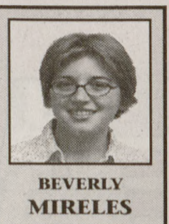


The Battalion

IT'S MY PARTY I'll conform if I want to



BEVERLY MIRELES

side from the occasional "whoop" that sounds like it came from a teen-age girl, most people would find little similarities between a young female demographic and the student population of Texas A&M. But do not be misled — the likenesses are more than just skin deep.

According to Rolling Stone magazine, there is a "secret" life of teen-age girls. One reporter for the magazine, Jancee Dunn was sent out to interact, correspond and visit with 12 girls in a small suburban town to unearth these secrets.

Teenage girls value individual uniqueness but cling to trends.

Upon reading the article, one is confronted with the usual teen-age stereotypes — boy-craziness, an eagerness to please, a sometimes-desperate need for attention. However, many of the girls' behavioral characteristics went far beyond stereotypes, if only because they were so unwaveringly adult in nature. In fact, their behavior was so adult in some aspects it was overly reminiscent of the behavior of college students.

How can it be that 14- and 15-year-old girls can act like students not only in college but specifically the students of A&M? A reader might venture to answer that it is the girls' reputations as over-achievers that lends them to the comparison. Or that the similarities are simply a mutual youth and exuberance.

To an extent, the reader would be right. Many teenage girls and A&M students exhibit an affinity for achievement. And it is also true that college students have the good fortune to be young.

No one says, "you must



ERIC ANDRAOS/THE BATTALION

dress like this to be noticed, accepted or loved," but one almost senses it. Style and trends are always arbitrary. The enactment of those trends are not, however, which is what pushes people toward conformity.

Though many students think differently and imagine they are original in their outlook, that rarely goes beyond the mind. People may think differently at A&M — to a point — but they do not usually look different.

Another significant similarity between teen-age girls and students at the University is the prevalence of a cautious optimism. Most students here are excited, but a little scared about the future that looms after graduation.

It is the same for young girls. They know so much of the world but have yet to experience it — all they are sure of is that one cannot be sure of anything. If that does not describe the typical college student's fears about life after

college, what would? And both young girls and many of A&M's female college students, specifically, feel that the days of serious protest are over, as far as feminism goes. Both seem to think feminism is a remnant of a pitiable history that they will never have to face. Because their mothers fought all the hard battles, the teen-age girls and college students already have a sense of female empowerment.

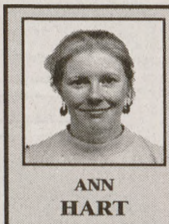
Feminism, for them, seems overbearing now. Perhaps teen-age girls and college students are not exactly alike, but they are all heading down the same path, and dealing with the same insecurities.

All worry about sex, disease, pollution, the economy and future jobs.

But noticing the similarities between the two groups might just help all to understand each other just a little bit more. Our problems are their problems — solving them together might just be easier than trying to work through them apart.

Beverly Mireles is a junior microbiology major.

Markets should fix health care



ANN HART

Each November the city of Bryan has open enrollment for its employees' health plan. This is the time when employees may make changes to their health insurance. It also is the time when the health-insurance company informs employees of coverage changes.

Many large employers use this practice — it is not unique to the city. Neither is employees' expectations that the changes announced by the plan's operator mean one thing — higher costs for fewer services.

Years after Bill Clinton tried to reform the health-care system and discovered his feet were nailed to the floor, noise is again being made by Congress about reforming the health-care system. One wonders why legislators think 535 people could make a plan that most might agree with. Instead, it would seem that as the number of cooks rises, the chances of a palatable soup falls.

Government failed to reform health care eight years ago, and it will fail again. As government continues to grow and attempts to be all things to all people, failures like previous efforts to reform health care will become more common. People should realize government has limitations and take things like health-care reform into their own hands.

Government failed to reform health care eight years ago, and it will fail again.

The business of government is to make public policy and administer it. The business of government is not to micro-manage every sector of the U.S. economy. Every other business is driven by supply and demand. Why should health care be different? When the price of name-brand cigarettes rose precipitously, many smokers switched to generic brands. The resulting dip in profits led cigarette manufacturers to introduce promotions and sales for their products. What would happen if people switched their patronage from health-care providers with few benefits to health-care providers whose financial arrangements were more reasonable?

If the demand for high-dollar health plans plummets, those plans will have little choice but to give up some of their profits to retain, or regain, patients. Patients also should question their doctors' judgment about the kinds and number of tests, asking that they look for problems systematically instead of launching massive fishing expeditions costing thousands of dollars. Doing so would help make health-care costs more manageable.

One of the distinct disadvantages of the current health-care system is the lack of choice. Most people only can afford the health-care plan subsidized for them by their employer. Often these plans specify participants only may use "in-network" providers, who have agreed to a particular fee schedule. The family doctor who has cared for several generations of a family is an endangered species. As plans find new ways to cut costs, the single-practice physician finds the going gets rougher.

Health-insurance companies are in business to make money. Generally they try to charge the highest rates and exclude the largest number of illnesses possible. Companies also find ways to cut down on the amount they pay to providers.

One common practice is to pay providers slowly throughout the year. At the end of the plan's fiscal term, they offer providers a percentage of outstanding claims in return for immediate payment. The doctors are left with a choice between a smaller lump sum now or the prospect of spending months and work-hours tracking and collecting outstanding claims. Understandably, many opt for the discounted payment.

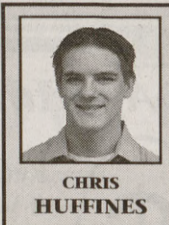
The whole system encourages antagonism between providers and their patients. Each sees the other as the problem. Doctors and patients should unite in an effort to force health-care providers to institute fair and humane practices. It is hard to understand why these two groups miss the fact they are not each other's enemies and are both getting raw deals from insurance companies.

When the Coca-Cola company changed the formula of its main product in the early '80s, consumers gave them a clear message about who was boss. Doctors and patients have an ideal coalition. Insurance companies are supposed to serve both. When they wake up and find that their ex-clients have decided to leave them out of the loop, they will have to take notice.

Does the health-care delivery system need first aid? Certainly. Can the government fix it? Probably not, nor should they try. It is not the government's responsibility to right all the wrongs plaguing citizens. It is the responsibility of the citizens to refuse to be abused.

Ann Hart is a senior English major.

Popular Harry Potter novels wrongly attacked



CHRIS HUFFINES

J. K. Rowling is a fascinating author. After writing the first of her now-famous Harry Potter books while living on welfare in Great Britain, Rowling has shot to stardom in the world of children's literature.

Harry Potter's adventures have caused furies of activity in bookstores as the books have flown to the top three spots of *The New York Times* Bestsellers' List.

But as happens all too often, religious zealotry has marred what would otherwise be excellent writing.

For those readers who have not read Harry Potter books, they are about a young orphan named Harry Potter who is sent to live with his resentful aunt and uncle after his parents are killed by an evil sorcerer. One day he learns he is to be sent to Hogwarts' School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and the rest of the books follow Harry's schooling at Hogwarts.

The magic involved is the root of the problem for many protesting the books. Many religious groups have condemned Harry Potter books as dangerously close to witchcraft.

These groups feel the books may initiate children to dabble in the occult and eventually fall into evil.

Unfortunately, these religious

groups are making a critical error in their thinking. The fundamentalist Christians who make up these groups have made the all-too-common mistake of thinking dichotomously.

Dichotomous thinkers see only two possibilities in a situation.

The most insidious attitude associated with dichotomous thinking is that if someone is not in favor of something, he or she must be against it.

But that thinking is wrong. There is a fundamental, albeit technical, difference between not liking something and disliking it.

Not liking is an absence of positive feelings. Disliking is a presence of negative feelings.

Those who dislike also do not have positive feelings and so do not like. However, those who neither like nor

dislike are stuck in no-man's land, constantly being mischaracterized by both extremes as a supporter of the other, when in reality they are neutral.

Harry Potter falls squarely into this neutral area.

While the idea of sorcery as a good thing is not supported by Christian doctrine, magic as it is used in the books is not anti-Christian either.

However, some Christians are refusing to recognize the neutrality and are instead condemning Harry Potter's non-Christian use of magic as anti-Christian, dangerous and satanic.

While Christian doctrine makes a point of creating a Christian/non-Christian dichotomy, Biblical lessons like "hate the sin, love the sinner" reveal the Almighty is well aware of the difference between not being for something and being actively against it.

And while Christianity cannot support a non-Christian ideal, it seems it cannot condemn a neutral item without hating the sinner.



MARK McPHERSON/THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

A person can be sued for negligence and the burden of proof is much less. Before we consider knee-jerk reactions to tragic events, we must first attempt to understand the limitations of our legal system.

We have enough laws that are not enforceable. How does someone know that they are too tired to drive? A good defense attorney would destroy that argument in a criminal trial.

I am not trying to downplay the tragic events which have recently occurred, but we must look for more effective solutions, instead of having the government pass more and more laws.

Are DWI laws effective? Tell

that to the thousands of families that lose people every year in drunken driving accidents.

Daniel Snow
Class of '89

Aggies still never quit playing hard

In response to Al Lazarus' Nov. 8 column.

I would like to take my hat off to Al Lazarus, and then throw it back in his face just as he has thrown all of the football team's pride back in its face. There is nothing worse than picking up *The Battalion* every week and hearing

someone trash talk our own football team. Obviously, Lazarus doesn't know what the Twelfth Man or school spirit is all about.

I came to this University all the way from Wyoming because of the tradition, and the fact that Aggies never quit.

I watched every second of the 37-0 loss to Nebraska this weekend. I was disappointed, yes, but I am not giving up on the team.

The team didn't give up either. Nothing made me and my friends prouder to be Aggies than when late in the fourth quarter I watched Ja-Mar Toombs barrel down the field with no helmet on, fighting for extra yards, even while

knowing that the game was over. That is what it means to be an Aggie.

David Voorhees
Class of '03

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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77843-1111

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Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com