

## Punxsatawny Bill

Life mimics movies after Clinton's presidency repeats itself for the past six years



GLENN JANIK

Today marks the day Punxsatawny Phil is pulled from his hole in Pennsylvania to forecast the end of winter. As the country waits to hear of an early spring or an early summer in Texas, the Republican Party already knows the outcome. For the past six years, the Republican Party has been living the same day. Like the charming movie *Groundhog Day*, the GOP is trapped in a repetitive day it cannot escape. Each morning, President Clinton awakes to commit crimes and moral indiscretions, each day the President's popularity rises and each night the country blames the Republicans for Clinton's troubles. Signs of Clinton's power to escape each day are prevalent even before he took office. In January 1992, Gennifer Flowers revealed her decade-long affair with Clinton, and the future president got a boost in the polls and a near victory in New Hampshire. Later in the spring, it was discovered the president dodged the draft, smoked pot and protested the Vietnam War while visiting the Soviet Union. Still, the president swept California, New York and won the presidential nomination. What could Republicans do? Many in the GOP hoped Clinton's magical powers would dissipate once he reached the White House. They were sorely mistaken; the office of the president increased Clinton's ability to break the law and escape responsibility. First, Whitewater washed ashore, but the problem quickly evaporated. Vince Foster, the Clinton's attorney with all the answers, was mysteriously found dead. With his death, many answers to the scandal went to the grave. Susan McDougall chose to go to jail instead of standing witness against Clinton and Jim McDougall died

of cancer before he could face Clinton in court. Some may blame these events on coincidence, but Clinton's ability to elude scandal was beginning to show. In 1996, the scandal and escape scenario was repeated. It was discovered the president collected nearly a thousand FBI files on Republicans. The public was alerted of this criminal action, but could care less. The pattern of the Clinton "Groundhog Day" was emerging. Following his reelection in 1996, the president and his administration were exposed for raising hundreds of thousands of dollars in illegal Asian campaign funds. However, like every scandal before, witnesses disappeared, the public lost interest and the Republicans were left looking foolish. So when Monica Lewinsky entered the scene in 1998, it was not surprising to see the president escape the scandal. Sure he has been the first-elected president to be impeached, but the latest CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll has Clinton with a 68-percent approval rating. Can anything destroy the president and bring about a new day? History has shown President Clinton's ability to survive is unmatched. Not even a charge of serious criminal wrongdoing can bring down this president. To Republicans, the Clinton presidency has been a never-ending nightmare. The GOP has tried to win the hearts of the public by balancing the budget, ending the welfare state and cutting taxes. They have tried impeachment, investigation, special prosecutors and congressional committees. Nothing has been able to stop the president from committing scandal, breaking the law and exercising poor moral judgment. For the past six years, the Republicans awake to the same day. Clinton is continuously thwarting the Republican effort to remove him at every turn. This never-ending "Groundhog Day" will haunt the GOP until Clinton leaves the White House.

Glenn Janik is a senior political science major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

## Meal plans not always the quickest, most cost-effective route

As the saying goes, "Dining on campus is in." It is a pity a student has to be in a room eating up rocks for that to be a true statement. As many hungry campus Aggies have learned, purchasing a meal plan with Texas A&M has the potential of becoming a frustrating and time-consuming experience. Since 1876, the Department of Food Services has proudly served the student body of A&M, stimulating their taste buds as well as their colons. With three dining centers and over a dozen restaurants and snack bars spread around campus, Food Services has attempted to make it as convenient as possible for students to have



DAVID LEE

high-quality food without compromising their busy schedules. After all, it is the most hassle-free means of getting food on campus; or is it? Consider the following: **High prices:** The Department of Food Services Website (food.tamu.edu) includes a listing of all the meal plans currently offered for the Spring 1999 semester. An impressive array of options are available, designed to fit any schedule. However, what the Website fails to mention is the per meal price for each meal plan. After calculation, it is obvious these meal plans are somewhat pricey, with some averaging as high as \$6.50 per meal after tax. For students who are looking to stretch their dollar as far as possible, this is not a cost-effective means of getting fed. Stocking groceries in a minifridge or eating out at some of the restaurants around campus every now and then can be a cheaper alternative.

**Time is precious:** Without question, time is the most scarce resource of any college student. During peak hours, standing in long lines at the dining halls is unavoidable. For students who are in a hurry to get to class during these time periods, meals prove to be a harrowing experience as they find themselves in a demolition derby of sorts, wildly bumping in and out of crowds, side-stepping near collisions with slower students, darting from buffet cart to buffet cart and racing to the nearest empty seat to wolf down their meals with just enough time to get to class. To its credit, Food Services has made a sincere attempt at preventing such chaos with the introduction of Outbound Dining, a service where students can pick up take-out meals in order to save time. However, this service has gained tremendous popularity among students on the

go, and it is commonplace to see long lines forming there as well. Ironically, the wait at Outbound Dining during peak hours is comparable to that of eating in the dining halls. **No carrying over of unused meals:** A few days before final exams, Joe Aggie decides to eat at Sbsia one last time before the end of the semester. To his bewilderment, he is politely informed that he has 64 meals remaining on his account. This sends Joe into a mad dash as he sprints to the Underground Market and attempts to purchase 50 pints of Blue Bell ice cream in a desperate last ditch effort in redeeming his unused meal credits. This scenario, while silly, is a consequence of a grossly inefficient and wasteful system. Any unused meals translate into wasted dollars that could have been better spent elsewhere. While the majority of the blame should be placed on Joe

for not keeping track of his meal credits, it is unreasonable to expect a student who purchases any of the larger meal plans to be able to use all of their meal credits in one semester. Food Services should be willing to allow a certain percentage of leftover meals from one semester to carry over to another. Do not be forced into thinking that buying a meal plan is a student's only option for getting food on campus. Any student with a minifridge, a microwave and a little creativity can save themselves a great amount of time and money preparing a few meals in their room. Who knows, treating oneself to a meal at the dining halls every now and then might be a welcomed change of pace. After all, that is what Aggie Bucks are for.

David Lee is a sophomore general studies major.

## Hopwood a step in the right direction for racial equality, needs time to prove benefits

March 18, 1996 the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed a decision by a Texas district court and ruled in favor of five plaintiffs in what is now widely known as the *Hopwood* case. That case ended race-based criteria in admissions to colleges in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Though the rhetoric from many minority groups and school administrators may say otherwise, *Hopwood* set in motion a move toward real racial equality in education. When the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled on the *Hopwood* case, it was specifically targeting the University of Texas Law School's admission criteria, which set separate standards for minority and white applicants. The state legislature and attorney general then applied it to all state universities by removing all forms of race-based criteria for admissions, scholarships and fellowships to be in line with the ruling from the *Hopwood* case. The 5th U.S. Circuit Court justices had ruled that U.T. Law School's admission criteria violated the 14th Amendment's equal access clause. However, unlike the UT Law School, whose criteria was that of a quota system, many schools used race as a small "plus factor" in the larger picture of admissions. A&M's use of race as an admission criteria, in essence, amounted to less than 5 percent of the total criteria. Therefore, *Hopwood* should have had only a light impact on the admissions process of many state institutions. The decline in some schools minority admissions apparently is a financial situation.



ZACH HALL

Jim Ashlock, Executive Director of University Relations, said that the effects of *Hopwood* ended race-based scholarships such as the Presidents Achievement Scholarship. This lack of school or state-sponsored minority scholarships created a perception to some minorities that they were not welcome at state schools. When coupled with the ability of out-of-state schools to offer school-based minority scholarships, one begins to see why there appears to be a decline in minority admissions. While A&M has seen a drop in minority enrollment, Ashlock said that minority enrollment has seen no state-wide decline. The attorney general and state legislature made the right decision in applying *Hopwood* to all state colleges and ending affirmative action within education. Recently though, they have made token efforts to bolster minority enrollment with the passage of House Bill 588, which grants automatic admission into state colleges for high school students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their class. Thus far, H.B. 588 seems to have had no effect on increasing minority enrollment. However, legislators and minority groups opposed to the effects of *Hopwood* should give the system a chance to work itself out.

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It has only been two years since the *Hopwood* ruling. Furthermore, the fact that state-wide minority admission numbers have not declined blows holes in the argument that minority students are leaving the state. School administrators and minority-interest groups should focus on solutions to increasing minority enrollment and quit focusing on the supposed slight dealt minorities by ending affirmative action. For instance, local minority groups and alumni can set up their own private minority scholarships and fellowships. School officials, in turn, need to dispel the incorrect perception that minorities are not welcome. Nevertheless, if a student does not want to go to a particular school, despite its efforts to be equal and fair in admissions, then the school must accept this. There should not be, however, a collective whining that the system discriminates or discourages certain groups from admission. If a student has no interest in a school, he likely will not go there, despite all the school's efforts. Schools and minority groups need to realize this is a step in the direction of ending discrimination against all races. With time and effort, the apparent side effects of the *Hopwood* case will work themselves out and colleges will again see increases in minority enrollment. The easy answer to the declines in some school's minority enrollment numbers is to blame it on *Hopwood*. The tougher answer is to realize discrimination does not end discrimination and *Hopwood* will reap greater rewards in the struggle toward racial equality in education and society.

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### EDITORIAL

## The Battalion

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## HAZY SITUATION

Recent allegations against Corps of Cadets exposes need for hazing law clarification

Haze — it's a collegiate four-letter word that sends organization presidents and outfit commanding officers scurrying for their bylaws and guidelines. Beatings, cold hoses or being forced to eat rotten foods are all easily identifiable forms of hazing. When the hazing laws were enacted in 1987, it was meant to stop the human degradation certain organizations were using to initiate new members. In 1999, actions that were once thought of as being in good spirit or as jokes have been tainted with the hazing laws. The laws regarding hazing are so complex and vague that confusion is often the only result from trying to understand its definition. While the recent advertisements placed in *The Battalion* by the Student Conflict Resolution Services are trying to educate students, the sheer number of ads over the past two weeks is proof of the complexity of the hazing issue. What one individual says is a bonding experience for all members, others call hazing. In order to simplify the hazing question, a definitive test needs to be developed that will allow all organization members, whether they be pledges, fish or upperclassmen to eliminate the potential for hazing. While the recent accusations made by a former cadet against other members of the Corps are serious and do involve allegations of physical assault and emotional abuse and should be investigated, the unique military tradition of the Corps needs to be recognized in some fashion. While a special status should not be designate to the Corps of Cadets, their commitment to the physical and mental standards of the military is unique to any other organization in the state.