

OPINION

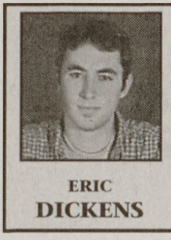
THE BATTALION

A woman's place

Women serving in on-campus organizations catering to men are demeaned, harming cause

Aggie women have earned rightful place in University, support men rather than serve

In the coming months, people will be able to attend the Texas Renaissance Festival and be transported back to a different time. Actors at the festival play out the daily life of medieval England, where chivalry was a noble gesture, but everybody knew a woman's place was bent over a washboard, with a baby in one arm and mud-covered clothes under the other.



ERIC DICKENS

While the Texas Renaissance Festival is a dead-on authentic representation, tourists on a budget may opt for simply staying in Aggieland, where a similar version of medieval life is carried out daily. Texas A&M's conservative atmosphere is a breeding ground for antiquated viewpoints and out-of-date attitudes. A number of students' mind-sets and individual A&M organizations keep alive a tradition of inequality by indirectly (and directly) defining themselves as subservient women.

For example, athletic support groups like Diamond Darlings and Aggie Hostesses are groups of women who stand by their men and little else, while female students going after their "Mrs. degrees" are throwbacks to a time most other communities have left behind. These women's actions are voluntary, but they counteract one function of higher education — preparation for the real world.

There is no doubt that women have made an enormous impact at A&M. Kelly Garrity, who served as deputy Corps of Cadets commander during the 1998-1999 school year, and Laurie Nickel, who was the student body president that same year are just two of the countless number of women who have achieved top positions at A&M.

However, the steps made by these leaders are countered and diminished by the actions of others. Members of athletic support organizations seem content to define the group and, by association, themselves, as tag-alongs to the men they back.

These organizations include Diamond Darlings, who are associated with the A&M baseball team; Aggie Hostesses, who work with the football team; and Aggie Angels, supporters of the men's basketball program.

Their job description is "to support the Aggie men's ___ all team." This is a vague explanation, but the activities include retrieving foul balls, selling game pro-

grams and decorating the men's locker room. These women work hard and provide the necessary functions of publicity, but the question must be raised as to why these groups contain only women.

The organizations' constitutions do not specify that they be open only to women, but the chances of a man joining a group named "Darlings," "Angels" or "Hostesses" is pretty slim.

Likewise, fans at women's soccer and volleyball games are not likely to see groups of guys charged with backing the women's athletic efforts.

So, whether by design or natural selection, the arrangement in A&M men's athletics is one where the men's job is to win games, and the women's is to dutifully support them from the sidelines. Most communities left this relationship behind in the 1950s.

Modern relationships may not always be straight out of a storybook, but setting the women's rights movement back five decades is not that praiseworthy, either.

And there are the students at A&M and other campuses who are said to be working on an "Mrs. degree." More plainly put, these women go to school with the goal of finding good husbands.

While these women certainly are looking to get diplomas along with that diamond ring, the notion of going into college on the prowl for a future husband makes a mockery of the ideal of youthful independence.

In the meantime, while husband-hunting, these students undermine the purpose of the university experience. Going to college is supposed to be about self-discovery and personal growth, not about racing to see who can snag the most desirable mate.

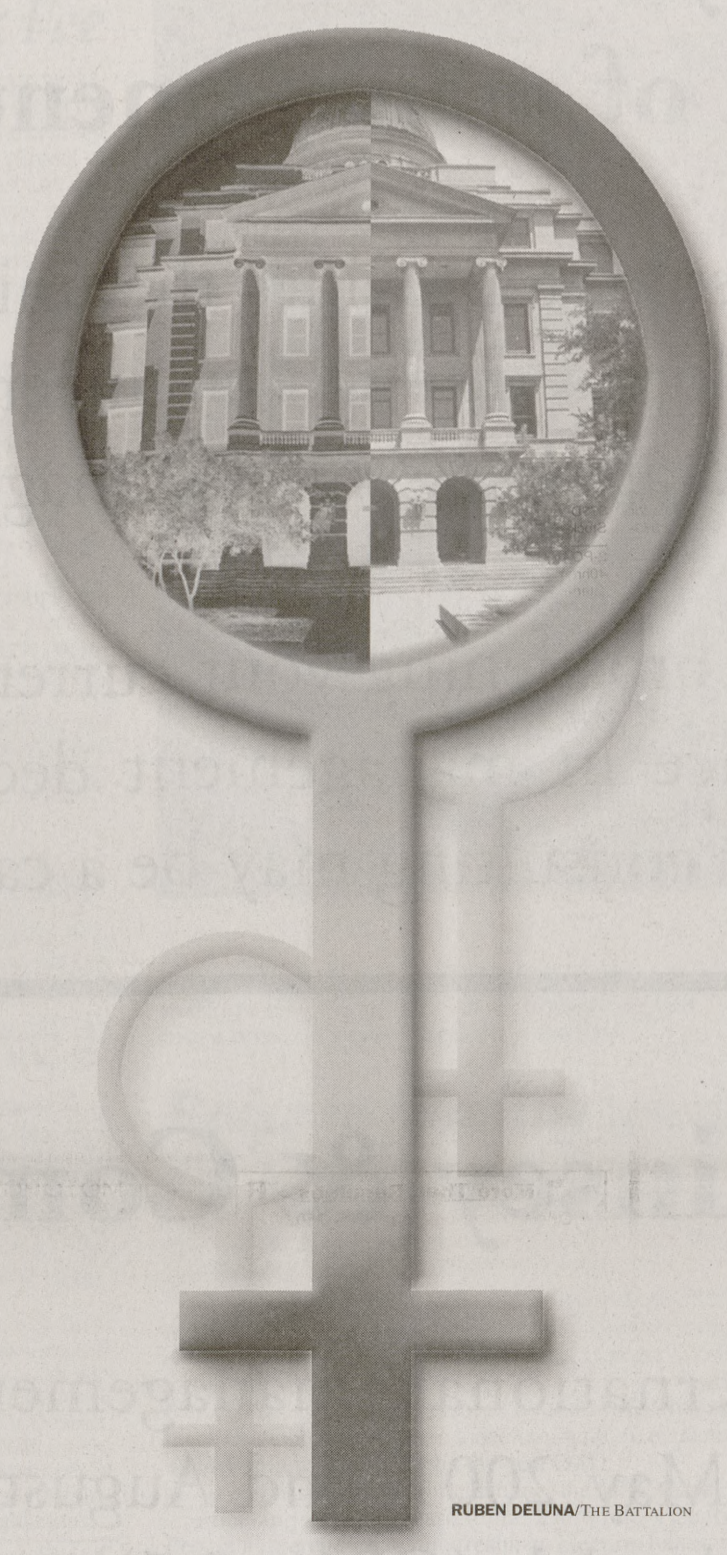
The social dynamics of male-female relationships in athletic support groups and the mentalities of husband-chasers at A&M need to be re-evaluated.

College is preparation for the real world, but the world some students seem to be angling for has been left behind. It must be noted that these women's actions are voluntary.

The ideals behind those actions and the picture they paint of men's and women's roles need to be addressed.

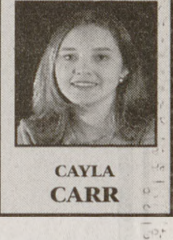
Nobody is forced to think a certain way, but the actions of "Mrs. degree" candidates and men's athletic support groups do not help women prepare for a world where feminism is not a four-letter word.

Eric Dickens is a senior English major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

It is unfortunate to think that, in the 21st century, women still have to struggle for respect and equality. Thankfully, that struggle has been made easier at this University.



CAYLA CARR

Since Texas A&M was established in 1876, it has evolved from a military, engineering, male-dominated school into a prominent co-educational University, offering diverse degree choices while maintaining its strong military background. While keeping tradition close at hand, A&M should continue to integrate women into the Aggie culture.

Examples of ways A&M women are treated well are found at Yell Practice and football games. These events demonstrate the respect men have for their dates. After the stadium lights go out or Aggies score a touchdown, the women are adorned with kisses and admiration from their escorts.

These traditions obviously originated out of love for women. This is not common to football games across the nation.

Normally, the most visible role women play at a football game are as female cheerleaders who are often described as airheaded, pompom-waving sex objects uniformed in short skirts and tight tops.

At A&M, this is not the case. Instead, the yell leaders are the ones responsible for motivating the crowd. This arrangement is the reverse of other universities. So, in a sense, women at Texas A&M are put on a pedestal, admired and adored rather than being cheaply displayed.

Before A&M was open to women officially, many found ways to participate on campus. According to the University Website, there were women referred to as "campus girls" by the students who attended some campus activities and were loved by the cadets.

Most people, including men, have a tendency to treat those who demand it with respect. In 1963, for instance, some women were admitted into the University, but it was not until 1971 that women were admitted without restriction. That same year a woman became student body president.

The male students must have accepted of women if they elected a woman to serve as the official representative of the student body.

More recently, another woman, Laurie Nickel, took the initiative to run for student body president in 1998 and was elected. If there is an office a woman has not held at A&M, it might not be because a woman was not qualified, but that a woman did not take it upon herself to run for the position.

"Women are the reason I came here instead of going to the Air Force Academy," said Gerry Poe, a senior speech communication major.

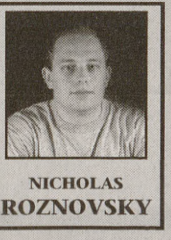
History has provided evidence to show that women are more than a window dressing at A&M. On campus, there are many women's organizations, there is a Women's Week in the spring and there are women Corps of Cadets members. Women have helped A&M grow to become, according to Time magazine, one of the top public universities in the nation.

It has not been an easy task, but women have demanded the respect needed to play an important role in the University.

Cayla Carr is a junior speech communication major.

Dick's Folly | Cheney's voting record as citizen raises eyebrows

Republican vice presidential candidate Dick Cheney's voting record is under fire — not his 21-year congressional voting record, rather, his voting record as a private citizen.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

According to a report by The Dallas Morning News, Cheney has voted only in two of 16 elections held in Dallas County over the past five years.

He did not even bother to vote in this year's Texas primary election, the one that helped his running mate, George W. Bush, secure the Republican presidential nomination.

Cheney's reluctance to participate in the democratic process sends the wrong message to Americans. In an era when voter apathy results in less than 50 percent of registered voters participating in presidential elections, it is important for public officials to set the example by voting themselves.

Why should Americans care about voting if their leaders — the ones who live and die by the ballot box — do not? Businesses do not make routine practice of hiring individuals who show a complete disinterest in their company's well-being. Why should Americans do so when choosing their leadership?

To be fair, Cheney did have an unblemished voting record during his congressional terms and while he served as Secretary of Defense.

On the flip side, however, members of Congress are always conscious of their public images as community leaders and usually go to great lengths to ensure that they vote in most elections.

In simpler terms, they consider it bad politics not to vote. Cheney's opponents have been quick to jump on his lack of electoral participation.

"Certainly, people would expect those seeking to lead them would take the time to vote," said Gore's campaign spokesman Douglas Hataway. "I suppose he had other priorities."

Since Cheney moved to Texas in December 1995, his dismal 12.5 percent election turnout has included absences from multiple state constitutional amendment elections and several hotly-contested Highland Park races.

Why should Americans care about voting if their leaders — the ones who live and die by the ballot box — do not?

Although Cheney refused to comment on the matter, his staff did mention that Cheney was often overseas as part of his job as the chief executive officer of Halliburton Co., an oil field services company.

"He does think that voting is important," explained Cheney spokesman Dirk Vande Beek. "He did it whenever he could."

Apparently, "whenever he could" means

whenever Cheney was in town on election day. Texas state law is extremely generous in allowing its citizens to vote early and by absentee ballot.

Records show that Cheney's running mate, Bush, has used such methods to cast his vote 18 times during his tenure as governor.

In fact, Bush and the other major-party nominees, Gore and Sen. Joseph Lieberman, hold outstanding voting records. Cheney's Democratic counterpart, Lieberman, has voted in five of the six elections held in his district since 1995.

The presidential nominees have even better records. Bush missed only one election out of 39 since 1988 and Gore has not missed a single election since 1972.

Some experts say Cheney's voting record reflects the fact that the large number of local elections held annually tends to decrease voter turnout.

Curtis Gans, director of the nonpartisan Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, explained, "Hold-

ing [local city and school elections] on

off-days is almost designed to reduce participation."

Unfortunately, such an excuse cannot exonerate Cheney's miserable voting record. Bush has found a way to participate in election after election. No matter how Cheney's camp tries to spin it, there is no excuse for not voting.

Some argue it is unfair to hold Cheney to such a stringent standard when the vast majority of Americans also does not vote.

It is important to note that the majority of Americans also do not run for the second-highest office in the land. Cheney, as a prospective public official, should be held to a higher standard.

In the end, it is Cheney's decision whether he should vote. On Nov. 7, regardless of whether Cheney joins them, the American people will cast their ballots.

Perhaps then, he will see why voting is important.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a senior political science major.

Mail Call

Dunking photo met with disapproval

In response to Patric Schneider's Sept. 19 photo. I was disappointed to see The Battalion run a photograph on the front page depicting several individuals "dunking" their Aggie rings.

Most appalling was that two of these people were parents. In an era where students maim themselves and are sometimes killed because of irresponsible drinking, this sort of behavior need not be fostered. Texas A&M has many traditions, but this one that does not need encouragement.

Given the statistics that demonstrate that many students still practice binge drinking, we do not need to glorify "chugging" or other inappropriate ways of consuming alcohol.

Todd Hudson
Graduate student

Student Supports Student Senate

In response to Jeanette Simpson's Sept. 21 article. It is my understanding that the Texas A&M Student Senate is elected to represent the student body and its best interests.

Keep The Fire Burning (KTFB) needs to realize that if a majority of the student-led organizations do not support an off-campus bonfire, then neither does the majority of the student body, most likely.

Do not get me wrong, I am all for Bonfire continuing — after we honor the administration's decision for a two-year moratorium.

I think KTFB needs to do a petition again. This time, let the students sign if they are in favor of an off-campus bonfire.

They might be surprised with the results.

Brandyn Martin
Class of '02

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