

## Honesty in Aggieland

### Stories from Texas A&M students and the reasons why 'Aggies do not lie, cheat or steal'

By STUART HUTSON  
The Battalion

Michael Simpson, a junior recreation, parks and tourism sciences major, was camping in New Mexico when he was startled by the discovery of a little piece of Aggieland.

"We found an Aggie's keyring and wallet in the middle of this New Mexico camp-

ing site, so we picked it up and carried it to the local authorities, who made sure that it got back to its owner," Simpson said.

"I probably would have done that no matter whose it was, but the fact that it was a fellow Aggie's just made me want to go through the extra effort. It was an obligation because an Aggie will help an Aggie no matter what."

This is just one example of why Texas A&M is lauded as one of the most honest campuses in the country. For many Aggie students, the well-rehearsed code of honor "Aggies do not lie, cheat or steal" is more than rhetoric spouted by professors warning their students against scholastic dishonesty. For those Aggies, honesty among students is a standard expected when one steps onto A&M soil.

"I lost my wallet in front of the Student Computing Center. My entire life was in there — my credit cards, my I.D., my money and a lot of important information," said Anne Hensler, a senior geology major. "It turned out that someone delivered it to the front desk at the Commons. They didn't even leave a name for a reward or anything, and nothing was taken out of it. That isn't something that would have happened at t.u. I know — I used to go there."

Sarah Rebecca, a senior sociology major, said she has always considered A&M an honest and safe environment because of the campus's atmosphere.

"I lose things all the time and have them returned to me, and I feel safe leaving my backpack while I work out at the Rec Center," she said. "I think it is because A&M has a small, wholesome, home-town atmosphere. A lot of the students come from small-town Texas, and that is what they try to re-

create here."

Howard Kaplan, a distinguished professor of sociology, offered a more scientific assessment.

"I'm not saying that A&M is or is not a more honest place than anywhere else, but you can discuss certain aspects of A&M that could possibly result in it being as such," he said. "Honesty is most likely to be found in an environment where the alternative is inconceivable, or in other words, where everyone has the same moral values."

Kaplan said that, since most A&M students hold the same moral values (those of a small-town Texas city), someone who does something that breaks with these morals may be persecuted by the rest of the population.

This would be intensified by what Kaplan calls a "low level of anonymity," meaning that everyone tends to know everyone else.

"The students at a college where there are a lot of different morals and where there is a high level of anonymity, such as at a college in a big city, might have a lower level of honesty," he said.

Sgt. Betty LeMay, a crime prevention specialist for the University Police Department, said that, although there may be a higher level of honesty, this still does not ensure students' safety.

"Generally, we've got a good bunch of Aggies here, but students need to remember that they don't move into a Utopia when they move to College Station," she said. "There still are those who aren't Aggies that wait to prey upon college students."

LeMay said students often get lulled into a false sense of security when they first move to A&M.

"It's really nice to think that you are safe, but you need to remember all the safety precautions that you would take if you were in a big city," she said. "Because A&M is really a big city, regardless of what it may feel like."

Blindly trusting those one meets face to face may also be a mistake, LeMay said.

"There are predators out there that look a lot like A&M students. Some even attend class," she said. "But there are people out there that literally work the campus to get money out of students."

"It's kind of tough when you have a little

## LOST & FOUND

"I was buying food at the Underground Market my freshman year, and I dropped \$15 on the ground. I didn't realize it until I got to the cashier and I didn't have any money. Luckily, somebody had already picked it up and had given it to the cashier."

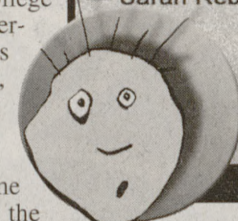
— Anne Hensler, senior geology major

"A waitress at Red Lobster had taken some guy's credit card and dropped it while she was carrying it back from the register. An Aggie picked it up and gave it back to her when he could have just as easily taken it and bought himself something nice online."

— Scott Swetnam, outdoor education graduate student

"A friend of mine left her wallet on the table at The (Dixie) Chicken and couldn't find it when she went back to look for it. Someone picked it up and gave it to the bartender."

— Sarah Rebecca, senior sociology major



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

girl crying in your office asking, 'How could another Aggie do this to me?' All you can tell them is that it wasn't another Aggie."

Regardless, students like Bowie Hogg, a senior marketing major, still feel safe leaving their doors unlocked at night.

"I walk away and don't even think twice about it unless I am leaving for a long time," he said. "Generally, everybody trusts and looks after everybody else."

No one is perfect. Even Aggies have been known to bend the truth now and again.

Danny Shaha, coordinator of Student Judicial Services, said that, while no one has been expelled from the University for the past year for scholastic dishonesty, where students have been disciplined for poor conduct.

"The first ones that pop up in my mind are the ones who forged documents from Beutel to get out of tests or quizzes," he said.

Not everyone forges the Beutel documents. Some try to earn it the old-fashioned way.

"I'm not going to comment on any specific cases, but there have been instances around test times where illnesses were greatly exaggerated. ... Let's leave it at that," said Dr. Ann Reed, associate director of clinical services at Beutel.



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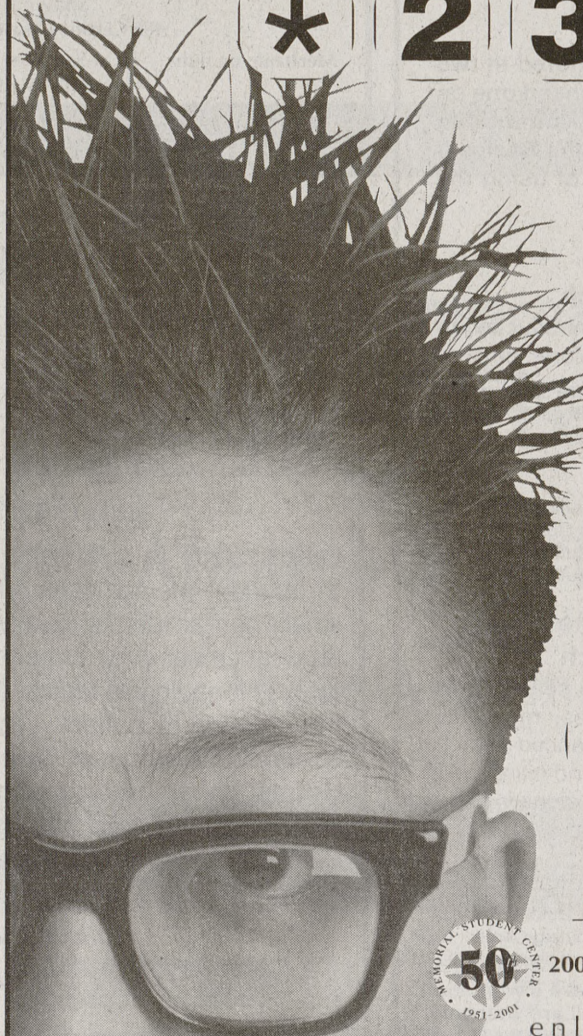
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