

THE BATTALION

History is here to stay

Confederate and Christian monuments remind us of our heritage



JONATHAN JONES

Texas has a rich and proud military history, and believes in showing it off. Most Americans, for example, have at least heard of the Alamo. The typical Texan attitude toward history for a worthy cause is summed up by the words on the Alamo Memorial: God and Texas, victory or death.

The Texas Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans is in a fight of its own about honoring those who were a part of the state's history. Last year, two small plaques at the Texas

Commandments rest in peace. Both should be allowed to hang freely.

The offensive plaques quoted Robert E. Lee and bore the Great Seal of the Confederacy, one stating simply, "Dedicated to Texans who served the Confederacy."

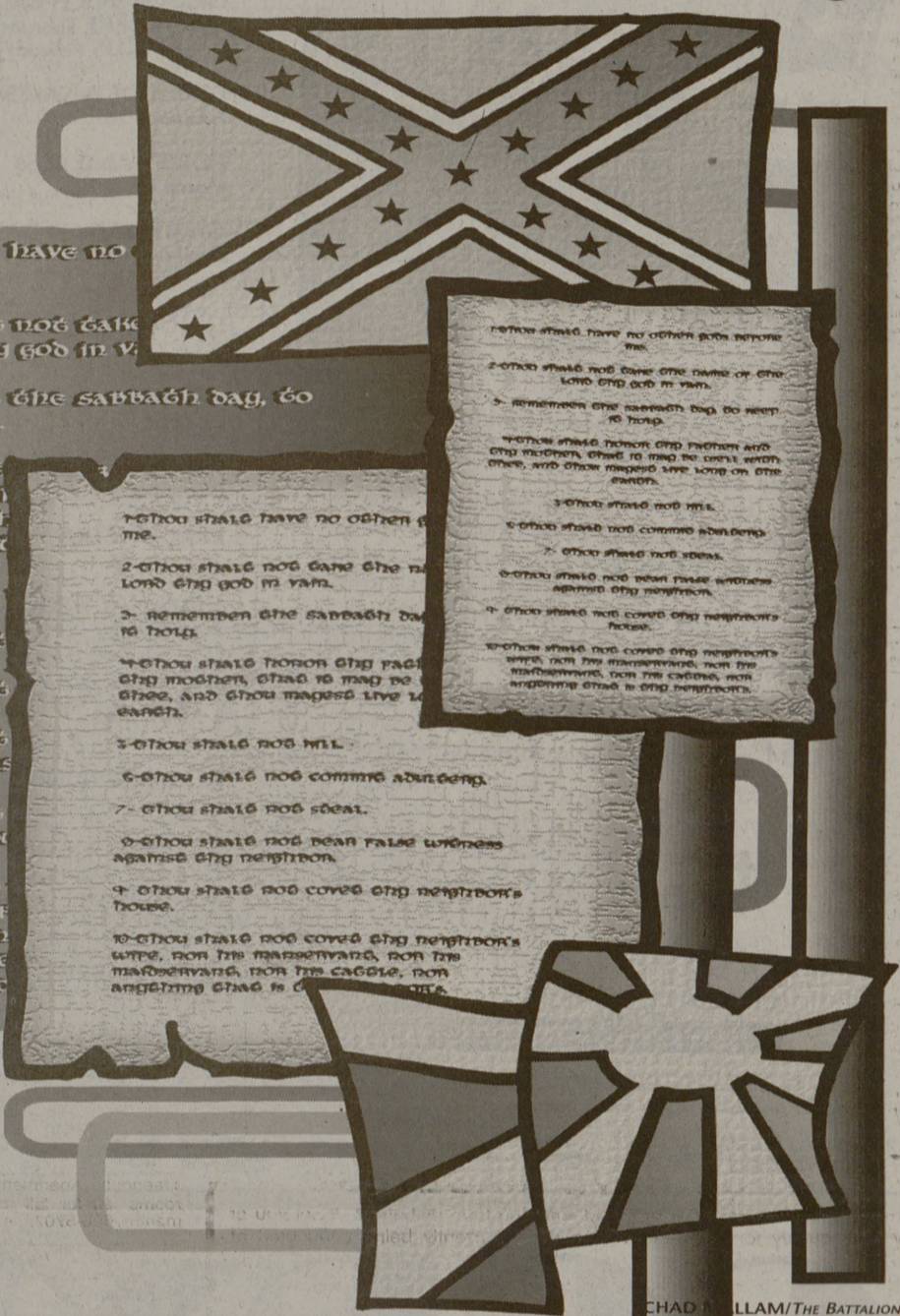
The group has filed a lawsuit, *Sweeney v. Muse*, noting that the decision to dedicate the memorial to Confederate veterans was made through a constitutional amendment election in 1954. It reads, "The first major structure erected from the State Building Fund shall be known and designed as a memorial to the Texans who served in the Armed Forces of the Confederate States of America and shall be devoted to the use and occupancy of the Supreme Court."

The law implementing the amendment specified the placement of the plaques. The issue raised by the Sons of Confederate Veterans is an interesting one. Can current unelected bureaucrats decide that memorials put in place by voters and legislators from a previous generation be undone if the memorials become politically controversial? There is no reason why this should even be an issue. The Civil War has been over for 130 years. Texans should concentrate on building a future that can benefit all citizens.

Why should the past be erased? If some citizens find symbols of the Confederacy offensive and racist, it should be understood that many other citizens throughout Texas do not. Other memorial plaques paying tribute to Texans with whom not everyone would agree, including President Lyndon Johnson and Congressman Henry Gonzalez, rightfully adorn the Capitol in Austin. They are important parts of state history. The plaques in question, along with other symbols through the Capitol, pay homage to the six governments that have governed Texas.

There is a rich and fascinating history in this state. Like all history, it contains elements that few today are proud of. The Confederacy, however, was about much more than slavery. The plaques were not intended to be an endorsement of all the policies and aspects of any of the old Texas governments. Likewise, the Ten

Commandments do not have a solely religious purpose when hanging on a classroom wall. The government is not forcing citizens to adhere to one state-established religion when they are put up on the classroom wall, just as no one is endorsing every aspect of 19th century Texas with the memorial plaques. Let them both hang freely, properly



CHAD WILLIAM/THE BATTALION

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Supreme Court Building that were dedicated as a memorial to those who had served the Confederacy were removed and replaced by the Texas General Services Commission. The action made headlines across the nation, just in time to be an issue for former Gov. George W. Bush as he sought the White House. Many of the same critics who insist the Ten Commandments are a threat to the separation of church and state wanted the plaques removed from the Capitol. Much has been made of their supposed narrow, divisive and bigoted nature. But an effort is currently underway to have the Confederate memorials restored. Certain areas, most notably Alabama, have pushed to have the Ten Commandments placed back in the wall. This controversy is nothing new, but it is long past time to let the plaques and the Ten Command-

ments honor those who came before us. The effort to erase the Confederate side of the Civil War and Judeo-Christian heritage of the United States does a disservice to everyone.

Like it or not, they are parts of U.S. history, and should be remembered and learned from. There is much there to honor and respect as well. In the mean-

time, Texas and America should both be forward-looking places, with no living in the past. The freedoms found here, after all, allow for the making of great history that can make every citizen proud.

Jonathan Jones is a junior political science major.

Mail Call

China deserving of 2008 Olympics

In response to Reid Bader's July 17 column.

I read the opinion article "China undeserving of Olympics because of human rights" today. I met other Chinese students at lunch this afternoon, and everyone felt angry about the article because it hurt every A&M Chinese student's heart. Although my English is not good, I want to talk about my opinion of China hosting the 2008 Olympic Games as an ordinary Chinese person.

I have to admit, our country is not a democracy like the United States. In addition, we took

part in the Tiananmen Square event. I still remember when I paraded with a lot of my schoolmates in 1989. At that time, I was 14 and did not exactly know the true meaning of democracy and freedom. I was just thinking it was great about parading in the street, because it kept us from having to go to school and do homework.

I just want to say that in China, ordinary people do support the Olympics being held in Beijing. We think it honors not only our nation, but every individual person. This event should be treated separate from politics. It is not about politics, it is not about governments' opinions, and it is the dream of every Chinese person's heart. The author is ridiculous in comparing Beijing

hosting the 2008 games to the 1936 and 1968 Olympic Games. Beijing hosting the 2008 Olympics will benefit the development of China. It will also make Americans understand Chinese culture, politics and customs much more than now.

Last Friday, when I saw the news from the Internet, I was moved. All the Chinese students at A&M are excited about this news. I also hear a lot in Email from my friends in China, Japan and Australia. We are all Chinese and we are all proud of our great country.

We had this dream when we were young. Now it has finally come true.

Vivian Xie
Graduate student

A second chance

Denying former drug users aid harms students

(U-WIRE) — The U.S. Department of Education estimates that more than 34,000 students will be denied loans and grants this year for pre-existing drug records. That number is triple the amount of those turned down for the 2000-2001 school year.

The education department screens all its applicants with drug records and denies those people any type of aid. Is this a fair law? Many students experiment with illegal substances before attending college. Should one mistake cause a student his or her education or future career?

The education officials in the Bush administration seem to think so. They support denial of aid to people with previous drug convictions. I find that quite amusing since Bush seems to have had his own dealings with illegal substances. What are students with prior drug records to do? It is commendable that the education department advocates a drug-free learning environment, but should it not also support the uplifting of students trying to better themselves through getting a college education even if their records aren't squeaky clean? Should students not be granted a second chance?

The argument at the opposite end of the spectrum is that

students should do nothing to compromise their futures. My response is interrogative. Don't we all make mistakes? I suggest the department do something to discourage drug use.

Maybe, implementation of an aid probation period would help the problem, rather than completely banning a student from aid. The reality of the sit-

Should one mistake cost a student his or her education and career?

uation is that this law will keep students who want to move forward from doing so, it will also discourage many students from even applying for aid for fear of denial.

Let's face the facts, we live in a competitive society. How are people expected to be able to compete and make a comfortable living when they aren't allowed a second chance once they make a mistake?

Take for example: a reformed robbery felon has a bachelor of science and is seeking work in a specific field for which he is well qualified. However, he finds no job. Where is his reward for wanting to do more with his life? Has his mistake cost him his future?

This analogy may not be a great one, but it promotes a certain point which is that people deserve a second chance.

There have been several attempts to repeal this law and give students a second chance. Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) introduced a new bill in hopes of repeal and the Students for Sensible Drug Policy's 140 chapters are also seeking a repeal of the law. According to officials, 10 million aid applications are expected this year. Of those applications 34,096 will likely be denied. For more information concerning the student drug policy go to <http://www.ed.gov/>

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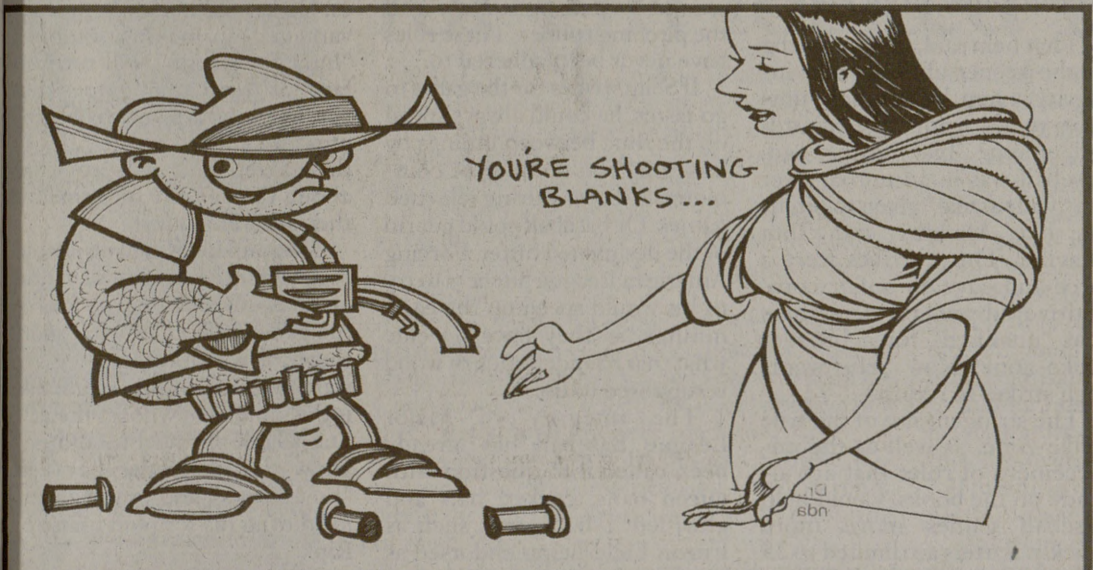
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