

Thursday, June 8, 2000

Blood on the fairway

New golf courses could create interesting rivalry

Contrary to all the jokes, the City of Bryan is not a ghetto. Anyone saying to themselves, "Yeah, but down past the train tracks..." should take a one-and-a-half hour drive south to downtown Houston and poke around the Fifth Ward. Funny how there are no Cafe Capris — or even Dairy Queens, for that matter — in the poorest parts of that city.



ERIC DICKENS

So while Bryan may be far from the slums, two parties are competing to improve the area and attract visitors with a pair of first-class golf courses. The City of Bryan, in partnership with Texas A&M, is planning a lush, 27-hole golf course to be surrounded by up-scale (i.e. expensive) homes. The Traditions Golf and Country Club will be located in West Bryan and will be designed by Jack Nicklaus and his son. On the other side of town, Miramont Development Corporation is scheming up a course of its own. Their plan is a 22-hole wonder in East Bryan, which will have the same costly homes around it, but unfortunately will not be designed by anybody famous.

So thanks to these two groups, Bryan, a city long noted for its rich golf history, will see the addition of nearly 50 holes of golfing glory. At first glance, new courses and country clubs seems like a perfect match for A&M's surrounding community. The Traditions course is pursuing former students as members, and with a historically all-white school, a cozy "members-only" country club seems like a good idea. However, even if A&M drags in every old Ag who has ever stepped onto the links, the Bryan area cannot support two new, full-scale golf and country clubs. Even though the Pebble Creek Country Club is doing well, Bryan's Municipal Golf Course and the Texas A&M University's course look like they are slowly going to waste. B-CS is not a large golfing community — it has a hard enough time keeping the Putt-Putt golf course alive,

and that place even has windmills. Besides, nothing would ruin Bryan's working-class community like a bunch of uppity white males with score cards.

Unfortunately, it seems too late to stop the construction of these facilities and surrounding upper-crust neighborhoods. Instead, the courses and country clubs should have to continue their competition by fighting for support from the City of Bryan. With any luck, this will set the stage for a Malthusian 'survival of the fittest' contest with the winner going on to cater what golf-enthusiasts it can attract. As for the loser, nobody wants to see another course lay fallow. Therefore, the less-successful course should get turned into a full-sized miniature golf course a la *Caddyshack II*. While this new ultimate miniature golf palace may put the old one out of business, at least local high school seniors will still have a windmill to make out behind.

Vying for the pennies of B-CS golfing patrons may be tough, but competition, like love, will make a man do

Vying for the pennies of B-CS golfing patrons may be tough, but competition, like love, will make a man do strange things.

But sadly, these ploys will probably not be enough for one of the courses to rise up as the premier, members-only cracker barrel of Bryan, Texas. The Traditions and Miramont courses will probably have to take more drastic measures. It is not horribly presumptuous to suspect members from rival courses will harbor animosity toward each other and may take out that aggression in a choreographed Leonard Bernstein climactic street fight straight out of *West Side Story*.

One can only hope that the competing courses could



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

settle their dispute with song and dance alone, however, things may turn violent. First Bryan gets two new golf courses, how far off is an 18-hole steel cage death match? Nonetheless, this struggle could turn into a spectator event, garnering much needed resident attention. Never forget, this is the community that damn-near sold out Reed Arena when the WCW came last year.

However it is resolved, the competition between Bryan's two new golf and country clubs is practically in-

evitable. The town may not be a hood, but it is not big enough for Traditions and Miramont. B-CS might support two new Wal-Marts or two new Sonics; but not two new expensive, members-only country clubs and golf courses. So, for the sake of not watching yet another set of fairways grow brown, let there be war. At least the WCW enthusiasts will come.

Eric Dickens is a senior English major.

News service hurt by religious group purchase

In the words of Neil Young, "It's better to burn out than to fade away."



DAVID LEE

Unfortunately, this phrase is a fitting epitaph for United Press International (UPI). The news wire service enjoyed its heyday in the '50s, with notable scoops including the first report of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas. Accordingly, UPI earned the majority of its 10 Pulitzer Prizes during this period. It had a robust network of affiliates across the country with a staff of news icons including David Brinkley and Walter Cronkite. Profit margins, however, have plummeted steadily since those days as the scars of two bankruptcies and three failed owners in the past decade remain. What once was a viable competitor to the Associated Press has now become a joke — a skeleton crew of 157 employees. Sadly, UPI today is merely a silhouette of what it was in its glorious past.

Two weeks ago, UPI hit rock bottom. It was announced that UPI is to be purchased by New World Communications Inc., publisher of the *The Washington Times*. More alarming is the fact that New World is the news arm of the ultra-conservative Unification Church, a cult-esque ministry founded by Rev. Sun Myong Moon. The church's antics have been documented for years with practices rang-

ing from mass weddings to "aggressive" recruitment techniques.

Predictably, the media has been in an uproar since the sale's announcement. "To me, UPI just died," said Sam Donaldson, ABC anchorman.

This sentiment is understandable and justified — the notion of an extremist church pulling the strings of a once-respected news wire borders on blasphemy. Gone is the journalistic need for impartiality and in its place is the threat of propaganda and self-promotion on behalf of the Unification Church.

Even if the church somehow manages to keep their noses out of UPI's content, the damage has already been done. The bottom line is that as long as New World controls UPI, the public and the media alike will have no faith in the stories UPI puts out because of lingering doubts.

Not surprisingly, New World was quick to address this concern soon after the purchase was announced. New World representative Larry Moffitt assured that the wire service will maintain its "editorial autonomy."

"UPI will maintain its editorial independence and build on its reputation for honest, fair-minded reporting that has made it an essential and respected news agency for generations," he said. No offense, but is that not along the lines of a fox guarding a hen house? Does New World really expect people to have faith that they will not, at any time, forcibly promote their agenda through UPI?

It already looks like New World has shot itself in the foot. Moffitt has stated that New World will encourage executives at UPI to promote "customized" news in areas such as morality, religion and family issues.

In any other context, these suggestions would be a wonderful addition to any newspaper. But with the Unification Church behind these changes, the line between a legitimate reporting and a church newsletter becomes severely compromised.

Sadly, there has already been one sizeable casualty due to this purchase — Helen Thomas, UPI's famed White House correspondent for the past 57 years. Often called the "dean of the White House press corps," Thomas enjoyed the honor of asking the first question at every news conference. She has followed eight presidents and was prepared to take on her ninth. Soon after the sale's announcement, Thomas turned in her resignation. She chose to quit rather than work for the questionable new owners. If Thomas' lack of faith does not call into question New World's possible motives, nothing else will. Since UPI's rapid decline, Thomas has become an ironic symbol, a reflection of the company's history — resilient and dependable, yet old and outpaced. Through this sale, New World and the Unification Church have destroyed that legacy in one swipe.

David Lee is a senior economics and journalism major.

WWII veterans deserve memorial

On Memorial Day, the small southern Virginia town of Bedford dedicated the National D-Day Memorial. Bedford was chosen as the site of the memorial because the town lost more men per capita (106 of its 3600 residents) on D-Day than anywhere else in the nation. This Veteran's Day, the National World War II Memorial, a \$100 million project, will be dedicated in Washington, D.C.



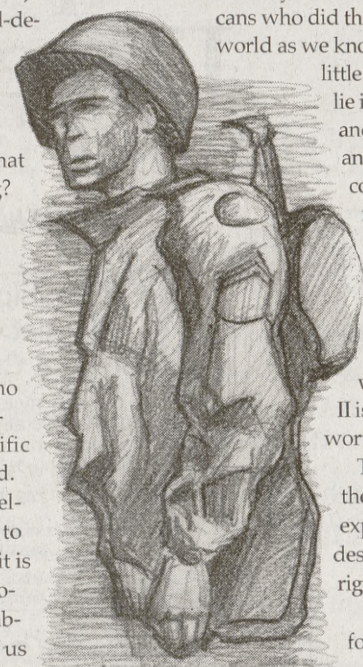
MARK PASSWATERS

Both of these monuments are well-deserved shrines to those who fought and died in the second World War. These veterans deserve every ounce of praise that can be heaped upon them. There is simply one question that needs to be asked: What took so long?

It is a terrible indictment of society that it took Spielberg's masterpiece, *Saving Private Ryan*, to restore the sacrifice of our grandfathers to the public's consciousness. While memorials were built — quite justly — for those who fought and died in Korea and Vietnam, the veterans of the most horrific war in history were largely ignored.

Perhaps it was the last bit of rebellion that our parents had stored up to pour on their own parents. Maybe it is because our nation is just plain ignorant. Whatever the reason for this absurd delay of gratification, those of us who did not fight and suffer owe those who did a great debt. It is time that we repaid them, with interest. That recognition may start with blocks of granite in Washington, but it must not stop there.

The men and women of the "greatest generation," as it has been called, faced an evil that most of us today cannot fathom. The best our generation has for public enemy number one is a dithering idiot like



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

Saddam Hussein. In the 1940s, there were villains galore, including Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler and Hideki Tojo, who had to be confronted and bested by the average citizen.

Each one of these horrible individuals shared a common objective: the destruction of democracy everywhere. Most of us recognize names like Eisenhower, MacArthur or Patton. Some even know future-famous politicians like John Kennedy, George Bush and Bob Dole served in military during World War II. Unfortunately, we do not know the names of common Americans who did their duty and, quite simply, saved the world as we know it. Even more tragically, we know so

little about the half million men whose bodies lie in cemeteries throughout Africa, Europe and Asia. Each day, more and more veterans of World War II leave us to join their comrades in the great beyond. There is much we can learn before they are all gone. This nation is sorely in need of a reminder that there are things worth fighting for, and that each person has the courage to do what is required of them. The pain and sacrifice of those who gave their blood during World War II is powerful proof that some things are worth fighting for, no matter what the cost.

The insidious disease that was spread by the protesters of the Vietnam war must be expunged from our collective soul before it destroys our ability to stand up for the rights of our nation and mankind.

As the memorials to honor those who fought in World War II begin to sprout up across the nation, it is time for all citizens to give these veterans their due. It is not a stretch to say that because of these people, we are not speaking German, Japanese or Russian. Their generation was forced into the greatest confrontation in history and won it. By following their example, maybe we can prevent a repeat occurrence.

Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.

Column exhibits errors, confusion about GPS

In response to Sunnye Owens' June 7 column.

The factual and technical errors in the article are too numerous to mention in one letter, although I will mention a few. For instance, Owens states that the although GPS "costs [sic] the government \$12 billion to develop, GPS does not charge companies for access to the data."

First, the GPS was developed in the '70s, and there are no more "development" costs. Maintenance, perhaps, but not development. Secondly, "GPS" cannot charge anyone for anything. "GPS" is a system of 24 satellites in geosynchronous orbit who, I assure you, do not charge bills. If anyone did charge for use of the system, it would be the U.S. military, who developed, owns and maintains the system.

Thirdly, with even a rudimentary knowledge of the GPS one would know that it does not contain "data" that users "access." The 24 satellites continuously

broadcast their location and time, and GPS devices can receive that data and triangulate a position. As far as recouping costs, the system more than paid for itself in the Gulf War.

The concept that the GPS could tell employers details of employees actions is false. All that the GPS can do is tell a user where he or she is at that moment.

For someone else to track your movements, you would have to carry around a GPS receiver and some sort of transmitter to transmit the GPS data to the person tracking you.

Statements such as "The GPS moni-

toring system should be illegal when it is used in a improper way such as monitoring employee bathrooms" demonstrate a misunderstanding of the technology.

The GPS is not capable of monitoring bathrooms. All the GPS can do is transmit the time, and all GPS receivers can do is use that transmission to calculate the receiver's current location. If journalists are going to comment on technology they don't understand, at least keep the facts straight.

Adam Mikeal
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