

Bicycle Safety

Bicycle police should focus on educating students in bicycle safety, traffic laws

Sgt. Fisher, now sergeant of the Bike Patrol Division at Texas A&M, started the division about nine years ago. Since then, he has built a program that now comprises six certified officers. These campus bike police choose bicycles as their mode of transportation.



CAYLA CARR

They have an advantage at A&M because, in an emergency, rather than being forced to maneuver a car through traffic, they can get to an accident scene more quickly.

But with all this mobility comes a price that student bicyclists hurrying to class will pay. These officers are not around only to fight crime and race to accident scenes.

They are there to write tickets to poor college students who are oblivious to bike laws and the consequences of breaking them. Although these police officers enforce the bicycle laws and students suffer the consequences, the police are not helping students become better aware of bicycle traffic laws.

Bicycle cops focus mainly on safe bicycle riding, so bike laws are strongly enforced and excessive tickets are given. These campus bicycle officers are bike-certified and trained in Austin by the International Police and Mountain Bike Association.

The problem is that these bicycle cops are highly trained professionals — students are not. There are no tests given to students regarding bicycle safety, and no classes are

offered. How are students expected to know bicycle traffic laws?

Officer Tumlinson explained that warnings are given to students during the first few weeks of school, but as the semester progresses, tickets serve as the consequence intended to teach the lesson.

Students are expected to know the rules for bicycles, but many bicycle riders have not been exposed to any kind of safety course or class and are therefore victims of expensive bicycle tickets. Bicycle violations are set by the county at \$100 per ticket.

Officer Tumlinson said tickets are given at the officer's discretion, but failing to stop at a stop sign, riding the wrong direction on a one-way street and not having night bike lights are the main offenses. A bike ticket can cost one-half to one-third of the cost of an average bicycle.

The ratio is quite different for an automobile ticket — the average vehicle violation is about one-sixtieth the price of the vehicle. Furthermore, with most vehicle violations, Texas law allows citizens to take a defensive driving course and waive the fine. This is not an option for bicyclists, who are forced to pay the ticket. The result is that very little is actually learned about bicycle safety, regardless of intent.

Bike safety is not something most citizens know. When driver's education is taken at the age of 15, the main focus is to learn how to operate an automobile.

There is very little, if any, focus on bicycle laws, as many citizens have no intention of riding a bike for any length of time after elementary school. Although

the bicycle safety laws are located at the end of the Texas Traffic Code, they are paid little attention.

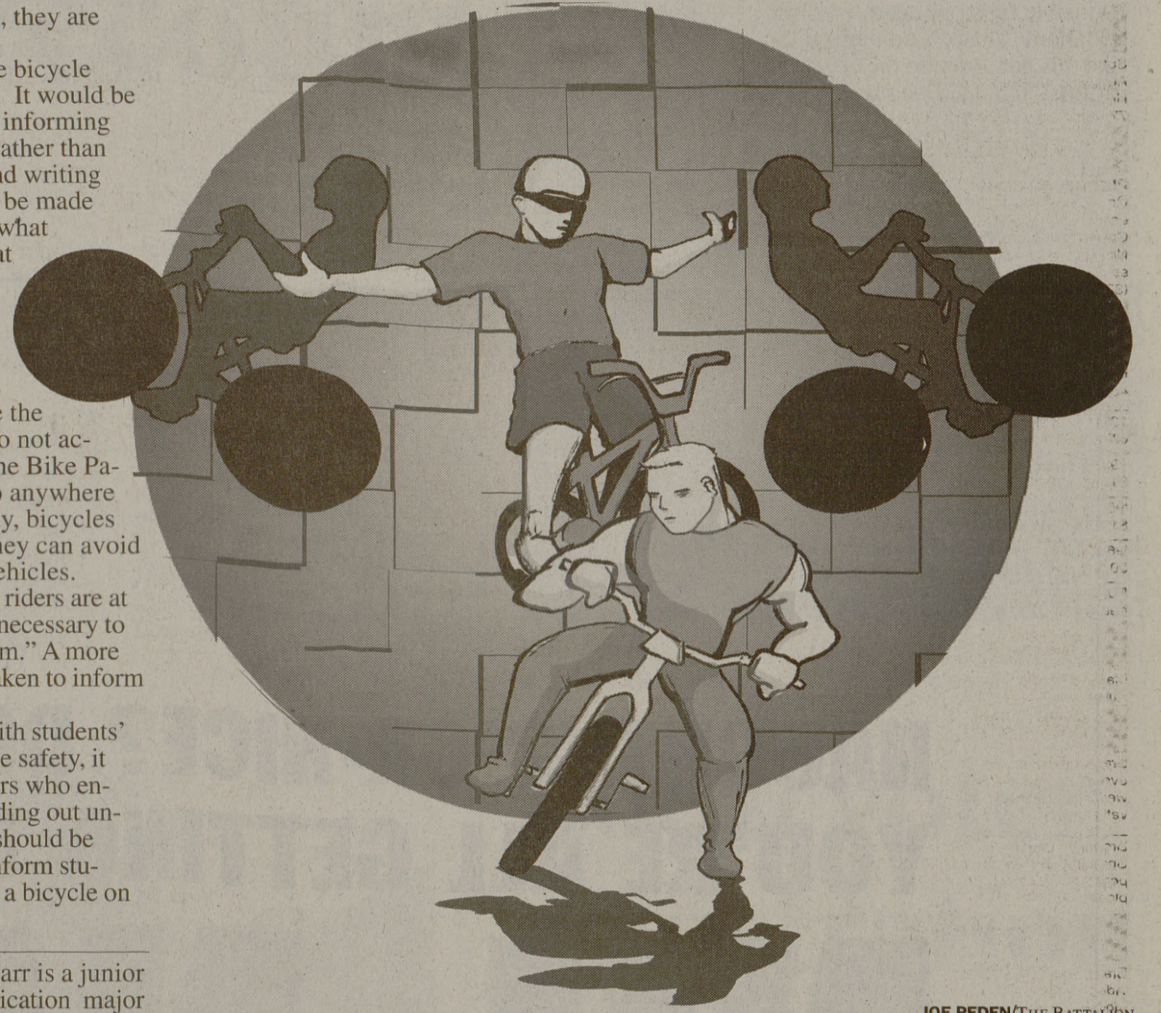
Bicycle officers assume the bicycle laws are common knowledge. It would be nice to see more bicycle cops informing students about the bike laws rather than simply chasing them down and writing tickets. More progress would be made with a simple explanation of what they should do instead of what was done wrong.

According to the Texas Traffic Code, bicycles have the same rights as automobiles. But most bicycle riders realize that, even if they have the right of way, most vehicles do not acknowledge it. According to the Bike Patrol Division, bicycles can go anywhere that a car cannot, but in reality, bicycles are limited to places where they can avoid pedestrians and inattentive vehicles.

Sgt. LeMay said, "Bicycle riders are at a disadvantage, therefore it is necessary to know the laws that govern them." A more positive approach should be taken to inform students about bicycle safety.

The problem may not be with students' lack of knowledge with bicycle safety, it may be with the bicycle officers who enforce the rules. Instead of handing out unwanted tickets, these officers should be more willing to educate and inform students how difficult it is to ride a bicycle on campus.

Cayla Carr is a junior speech communication major



JOE PEDEN/THE BATTALION

Bull Board

BAD BULL

As the semester wears on, more and more students are complaining about the "parking Nazis" who ticket their automobiles. After minutes of fussing, the students invariably admit, "Sure I was double-parked in a fire lane, but still — they didn't have to give me a ticket." Nearly every student is convinced that Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services (PTTS) is out to get him or her.

The truth is, PTTS does single out students — those who cannot follow common-sense parking regulations. Fire lanes, reserved spots, handicapped spots and temporary parking spots are clearly marked. The lack of a nearby parking lot does not give students the right to engage in illegal parking practices.

If students cannot afford the \$50 fines PTTS doles out, they are in for a real shock when they park illegally in the big city.

BAD BULL

Why are campus bicycle police concentrating their efforts on cracking down on the "fugitives from justice" who do not wear helmets while riding? Although wearing helmets is a University regulation, surely there are more pressing matters that need attention.

Instead of stopping bicyclists who are endangering only themselves, campus police should be stopping the cyclists who dart out in front of cars and buses on crowded campus streets. Stop signs,

yield signs and traffic signals also apply to bicyclists — a fact that many ignore, placing themselves and those around them in danger.

Instead of ensuring bicyclists will be protected when they cause accidents, the goal should be to prevent the accidents in the first place.

BAD BULL

Once again, marketing executives have proven they have absolutely no idea what appeals to children.

The recently launched Duck Texas anti-smoking campaign is a glaring example of what happens when adults try to make a somber message "hip" before delivering it to kids.

In a series of television and billboard ads, an obnoxious and poorly illustrated duck dishes out-of-date lingo in '80s clothing while telling kids not to smoke. The campaign's slogan — "Tobacco is foul" — epitomizes the horribly bad public service campaign.

It takes more than bright colors and loud noise to keep kids from smoking. Texas would be better off spending its money on something that will be effective, not just annoying.

GOOD BULL

One of the most important aspects of the Aggie family is the care and help Aggies share with one another and the world. There is no

better example of this spirit than former student Luke Bolton, who helped save the life of a man from Rhode Island by donating his bone marrow last year.

To Bolton and other Aggies who have selflessly donated bone marrow, blood and other life-saving items, a debt of gratitude is owed by the community at large. It is reassuring to know that, if tragedy should strike, others are willing to aid however they can. Their example should encourage others to make a difference and help others.

GOOD BULL

Congratulations to the city of Houston and its devoted football fans on its selection as the site of 2004 Super Bowl. It appears that football fortunes in South Texas have rebounded since the contentious departure of Bud Adams and the Houston Oilers in 1996.

Now, with the Houston Texans joining the National Football League in 2002, a new retractable-roof stadium under construction and a Super Bowl on the horizon, things are looking up for the Bayou City. Houston's successful bid was due in no small part to the business community, which supported the initiative to bring professional football back to the city and will now benefit from the economic windfall from hosting Super Bowl XXXVIII.

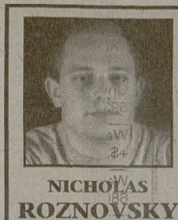
Tennessee can keep the Bum Squad — Houston is a big-time city with big-time football in its future.

Nicholas Roznovsky

Too Much Praise

Proposed Reagan memorial undeserved

Move over Lincoln, Jefferson, Washington and Roosevelt — the Gipper is coming to town.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

At least that is what Republicans on the House Resources Committee hope will happen. On Sept. 13, they approved the Ronald Reagan Recognition Act (HR 4800), calling for the construction of a memorial to Ronald Reagan on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

In doing so, House Republicans are attempting to subvert the established procedures for proposing and approving new monuments for the mall. Although they may think Ol' Dutch was the greatest thing since sliced bread, it is inappropriate at this juncture to contemplate a memorial to a man who is still alive and whose place in history has yet to be determined.

The Reagan Recognition Act seeks to ignore the established framework for proposing, designing and constructing national memorials. It flies in the face of the 1986 Commemorative Works Act, which prohibits memorial construction until at least 25 years after the subject's death and requires the approval of three committees — the National Capital Memorial, Fine Arts and National Capital Planning commissions.

Undeterred, House Republicans have decided to bypass the commissions entirely with their proposed legislation. The bill would create a special panel of three to oversee the Reagan memorial design and construction — the chairman of the National Capital Memorial Commission and one member appointed by the speaker of the House and by the majority leader of the Senate.

"No bureaucrat or unelected political appointee should prevent us from honoring this great American," said bill sponsor Don Young (R-Alaska). The thinly veiled truth is, the bill's supporters hope to take the process out of the hands of the established authorities and put it under the control of the Republican Congress. The need to resort to such contrived backdoor tactics only proves that the time is not yet right to consider building a

memorial to Reagan.

"I just think we are rushing this whole thing," said Charles Atherton, secretary of the Commission of Fine Arts. "It's nice to get some historical perspective before we put a memorial on the mall."

Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt all had to wait to half a century after their deaths for their spots on the mall. Reagan supporters are so adamant about building their shrine so quickly because they are in a race against time and the judgment of history.

When that judgment is finally made, it will be harder, if not impossible, to justify a Reagan memorial. Reagan does not belong in the top echelon of American presidents. He did not lead America to victory over the British Empire, write the Declaration of Independence, save the Union from division or lead the

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nation through the struggles of the Great Depression and World War II. The reach of his administration does not fall outside the scope of normal presidencies.

The bill's supporters, such as Rep. Jim Hanson (R-Utah), list plenty of "achievements" Reagan accomplished during his administration, such as challenging the Soviet Union, winning the Cold War and saving the U. S. economy.

If America is looking to memorialize presidents who have stood up to the Soviet Union, then John F. Kennedy, who defiantly held his ground during the Cuban Missile Crisis, or Harry Truman, who carried out the dramatic Berlin air lifts, would be a better choice. Despite conservatives' attempts to

proclaim him the 20th century savior of democracy, Reagan did not take down the Soviet Union.

As for the economy, Reagan's tax cuts and increased military expenditures resulted in enormous deficit spending. Americans are still paying the bill for supply-side economics with a \$5 trillion national debt. Reagan may have given Americans a little extra money in their pockets in the '80s, but his legacy has been sucking them dry ever since.

Still, Reagan's supporters are seeking to plaster his face and name everywhere. Spearheaded by a private group called the Reagan Legacy Project, fans of Ol' Dutch seek to name "something significant after President Reagan in each of the 50 states and in every county of America." According to the St. Petersburg Times, 36 things have been officially named in honor of Reagan, including a nuclear aircraft carrier, a hotel suite in Los Angeles, numerous highways and roads, a statue at the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and a commemorative stamp in Grenada. The group is also seeking to put Reagan's face on the \$10 bill.

The Republican Congress has done its part to further the Reagan cult by slapping his name on Washington's National Airport and on the new Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, the federal government's second-largest bureaucratic office. Ironically, the building houses the Customs Service and the Environmental Protection Agency — two agencies that Reagan detested.

In its zeal to memorialize the Gipper, Republicans are coming dangerously close to exhibiting the behavior shown by dictatorships and communist regimes. It is almost as if they are in a race to build more monuments to Reagan than there are for Mao, Stalin, Castro and Saddam Hussein. The true measure of greatness is the reflection of history, not the number of granite edifices dedicated in one's honor.

The National Mall is not a place for partisan memorials or commemorations of living people. Four great presidents and countless soldiers who gave their lives in defense of this nation have had to wait their turn. Ronald Reagan should have to wait his.

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MIKE LUCKOVICH
ATLANTA
CARPENTERS

I PERSONALLY HAVEN'T SEEN AN "AX" STUDY THAT CONVINCES ME OF DANGER....

