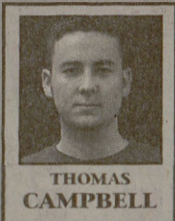


O Ye of Little Faith

Aggies should support basketball team whether it wins or loses

Aggie spirit is internationally famous and unparalleled — during football season. That spirit seems to become dormant between the last touchdown and the opening pitch of baseball. Aggies often make trips, such as the 1,200 mile, 18-hour trek to South Bend, Ind., for the Notre Dame game, but most Aggies did not walk down the street to watch the Aggie basketball team take on the University of Texas. Scott Blackwell, a senior electrical engineering major, said he thinks that "A&M's famous for their spirit, but you have to wonder how true that spirit is because we can't even fill Reed Arena for the Texas game."

There is automatic support for football and baseball because of each team's winning traditions. Because the basketball team have not had a successful season in recent years, many students think it does not deserve support.



THOMAS CAMPBELL

Someone who cheers for a team only when that team is winning is more accurately called a bandwagon fan. So far, the men's basketball team has received pitiful attendance. The average attendance for basketball games has been about 4,200 fans. That is pathetic, considering A&M has 44,000 students and 20,000 staff and faculty members, in addition to a new \$30 million state-of-the-art Reed Arena.

"If every Aggie went to just two home games, we would pack Reed Arena every time," said Bubba Moser, senior yell leader.

If each Aggie just went to one home game from here on out, nearly 6,300 students would be at each game, not counting all the parents, old Ags and faculty. Many Aggies will blame their lack of attendance on the team's inadequate playing in recent years.

The basketball team may not be going to the NCAA tournament in March, but that does not mean that Aggies should not support their athletic teams.

"Student support is the foundation of a solid basketball program in the future. A prospective player would not want to sign with a school that does not have fan support," said Brian Hodges, the president of the Reed Rowdies. Fan support goes to the core of coach Melvin Watkins' plan to build solid, winning basketball teams for years to come. "Aggie fans are fair-weather when it comes to Aggie basketball. If the basketball team was 12-4 this year instead of 6-10, Reed Arena would be packed," said Davin Haley, a junior education major.

Students may say they do not attend games because many games are played on week nights. It is doubtful that professors gave too much homework on the first day of classes for students to attend the Texas game. Only 8,600 people watched the Aggie basketball team take on Texas, including Texas fans, parents, and former students.

Even had it been only Aggies, the crowd still would have been less than one-fifth of

the student body. There have been more than 4,000 fans at only two home games, and only once were there more than 4,000 at an away game. A&M will never be considered a good program until it has fan support at its games.

People who do not go to every football game are called "two-percenters," but what about the majority of Aggies who do not support athletics other than football?

"I attend football games, despite not enjoying football, because I want to help support Texas A&M," says Sara Gro-mowsky, a freshman business major.

Not everyone enjoys every sport, but by supporting teams that one may not really find enthralling, Aggies show the true spirit of Aggieland. Those who refuse to support sports other than football are the true two-percenters.

Thomas Campbell is a junior agricultural journalism major.

English skills needed for all

Many students know the annoyance of getting a professor or a teaching assistant with English skills so poor it is almost impossible to communicate. The problems with English language barriers are currently much greater than those around the nation.

Last Tuesday, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in a lawsuit filed by Mexican immigrant Martha Sandoval saying the state of Alabama violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act by offering written driver's license tests in English only. Sandoval, a permanent resident of Alabama who came to the United States in 1987, claims the English-language tests discriminate against her based on her national origin.

Refusing to accept English as a national language will inevitably cause major problems. A common bond must unite the personal and social worlds of this country. The inability to communicate causes misunderstandings for everyone involved. It is not fair for anyone to be stuck in this frustrating situation. However, this particular issue goes beyond a lack of communication. It also concerns the safety of those who come in contact with non-English-speaking drivers, who are therefore unable to interpret road signs.

In most of America, the road signs are written in English. Although most drivers can recognize the octagonal shape of a stop sign, many other signs are not easy to interpret. "Beware of sharp curves ahead" and "Watch for ice on bridge" do not mean the same thing, but are written on the same sign.

Many freeways have electronic signs notifying drivers of high-traffic areas or specific problems on the roads. Driving on these freeways at 70 mph is not the time to pull out an English dictionary to translate these signs.

In 1990, Alabama amended its constitution to declare English the official language. Alabama's brief explained that "individuals who live in Alabama have access to a host of private and public initiatives designed to teach proficiency in the English language."

The state offers free public education to all of its residents, providing an equal opportunity for residents to become proficient in English. Unfortunately, safety issues such as driving ability, which should be the biggest concern in this case, are being overlooked due to the underlying issue of money involved.

The constitutional issue at the center of attention for this case is the Spending Clause of Article I, which says the federal government may impose conditions on states that receive federal money.

The Supreme Court has the right to make a ruling in the case because the U.S. Department of Transportation is funded by federal money. Specifically, the Supreme Court is ruling on Sandoval's right to sue the state of Alabama.

Although Sandoval deserves the right to sue the state, it does not entitle her, or anyone, to have special exceptions made simply because of their inability to accept a state's laws. Sandoval should have known that Alabama declared English as its official language when she decided to become a resident of that state.

"One does not discriminate on the basis of national origin by setting up modest English proficiency requirements," said Ohio lawyer Jeff Sutton. "We have a common language and there is some efficiency to requiring people to conduct official business in that common language. It is beneficial ... for an immigrant to learn English to live in this country."

Learning English is not simply "beneficial." It is essential for Americans (immigrants or not) to be able to live and interact together.

Melissa Bedsole is a junior psychology major.



MELISSA BEDSOLE

Mail Call

Passwaters' article was misguided

In response to Mark Passwaters' Jan. 22 column.

Passwaters' article "Misguided Efforts" is an insult to the truth. In the article, Passwaters claims that Clinton has exerted too much pressure on the Israelis and not enough on the Palestinians. Not unlike previous administrations, Bill Clinton has continued to support the apartheid Israeli government.

Due to the recent conflict that has claimed 367 lives — the vast majority Arab — and injured tens of thousands of Arabs, the Palestinians asked the United Nations to send a protective force. The Israeli government rejected the notion of a U.N. protection force, as that will bring an international response to the daily atrocities committed against the Palestinian population.

The United States threatened to veto a protection force, stating that such a force would require the backing of the Israeli government. However, where was Serbia's backing of the K4 troops in Kosovo? The U.S. and NATO did not wait for Serbia's permission to enter the embattled region.

Even more hypocritical, in Clinton's proposed Middle East peace plan, the West Bank will remain surrounded by a "protection" Israeli force along the Jordan River valley — to ensure the protection of "Israel." Obviously, Palestinian lives do not merit protection or worth in the eyes of the United States and Israel.

The difference between Barak and Sharon is irrelevant, as either one of them heading the racist Israeli government will continue to oppress the Palestinians. However, the article mentions that Sharon, by visiting the Haram al-Sharif mosque compound, helped start the bloodshed.

One must also not overlook that he was accompanied by literally thousands of Israeli soldiers, which had to be approved by the government and Prime Minister Barak. In other words, Barak sanctioned Sharon's instigating visit to the mosque.

than the game at hand, then we have accomplished our mission.

A particular T.U. player incurred a high level of attention late in the game by making several taunting gestures toward the crowd. Fittingly our students turned up the heat on this player and in so doing, made a solid statement to visiting teams. It doesn't matter if we are down by 20 or up by 20, when you come to Reed Arena to play the Aggies, the Rowdies will be on your case from start to finish.

While maintaining an edgy, controversial style of heckling, we make every effort to denounce the use of profanity and sexually explicit comments at our games.

The only thing embarrassing to our University on Wednesday night was the 4,000 empty seats for the game against our archrival. Aggies support their teams win or lose. This year's Aggie basketball team has fought through several key injuries and the inconsistency that the youngest team in the Big 12 can expect.

However, they continue to play hard, recruit well and build for the future.

Brian Hodges
Class of '00

Students should respect dining hall

For more than a year, many meal plan buyers and students who frequently visited Sbsia Dining Hall patiently waited as Sbsia was renovated so that the dining hall we all know and love could become a dining hall with the look and service for the 21st century.

With the vision and service first principles the Department of Food Services has strongly maintained, last Tuesday, the newly renovated Sbsia Dining Hall was opened for student use once again.

Unfortunately, some student patrons of Sbsia were not able to maintain the level of respect this longstanding building deserves and chose to participate in food fights that would threaten the image this building portrays.

It is disheartening to know that any fellow Aggie could let the pride in their residence hall overtake the work and money that went to make this renovation possible and participate in the above listed activities.

This behavior should not and will not be tolerated. Student representatives are strongly supporting all efforts to ensure these activities never happen again. Students at Texas A&M are known for their respect and undying love of this institution. When we are enjoying meals in Sbsia, let's make sure we never forget that.

Forrest Lane
Class of '00
Accompanied by
two signatures

Silver Tongue

Clinton avoids prosecution with sly wordplay

Bill Clinton spared himself from an indictment by reaching an agreement with independent counsel Robert Ray on his last day in office. Supporters and critics of the former president should not be surprised by his last-minute sly maneuvering, as it has become a trademark of the way Clinton does business.



MARIANO CASTILLO

Clinton made several concessions in negotiations, but still emerged with the better side of the deal. His mastery of playing with the technicalities of words' meanings has managed to save him.

"I now recognize that ... certain of my responses to questions about Ms. Lewinsky were false," Clinton's statement read.

It was a statement that critics had been waiting for years to hear, but both sides had different interpretations of what the statement meant exactly.

Those opposed to Clinton rejoiced at having him admit that he "acknowledged that he knowingly gave evasive and misleading answers," Ray said.

However, Clinton's lawyers are quick to point out that, technically, the statement did not admit to any obstruction of justice or intentional false answers.

Clinton's law license was suspended for five years and he will not seek reimbursement from the government for legal fees incurred during the Lewinsky investigation, but he is still getting the last laugh.

Ray applauded the deal, saying that "the nation's interests have been served." In reality, little has changed. Clinton is off the hook and no action will be taken for his lying under oath.

The former president deserved to be punished more severely for intentionally making false statements during questioning of the Lewinsky case.

The independent counsel folded too easily. Ray was not as aggressive as his predecessor, Ken Starr. Part of the reason may be the public's dislike of Starr's investigation. Starr faced a tough assignment and went through with it even though it was not popular. Ray, on the other hand, used the threat of indictment to speed up the deal, which changed nothing.

All Clinton did was vaguely admit to an accusation that is widely accepted as true.

The suspension of his law license means little in the context of the case.

However, media outlets have reported that, for the most part, citizens are responding well to the deal. This response implies that the positive points of Clinton's presidency were enough to overshadow his obstruction of justice.

Certainly the nation is better off in many ways, but his actions were criminal and need to be prosecuted as such. If he is cleared afterward, that would be fine, but he should be tried just like anyone else.

Experts argue that the deal was in the best interests of both parties. Clinton will not be indicted and George W. Bush's administration will not inherit the baggage of the scandal. The Republicans who pushed for impeachment believe that the deal means that they did the right thing, and Democrats are relieved that the matter is finally over.

The truth is that most of the action threatened against Clinton was overblown. Although it did not result in any action, the House's decision to impeach was a big step. Ray was too timid and closed the deal too early.

The deal Clinton struck with Ray is not the first time he has fallen back on technicalities. When the Lewinsky allegations originally came out, Clinton eventually made the infamous declaration "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Ms. Lewinsky."

For days, speculation that Clinton was lying was everywhere. People focused on the way the statement had been delivered. What constitutes sexual relations was a question on everyone's mind.

Slyness is one of Clinton's talents. It eased the force with which he was attacked after he denied the Lewinsky affair, and ultimately has allowed him to leave office relatively unscathed.

Clinton is a clever man and has succeeded in appeasing the independent counsel without fully admitting any wrongdoing. The accusations he encountered throughout his eight years in office were not as bad as they could have been had he not played with his words.

Only time will tell how Clinton's presidency will be remembered. Unfortunately, it seems that his controversial and sometimes turbulent time in office will be downplayed, thanks to his talent of putting a spin on his statements.

Mariano Castillo is a junior journalism and international studies major.

Reed Rowdies show basketball spirit

In response to Mark Tuschoki's Mail Call letter

I would like to inform students of the Reed Rowdies' purpose and to defend the actions we take to accomplish it. The Rowdies were formed to increase support and to generate fan interest by making Reed Arena a tough stop on any opponent's road schedule.

Part of that intimidation manifests itself in verbally heckling the opposing team's players. Our proximity to the court makes the verbal exchanges very effective and entertaining. If a visiting player is thinking more about us

