

Opinion

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THE BATTALION

Page 9

A proud tradition returns to Aggieland

As Bonfire fades, Fish Drill Team a welcome addition

Aggies have endured several losses this semester, including the possibility that Bonfire will not burn in 2002 and a home loss to their biggest rival. However, Ol' Army is not dead.

The nationally famous Corps of Cadets Fish Drill Team, a tradition that students can take pride in, is set to return, and unfortunately, its return has been overshadowed by other events.

As Bonfire's future hangs in the balance, students should begin to turn their attention to other, more positive traditions that make Texas A&M

unique. While many in the Aggie community have been focusing on the future of Bonfire, the administration provided a welcome surprise by announcing the return of Fish Drill Team.

The Fish Drill Team, created in 1946 by a group of freshman cadets, was famous for winning national championships in precision drill competitions. The team was disbanded in 1997 after one of the team's members complained of physical assaults from the upperclassmen advisers. No time was set for reinstatement.

Although many students have expressed their appreciation for having an A&M tradition return, some former members of the Fish Drill Team have not displayed the same excitement.

Concerns have been expressed that the new Fish Drill Team will be a watered-down, more user-friendly version of the original without the rigorous physical training that made the Fish Drill Team famous in years past.

The new Fish Drill Team, which bears the same name as the original, will be vastly different and Aggies should be proud of the changes it is making. Changes were made apparent when Michelle Peters, a junior interdisciplinary studies major, was named one of two senior cadets on the new squad. In the history of the Fish Drill Team, no female has ever held the position.



RICHARD BRAY

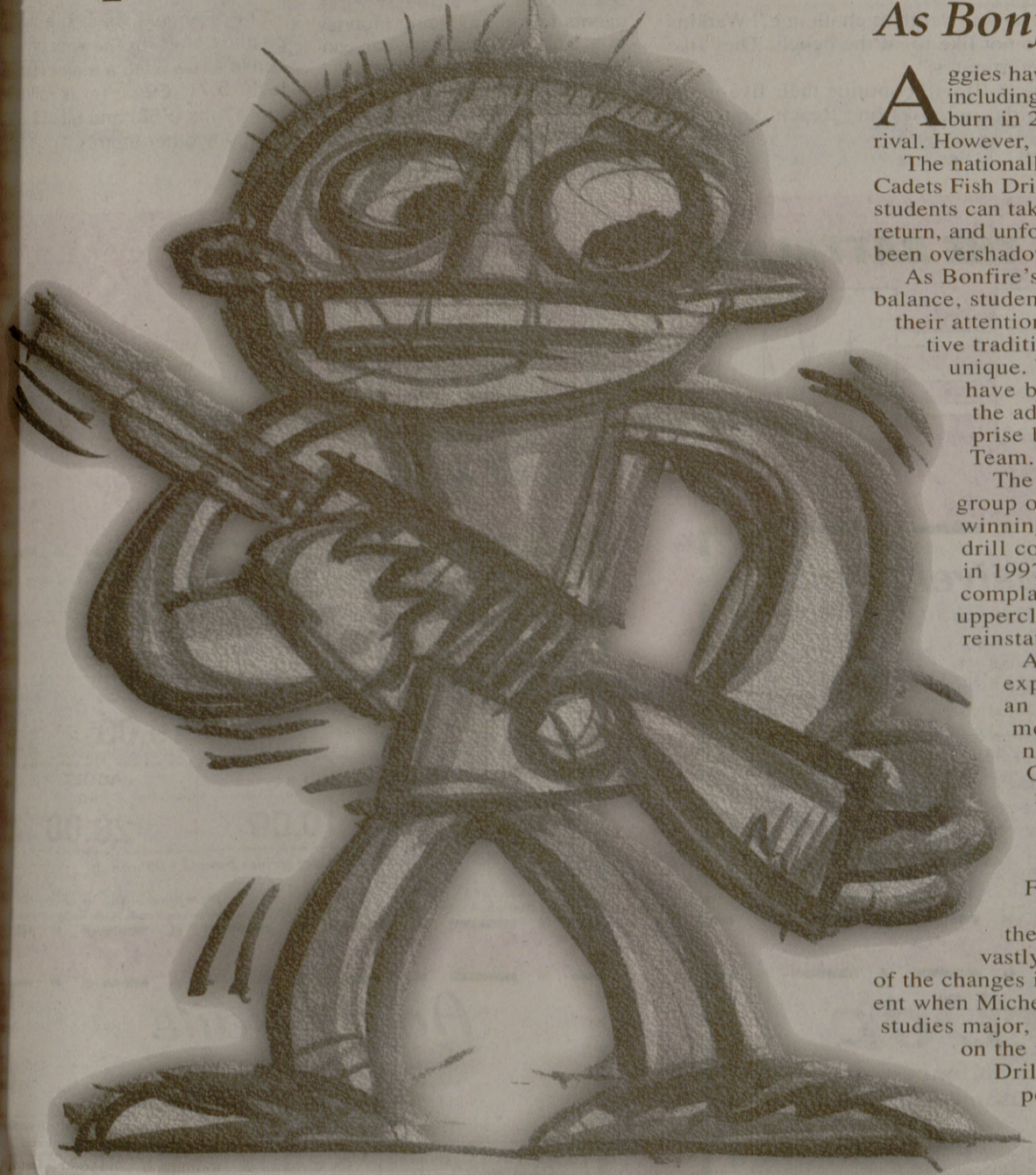
Old members of the team have expressed their fear that these changes will make the new Fish Drill Team little more than a mockery of the original. They have pointed to the rigorous drills and exercises that made the Fish Drill Team respected nationwide as proof that their toughness cannot be matched by the new version. The team will also not have the advantage of traditions passed down by previous Fish Drill Team members.

The fact is, however, that while the Fish Drill Team of the past may have won numerous national championships and made appearances in "A Few Good Men" and "Courage Under Fire," they embarrassed themselves when they were caught hazing members of their team. There is no excuse for such behavior. Old members of the Fish Drill Team can speak of honor, commitment and discipline, but the bottom line is that their past behavior is to blame for the current state of the Fish Drill Team.

Some former members of the Fish Drill Team have said Peters and Jerry Aymond, the other senior adviser and a junior history major, have not earned their positions and know nothing about the Fish Drill Team. Their argument circumvents a very important point: there would not be a need for a reinvented Fish Drill Team if the original had not made a stupid mistake by physically abusing members of their team. Peters and Aymond have never been members of the Fish Drill Team, but not through any fault of their own. As a result, they cannot be held responsible for the lack of Fish Drill Team experience.

Aggies who hold A&M's traditions near to their heart should be excited about the reinstatement of the Fish Drill Team. A Fish Drill Team without hazing is something Texas A&M can be proud of, regardless of whether it wins any national championships. Peters and Aymond have been placed in a difficult position in being asked to take the reins of an organization with an unsurpassed tradition of competitive excellence. Hopefully they can also mold the Fish Drill Team into an organization with an unsurpassed tradition of moral excellence and respect.

Richard Bray is a junior journalism major.



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MAIL CALL

Teach the younger students about Bonfire

This goes out to all the upperclassmen. You know that the fate of Bonfire is up to the Classes of 2004 and 2005, but you will not tell us how to keep the tradition alive. I am a freshman and I know more than you think I know about Bonfire. I have been to three Bonfires in the past and listened to good bull stories years from my brother and his friends who were members of the Corps of Cadets.

Every time I think, read, or talk about Bonfire, I cry because I know what it means to Aggies and to me. However, many of my fellow freshmen cannot really grasp the concept behind Bonfire. They do not truly understand that it is the single largest event that created the family ties and bonding of fellow Aggies. Now I am seeing the lack of dorm community, lack of respect between non-regs and Corps members and an overall lack of true Aggie spirit. So, I am calling on upperclassmen to stop telling the underclassmen that it is up to us. You are still here and this is still your University.

Take us under your wing and show us the ways of Bonfire and all that goes with it and show us what we can do to keep this tradition alive, forever.

Erin Stock
Class of 2005

Lawsuits not the way to heal and move on

In response to the Nov. 26 editorial "Wrong Action:"

I believe these lawsuits filed by the families whose children were injured or killed are unnecessary. I understand the pain and grief those families have in their hearts from the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, and I know that even after two years that pain still has not subsided. However, suing A&M administrators and students for monetary compensation is not the right way to go about the healing process.

Many of the families have said that the lawsuits are not about the money, but an attempt to make the next Bonfire and other student activities safer. If this were truly the case, then the families should not be seeking financial rewards, especially suing individual persons to avoid the liability cap.

A&M and administrators have already acknowledged the need for changes, and have gone through the necessary measures to ensure the safety of students for the next Bonfire. Students and families of those

injured or killed in the collapse have already received financial compensation, and more money will not undo the tragedy.

For those students who are named as defendants, these lawsuits are grossly unfair. They made Bonfire as safe as they possibly could. No one could foresee what would happen. Not only that, but those students who were injured or killed were participating in the same way as those being sued.

Will the families also sue themselves because their children knew they were taking part in a dangerous, if not lethal, student activity, and did nothing to correct it? I truly wish that those families suing would realize that sometimes accidents happen and find a more constructive way to heal.

Jessica Riggs
Class of 2003

Moving moments of Bonfire reflection

At 2:32 a.m. on Nov. 18, I, among many other Aggies, stood together as we honored 12 fallen Aggies. There have been only a few times in my life in which I have been overcome by different emotions, many I cannot describe. However, I am going to try. I am writing this at 4:08 a.m. because I am completely overwhelmed. I felt sadness as I watched the families and friends mourn over the loss of their loved ones.

I felt anger because many have forgotten what happened just a few years ago. Yet, I am hopeful that we soon will become united and yet again realize what the true meaning of Bonfire is. It is more than a stack of logs. Bonfire is a representation of the Aggie spirit, our burning desire and love for our University and for fellow Aggies. It angers me that people will condemn others for the lack of action, instead of taking action themselves.

It is so much easier to blame others and so much harder to take an initiative. I feel that we as Aggies must realize if we want Bonfire to come back, then we must stand united, not divided and take action together. The basis of the Aggie spirit is the unity among all Aggies. It is the pure foundation on which this University is built. Without this foundation, nothing can be built; nothing can be created or passed on.

I believe that this morning demonstrated the beginning of that unity that we need. I have never been to Bonfire, but I look forward to the Bonfire in 2002, where I hope that we, as Aggies, will stand as one.

Julie Rowe
Class of 2003

Georgia school board ruling on cheerleader routines senseless

Georgia recently reaffirmed its position as one of the country's most conservative states when Chatham County school officials banned vague behavior like "suggestive movements" and "lewd gestures" from all school performances. The ruling comes in response to parental complaints that some of the area cheerleaders' dance routines were too sexually suggestive for high school students. The Savannah, Ga., school board unanimously agreed on the ban.

It is unfortunate that something as harmless as dancing is criticized and dissected by well-meaning parents in an effort to keep their children from growing up. No amount of cheering and dancing, suggestive or not, has ever hurt a young person's performance at school or eaten away at his or her mind and morals.

According to The Associated Press, Lori Brady, one of the Chatham County School Board members, was offended by such things as "hip thrusts" and "shaking ... rear ends." Maybe Brady can instruct some of these cheerleaders on how to dance and cheer without moving their hips and rear ends. It cannot be done. The Georgia school board members have drawn the line of vulgarity at standard dance movements used by other schools across the country.

How are school officials going to rule on such arbitrary things? What one over-sensitive parent may consider too suggestive of a movement or an inappropriate rear-end shake, another more rational person may not. It is not any one parent's duty to be the morality police for an entire school district, especially not when that parent is offended by his or her own shadow.

It is okay to want decent, moral children and it is

good that these parents and school board members want to keep vulgarity and indecency out of schools. But a two-minute dance routine is not going to corrupt a young person's mind and thrust them into a life of sin and promiscuity. The very idea is absurd. If these parents truly want to help their children, they should spend more time with them at home and otherwise offer their guidance and support.

Even the most vulgar and explicit high school cheerleading routine is not as bad as some of what can be seen on late-night cable television by children of any age. Besides, there are already adults in place, usually cheerleading sponsors, who know their squad's dance steps before they are performed. These sponsors would not intentionally encourage sexually vulgar cheers, so a district-wide ban is unnecessary.

This policy is not just a pacifier stuck in the mouths of some whining parents. Its effects are farther reaching. This ruling places needless scrutiny and bad publicity on an entire county of young people who have more important things to be concerned with. Schools should gain recognition for academic and athletic achievements, not media-hyped dance routines.

Not everyone supports the board's decision. Some parents have been very vocal about their distaste for the ban, likening it to the controversy over Elvis' hip-shaking of the 1950s. Yvonne Holmes, mother of a 16-year-old cheerleader, accurately accused the school board members of "forget[ting] they were kids, too, and not everything they did their parents agreed with." Well said.

Congratulations, Georgia, for having this country's most uninspired, politically correct cheerleaders. America salutes you.

George Deutsch is a junior journalism major.

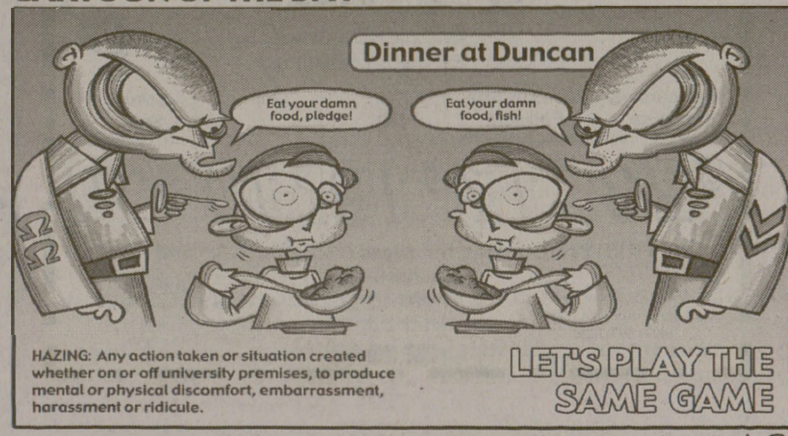
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CARTOON OF THE DAY



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