

## Modern society offers few chances to build vocabulary Registration brings stress

Since bettering oneself for the sake of knowledge alone is not an option, and packed degree plans are in, students planning to take tests such as the Graduate Record Exam should take measures to increase argument, expand, aggrandize) their vocabularies as soon as possible.



BEVERLY MIRELES

There are many obstacles (impediments, encumbrances) on the path to impressive verbosity, however. Culture, sensible as always, teaches (instills, indoctrinates) that big words are bad, small words are good and the more trite, the better. Otherwise, would there not be so many Kwikie or E-Z (also known as Zee, but rarely easy) marts?

Therefore, preparation must start quickly — sorry, quickly — to counteract the bad (nefarious) effects of convenience stores everywhere.

One effective solution is to read copious amounts of literature. But of course, everyone knows reading for pleasure is preposterous as wearing burnt orange Bonfire.

Another way to temporarily increase one's vocabulary in a timely fashion is to use rarely-spoken words in sentences. This works best in highly public situations, where one's intelligent (erudite) speech could cause much celebration. One example is in the classroom.

Student: "Professor, might I add that the articulation of bellicose zealots almost certainly represents the nadir of individualistic thought on campus."

Professor: "That's outstanding. Walks for the rest of the week."

If that does not cause the whole class to offer up multiple standing ovations, nothing will.

This method not only cements the words into the mind, it makes one seem much more knowledgeable than say, the average touring funk band. This is a tried-and-true technique used by professors and administrators alike.

Student: "Professor Heddy, I mean Heddy, could you please define discrete math in simple terms?"

Professor: "My mind is aglow with whirling, transient nodes of thought, careening through a cosmic vapor of invention."

Student: "Ditto! But what in the world is discrete math?"

Professor: "Time for a quiz!"  
This way, contact with the words will have been made sometime before any aptitude test tries to grade on the knowledge of them.

But perhaps there are not any applicable uses for words with more than one syllable outside of the spectrum of aptitude tests and thesis statements.

Given the choice between "desuetude" and "disuse," most people will opt for "disuse." Not surprisingly, since half the words on the GRE vocabulary list are not even included in most spell-checking software. Being incorporated into spell-checking programs is a serious distinction for words because using computer spell checkers is practically second nature for most people today.

If spell checkers were not so prevalent, most Americans would have to admit mnemonic devices and grade-school spelling tests were not secured into memory enough to prevent misspellings now. And though some would be loath to admit it, regular contact with words, such as "capricious" and "ameliorate," is necessary for thorough understanding.

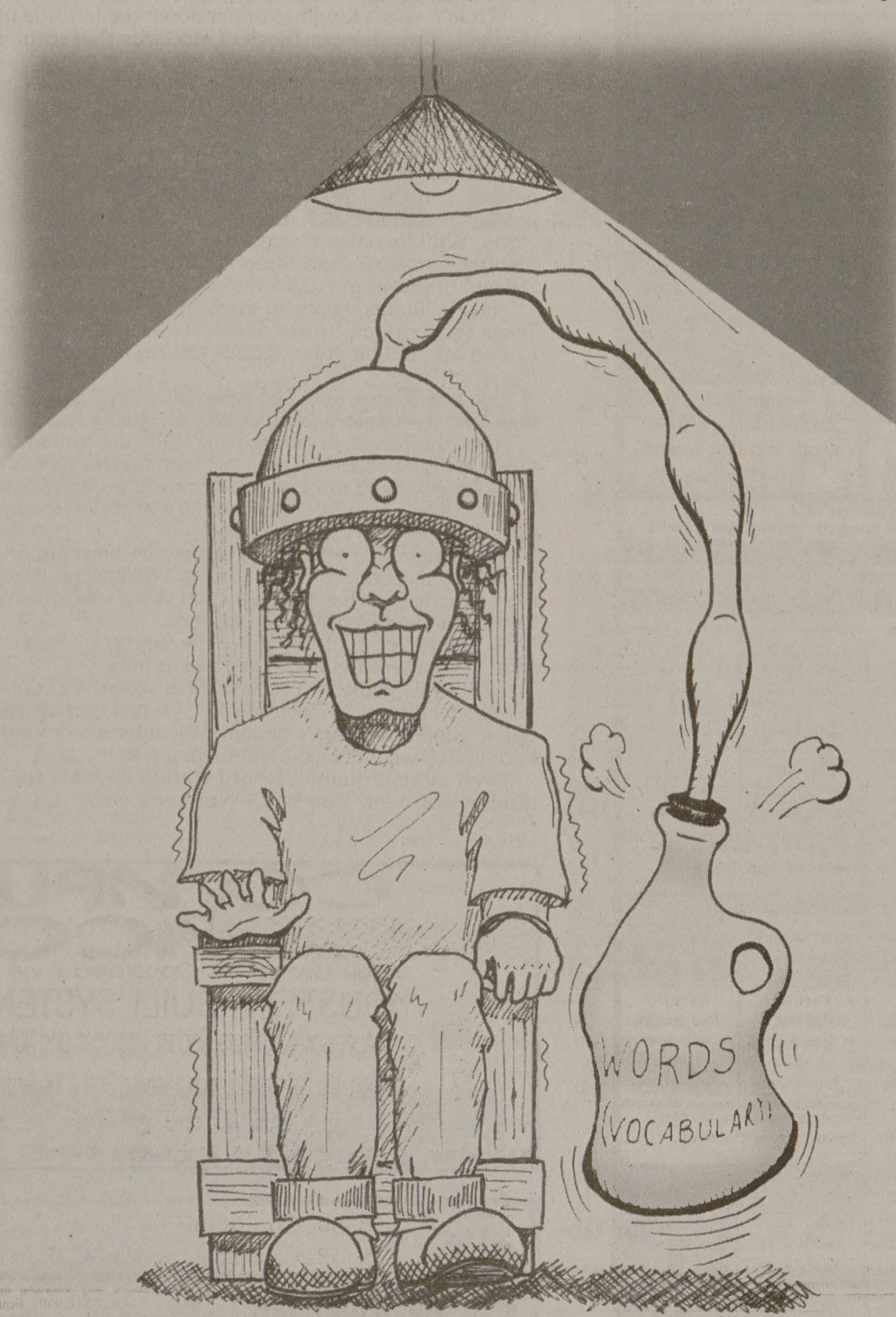
Exposure to those words will not be found on television or the Internet, but in the printed versions of fantasy, horror, mystery, nonfiction and a host of other types of books.

So is it technology's fault people have allowed themselves to become inept at the once ambitious language, which started with low grunts and evolved into high complex vocalizations?

Possibly. If the American masses accessed the resources of a library nearly as much as they reach for the remote control, speaking in sentences with complex word structure would not be such a tall-tale distinction between the educated and non-educated — those who never had the opportunity or inclination to compound their basic knowledge.

Until literature is acknowledged to be as appealing as "Must See TV" or movies, the oversimplification of language can be expected to increase, making language aptitude tests that much more difficult. But what will hurt more than dropping test scores is the knowledge that a once enterprising culture is now too lazy to appreciate its accomplishments.

Beverly Mireles is a sophomore microbiology major.



TIM KANG/THE BATTALION

### Registration brings stress

Finals are still almost two weeks away, but many students have already gone through the most traumatic time of the semester — registration.



DAVE JOHNSTON

Class registration is almost over. Of course, the end of registration only means it is time to start filling out force slips.

Course registration at Texas A&M is a serious ordeal. Students will use any means they can think of to make sure they find their dream schedule. The system is too complex and stressful. Students should be able to focus on term papers and finals without worrying about academic advising, force slips and the haunting voice of the University information system.

Many students invest a significant amount of time and effort into course registration — and it is understandable. This short phone conversation between an automated voice and a few dozen touch-tone pulses will control virtually every aspect of the student's life.

Depending on the outcome of these minutes of stress, the student will be spending hundreds of hours studying for nuclear physics or coasting through four kinesiology. A student's schedule may determine how early they get up, how stressed they are, how their grade point ratio changes or when they graduate. The difference between section 513 and 514 might be enormous, and a panicked Aggie may only have a few minutes to choose between the two.

There are dozens of aspects to consider when choosing a schedule, and students need more help than the small degree chart in the course catalog can provide. Students must decide when to take their elective hours, what classes will help them most, what order to take which classes and which professors will best teach the material.

Most departments offer their students extensive academic advising, but few students take advantage of that offer. Instead, Aggies often base their course selection on the advice of other students and a few random guesses.

Texas A&M's method of registration only increases the stress of course selection. Students often compete against thousands of fellow Aggies for one of the 30 seats available in a specific class. The results are not always pretty.

The University staggers registration, giving preference to honors students, student workers and upperclassmen. Hence, more stressful decisions.

Student workers must decide whether their schedule allows them the time to dig up recent paycheck stubs, collect a signature from a supervisor and stand in line so they may qualify for early student-worker registration.

Students must weigh the advantages of honors registration against the risk of losing future privileges if they drop an honors class.

As 10 p.m. draws near on the given registration day, students race to the nearest touch-tone phone. For the next few hours, students across campus will listen to the irritating tones of a busy signal as their hopes for getting their perfect schedule dwindle away.

Under certain circumstances, some faculty and administrators will take pity on a slow-dialing student, allowing them to be forced into a filled class.

Some classes are so popular that a force slip represents the only practical method to register for a section. This is often the case with technical writing, which every student must take in order to graduate.

The result is a long line on one of the dead days as students wait to be forced into a class they need in order to earn their diploma. On this day with no classes, students begin collecting in the halls of the Blocker Building as early as 7 a.m. hoping to secure one of the hotly-contested seats.

The whole system is stressful — too stressful for students to be messing with during finals. Students should be encouraged to take advantage of the advising available to them, but steps should be taken to remove the traumatic aspects of registration.

Dave Johnston is a senior mathematics major.

### EDITORIAL



Editorials appearing in *The Battalion* reflect the views of the editorials board members. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors.

## BONFIRE ANONYMOUS

### Drop in Bonfire arrests, citations credits University efforts to clean up tradition

As always, last week's Bonfire was an event to remember. Aggies worked together and created an event everyone could enjoy. In fact, in some aspects, this year's event was more enjoyable than past Bonfires.

University Police Department announced alcohol arrests and citations at Tuesday's Bonfire were lower than previous years' totals.

It is unfortunate to see the University bragging about 90 combined citations and arrests, but considering the status of Bonfire only a few years ago, this year's numbers are a sign things are headed in the right direction.

In response to the increase in poor behavior at Bonfire, UPD instituted a zero-tolerance alcohol policy, and not a moment to soon. Before the department's new policy, Bonfire had become less a symbol of the burning desire to beat t.u. and more a symbol of the negative aspects of alcohol.

Many who attended past Bonfires viewed the event as an excuse for public inebriation, and their behavior made it difficult for sober participants to enjoy the annual wood-burning.

Community residents were hesitant to bring their families to Bonfire because many participants were rowdy, obnoxious and sometimes violent.

Over the past few years, however, several groups have worked to improve Bonfire. The Bonfire Alcohol Awareness Committee has worked to persuade students to

forego alcohol during the celebration. The committee conducts a campaign shortly before Bonfire encouraging students to sign pledge cards agreeing not to drink at Bonfire.

The Alcohol and Drug Education Programs office of the Department of Student Life has similarly worked to convince students alcohol does not have to be part of this annual event. Throughout the year, the office conducts efforts to remind students of the laws pertaining to alcohol use and the consequences of violating those laws.

UPD has done a good job enforcing the law at Bonfire site. This year, 60 UPD officers were patrolling the site trying to keep things orderly. Fortunately, there was less for them to do than there has been in previous years.

With an estimated crowd of 60 to 70,000 people, UPD only issued 72 alcohol-related citations and made 18 arrests. These lower numbers are a great credit to the many groups who have invested so much effort in making Bonfire a family event once again.

Things are certainly looking up for Bonfire, although there is always room for improvement. Hopefully the tradition will continue to improve and the number of alcohol-related offenses will continue to decrease. It is unfortunate UPD had to cite or arrest close to 100 people, but sometimes you have to take what you can get.

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### General Simpson deserves honor

Why is it when an Aggie of the stature of Lieutenant General Simpson, Class of '36 passes away, hardly a ripple is felt through the Texas A&M community? If there was ever a person who truly symbolized what it meant to be an Aggie, it was Simpson.

A 37-year career Marine, decorated veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, assistant vice president of Student Affairs Emeritus and a Texas Aggie — these are notable accolades to be sure. However, I feel these merits are of greater importance: a devoted husband of 60 years, a loving father, a man dedicated to making the world better by bringing out the best within us.

Simpson challenged each of

us to live our lives with integrity, by an uncompromising code of uprightness in character and moral strength, a challenge he met daily.

Simpson's life is a testimony of how life should be lived: with courage, fidelity, enthusiasm and love. It is a life that can provide inspiration and would improve us all with its examination.

The fact such a life was scarcely reported in the newspaper of the alma mater he so diligently served just adds dishonor to his absence.

Afinju Oja McDowell  
Class of '01

### Students must follow traffic laws

Many Texas A&M students need to go back to kindergarten and learn what the red traffic light means (it means "stop").

If you do not care about your own safety, think about all the other Aggies on the road. I have been driving for many years, and I have never seen so many red lights run as I have this school year.

Kallee Kirsch  
Class of '99

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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