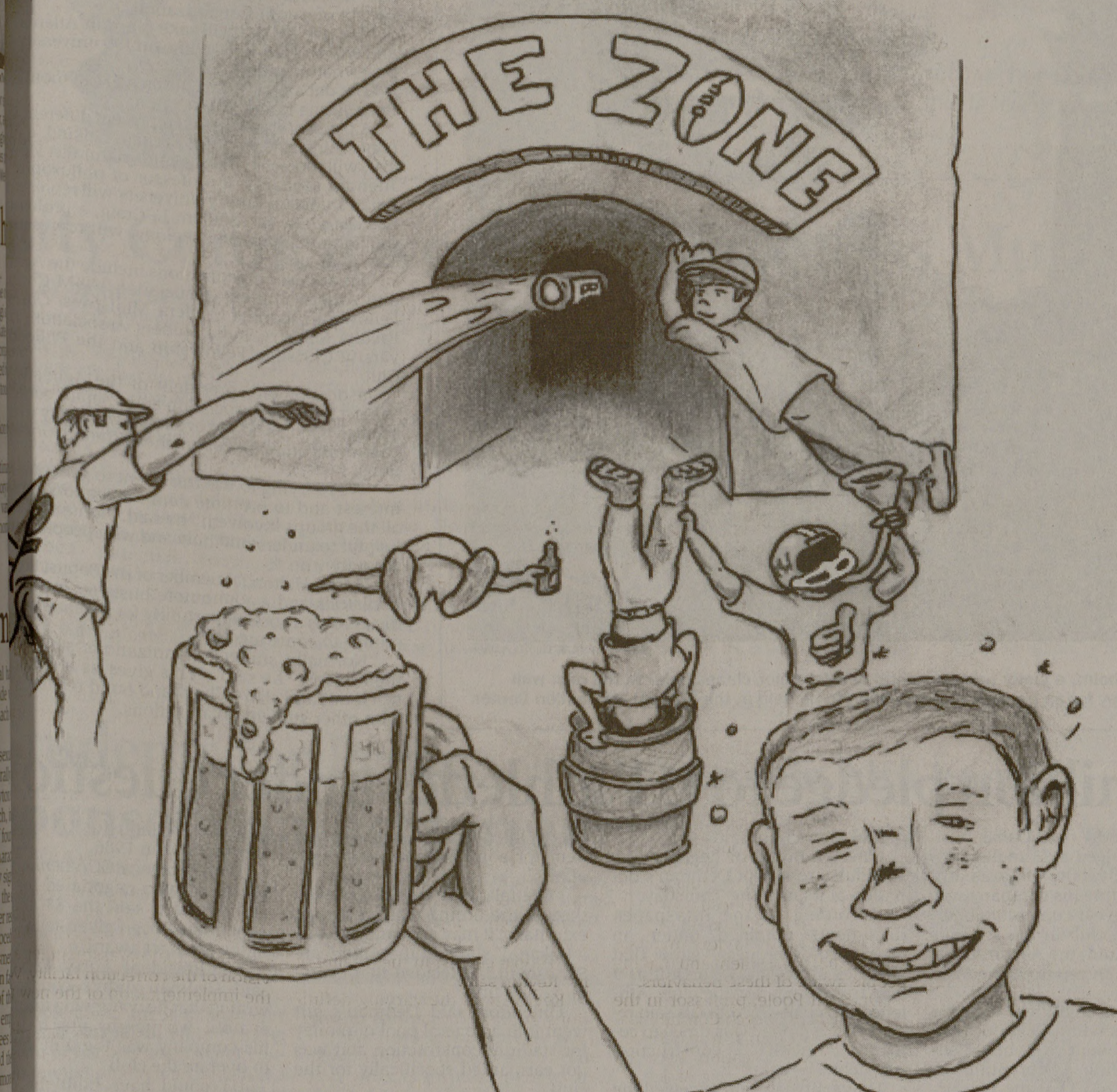


An addition to the tradition?

Introduction of alcohol to The Zone diminishes Aggie traditions, spirit of A&M football



CHAE WAGENER/THE BATTALION

While the addition of "The Zone" to the North End of Kyle Field will add to the intimidating surroundings of Aggie home games, it will also damage the tradition of the stadium itself. And the damage has nothing to do with the movement of the deceased Reveilles.



BRANDON MULLEN

The problem with "The Zone" will be found in the luxury boxes. It is in these private boxes that, for an exorbitant amount of money, alumni will be allowed to disregard the memory of fallen Aggies and drink from a fully-stocked bar.

Breaking the tradition of no alcohol diminishes Kyle Field as a memorial to all Aggies who have died in combat. It also raises the question, "If the rich are allowed to drink why not the rest of the fans?"

Every Aggie who has gone to a Fish Camp or Freshman Orientation Conference knows the rules of Kyle Field. The most important is no one is allowed to step on Kyle Field except those on the team or in the band. Then there are all the procedures of the yells and songs. Finally, as is announced before every kickoff, there is no alcohol allowed in Kyle Field — except for those who can afford a private luxury box.

The only people who can realistically purchase these boxes are wealthy alumni — the very people who built the traditions of this campus and stay involved to make sure that these traditions are not lost.

By serving alcohol in these boxes the message is being sent that for the right dollar amount A&M is willing to sell out.

Other traditions may see similar changes. Fish Camps could be sponsored by local businesses. Instead of Camp Chicken Oil or a Camp Planned Parenthood.

Think of the impression this type of marketing would have on young, naive fish.

Likewise, fish, along with every other Aggie, look up to their elders. This admiration can be seen in traditions

like Wildcats, Senior Boots, and Aggie rings. Will the next level of seniority be the right to drink at football game. While a distant dream for most graduates, a luxury box could show that they have reached the pinnacle of Aggie privileges.

Or will it lead to undergraduates wanting to "pull-out" and drink in the student section. It would make financial sense for the University. Imagine the amount of revenue that could be raised by selling ice cold beer in the middle of a Texas September. Of course, the number of heat strokes and dehydration cases would sky rocket, but it could become the new Aggie way to enjoy a football game.

As the weather becomes more tolerable, think of the intoxicated enthusiasm that would pulsate from the stands. 80,000 drunken, delirious, decadent fans chanting in unison.

Perhaps the yell leaders could amend some of the yells. Instead of "Gig Em, Aggies" it could be "Drink Up, Aggies." But by the end of the third quarter no one would be able to stand to sing the "Aggie War Hymn."

While this may sound like great fun, alcohol would ruin the image of Kyle Field and A&M.

The respect that is shown to our opposition and each other at football games makes A&M special. A&M is not like other universities, whose drunken fans heckle and berate their opponents.

The way to truly show Aggie hospitality is to make them feel at home. A&M home football games are special and should be kept that way.

Like weddings and other occasions, an Aggie home game is special for both students and alumni. And the use of alcohol should be allowed in a similar manner. Most weddings allow alcohol at the rehearsal dinner and at the reception, but very few allow the guest to booze it up during the ceremony.

"The Zone" is definitely going to make Kyle Field one of the most awe-inspiring venues in college sports. But, there is no need for alcohol to be served in it. There is a time and a place for everything, and Kyle Field is not the place and during the game is not the time.

Brandon Mullen is a senior history and English major.

Hate crime legislation attacks American civil liberties, not hate

It took an extra 15 years, but it seems as though George Orwell's masterpiece, 1984, is finally coming true.



MANISHA PAREKH

America, a place revered for freedom of belief, is becoming another Oceania — a land where thoughtcrime is a reality.

Only in America, "thoughtcrime" has been renamed "hate crime laws."

That is correct. In our rush to be truly fair and fight for justice, we as a country have trampled over one of the most fundamental rights we have: the freedom of thought and belief.

The groups that have masterminded this attack against American civil liberties were trying to accomplish a noble goal: ending hate crimes. As a society

that is constantly trying to better itself, hate crimes are a dark reminder of the past, when equality was just a lofty ideal touted by philosophers. Incidents such as the murder of James Byrd in Jasper are revolting and sad reminders of what hate can do to innocent citizens.

Senseless incidents such as this lead people to feel helpless, and there is an overwhelming need to somehow deal with the shock and fear. But hate crime legislation is not the way to deal with that fear.

The current hate crime laws that have been enacted in several states give prosecutors the opportunity to impose extra penalties on criminals — beyond the sentence handed down for the actual act — if the criminal appears to have been motivated by the victim's religion, race, sexual orientation or ethnic background.

This should frighten Americans for several reasons.

- First, hate crime legislation punishes criminals for what they believe, not for what they have done. After the criminal has already been found guilty and sentenced for the actual crime, he receives an extra sentence for what he was thinking about or feeling when he committed the crime.

Steve Dasbach, national chairman for the Libertarian Party, said hate crime legislation creates a dangerous precedent.

"When politicians start punishing people for what they think — not for what they do — they create a chilling new category of wrongdoing: thought crimes," Dasbach said.

If criminals are already being punished for the actual crime, how and why can they be punished for their thoughts? Is America trying to say it is "better" to commit a crime if the criminal did not hate the victim? This is, in effect, what hate crime legislation says.

- Second, "hate" is a subjective concept.

What one person may classify as a strong dislike, another person may classify as hate. Who are we to sit and judge the feelings of another person? How can a judge or jury know if something was truly motivated by hate unless they have the ability to read the criminal's mind?

Supporters of hate crime legislation claim it is easy to decide whether a crime was motivated by hate. Is it? In the case of Matthew Shepard, half of the nation is crying "hate crime" while the accused claim they were simply motivated by greed. Who can honestly know what another person thinks?

Third, what exactly is a hate crime? According to the National Center for Policy Analysis, some states — including Texas — are vague as to which groups a hate crime can be committed against.

This leaves the door open for crime against anyone to be classified as a hate crime.

Manisha Parekh is a junior psychology and journalism major.

Blue Jays' Johnson crossed line in lying about combat service

Winter is over, and it is time for Major League Baseball to make its return. Next week, players will return to Spring Training, and one of the more interesting camps to be in would be the Toronto Blue Jays.



MARK PASSWATERS

This is not because they have a chance of winning the World Series, or because Roger Clemens is pouting in the corner until he is traded, but because of their manager, Tim Johnson.

To this point in his career, he has not been very successful. In fact, he is in jeopardy of being fired.

This is not really fair to a guy who, according to the Blue Jays' 1998 media guide, served two tours as a Marine in Vietnam and was so good at basketball that he almost went to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) on a scholarship.

Unfortunately for Johnson, he received his degree from the Bill Clinton School of Public Disclosure instead. In other words, he is a liar.

Lying about being good enough to play basketball or the great John Wooden at UCLA is not original; lots of average basketball players, after a few drinks, most went to UCLA.

Lying about serving during a major armed conflict, however, is a little different. In fact, it is a despicable act that mocks everyone who has ever put their life on the line in battle.

Johnson was a Marine. In fact, he served for six years — in the Reserves. He taught mortar technology (how to use mortars, in civilian speak) to troops going to Vietnam — but he never set foot there.

If Johnson's stories were to be believed, he was serving in Vietnam when he was actually playing minor league baseball, a remarkable feat.

Maybe he thought there were minor league clubs in Da Nang and Saigon. In a way, it was a shame Johnson broke down and told the world that he had been lying for the past 15 years.

His experiences seemed so fascinating, there was a desire to hear more of Johnson's stories about his service in Vietnam.

Maybe someday he would have revealed those deep, dark war secrets that he said he could not talk about. Of course, now we know why he did not talk about them. He had not made them up yet.

The 1999 Blue Jays' media guide will omit any mention of Johnson's "service" or "basketball skill." His credibility with the team and society has vanished with them.

According to the Associated Press, Johnson has apologized to the organization and to his players

and said he is a changed person. He also said he feels better about himself now that this weight has been lifted off of his shoulders.

Isn't that special.

"Lying about serving in combat is tantamount to spitting in the face of every soldier who has ever been in battle..."

Johnson has yet to apologize to the people that matter most — the veterans and families of those that actually did serve in combat, and no amount of makeup is going to cover up the damage done to his reputation.

Lying about one's service in the military is certainly not something to be proud of. Lying about serving in combat is tantamount to spitting in the face of every soldier who has ever been in battle, regardless of what uniform they wore.

It minimizes the courage and selflessness they showed, risking their life for a nation or an ideal. Johnson should be punished.

However, he should not be fired, since it would

actually be worse for him to go to work every day knowing that he does not have the respect of his players.

For these players, knowing that they are on a ball club that probably cannot compete with the likes of New York and Baltimore is tough enough; but playing for someone as fake as Millie Vanilli?

Disastrous. A manager is looked to as a leader and symbol of authority, and his greatest strength is having the team's trust. Toronto's players probably have more faith in Middle East peace than their manager.

What will Johnson do when one of his players, less than awed by his manager, ignores him? Fine the guy?

To fine one of these millionaires would have the same effect as Fiji declaring war on Ecuador: zero. Johnson's lies have destroyed his ability to do his job effectively.

But this is not ample punishment either. Maybe a just punishment would be to have Johnson apologize face to face to all Vietnam veterans, one at a time.

Mark Passwaters is an electrical engineering graduate student.