

JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

Let's go back

Anniversary of first moon landing causes reflection on global benefits of making another lunar voyage

In recent weeks, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has been receiving quite a bit of media coverage. The two primary reasons are the 30th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission which put men on the moon, and Eileen Collins, who is the first female commander of a mission, commanding the space shuttle *Columbia*.



MARK PASSWATERS

Inadvertently, this coverage has illustrated NASA's glory days and just how far it has fallen from that level. The landing of Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin on the moon was the greatest achievement in human history.

Colonel Collins is the first woman to command a mission, and with the exception of the fuel leak during liftoff, this is the only portion of the entire operation that is receiving any publicity. NASA's projects in general have become bland and repetitious and cannot hold the imagination of the American people. A good way to regain that attention and do some good for the world in the process is to once again take a trip from the Earth to the moon. There are complaints that NASA's budget, which is already less than a quarter of what it was in 1981 (adjusted for inflation), is too high and that what they are doing has minimal benefits for society. People who are of this belief may have good intentions but do not realize what benefits society could reap from further space exploration. With the economy in as good a condition as it currently is, now is the time to bite the bullet and reinvest in what could be our future. Floating around on a space station in Earth's orbit is not exactly news anymore. When the name *Mir* is floated in

conversation, the comments are no longer statements of awe or interest, but of laughter. An international space station is a cop out to appease those who are not thinking for the long term. The most enticing reasons to go back to the moon are scientific. While American astronauts have already made the journey, the amount of data that they were able to obtain was limited. Now, with our advances in technology, it would actually be cheaper and easier to maintain a lunar program which could truly benefit people on this planet. Scientists have long speculated that the moon was once actually part of the Earth that was blown off during a cosmic collision.

"The landing of Neil Armstrong and Edwin 'Buzz' Aldrin on the moon was the greatest achievement in human history."

If this is indeed the case, learning about the moon could help us learn about the geology of this planet. NASA has already experimented with superconductors in zero gravity to see if their efficiency in space would be greater than it is on Earth. What might happen if such experiments were tried at one sixth of the Earth's gravity? Perhaps materials that still exist on the moon but not on this planet would actually be faster at transferring electrical impulses than those that we are currently using. The only way to know is to go back and run experiments. There are also possible direct benefits for human beings as well. It has already been documented that one

pound of a material found on the moon (an off-shoot of plutonium) could hypothetically produce enough electricity to light up New York City for over a year.

This material, which is not found on Earth, could have great benefits for the environment. Those members of Congress who are pushing environmental programs ahead of the space program might reconsider their stance if they knew this information.

The use of gasoline, water and nuclear energy as sources of power would be greatly reduced if this lunar material were used, preventing degradation of our environment.

Doctors have also long speculated that it may be possible for medicines or vaccines to be created faster outside of the Earth's atmosphere.

While this has already been undertaken on a small scale on shuttle missions and will continue on the international space station, what possible bounties for medicine await us on that dead rock out there? Frankly, we have very little idea. A return to the moon would answer these questions.

In 1961, John F. Kennedy announced his vision for putting an American on the moon by the end of the decade and returning him safely to Earth. At that point in time, this was as courageous a step as Columbus sailing over the horizon. Now, it is possible not only to return to the moon but to capitalize on our knowledge and its resources.

Thirty years ago, when Armstrong and Aldrin stepped on the moon, it was a symbol of victory for the United States in an important race — the space race — with the Soviet Union.

Now, a return to the moon would be a victory for another race: the human race. Let us undertake that burden once more and see how this satellite can be used to better life here on Earth.

Mark Passwaters is an electrical engineering graduate student.

Barry bruises Sanders' retirement shows disregard for former teammate Reggie Brown



JEFF WEBB

Running back Barry Sanders selfishly announced his retirement from the Detroit Lions yesterday after 10 seasons and 15,269 yards in the NFL. And now former Texas A&M line-backer Reggie Brown must be wondering why. "I guess the frustration finally got the best of him," Brown said yesterday. "There have been a bunch of bad decisions this season, the fans who loved him and the teammates who were counting on him — specifically, one former teammate residing in College Station.

Brown finds it a bit more difficult to keep up with the Lions after an injury that nearly took his life. On Dec. 21, 1997, Sanders became only the third back in NFL history to break the 2,000-yard season mark, but players and fans remember it as being only the second most important event on the field that day.

In the fourth quarter of a game against the New York Jets, resulting in a 13-10 Lions victory and a playoff berth, the Pontiac Silverdome fell silent when then-Detroit linebacker Brown bumped his head into the back of a Jets lineman in the fourth quarter after making a tackle.

Brown immediately lost consciousness and stopped breathing before emergency measures were administered to him on the Silverdome turf. The collision bruised two bones in his cervical region of the spinal column which doctors patched up with a small hipbone and two titanium screws.

The result was an ended football career for Brown and months of therapy to regain the sensation he had lost due to the accident.

He didn't learn of Sanders' yardage record until he regained consciousness after the game, and Brown said the biggest disappointment was knowing he would not be able to play in the Lions playoff game the next week.

Brown's attitude should jolt Sanders back to the correct perspective after the former Oklahoma State Heisman Trophy winner seems to be quitting when he still has a debt to his team. The player, who passed up a few trash-time carries in the last game of his rookie season when he needed only 10 yards for the league rushing title, needs to show a little more humility before he retires.

Brown received his Agricultural Economics degree in the spring and occasionally plays basketball at the Student Recreation Center in his free time. But early retirement doesn't seem to be as fulfilling to the 24-year-old.

"I'd rather be there (Lions' training camp) than here," Brown said, "but I don't miss all the hard work in the heat."

But certainly he would trade off one more grueling training camp at the chance to play in just one NFL game.

Fate deprived Brown of the chance to play another down of NFL football.

Unfortunately, at a spry 31 years old, Sanders is ending his football career prematurely because he said he doesn't think it is worth playing anymore.

Perhaps the usually humble Sanders should be lucky enough to have had a damaged spine like Brown instead of no spine at all — which is what his current actions in the face of perhaps another losing season show about his character.

Jeff Webb is a senior journalism major.

MAIL CALL

Column unfairly depicts French

In response to Mark Passwaters' July 28 column.

As an American and cyclist who has personally had his legs cracked by Lance Armstrong and half his team before deciding to study political science, I am offended by Passwaters' latest commentary on Armstrong's amazing victory in the Tour de France. Passwaters slandered all French people due to certain French media allegations and innuendos about Armstrong taking performance enhancing drugs. It is just a guess, but I do

not think Passwaters would like Americans to be judged by the actions of the American media.

Reporting by some French media should not be seen as a reflection of all French people's reaction to an American winning their hallowed event.

Passwaters believes the French media is intent on "burying" Armstrong due to the fact that he is an American.

But the official press releases from the Societe du Tour de France applauded Armstrong's riding on a daily basis, calling him "inspirational" and a "saint for those looking for hope in their fight against cancer."

As a fan of cycling, I am in awe of anyone who wins the Tour.

As an American cyclist, I am happy to see an American on an American team win the Tour.

And as a human, I am inspired by Armstrong's determination. Armstrong's victory, though, does not give me or any other American an excuse to beat our chests and say we are the best.

Passwaters should feel ashamed to have used such an inspirational victory by a humble human to slander a whole nation.

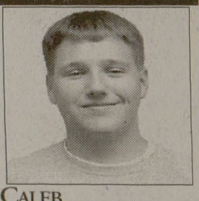
Nick Theobald Graduate Student



MIKE LUCKYCH

Suit accusing AP program of bias shows public schools need help

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is filing a lawsuit against the State of California for discrimination against schools in low-income and minority areas. The state's crime, according to the ACLU, is allowing its public universities to use performance on Advanced Placement (AP) exams as a tool in measuring applicants for admission. The APs are bad



CALEB MCDANIEL

yardsticks, says the ACLU, because California public schools located in high-income, predominantly white communities tend to offer more AP classes than their lower-income, predominately minority counterparts. Because students at poorer, inner-city schools have limited access to AP courses, the ACLU believes it is discriminatory to use the tests in admissions processes at all. "California is flunking out when it comes to educating these students, denying them the intellectually challenging courses designed to prepare them for college and holding them back by squelching their competitive chances of acceptance," Mark Rosenbaum, the civil liberties

union's local legal director, said in an article in yesterday's *The New York Times*. In this latest staked battle, the ACLU is successfully taking an instance of inequality and holding it up to the public spotlight. Their knack for stirring up controversy is valuable in spite of the tenuous nature of the particular case. The accusation that admissions officials in California are discriminating on the basis of AP scores is probably untrue. Most admissions officers take into account the strength and size of a school's AP program when considering an individual applicant's AP record. Although the charge of discrimination may prove to be groundless, the problem of in-

equality among public schools is more pressing than ever. The ACLU may be slightly inaccurate to make universities the target of its animus, but if the case draws attention to the root of the problem — the vast inequity in the public school system — it will have accomplished a worthy purpose. For instance, according to the suit, Beverly Hills High, a rich and mostly white school, offers 14 AP courses, while Inglewood High, a mainly minority school in South Los Angeles, has 3. Figures like this show the problem is in the public schools. A wide inequality continues to exist between suburban, wealthy schools and urban schools with shoe-string budgets.

Whatever critics may say about the ACLU's lawsuit, it will force them to notice that some schools really do have significantly less academic opportunities than others. Such an inequality is wrong, and fixing the problem will require searching, substantive changes in educational policy. For instance, suits like this one should continue to challenge the practice of funding public education with property taxes. As long as a school's quality is dependent on the quantity of its community's wealth, inner-city schools will suffer from inadequate funds. Reminders that inner-city schools often languish in destitution, rendering them incapable of meeting basic needs or offering special opportunities like AP classes,

should create real debates in communities about better ways to finance education. The ACLU's efforts should also squash the many proposals to curtail public school spending that currently crowd legislative dockets around the country. Cuts in education funds or voucher programs that direct money away from the schools that most need it should be vigorously fought. If the ACLU does nothing more than rekindle these controversies with its suit, it will have done well. By suggesting there is a problem with AP classes, they will highlight the problems still facing embattled public schools.

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.