

Opinion

FRANK LLOYD WRONG

Central Library Annex brings more bad architecture to campus



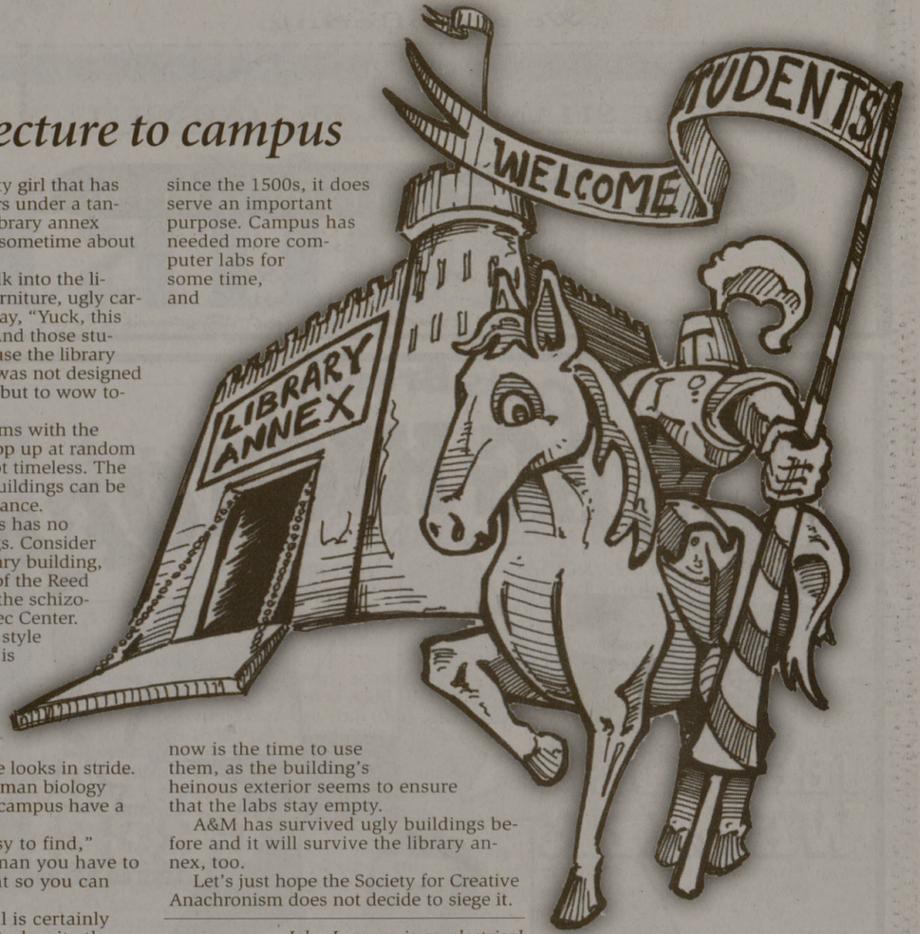
JOHN LEMONS

For a year's worth of construction, the scaffolded-up Men in Black building is now a power house. And now that it has settled, A&M University is left with her ugly building. The four weeks needed library annex and center opened to serve A&M students. The fruits of several million and thousands of man hours is a result, A&M is stuck with a building not even a mother could love. The Battalion may not be Arch-Digest, but one does not have to look Lloyd Wright to see that the library annex looks like somebody with an ugly stick. Of course, the bad looks may be intentional, as it is an annex for Sterling C. Evans Library, which also is

known as the land of lime green carpeting and vinyl couches. The annex has some innovative design elements. Foremost of these elements is the turret that graces the building's northwest corner. That is correct — turret, as in castle. Indeed, looking at Castle Greyskull, err, the library annex, one wonders whether he should enter it or raid it. Moreover, several young men have been seen standing outside the building pinning for Rapunzel to let her hair down. Walking the stairwell inside the turret is a medieval experience. One wonders if the stairs end in a dungeon filled with torture devices. Library officials, however, insist that the iron maidens, stretching racks and microfiche machines remain in Evans library. The building's interior is about par for the course. The furniture is loud and looks suspiciously like a bad polyester tie one might find dad's closet. The annex's carpet is distracting, featuring large black squares on a gray background. To be fair, the building has its good points. There is the catwalk that spans the space between Sterling C. Evans Library and its new annex. If one can muster up the courage to cross it, it offers one of the best views available on campus. Furthermore, the building is new. Its halls billow with that new building smell — the one that is a cross between super glue fumes and leather. New things are nice. There is a bit of thrill knowing that one is the first one to place his posterior on one of the annex's ugly new couches. How long that newness lasts, though, is up for debate. For the library annex is

going to age like a sorority girl that has spent one too many hours under a tanning lamp. Indeed, the library annex should be looking dated sometime about next Tuesday afternoon. Future Aggies will walk into the library, look at the loud furniture, ugly carpet and turret and then say, "Yuck, this place is, like, so 1998." And those students will be right, because the library annex is a building that was not designed to have a lasting beauty, but to wow today's students. See, one of the problems with the buildings that seem to pop up at random on campus is they are not timeless. The ages of most of A&M's buildings can be guessed with merely a glance. Moreover, this campus has no shortage of ugly buildings. Consider the bulkiness of the Zachry building, the rusty orange facade of the Reed McDonald Building and the schizophrenic exterior of the Rec Center. If there is one consistent style to A&M's architecture, it is butt-ugliness. Surprisingly, though, student reaction to the annex is positive. Students seem to be taking Castle Greyskull's unique looks in stride. Larissa Leuen, a freshman biology major said it is good for campus have a building that is different. "It's nice and it is easy to find," Leuen said. "As a freshman you have to have something different so you can identify it." Well, Castle Greyskull is certainly something different. But, despite the fact that turrets have been out of style

since the 1500s, it does serve an important purpose. Campus has needed more computer labs for some time, and



John Lemons is an electrical engineering graduate student.

Affirmative action study lacks credibility



DAVE JOHNSTON

Proponents of affirmative action have a banner to wave. They will soon renew their act in the Hopwood decision. The closed-minded conservatism of anyone who argues equal reward for merit. Dallas Morning News's release of a book on affirmative action and declaring the book a success. The book, *The Shape of the River: Long-Consequences of Considering Race in College Admissions*, is a propagandist — though a well-researched one. Twain once said, "There's a lie, a lie and there's a statistic." The authors of *The Shape of the River* seem to mold the star around their viewpoint and claim they found proof of affirmative action's success. The two authors, an economist and a politician, admit they are supporters of affirmative action, and they admit their study fails to address some key areas of concern. Their figures focus on the performance of students compared to their white counterparts, but the authors admit they determine whether society is harmed by displacement of one group of students or of another. It appears beneficiaries of affirmative programs are happy, healthy contributors to society. They have achieved well and interaction with other cultures influences them positively. This is not news. Society has long ac-

known the advantages of a university education. A&M sees an increasing number of students seeking graduate degrees and a decreasing number of students merely seeking an MRS. The concern with affirmative action is the double standard. It is morally wrong to hold one set of individuals to one standard while holding another group to a different standard. This is the problem with affirmative action. The programs force participating institutions to treat people unequally. The authors of the book, however, do not believe this inequality is harmful. Their study not only examines the achievements of affirmative action beneficiaries, but also looks at the attitudes and experiences of those former students. The study focuses on students who entered college in 1976 and 1989, but race relations have been changing rapidly in the United States. Although the '60s saw segregated water fountains, America has grown up since then. There are still pockets of racism — and one of them is Bryan-College Station — but racism does not have the same broad, oppressive hold it once had. Minorities are not prevented from achievement because of the closed-minded views of people in power. Sure, there are some people with prejudices, but everyone on the planet has to deal with that. It is time for the country to show its maturity and stop considering race a factor in admissions, hiring, sports, entertainment or any other area. Race will continue to be an issue as long as Americans make it one. Every conversation,

book and column discusses the poor state of race relations. This exploits the issue instead of remedying it. America has grown since the time of widespread prejudice. Decades ago the issue was segregation, and society has reached a consensus that everyone benefits from interaction. Today, however, the issue is quotas. No one benefits from unfairness and inequality, in fact everyone loses. Dinesh D'souza, author of *The End of Racism*, claims affirmative action programs unfairly turn people into failures. He argues by lowering standards, schools admit students with the risk of not being capable of completing their course of study. D'souza suggests these students could perform admirably at a less-elite college, but by admitting them to a university where they need a special allowance to enter, they face an excessive risk of failure. Despite the arguments, proponents of affirmative action programs claim they are necessary to achieve a level playing field. Giving some an allowance to make up for a disadvantage sounds nice, but comes at too high a price. It is easy to support affirmative action programs if you do not have to look into a student's eyes and tell them they would have been admitted/hired/recognized — if only they were another color. Even if the data show benefits of affirmative action programs, the ends never justify the means. Any race-preference initiative violates a moral principle by treating people differently.

Dave Johnston is a senior mathematics major.

MAIL CALL

Cultures deserve honor, respect

In response to Sept. 10 mail call:

I am willing to agree with the fact that political correctness and cultural sensitivity in today's society have reached the state of overkill. However, I do not agree with the notion that thematic uniforms at Elephant Wok are for "cultural enrichment." The argument that Disney's "cultural showcasing" in their theme parks can justify such a dress code here is a poor example. The inaccuracy, candy coating and Mickey Mouse ears placed on the cultural themes at Disney World or Disneyland is laughable. Just because Disney makes their employees dress up in such garb does not make it right. It ultimately promotes ignorance and stereotype when placed in an amusement park setting. If anyone wants an accurate lesson in Asian culture, they would not go to the Elephant Wok or Disneyland. Taking the appropriate history course or following one of the many Asian student organizations on campus would suffice quite nicely. If Food Services management is simply trying to make campus life more interesting, why not apply this policy to all dining facilities on campus?

Have employees at Lil' Bernie's and Stone Willy's wear "traditional" Italian garb with those bushy fake mustaches. Or have the serving staff at any one of the dining halls wear different uniforms for different days that they serve international food. Enchiladas tonight? Bring out the sombreros. Teriyaki chicken for lunch? Bring out the kimonos and kabuki makeup. The prospect of such a policy would be very funny and entertaining but someone along the way will get offended for good reason as it displays an inaccurate caricature of a culture. In the end, being "PC" and always tiptoeing around people's sensitivities is ridiculous, but that does not mean all sensitivity is bad.

David Lee Class of '01

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:
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Friendly tradition must continue



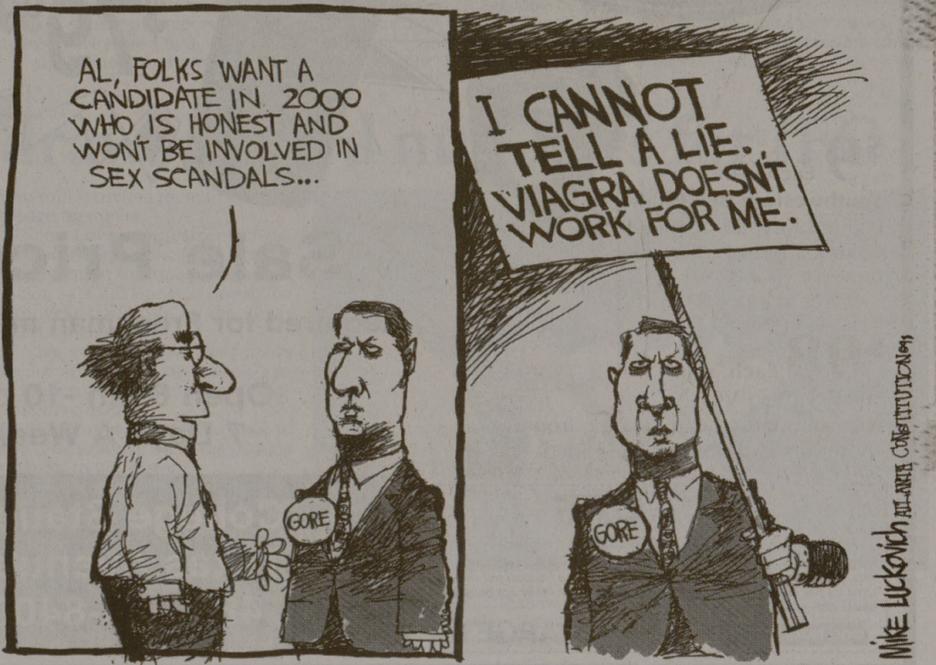
JOSH MASKOW

Texas A&M welcomes one of the largest freshman classes in the country. It is a good reflection of the qualities we have throughout the country. Aggie friendliness is one of our stellar traits — including traits such as the Corps of Cadets, Reveille, Muster, Silver and Aggie football — that university can claim as its own. Most, if not all, visitors to the campus will notice the congenial atmosphere A&M enjoys as a result of this special environment. This special environment is usually obvious in contrast to other campuses, both in the area and elsewhere. There is a tangible difference in character and spirit of this University. This University is indeed a friendly neighborhood.

A source of great pride for Aggies worldwide. This camaraderie sets aside A&M as a campus and as a student body. This atmosphere is not self-sustaining, however. Its existence requires the participation of all A&M students, whether they be incoming freshmen or fifth-year seniors. This participation is especially important for upperclassmen that must pass on the traditions of friendliness and encouragement to freshmen and visitors. In order to maintain and strengthen this atmosphere, upperclassmen are must be friendly and approachable — engaging in and encouraging conversation. Upperclassmen should be careful, however, to recognize the difference between talking at someone and talking with them. Aggie freshmen are — for the first time in their life — experiencing a rigid lecture environment in which professors talk at them for eight hours a day, and they can only absorb so much rhetoric. By contrast, if an upperclassman engages such a freshman in conversation to talk with them

about their new Aggieland experience and concerns, a new friendship and sense of fellowship will be forged. The Corps of Cadets is an excellent example of how this atmosphere of friendliness will be maintained. In a scene that will be repeated many times throughout the school year, an underclassman greets his superior officer and makes a brief acquaintance. Gradually, this mutual communication helps to instill the strong sense of fellowship that binds the Corps. This interaction will not only imbue such values for the Corps and non-regs, but it also avoids unproductive conflict that flows out of isolation and miscommunication. A sincere bond of friendship is the beginning of passing on the traditions and experience of A&M onto another freshman class. With the beginning of another academic year at A&M, Aggies are called upon to maintain and strengthen the Aggie tradition of friendliness.

Josh Maskow is a sophomore computer science major.



MIKE LUCKOVICH RELIGIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS