

EDITORIAL

ANSWERING THE CALL

Aggies should remember fallen fellow students at Muster

Of all of the deeply rooted and admirable Texas A&M traditions, the call to Muster is one tradition that touches the hearts of all Aggies. Muster is an annual event that calls for the remembrance of all fallen Aggies. As in years past where the country has been involved in international conflict, Muster takes on a special role this year as it reminds us that Aggies are currently giving their lives for their country.

Today, Aggies at home and abroad will embrace each other as they remember their fallen classmates and comrades.

In addition to Muster, there are other Aggie traditions that have special meaning during a time of war. The campus is rich when it comes to reminding its visitors how committed Aggies have been now and in the past to serving their country.

The Corps of Cadets is where many Aggies who are serving in Iraq right now began their military careers. There are living memorials such as the Memorial Student Center for all those Aggies who have served and died in combat. In addition, the trees surrounding Simpson Drill Field as well as the flags on top of Kyle Field stand to honor the Aggies who died in World War I. One does not have to look far to see the abounding honor and service associated with this University.

Muster, as well as many other A&M traditions, will remind us all not only of the Aggies who have fallen but of the ones who are currently giving their lives in battle. It is our responsibility as members of this University to always hold in our hearts the memories of those Aggies who have lost their lives and to take this time to revere the A&M tradition of service and duty to country.

THE BATTALION

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The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebattalion.net

Riding the rail

High-speed rail line would benefit the Brazos Valley



CODY SAIN

On May 10, 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was completed, thus laying the tracks for a new era in American transportation. Over the past 135 years, the method of traveling by train in the United States has largely been abandoned to give

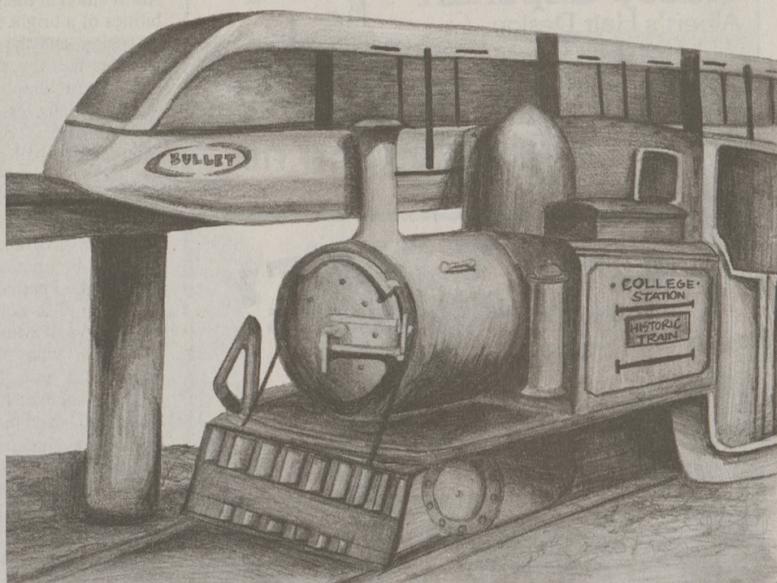
way to travel by air and by car. Now in 2004, there are hopes of resurrecting this great lost method of travel.

The April 13 Battalion reported the possibility of completing a high-speed rail from Killeen to Houston approximately 20 years from now. According to the Texas High Speed Rail and Transformation Corporation (THSRC) the Killeen-Houston rail would be part of the "Texas T-Bone" which would connect San Antonio, Austin, Fort Hood, Killeen, and the Dallas-Fort Worth area. There are numerous economic, social, academic and practical benefits that can come from the completion of such a project.

Currently, unless one drives excessively over the speed limit, it takes approximately 90 minutes to reach the western edge of Houston from College Station. It is projected, however, that a high-speed rail system could shorten travel time to a mere 20 minutes.

This alone would help A&M and College Station by allowing more people to come to the community for leisure, especially sporting events, and would also increase faculty base. Someone in the Houston area could work at A&M without the hassle of moving, even if they were currently employed at another university.

There are many dedicated Aggies who would love to attend A&M home football games and other sporting events. However, many times the travel can be too tedious and prevents them from coming to the games. The proposed rail system would make their trip much easier and, in turn, since more people will come to the games, Kyle Field and the Twelfth Man will grow. It is also important to keep in mind that the students at A&M now are the ones who would be using and enjoying a high-speed rail system 20



years from now.

A&M's academic reputation would also increase by bringing in professors from schools such as the University of Houston and Rice University to give guest lectures, talks and presentations. Due to time and fuel constraints, these women and men who might not otherwise be able to visit A&M would now be able to come with greater ease.

According to the THSRC, the population of Texas is expected to double to more than 30 million people. A statewide high-speed rail system will help alleviate and prevent highway traffic problems and will allow for the expansion of cities. People will continue spreading outward and living in the suburbs of the major cities. Jobs can often be limited in these areas; a rail system would increase the opportunities any particular individual has to find adequate work. No longer will he be restricted to work only within a 30-minute to one-hour drive.

A&M students already seem to be taking to the idea. Sophomore sociology major Christine Stockholm said, "I believe overall that (the rail system) will

be a good thing. It would be a lot easier to commute to and from places and would cut down on the traffic. However, I don't think that many people will use them." This is certainly a legitimate concern. Why spend the money on a project no one will use? However, unlike the light-rail in Houston that covers a small area and serves a small portion of the population, the proposed high-speed rail system would cover central and southeast Texas' vital cities. Given the opportunity to get to San Antonio, College Station, Austin, Houston or Dallas in a matter of minutes and without the hassle of the airport, many people will surely take it.

Like the creation of the interstate highway system, high-speed rail has the potential to revolutionize travel. Aggies and Texans should embrace the rail and return the "station" to College Station.

Cody Sain is a junior philosophy major. Graphic by Rylie Deyoe

MAIL CALL

Aggies responsible for honoring fallen today

It is once again April 21 in Aggieland. For some Aggies, this day will be somber as they remember a lost loved one. For others, it is a day of celebration. I encourage every Aggie out there to make this day special by taking part in Aggie Muster.

The March 1923 issue of the Texas Aggie magazine urged, "If there is an A&M man in 100 miles of you, you are expected to get together, eat a little, and live over the days you spent at the A&M College of Texas." There are tens of thousands of Aggies in this town.

A very special group of Aggies in town is the Class of 1954, who is celebrating their 50th reunion. They will be attending the Camaraderie Barbecue at the Academic Plaza today. Make an effort to say "howdy" to them, and get to know them. These Aggies have some of the best stories you'll ever hear. Some of them won't recognize most of the newer buildings on campus, but they will definitely recognize the spirit. Give up 30 minutes of your day to sit down with them at the barbecue and get to know them. You won't be sorry.

The Muster ceremony is tonight at 7p.m. Be there. Every other institution in the world strives to have the bond that Aggies have, some colleges have even started their own Musters patterned after what we do here (The Citadel, for example).

Reed Arena was not full last year. Whether you are Old Army or new army, Corps or non-reg, straight, gay, black, white, green or purple, we're all Aggies. Some Aggies cannot return for Muster this year. Death has taken them from our ranks. Each one of them is leaving behind a story, a family and values that were significant to them. In Aggieland we celebrate these stories, these families and these values by answering "Here!" for these people at Muster. We say to the world that we will do our best to carry on that person's legacy in our lives. Their spirit will never die, you

and I will carry the torch for them. Make this day special for all Aggies. Invest time in the lives of others. Be bold, be proud, and be Aggies.

Andy Luten
Class of 2005

Exploration of Mars offers America little

In response to Collins Ezeanyim's April 19 column:

I found it quite amusing that in the midst of the war in Iraq people still want to talk about going to Mars.

In Collins Ezeanyim's article about the Hubble, he writes that the gains are enormous for us as mankind, yet with trillions of dollars spent we only found out the age of the universe and the fact that there are black holes. WOW! Money well spent?

I think not. I think it is horrible for President Bush to want to spend so much money for minimal gains of knowledge about Mars. They said there was water on the planet at one time. Big deal.

Bush should be thinking about how to conserve the natural resources on our own planet. With the population growing exponentially, we should worry about people not fighting over fresh water one day. The gains are minimal in space except for the fact they might tell us if an asteroid is coming. That is the only reason I need NASA.

Jordan Chambers
Class of 2003

Saddam is inhumane, not President Bush

In response to an April 19 mail call:

Mr. Bisrat's comments that President Bush has led Iraq down an "inhumane path" are completely unfounded. I'm sorry if I appear

dense, but I have trouble seeing how any of our actions in Iraq have been inhumane. Maybe Mr. Bisrat was never informed of the numerous crimes against Iraqi people that Saddam Hussein committed. The only inhumane actions that have been taken since Saddam's deposition have been taken by Iraqi citizens themselves. Mr. Bisrat, didn't you hear about the four Americans who were recently killed? President Bush, to the best of my knowledge, hasn't ordered U.S. troops to kill or mutilate any innocent people.

Then, of course, there is the argument that the United States had no business invading a sovereign state and we failed to find weapons of mass destruction anywhere in Iraq.

But, Saddam was an oppressive ruler who had no business governing Iraq. He repeatedly violated the sanctions imposed upon him by the United Nations by repeatedly refusing to allow U.N. weapons inspectors to do their jobs. Why would Saddam have refused to allow weapons inspectors to inspect if there was nothing to hide? Most people would draw the conclusion that Saddam was hiding weapons of mass destruction from that information alone. The United Nations refused to enforce their own sanctions, so America enforced them itself.

Lastly, Mr. Bisrat's assertion that the United States' actions in Iraq "will only breed more deadly anti-American violence and instability in that troubled nation" is far too sympathetic toward a people who continue to attack and kill the very soldiers who risked their lives to give them freedom. Mr. Bisrat may not agree that all President Bush's reasons for liberating Iraq have been completely without fault, and that is a valid point.

But to say that our actions in Iraq have been inhumane while excusing the actions of a nation who attacks, kills and mutilates the bodies of those offering aid is ignorant at best.

William Shattuck
Class of 2006

Kerry denies threats posed by terrorists

In response to Mike Walters' April 20 column:

Thank you, Mr. Walters, for stating an opinion in the paper that is shared by many Americans but that rarely sees the press.

John Kerry and the left end of the political spectrum — along with much of the media, it would seem — has lost touch with the fact that there is a large group of individuals in the world called terrorists whose perverse purpose in life is to kill Americans, like you and me, at any cost, even wasting their own lives.

Thankfully, we currently have a president in office who realizes the roots of evil that have been laid down in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and has therefore taken actions to not merely cut off the top, but dig down and fully uproot the forces aligned against us before they again encroach upon our borders.

To fully accomplish this task will take time, but America will suffer horrific losses if it isn't willing to make the sacrifices required to do it right.

Your editorial is one of the first I have seen that doesn't play to human

impatience, and rather focuses on the merit of what is being done in Iraq. Thank you.

Ross McLendon
Class of 2006

Poor designs chosen by energy committee

In response to Natalie Younts' April 20 news article:

I am totally disappointed with the poor quality of the designs picked up as winners by the TAMU Energy Conservation Committee. I am certain that the quality of the submissions might have been commendable given the amount of time that the contestants had at their disposal, but the final choices were far from laudable.

The winning slogan proclaiming "Energy Conservation: The New Aggie Tradition," exposes the fact that we as Aggies had never given a thought to energy conservation ever before! Similarly, the mascot design and the logo design do not reflect any creativity, class or thoughtfulness.

Amitava Sinharay
graduate student

