

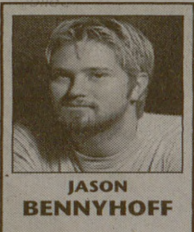
# OPINION

THE BATTALION

## Glaring hypocrisy

### U.S. execution of Germans violates human rights

The United States has long sought to assert itself as an international power and "a lighthouse of freedom" that the rest of the world could look to for protection, as well as an example of how government should work and justice should be served.



JASON BENNYHOFF

However, the myth that the United States truly offers any of these things to the rest of the world was dispelled yesterday when the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the judicial arm of the United Nations, ruled that the U.S. government violated the civil and human rights of two German citizens it executed in 1999.

CNN reports that Karl LaGrand and his brother Walter LaGrand were executed after being convicted for a botched bank robbery in which a bank manager was killed in 1982.

Karl LaGrand was executed on Feb. 24, 1999. His brother was executed March 3, 1999, the day after the International Court of Justice ordered the state of Arizona, in which the men were executed, to postpone the execution.

This is the real affront of the case. The United States feels the need to impose its will on other nations and to force other nations to respect U.S. laws, but America will not bow to the ruling of an international court. The United States was instrumental in the



ADRIAN CALCANEI/THE BATTALION

founding of the U.N., but it seems the United States all but ignores the organization except when it suits U.S. interests.

Granted, in this case, the U.S. government did apologize to Germany and promise to apprise its citizens of their rights in the future. But that does no good for the LaGrand brothers.

There would have been no harm if the Arizona courts had stayed the execution until after the ICJ. After all, the LaGrands had already been imprisoned for 17 years, it seems that one more night could not have caused much more trouble.

The ICJ ordered Arizona courts

to postpone the execution because the ICJ justices believed the German citizens had been denied their right to due process.

They were never informed that as foreigners, they could receive legal advice from the German consulate. Under the Vienna Convention on Human Rights, this is a violation of the accused prisoners' civil rights.

The ICJ ruled that the United States broke the Convention and committed a human rights offense against the LaGrand brothers and the German people as a whole.

Despite foreign-born residents of this country not having the same access to legal representa-

tion as those born here, it is despicable that the United States, of all nations, would so blatantly disregard the laws it helped write. The ICJ is meant to be a moral body. Since it has no power to unilaterally enforce its rulings, it depends on the honesty and goodwill of the United Nations' members it serves.

The United States should be above such petty actions — how can the rest of the world ever respect a country that ignores the rules it helped foster when they become inconvenient?

Jason Bennyhoff is a senior journalism major.

## Less confusion, please

### Nation needs to take less ambiguous stance on drugs, including alcohol

(U-WIRE) — The courts ordered me to go to a Mothers Against Drunk Driving meeting. But, I don't drink and drive. About a year ago, I walked to a friend's house and had beer. I was only 20 and, unfortunately, the police officer that asked me for my driver's license could count that high. I had become a minor in possession of alcohol, not a drunken driver. But, I was ordered by the court to attend a MADD meeting.

"If you are over the age of 21, go ahead and have a good time," one of the speakers said, "Just don't get behind the wheel."

It was a well-meaning phrase, but it tainted the otherwise extremely effective presentation.

I think everyone should attend a MADD meeting at least once, — but not everyone should drink.

Some people in that room had been convicted of drinking and driving for the second time. That sort of behavior is indicative of alcoholism. A person who has been pulled over twice while drunk should never use alcohol — ever.

It struck me as odd when I heard someone encourage a room of drunken drivers to drink responsibly — a feat of which the audience had proven most incapable.

To bring the arbitrary age of 21 into the equation just makes things more confusing. There are some people under the age of 21 who drink responsibly. And, there are people over the age of 21 who do not. It is a simple concept; some peo-

ple can handle the responsible, recreational use of drugs, and some cannot.

But, when it comes to this country and drug policy, logic is never a factor. Things are always confusing. One of the reasons alcohol is such a problem is the circumstance surrounding its legality. Other drugs, some more harmful, some less harmful, are illegal — it is as if alcohol is somehow a better drug.

For this country to have a healthy attitude toward drugs, it must choose prohibition or legality — not political ambiguity.

All drugs are bad. The question is whether we should treat drug addiction as a disease or a crime. Instead of making this decision, America has chosen to treat some drug addictions like a disease and some like a crime, and it has drawn these lines with politics, not logic.

When decisions of health are based in politics, unhealthy results will come to bear. When I walked into a huge auditorium full of convicted drunken drivers, the unhealthy results of our twisted logic were readily apparent.

Alcoholism is glorified in this country — so long as you are "over the age of 21." Consumers of alcohol enjoy preferential treatment from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, which regulates the content of the drug.

Other narcotics are not protected in such a way and, as a result, often result in overdoses. Forest Gump's famous phrase might be changed to

"Life's like a needle full of heroin ... because, in the politics of drug prohibition, you really never know what you're going to get."

In our paradoxical nation, marketing alcohol to children is, for all intents and purposes, accepted by society and, more importantly, the Federal Trade Commission. Yet, we tell our children not to drink. Beer ads that feature talking frogs and lizards do not miraculously float past the consciousness of those under the age of 21. The media are no magic bullet, but the power of advertising's ubiquity is unquestionable.

When mom and dad drink beer at Super Bowl parties and at the same time, three wacky guys utter "whassup" to each other while downing Budweiser, we are sending mixed messages to minors. We might as well allow drug cartels to place ads that feature witty, marijuana-smoking cats.

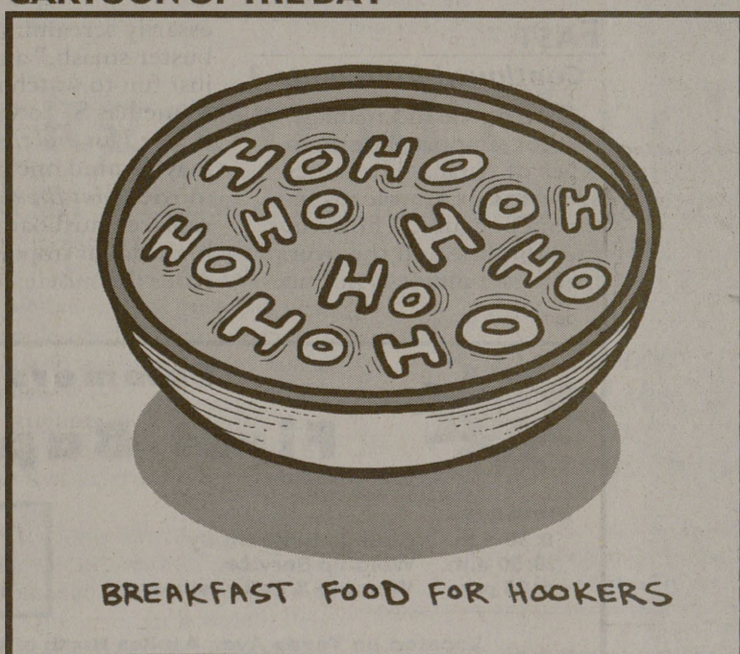
It is reprehensible that some drug addicts are treated like criminals.

But it is equally disturbing that some drug dealers are allowed to advertise on network television and attract children. All drugs should be legal and no drug should be advertised.

Until we adopt a healthier attitude toward addiction in this country, programs like MADD will unfortunately be necessary.

Reed Albergotti  
The Daily Aztec  
San Diego State U.

### CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UNCARTOONIST ©

### Mail Call

#### People are too easily offended by cartoons

In response to all the whining about the Uncartoonist, I'd like to say that I think he's great. He draws well and his cartoons are actually funny.

As far as his making fun of PTTS, it is ridiculous to get angry about that. Our PTTS officers are generally obese, but more importantly, they are part of a corrupt system that exists solely to bilk the students out of more money. What's wrong with poking fun at that? Would people get mad if I poked fun at Hitler for being short?

And about the Corps cartoon, I'm in the Corps and it didn't offend me. There is a running joke among both non-regs and CTs about how brainless Corps fish can be. What's wrong with putting that joke down on paper?

The Uncartoonist is one of the few good things about our droll and error-ridden student paper. I think the

Battalion should put him on the front page.

Nick Nethery  
Class of '03

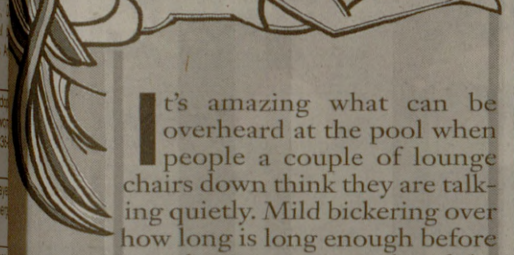
The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

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:

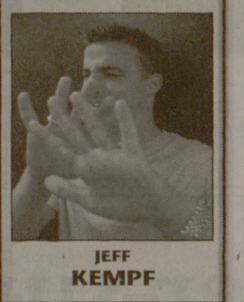
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## SEV AND THE RURAL COLLEGE TOWN



It's amazing what can be overheard at the pool when people a couple of lounge chairs down think they are talking quietly. Mild bickering over how long is long enough before a couple can get engaged, and the comment, "girls want to get married and have kids, that is why they are the moms," made me wonder how many people are determined to find that one person to spend the rest of their life with while in college.



JEFF KEMPF

Intrigued by their conversation, I decided to delve into the world of lifetime commitment. Marriage. Bouquets. Rice. Family. Wedding bells. Rings. Wait. Calm down. Graduation. Classes. Finals. My life. My money. My youth.

This scenario needs to be rewound, reversed and rethought. College is a time of discovery and freedom, right? In a town of 40 some odd thousand college students and an even less proportionate few of dating prospects, is it really possible or desirable to search for and claim to find the one you are going to spend the rest of your life with?

"It is sad to see so many young and promising college students turn to an engagement in a belief that it is genuine love before they even have a chance to get their feet wet. I have had a couple of friends 'go down' and it ended in divorce. Plus, if all these women are getting engaged, that is less for me to pick from when I graduate."

— Kevin Thurman, senior economics major

"I have always thought if you are going to come to college to just find marriage you are wasting money. If you want to get married that badly, get your parents to arrange a marriage. So many people get married so early that it ends in divorce so early. Getting married early is not really a bad thing, it is the thought that you have to in order to feel whole. People getting married at our age weirs me out anyway. Last summer I had friends that got married who had been together since high school, but it seems they cheated themselves of new experiences college has to offer."

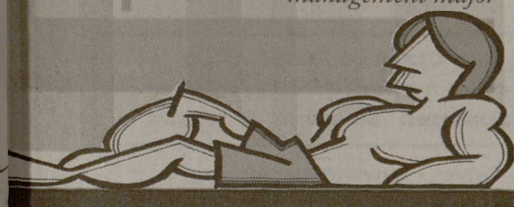
— Brooke Sikes, senior psychology major

Are you kidding? This is College Station, a town where a cultural and non-conformist barricade surrounds its perimeter. It is time to break from this town's walls and believe that you can find someone in a city that houses more than one bowling alley and adult video store.

Some may argue that the reasons for attending A&M include group mentality, family atmosphere and universal morality, however, while that is very idealistic, the sheer odds are against anyone finding their soul mate. For those of you that have found love, congratulations, revel in it.

But people should date different people in college. It is healthy. Sow your wild oats, but try focusing on graduating from college before focusing on a chapel. Maybe your wedding dress will not be white, but who wants to marry a virgin. So remember, when trying to locate that special someone in this town, do it because you are ready for it. Make sure you aren't engaged because you feel pressure from friends or that stupid, drunken \$50 bet you made last week. Maturity comes with age, and if we think we are all mature enough to get married now, I know why the world fears our generation. (This column in no way has anything to do with being jealous of those who are not lonely.)

Jeff Kempf is a senior management major



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