

What did they do wrong?

Consider legal rights when firing officers for KKK membership

A controversy is looming in Georgetown, Texas, a small town near Austin. Two Williamson County law enforcement officers, Deputy David Gay and Sgt. Greg Palm, were recently fired because of their membership in the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). While the KKK's beliefs and actions are repulsive to most



BRIENNE PORTER

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Membership in the KKK is not a valid reason to fire these men. If the men acted on their beliefs and violated the law or their oath of office, then firing the officers was justified. In America, those people whose beliefs put them in a minority are just as protected as people who share the majorities' beliefs — and that includes members of the KKK.

According to *The Dallas Morning News*, "Sheriff's department officials said no complaints had been filed against Deputy Gay or

Sgt. Palm dealing with racial discrimination."

If these men did not violate the rights of others, these men did not deserve to be fired. There are many people who hold jobs that conflict with their beliefs, and like the two officers, are able to perform their duties without incident.

The officers did not flaunt their beliefs. It was only when a fellow officer acted as if he shared those same beliefs that Deputy Gay gave him a KKK application.

"Deputy Gay said he had recently attempted to boost the KKK's membership by giving an application to another deputy he thought shared his 'white, Christian, heterosexual values,'" according to an article in *The Dallas Morning News*. The officer was working undercover after investigators were told by an unidentified deputy that Gay and Palm were involved with the KKK.

The men had done nothing illegal to warrant such an investigation, besides being members of a group that has a history of illegal activities. This does not mean that these men were involved in any of these activities. There are people who are members of the Teamsters Union and the Neo Nazi Party, groups that do not have a clean past, who are not fired because of their group affiliation.

If the officers in question were only fired because they are on the roll sheet of the KKK, then their firing was not justified, and they should be reinstated.

While the group is unsavory to the general public, these officers are within their rights to be members of the KKK, as long as they did not commit any illegal acts.

Brienne Porter is a junior political science major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

College is time to enjoy our nerdiness

(U-WIRE) CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — I cannot go on living this lie any longer. I'm not fooling anyone but myself. The time has arrived for me to come out of the closet.

I am...a nerd. (Webster defines "nerd" as "the type of person who looks the word 'nerd' up in a dictionary").

Always have been, too. The symptoms were all there: I collected Garbage Pail Kids, worshiped Batman and played Super Mario Kart for hours on end — even in high school. In fact, I still show all of these symptoms, plus a few more. There's no denying it.

And yet, for some reason, I

have been denying my nerd roots for years. Arriving in Champaign-Urbana my freshman year, I hoped to start anew — you know, tabula rasa and all that crap. My theory: "If I sing along to Nirvana, they'll never suspect I have every They Might Be Giants CD in my room," or something to that effect.

But as time went by, I gradually learned that nearly everyone in college has some sort of nerd (or dork or even dweeb) aspects of their past. Whether it be band camp, Scholastic Bowl or the debate team, most people are trying to keep something about

their history quiet. There's no hiding from it, and eventually the truth will be uncovered in some horribly embarrassing moment, much like in *Mrs. Doubtfire*, only completely different.

There is another way, however. If you admit to being a nerd without hesitation or regret, it's all good. Seeing your confidence, your peers might soon expose their own nerd qualities and you'll all be better off. You may even start revisiting past activities that have long gone avoided; I myself recently began playing chess again, I'm proud to say (it's a manly game about war!).

The nerd element hasn't been suppressed in college life, just modified. Students often play Trivial Pursuit, only now as a drinking game; knowledge about history and philosophy is admirable, but usually only when incorporated into conversations conducted after 3 a.m.; and "The Simpsons," once a nerd cult classic, has become the most quoted TV show of all time.

Here, Weezer reigns supreme over the radio, The Onion is king of the Internet and Monty Python movies are the crown jewel of any video collection. Bullies, for the most part,

are no longer around to bother you: When your academic career gave you a ticket out of whatever town you were spawned in, you left them behind as well to pump gas or molest goats or do whatever it is they do when all their targets have grown up and left.

You'll always have to deal with mockery, but at least in college nerds have safety in numbers.

And seriously, even though Judd Nelson stole the show in *The Breakfast Club*, three out of every four of you readers know that you relate much better to Anthony Michael Hall. So embrace the nerd within

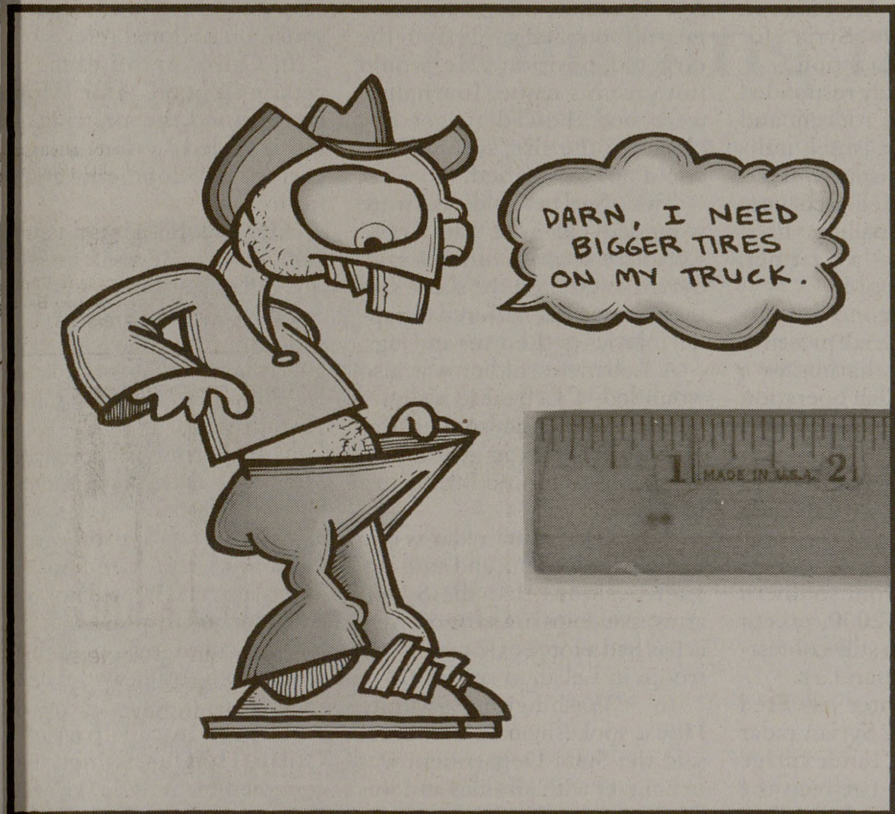
you, and encourage others to do the same. Incorporate your less socially acceptable behaviors into your daily life: play a game of chess in a bar, play Tetris on a date, or start up an *Empire Strikes Back* versus *Return of the Jedi* debate at your next party.

Make these socially unacceptable behaviors more ubiquitous. Start using words like "ubiquitous." We have the majority, and we should take advantage of that.

Now, who's with me?

Shachar Meron
Daily Illini
U. of Illinois

CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UNCARTOONIST ©

Finding life partner in college not unlikely

In response to Jeff Kempf's June 28 column.

I am writing in response to the hormone-driven June 28 column of "Sex and the Rural College Town." Although the basis of the article is sound, a few of the points were off base.

I am one of Kempf's few that have found my life partner. After only one month here at A&M I found my soulmate and in no way have I "missed out" on my youth or the so-called college experience. In fact, sharing this time with my significant other has only enriched it. As Kempf obviously has not experienced, having your soul mate by your side makes every moment worthwhile.

With only two semesters left, I think I can say I've "focused" on graduation, unlike some. I don't have to play the field to make my college days here worthwhile. But if he thinks his options are limited in this town and would rather gamble

Mail Call

with the risks that are found on that famous playing field, the cards are all his. I was extremely disgusted, however, with his comment "Maybe your wedding dress will not be white, but who wants to marry a virgin?"

I am sorry this question puzzles you Mr. Kempf, but here's your answer — any person with respect for themselves and for the one they love. As I truly hope you find out one day, finding and loving your soul mate has very little to do with sex. Some people can control their urges and honor their partner and their wishes. You seem to speak for the mass but I think it's clear that some of us mature much faster than others.

Brooke Handlin
Class of '03

The space in *The Battalion* allotted for Kempf's column is severely wasted. Instead of using this space to promote safe and responsible sexual practices in a college town that so desperately needs it, he promotes promiscuity

and distorts the intended function of sex. Sex is a gift from God to be shared within the confines of marriage for several reasons that Christians and non-Christians alike must recognize.

However, Kempf's column outwardly suggests that people are not interested in marrying virgins anymore, so we should go out and "sow our wild oats" while we can.

Kempf's socially irresponsible comments fail to recognize that STDs such as herpes and chlamydia currently are reaching epidemic levels in the U.S., College Station included. "Sowing your wild oats" additionally opens the possibility of unplanned pregnancies that often force doomed marriages, leaving children in the crossfire.

I am embarrassed for the parents who brought their freshman to New Student Conference today only to hear Kempf telling their children that in College Station we have fun by running to the bar and dropping our virginity with whoever is willing.

Marissa Reynolds
Class of '02