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Praying for an end

Mallowing prayer at graduation upsetting to some, result of Supreme Court's poor judgement

ears at this university. Yes, there has been the ocasional boring class (why do liberal arts majors need science and

nd some of the traditions seem slightly ridiculous, but on the whole

his is a pretty good place to go to Unfortunately, the University realing that soon it will no longer be able to plague me with the core cur-riculum and the PTTS, has decided

n one final, glorious slap across the ace to remind me of my time here. Of course, I refer to nothing else ut the terrifying specter of schoolponsored prayer being conducted at aduation

The true horror is that the Univer-ity does seem to have the law on heir side on this one. The Supreme ourt, in a rather confusing move ince it banned organized prayer in e classrooms and even at high chool football games, has ruled that ayer at graduations is acceptable as ng as it is initiated by students.

The court's rationale for treating raduations with less First Amendent scrutiny than regular school vents is that graduations are comwas m paratively rare, are optional and are conducted outside of the classroom.

This explanation does not make It is a basic law of economics that

something is rare, it is more valuble. The rarity of a graduation my of his makes it that much more important han any normal school event, which

fellow means the First Amendment should enforced more rigorously, not less. As for graduation being optional, ndinth true as far as it goes but than technially attending the public schools is ptional with private and home hooling being available. And of ourse graduations take place outside ne classroom, but they are still a chool — or university — sponsored

If a public school or university rmits prayer at one of its events it giving state sanction to one reliion over all the others, this is the ry thing the First Amendment is signed to prevent.

So basically, the Supreme Court rewed up. There is always a special isappointment when that happens, ecause the Supreme Court is supose to be the responsible, dignified ranch of the government, the one hat protects us from the blunders of he president and Congress, but even he best of institutions is going to make a mistake now and then.

The real issue here is why Texas &M feels the need to take advanage of the Supreme Court's mistake.

How could having organized prayer at graduation seem like a good dea? Is the University just giving no hought at all to its non-Christian stuents? Non-christians are as much ggies as the Christians are and deviews, something that would be mad-

ness given graduation is already rumored to take over three hours. The other way is to not have any schoolsponsored prayer at graduation at all. That is the most logical way to go on

Now some might say that the same arguments that are made against school prayer could just as easily be made about having George Bush speak at graduation. After all, not all Aggies are Republicans (it just seems that way) and some might be offended at hearing him speak

Sorry, but this is completely different. President Bush will be able to impart his wisdom and experience to the graduating class, this is some-thing that is of value to everyone regardless of political affiliation. And even if one is a raging liberal, it is still important to at least know how the opposition thinks, so hearing Bush speak is still of value. Prayer does not carry the same universal

Prayer is (or at least it is supposed to be) a personal connection between an individual and whatever god/force they believe in. If one does not follow the god a particular prayer is aimed at, he or she almost certainly will not get anything out of it. The consequences of this is that schoolsponsored prayer is needlessly divisive and insulting to non-Christians at an event where all Aggies should be able to come together regardless of religious belief.

And quite frankly there is something unseemly about public prayer. It just does not look that sincere; it seems like the person doing it is more interested in showing his fellow men how pious he is instead of honestly communing with whatever higher power he believes in.

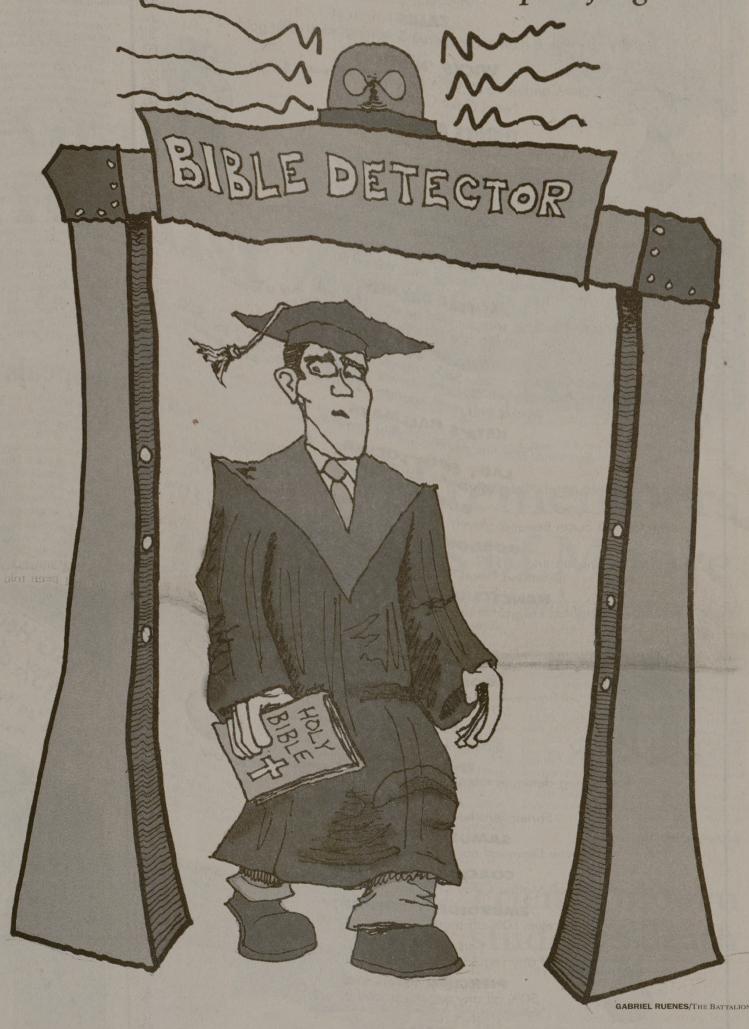
Nor is this just the thoughts of an annoyed atheist.

Matthew 6:5-6 states, "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men ... when thou prayest, enter into thy closet and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret," so the Bible would also seem to warn about the flashy showiness of public prayer. There is nothing wrong with

prayer as long as it is done in the proper place and time (and not as a replacement for studying or getting proper medical care).

For those that want to pray, by all means please do. Get together with your friends and pray until your knees bleed, but please do it before or after graduation (or if you just have to do it at graduation at least do it in a silent, dignified, nondisruptive manner). Texas A&M is a secular university, graduation from it should remain a strictly secular event.

> Brendan Guy is a senior history and political science major.



Columnist reminisces about experiences at Battalion, hopes for future of University, students in general

Tho knew the end would come so uickly? After three senesters on the opinion esk, I am finally writng my last column.

The conservatives an stop cheering now. M **PAREKH** It has been an interting three years for

nis liberal Jain (i.e. non-Christian). I have learned that Copenhagen is not ust a city in Denmark. I have learned hat pedestrians truly rule the streets. And I have learned that I am going to

Somewhere in the middle of this culare clash, I decided to try to tell A&M bout those people who did not fit into he majority mold. And so my three seesters began.

During this time, I have had many exriences on the desk. I have learned that exas A&M is not quite the "conservative vasteland" my democratic friends back n Louisiana claimed I was being exiled

But it is pretty close.

As much as I love the University, only a truly ignorant person would not admit that A&M is a haven for the conservative, the fundamentally Christian and the shel-

During my stint on this desk, I have managed to tick off many different groups on this campus. Conservatives have told me how uniformed and uneducated I am. The sheltered have written me about how I should not try and shake up the status quo. And the religious right have written that I am going to hell.

I have also found myself at the center of controversy. Thanks to a column I wrote earlier this semester, I had the distinct pleasure of receiving a phone call from Tom Short, the itinerant preacher. Yes, I know. I am going to hell for that one, too.

But as much as I enjoyed receiving letters from people who criticized writers' grammar, style and punctuation (and making more mistakes in 150 words than in a whole 10-page Battalion), the best responses have been from those who have applauded what the opinion desk and the writers are trying to do.

I have enjoyed reading the e-mails

from international students, from non-Christians and from racial minorities thanking me for presenting a viewpoint a little closer to their own. I have enjoyed having people tell me that they always read my columns. But most of all, I have enjoyed people informing me that my column made them think

Because in the end, that is what makes

I never planned to change anyone's views. I just wanted to make people aware that there are different voices out there. There are different people in the world

It seems people tend to forget that at this University. People tend to forget that the world is made of many types of people, and most of them do not see the world in the same way.

It is sad to come to place of higher learning and realize that many students are not taking the opportunity to broaden their horizons and learn about others. Worse yet, it is sad to know that they discount others' ideas and opinions simply because those people are different.

And that is my one regret. Even after trying numerous times to let the majority

see what it is like to be in the minority, there were still those who wanted to attack and criticize instead of trying to sit down and calmly discussing and learn-

I am proud to be an Aggie. I plan to tell my children, one day, about my wonderful— and not so wonderful — experiences as an Aggie.

But before I encourage my children to become second-generation Aggies, I want to know that they will feel welcome here and that their ideas will not be looked down on by the majority simply because they are half-Indian.

I do not want my children to feel as alienated at A&M as I have felt many times.

I received my Aggie Ring yesterday. I receive my diploma in August and I will walk away from this University with

But I will look back fondly on my time as a columnist and as opinion editor for The Battalion. It has been an experience like no other and I would not trade it for anything. Not even if I am going to hell.

Manisha Parekh is a junior psychology and journalism major.

MAIL CALL Alumni grateful for student's honesty

The honesty and character of your student body was demonstrated to me when I returned home from Muster. A credit card service called to tell me that a student at A&M called them to say they had found one of my credit cards on the campus - I had not even missed the card. The student did not give a name so I want to express my thanks through your newspaper.

I am very proud of being an Aggie and even more so after my experienced the last few days.

> Phillip McDaniel Class of '49

itor. Letters must be 300 words or less and in-

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed Mc-Donald with a valid student ID. Letters may also

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