

EDITORIAL BORN, NOT MADE

It is well known in Texas and across the nation that Aggies value their traditions. In fact, "tradition" is probably the word most associated with Texas A&M. There has been much debate in recent years about what this word means and if a given event or object should enjoy the privilege of having this word bestowed on it. Unfortunately, the word "tradition" seems to have become a marketing tool for various campus interests, an increasingly meaningless phrase used to attract attention and make people feel good.

True traditions grow over time and evolve in unknown directions. This is how Reveille and Aggie Bonfire came about. Almost a century ago, these two well-known symbols of contemporary Aggieland began without any formal planning. Over time they became something meaningful because of student interest. Today, such an evolution is difficult, if not impossible, to find. A common slogan for new organizations or events is something like "the newest Aggie tradition." As the word "tradition" gets thrown around more and more, it must be remembered that many of A&M's dearest and oldest traditions are still part of the campus.

There is much to be proud of at this University. The Corps of Cadets is a visible part of A&M, Silver Taps commemorates fellow students, and Muster is a reminder of the camaraderie that is A&M's greatest, most enduring tradition. This event also began small and gained support over time based on its merits. This is part of the reason why Muster is so meaningful each year in College Station and around the world. Respecting our past and those who came before us is proper and necessary. It also cannot be forced. The seeds for the next great Aggie tradition do exist in the student body. Like those before it, it will be an evolving process, and student and other leaders should not burden themselves to create a "new tradition." This will happen on its own. Aggies need to take things one step at a time — focus on what the right thing for the near future is, and time will mold the rest.

THE BATTALION

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Crooked men of God

TV evangelical personalities are notorious for scamming

God must be disappointed. In the past year, America has witnessed pedophiles posing as priests, pastors behaving like bigots and members of the religious Rite looking anything but right and religious. Gone are the days of the moral majority.



GEORGE DEUTSCH

Crooked "men of God" plague this country, and since the advent of television, certain televangelists have exploited the weaknesses of others and cashed in on their pain by putting a price on God's blessings.

Though some, like Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart, have fallen from grace, others continue to "preach" and thrive by playing off of people's fears. One such man, the "Reverend" Benny Hinn, is currently under scrutiny from the media, and rightfully so.

Hinn, it seems, is the new Bakker. With his bleached-white suit and neatly coiffed hair, he stands behind an ornate, clear glass pulpit and offers forgiveness for money. While this might not be a bad deal, it conflicts with all things Christian.

Hinn is the same man who places his hand on people's heads during services, resulting in them falling lifelessly to the floor under his power. This is not the work of God, but a crowd control technique, akin to hypnotism, called mesmerism.

Critics note that "healings" like Hinn's often have bad consequences. Some people, foolhardy as they may be, have abandoned their treatments as a result of these claims and succumbed to their illnesses. Certainly, this is not God's intention. If there was any justice in this world, this would be prosecuted as malpractice.

On one of his most recent Trinity Broadcasting Network services, Hinn stared into the camera and called out to an overweight man who claimed God told him to resist Hinn's attempts at solicitation. "If you will come back and make that (monetary) pledge," he said, "God will heal your heart tonight." So, anyone who wants spiritual healing need only send his or her money to Hinn, who will see to it that it gets to God.

Not a pastor, Hinn is a "faith healer." He quaintly calls his broadcasts "healing services." Currently, he is not a member of the Christian financial integrity council called the Evangelical Council on Financial Accountability. The Associated Press calls this group "a sort of Christian Better Business Bureau."

Among his other faults, Hinn is like a second-rate Nostradamus, repeatedly making predictions that fall flat. He spreads these inaccuracies on national TV to people who swallow them whole.

He once said that women were meant to have children out of their sides, and years ago, he announced that God told him the world would end in 1999. Either God erred here, or Hinn did.

All of this is bad, but it is Hinn's shameless solicitation that makes him a social predator. "The Lord spoke to me in a powerful way," he said during one healing service. "He told me to raise Him up an army of prayer." For a small gift of \$25, \$50 or more, anyone can join this prayer army. To legitimize this request, Hinn offers two books for any gift amount over \$25, but only if the correct box is checked.

Admittedly, people are responsible for their money and whom they send it to. But when money is taken in the name of religion and expectations are not met, someone should be held lawfully accountable.

Consider Hinn's \$30 million theme park that he has been collecting funds for since 1999, the same year he said the world would end. It is to be built in Irving, Texas, yet an Irving zoning department spokesperson said no plans have been submitted. For a mere \$150,000, anyone can have their name put on a cornerstone of the People's Cathedral of this never-to-be-built park Hinn calls his Healing Gardens.

Hinn is not the only one to abuse the system, though. There are others, like Jerry Falwell, who choose to exploit the tax-free advantage the church affords. Project Fair Play reported Falwell to the IRS after he endorsed Mark Farley for Virginia Attorney General. A church cannot reasonably be non-profit while endorsing political candidates.

Surely, Falwell has his hands full by furthering his own political agenda. Anyone unfortunate enough to tune him in has heard his message of anti-Semitism. He claims the Antichrist will be a Jewish man who is probably alive right now. A bigot like this should not be given a voice on any Christian TV network.

These evangelists love to attack abortion, homosexuality and frugality, which can all understandably be classified as sins. But greed and lying are similarly sinful, and it is time televangelists regained this country's faith.



George Deutsch is a junior journalism major.

ADRIAN CALCANEO • THE BATTALION

Affairs of politicians are private



MELISSA FRIED

Since 1999, Swiss Ambassador Thomas Borer-Fielding and his former Miss Texas wife have not only hit it big in the German political scene, but have made themselves a card-carrying member of the hip and swinging Berlin night life. The Swiss hated the couple for tarnishing their country's refined image, and the Germans loved them for leading them to believe that the Swiss were indeed more than boring and bureaucratic.

Unfortunately, it looks as though Ambassador Borer-Fielding and his wife will be doing more packing than partying as they prepare to move from Berlin, the capital of Germany, back to Switzerland this April.

Borer-Fielding, once Switzerland's golden boy of politics, has been under heavy fire from the German and Swiss media to spill details concerning an alleged affair with a perfume saleswoman who was photographed leaving the Swiss Embassy during the early hours of the morning, that is, while Fielding's wife was away. Swiss officials are now using this scandal as leverage to finally oust this perpetual thorn from their side and replace Borer-Fielding with a quieter and less ostentatious representative. So much for the

Swiss being more than boring and bureaucratic.

Given that extramarital affairs are a universal no-no, Borer-Fielding's personal life should not have played a role in his dismissal from public office. Swiss Foreign Minister Joseph Deiss assured the public that his dismissal was not based upon the reports of the alleged affair, but solely on his inability "to represent Switzerland with dignity and composure." Borer-Fielding's political record is outstanding as he went from a nobody to someone of international acclaim after heading Switzerland's World War II Truth

Borer-Fielding's personal life should not have played a role in his dismissal from public office.

Campaign in 1996. He was named ambassador in 1999 and has since fulfilled all of the duties and obligations required of him. While his flamboyance has irritated his Swiss colleagues, it has gained him the respect and admiration of some of Germany's high-ranking politicians. In other words, it had everything to do with the affair.

Compared to Sen. Gary Condit, Borer-Fielding had a better chance of talking his way out of the mess he created or did not create, depending on what one believes. After Chandra Levy, an intern, was missing, Condit came forth and admitted that he had had an affair with the intern. He did not use flashy distract-

tion tactics, and if Chandra Levy had not disappeared, perhaps he would not have lost his political clout and might have been forgiven by his constituents for coming clean about the issue.

Funny thing is, Borer-Fielding had the chance, the option even, to set things right in Bern and Berlin and scorned the chance to do both. In fact, Borer-Fielding refused to hurry home from a vacation on the French island of Mauritius to confer with Deiss about how to resolve the problem. That is sloppy politics. As a diplomat, Borer-Fielding should have realized an urgent public relations problem when he saw it and sought after the necessary actions to correct the situation.

Politicians always complain that their personal lives should not affect their public lives, and Borer-Fielding could have used this opportunity to criticize the Swiss government for failing to separate public and private life.

The world of politics is complicated and has seen the rise and fall of many great leaders. Borer-Fielding, as brash as he is, was on his way to the political top. His sex life aside, there was no reason for this scandal to call into question his ability to effectively carry out his responsibilities as a Swiss ambassador. The future of politics must not focus on what is taking place in bed, but rather in the office. After all, that is where the "real work" is done.

Melissa Fried is a freshman international studies major.



MAIL CALL

Academic integrity has been wasted

In response to the April 16 editorial:

Recently while visiting the campus, I walked by my old dorm room and visited the MSC. I was glad to see words like "honor" and "integrity" around the campus. That's the way I remember Texas A&M.

Then I read in *The Battalion* the editorial "For Academic Integrity," and learned about plagiarism and scientific misconduct by a tenured professor.

Even though the president and chief academic officer agree with the findings of an investigation concerning the professor's guilt, President Bowen has decided that plagiarism and scientific conduct do not merit dismissal.

What has become of the ideal that we will neither cheat nor tolerate among us those who do? Would Bowen agree to be operated on by a surgeon who plagiarized her way through medical school? Would he board a flight piloted by a captain who plagiarized his flight examinations? Would you?

Aggies, it's time to reverse this outrage. Students caught plagiarizing face severe sanctions. Texas A&M must never acquiesce in plagiarism and scientific misconduct by its professors. It's time for Aggies to join *The Battalion* and

demand a return to integrity at Texas A&M. Both the president and the professor must go.

Forrest M. Mims III
Class of 1966

Women should respect themselves

I would like to say a few words to the women of Texas A&M who support Playboy magazine coming to our campus. You are each unique individuals and an irreplaceable part of our community.

By posing for anyone who will view your unique body as a mere object for sensual pleasure and not as a part of the unique individual you are, you allow others to dehumanize you and turn you into a reproducible piece of matter.

I know that that each of you are working very hard at Texas A&M to better yourself and prevent your gender from becoming the inferior gender. If you will think about it, you will realize that men will never respect you for the truly unique and invaluable individual that you are as long as you allow them to rip your individualism apart for the sake of their personal pleasure.

Ryan Huseman
Class of 2002