

OPINION

Battalion

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NATURAL DISASTER

As the nation enters hurricane season, preparation is needed to deal with the ramifications of

Mandatory evacuation laws unconstitutional

In the aftermath of Hurricane Bret, the saddest sight were not destroyed homes or flooded streets, but the memories of the devastation. Galveston came of 1900, but every life lost is still one too many. To end these tragedies, laws authorizing government officials to order mandatory evacuations have been put forward as an answer. The unfortunate truth is that laws are not the solution they are supposed to be. First, these laws are unconstitutional. Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution lays out the powers of Congress. Nowhere is anything remotely resembling the power to take private property without just compensation. The Fifth Amendment states: "No person shall be ... deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law." One of the key elements of ownership is exercising control over that property. By forcing individuals to leave their property and evacuate, the government would be depriving them of control over that property. In turn, this means that the government would be depriving those citizens of their property without due

process, violating the Fifth Amendment. Therefore, for two reasons, these laws would be unconstitutional. Of course, this problem would be completely solved by a constitutional amendment.

However, even assuming one of those is passed, no small problem in and of itself, there still remains the fact that a mandatory evacuation order would be impossible to adequately enforce.

Imagine for a moment a hypothetical situation in which Mrs. Amanda Mae Eckner is a widow because despite a recent mandatory evacuation order, she and the late Mr. Eckner stayed behind in their now-destroyed home. The home was washed away by a flash flood, and Mr. Eckner was killed because of his own stupidity. Mrs. Eckner was fished out of the river by rescue helicopters. Given the fact that she broke the law by disobeying the mandatory evacuation order, exactly is going to punish her by fining her or throwing her in jail? Absolutely no one.

Nobody is going to heap legal action on a grieving widow, widower, child or parent.

Even worse, those who stay behind, defying the evacuation order, and survive the weather unharmed will feel that they were right and the government was wrong.

Instead of realizing they were lucky and a just, non-merciful deity would have issued a terminal lesson on obedience, these individuals would believe that any punishment inflicted on them was unjust.

Besides, how many politicians (including sheriffs) would arrest people who are not only lucky survivors but are also constituents? Not many. The laws are simply not enforceable.

Mandatory evacuation is a high ideal. It is something that, if it were practical should and would be implemented in a heartbeat.

But, like Utopia, mandatory evacuation simply cannot exist in reality as it is now known.

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.



Photos courtesy of The Daily Tar Heel/UNC-Chapel Hill

Goodwill, faith can flourish when calamity comes

When Hurricane Bret threatened the South Texas coast, the residents of Corpus Christi learned the valuable lesson that good can come from even the most difficult trials. Word traveled quickly through the city that Hurricane Bret had almost instantly transformed from a Category 1 storm heading to Mexico to a Category 4 monster heading straight toward the city.

Fear does not accurately describe the residents' reactions. Hordes of people gathered around every water station in the city, waiting sometimes hours just to fill a few gallons.

Long lines of cars snaked around every gas station, preparing themselves in case an evacuation was necessary. Customers flocked to grocery stores, gathering as many batteries and canned goods as they could afford. Some people boarded their homes and fled the city late that night, escaping the bottle-necked traffic that was to come the next day.

Others gathered in churches, praying the storm would bypass the city. It is amazing how the greatest good can come from the toughest struggles.

Many Corpus Christi residents learned this lesson the weekend of Hurricane Bret.

An article in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* quoted Charles Kizzine, a Salvation Army volunteer, as he commented on the positive results that can come from hardship.

"We see it all the time," he said. "[Calamity] brings out the best in people, people who never came together before."

This was displayed by a man named Joe Elizondo, who owns a

downtown Corpus Christi store called Greenwood Door Co. He had 12,000 pieces of wood to sell.

Potential customers were desperate to board their windows against winds that could reach 140 mph. He could have made a small fortune selling the boards. Instead, he gave the wood away for free.

Meanwhile, men from a Corpus Christi church stayed in the city until almost two hours before the storm hit so they could help older widows board their houses.

Other people offered their homes to those who lost power or had to evacuate. Fortunately, in the middle of this frightening situation and thousands evacuating to safety, the storm took a last-minute, westward turn. The Category 4 hurricane made landfall in one of the most unpopulated areas in Texas.

A graduate student from Texas A&M-Corpus Christi was staying with her parents just outside the city, waiting for the storm to hit, when she heard the news about the hurricane's course correction.

The day before, she prayed that God would move the storm on a westward path, away from the city, to a more unpopulated territory.

"I was stunned," she said, recalling her reaction when she heard the danger was past. "I realized Jesus really does answer prayers."

Some people in smaller towns still weathered the brunt of the storm. But the damage could have been much worse. One church in Corpus Christi displayed a message on its marquee a few days after the threat passed: "He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed" (Psalm 107:29).

Great good came from what could have been a terrible situation. Anyone who focused on just getting the situation over with missed out on seeing God at work.

Some Corpus Christi residents, however, saw that God can do miracles in even the toughest situations.

Stephanie Dube is a journalism graduate student.

MAIL CALL

Fish Camp catches spirit

Response to Eric Dickens' 6 column.

I am a Fish Camp counselor, and I think of about 2003.

Reasons why Dicken's column misrepresentation of the Camp process.

It is obvious that Dickens only experienced one of Fish Camp because counselors do not spend months preparing for just to "mislead" our freshmen about college life.

Dickens says we need to have a grip on what daily life in Aggie land is really like.

For many of us, daily life in Aggie land is about embracing time-honored traditions of school and trying to give back to our fellow classes.

Yes, would Dickens rather let us promote some other aspects of daily life, such as ping classes and getting drunk on weeknights?

Perhaps we should turn Fish Camp into a huge keg party, to give the freshmen a "realistic view" of college life.

The transition from high school to college is difficult. But I do not believe that school spirit, pride, enthusiasm, and support offered at camp are obstacles.

Laura Coward
Class of '02

Dickens' column is an example of the very attitude that degenerates the Aggie lifestyle.

How many freshmen come to Fish Camp believing that it is going to be exactly Fish Camp?

That if, however unlikely, it becomes convinced that it is going to be an Aggie packed, pre-designed fest with no regard for your time?

Are they going to become

confused, withdrawn or angry? Not quite. Freshmen who come out of Fish Camp are much more likely to be spirited, friendly representatives of the famous spirit which embodies Texas A&M than students who do not attend camp at all.

Traditions are shown to freshmen who attend Fish Camp as an example of what A&M could be, not as what it is. After having experienced life at Fish Camp, with its Aggie Spirit packed with "howdys" and class pride, these freshmen become the very students who keep the traditions alive.

We do not need to tone down Fish Camp to protect freshmen from being disillusioned.

Michael Trollan
Class of '02

Aggies deserve radio coverage

Texas A&M is defending its BIG 12 Championship and pursuing a national title in 1999.

As a former student, I have been anticipating the first game of the '99 campaign and was prepared to listen to the Aggie Radio Network here in San Antonio on 680 KKYX-AM.

However, KKYX did not broadcast the Aggies as they were contracted to do.

I wanted to make the student body at A&M aware of the fact that the Aggies had no radio coverage in the eighth largest city in the United States just 170 miles from Aggieland.

Shame on KKYX and shame on the Aggie Radio Network if they don't take care of business in San Antonio and find a station willing to honor its obligation to Aggie sports.

Ben F. Harrison
Class of '93

Bush's past plagued by more than cocaine

The clock has finally struck midnight on Gov. George W. Bush's fairy tale campaign for the presidency of the United States.

Until July, only the Fairy Godmother, herself, would have been able to create such a perfect campaign environment — one with no scrutiny concerning Bush's platform and no lingering questions about ethical wrongdoing in his past.

The 2000 presidential election was in the bag. All Bush had to do was keep smiling for the cameras and keep crowing about "compassionate" conservatism. What could have possibly gone wrong?

As strange as it may sound, the upcoming derailment of his campaign is not limited to Bush's alleged use of cocaine during his '20s.

Instead, the Bush propaganda machine is quickly unraveling because of other items in his past, things which are neither unethical or illegal. The items in question are titles his campaign literature proudly displays: a scholar at Yale, a brave soldier, an experienced businessman and the proud governor of Texas.

As election day draws closer, various media outlets including Newsweek and The Economist have delved into each of these claims — claims that have now been exposed as half-truths. Hopefully, the American public will analyze these half-truths and come to the realization that Bush is not exactly a dynamic, experienced leader who will revamp the American political spectrum.

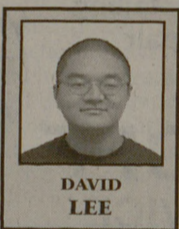
Instead, they will realize that despite living a privileged life, Bush is an underachiever who is frantically trying to live up to his famous namesake. Riding the coattails of a last name can only go so far.

Bush's wild partying binges and frat-boy pranks were numerous, landing him in the New Haven, Conn. jail on more than one occasion. These poor choices led to his well-documented battle with alcoholism, a battle that, according to the *Rolling Stone*, once caused him to physically threaten his father while in a drunken stupor.

When he was discovered drunk in the kitchen one night, George W. sputtered at his father, "You want to go mano a mano right here?"

After graduation, Bush's academic deferment from military service expired. In order to avoid serving in the Vietnam War, he was hastily commissioned as an officer in the 147th Fighter Group in the Texas Air National Guard.

The interesting fact is that in 1968, the National Guard had a waiting list of 100,000 names. When Bush applied, he was admitted right away. At the time, his father was the con-



DAVID LEE



gressman for a nearby district.

After his uneventful term in the National Guard and an unsuccessful run for Congress, Bush tried his luck in the booming oil business. Unfortunately, all of his dealings were spectacular failures.

In 1984, his Bush Exploration Oil Co. was saved from going under by merging with Spectrum Seven, a company owned by a handful of his father's largest campaign contributors.

Soon after in 1985, Bush convinced the new company to invest \$1 million into stripper oil wells. Not surprisingly, this was another immense failure.

Spectrum Seven was fast approaching bankruptcy until Bush orchestrated a bailout in 1996 with Harkin Oil and Gas, a company that had the common sense not to offer Bush a management position.

It is fitting that the only venture Bush ever received a profit under was made possible through the sacrifices of taxpayers.

In 1994, after the city of Arlington, Texas approved a sales tax hike in order to finance a new baseball stadium for the Texas Rangers, the value of Bush's share of the team skyrocketed. After selling the team, Bush's cut was \$14.9 million. This was more than 20 times the value of his initial investment.

Rolling Stone magazine writer Paul Alexander deadpans, "Bush's business career: if at first you don't succeed ... soak the taxpayers."

During the same period Bush was cashing

in his share of the Texas Rangers, he became governor of Texas. So far, this has been the one and only political office he has ever held.

While many are critical of his lack of experience in politics, Bush's defense has been that he has been instrumental in guiding Texas through one of its most prosperous and profitable periods ever.

What most people fail to realize is that the state constitution of Texas essentially makes the governor a figurehead with very little power.

To fragment the levels of responsibility in state government, the constitution instead places the majority of the power with the lieutenant governor and the legislative branch.

Basically, the credit Bush takes for the good times in Texas should go to the state legislature.

George W. Bush is not a bad guy. For all intents and purposes, he is a decent man who has reared a proud and respectable family.

Compared to the misdeeds of other politicians, Bush has been able to keep his nose clean, sort of.

However, George W. Bush is by no means the great man his campaign machine makes him seem to be. Before his recent career in politics, Bush lived a privileged life with very little success, wallowing away in mediocrity.

Whether or not the public can accept mediocrity in a president remains to be seen.

David Lee is a junior economics major.