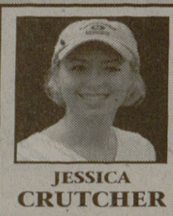


Not a miracle cure

Smoking ban has mixed effects on restaurants and their patrons



A smoking ban went into effect for all restaurants in Bryan and College Station on March 28. It is now illegal to smoke in any restaurant between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. However, smoking is still allowed in restaurants that seat more than 50 people between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Bars and businesses that receive more than 51 percent of their revenue from alcohol sales are exempt from the ruling. Smoking is also illegal within 20 feet of the entrance to any public building.



JESSICA CRUTCHER

It is a matter of opinion whether the smoking ban has been helpful or a public nuisance. However, it seems to have been a bit of both, and the ruling really has not satisfied anyone. Ardent anti-smokers are unhappy that smoking is allowed in restaurants between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

However, smokers also have a right to be upset. Not only are they prohibited from smoking during dinner, they are not even allowed to sit outside of the restaurant and have a cigarette between meal courses. This may cause a decrease in restaurant revenue and workers' tips from smokers.

No transition is easy, but there is a solution for all involved. California's 1998 smoking ban in bars also had a rocky start but seems to be going smoothly now. Although opposition to California's ban originally argued that restaurants and bars would lose money because of the ban, more recent studies have shown the opposite. Revenues have actually risen since the law went into effect, said Stan Glantz a professor of medicine at the University of California-San Francisco, in a CNN interview. It is

arguable that the same thing will happen in College Station, once the adjustment time is over.

In the meantime, many non-smokers are enjoying their new-found freedom to eat without irritation from smoke, and the health of restaurant staff will almost certainly improve. A 1998 study in California showed a sharp increase in bartenders' health after the ban was passed. Before the law was passed, three-quarters of the bartenders studied had lung ailments. Sixty percent of the illnesses disappeared after the ban, according to a CNN study.

It is reasonable to expect the same thing to happen in College Station. In fact, these findings are the best reasons to keep the smoking ban in place rather than installing more effective ventilation systems to keep the smoking and non-smoking sections separated. Ventilation will not help the staff working in the smoking section.

However, there is one major drawback to the smoking ban in College Station that should be revised. Restaurants would benefit from providing a covered, outdoor smoking area for their smoking customers. With no place to smoke, Brooke Sikes, a junior psychology major, says "We will not stay as long at restaurants, because we cannot sit there and relax. Also, we will not tip as well, because we will not stay as long."

Smokers would be more likely to enjoy an extended meal if they could walk outside to smoke without having to stand in the pouring rain or blinding sunlight, which would solve the most prevalent complaints about the smoking ban.

Jessica Crutcher is a junior journalism major.

Zero tolerance not working

(U-WIRE) TAMPA, Fla. — It appears that zero tolerance is not doing the job it was designed to do. It now seems the solution has become worse than the problem.

The latest example comes from a high school in Ft. Myers, Fla., and an honors student with a kitchen knife. A week ago, Lindsey Brown, an 18-year-old senior at Estero High School, was arrested for felony possession of a weapon on a school campus. Suspended for five days at the end of her high school career, Brown will at least get to take her exams and receive her diploma. But she will not get to walk at her graduation ceremony.

The facts: The weapon was brought to school, and Brown brought it. But Brown didn't bring the knife into school; she left it in her car (it just happened to be left in plain view). Brown contests she was not aware the knife was in her car because she was helping her parents move some items, and the knife must have fallen out of one of the boxes.

Now the principal is being pressured by parents to overturn the suspension, and the graduating seniors are threatening to stage a boycott of graduation.

Brown's classmates should be commended for staring the system in the face and making the point known that the zero-tolerance policy in schools simply is not working.

The only problem with criticizing the school's principal is that his hands are tied; he is just following orders. The school board's policy was put in place to prevent tragedies such as Columbine, which means a kitchen knife is just as bad as a semi-automatic machine gun. However, the argument that zero tolerance is not the answer is not a new concept. In 1999, two consultants in behavior management and discipline wrote in their article, "Zero Tolerance for Zero

Tolerance," about the negative aspects of the cut-and-dry, across-the-board rule.

"Any intervention that treats dissimilar problems with similar behavior outcomes the same is not only unfair but destined to fail," stated authors Richard L. Curwin and Allen N. Mendler.

Curwin and Mendler cite an example of a doctor who prescribes chemotherapy for two patients with headaches — one has a brain tumor, and the other has a sinus condition. The authors argue that a zero-tolerance policy is no different.

While the authors have a new theory of their own called "As Tough As Necessary" for cases that zero tolerance simply would not work for, the answer may not be that clear. Zero tolerance was put in place to plug the loopholes with full knowledge that some good intentions (such as Brown) would fall as sacrificial lambs along with the evils that should theoretically be the majority.

Either way, we are dealing with kids here. And a girl helping her parents move during the weekend and accidentally dropping a kitchen knife along the way should not be grouped with Nathaniel Brazill bringing a gun onto campus after earlier threats of using it.

The best solution is dealing with problems on a case-by-case basis. The public school board needs to look into the zero-tolerance policy and allow for time and research into issues and not rush judgments. By following the current policy, school officials are striking fear into the hearts of students, even those with good intentions, and making them walk a tightrope when officials' sole duty is making the school the most comfortable place to be, not the most feared.

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It's not easy being green

Even though there are almost four years remaining in the war, it seems as though the tide has turned. This war, however, is not about bombs, guns and power: It is over the environment, and the defending side is losing. With an energy crisis in California and gas prices skyrocketing, the Bush administration has again showed that it is a fair-weather friend to the environment.



BRIANNE PORTER

When the publicity protecting the environment gains more attention from voters, then the environment is being protected. President Bush should not need to believe and follow the hysteric few but instead work to find better ways to end these crises than by the destruction of the environment.

Early this year, President Bush seemed to want to protect the environment, with moves such as protecting the wetlands, but when it became politically correct to ignore the environment, the Republicans, and George W. Bush, jumped on the bandwagon.

With the energy crisis in California, Bush has decided to consider more leniency on, or suspending altogether, laws governing pollution for power plants. The leniency is to help companies produce more electricity and end the energy problems. A provision in the Clean Air Act of 1990 required power plants and refineries to make major upgrades in order to reduce or elim-

inate additional pollution, by reducing emissions in another part of the plant or installing new controls. This provision is what the president is considering suspending because the companies say these laws prevented them from expanding their plants.

According to *The New York Times*, the act targeted numerous, old coal-burning power plants that were exempted from the re-

With an energy crisis in California and gas prices skyrocketing, the Bush administration has again showed that it is a fair-weather friend to the environment.

strictive pollution laws because the lawmakers believed that these plants would be phased out. Yet, the plants are still here and contaminating the environment with pollutants that cause smog, global warming, acid rain and mercury contamination.

The Bush administration also complains that drilling in the Arctic Wildlife Preserve will solve the high gas prices. Yet, prices are not increasing because there is a shortage of oil. The crisis is caused by refineries not having the capacity to produce enough gasoline for the country. The administration believes that by spinning the story to make citizens believe there is not enough oil, it will be able to lead the pub-

lic down the road of environmental destruction.

"George Bush now has no chance of drilling in the arctic refuge and will have to work very hard to stop it from being turned into a wilderness with a capital 'W' — that is an actual legal status with stronger protections than a refuge," said Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass) in a *Boston Globe* article. Hopefully, this is not just an idle threat and there are people in Congress who are not fooled by spin doctors.

Let us recap the battles. There was the President's decision for the U.S. not to enter into the Kyoto agreement on reducing global warming. Then there was his decision not to honor his campaign promise of listing carbon dioxide as a pollutant. Now his new ideas include relaxing the Clean Air Act and opening the Arctic Wildlife Preserve for oil drilling as a way to solve the energy crisis.

There are a few bright spots on Bush's environmental record that must not be forgotten. His decision to leave a Clinton-era protection of the wetlands in place was seen as an increased concern for the environment. He also continued the requirement for industry to disclose emission levels to the public, and he agreed to U.S. participation in a global treaty aimed at stopping production of 12 toxic chemicals.

Yet, overall and with future predictions, Bush's environmental record will be as black as smog.

Brianne Porter is a junior political science major.

CARTOON OF THE DAY



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

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