

Between the lines

University Drive is a dangerous crossing

As safety-minded as Texas A&M has become, one potential danger is overlooked on University Drive at Northgate. On any given night, students risk their lives by haphazardly crossing University to get to the bars or returning to their cars after a night of partying. This is an accident waiting to happen.

Crossing six lanes of traffic is always a risk, but on University, this risk is compounded significantly. Many of the bar-goers have been drinking, as have many of the drivers.

The danger mainly stems from students' search for free parking. Parking at Northgate will always be a hassle, no matter how many garages are built or spaces are made available. Students have learned to seek alternatives because Northgate parking remains expensive, and the police strictly enforce parking violations.

The most popular alternative is to park in the campus parking lots near the Northside residence halls. On weekends, they provide free, safe parking for Northgate patrons. The only thing standing between the students and the bars is six lanes of traffic.

Students seem aware of the danger, as it is often discussed informally. Talking about it, however, is not enough — it is the responsibility of students to make this a pertinent issue, so proper measures may prevent fatal accidents.

When the bars close, and bar patrons run back across the street to their vehicles, even more care must be taken.

Although crossing University is a visible problem, little has been done to solve it, because no one is specifically at fault. There may not be one entity or organization to blame, but the responsibility to find a solution falls on many shoulders.

Most importantly, it is the Northgate-goers' problem. Students who enjoy Northgate must be vocal with city officials to ensure proper action is taken. Aggies look out for each other, and it takes little effort to say something to students who are about to run carelessly across University. It is an unspoken responsibility of students to keep

others from endangering their lives.

It also is important to remember that it is not only students crossing University who are in danger. Continued emphasis on the use of a designated driver drastically can reduce the risk of an accident.

Responsibility also lies on the shoulders of the Student Government Association. Student leaders must take the initiative to inform their peers of the risks that exist while crossing University.

For similar reasons, it is the Texas A&M administration's problem. If they are going to push risk management requirements on campus, it would be hypocritical not to address this issue. After all, students are parking on campus and crossing to Northgate from there.

It also is a problem for the city of College Station. The city's parking rates are part of the reason that students seek cheaper alternatives. Indirectly and unintentionally, the city's current system results in students endangering their lives.

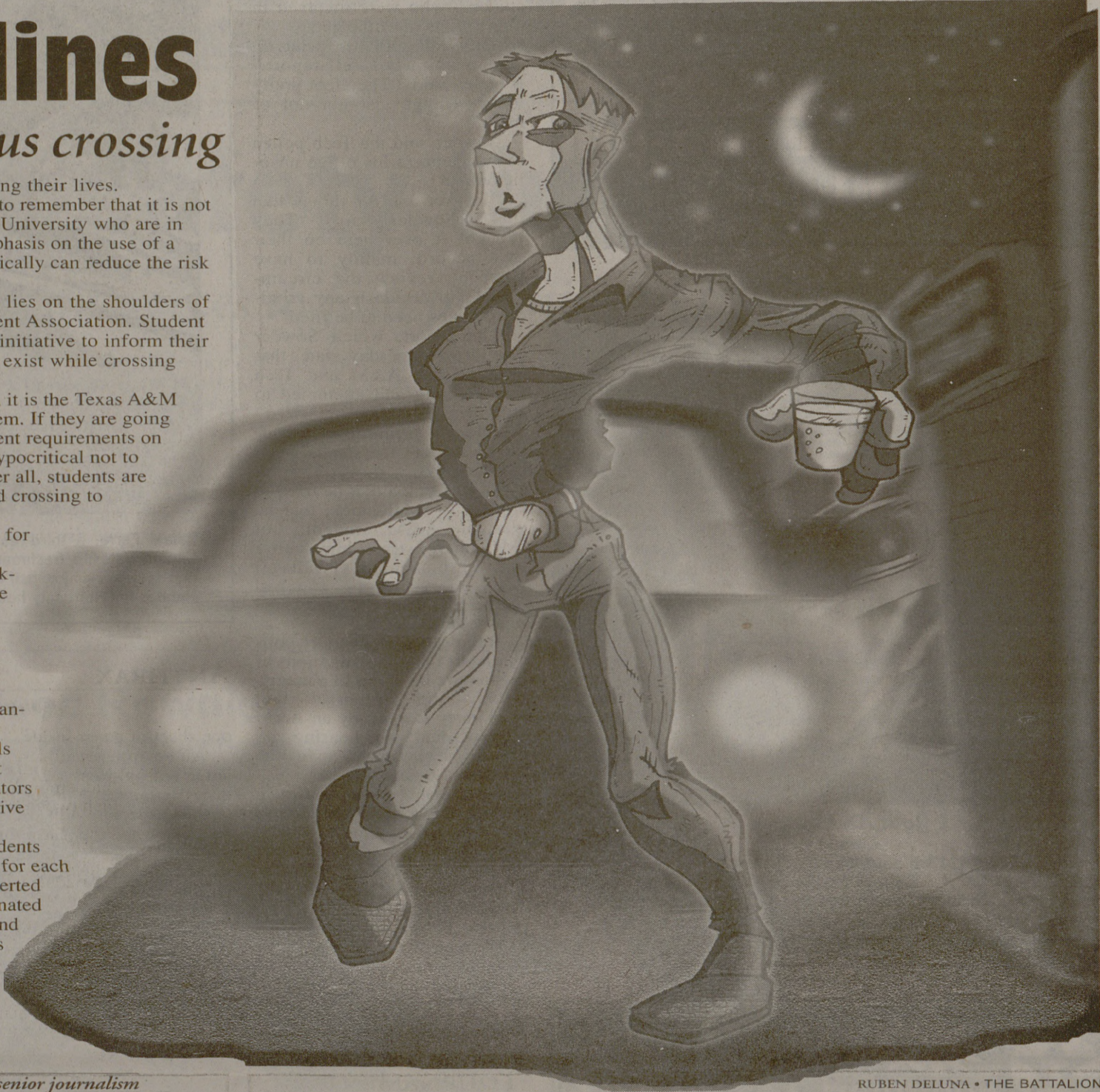
Hopefully, city officials will work with student leaders and administrators to make University Drive safe at night.

For the present, students should set an example for each other and make a concerted effort to cross at designated crosswalks. As basic and silly as this seems, it is the least students can do to look out for each other.

Mariano Castillo is a senior journalism and international studies major.



MARIANO CASTILLO



RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

Students should respect Food Services

Eating constitutes a large part of the everyday college student's life. This has become associated with social activities, and it is no different at Texas A&M. Many students meet friends and classmates for lunch or dinner during the week. Sometimes, students gather at Poor Yorrick's for a quick cup of coffee before a class or to study while enjoying an iced mocha. Before this semester, it was possible for a student to use a meal credit in exchange for \$4 worth of food at dining facilities on campus.

However, as many observant Aggies have noted, AMCs are no longer an option, and cer-

tain Outbound meal sizes have downsized yet prices have remained the same.

Students around campus have become irate, mumbling that the University has found another way to extract as much money as possible from students. The Department of Food Services is operating on limited resources and has come to a conclusion that has allowed prices to remain the same while having essentially the same options. Students need to respect this decision.

Each meal cost ranges from about \$4.20 to \$6.95. What many students are not aware of is that not all of that money pays for the food. Almost half of each meal plan purchased goes to the labor and overhead costs of maintaining dining facilities on campus. Regardless of whether students eat there, the

building remains open and utilities and overhead costs must be paid. Food Services is not funded by the state; it is an independent auxiliary enterprise.

With the cost of utilities tripling last year and a mandated personnel pay raise, Food Services had two options to stay in business. The first option was to raise prices for meal plans, which would have caused an uproar. The second choice was to cut down choices and find acceptable substitutes.

The decision to take away the AMC option was based on the fact that not many students used it. Most students were not willing to get only \$4 worth of food in exchange for a meal plan. Baked Lays are no longer an option as part of Outbound combos, and, as many students have realized, the chips are no longer

the Big Grab variety but smaller sizes.

Costs have increased drastically, and, to prevent an increase in meal plan costs, chip bag sizes were reduced. Unfortunately, Baked Lays do not come in this size.

If students are insistent on getting something that is not part of the Outbound combo, there is the new Outbound Exchange option. With this option, up to \$2 of food can be obtained in addition to the Outbound meal. While students have complained it is a rip-off and prefer the \$4 value, only \$2 of each meal plan goes to food. As Cindy Zaweiya, associate director of food services said, "You're purchasing a service."

Ruby Lee is a sophomore computer science major.



RUBY LEE



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 also may be mailed to:

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Houser speaks out

It saddens me to hear the assertion of my silence and lack of participation in furthering Bonfire. My extensive involvement in Bonfire in past years is clear evidence that I support the return of this tradition. I do want Bonfire to return, and I want students to be safe.

For that reason, I have participated in many difficult meetings, talked with various student groups, answered countless emails, displayed plans in my office for comment, made my contact information readily available and welcomed students who would like to visit with me.

In order to push forward, we need to be committed to all it will take to have a safe Bonfire. I fear that because of uninformed condemnations, the trust that we all need to make this happen could be dissolved. I am very glad that students are again becoming interested in Bonfire.

For many months, student feedback on Bonfire plans and participation at open forums and meetings was worryingly low. Bonfire has surfaced again as a big issue, as it should be. This is a very serious project. I will not abandon the safety issue, but I certainly have

not lost hope that Bonfire can return in 2002 and feel very optimistic that we are moving closer and closer daily.

A&M students should care, you should give your opinion, and you should ask questions. Hard work is going to make Bonfire return, and there are so many people who have and continue to work tirelessly to serve Texas A&M. I will continue to serve this student body and treasure the opportunity to see this project through its entirety.

R. Schuyler Houser
Class of 2001

Silver Taps, anyone?

As a student, it saddens me to see the low number of students who attend Silver Taps. After the summer break, the first Silver Taps is very crowded, but as the semester rolls on, the numbers dwindle. Considering that the school we attend prides itself on traditions, it is shocking that so few Aggies show up.

Tuesday, I not only saw students walking past as if nothing was taking place, but also people leaving early. How many students stand in support for the football team each week compared to the

MAIL CALL

number of students who stand for our fellow fallen Ags each month? Silver Taps takes a mere 20 minutes. That is not a large amount of time taken out of your day. Ask yourself this would you go to Taps if it was your best friend who died?

Sara Herbst
Class of 2002

School prayer should be a local matter

In response to Christy Ruth's Nov. 7 column:

I cannot disagree more with Ruth regarding religion in schools. First, no one ever said prayer in school was mandatory. Some schools may choose to include a prayer in the morning, some may not. Similarly, a child may have been brought up with strict atheistic views and just not participate in the prayer.

I find it ironic that a vocal minority that preaches tolerance would have such trouble displaying it. Using the argument of tolerance, a group is a group be it a minority or a majority, and it makes no sense to deny the

majority an activity just because a vocal minority objects to its validity. If the vocal minority were allowed to set policy everywhere, how many freedoms would the people of America lose. Tolerance is fine, but it works both ways.

I am sure that if he were Jewish, Muslim, Shinto, Hindu or any other religion the prayer would've been much different. And as the sensible majority did then, they would have accepted his prayer as the sign of remorse and plea for strength that it was.

In the end, everyone is dancing around the real issue which the author hinted at. Who decides what is acceptable in a state or locally administered agency, the federal, state or local government? I believe that only the governing body with the most direct contact with the concerned area should have rule of law over such an intimate issue.

Secondary to this is the fear that a child's right to chose is being infringed upon in some way. It is, but not in the way that Ruth seems to think. In fact, removing prayer simply removes a category of choices.

Zach Cummings
Class of 1999