

**killed**  
**ferry**  
**s rock**

S, Greece (AP) — Greek  
 on Wednesday arrested  
 d four crew members  
 struck a rocky outcrop  
 a light beacon that could  
 ives miles. At least 62  
 lled.  
 survivors said crew mem  
 watching a soccer match  
 Tuesday night when  
 ng more than 500 peop  
 nd in a gale in the Aege  
 o miles from shore.  
 d with my husband  
 iving the ship?" said  
 zbinski, a pregnant, 37  
 om Seeheim, Germany.  
 veling with her husban  
 nsa pilot — and their  
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 lead prosecutor, Panag  
 ulos, said he would see  
 for the crew on murder

licable how the ship  
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 " said coast guard chief  
 rigos. "You have to be  
 see it."  
 described a scene of pas  
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 cause eight to 24 peop  
 ounted for. Navy divers  
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 15 minutes of the crash.  
 ear-old Express Samira  
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**inexplicab**  
**ow the ship**  
**ded with a**  
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— Andreas Sirigos  
 Coast guard chief

ents heading home  
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 ear how many peop  
 e and how many of the  
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 ncluding two Ameri  
 said.  
 reportedly also pas  
 Australia, Belgium,  
 Germany, Italy, and  
 own if any Americans  
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 gian woman. The rest

ead were young child  
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 passenger list. A port  
 a heart attack and died  
 the sinking, the coast

Athens' port of Pir  
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 the, the 345-foot, 4,407-  
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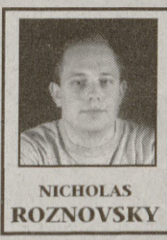
annon, 30, an artist  
 Seattle, said she was  
 k at the time of the

hannon said. "It was  
 o deck. ... It was like  
 la of fishing boats  
 ene, followed by  
 vessels and British  
 They rescued dozens  
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aved by the British  
 least 12 people, in  
 ons, who had been  
 They were taken to  
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 d, shock and minor

rescue operation  
 uthorities began in  
 of the crew in the  
 preliminary inves  
 e captain, Vassilis  
 on his bridge.

**Good Business, Bad Medicine**  
*Budgetary cutbacks lower quality of healthcare*



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

Millions of Americans are confident they are receiving the best, most advanced health care in the world from their hospitals. Although the United States may lead the medical world in terms of technology and research, the nation is lagging far behind in the most important area — competent medical staffers.

In a report released by The Chicago Tribune, at least 1,720 patients have died in U.S. hospitals since 1995 due to mistakes made by overwhelmed or ill-prepared registered nurses.

This report, which also claims that more than 9,500 patients have been injured, follows a 1999 report by the Institute of Medicine that reported that anywhere from 44,000 to 98,000 Americans die in hospitals every year due to mistakes made by hospitals, clinics and pharmacies.

Clearly, the nation's efforts in combating health ailments with pills and surgical techniques are wasted if it cannot provide enough well-trained people to administer life-saving skills.

The U.S. health care system has forsaken quantity and quality in terms of its effectiveness in saving lives.

According to the Tribune report, the shortage of capable nurses is a result of the financial problems plaguing many of today's hospitals.

Plagued with dwindling budgets, America's hospitals have been attempting to squeeze more productivity from increasingly smaller staffs.

The result has been frequently ineffective health care.

The Tribune's researchers found that many money-saving techniques being used by hospitals were actually driving registered nurses away.

Mandatory overtime shifts and 16-hour workdays at the University of Illinois-Chicago Medical Center have reduced the nursing crew significantly and overburdened the remaining workers.

"I wake up every day, and hope I don't kill someone today," said Kathy Cloninger, a nurse at the UI-Chicago Medical Center since 1993.

"Every day I pray: God protect me; let me make it out of there with my patients alive."

In Chicago, at least two hospitals pulled custodial crews away from their duties to dispense medicine to patients. At other hospitals, part-time nurses from temporary employment agencies were taking care of the patients.

In its study, the Tribune also found that at least 119 patients died over the past five years under the care of unlicensed, unregulated nurses' aides. On average, nurses' aides were working for only \$9 per hour.

According to the American Hospital Association, nursing staffs have been the first target for cutbacks at hospitals where profits have been squeezed by manage-

care programs and shrinking federal Medicaid reimbursements.

Like any other group operating under a budget, hospitals act as if cutting their staffs is a quick way to minimize costs without drastically impacting on their customers. But this time, they may have cut too far.

The fault for this medical crisis cannot be placed on the nurses and other hospital workers themselves. Indeed, for continuing to work under such harrowing and exhausting conditions, they deserve praise and gratitude.

For most of them, saving lives is still the bottom line.

Those who see another bottom line — money — are to blame. In the interests of saving taxpayers and clients money, the government and private managed health care operators have led the American medical system down its path of ruin.

The reluctance of Congress to put more money into the Medicare system means millions of Americans who depend on it for assistance can no longer afford the medical care they need.

Medical providers, such as hospitals and nursing homes that rely on Medicare subsidies, are having to make difficult choices too. Over the past two years, five of the 10 largest nursing home chains in the country have filed for bankruptcy.

How many more hospitals, clinics and nursing homes must close? How many more patients must go without care or die before it becomes economically attractive to provide funds for them?

Unlike other professions in which workdays are regulated by law, nurses and doctors continue to work around the clock. If it is critical to public safety to limit the number of hours a trucker can drive on America's roads, why has Congress not done the same for the people who literally take lives into their own hands?

It is not fair to patients nor to medical workers that nurses and doctors should work to the point of physical and mental exhaustion.

Legislation limiting medical workers' hours is now before the House of Representatives.

HR5179, the Registered Nurses and Patients Protection Act, is an attempt to reduce medical workers' workdays to a realistic time frame. Under its provisions, nurses would not be required to work more than eight hours a day and 80 hours in a two-week period.

Unfortunately, such legislation may help nurses but it will not necessarily help the average patient.

If hospitals are already using janitors and part-time help to fill in for nurses, what will happen when they cannot force nurses to work around the clock?

Unless hospitals receive more funding to hire and keep more nurses, the situation will get worse.

The Registered Nurses and Patients Protection Act is a step in the right direction, but it cannot be effective without proper funding for hospitals and clinics.

Ultimately, nothing will change until the government and private health care providers decide that risking patients' lives is bad business.

*Nicholas Roznovsky is a junior political science major.*

**A hard-earned title**

*Blinn College students are not Aggies, should not be in A&M activities*



BRIENNE PORTER

At this month's Faculty Senate meeting, Texas A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen discussed the idea of allowing Blinn College students who are planning to transfer to Texas A&M, to participate in Aggie student activities.

At first, the idea seems like a good one. However, there are many problems that could be brought about by its implementation.

Some proponents of Bowen's proposition argue that many Blinn students will become Aggies someday. Clearly, this argument is flawed.

The bottom line is that they are not Aggies yet. They do not walk this campus and they do not pay Student Service Fees.

The students who have made it to A&M worked hard to earn the title of "Aggie."

With that title comes certain privileges that make being an Aggie even more of an honor. Blinn students are not Aggies — period.

If Blinn students were admitted to athletic events as students or able to join in such time-honored traditions as E-Walk, it would make a mockery of everything the students of Aggieland have worked to gain.

In addition, Blinn students are not held to the same academic standards as A&M students.

Although Blinn students have to maintain a 2.0 grade point ration (GPR), they have three semesters to reach the required GPR if they fall behind.

At A&M, the student would have one semester to raise his or

her GPR before facing dismissal from the University.

By allowing these students to join in, Aggies might feel they can go to Blinn College, where they have longer to bring up a GPR and still be a part of the 12th Man.

It must also be kept in mind that Blinn students do not have to meet the same demanding entrance requirements that Aggies have to.

Another problem with Bowen's proposal is the fact that Blinn already has student activities like A&M.

It is reasonable to believe that, if these students wanted to get involved, that Blinn College could offer many opportunities.

They already have programs such as the Buccaneer Band, student government and numerous professional organizations.

It makes no sense for Blinn students to be able to join in Aggie activities when they have the opportunity to do so at their own school.

To be fair, Bowen's idea is commendable because many Aggie transfer students come from Blinn College — but they are not Aggies yet.

The administration should not



ANGELIQUE FORD/THE BATTALION

allow students who are not Aggies participate in student activities and be loosely considered a part of the student body.

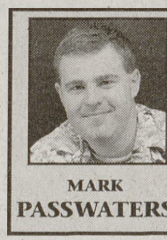
Although obvious, it must be remembered that being an Aggie requires being a student at Texas A&M.

Basically, A&M student activ-

ities are for those who have had the honor of being accepted into the University — not for those that are in close proximity or for those that "might" be an Aggie one day.

*Brienne Porter is a sophomore chemical engineering major.*

**Keep your day job** *Celebrity views on politics amusing*



MARK PASSWATERS

In the Sunday newspaper's comics section, readers were treated to a comic strip that was not only funny, but closer to the truth than people may think.

The cartoon "Mallard Fillmore" was devoted to a "commercial" made by a supermodel who said she would be supporting the more environment-friendly candidate who would do something for those "60 million leaves that die each fall!"

Welcome to Hollywood, home of million-dollar smiles and five-cent minds.

Since this is an election year, the entertainment industry's best and brightest — with that term being used very loosely — are more politically active than usual.

While Hollywood might think it are doing some kind of public service by speaking out on major issues, it is difficult for other members of society to take it seriously when the big stars just talk and rarely follow through with action.

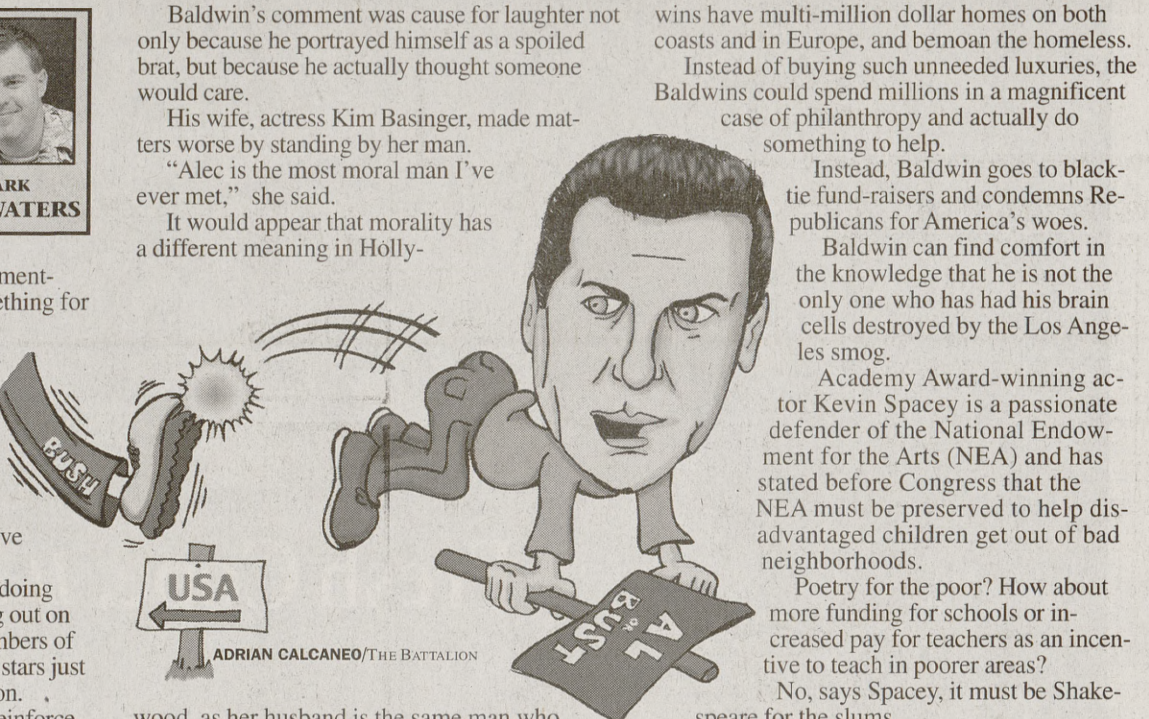
With inane comments and acts that reinforce the widely held belief that big stars are big whiners, Hollywood's credibility in the eyes of the public borders on nil.

Yet, loyal to their cause, whatever it is, Hollywood's heroes keep trying.

Entertainer Elton John — who has as much riding on this election as a Mongolian peasant — has proclaimed that George W. Bush "and those that think like him" will return America to "The Dark Ages."

Director Robert Altman is apparently ready to join John on the slow boat to Europe, saying he will take his folding chair and go to France if the Bush wins.

The leader of the clueless crusaders would appear to be Alec Baldwin. Baldwin, who has created his own supposedly impartial political action group, has said he will also leave the country should Bush win.



ADRIAN CALCANELO/THE BATTALION

wood, as her husband is the same man who advocated killing Rep. Henry Hyde (R-New York) and his family for his role in the impeachment of President Clinton on Late Night With Conan O'Brien.

"You're kidding, right?" said O'Brien.

"I'm serious," Baldwin replied, noting how this was how the Romans dispensed with traitors.

While Baldwin's stunt lacks gravitas, at least he can take solace in the knowledge that very few of his fellow actors can say they have it, either.

Proclaiming oneself a supporter of a cause and then not having the conviction to stick by one's beliefs in person and in practice is sheer hypocrisy.

Baldwin and his wife make tens of millions of dollars a year, then claim they are concerned about the plight of America's poor. The Bald-

wins have multi-million dollar homes on both coasts and in Europe, and bemoan the homeless.

Instead of buying such unneeded luxuries, the Baldwins could spend millions in a magnificent case of philanthropy and actually do something to help.

Instead, Baldwin goes to black-tie fund-raisers and condemns Republicans for America's woes.

Baldwin can find comfort in the knowledge that he is not the only one who has had his brain cells destroyed by the Los Angeles smog.

Academy Award-winning actor Kevin Spacey is a passionate defender of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and has stated before Congress that the NEA must be preserved to help disadvantaged children get out of bad neighborhoods.

Poetry for the poor? How about more funding for schools or increased pay for teachers as an incentive to teach in poorer areas?

No, says Spacey, it must be Shakespeare for the slums.

The pervasive cluelessness of Hollywood ruins its credibility with society. Just because stars have money does not mean they have minds, which many seem intent on proving.

Abandoning a cause that is supposedly important, instead of standing fast for one's beliefs, is even more appalling.

Until big stars back their words with actions, their political luster will be dulled.

But do not tell the stars; they are still intent on changing the world, one word at a time. Just ask Cher, who said at the Democratic National Convention that she will not rest "until every American has the right to free speech."

Indeed.

*Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.*



MIKE LUKOVICH

**Ring dunking shows Aggie spirit**

In response to Sept. 26 Mail Call.

I was disappointed to see Tuesday's Mail Call concerning the Sept. 19 front-page photo.

Those individuals dunking their Aggie rings were, in fact, extremely responsible.

They were all of legal age and had someone to drive them home.

**Ring dunking shows Aggie spirit**

As for the parents, they drove in all the way from Mississippi to be with their daughter on her special day.

This photograph was not meant to "glorify 'chugging'" or other inappropriate methods of alcohol consumption.

This photograph was put on the front page of *The Battalion* to show that the Aggie spirit lives on through generations.

Rebecca Baron  
 Class of '03

**Mail Call**

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call  
 014 Reed McDonald  
 Texas A&M University  
 1111 TAMU  
 College Station, Texas 77843

Campus Mail: 1111  
 Fax: (979) 845-2647  
 E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com

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