

Too pretty for the Corps?

Cadet stereotypes unfairly masculinize women

Recently, a female freshman in the Corps of Cadets approached one of her upperclassmen and asked how she should have responded when she sat down in class and four non-reg male students around her got up and moved to the other side of the room.

Incidents such as this are reminders that as idealistic as Aggie spirit is, the school still lacks in the field of equality and prejudice. One group that is often stereotyped and unfairly judged here at Texas A&M is women in the Corps of Cadets.

Stereotypes and rumors that circulate among the non-reg population often give the Corps a bad image it does not deserve.

Students who are not in the Corps often have an image of cadet women far from the Aggie ideal of being true to each other.

Non-reg males see women in the Corps as a group of butch gals who get abused by male cadets.

At parties, unsuspecting guys trying to start conversation have made comments to female cadets that include, "You're too pretty to be in the Corps," and the ever charming "Did I say dyke? I meant it in a good way."

Even if every cadet in the Corps does not share the same personal opinion about integra-

tion in the Corps, they do share the Corps of Cadets' oath which pushes every cadet to live by a higher standard.

This is not just a saying. For the most part, cadets who do not agree with women's role in the Corps still respect them and are not judgmental when allotting positions for the following year.

It is a few bad apples making the entire Corps look bad. The cadets who openly tell their freshmen not to meet upperclass female cadets and to blow off their directives should follow the advice General Hoggood wrote in his statement about gender integration: "For those cadets who cannot [follow the integration policy], the only honorable course is to resign from the Corps."

The truth of the matter is, while a minority, women play an important role in the Corps and hold several leadership positions. Last year, females held three of the top seven positions in the Corps.

Rebecca Fennel, a member of Company E-1 and a senior accounting major said one reason why females excel is that they have to be tough from the beginning.

"It takes a special kind of women to make it through the Corps," she said.

This does not mean there are attempts to drive women out of the Corps. The fact is that the Corps is not for everyone, male or female. In most cases, however, activities and hobbies that males

often take part in during high school better prepare them for the rigors of cadet life.

In every case, the women who make it through their freshman year are just as qualified or better than their male counterparts.

The Corps of Cadets was integrated in 1974, two years before the service academies integrated. From the beginning the Corps has been a model for integration at other military academies such as the Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel.

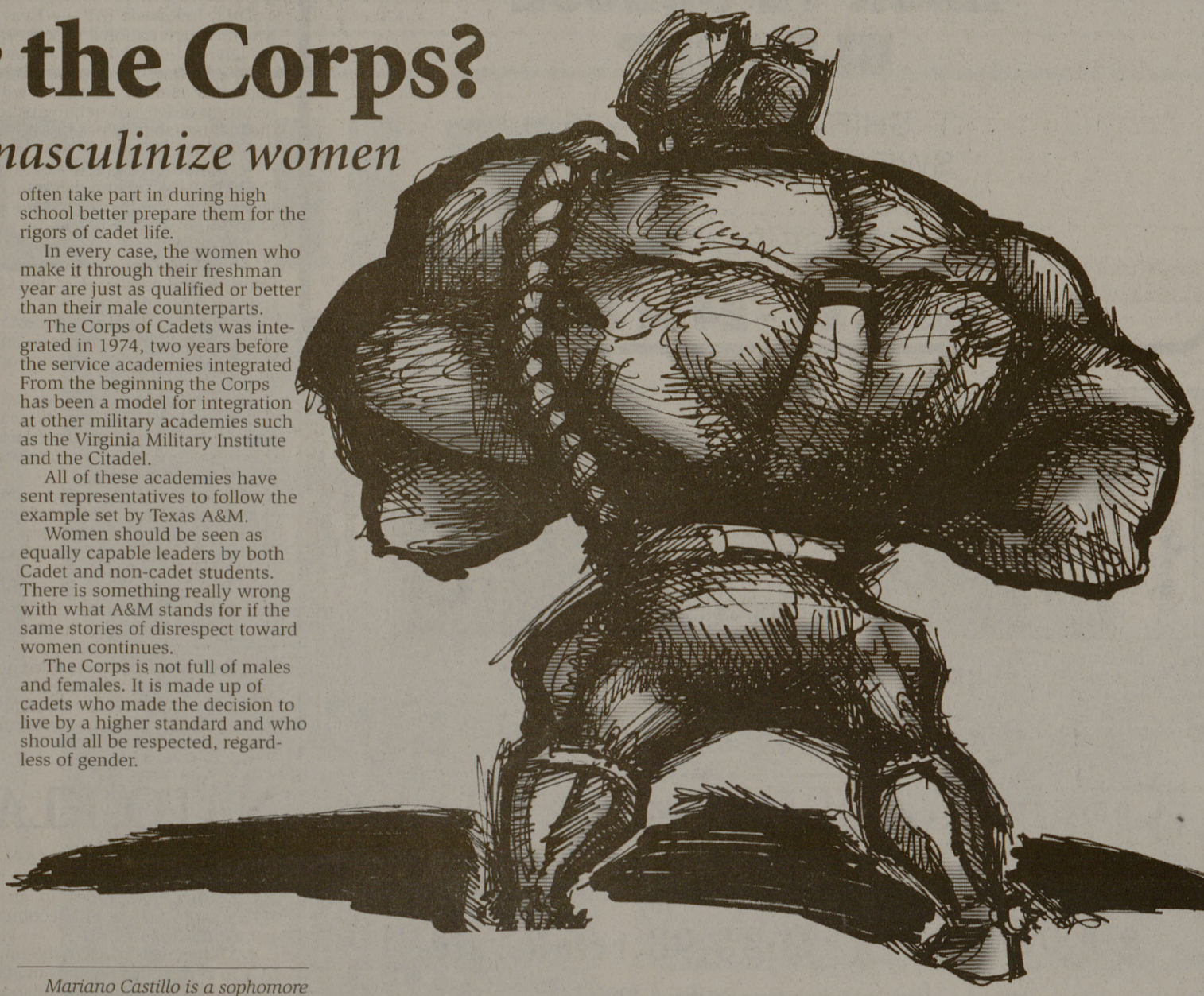
All of these academies have sent representatives to follow the example set by Texas A&M.

Women should be seen as equally capable leaders by both Cadet and non-cadet students. There is something really wrong with what A&M stands for if the same stories of disrespect toward women continues.

The Corps is not full of males and females. It is made up of cadets who made the decision to live by a higher standard and who should all be respected, regardless of gender.



MARIANO CASTILLO



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

Mariano Castillo is a sophomore international studies major.

Money capers in Congress

Needless raises disrespectful to constituents

The members of Congress have returned from their summer recess with a new sense of bipartisanship. They have already worked together to pass a bill with overwhelming support from both sides of the aisle. What major issue have these elected officials tackled?

Could it be campaign finance reform, or perhaps social security changes? Try a pay raise for federal employees.

Clinton has already said he will sign a bill to give a pay raise to 250,000 federal employees, at an average of \$2,346 per person. It also includes a 4.8 percent pay raise, (approximately \$4,000 per person) for members of Congress.

President Clinton is eager to embrace this new bipartisan spirit since the bill also doubles the pay of the Chief Executive to \$400,000. It seems like everyone has been well taken care of by this new legislation.

Everyone, that is, except the American taxpayer, who gets to pay for all of these goodies.

Members of Congress have said this pay increase is to offset inflation. Remarkably enough, 4.8 percent is exactly twice the going rate of inflation in this country.

This sort of math makes it easier to understand how Congress could also make a fiscal year 13 months long.

The Constitution is designed so that it is difficult for members of Congress to pass sweeping changes unless there is almost unanimous agreement.

In spite of this, people expect to see their elected officials make some effort to face down the nation's problems.

In recent years, however, pathetic partisan bickering and a desire to play "gotcha" politics has made Congress stagnant.

That they can put their differences aside on this lone issue — one that works to their benefit, not the public's — should be dismaying to the average citizen.

The average congressional salary is over \$136,000. If Congress is in-

tent on continuing their current pattern of doing nothing and blaming the other guy, the American people should demand a refund.

While gridlock is to be expected, the actions of this bunch of lawmakers should be deemed unacceptable by the nation as a whole.

Though it has always been the case that members of Congress go to Washington in order to stay there (by being reelected) it has rarely been more to the detriment of the American people than it is now.

With the American economy booming in an era of relative peace, there is a great opportunity to address issues which, unchecked, will be plaguing America for decades to come.

Add onto that the issues that are irritants to the nation now, and this decision by Congress to pat itself in the wallet becomes even more distasteful.



MARK PASSWATERS

The Republicans said they were in support of a \$790 billion tax break, while the Democrats were behind a proposal to cut taxes by \$350 billion.

Again using their bad math skills, the average of these two numbers (which should be \$570 billion) has come out to zero.

There was not even an attempt to debate the issue in committee or on the floor of either house of Congress. It was simply dropped.

So Congress gets money that was not its own to begin with.

Putting someone else's money in one's pocket would be considered grand larceny in the private sector, yet is accepted as "business as usual" when government representatives do it.

Congress has been unwilling to pass or even seriously debate the Shays-Meehan or McCain-Feingold campaign reform acts, which would limit "soft money" or foreign donations. Instead, they passed a watered down version that will make minimal changes to the current system.

Soft money almost always goes to the incumbent, so why would they want to hurt themselves?

Congress is about to kill funding for the F-22 Raptor, the Air Force's new fighter, because the money just isn't there. All right, then where is it?

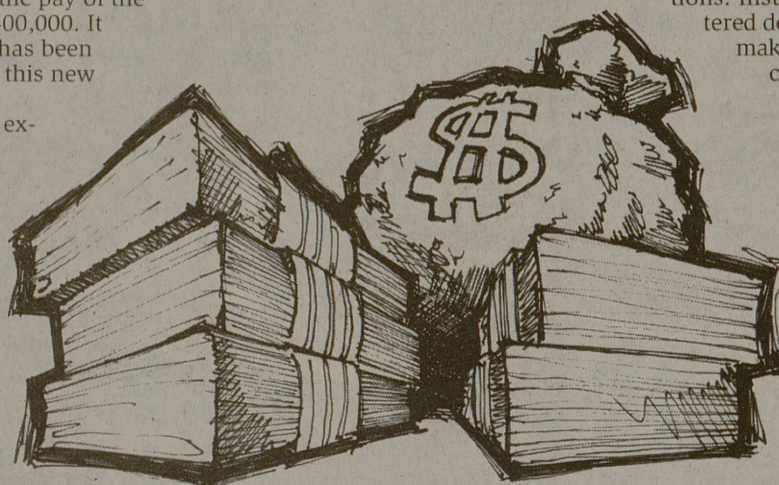
The prospects of Social Security reform have also been danced around because of how much it would cost to consider changing it.

Someone should remind our fine tunnel-visioned friends in Washington of a few things.

They are sitting on a major budget surplus which could be used on a variety of major issues if they were willing to recognize the situation.

They should also remind them that they were sent to Washington to serve the people of the nation, not themselves.

If Congress is unwilling to adapt and at least seriously address America's serious issues, the nation should do something about it, sooner as opposed to later.



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

There is a mountain of money from recent budget surpluses that Congress is sitting on, and all it can decide to do is make the fiscal year 13 months and give itself more money.

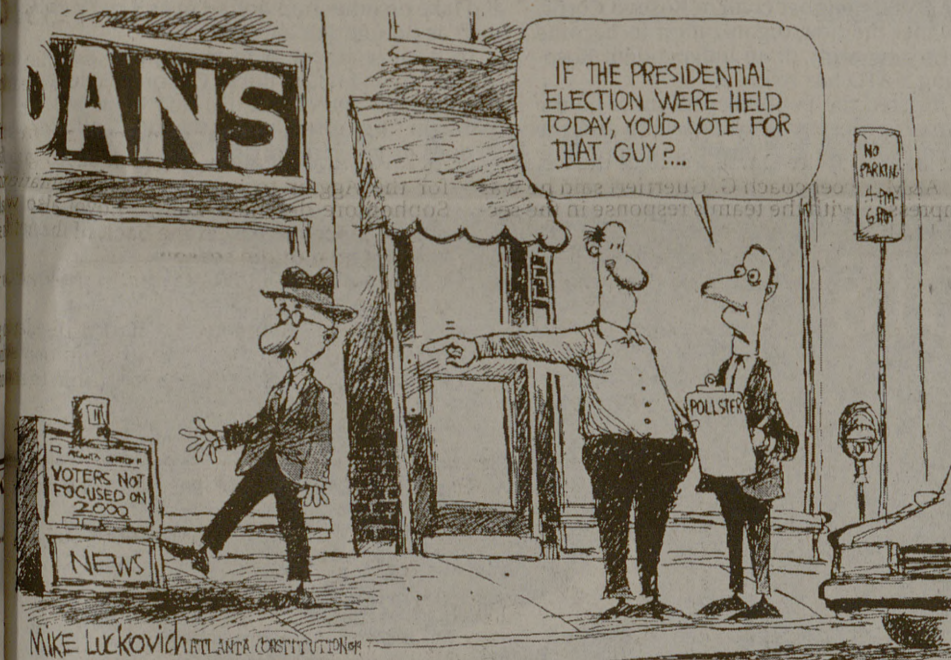
This is beyond gridlock — this is greed, laziness and ineptitude hard at work.

There are dozens of other things Congress could be attempting to change besides their own tax brackets, all of which would be more helpful to the public.

At this juncture, Congress' resolve to push for a solution seems to dissipate.

The day before passing this pay raise, leaders of both houses of Congress announced that any tax cut for the nation would not be forthcoming this year.

Mark Passwaters is an electrical engineering graduate student.



Public prayer infringes on rights of American people

The public profession of Christianity offends many people. Therefore, organized prayer has been banned at many sporting events and public gathering places.

These decisions were justified under the constitutional stipulation of the separation of church and state.

However, as the recent case of Marian Ward illustrates, a permanent decision is far from near being reached.

Because a state appeals court's ruling banned prayer before football games, Ward was barred from leading her Santa Fe (Texas) High School in a pregame prayer.

However, U.S. district judge Sim Lake issued a temporary order reversing the ruling, demonstrating the indecisiveness of our entire society toward drawing a line regarding public displays of religion.

The debate would be more easily solved if supporters of public prayer would be more considerate of non-Christians' wishes and beliefs.

Prayer has many purposes. According to Santa Fe High School Superintendent Ray Ownby, the invocation prior to football games is intended to solemnize the event. However, it is possible to solemnize an event without a public claiming of Christianity.

Although Ward's message itself was inoffensive, her ending — "In Jesus' name, Amen" — lacked consideration for others. It is doubtful every person in the audience professed Christianity as his or her religion of choice.

Expecting these non-believers to partake in and properly appreciate a Christian prayer is unreasonable.

Before beginning her prayer, Ward stated "Since a very good judge ruled that I have freedom of speech tonight."



JESSICA CRUTCHER

However, prayer before football games is less a matter of freedom of speech than one of freedom of choice. For example, people attend church because they wish for spiritual guidance. If they do not wish to attend, they do not.

On the other hand, most people attend sporting events wishing to be entertained, not to have another religion imposed upon them. These wishes should be respected.

The issue of prayer before sporting events is far from being exclusively a high school issue. Even at a school as diverse as Texas A&M, there is still a brief prayer said before the kick-off of all home football games.

Given the religiously diverse population of A&M, all attendants of the football game probably do not appreciate the significance of the prayer. It is impossible to recognize all religions equally at sports events such as these.

Therefore, they should all be equally ignored for the duration of the gathering.

The resident non-Christians cannot be expected to feel comfortable participating in a Christian prayer, just as Christians would probably not enjoy sitting through a prayer to Allah.

Incorporating a moment of silence would better serve the desired purpose of solemnizing the crowd. It would enable everyone in the crowd to pray — or not pray — according to their discretion. In addition, a moment of silence would not infringe on the wall of separation between church and state, therefore obliterating many of the current legal arguments dealing with pregame prayer.

Invocations before sporting events are a matter of respect more than one of religion. Since the invocation is meant to unify the crowd and show respect for the players, it should seek to unify everyone present — not just the Christian majority.

Jessica Crutcher is a sophomore journalism major.