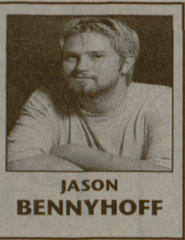


Open skies, open bars

Limit of alcohol consumption on airlines an unnecessary violation of rights

The United States is a land of freedom, not unlimited freedom, but freedom nonetheless. However, every day, freedoms that pose little or no danger to others, are being eroded by an overactive government.



JASON BENNYHOFF

One of those freedoms is the freedom to drink alcohol. Like most freedoms in this country, drinking is restricted, and often rightly so. No one wants pilots drinking on the job, and no one wants drunken drivers on the road. However, people should be allowed to drink as much as they want when they are not placing anyone in danger by doing so. Unfortunately, California Democrat Sen. Dianne Feinstein does not agree.

Feinstein recently sent a letter to the heads of seven major airlines requesting that they voluntarily impose a two-drink limit on all domestic flights or face Congressional action on the matter. She said in her letter that she could not sit by and put up with the numerous incidents of "air rage" every year and not take action. Air rage incidents are cases where unruly passengers, sometimes drunk, have to be restrained by other passen-

gers or airline personnel. The Federal Aviation Administration reports that there have been more than 100 incidents involving disorderly passengers so far this year.

One hundred incidents, hardly seems like enough to restrict the rights of the millions of passengers who fly every year and cause no trouble. Restrictions on freedoms in this country have always been made, but they should be looked at by weighing the individual's rights against society's needs. Here, the individual's right to drink poses, at most, a minor risk to the passengers sitting around him or her, much less to society as a whole.

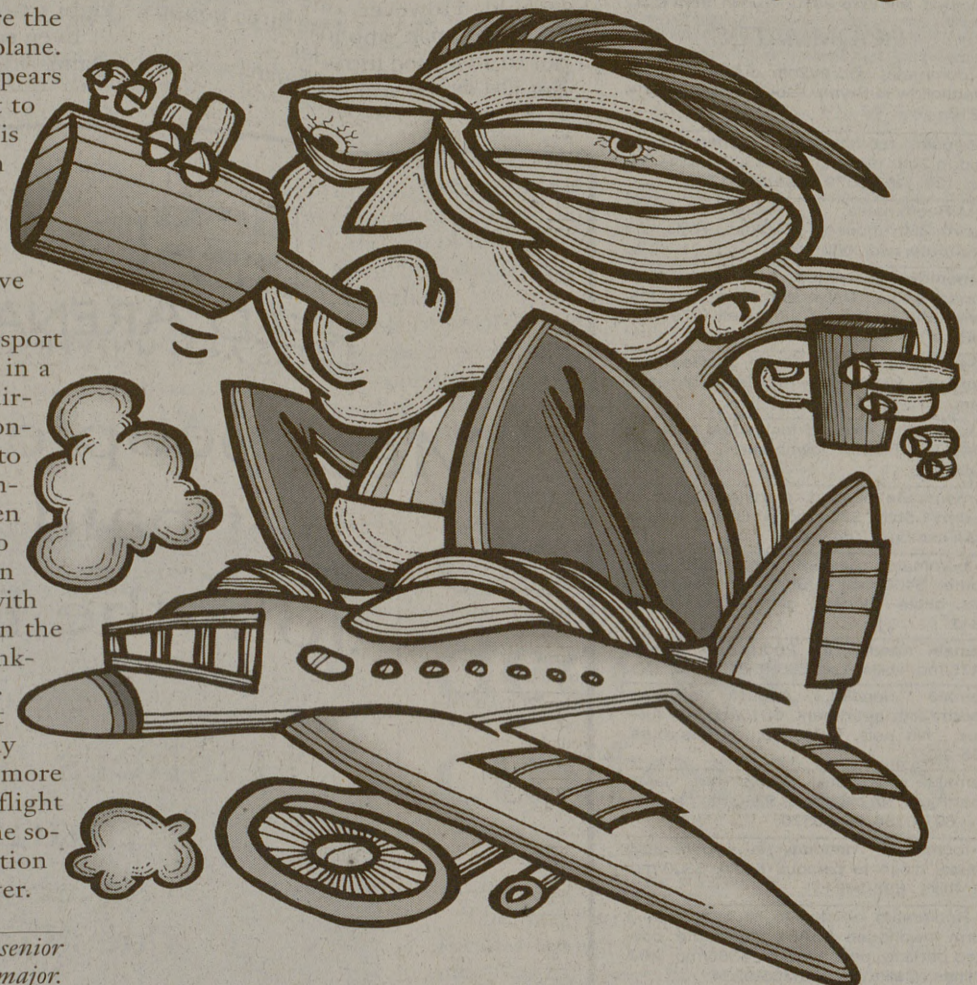
For every passenger who gets drunk and insults a flight attendant, there are thousands more who sit quietly with their tray tables in the upright and locked positions. Airlines mistreat passengers enough by packing them in like sardines and poisoning them with what passes for food on their flights. It hardly seems right that the one true pleasure an airline passenger could have may now be taken away by the government.

Feinstein cites incidents such as one where twin sisters, equally sloshed, assaulted a flight attendant and hit the plane's captain. All of this commotion forced the pilot to divert the flight

from its destination in China to an alternate landing in Alaska, where the sisters were removed from the plane. While this incident certainly appears to be a blight on the argument to refuse a two-drink maximum, it is really an indictment of the cabin crew on the flight in question.

Most airlines already have restrictions on how cabin crews should serve and not serve alcohol.

Michael Wascom, Air Transport Association spokesperson, said in a statement to CNN.com that airlines already limit alcohol consumption by not serving drinks to intoxicated or underage passengers. He also said they may even refuse to board passengers who look intoxicated before getting on the plane. So, the one problem with the current system is that when the cabin crew does not cut the drinking passengers off soon enough. Airline passengers might be best served if airlines would simply agree to train their cabin crews more thoroughly in dealing with in-flight drinking. However, whatever the solution, Congressional legislation hardly seems like the right answer.



CHAD MALLAM/THE BATTALION

Jason Bennyhoff is a senior journalism major.

Thanks, farewell to Dr. Wade Birch

Without fanfare or long goodbyes, Dr. Wade Birch is quietly leaving the community he has called home for the last three decades. But those who know Birch would expect nothing else.



STUART HUTSON

Birch has never asked for congratulations or thanks from those he has helped, and he usually does not get them. This is because the students all too often are afraid to acknowledge the fact that they needed the mental or academic assistance that they have received.

Somewhat, they are ashamed to admit that they have sought help for problems that are as prevalent on college campuses as textbooks. Yet Birch never has failed to take these problems upon his shoulders and give a helping hand anytime it was needed.

One of my most vivid memories of Birch was the Bonfire Memorial ceremony, one year after the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse. As Aggies gathered with candles in hand to remember those who had fallen,

Birch and others waited in the drizzling rain and cold winds to lend an ear to anyone who needed someone to listen.

But that was typical of Birch's mentality. When other directors of student services go home, they are allowed to forget about their job, their responsibilities and the students.

Birch always kept in mind those for whom he was here and did whatever he could to make sure they got what they needed.

When he first came to A&M, mental health was not a concern on the campus. Those dealing with the pressures of life had no where to go. Today, they have one of the foremost college counseling services in the country.

A few years ago, I needed help. It does not matter why. It does not matter how badly. Wade Birch and the counselors of the Student Counseling Service were there.

In less than two weeks, I will graduate from A&M — an accomplishment that was possible only with the help I received from the SCS.

Dr. Birch, from one student, thank you.

Stuart Hutson senior journalism major.

The bidding these days is absurd

One of the interesting things about capitalism is bartering. A prospective buyer and seller get together and try to come to some sort of financial understanding over an item. For thousands of years, these items were things like food, rugs or clothing. In recent years, this has included naming rights to things like stadiums or buildings.

Now, the money craze has reached a level of sublime absurdity. Jason Black and Frances Schroeder of New York City soon will be the parents of a bouncing baby boy. The baby's name? That remains to be decided — until a company decides to "sponsor" the baby with a donation of a half-million dollars.

That guy who said the love of money was the root of all evil may have been on to something. One must feel for the soon-to-be-born "Toshiba" (or whatever his name will be) Black, for his life will be hellish because of the remarkable greed of his parents.

The father of "Pepsi" Black was interviewed on CNN and asked what he possibly could be thinking with such an idea. "It's the opportunity to have this media moment when the name would be unveiled... the exposure it could bring to a business is potentially huge."

Ah, yes. Childbirth, brought to you by the Ford Motor Company.

Usually, monetary transactions leave two parties happy. In this case, there is a



MARK PASSWATERS

This time, the money craze has just gone too far

third party who is going to suffer every day of his life until he turns 18: "Nintendo" Black. In this society, it usually has been frowned upon to take business home.

What if you cannot escape big business because it is not your middle name but your first? Mr. Black and Ms. Schroeder claim that they merely are doing this in the best interests of themselves (a stunning development) and their two daughters. This is good, because they certainly can-

Usually, a monetary transaction leaves two parties happy. In this case, there is a third party who is going to suffer every day of his life until he turns 18.

not be in the best interests of "Rich Chocolate Ovaltine."

Once "Firestone's" name is decided on, will his parents then sponsor the stages of his development? Will Pampers pay for the rights to host his "terrible two's?" Or will Playskool sponsor the preschool years?

The year when "Nike" gets his learner's permit certainly will have to be hosted by General Motors. Trojan must be just chomping at the bit for his senior year of high school.

In spite of the general cheers of derision directed toward their decision, Black and Schroeder fail to see the problem.

"As long as we provide him with a comfortable and loving home, he's going to turn out fine," Black said.

Has it been that long since they went through grade school? Children are cruel enough to people with normal names. How bad would they be to "Microsoft?" No example is required to illustrate the pain this poor kid will endure.

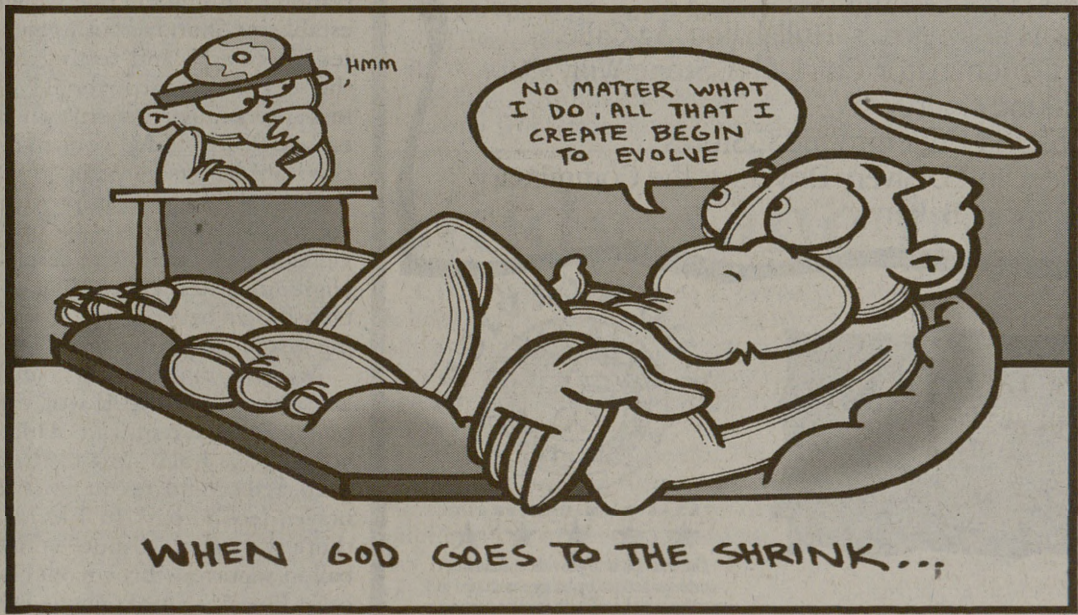
Naming rights have become an everyday feature of the corporate world. Look at the MetLife Building in New York or FedEx Field, home of the Washington Redskins. It should not become part of America's family life.

Black and Schroeder are not whoring themselves out for money. They are whoring out their unborn child. If these people are the first in a pattern of corporate-sponsored parenting, it is a sad commentary on our country's mentality.

Find it in your hearts to feel for "Clearasil." His life will be cruel and unusual because of his parents' desire to make very quick change. Of course, there is one thing that can be done: log onto Ebay and bid yourselves; then you can name him "Bob."

Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.

CARTOON OF THE DAY



WHEN GOD GOES TO THE SHRINK...

THE UN-CARTOONIST ©

Mail Call

West Campus parking garage inconvenient for students

In response to Stuart Hutson's July 30 article.

I was reading about the West Campus garage construction and was shocked to see the quote by Tony Heger mentioning Dr. Bowen's feelings toward the construction. In the article, he is quoted as saying "President Bowen made a point to express to the committee how much possible disruption this construction may cause during football season. This is going to be happening for two years, so it going to cause some problems for two seasons."

So Bowen is making a point to ensure the construction does not affect football games but does not mention a word about the nightmare students are going to face trying to park to attend classes and the Student Recreation Center. This just proves what so many people were

saying last spring about how the garage was only being built to satisfy parking demands during football games and how the administration really did not care about students' concerns. Why not put the parking garage closer to main campus near the Southside garage or the Northside dorms where it makes more sense?

Last spring, the University defended the garage saying it would provide more space for students needing to park on West Campus for classes. Dr. Bowen does not make a "point" to ensure that students have other places to park for classes, but rather seems to care about the football season and the money it brings to A&M. I would like to see him try to park on West Campus every day this fall during the construction.

Ryan Burkhalter Class of '02