Perhaps if *The Battalion* had stuck around the site, instead of

leaving an hour before the circus was scheduled to begin, it would have had a clearer idea of the strength and conviction behind the protest. Instead of running countless articles on the glamour and "family fun" of the circus, the newspaper might have covered the protest after the first night, alerting ticket-holders to what really goes on under the big top.

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*The Battalion* encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

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