

ROAD WARRIORS

Road rage stems from individuals' tendency to shirk accountability for actions

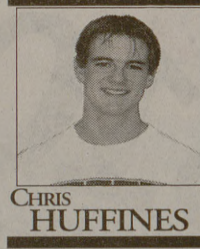
Young Aggies contribute to hazardous traffic problems



MARK PASSWATERS



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION



CHRIS HUFFINES

ate last month, a 25-year-old Wood-ridge, Va., woman was dragged out of her car and beaten to death by a couple of teenage girls. This woman's crime, which cost her life in front of her husband and child, was passing the woman's car and pound her head onto the pavement until she was unconscious. The very next day, a man pleaded guilty to vehicular manslaughter in southern Maryland after he rammed his car into another vehicle until it tipped over onto railroad tracks, where the two people inside were crushed by an oncoming train. These incidents of road rage are not just confined to the Washington Beltway either. They now occur across the nation, with increasing frequency. The road is a frightening enough place as it is without having people driving with the desire to hurt other people. Why are there so many people acting like their brains are in vapor lock on the highway? Maybe because they do not realize the consequences of what they are doing until it has been done. That is not to insinuate that these felons are any less guilty of the brutal crimes that they have committed; in fact, it should be a reason for them to be looked upon with even greater scorn. A car is a deadly weapon, and there is no way to sugar coat this fact. When individuals, no matter what their age, act like little kids behind the wheel, everyone around them is in grave danger. What has caused this outbreak of childish acts over the past decade? Probably the fact that people are so unwilling to take responsibility for their actions. Being accountable for your actions is something people should learn from their very first years on this planet and should be reinforced often. Unfortunately, this is

happening with less frequency as time passes. Like most things, this is something that needs to be imparted by an adult to a child. A teacher may be capable of getting the message across, but the primary responsibility for telling children they reap what they sow falls on the parents. Mothers and fathers must undertake the difficult task of telling their children the world does not revolve around them and that they have to think before they act. Thinking before acting is something that should be common sense but is becoming a very rare character trait. People are far more content to place the blame for their actions on someone else, and society allows them to. Since the slaughter at

Columbine High School, there has been a great outcry that Hollywood and the gun lobby should bear the primary blame for the deaths of 13 innocents. Very few people have stopped to consider that if Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold's parents had taken time to teach their children some personal responsibility and they had heeded the message, maybe this would not have happened. It is time for the copouts to end. Some people truly do have diseases or psychiatric problems. But a vast number of people who commit crimes do not think before they act and then want to pass the buck when they are caught. After New York Yankees outfielder Darryl Strawberry was caught with cocaine for what seems to be the 800th time, he

blamed his "illness" for getting the better of him. Once again, Strawberry was trying to deny that he had screwed up, and today's society will allow him to do just that. When people blame something or someone else for a self-destructive action, that is their problem. When people get out behind the wheel and start killing people because they got mad or were "disrespected," it becomes a far bigger problem. It is time — actually, it is past time — that people started taking accountability for what they do at all times. Think, then act. The sooner people start recognizing their actions do indeed have consequences, the more likely it is that people will be able to drive down the road (and do other things) with less fear. Mark Passwaters is an electrical engineering graduate student.

Driving in Houston brings about a curious sort of reaction in even the most calm and collected of individuals. Everyone behind the wheel, upon entering the greater Houston area highway system, feels compelled, at the slightest discourtesy, to whip out a 36-inch samurai sword, confront the offensive driver in a terrible high-octane apocalypse, and carve his (or her) bones into heirloom flutes for the grandchildren. Fortunately, no one has quite gone to that extreme. Yet. The sad fact is that drivers in Houston are not alone. In fact, they have a small surrogate colony right here in Bryan-College Station. Students who, despite spending four (or more) years of learning, never figure out that driving home should not remind anyone of the chariot race from Ben Hur. It is not just Houston, Dallas and San Antonio and every other stress-inducing driving area in the state have their little colonies, too. This has turned Bryan-College Station into an automotive melting pot. It has also made this area the most dangerous driving arena outside of a *Mad Max* movie. And the funny thing is, just like the old man said, it really is the fault of those darned kids. College students are the prime cause of most or all of the driving problems in Bryan-College Station. Of course, that college students tend to drive a bit faster than the speed limit, lack common sense, believe they are invincible, tend to be more tired than everyone else, lack good driving judgment, drink and drive, speed and lack common sense does not help at all. Nowhere close. There is a reason males between 16 and 25 years old have the highest insurance. There are other factors that have kept Bryan-College Station from becoming automotive heaven. The roads could use some work. Sight lines are absolutely

atrocious, especially around Post Oak Mall. Residents arrange for streets to be blocked off. There are trains. But except for the trains, all of these can again be traced back to Aggies. Aggies use the roads, which tends to increase wear. Aggies shop at the mall, which makes it able to afford large, opaque shrubs. It mostly is college students. What can be done? After all, most students do not know any other way to drive. They have been raised in bad traffic since birth. It is like asking a Bedouin to make an igloo. They just have not been exposed to the knowledge. What can be done? There are two schools of thought on the topic. The college students can have their driving sharply reduced, or even eliminated, which would make it difficult for them to cause any trouble. Or they can be required to start thinking. Yes, thinking — the bane of the collegiate experience. Closer examination of the list of what college students usually do wrong while driving reveals the alarming fact that each and every one of those little problems can be reversed with a little thought and maturity. Speeding is easy to fix. Go the speed limit. Common sense is just a matter of keeping options open in case something goes wrong. Obviously, no one is invincible. These are simple problems that can be simply fixed. The purpose of driving is not to get from point A to point B. The purpose is to get from point A to point B without getting injured, maimed, killed or inflicting the same on others. All too often, that is forgotten or overlooked, and bad things happen. College students — Aggies — are the problem here. Aggies are also the solution. Students are supposed to learn not only from their own mistakes but also from the mistakes of others. Every death on the highways is a lesson that is being ignored in favor of convenience and false necessity. Learn from them and do not ignore them. Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.

MAIL CALL

Other lives as valuable as JFK's
In response to Caleb McDaniel's July 21st column.
I was saddened by McDaniel's call for further reflection regarding the death of JFK. Maybe I am alone on this issue, but I would rather live amongst a people who can deal with the demise of a stranger with but a momentary twinge of sadness than in a society of rabid mourners. McDaniel's mistakenly attributes the media frenzy and public hype to the belief that it is the result of a devastated

society full of thoughtful sorrow. Unfortunately, this is not true. Ours is a society with a short and perverse attention span for that which is famous, that which is exciting and that which is grotesque. We choke on information spoon fed from the media in order to live the vicarious lives of stars instead of placing the emphasis on our own existences. We thirst for tidbits of useless gossip concerning their daily lives and forget to ask our families how their day was. It is unfortunate, but we have been taught that some lives mean more than others. It is time to consider what is

happening in our own lives, to mourn the deaths of our own families and friends and to turn off CNN.
Joshua Levar
Class of '01
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PBS should not be denied funding for swapping donor lists with DNC

With the Clinton witch-hunt presumably over, Republicans have shifted their focus to a new target, the Public Broadcasting System (PBS). In a perfect example of the perils of bipartisan politics, Representative Billy Tauzin, R-La., chairman of the Commerce Committee's telecommunications subcommittee, said he will reduce his funding proposal for public broadcasting. His decision was made after learning this month that PBS Boston affiliate WGBH-TV traded a list of its donors to the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in exchange for a list of DNC donors. The list swap was discovered after Sam Black, a 4 year-old boy who watches "Barney," began receiving mail from the DNC, including an agenda survey and a fund-raising pitch. In Tauzin's fervor to assign a political ideology to PBS, he neglects to evaluate and recognize PBS' actual contributions to society as a broadcasting system delivering educational and objective programs oriented toward all age groups, from 1-year-olds to adults. In an Associated Press article, Tauzin's spokesperson, Ken Johnson said, "The worst part about this

whole thing is that it feeds the old stereotypes. There are a number of people in our party who are absolutely convinced that public broadcasting is in the hip pocket of the Democratic Party and the liberals in this country." Tauzin's actions certainly associate him with this group of paranoid political radicals who have the audacity to believe Barney and Big Bird have hidden agendas detrimental to the Republican Party.

a newspaper about public broadcasting, WETA spokeswoman Mary Stewart said, "We're looking for people who have a giving history, but if Congress becomes concerned, we will reevaluate our policy." If anything, this is where Tauzin and Congress should focus their efforts — on reformation rather than punishment. By their own admission of policy practices, PBS affiliates nationwide have shown an inconsistency in their policies and the actions associated with them. Whether station management believes violations of practices have occurred, or the Internal Revenue Service finds any technical violation of laws governing tax-exempt organizations, PBS has erred. Instead of attempting to turn this into a political issue, all parties involved should recognize this and work together to develop clear guidelines, applicable to all PBS affiliates. A reduction in funding accomplishes nothing and is a misdirected punishment that is punitive in nature, no matter what Tauzin says. PBS' programming is too valuable, both educationally and culturally, to be threatened by the inconsistent practices of its flawed bureaucracy and the over-zealousness of radical Republicans who think Teletubbies are conspiring against them.

Some Republicans "believe Barney and Big Bird have hidden agendas detrimental to the Republican Party."

House Republicans' partisan-directed anger had to be somewhat squelched when after further investigation into the matter, it was revealed that various other PBS affiliates, such as WNET and WETA, had previously swapped donor lists with Democrats as well as Republicans. So much for a conspiracy theory. In fact, several affiliates admitted to a history of swapping donor lists with all sorts of groups, not just political ones. In an article appearing in *Current*,

Ryan Garcia is a senior journalism major.

Mike Lickovich ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

