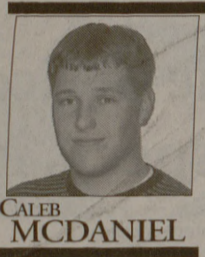


## The kids on the bus ...

*A&M buses antiquated, need seat belts installed to protect passengers in case of accident*

Campaign season is here, and once again candidates are building substantial parts of their platforms on the never-ending calls for more parking on campus.



CALEB MCDANIEL

There seems to be no end to the dizzying amount of unoriginal and unrealistic parking planks put forth each spring by zealous hopefuls.

Meanwhile, however, the continued deterioration of Bus Operations remains largely unnoticed and unaddressed by student leaders and administration officials alike.

This misplaced emphasis on parking not only leaves Bus Ops in financial straits as funds are forever siphoned away to meet parking demands. More immediately and much more importantly, it sacrifices the safety of bus riders for the convenience of those who drive to school.

The antiquated Aggie buses, after all, have poorly padded seats, no seat belts and no stop signs to protect riders from oncoming traffic as they exit the bus. While students have fanciful dreams about more parking garages or an underground tunnel to protect pedestrians crossing Wellborn (where there is already an overhead walkway), buses continue to carry passengers without standard safety features like seat belts.

And they are not even being discussed. "We really haven't considered seat belts at all," Gary Jackson, Director of Bus Operations, said. Safety belts would be largely "cost-prohibitive."

Granted, the debate over whether public school buses even need seat belts has raged for some years in school districts, and most transportation researchers have persuasively argued that seat belts would actually increase the danger to young children who ride the bus to elementary and secondary school.

In head-on collisions, which are the most common type of accidents involving school buses, studies have shown that small-bodied children who wear seat belts are likely to double over and hit their head and neck on the seat in front of them.

Therefore, rather than buying belts, most school districts across the country have added other safety measures to their buses. They have installed seats with higher, heavily padded backs and spaced them so that passenger movement will be minimized in the event of a crash.

These efforts to "compartmentalize" each seat have been largely successful, and in some states it is actually more dangerous statistically for a child

to ride to school in their parents' car than to ride the big yellow bus.

Meanwhile, back in Aggieland, buses have not even caught up with these developments. Perhaps "compartmentalizing" works for smaller children, but the danger of college students jack-knifing when they wear seat belts is less apparent.

Even if that danger were real, Aggie school buses have none of the traditional features to compensate for the lack of seat belts. Most of the buses still have seats with metal backing, which makes sliding forward in a head-on crash more threatening than in school buses with highly padded seats.

The seat backs are also shorter than the newest school bus seats and the seats are farther apart, making the possibility that passengers will flip over the seats in front of them during an accident a very real danger.

More obviously, "compartmental" approaches to bus safety do not even solve all potential dangers. Should the bus be hit on the side or roll over, passengers have no restraints to protect them from flying around the cabin.

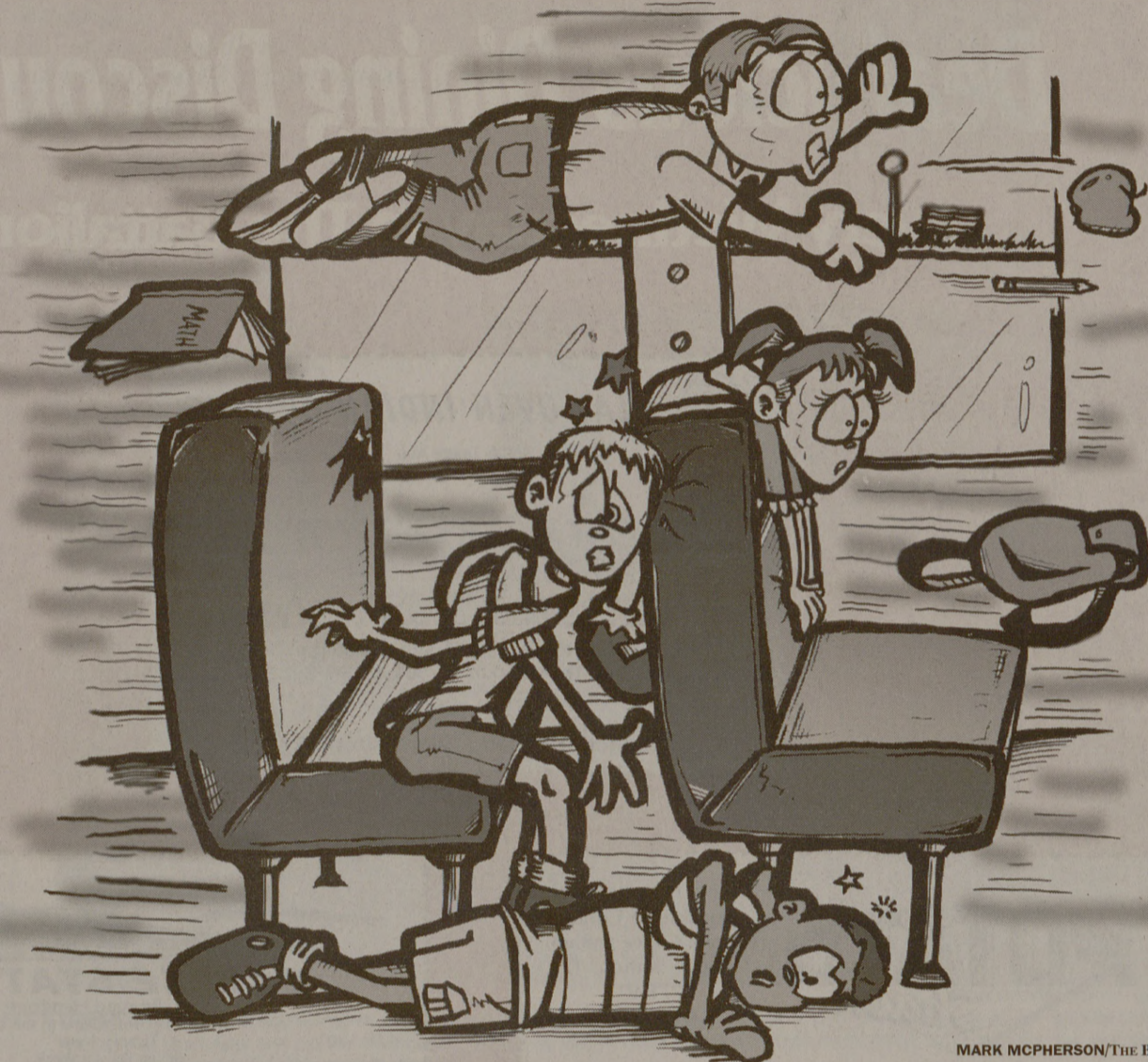
Worse, since there are not enough buses in the Aggie bus fleet, an unsafe amount of passengers must stand up.

Rather than seeing this as cause for concern, Jackson said the amount of standing passengers is the main reason seat belts would never work. Standing passengers and belt-less seats, he said, are not a problem.

"We are considered a transit system," Jackson said, arguing the Aggie buses operate more like a city transportation service than a school bus fleet.

While this may be true, it ought to be a reason for concern, not complacency. Bus Operations runs like a municipal transit system but uses antiquated, unsafe school buses.

Either the buses should be modified to meet new safety recommendations, or the buses should be replaced with larger vehicles more befitting of a mass



MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

"transit system."

Outdated school buses will simply not do. This is not the fault of Jackson or Bus Operations officials. It is the fault, once again, of a widespread student attitude that riding the bus to or around campus is an inferior mode of transportation. What is needed, students insist, is parking, parking.

Surely, though, what is most needed is the safety of fellow Aggies. It would be wrong to wait until a tragic accident occurs to act to improve our bus system. Instead, students and student leaders should rally around initiatives to help Bus Operations.

Caleb McDaniel is a sophomore history major.

### EDITORIAL

## The Battalion

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.

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## SBP ENDORSEMENT

*Battalion endorses Will Hurd for student body president due to experience, leadership*

The *Battalion* has decided to endorse Will Hurd for the office of student body president. Hurd, who is currently MSC president, displays the communication, leadership and diplomacy skills necessary to make a successful student body president.

Hurd is well-respected by students, faculty and administration, making him a good representative for the student body at Texas A&M. He is also a good communicator, a quality that makes him an ideal ambassador for this University.

Furthermore, Hurd, through the vast experience gained from his leadership roles at A&M, knows how to make things happen on this campus. He knows how the campus is organized and who to talk to get things done.

Most importantly, though, Hurd represents the kind of student body candidate who can actually improve the University. Hurd has real solutions for improving student life, not vague promises. His ideas include working towards a seamless transition between his administration and current Student Body President Laurie Nickel's Hurd plans to start taking the reins of student government immediately instead of al-

lowing issues to fall to the wayside as the semester ends.

Much of Hurd's platform centers around — and supports — Vision 2020, the blueprint for A&M's role into the next century. He plans to rally students together in order to voice important concerns to the administration, making the University more responsive to its most important customers, the students.

Hurd also plans on making changes to the way student government works in order to make it run more efficiently and effectively. Some of these changes include utilizing University resources, such as Measurement and Research Services, to poll students about their top concerns and possible solutions. Hurd plans on making sure Student Government reaches out for student input instead of relying on students to come to them.

The *Battalion* believes Will Hurd is the best choice for student body president. His commitment to improving A&M through both long- and short-term goals will have a positive effect for the students and faculty alike. His experience, knowledge and ability make him the strongest candidate for the job.

## Conservation efforts by humans foolish, presumes ability to affect environment

Conservation efforts in America today are pointless. While the mission



LUKE SAUGIER

of environmental groups contain such broad statements as "preserving economic diversity for the children of tomorrow," people involved in conservation have forgotten to ask themselves why they are doing what they do, and what benefit will be gained by so spending their time and money.

Greenpeace argues that humans should conserve other species because they have a right to exist on Earth and are at least as important as humans. But who are we to say which species have a right to exist? If it had been up to people, the more cuddly of the dinosaurs would probably still be around, but that is not the way it turns out, and we are glad of it. Earth is a dynamic place, and a view that does not take into account the existence

of natural cycles of extinction and ecological change is a narrow one at best.

Certainly Darwin's theory of evolution and its theme of survival of the fittest pertains to humanity and its activities as well. If a species becomes extinct today, regardless of the cause, it was still phased out by the process of evolution just as surely as were the trilobites. Humans never have and never will tolerate the existence of anything perceived as a threat to humans.

There is no question that smallpox, measles, tuberculosis and AIDS will be utterly wiped out if humans get the chance. There would be no question of their "natural beauty" or "right to live," yet they are life just as surely as humans are. If a distinction is drawn between the lives of bacteria and viruses and the life of an owl because one is more complex than the other, then only the most complex life forms are worth anything and humans are by far the most complex life form on Earth. By this logic, all other life is secondary to the needs of humans, which is obviously not the philosophy en-

vironmental groups adhere to.

Perhaps they strive to preserve only life that is not a threat to humans. This is a good guideline for now, but eventually, humans will be so numerous that any species that does not directly benefit humans as food will become competition for food and space and will doubtlessly be destroyed.

So humanity will ultimately only conserve those life forms which are of benefit to humanity. Thus cows, chickens, pigs, wheat, corn and oats will probably never become extinct. But are not all life forms useful to us? So it can be argued — to paraphrase John Donne's *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, every time the earth loses a species to extinction everyone is somehow impoverished.

The world is fearfully and wonderfully made, and the complexity of its operation is so far beyond human comprehension that we are only now beginning to understand how it works. Our reckless use of this wonderful creation is dangerous, regardless of whether or not its wrong. Just as dangerous however are our

fumbling attempts to fix what we have damaged. Like it or not there is no ecosystem on Earth unaffected by humans, so even isolating fragile environments has become a moot point. Earth has been around for quite a long time and has seen many violent events humans would call ecological disasters but has sprung back from each such event even more wonderful and diverse than before. The world has proven its ability to take care of itself. Are humans so arrogant as to assume that they have had some lasting impact on the planet, let alone that they can possibly fix the damage they may have done? Our role in any conservation attempts must be a humble one, not relying on what humans think they understand and making rash decisions to "fix" what they think they have ruined. Instead, humans should focus on learning more about the wonderful creation that is Earth and engage in a much more passive role that focuses not on other species but on humanity itself.

Luke Saugier is a sophomore petroleum engineering major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Reader provides verses about gays

In response to Aaron Meier's Mar. 29 opinion column.

I am writing in regards to Aaron Meier who wrote the article concerning the Church's action against homosexuality. In his article, he stated that in his four years in college, he has yet to have anyone be able to quote the exact chapter and verse in the Bible where homosexuality is deemed an abomination.

Well, get your pen and paper ready Meier, because here it is; 1

Corinthians 6: 9-10 states, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

It is pretty simple, huh? It is in the Bible after all.

Also in the article, Meier asks the question, "Why is it so difficult for religion to accept the homosexual community?" Well, I will tell you why, and again, I will use scripture to do so. 1 Corinthians

5: 11 says, "But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat." So, when two men or women come to a Church to be wed in holy matrimony, it cannot be done. God will not recognize it, and He will not tolerate it.

That is why the Church cannot accept homosexuality. Now I ask you, why is it so hard to see that homosexuality is wrong? It is straight from the Scripture. It is the word of God, and God's word

cannot be compromised.

Clint Harris  
Class of '00

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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