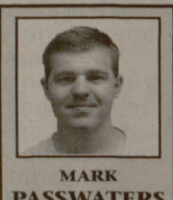


## Controlling the image

### Al Gore's newest revamp will not help campaign



MARK PASSWATERS

Recently the debate between evolutionists and creationists over the appearance of humans on this planet has accelerated. Close observation of the American political scene would seem to give science the edge over faith at this point. After all, isn't Vice President Al Gore evolving before the public's very eyes?

At the start of Gore's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, it appeared he was involved not in a race but in a corollary. There were no clouds on the horizon for Gore, who had the support not only of his party but also that of the presidency.

In spite of all this, however, Gore's bandwagon has rapidly fallen apart. Challenged not only by George W. Bush on the Republican side but also by fellow Democrat Bill Bradley, Gore's stroll to victory has become a political Bataan Death March.

Much has been made of both Gore's charisma problems and the harmful effects of "Clinton fatigue" on his campaign. These certainly have taken a toll, but there is a far simpler reason why the Gore campaign has gone from juggernaut to jughead. Gore and his handlers have run an inept campaign, lacking focus on major issues.

Gore's lack of charisma is well-documented. Instead of evoking memories of Reagan or Kennedy, his stiff, monotonous style has led to comparisons to a certain golden retriever fluent in over six million forms of communication.

Sensing this undercurrent, Gore has tried to change his character. A man who once seemed addicted to

notecard use, Gore can no longer be found behind the podium. He now moves around the stage, like Jerry Springer on PCP.

If shoe-pounding, a la Nikita Khrushchev, were still in vogue, Gore's docksiders would be in jeopardy. Going from one extreme to the other may show the nation Gore is not a human cinderblock, but it may also make him out to be Pinocchio.

Such a dramatic change does not show Gore's human side but instead shows he is willing to do anything, including changing his personality, for votes.

Bradley, by no means a charismatic man, is comfortable with who he is, and it has helped him cut Gore's national lead in the polls from 33 to 11 percent in one month. Or could Bradley's sudden gain be attributed to something else, like his willingness to talk about issues?

Another contributing factor in Gore's problems can be traced back to his boss, one William Clinton. In the year since Clinton's impeachment, the vice president often has mentioned how proud he still is to serve with him. With polls showing over half of the American people (between 53 and 58 percent) are sick of Bill Clinton and want him to go away, Gore has abruptly changed his tone. In an attempt to distance himself from Clinton, he has moved his campaign headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Nashville, Tenn.

However, Gore says he would continue on the path Clinton has charted. Since his re-election, Clinton has been impeached, ordered the bombing of Serbia and fought with the Republican Congress.

His inability to do anything of substance domestically, while not entirely his fault, is not a sign of great leadership.

But poor leadership, Gore's most

pressing problem, has little to do with Clinton. His advisers, who seemed woefully unprepared for any sort of challenge, have counseled Gore to make these abrupt personality changes.

Making Al into Oprah or the Anti-Clinton will do little good at this point because the public has seen the real Gore for the past eight years. Gore's only hope is to pay attention to the issues — something he has not yet done.

Social Security reform is a hot issue around the nation, but Gore would rather be on TV talking about how he inhaled marijuana and how his wife Tipper calls him the "Energizer Bunny" because he is such a stud. Gore could merit votes by making a stand on campaign finance, but instead he went on stage in Iowa and yelled at Bradley, "calling him out" for a series of debates.

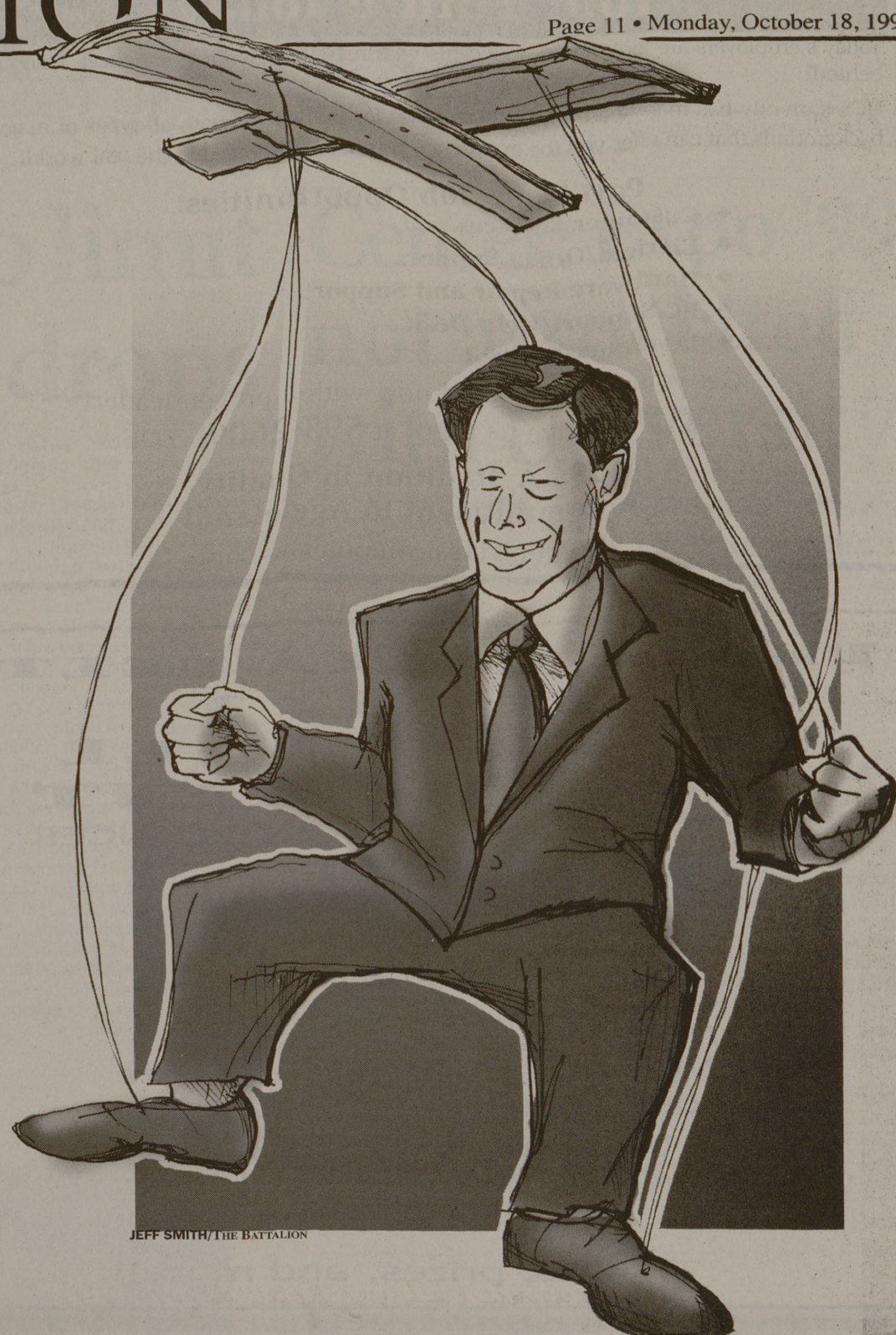
Gore could come up with his plan to balance the budget, but instead he mentions how great it is to be in a dogfight for the Democratic nomination for president.

Gore's actions may be good for "Stone Cold" Steve Austin, but they are not good for a presidential candidate. A man running for president must have a campaign that has not only style, but also substance. Currently, Gore's campaign has neither.

It would not be inaccurate to compare Vice President Gore's presidential campaign with a ship taking on water — he has no momentum, while his opposition continues to make great strides. There is still time for the S.S. Gore to be righted, but his campaign must drop anchor on a clue quickly.

Otherwise, the campaign will slip out of sight with nary a chuckle from the public.

Mark Passwaters is a graduate student in electrical engineering.



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

## A&M policy allows little tolerance for gay Aggies

Tensions between homosexuals and heterosexuals have risen steadily over the last few years, and the amount of anti-gay-related discrimination and violent crime is shocking.

As homosexuals have made their lifestyles more public, anti-gay crimes have become more prevalent. The issues of anti-gay discrimination and hate crimes currently are in the news because of the trial of the second suspect in the murder of Matthew Shepard, a college student brutally murdered because of his sexual orientation.

To prevent intolerant acts against homosexuals, Texas A&M University recently considered supplementing the school's existing anti-discrimination policy with a clause forbidding discrimination based on sexual orientation.

However, the proposal was not approved, apparently because University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen decided it was not important to guarantee in writing the protection of homosexual Aggies.

Bowen's decision, however well-intentioned it may have been, lacks consideration. Pretending a problem does not exist will not make it go away.

Homophobia and its tragic results will not be things of the past until the law forces others to treat homosexuals equally.

The current A&M discrimination policy states discrimination "could include but is not limited to: race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, age, the right to free speech, and the right to freedom of the press."

The policy obviously is intended to protect people from discrimination based on physical characteristics or lifestyles. Excluding homosexuality from the policy ignores a lifestyle that desperately needs legal protection.

According to the FBI's collection of hate-crimes statistics, anti-gay hate



JESSICA CRUTCHER

crimes accounted for 13.7 percent of all 1997 hate crimes. This ranks anti-gay crimes as the third most common cause of hate crimes reported to the FBI — below race and religion, but 3 percent above ethnicity.

Race, religion, and ethnicity all are included in A&M's discrimination policy — a hint A&M's anti-discrimination policy is itself discriminatory.

Even more disturbing, A&M's discrimination policy follows the example set by the state of Texas. Texas is one of 20 states in which hate-crime laws exclude sexual orientation.

The Texas law is conveniently vague, referring to hate-crime victims as those chosen "because of the defendant's bias or prejudice against a person or group."

But even this stipulation would be preferable over A&M's current policy.

According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, voters have repealed gay-rights laws or enacted anti-gay rights measures in 45 communities nationwide since the '70s.

In 1996, Colorado passed an amendment banning laws protecting homosexuals from discrimination.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court revoked the law, the fact it was enacted at all further illustrates the need for an anti-discrimination policy at A&M.

Anti-homosexual discrimination will continue to be a problem until there are policies banning it. Bowen's recent decision further enforces the common view homosexuals do not deserve legal protection.

Just as ending racial discrimination and religious persecution required years of legislation and intense political struggle, ending anti-gay discrimination will require straightforward legislation.

Hopefully, public leaders such as Bowen eventually will learn from past mistakes and work to end discrimination instead of blatantly allowing it.

Jessica Crutcher is a sophomore journalism major.

### Prolife flyers torn down

On the night of Oct. 13, someone went around the campus and removed from bulletin boards flyers posted by Aggies For Life which were in accordance with the rules of the University.

These persons then placed flyers accusing Aggies For Life and the Brazos Valley Coalition for Life of preventing poor women from obtaining health care.

Abortion is not healthcare. Abortion is a risky elective surgery sold to women in a crisis using high-pressure sales tactics. Healthcare claims to cure or prevent diseases or injuries. Pregnancy is not an injury or a disease.

If these people are really "pro-choice," wouldn't they want pregnant women to know all the options available to them in the community, not just abortion?

That is what pro-lifers do outside Planned Parenthood each Tuesday — they offer alternatives. All student organizations rightfully defend their freedom of speech.

No group should be allowed to take down information posted by another group just because they disagree with what the other group is saying.

Or are pro-choice groups afraid that in the battle for the truth about abortion and Planned Parenthood they will lose if they let pro-life groups get their message out?

Amber Matchen Class of '00 accompanied by 122 signatures

### Team should join rest of student body after game

I am writing about the football games I have attended this year. I am out of town this semester doing student teaching in San Antonio and always look forward to coming into town to watch our beloved football team.

But there is something different this year. During all the years I have been here, when the game is over, the Fight-in' Texas Aggie Band plays the War Hymn as the 12th Man sings and "saws Varsity's horns off" together.

This still happens, but the football team this year excommunicates themselves from the 12th Man and hightails it off the field in the middle of the War Hymn. I realize that it only a song to some, but when I see the badly defeated Baylor football team join THEIR student body for the Baylor song, it makes me wonder if the A&M football team feels above the rest of us.

### MAIL CALL

I didn't go to the football game for my health — I went to support the Aggies. I don't think it's too much to ask for the football team to at least pretend to be a part of the student body.

Kischel Arellano Class of '98

### Friendship not shallow

In his article, Jeff Wolfshohl attempts to define friendship. As a junior in college reading this article, I was surprised at the shallow examples used to describe what was considered friendship.

Many of the supposed friendships I read about were nothing more than superficial acquaintances.

One should be able to distinguish true friends from drinking buddies or fellow members of an organization.

With the people I consider friends, we jokingly talk about taking a bat to someone's head for one another. However, in all seriousness, I can easily see these people laying down their lives for me.

It is common to find difficulties in friendships, like in any relationship, but friends, by the true definition, will overcome them.

"Greater love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his for his friend." — John 15:13

Matt Hince Class of '01 accompanied by two signatures

### ResNet porn avoidable

Huffines' opinion on pornography on ResNet is wrong. His suggestion freedom of expression and due process should not be extended to purveyors of pornography shows a complete lack of understanding of these freedoms.

They are here to protect those who do and say unpopular things, like pornography.

Also, community sentiment on an issue should have no bearing on the lives of students or on A&M policies. If community sentiment turned and no longer supported animal cloning, should A&M stop doing it?

If the community does not like porn, then they should not look at it and leave those who do alone. While it is true A&M is supported by state money, it is

supported more so by student money. And so if students want to parlay porn, the University has no right to stop them. Huffines' idea CIS workers should delete unacceptable files from students' computers is laughable.

He might as well suggest the Grounds Service go and count all the leaves of grass on campus. In short, if you don't like the pornography on someone's computer, then go somewhere else.

Terrell Rabb Class of '03

### Surplus does not exist

Where did Ann Hart get her information? She demonizes Republicans for not balancing the budget by taking out of the Social Security "surplus." What surplus? Social Security is on track to be entirely bankrupt within fifteen years.

She also claims money the wealthy saved on taxes was supposed to "trickle down" to the common man did not.

Again, she is entirely wrong. In the '90s, it is the poor who have benefited more than the middle class, even with "heartless" Republicans gutting their much-needed welfare.

I volunteered this summer with kids from working poor families who had to suffer with their \$100 Nikes, Starter jackets and replica uniforms.

It nearly broke my heart to see their daddies didn't buy them an Abercrombie and Fitch uniform or late-model Mustang. The families who can barely scrape up money to buy food in America need blame only themselves for their own fiscal incompetence.

Brian Shelley Class of '99

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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