

# OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 11 • Monday, September 13, 2004

## Deadly drink

### Students must take responsibility into their own hands when drinking



MIKE WALTERS

The poet W.H. Auden once wrote that "choice of attention — to pay attention to this and ignore that — is to the inner life what choice of action is to the outer. In both cases, a man is responsible for his choice and must accept the consequences whatever they may be."

Sadly, many adults in America refute their responsibility, longing for a golden age when someone else took care of them, made the decisions for them, and they didn't have to deal with the consequences of their actions. And while childhood may have been a nice time for many people, adults must grow up and realize they are responsible for their

individual becomes intoxicated, he becomes less capable of rational thought and eventually loses his memory and motor functions.

However, just because someone heads to Northgate for a night of drunken excess doesn't mean he loses his adult status and the responsibilities associated with that title.

The government sets the legal drinking age at 21 — by then people are expected to be able to deal with the consequences of buying one of the few legal recreational drugs available.

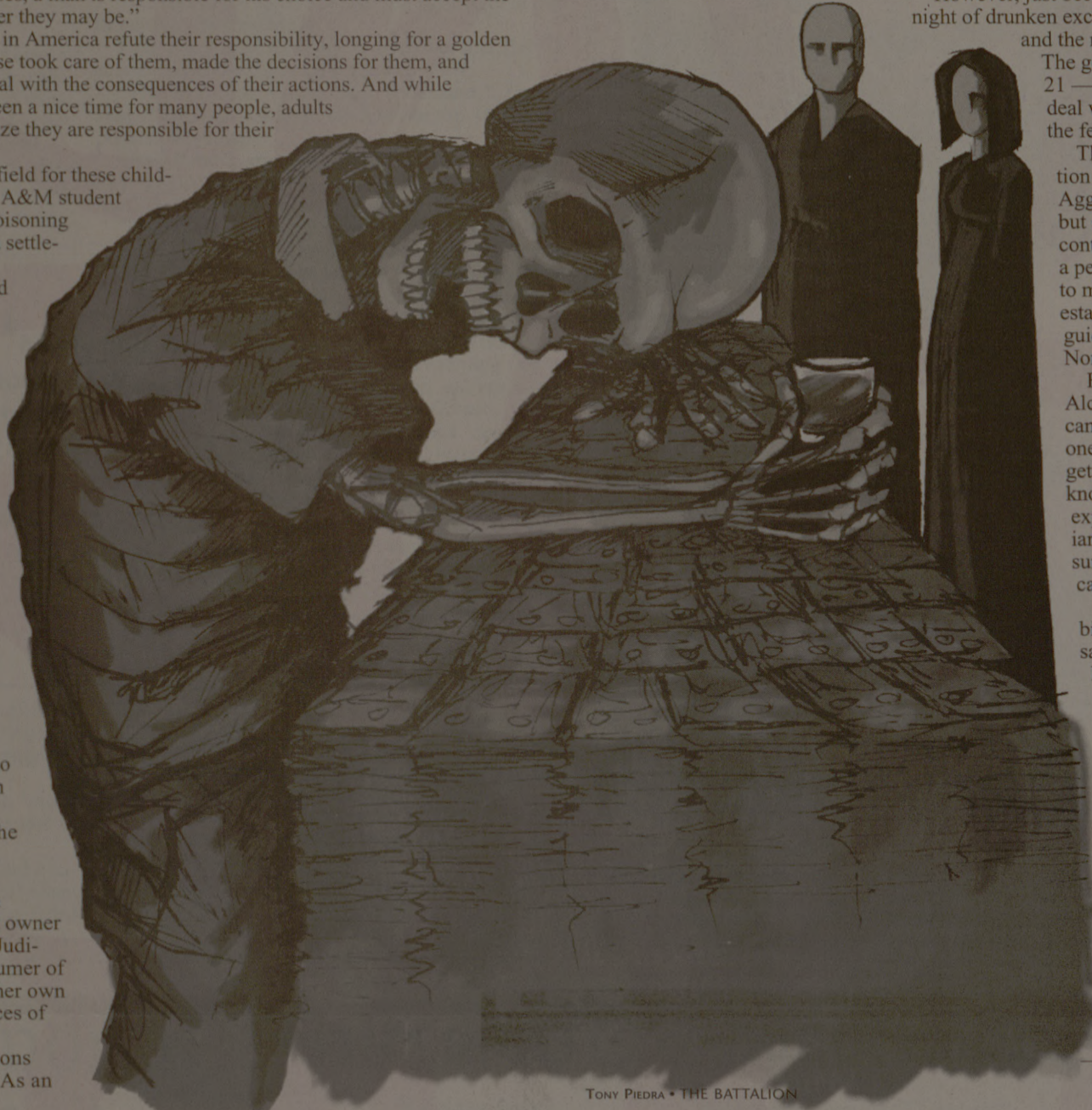
There's no denying that alcohol consumption is a popular pastime in Aggieland, so if Aggies are going to be responsible adults, but still want to get drunk and possibly "lose control," how do they do that? If that's how a person wants to spend an evening, he needs to make the conscious decision to do so and establish a safety net. Following a few simple guidelines can make a fun evening out on Northgate a safe one.

First, never get drunk with strangers. Alcohol has been called the "social lubricant," — and yes, sharing a drink with someone you've just met may be a great way to get to know a new friend and have fun. But know your drinking limits and never push or explore them while surrounded by unfamiliar people. If you choose to get drunk, make sure you have a sober friend you trust to take care of you and get you home safely.

If someone can't commit to the responsibility of personal safety or can't place this safety in the hands of a trustworthy friend, he shouldn't get drunk.

Ultimately, people's safety is their job and no one else's. Suing a bar for irresponsible behavior doesn't change the fact that all people are accountable for themselves, and it doesn't bring dead friends and loved ones back.

By taking the right steps, Aggies can stay safe, have a good time and avoid having to worry about blaming someone else. The mistakes of Wagener and others like him are mistakes Aggies don't have to make.



TONY PIEDRA • THE BATTALION

Mike Walters is a senior psychology major.

livelihood and actions.

Civil courts have lately become the battlefield for these childhood longings. The parents of former Texas A&M student Michael Wagener, who died from alcohol poisoning five years ago, were awarded \$5 million in a settlement against the owner of a bar on July 28.

According to The Battalion, Wagener died on his 21st birthday in 1999, after a night of drinking on Northgate, capped off by consuming approximately eight shots of hard liquor at a shot bar. Wagener was later found dead in his apartment with a .48 blood-alcohol level.

It is the Dram Shop Act that made that award possible. Dram Shop laws allow an individual to sue a bar if he was served alcohol while intoxicated and later caused injury to himself.

Let's set the legalese aside and translate this into English: If you get drunk and hurt yourself, you can legally sue somebody else for it. When broken down and looked at objectively, this hardly sounds like justice.

It's true that someone has to serve the liquor in order for someone to get drunk, but that doesn't change the fact that people have to make the decisions to purchase and consume the alcohol all on their own. While alcohol related deaths are tragic, Americans can't forget that the "victim," in fact, is the one responsible.

"I empathize with any victims who are damaged as a result of a drunk driver or an intoxicated person," said Texas Restaurant owner Victor Allred in a testimony to the House Judiciary Committee. "However, it is the consumer of alcoholic beverages who must face his or her own personal responsibility and the consequences of their actions."

Of course the counter-argument questions how in control the intoxicated person is. As an

## Democratic protesters missed publicity during the convention



JIM FOREMAN

The Republican National Convention last week will be remembered for the speeches of a Democratic senator, a famed actor and the president of the United States. However, the convention will not be remembered for the protesters who tried in vain to get their message across.

Throughout the convention, almost 2,000 protesters, demonstrators and anarchists were arrested. Many of them never got near Madison Square Garden.

The press gave little attention to the protesters and those who did receive media attention only managed to advance the image of the Republican Party.

Last Wednesday, during a speech by the White House chief of staff, a handful of protesters managed to gain access to the convention floor and began shouting demands for money to prevent the spread of AIDS. They were arrested and literally carried away.

Those protesters were among the small portion of people who disturbed the convention. They even received national attention in The New York Times in the form of a front-page picture of a protester being carried away, kicking and screaming, by three police officers — an image that makes one think that maybe the Republican Party is the only sane political choice.

Kieran Mahoney, a Republican political consultant, told The Times, "if the protesters do something outrageous, they benefit Bush; if they don't do something outrageous, they don't get covered."

Most delegates claimed the protests had almost no effect after their visit to the city, while a few complained about the protest-

ers' behavior. According to Chris Healy, an alternate delegate from Connecticut who spoke to CNN, "It's not in the spirit of political discourse ... there's such a lack of humor, there's such a lack of subtlety; it's all so retro-60s stuff."

Anarchist organizers of some of last week's protests view people being arrested as a success. They fail to realize their public disturbances never lasted long enough to be heard, thanks to the New York Police Department. In one case, a well-trained group of police officers took a mere 15 minutes to arrest 200 protesters demonstrating without a permit.

Processing all of them individually took only three hours (less than a minute per protester). It is unfortunate and ironic that their message was never really heard — and people in prison are ineligible to vote.

However, anti-Bush marchers should consider it lucky that they have not received major media coverage. If they had, it would not take long for the public to connect their disruptive behavior to the Democratic Party. Many of the demonstrations last week were funded by the Tides Foundation, which receives millions of dollars in funding from Teresa Heinz-Kerry, wife of Democratic Presidential Candidate, according to World-NetDaily.com.

To the dismay of protesters and Republicans who want to blame their opponents, nobody really noticed the marches, public disturbances and civil disobedience, as these acts were overshadowed by the convention. But honestly, who wants to hear people gripe when they can hear Arnold Schwarzenegger talk instead?

Jim Foreman is a junior mechanical engineering major.

**“They fail to realize their public disturbance never lasted long enough to be heard, thanks to the New York Police Department.”**

## SGA ignores student body

In response to David Shoemaker's Sept. 9 column:

When it comes to the Student Services Fee Advisory Board (SS-FAB), it seems that once again with A&M student government the so-called leaders are nothing more than followers of the administration. Despite the fact that students voted overwhelmingly against new fees, the board increased the fees anyway.

Its gotten to the point that student service fees are funding administration boondoggles, such as the renovation of Cain Hall, which doesn't improve the lot of one single student. This action only goes to bolster many students claim that the student government isn't working for the good of the students but instead the good of their resumes.

The student government has become so insulated that often those involved lose touch with average students and are more interested in how to increase their own budgets and make friends with the administration. It's about time that we had student leaders, not lap dogs. Now is the time to demand accountability from your student government and insist that they pay more attention to the needs of the student body.

Robert Edmonson  
Class of 2007

## Women will hurt the front lines

In response to Jim Foreman's Sept. 10 column:

The military is not a social experiment for gender equality. The military exists to win wars, not to serve as a platform for women's rights. Helping gender equality is not a good enough reason to

## MAIL CALL

change our armed forces.

I agree with those Mr. Foreman labeled traditionalists (though I prefer the term "people who grasp the notion of mammalian evolution") that, if there are women in a fighting unit, it might create a conflict of interest within the male ranks. Even a second's hesitation could mean the difference between failure and success.

The Israeli military, like Jim Foreman, believed women should be in combat. That experiment ended once morale started to drop due to the fact that the men had to watch women die in combat — women they instinctively wanted to protect.

Of course, this is to say nothing of study done by Israel of how women really are the physically weaker sex and therefore won't be placed in combat roles (all in spite of their military being desperate for bodies to fill the ranks). If the U.S. Army has found that women can achieve the same physical standards as men, why is there such a disparity in the physical training requirements? Being in the Corps, I know Mr. Foreman is not ignorant of this double standard.

I believe in women's rights as much as the next person, but this is one issue too important to concede to political correctness.

Paul Sims  
Class of 2006

## TS should start buses earlier

As a recent graduate of Texas A&M, I can understand the struggles of TS to provide parking at reasonable prices and establish efficient bus service. Since my graduation last May, I have worked on campus, and as an employee, have purchased my parking pass in the only lot available to me. You can imagine my disappointment when I found out that I cannot use my parking pass on game days because it is a reserved football lot.

Rather than complaining about the situation or griping about TS, I decided to use the Get to the Grid service from Post Oak Mall on game days. I was especially excited to about the "Aggie Fan Zone" and planned on watching the Aggie Band and football team make their Spirit Walk to Kyle Field at 11:30 a.m. And then more disappointment — the "Get to the Grid" service starts at noon. In order for this University to accomplish Bill Byrne's goal of "Building Champions," everyone must work together. I hope to see Transportation Services extend their services for our remaining home games to allow the Twelfth Man to participate in all game day activities, even those that occur before kickoff!

Beth Johnson  
Class of 2003

