

The time has passed

Passwaters bids farewell

Every *Battalion* opinion writer gets the chance to write one final column when he or she graduates. My time has arrived. Usually, these columns are a chance for the writer to settle old scores or complain about the things they hated at A&M. If you are waiting for that, quit reading. Go back to the crossword. I enjoyed my time here, and I am going to say so — in just a minute.



MARK PASSWATERS

First, a parting nod to our fine foes in that cesspool known as Austin and that fourth-dimension hellhole known as West Texas. It is a good thing the University of Texas adopted the Longhorn as its mascot, because only stupid cattle would mass around the 40 acres of urban sprawl. I could not have gone to that school, as I do not believe in Maoist values or that piercing one's nose brings us closer to the deity of the week. You are not Texas, you're Beverly Hills, 90210. Like, oh my ga!

As for you brain-dead Red Raiders, thanks for showing us that it is possible to devolve. You wonder why nobody takes you seriously? It is simple: every time you get a chance to prove to the world that you are not a bunch of community college rejects, you blow it. Do not whine or complain, either; I do not read hate mail written in crayon.

A&M truly is a special place. In spite of how many times that is said, it's still true. Aggies, by and large, respect themselves and other people. They believe that things like courage, commitment, courtesy and respect are not to be laughed at. People say Aggies are different. I say, so what? We know what we are doing. Do you?

The greatest thing about A&M is its traditions. Outside of

Aggies by and large, respect themselves and other people. They believe that courage, commitment, courtesy and respect are not things to laugh at.

Muster, Bonfire is the most important of these traditions. That is why Bonfire must continue. If A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen is going to make cost an issue, current and former students should find the money to keep it burning. It can and must be done safely, and it can be done. The students and the administration should have the guts to stand up for all Aggies and ensure that it does.

When people grumble about *The Battalion*, it irks me a little. If people are not willing to apply and try to change things, I do not want to hear the whining. The application process is open, and who knows what you may end up doing. I got to meet a couple of presidents, a governor or two and a bunch of celebrities while working there. I also got to meet people who were truly inspiring: folks like Lanny Hays, who nearly died in the Bonfire collapse but is ready to get back on stack today; the Kerlee family, who embraced the community where their son died instead of avoiding it, and Travis Garren, who lost his brother in a tragic accident but became an emotional rock for other people.

As I go, a few final things: political correctness is garbage. It was a method of suppression started by Stalin, and that is all it is today. For those of you out there who say that Gore was robbed: Bush won, every time. Get over it.

I think Saddam Hussein has to be killed. I did not before, but I do now. Sept. 11 changed everything. It is a very simple equation: Either the terrorists and their supporters die, or we die. I have no intention of dying anytime soon. Saddam can join Bin Laden someplace where it never gets cold, and I do not mean Brownsville.

It is time for me to go. I have enjoyed my time here. For the liberals who celebrate my departure: My brother Lee will be here in two years. He knows your names. God bless all of you. Gig 'em, Aggies.

Mark Passwaters is a senior political science major.

CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UNCARTOONIST ©

Hit the road, Jack

Highway 6 should be a road traveled by naysayers

Texas A&M is going through a period in which a lot of changes are being proposed. A group of students has struggled to create a competitive cheerleading squad, and as a result have been chastised for being destructive to A&M's rich tradition. The Residence Hall Association encouraged students to sing the first verse of the "War Hymn" instead of singing the second verse twice, as Aggies have done for years. This suggestion was met with resistance in the name of traditions.



RICHARD BRAY

Whenever such suggestions are voiced requesting change, some misguided Aggie invariably responds with a statement to the effect of, "If you don't like the way we do things here, then why don't you just leave? When such statements are ignored for the brutal stupidity that they are, the people who asked the question think that they have somehow won the argument."

Believe it or not, students who propose changes do love Aggieland. In fact, they probably love Aggieland more than those who sit idly by and accept every aspect of the University because it is "tradition." It is entirely possible for Aggies to respect A&M's multitude of traditions without holding every aspect of this University near to their heart.

Those who love A&M want it to be the best it can be. They are willing to take a logical look

at their school and take the good and the bad. They are willing to acknowledge that both aspects of this University exist, and they want to do what they can to improve upon those bad aspects.

Telling these people to either keep silent about their views or to leave the University does Texas A&M no good. A&M is not composed of just conservative middle class third-generation Aggies. Aggies include those whose views differ from the norm. Aggies also include those who would like to create new traditions, such as competitive cheerleading organizations.

These individuals have just as much right to be here as any Aggies, past or present. The different opinions expressed make the University stronger, not weaker.

Even worse is the ridiculous nature of expecting someone to leave A&M simply because their ideology does not match the majority. A&M is strengthened by the diversity of its student body. Improving diversity has become a primary concern of the administration, as evident by Vision 2020.

By suggesting that students who want to change some things should simply leave A&M, Aggies perpetuate the feeling that outsiders are not welcome. As a result, they exemplify one of A&M's greatest weaknesses and do nothing to contribute to the friendly atmosphere that attracts so many students.

Richard Bray is a junior journalism major.

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SOUND OFF FOR BONFIRE

Students should applaud administration, stay the course for 2002

The first Aggie Bonfire burned as a small pile of trash and brush in 1909. Since then, what became one of Texas A&M's most cherished traditions evolved into a display of spirit, pride and unity, and then into the University's greatest tragedy.

Controversy has ensued concerning the details of the next Bonfire, and understandably so. Ten lawsuits have been filed by families of the victims, several students have constructed their own bonfires and administrators have been accused of delaying Bonfire 2002 or wishing it canceled altogether.

Fortunately, many Aggies and former students feel passionately about Bonfire and have made their voices heard. Above all, they want it to return on schedule. If that is to happen, students and alumni must meet the administration halfway, because the time has come for students to play their role.

Last week, the University took a big step

toward Bonfire 2002 when potential designs were presented to the Student Senate, and the A&M community should give credit where credit is due. A&M administrators and leaders have been the brunt of profuse criticism, which they have heeded. Now, they should be commended for facilitating development of three designs that meet the parameters set forth by A&M President Dr. Ray M. Bowen — a tremendous boost in momentum.

But if any one of those designs is to become a reality, student voices must extend beyond complaint and criticism. Students will be given an opportunity to vote and provide feedback on the designs Jan. 16-18. This period is key to the success of Bonfire 2002 and beyond. Dr. Bryan R. Cole, steering committee facilitator, has said feedback will gauge student interest. If not enough students respond, Cole said, the committee will

be forced to weigh for itself student interest in the future of Bonfire.

That must not happen.

The likelihood of student apathy is frightening, though. For the last two years, only about 10,000 students have voted in the spring student body elections — less than 25 percent of the student body. Apathy next month would be unacceptable and uncharacteristic of the Aggie spirit that successfully fueled Bonfire for 90 years.

Aggies, the days of spirit, school pride and unity that Bonfire brought need not end. Fill out surveys and make your voices echo off the walls of Jericho. Planning for Bonfire 2002 involves more than student leaders and a task force. It involves student sentiment, too. It involves you.

The University has done its part, and now, you must do yours.