

EDITORIAL NO SECRETS

The appointment date for Texas A&M's next president is quickly approaching. By the end of June, students will most likely have a new president. But two candidates remain unknown. While three potential presidents have visited campus to discuss important issues and answer questions, the A&M community has not had the opportunity to hear from the others. With each passing day bringing us closer to the end of the semester, the likelihood of an opportunity for open dialogue decreases.

Students, faculty and alumni deserve better than this. The names should be released immediately and the two unknown candidates should visit the University before the semester ends. Under Texas law, the names of all finalists must be made public only 21 days prior to the Board of Regents appointment of the next president. It would be the height of administrative arrogance to keep the candidates undisclosed until a large majority of the students are away from campus. Why the secrecy and the lack of opportunity to meet with or voice concerns about every candidate?

The president of Texas A&M makes decisions that directly affect students. As such, Aggies should have the opportunity to hear the goals and vision of all individuals who wish to lead the University. They also should be given time to examine and scrutinize the record and qualifications of any person who might make decisions on their behalf. To completely release the candidates names after most students are gone is a disservice and a slap in the face to students and University supporters.

The Texas A&M Board of Regents should end the secrecy immediately. Such action should be unnecessary if all the candidates are qualified. The confusion and speculation is unproductive to the process of choosing a new president. All those who care about A&M should be outraged by the refusal to make all the candidates known. There is no legitimate reason why all of those who want to make decisions on behalf of others should be protected from critical analysis.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Parents survived the college visit

I am a parent who survived the college visit experience with my own children in their pursuit of selecting a college for their further studies. I have experienced the conservatism at Texas A&M and the religious closing to the video presented by Baylor University. The Baylor film ended with the university's president stating "that attending Baylor University was the next best thing to being in heaven." It is evident that religion is alive at Baylor. It is also obvious to me that conservatism is alive and well at Texas A&M.

While visiting the College Station campus it is impossible to miss the George Bush Library, George Bush Drive, and the Clayton Williams Alumni Center.

Speaking of conservatives, the very idea of Tom Delay confusing conservatism and religious affiliation at these two universities shows that the House Majority Whip needs more education. Perhaps the voters will decide to send him back to class and put him out of a job just like Baylor did when they sent him packing because of his very social social life.

John Skinner
Fort Worth, TX

Muster is a time of remembrance

This year at Muster I rediscovered a lot. I saw why our school is held in such high esteem. I saw why I am nearly brought to tears at every single Silver Taps, and why I am brought to my feet at every game. The band made me tremble with pride and passion and the fightin' Texas Aggie Class of 1952 made me humble and eternally grateful.

I was blessed, overwhelmed, inspired, made proud, moved and impassioned among many other things. And I was also enlightened.

I learned how to make things easier on my family when I pass. The struggle with a death need not be complicated with the burdens of financing ceremonies and travel expenses and everything that goes into remembering the deceased.

I only hope that by then people follow the example set by the reverent trail-blazers in the window offices at A&M at our most sacred of ceremonies.

Dion McInnis
Class of 2003

DANGEROUS GAMES

Sports clubs should implement safety precautions

Whenever sports fans hear the name Brittanie Cecil, they instantly feel a pang of sadness.



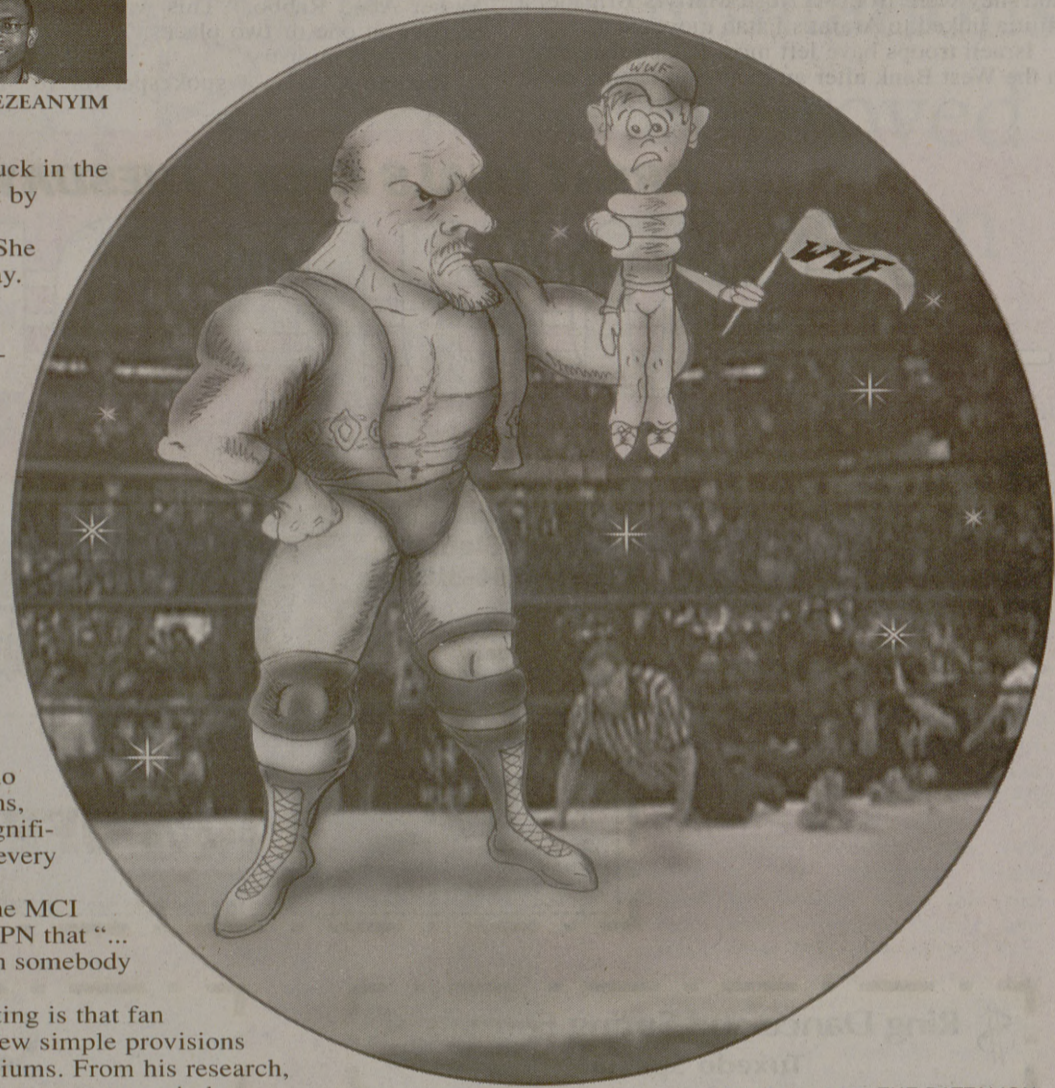
COLLINS EZEANYIM

Cecil, an Ohio eighth-grader, was struck in the head by a deflected hockey puck shot by Columbus Blue Jackets center Espen Nutsen during a game on March 16. She died two days before her 14th birthday. Although the death of Cecil is tragic, some good can come out of her untimely passing. Now the opportunity exist for sports teams to finally address the problem of keeping fans safe at sporting events — an issue they have set aside for too long.

Admittedly, it is rare for fans to suffer casualties while enjoying sports. Cecil was the first fatality to occur at a National Hockey League game. And, according to an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, only five people have died from being hit by foul balls at major or minor-league baseball games.

But for every Cecil, there may be hundreds of fans who suffer serious injuries. James O. Elliot, a lawyer who has researched injuries to baseball fans, told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that significant harm could affect a spectator at every baseball game. Likewise, Dr. David Milzmann, a doctor who worked at the MCI Center for two NHL seasons, told ESPN that "... almost every game we wound up with somebody with an injury."

What makes this situation frustrating is that fan safety can be greatly improved if a few simple provisions are made to sporting arenas and stadiums. From his research, Elliot has concluded that the most dangerous areas in baseball parks are between home base and first base and home



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base and third base. He calls these places "war zones." He claims that injuries due to foul balls could be reduced by as much as 80 percent if a Plexiglas screen would be placed from first base to third base. Hockey, also, has many safety options. According to *The Hartford Courant*, many hockey arenas in Europe and NCAA Division I hockey use netting to protect fans from errant hockey pucks.

But professional baseball teams and the NHL continue to drag their feet when it comes to taking measures to keep fans safe. They even try to shift the blame for the complacency to the fans. Elliot told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that baseball teams will not implement the Plexiglas proposal because fans who buy the most expensive seats do not approve of it. This is the same reason used by the NHL. Frank Brown, vice

president of media relations for the NHL, told *The Hartford Courant* that "people seem ... to be comfortable with things the way they are."

Professional sports franchises need to be more up front about the risk involved in watching events and the number of fan injuries that occur in stadiums and arenas. Sports teams regularly print warnings on the back of tickets about the possibility of being struck by a foul ball or puck, but many experts say this type of warning is inadequate. Also, too many major-league baseball teams claim they keep no record of fan injuries, which also needs to be changed immediately.

Decisive action is needed by the sports leagues and stadium and arena owners to protect fans who keep the business of sports thriving. If these parties do not act in the urgent manner warranted by Cecil's death, then she will have died in vain.

Collins Ezeanyim is a junior computer engineering major.

More than barrels of joy

Drilling in ANWR's pristine lands should not be avoided



CHRIS JACKSON

Recently, the democrat - controlled Senate defeated a measure that would allow drilling in Alaska's tundra-covered Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). The issue, however, is not yet dead and is hotly contested for good reason: the federally protected land could contain as much as 16 billion barrels of oil to supplement the United States' ravenous appetite for energy.

But the pro-development lobby pushed over some seriously questionable figures on the House of Representatives to hurry the bill through last session, namely, inflated employment estimates and a tricky technicality involving the amount of land available for building permanent structures. Political sleight of hand is not entirely unnecessary though; oil exploration and drilling carries with it a stigma of pollution and destruction, even if contrary evidence can be presented. Development's negative image does not remove the possibility of a 16 billion barrel lake of oil pooled under the frozen tundra of America's last wilderness, however. Though lobbyists for ANWR exploration have been sneaky with their promotion and were shot down in the Senate last week, the pro-drilling lobby has a decent case.

The United States makes up only five

percent of the world's population, yet it uses 25 percent of the world's oil production every year. That breaks down to about 19.2 million barrels per day, according to a March 1998 report by the U.S. Geological Survey. U.S. oil production steadily fell to 5.9 million barrels per day since 1985, a 33 percent reduction in output, while demand rose 21 percent. Clearly, America uses a lot of oil and produces little. Another report by the U.S. Geological Survey, however, reported that between 6 and 16 billion barrels of oil are available under the Alaskan coastal plain. At peak production, this reserve would be able to output between one million and 1.5 million barrels per day, increasing current production by more than 20 percent and taking a chunk out of daily import needs.

The need for oil, however, is not the real issue. The issue is a herd of caribou that has made the plains one of its regular stomping grounds.

The Porcupine Caribou herd's calving grounds are located in the middle of the 1.5 million acre coastal plain, and disruption of these grounds is a main concern of environmentalists who object to development in the region. The caribou population of nearby Prudhoe Bay, however, shows that caribou can live on oil fields, and actually favor the area to more open environments. The herd numbered 3,000 when development began, and has grown to nearly eight times that size.

Last year, the Canadian government expressed concern over exploration in

the ANWR, and how it might affect the Porcupine herd's migration route and calving grounds.

Alaska Sen. Frank Murkowski was quick to point out, however, that this is the same government whose unsuccessful attempt at coastal oil development had little to no effect on the same herd of caribou. Though 89 wells were drilled and a highway was extended straight through the herd's migration route, the caribou were not relocated and continued to calve normally.

Development of the ANWR would have an even smaller impact. Ice roads would be utilized instead of highways and runways, and most activity would be restricted to the long winter months, allowing ice to naturally protect the ground and vegetation.

Though environmentalists do not support oil exploration or drilling in the first place, the situation in Alaska's ANWR is compounded by the two simple words at the end of its title. But no one wants to shred the land and kill the wildlife. There is oil potential locked deep in the ground, and high tech, low impact drilling can realize that potential. The untapped energy might as well be wasted, however, unless measures are taken to get it out.

Chris Jackson is a sophomore business administration major.