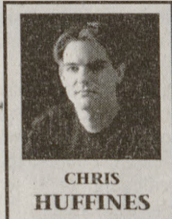


Tuesday, May 2, 2000

A tale of two cities

Bryan and College Station would benefit from merging governments, cut bureaucracy

The difference between Bryan and College Station is nine letters and about half an inch. Despite this, the two cities insist on maintaining identities about as independent of each other as Siamese twins. In the case of Bryan and College Station, unlike the twins, the goal should be to unite and not divide them.

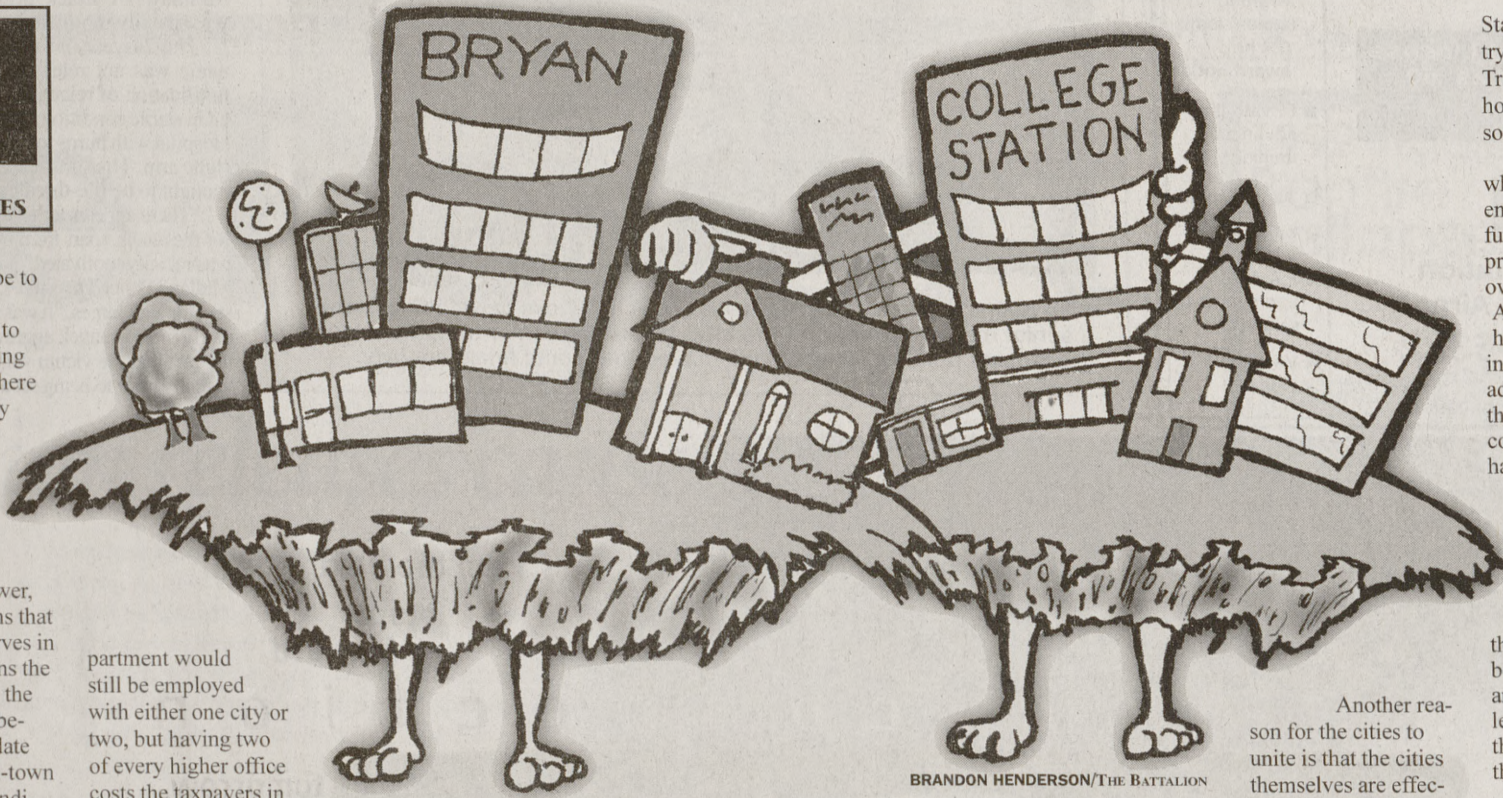


CHRIS HUFFINES

There are several reasons for the cities to unite. Bryan and College Station are wasting money by existing separately. Currently, there are two mayors, two police chiefs, two city councils and two bureaucracies to maintain. Even worse, there are two city halls, two police stations and two fleets of city vehicles. This duplication is wasteful, not only of personnel, but also of money.

In terms of manpower (and womanpower, of course), having two governments means that the best person for any duplicated job, serves in that position in only one city. It also means the second-best also serves in that position in the other city. By spreading the good people between two governments, the entire candidate pool is made shallower. Veterans of small-town politics know the dangers of a shallow candidate pool, the results of which resemble a shallow gene pool. Do Bryan and College Station want the best, or the second string?

In terms of money, having two cities instead of one is also wasteful. At many levels, salaries cost twice as much because twice as many people are on payroll. The lowest levels of any department would still be employed with either one city or two, but having two of every higher office costs the taxpayers in duplicated salaries. In addition, the buildings are a colossal waste of money for building construction and in maintenance. Not only must those buildings be heated in the winter and cooled in the summer, but they must be landscaped, repaired and kept clean, which costs a lot of money. Best still, a



BRANDON HENDERSON/THE BATTALION

combined government could sell one of the city halls at a premium, as College Station's is in a prime location for local or chain merchants and Bryan's is a fairly new, fairly large office space. The sale price would be a very attractive amount of money in the bank.

Another reason for the cities to unite is that the cities themselves are effectively one entity that must treat problems separately. Bryan and College Station are currently closer than a 3-year-old and her teddy bear in a thunderstorm, but each can only zone, prosecute and administrate within its borders. A party in Bryan that offends residents in College

Station presents a problem for the cities who try to figure out how to prosecute the offenders. Traffic control, urban growth, zoning and a host of other issues can be more effectively resolved by one city than two.

Even worse, the presence of Texas A&M, while providing a large amount of life (and revenue) for the cities, complicates things even further. Students are the cause of many of the problems in Bryan-College Station, including overcrowding, traffic, crime and drunk driving. Also, there is an extreme surplus of workers here due to the size of the student body, making it very difficult for teen-agers and unskilled adults to find work. Yes, Aggies pay taxes to the cities, but no, students do not live in the community for more than a few years. They have nowhere near the same amount of incentive to take care of and improve the community as lifelong residents do. In the face of these obstacles, one unified government is in the ideal position to ensure the well-being of the community as a whole. If Bryan or College Station were to pass an ordinance that was extremely unpopular with the student body, the one city would simply be sponsoring an exodus to the other. As one city, Bryan-College Station can pass reasonable ordinances that may upset the students, but will be the right thing to do.

It simply makes sense for Bryan and College Station to join and become one city. The identity of these cities are already inseparably linked. They are one city in essence, if not in name. It is time the name caught up to the reality.

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communications major.

Testosterone gel fuels debate of gains and risks

The debate over testosterone is nothing new. For years, men have injected the hormone in hopes of becoming the stereotypical male.



JILL RILEY

It seems the sector of the male population known as the "guy next door" no longer exists.

With the creation of various prescription drugs to increase sex drive and the media's portrayal of young, virile men, males seem more unwilling to accept Mother Nature's way. Instead, they create their own path, which places more men into the demographic category of "wannabe Backstreet Boys."

One way men attempt to curb their feelings of inadequacy is by using prescribed doses of testosterone. About 4 million men whose bodies do not produce enough testosterone take a doctor-prescribed synthetic version. Time magazine reports that until now, these men had to take it by self-injection or with a testosterone patch applied to the scrotum. Ouch. And people think pulling off Band-Aids is painful.

This summer, though, men everywhere can have easy access to the male hormone by using AndroGel, a rub-on testosterone ointment. Making testosterone easier to use is a bad idea for several reasons.

The reasons most men get extra testosterone are not life-threatening — they are frivolous. Having high testosterone levels gives them confidence, increases libido and aids in building muscle.

Using unnecessary drugs to feel more confident is ridiculous — almost as ridiculous as buying a gargantuan extended cab pickup truck jacked 12 feet off the ground to cruise around town.

Also, the male body manufactures less

testosterone as it ages — it is a natural process. However, some aging men feel the need to keep their level "normal" by obtaining testosterone from their doctors. The extra testosterone makes them feel they are not losing their manliness as they age.

Messing around with hormone levels teeters on the edge of insanity. Men who receive extra testosterone report feeling more peppy and on-edge

few hours in a room full of menopausal women. Seeing what happens when hormone levels dramatically increase should convince them to leave their hormones alone.

Another reason men consider adding testosterone to their bodies is to increase their sex drives; however, there are enough products on the market for that problem to help non-elderly men.

dysfunction is supposed to affect mostly older men, right?

Men may also turn to AndroGel or injections in order to increase muscle mass more easily. Men trying to be like Mark McGwire may be the first in line for the new, easy-to-use gel form.

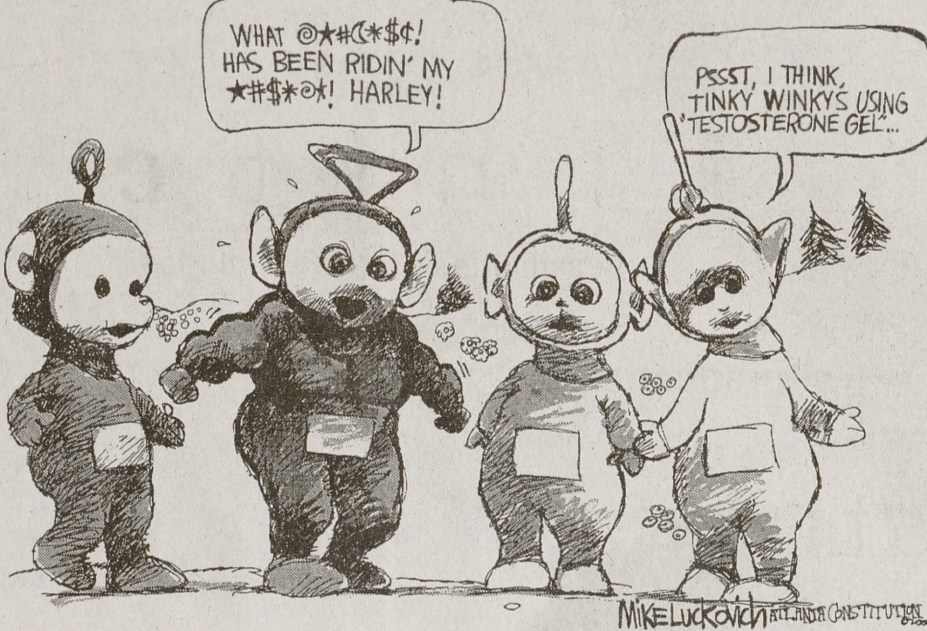
Following them would be an array of adolescent guys trying to impress girls with big muscles. And since young men already have high testosterone levels, someone will be forced to sell AndroGel illegally, like they already do with other forms of steroids.

This would only lead these hormonally overloaded men to more aggressive behavior that could turn dangerous, not to mention increase the system of steroid bootlegging. One thing men may not know is that taking too much extra testosterone can lead their bodies to produce more estrogen, the "female" hormone. While both men and women produce both hormones, testosterone levels are higher in men and vice versa, and should not be tampered with.

It would serve them right if they turned into a combination of the Incredible Hulk and Martha Stewart. Putting testosterone in such an easy-to-use form will only cause more unnecessary abuse of prescribed drugs. Men who only use it for self-confidence, libido or larger muscle potential will be dabbling with nature's norm, which could cause them and their loved ones serious personal problems.

Men need to refrain from fighting nature and just be the "guy next door."

Jill Riley is a senior journalism major.



MIKE LUCKOVICH/THE BATTALION

in the days following the injection.

There are already enough cases of people flying off the handle and shooting strangers at McDonald's, not to mention the number of domestic abuse occurrences.

Men should leave the "it's just my hormones" excuse to the 52 percent of the population who have to deal with premenstrual syndrome.

Or maybe we should make men considering AndroGel or injections spend a

As for elderly men, it is natural for men to lose some of their sex drive as they age. Sixty-five-year-old men were not meant to run around and spread their seed.

Procreation is probably the top reason for sexual intercourse, though advertisers would roll over and croak if people were to figure that out. Notice the "faces of erectile dysfunction" seen on television — younger, good-looking... How much do they pay those guys, anyway? Erectile

Bonfire report, exam concerns addressed

As you are aware, the report of the Bonfire Commission will be released this afternoon following a press conference in Reed Arena. Although originally planned for completion and distribution a month ago, the release of the report now falls on the last day of scheduled classes, only two days before the start of the final exam period. It is not unreasonable to expect that the release of the findings in the report may cause some of our students, faculty and staff to have a recurrence of memories and strong emotions rivaling those felt immediately following the tragedy itself. Indeed, it may affect the ability of some of our students to properly concentrate on their preparations for final exams.

As we enter the final examination period, it is expected that the administration of the final exams will proceed as planned. However, should students feel the need for special consideration regarding the administration of their final exams, they should meet with the instructors of their classes and present the nature of any extenuating circumstances related to the release of the Bonfire Commission report that would adversely affect their ability to take the exams as scheduled. In addition, students anticipating special consideration are directed to meet with advisers in their academic major. In all cases, students should resolve requests for special consideration prior to the scheduled period for the final examination.

There may be students intending to graduate in the May ceremonies yet, due to the release of the Bonfire Commission report, feel they are unable to complete the requirements of all of their courses. A situation of incomplete requirements for a graduating student is not uncommon. Students faced with this situation may request the incomplete (I) grade from the instructor and then should endeavor to complete the remaining work as quickly as possible.

I know that each of us desires what is best for our students, and I am confident that appropriate academic decisions will be made at all levels. I also know that the Aggie family will once again join together in appropriately accommodating and understanding our students' emotional needs.

Dr. Ronald G. Douglas is executive vice president and provost.



GUEST COLUMNIST

VIEW POINTS

Muster invocation insensitive to some

For many Christians, it is important to share the word of God. Unfortunately, this sharing sometimes occurs at inappropriate times. Jeremiah Ebeling, Corps Chaplain, delivered the invocation at Muster this year and spoke of Christian beliefs, excluding and disrespecting many non-believing Aggies. Muster is a time for all Aggies to come back and feel comfortable while remembering their fallen friends. And while this campus may sometimes seem to be a completely Christian environment, it is not, and Aggies must respect that there are other non-Christian beliefs.

Ebeling made reference to God's son and read from Philippians, a book in the Bible's New Testament. For many, Ebeling's words were heart-spoken and inspiring, but it is understandable that non-Christian students would be offended by them. Marisa Minor, a senior psychology major, felt that

out of the 13,000 people that attended Muster, the majority were probably Christian, but those who were not did not feel united as Aggies.

"Being Jewish at A&M, I've always known it was Christian-oriented, but it has never been an issue for me personally. I felt that my right to pray was taken away because I don't pray to Jesus and that is who it was directed toward."

Excluding someone on this campus based upon their religious beliefs not only questions the 1st amendment of separation of church and state, but goes against the idea of the friendly, accepting campus we strive for.

Not only is it completely unfair to bring such strong religious statements into a school function, but Ebeling's invocation was completely detrimental to the purpose behind Aggie Muster. Families and Aggie friends of the deceased filled Reed Arena to take a moment to remember their friends and relatives. And while many, including myself, believed strongly in the things Ebeling spoke of, it still caught us by surprise that such things were spoken of on this occasion.

Muster is one of the most distinguished traditions on this campus. But when situations like this

arise among our traditions and have a negative effect on some of our student body, Texas A&M has no reason to feel distinguished.

— Melissa Bedsole

Pranks go too far

Everybody loves a good prank. However, pranks are always much more fun for the perpetrators than for the victims. Texas A&M has among its strong traditions a long-standing history of dorm rivalries and consequent pranks that are fun to hear about as part of Aggie lore. The price that is paid for a great story, though, can be excessively high. Rationality is not often enough a part of crazy college pranks.

Two weeks ago, residents on the first floor of Moore Hall on Northside were awakened at 2 a.m. by an unbearable stench. A barrel of goo, filled with water, dead animals and human excrement that had been stagnating for some time, was dumped into Moore's first floor hallway by culprits from a rival dorm. Two of the first floor residents salvaged as many items as they could from the floor before

climbing out the window to escape the smel. They lost their carpeting, several pairs of shoes and some clothing that was in the closet. The items were so badly stained that they could not be cleaned.

Rivalries can be constructive and entertaining, but they go too far when they result in pranks that are dangerous and destructive. Dorms should not encourage such activities. People are hurt, property is destroyed, time is wasted and, sometimes, records are ruined. Students who have been talked into grand schemes of vandalism and chaos may find themselves in legal trouble with the Residence Hall Association, the University or the police.

Extreme pranks also disrupt the university atmosphere. Pranksters lose valuable study or class time, and their victims may be unable to concentrate on school when dealing with the consequences of pranks. Further, as in the case of Moore Hall's victimization, the custodial and maintenance crews are forced to clean up after students who are supposed to be adults. That should not be part of their jobs. Pranking extremes give Texas A&M and Aggies a bad name.

— Heather Corbell