

CELLULAR SAFETY

Motorists endanger others by using cell phones on the road



CHRIS HUFFINES

The problem is people are just trying to do too much while driving. While almost all drivers do realize driving requires attention, many do not realize driving requires a lot of attention.

The modern automobile is, in fact, a highly complex machine weighing in excess of 3,000 pounds, capable of not only reaching speeds in the triple digits, but also of flattening other cars on the road like a whoopee cushion under a sumo wrestler. Automobiles can be multi-ton death machines.

Driving while talking on a cell phone is not like walking and chewing gum, it is like chewing gum and trying to tie a cherry stem into a knot with one's tongue.

Both driving and speaking require motor control, analytical thought, interpretation of outside stimulus and undivided attention. If distractions exist, wires are bound to get crossed and accidents are bound to happen.

What makes the problem even more severe is that many of the people who talk and drive tend to "talk with their hands," even while on the phone.

Aside from the obvious problem of conveying hand gestures over the phone, swerving into nearby lanes because one is arguing with one's spouse is something that should be avoided.

If there is already a fight going on, wrecking the car is certainly

not going to make things better at home.

Cell phones do make a statement. Carrying a cell phone tells the world that the wearer is important — a man or woman who must be available to make critical decisions that might affect millions at the drop of a hat.

Cell phones declare, "The person who owns me and is fashionably toting me around has status!"

Cell phones are also emergency tools par excellence.

Losing a tire or "Chernobyling" the engine while on the back roads of Texas is a bad experience that can be lessened knowing help is on the way — courtesy of the cell phone and the 911 system.

But there is a difference between carrying a cell phone for emergencies and gabbing around on the phone while driving. The difference is that those who carry a cell phone for emergencies carry one to protect themselves from dangerous situations.

Those who carry cell phones to socialize while driving put other drivers into an emergency situation.

Paramedics like to be bored. Put the cell phones away while behind the wheel, or at least pull over to the side.

Anything else can and will put everyone on the road at risk.

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.



ERIC ANDRAOS/THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

Bowen's policy not 'inclusive'

I find it very ironic that Texas A&M University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen states that this university is "an inclusive institution that provides broad-based support."

I think Dr. Bowen needs to realize that his choice not to support the addition of sexual orientation to the non-discrimination clause does not match his words in this article. How can he expect gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered Aggies to feel they are part of "an inclusive institution" if they are still not fully protected from discrimination at A&M?

It is time for Dr. Bowen, Dr. Southerland and the administration at Texas A&M to start acting instead of speaking.

If someone does not believe A&M is the 3rd least gay-friendly institution in the nation, then all he or she has to do is look at the administration.

Jeffrey B. Bell
Class of '00

U.S. implicated in East Timor crisis

The United States is inaccurately portrayed in the media as merely an innocent bystander in the recent elections in East Timor.

President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger were in Jakarta the day before the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975 and gave the green light for the invasion.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Daniel Patrick Moynihan blocked implementation of all U.N. resolutions against the invasion. U.S. military aid and training of Indonesian soldiers increased following the invasion.

The fighter jets and helicopter gun ships, which bombed and strafed East Timorese fleeing to the mountains, came from the United States.

At the height of the atrocities in 1978, when an estimated 200,000 East Timorese had been killed out of a total population of

600,000, coverage of this genocide in the U.S. media dropped to zero. Now, over 20 years later, when Indonesian death squads are again rampaging through East Timor, another media whitewash of the U.S. role is in progress.

Gary Sudborough
Bellflower, Calif.

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Color-blind admission policies better than affirmative action

If race returns as a determining factor in financial aid and scholarship applications, there will always be discrimination.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

against one of the most basic sayings learned in childhood: "Two wrongs do not make a right." It is true that minorities were wronged in the past because of discrimination in scholarship and financial aid applications.

But the solution should not be to give minorities an advantage over white applicants as "compensation" for past injustices. If race returns as a determining factor in financial aid and scholarship applications, there will always be discrimination — either against white applicants who lose out coveted spots to minorities with easier entrance requirements or against minorities who might lose spots due to racism.

The only compensation minorities should expect is equality and justice. The affirmative action policies that Cornyn wants to bring back teach minorities that when life gets tough, the government will pity you and give you a handout.

In such a society, everyone loses. It will only be a matter of time before a white student who applied for a scholarship sues a university for losing out to a Hispanic student who is not as qualified.

And like Cheryl Hopwood, this student has every right to sue and win. And it is not just white students who should get riled up about Cornyn's decision. Affirmative action policies are strange phenomena in this way — they are discriminatory to both the majority and minority.

Any self-respecting minority student

ought to be offended at the idea that just because of their race, the standards to get a scholarship or financial aid are being lowered for them. Even if it improves minority's chances to get money, it is at the cost of being singled out from the rest of the applicants and never knowing if the reward was truly earned or if it was just to fill a quota.

Another argument for Cornyn's reinterpretation is that having a diverse campus is more important than having every student score above a certain SAT grade.

This idea is also severely flawed. It is wrong to artificially make Texas public schools diverse.

Scholarships are designed to aid and reward students for involvement and academic excellence during high school, not for being a certain color.

If school officials truly believe a di-

verse campus is a better campus, then they should take the initiative to make it happen. Public universities can become diverse without lowering standards.

Of course it is easier to admit second-class minority students than to go around and actively recruit top minority scholars from Texas and the rest of the nation. But that does not justify undoing what the Hopwood case settled.

Besides, the effects of the Hopwood decision that drove Cornyn to change it have been blown out of proportion.

Since the 1996 decision, advocates of affirmative action have claimed campuses became less diverse.

However, enrollment of African-Americans at UT only went down 1 percent, from 3 to 2, and Hispanic enrollment barely fell from 14 percent to 12.

In the 1998 Hopwood conference

proceedings, University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen said the effect on this school was similar.

"For Hispanics, my recollection of the number at Texas A&M is essentially the same; for African-Americans, it went down, and we think there is a reason for that," he said. "So, admission is not a huge problem for us."

The main repercussion of Cornyn's reinterpretation is that it kills the model Morales had formed. Morales did not take his power too far, as some claim, when he banished affirmative action. He was totally in his jurisdiction to interpret the court's ruling as he did. As tempting as the anti-Hopwood ideas sound, they are unfair to all parties involved.

Mariano Castillo is a sophomore international studies major.



MARIANO CASTILLO

Texas Attorney General John Cornyn's reinterpretation of the Hopwood decision has opened a new can of worms regarding affirmative action in Texas.

Actually, it is more like a can of maggots because it stinks.

His predecessor, Dan Morales, left no room for confusion about the role race should play in admission, scholarship and financial aid decisions. The role was absolutely none.

But Cornyn's rescinding of the decision gives public universities in Texas the right to bring back affirmative action policies regarding financial aid and scholarship decisions.

If schools like Texas A&M, the University of Texas and Texas Tech University change their policies, they will be painting huge bull's-eyes on themselves, becoming targets for reverse-discrimination lawsuits and for outspoken minority power groups.

Cornyn's idea is a step backward on the road to racial equality. His reinterpretation is based on the same argument that UT used in its court case.

The university defended affirmative action on the grounds that it is "needed to compensate for past discrimination and to ensure diversity."

The logic behind this argument goes