

Happy trails

The semester has come and gone, and the time has come for my farewell nod as editor of *The Battalion*. Unfortunately, words cannot quantify my *Battalion* career or the experience I have had this semester. But I shall try anyway.

The news business is bizarre, for lack of a better word. Journalists' finest work often comes during the worst of times. Regrettably, such was the case for *The Battalion* staff this semester.

When I learned of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, my first instinct was to organize the newsroom and plot a course for the next day's paper. How could we cover this? What should we expect of ourselves?

As I was pondering the endless stream of questions, my thoughts drifted back to the morning of Nov. 18, 1999, a day that redefined the dynamics of being a student journalist at Texas A&M.

On the morning of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, the *Battalion* staff was called into the newsroom for a meeting. I remember watching Sallie Turner and Marium Mohiuddin, the newsroom leaders at the time, wondering if I could have overcome the challenges they were faced with.

After a day of holding a notepad and pen on the Polo Fields, I was among the masses that solemnly shuffled to Reed Arena for the Bonfire memorial service. As I left Reed, emotion and tears overtook me, and I felt unable to do the job I knew I had to do. As I choked back tears and tried to write, my editors made something very clear to me: my duty and service to fellow Aggies was news coverage, no matter how difficult it was.

As much as it hurt, our obligation was to set aside our emotional wounds and perform a task that could be done by no one else: provide coverage of a tragedy no other media outlet could fathom or comprehend.

And we did. Our coverage rivaled that of the best news crews — not because we were professionals, but because we saw the tragedy through eyes filled with tears. Some say born-to-journalists experience an epiphany during their career, a news event that hooks them for life. If that is true, the Aggie Bonfire collapse christened me as a journalist.

The *Battalion* staff was faced with the same challenge Sept. 11, and as I led the newsroom meeting, I saw myself standing in the big pair of shoes that had been filled by my mentors almost two years before, a soliloquy I felt unprepared to handle. But as student journalists, we had already been trained to deal with tragedy. Unfortunately, we had learned the hard way.

And as I look back on the semester and our nation's strength amid the tragedy that struck our homeland, "phenomenal" is the only word that comes to mind. Like I said, news is a strange business, but to tell the stories of people — true heroes — is a feeling like no other.

For all the bitter diatribes published in *The Battalion* about Bonfire, the MSC or anything else, we are still Aggies, with a deep love for this University. We do the job prescribed by John Locke and the writers of the Constitution; we do not hold grudges and never intend to hurt anyone, but, sometimes, someone must say what we would rather not hear. That makes me no less of an Aggie, though; I received my Aggie ring this semester, and I wear it with pride everyday. But I am rational enough to realize that things can always be better in Aggieland, for it is not Utopia. Anything else would be a disservice to me and those whom I serve.

The Battalion is an educational forum, and we learn a lot. Journalism professors teach the mechanics of writing and editing. Newsrooms teach journalism — especially on days like Sept. 11. This newspaper is a miracle that happens every 24 hours — the miraculous part is that a bunch of twenty-somethings has the confidence, stamina and dedication to do it everyday without hesitation. I salute the staff and editors for passing the true test of commitment and resiliency by serving the A&M community well: you have done a first-class job this semester, and never let anyone tell you otherwise.

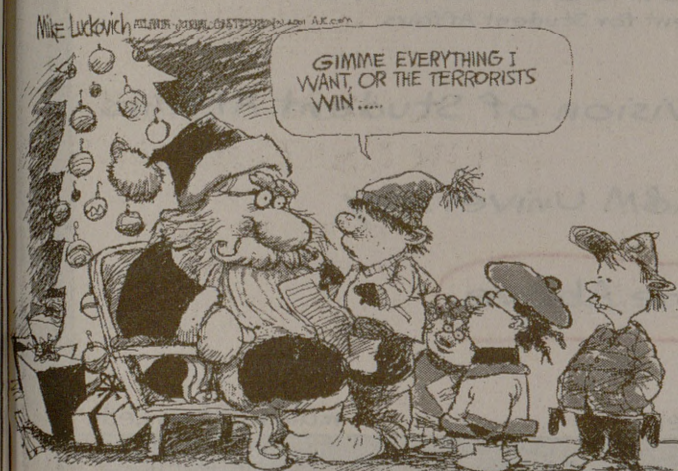
Readers, I leave you in capable hands next semester. As I pass the red pen to Mariano Castillo (known affectionately in the newsroom as "Fish Castillo"), I wish him and his team the best of luck. And I cannot leave without thanking my parents and friends (Amanda, especially) for the support they have given me.

As I ride into the sunset, the legacy I hope to leave is one of news coverage. To opine is, indeed, fine, but less noble than objective news coverage. I challenge those who come and go at *The Battalion* after me to remember the premise of newspapers, and to stay true to heart and the spirit of Aggies. One could ask for no more, and one should expect no less of oneself.

A&M is a special place, and I thank God 2003 times everyday for being a part of the Aggie family. Regardless of what our rivals in Austin call their school, Texans shall always know what is best: Texas A&M — the true university of Texas.

Gig 'em, and God bless you, Texas Aggies.

Brady Creel is a junior journalism and management major.



Get help when you need it

Finals have arrived in Aggieland, and as the semester drags itself to a close, students are finding themselves overwhelmed with loads of material dating back to September and feelings of dread associated with cumulative finals. Coffee shops, libraries, and computer labs are packed, many resorting to 24-hour operation to accommodate the hoards of studying students.

A little further from campus, 4.0 and Go is packed, too, conducting class everyday from dawn to way past dusk. Not unlike the library, what has become a savior for many is overwhelmed with students ready and willing to sit in the same spot for four hours reviewing for exams.

This type of tutoring service, as popular as it is with many A&M students, is something that some faculty are not quite comfortable with.

Teachers often discourage attendance at these mass reviews found at places like 4.0 and Go and A+ Tutoring, and are downright annoyed with solicitors standing outside classroom doors passing out review schedules as students exit their own reviews. They have raised copyright issues, asking where these tutors get the right to use their own materials to review students. Some have even threatened to fail students who go, contending that 4.0 and Go attendance is cheating because students receive answers.

Like it or not, tutoring is tutoring, whether it is private or mass, and teachers should be encouraged by the willingness of students to understand material and do well on tests. Teachers should be encouraged by the commitment of students who make the effort and pay the money to go to tutoring. There is no secret information handed out, and students have to do more than pay for a review to do well in class.

They operate with integrity, and their tutoring is designed to aid in the study process and their help will only take a student so far. The concept of a 4.0 and Go-type service is one that most students are familiar with. Topics range from math to marketing to biology and everything in between.

In most cases, private sessions can be arranged. The number of students waiting outside for a midnight review should be evidence of these services' popularity among students. Teachers are not so excited about these services though, and they sometimes discourage their students from paying for tutoring in exchange for department sponsored help desks and review sessions. They have also raised legal issues involving the use of their old tests reviews in the past.

In the spirit of entrepreneurship, 4.0 and Go began in 1994 with six classes, including math, accounting info and finance. Proprietors saw that tutoring was popular and have expanded as the demand has grown. Arf Carr, owner and tutor, says his company's existence is upsetting to some faculty members because they are doing the same things. "They wonder why their students are paying to go to someone else when they could be getting the help from them for free," Carr said. "We are professionals at what we do, and it is not an issue of competing with teachers or their teaching methods. We give them extra help and more practice for their tests."

No matter what the names imply, and speaking from experience, one will not be guaranteed an A by merely attending a review session — but it will not hurt. Students are able to review the material and be more prepared for tests, but it is not a cure-all for studying woes. So teachers take heart, while many of your students would rather walk into oncoming traffic than pay \$20 to sit through a grueling four-hour review session, the ones that go are not assured an A and they

really have no other advantage besides the fact that they have taken four hours to study for a test. And to students willing to pay, remember that there are no guarantees and you get what you give; do not be fooled by the name and be ready to put in a little bit more than the drive to tutoring to get that A.

Kelln Zimmer is a junior English major.



KELLN ZIMMER



ADRIAN CALCANEO • THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

Uncartoonist can be uncool

In response to the Dec. 4 cartoon:

If the Uncartoonist were not so closed minded and quick to stereotype, he would realize that sororities are impacting the community with much more to offer than their bank balance.

Before coming to A&M and joining the Greek community, I was apprehensive and skeptical of its motives and morals. However, I went a step farther than the Uncartoonist and researched Greek life.

What the cartoon does not display or detail is the amount of good that sororities are providing for the community. The Uncartoonist obviously does not realize the amount of hours and work put into philanthropic efforts by sororities.

For example, in the last semester alone, members of my sorority have participated in Breast Cancer Research Funding, St. Jude's Children's Hospital, Still Creek Boys and Girls Ranch, blood, food and book drives, March of Dimes and the American Red Cross Relief fund for the Sept. 11th Tragedy.

This list does not include activities planned for the spring, which is usually more devoted to philanthropies and weekends like Big Event. It is also true that Greek members are more likely to be involved in other areas on campus, which range from freshman leadership organizations to working alongside the Uncartoonist at *The Battalion*. Before you are so quick to judge sororities as snobby, money-hungry girls, take a closer look at what they are really about, scholarship, leadership and service.

*M'Lee Lytle
Class of 2005*

"Womyn" treated badly at A&M

In response to Kendra Kingsley's Dec. 3rd article:

When I came to A&M, I saw men giving up their seats "selflessly" to womyn (sic) and this was something I had never seen before. Like most things here, on the surface this seemed to be something special. It is not. Womyn are treated terribly at A&M, and to see misogyny disguised by a held door is typical.

When I carried my bicycle in the rain because I had a flat tire, nobody stopped to offer me a ride. When my friend who dresses "punk" sat on the bus, she sat alone. A nurse in the health center once confessed to me her dislike of the foreign students because they don't understand the health forms.

The womyn's cheerleading team was rejected for fear that they may be confused with the "men" who lead the spirit of A&M. On the radio I hear songs about womyn who should dream about "babies and cowboys" and I must say that I agree, this does not happen in New York. I think A&M could learn a lot from womyn, and I wish more womyn here would realize that having a car door opened for them isn't necessarily respect, but just playing his game.

Look around campus, how many times has an "Aggie" helped a foreign student with the language barrier? When my moving truck broke down, I had to take my car off the hitch, change the tire and put it back together. Many "southerners" looked at me without offering help. So, either I do not have the physical attributes required for respect or I do not deserve it because I am different.

This school prides itself on its football program, but it is womyn's softball that has brought

the most national collegiate championships to this university. Little boys in overalls could learn a lot from real cheerleaders.

*Mike Wallowitz
Graduate Student*

Israel occupying foreign land

The scenario must now be familiar to many students. A suicide bomb explodes, killing many people. Israel and the West express shock and horror. The Israeli security cabinet convenes, and what follows are air strikes against Palestinian targets, assassinations and more deaths. It is time for a new script to be written.

Not once has Israel considered the alternative path of giving back the occupied territories to the Palestinians. It keeps hold of the land under the pretense that to give it back would mean certain destruction for Israel.

Pardon me, but whose army in the Middle East is capable of attacking and destroying the nuclear equipped, American funded Israeli Army?

Whatever the Palestinians do, and some acts can only be described as terrorism, they are done for the purpose of removing the Israeli occupation from their land. If Israel was to withdraw to its internationally recognized 1967 borders, any attacks on Israel could be legitimately answered in self-defense. As long as Israel occupies the Palestinian territories, anything it does will always be an act of offense, and neither Bush nor Sharon can convince us otherwise.

*Meg Leskowitz
Class of 2005*