

## Scare tactics should not be used to teach teen-agers responsibility

Using scare tactics seems to be the most popular way of convincing teen-agers not to engage in illegal activities.



JESSICA CRUTCHER

The DEAD program, a DWI-prevention program whose name stands for Drinking and Driving Ends All Dreams, is the most recent example of trying to scare teenagers into behaving properly.

A program recently implemented at A&M Consolidated High School used teaching methods such as a staged drunken-driving accident and a person dressed as the Grim Reaper roaming the hallways.

Using scare tactics to convince teen-agers to be good will never be effective. By the time most teen-agers reach high school, they are well on their way to becoming adults. Therefore, they should be granted enough respect to be spoken to logically about such subjects as drinking and illicit drug use, instead of emotionally scaring them with graphic examples.

The festivities began on the morning of Nov. 4, when a two-vehicle collision was staged in front of A&M Consolidated.

Emergency personnel pulled the front seat passenger from the car — her face covered in fake blood.

Then, firefighters used the Jaws of Life to remove the other three passengers, who looked bloody and pretended to be unconscious. Next, a police officer began pulling beer cans from the other vehicle, the driver of which seemed to be intoxicated. The drunken driver was taken to a mock jail, while a seemingly deceased passenger was loaded into a body bag.

To remind students of the high number of people who die of alcohol-related accidents, the Grim Reaper wandered around the high school campus for the rest of the day.

He stopped into a classroom every 15 minutes to claim another "victim." The 30 victims had gray makeup applied to their faces and were dubbed the "living dead." The morbidity of the DEAD acronym seems a little too appropriate.

Teen-agers are exposed to extreme violence every day. It is an accepted part of movies, video games, musical lyrics and even prime-time programming. Violence is accepted as something that happens — to other people.

No matter how grotesque the staged car crash was, it will not widely change this frame of mind.

The only people sure to take displays like the DEAD one to heart are those who have already lost friends and loved ones to socially unacceptable activities such as drunken driving.

But these people already know first-hand what the DEAD program — and others like it — are attempting to teach.

These people do not need to be subjected to bloody, violent displays like the one at A&M Consolidated to help them remember drinking and driving is unsafe.

One would think today's educators would be intuitive enough to realize that methods that have not worked in the past probably will not work now. And by emphasizing scare tactics, they are failing to address more pressing problems.

Alcohol is the No. 1 drug problem among young people, according to the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP).

In addition, according to the U.S. surgeon general, more than half of all high school students drink alcoholic beverages.

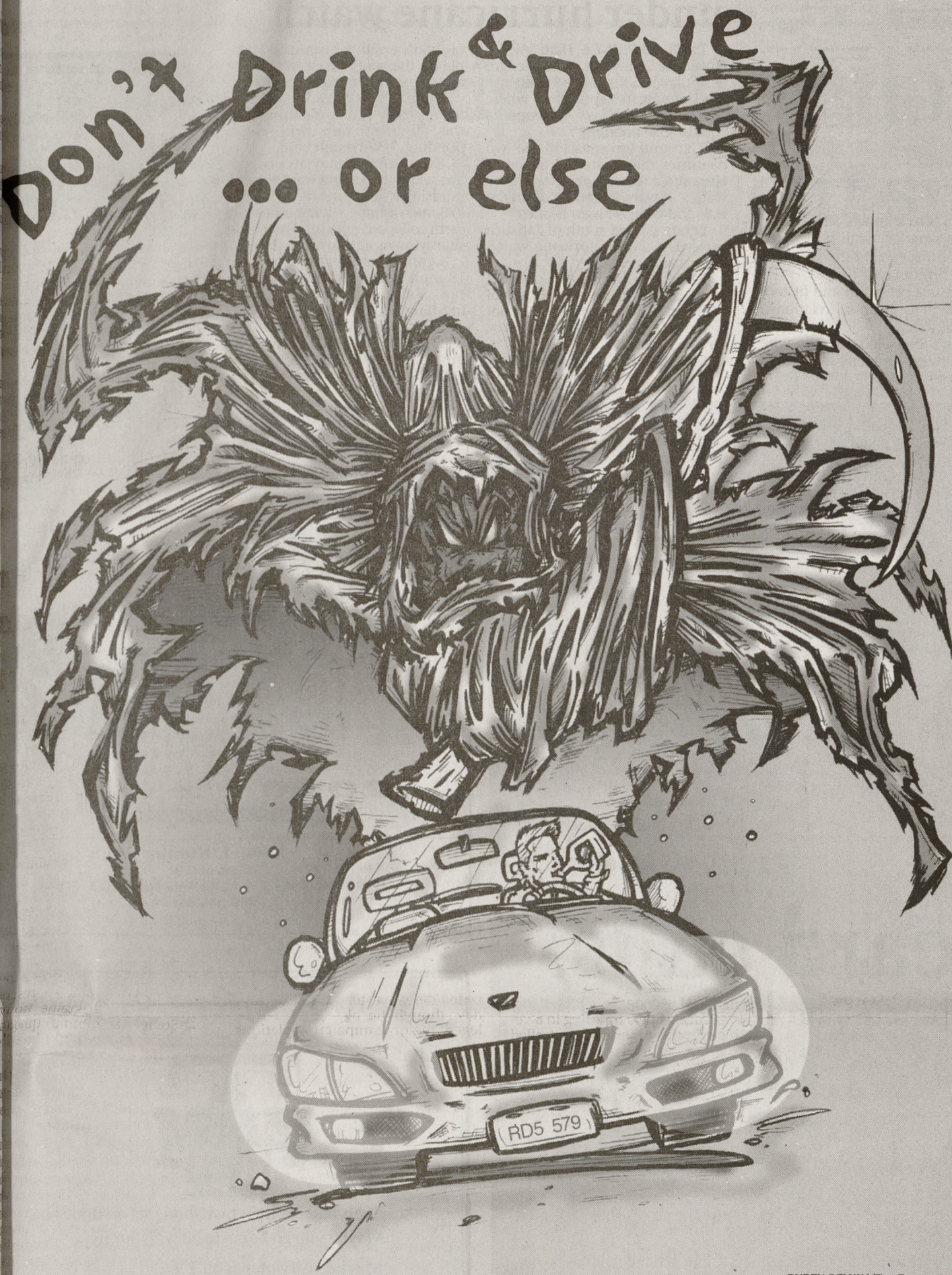
But the most disturbing statistic is that 2.6 million teen-agers do not know that a person can die from an alcohol overdose.

Apparently, educators have been too busy proving to students that dying in an alcohol-related accident is horrible, to tell them exactly what the dangers of alcohol consumption really are.

Instead of treating high-school students as children who can be frightened into not doing something, teen-agers should be granted the respect most of them deserve.

High school students generally are intelligent enough to be presented with the honest facts on a given subject, and to make their own decisions. There will be changes only when students are taught with respect.

Jessica Crutcher is a sophomore journalism major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

## Believers avoid criticism at any cost

Challenging a belief system is a tricky thing, because few people know how others will react when one crosses the line between criticism and offensiveness. Add in the fact that everyone has different beliefs, as well as different levels of those beliefs, and the world gets even more complicated. These complications are simply products of the nature of beliefs. They are highly personal, and people can feel threatened when what they believe to be true is made fun of or contested — even to those who would ridicule a long-held belief, religious or not. But owing to ethnocentrism and personal beliefs to get in the way of constructive criticism may eventually be more destructive than the criticism itself. Blind faith in anything can only lead to the deterioration of rational thought.



BEVERLY MIRELES

The world is filled with examples of people or ideas meant to challenge belief systems, but the most recent, celebrity-ridden one is *Dogma*, a Kevin Smith (writer and director of *Clerks* and *Mating Amy*) film. In it, Smith overtly critiques and repudiates Catholicism, as well as other products of organized religions, such as televangelism. And though his film never challenges the existence of God himself — or herself, as the case may be — this cinematic satire of faith and religion has sent pious ripples wherever movie theaters are located. One can easily understand why Catholics, and many other Christians, are so upset. Smith's *Dogma* is hardly their "95 Theses," but it does get in plenty of shots before the credits roll. Unfortunately, that is all people seem to see in the film — a collection of sly and crude remarks about a firmly-trenched doctrine. Whether or not the film is primary, and perhaps necessary,

criticism because of a vulgarly-worded screenplay and a cast of evangelically-unfriendly characters. It is the typical reaction to a controversial film, but these reactions are counter-productive.

People may criticize and rant in their own homes, but publicly, it seems defenders of the same beliefs must keep an undivided front against the menace of non-believers.

And religious matters are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to pushing people to the edge of tolerance.

### Blind faith can only lead to the deterioration of rational thought.

Texas A&M students should understand this give-and-take of beliefs better than anyone else. The University has plenty of traditions that feel the sting of criticism every year. Ask a Bonfire red-pot how he feels about *The Battalion* and notice how ordinary people might turn into belligerent defenders of tradition when threatened by other ideas.

Bonfire may not be as important to people as their religious alignments are, but as far as A&M goes, whether one is for or against Bonfire can make a neutral Aggie feel as though they are in the middle of A&M's very own holy war come Nov. 25.

Another sensitive subject is the quality of education at A&M. Observe how people react to comments about A&M's superiority, or lack thereof, academically speaking. Even conservative A&M students will react with some type of offense when their education is being ridiculed. And as badly as Aggies will react to a fellow student who criticizes A&M, reactions are even worse when non-Aggies put in their two cents.

It could be that Aggies are so worried about appearing inferior that they over-compensate with righteous indignation when anything derogatory about A&M is announced or admitted. However, if everyone ignores A&M's academic blemishes, they will never go away. Of course, people almost always will defend something they are a part of, and that is a big part of A&M's draw — "Aggie for life" is not just a bumper sticker phrase; it is a mentality. Nothing is wrong with defending a belief or showing Aggie pride well after one's graduation, but there is something wrong with hating others with different beliefs, or from different schools, as it may be. It is wrong to disregard something because one might not like it.

When someone believes in something, to what ends is a person allowed to defend that belief? What types of measures, if any, are acceptable when one feels challenged? Or is belief fluid, capable of change and expansion?

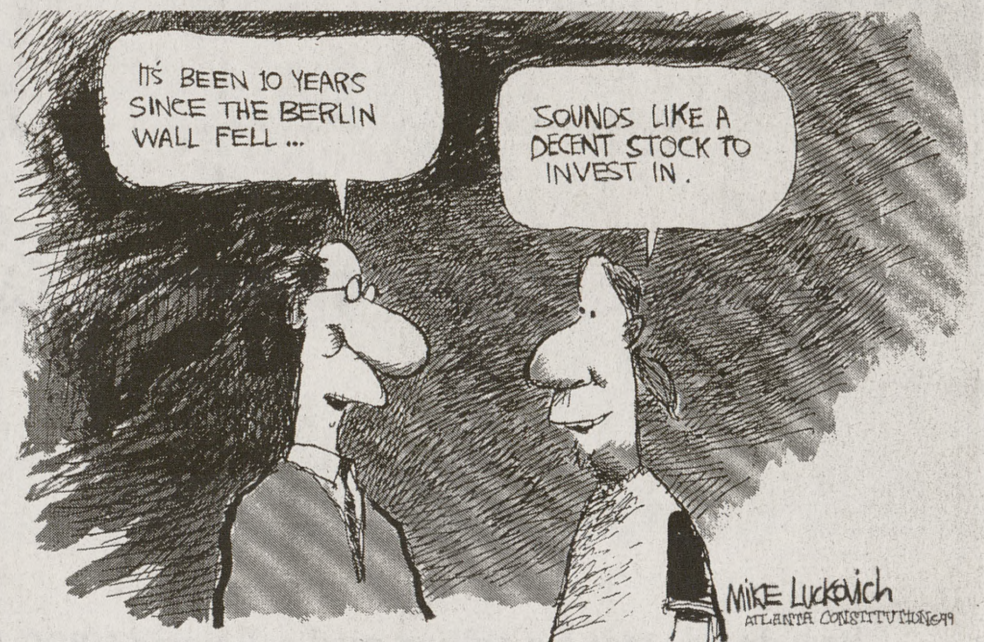
No one knows the answer to any of these questions for sure — beliefs are not structured enough to have certainty when it comes to questions about them. But what everyone knows is that a little constructive criticism never hurt anyone.

Catholics, Bonfire supporters and every other type of group are allowed to protest when they feel their beliefs are being maligned.

But if they only were to step back and take satire and criticism for what they really are — a documented recognition of obstacles in the execution of a belief, or beliefs — then believers might better their faith or their practice. This does not mean they should inordinately change their beliefs to accommodate someone else's.

Rather, these criticisms might allow a belief to improve upon itself, instead of encouraging believers to strike out blindly against those challenging them.

Beverly Mireles is a junior microbiology major.



### MAIL CALL

#### Foreign policy ability matters

In response to Mark Passwaters' Nov. 15 column.

In a tacit show of support for Bush, Passwaters dismisses the Texas governor's patent ignorance of foreign affairs: "What relevance should Bush's blunder have on campaign 2000? In a fair world, probably none."

Passwaters should be informed that owing to historical dynamics and economic globalization, the presidency of the United States of America should not be held, or aspired to, by average Georgians. The office is now so important

that some analysts have remarked, half-jokingly, that the election of the U.S. presidency ought to be conducted all over the world.

Therefore, W. Bush's contempt for the world's citizenry, the true domain of the U.S. presidency today, is unacceptable.

Ayokunle Ogunshola  
Graduate student

#### Dogma offends Catholic beliefs

I went to see the free sneak-preview of the Kevin Smith movie *Dogma*. I was sickened and appalled by what I saw. The obvious swipes at my faith were not

funny — they were mean-spirited and bigoted.

Do you really think that the MSC Film Society would host a film that attacked the beliefs of the Jewish people, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims or any of the mainline Protestant denominations? What would happen at this school if that occurred? How would you feel? How do you think we feel? Regardless of any disclaimer, there has to be some basic respect for a person's beliefs. Beliefs are what we hold sacred and to mock, ridicule and spread falsehoods about those beliefs is just plain wrong.

Mark Chaszar  
Graduate student