

## Aggies who lie, cheat and steal

Students who ignore code of honor damage University reputation

The Aggie Code of Honor states that "Aggies do not lie, cheat, or steal, nor do they tolerate those who do." Few academic institutions across the nation have an honor code similar to that of Texas A&M. The existence of this self-imposed ethical standard is commendable, but the question of whether students abide by it is another matter entirely.



SUMMER HICKS

A&M students are known to comprise a respectable and friendly student body. Unfortunately, though, Aggies in fact do lie, cheat, steal, as well as assault others, abuse alcohol, drive while intoxicated and commit a number of other crimes. The Aggie Code of Honor represents positive intentions but does not necessarily speak to the truth of student behavior.

All students have cheated on a test, seen someone else in a class with mysterious temporary tattoos on their hands or a convenient microscopic study guide. The fact that this occurs at A&M is not altogether shocking because it is regrettably something that happens on all college campuses. If A&M is to retain its sense of integrity, Aggies must realize the detrimental effect that is inflicted upon the University reputation.

If freshmen enter A&M with the expectation that the students on this campus are different than at other institutions, they may quickly become disillusioned by the same existence of scholastic dishonesty on the part of their peers.

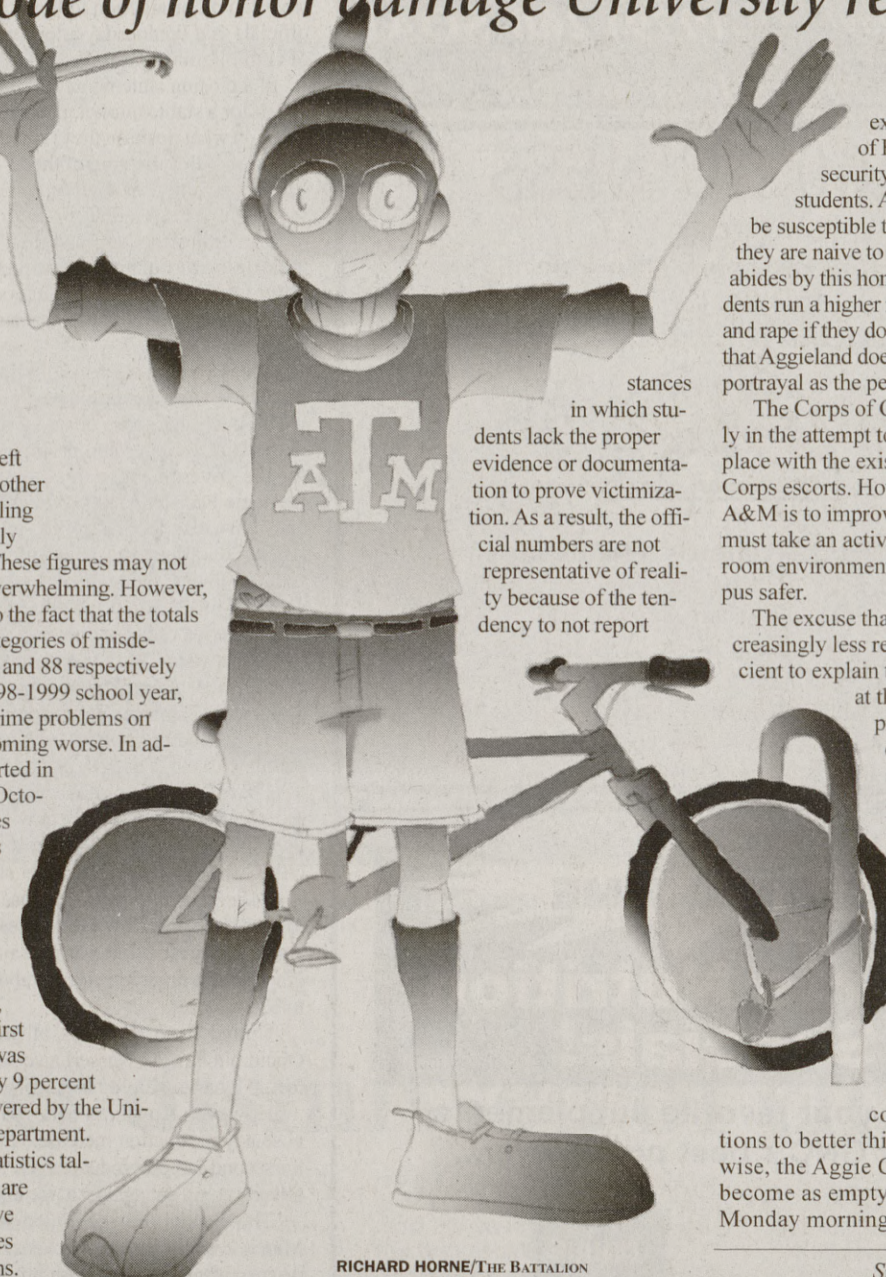
The Aggie Code of Honor is a declaration of morality, yet students do not always live up to this standard. The frequent sight of the solitary chained bicycle wheel is disappointing evidence of the theft of private property. Students have purses and wallets stolen from benches and lounges, books from classrooms and clothing and money from dormitories. Cars are burgled in cam-

pus

parking lots, and vandalism is not altogether infrequent.

In the first two months of the Fall 1999 semester, 44 misdemeanor theft incidents and another 64 incidents dealing with bicycles only were reported. These figures may not initially seem overwhelming. However, in comparison to the fact that the totals for these two categories of misdemeanor were 43 and 88 respectively for the entire 1998-1999 school year, it appears that crime problems on campus are becoming worse. In addition, also reported in September and October were 16 cases of harassment as opposed to 15 for the '98-'99 academic year. The value of property lost by students, faculty, and staff in the first half of Fall '99 was \$42,595 and only 9 percent of this was recovered by the University Police Department.

The crime statistics tallied by the UPD are sufficient to prove that not all Aggies are model citizens. There are many in-



RICHARD HORNE/THE BATTALION

incidents.

A disadvantage of the existence of the Aggie Code of Honor is the false sense of security that it tends to promote in students. Aggies are more likely to be susceptible to theft or other crimes if they are naive to the fact that not everyone abides by this honor system. Female students run a higher risk for harassment, assault and rape if they do not take into consideration that AggieLand does not always live up to its portrayal as the perfect, safe environment.

The Corps of Cadets participates actively in the attempt to make campus a secure place with the existence of services such as Corps escorts. However, if the integrity of A&M is to improve, the entire student body must take an active role in making classroom environments more honest and campus safer.

The excuse that society is becoming increasingly less respectable cannot be sufficient to explain the increasing problems at this University. Aggies pride themselves on being different, and they must stand by this belief to preserve the virtue represented by the Code of Honor.

If A&M is to retain the reputation it holds for being a place of great esteem, Aggies must make a conscientious effort to uphold the promises of the Code of Honor.

Students must begin to hold one another accountable for their actions to better this institution. Otherwise, the Aggie Code of Honor will become as empty as an 8 a.m. class on a Monday morning.

Summer Hicks is a senior English major.

## Mandatory anthrax vaccine hurts military morale

The Department of Defense is walking a road paved with good intentions, but those intentions are no match for angry military personnel and public dissent. Division over the Pentagon's mandatory anthrax vaccination program has sparked much debate in the past two years, and a recent House subcommittee report has added fuel to the fire. Though the government should certainly be concerned about the well-being and safety of its troops, it should also realize that this sort of controversy could result in an even more immediate crisis than the threat of biological warfare: destruction of military morale.

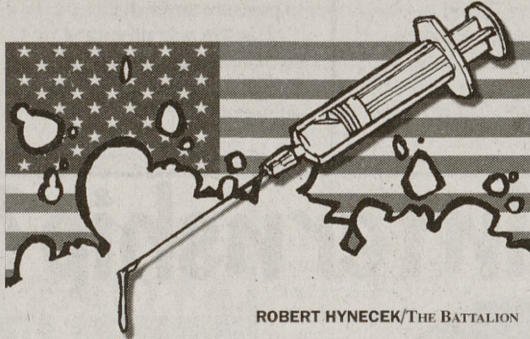
In 1998, the government made it mandatory for all active duty and reserve military personnel to receive a six-shot vaccination regimen for anthrax. Anthrax, a naturally occurring bacteria that can be spread by airborne spores, is 99 percent lethal when inhaled. A person receives no indication of exposure to this bacteria, and death within a few days is inevitable.

Though anthrax has never been used as a weapon, it is not something to be taken lightly, and in that vein, the Pentagon is getting in the game. At least seven potential enemies of the United States have admitted to developing capabilities for weaponizing anthrax. In fact, Iraq's military has already mastered these capabilities and currently produces and weaponizes the bacteria.

Secretary of Defense William Cohen used a five-pound bag of sugar to demonstrate how much anthrax would be necessary to wipe out one-half of the population of Washington, DC. The government does have a right to be cautious — people's lives could be at risk.

Since the vaccine was made mandatory for soldiers in

1998, more than 400,000 troops have received 1.5 million shots. However, the past two years have not gone as smoothly as the government might have hoped. To begin with, there have been 620 adverse reactions among military members who received the vaccine. Many complained of fevers, muscle pain, and dizziness; all of these are symptoms of the actual inhalation of anthrax itself. Due to these reactions, as well as a



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

general lack of government information on the vaccine, around 350 military members have refused to be vaccinated since 1998 — not exactly the best representation of military unity.

The House Government Reform National Security Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.), recently released a report stating that the vaccine is based on a "paucity of science." The report voices concern that little research on anthrax inhalation has been conducted and concludes that the vaccine should be an investigational drug, requiring troop approval prior to its use.

The Pentagon, of course, disagrees. Cohen has ordered

vaccination to continue, declaring that it would be irresponsible to send troops into combat without proper protection, apparently regardless of the amount of research that has or has not been done. The report also suggests that the vaccine, which is supplied by one manufacturer in Michigan, is prone to supply shortages and price increases. Perhaps the Pentagon feels that adding a bit to the national debt is a small price to pay, and it probably would be, if only the information the government released to its troops would outline these possibilities.

The government is trying to suggest that its commitment to protection and its responsibility for military safety are reason enough for its current actions, but going about it in this fashion is practically causing more problems than the bacteria itself. By labeling those who refuse or doubt the vaccine as paranoid and irrational, and not providing reasoning or information on its opinion, the government is setting itself up for a fall. The Department of Defense originally made the mistakes of refusing to answer critics' questions in a straightforward manner and of not widely publicizing research on anthrax. What the House report calls "heavy-handed propaganda" has dominated the government's vaccination promotions and has become a point of tension and distrust among many troops and other critics.

According to both the Pentagon and the House Committee, the vaccine does provide some measure of protection to those who receive it, but the costly results of its mandatory implementation have begun to weigh heavily against the possibility of its need. Military members deserve more than good intentions: they deserve information and choice, and the government has turned a blind eye to both.

Melissa Johnston is a senior English major.

## Making gay friends opens 'liberal' eyes

By Amy Choi

(U-WIRE) EVANSTON, Ill. -- The thing about being gay is that some great, vast majority of people think you're wrong. You're just plain wrong no matter what you do. It doesn't matter what the source of your "problem" is. You could have made a wrong decision to be gay. You could have been turned away from heterosexuality by some traumatic event, so it's not necessarily your fault you're so mistaken. You could just be some sort of genetic freak and have been born wrong. But in the end, what matters is that you're abnormal. You're strange. You're different. You're wrong.

Or you could be bisexual. You could be half-wrong. You could be indecisive. You're still weird. There's still something not quite right about you.

I met my friend Tina last summer. She's funky, hip, intelligent and, to put it plainly, cool as hell. I met her girlfriend, Mary, a few months later. My friend Jack told me in July he'd been sleeping with guys for months but just hadn't told anybody, especially not any of his good guy friends. (Ironically, it was and still is easier for Jack to talk about being gay to complete strangers than it is for him to come out to his friends.) Another friend Mike came out of the closet after graduating college, having known he was gay for nine years. Imagine! Nine years of being "right" but always being wrong!

I don't like being wrong, not about anything. That's one of the funny quirks about being a reporter: It's our job to get things right and expose and reprimand those who do things

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wrong. But there I was, with my first gay friends, really, and feeling a little strange. I was suddenly surrounded by "wrongness," but for them, at least, coming out had finally made everything "right."

Or maybe it's just that my mindset has been wrong all along, and I just never thought so myself. I've always been proud of being a liberal, but when have I ever had gay friends or experienced the gay community? I live in an upper-middle-class, frat-boy world, where the words "fag" and "gay" are tossed around to describe anything negative. They are defined as purely adjectives, not homophobia, by those who use them. Anything can be gay, they say. It just means it's stupid.

When I brought Jack to a friend's party, sex and dating inevitably became the topics of conversation, as they almost always will among a group of college students. He started talking about his last fling — with a guy.

Later, friends mentioned him to me, but never by name: "Hey, how's your bi-friend? He turned out to be an OK guy."

These are not backward, uneducated people. And their uncertainty and curiosity aren't character flaws. But that itching feeling that something alien has suddenly stepped into a very safe, homogenous and "liberal" world is unsettling. I was unsettled. I was weirded out the first time Tina and I had a sleepover and changed our clothes in front of each other. It was odd for me to watch her kiss Mary hello and goodbye. And in some ways, I got a little jealous of their relationship and thought of those women who have captivated me, whom I've admired and even been infatuated with. But I've never wanted to be "wrong."

I don't know if I'm "right" now. It shocked and upset me to feel those little waves of disturbance at learning that the girl soon to become my best friend is bisexual, that I wasn't immediately completely open and accepting. I don't know about a lot of things, and, like many others our age, started questioning my own sexuality.

But after 20 years of being so absolutely "right," can I be "wrong" after all? I'm not sure, but when I asked Tina, she just kind of gave me a funny look and giggled. Then all she said was that if it counts for anything, she would never be attracted to me. I'm not offended. I wouldn't date a good friend anyways. It's just not "right."

Amy Choi is a columnist for the Daily Northwestern at Northwestern University.

## Austrian domestic politics their business

In response to Jill Riley's Feb. 21 column.

The West has decided to flex its might when it is not needed. The Austrian people elected 52 members of the far-right Freedom Party to its 183-member Parliament; but America and our allies have decided that we should once again infringe on another nation's democratic rights. The Freedom party then merged with the People's Party to form a coalition government in charge with 104 of 183 seats in the Parliament.

Joerg Haider has been severely criticized for some things that he has apologized for; and that is wrong. If anyone would read the planks of the Freedom Party, they could never compare them to National Socialists (Nazis). One of the main themes of the Freedom Party is "Freedom is the most precious possession people have." Freedom means the utmost degree of self-determination exercised in a responsible way.

Freedom excludes any oppression, whether physical or mental, religious, political or economic and, above all, rules out any kind of state despotism. That is

taken from Chapter 1, Article 1 of their program. The main theme of National Socialism is government control of all major aspects of society. I encourage everyone to find the Freedom Party's Web site and read their ideas.

Other nation's intolerance to this situation is its biggest problem. A Jewish organization has stopped a program that they were doing in Austria teaching about openness and acceptance because of this.

To conclude, I suggest that we let Haider's Freedom Party start dictating national policy; because they stand for freedom, free education, fair market economies, and Christianity.

David Hettick Class of '02

## Resistance is logical

In response to Melissa Bedsole's Feb. 17 column.

While Bedsole's article regarding the unity within the Aggie family holds some truth, it is illogical to suggest that Aggies should condone and tolerate all groups, regardless of their beliefs. I think if she were to seriously consider the point, she

would agree that if the Klu Klux Klan or a group of Neo-Nazis decided to express their beliefs on our campus, they would meet much deserved resistance. Simply because we share an identity as Aggies, we should not allow that to supersede our moral beliefs and convictions.

Aggies for Life's presence at Rudder Fountain during last week's gay/lesbian weddings was centered around promoting unity as a means, not a goal. The message being sent was one of love, hope and encouragement. The white ribbons promoting National Chastity Week and the literature regarding the sanctity of marriage were distributed in a peaceful and loving manner. We were seeking to better unify our campus around that which is both true and good.

Amber Matchen Class of '00

## McCain not a hypocrite

In response to Mark Passwaters's Feb. 22 column.

Has McCain been contradicting himself? A careful observation of McCain's behavior shows that the Senator did not make an about-face heading into the pres-

idential nomination.

Can McCain be against a repeal of Roe v. Wade? He calls for abortion exemptions in case of risk of life, incest, or rape, and he probably feels these conditions constitute freedom of choice. It should also be noted that the Christian Coalition stopped endorsing McCain once he reestablished the exemptions of his abortion policy, which were irrelevant when the Senate was debating partial-birth abortion and state abortion funding.

If one visits the Senator's campaign site (www.mccain2000.com), one can read details about McCain's involvement with the infamous Charles Keating. According to McCain, his experience with Keating is strongly responsible for his drive for finance reform; he doesn't want history to repeat itself. As of now, no other major presidential candidate has made a pledge to eliminate all soft money, the largest loophole that allows individuals and organizations to contribute an unlimited amount of money to a campaign, the same loophole that Charles Keating exploited in 1991.

It should be noted, though, that McCain bases much of his reform image on his plan to cut tax breaks for several corporations. He plans to slash "Corporate Welfare" (a subject thoroughly covered by the November 9-30, 1998 editions of

## MAIL CALL

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