

Who's got spirit?

Twelfth Man Spirit will continue to grow until the team stops winning



JIM FOREMAN
COLUMNIST

For years, students have complained about the steady decrease of the Aggie Spirit. Campaigns have been launched to keep alive even the simplest traditions, such as saying "Howdy" and staying off the MSC grass. The fact of the matter is that students need some sort of catalyst to stir what a psychologist might refer to as strong school-oriented emotions and a sense of belonging to something that is bigger than themselves.

It's easy to take pride in a university for its football team, but ideally an Aggie should take pride in his university for its heritage.

Bonfire was probably the greatest source of Aggie Spirit, primarily because it was not the product of a single organization but of the entire student body. Almost every student had some part in the construction of Bonfire but, since its collapse, there has been a severe loss of pride among Aggies.

Most schools feed off a different source of school spirit, one that is typical of all universities: football. Naturally, after A&M shut out the Cowboys and pounded the nationally-ranked Tigers, it should come as no surprise when students become friendlier and whooping becomes more rampant. One might even expect the third deck to actually be filled at the game against Kansas State this weekend.

In one of his weekly addresses to the University, Bill Byrne mentioned that last year only 24,910 student sport passes had been sold at the beginning of the fall semester. This year only 20,810 had been sold, more than a 16 percent drop. Not surprisingly, however, attendance at the past two home football games increased from more than 69,000 to more than 72,000.

As if their absence from games in the past were not enough, some students have failed to pick up on some of the most important Aggie traditions such as uncovering, yelling and mugging down. At least an increase in attendance will help spread traditions that were once considered common knowledge.

"People up on third deck didn't even seem to know all the yells, and they weren't freshmen," said student Brette Hardison, a junior business major and dedicated football fan, "Ever since we shut out Wyoming, everyone all of the sudden wants to go to the games."

The main problem with relying on the football team to settle A&M's pride issues is that eventually it will lose and the student body will once again begin to forget about the many traditions that make this University so different.

It should be no secret that a team's self-confidence can be easily squelched by the pride of the opposing team's fans. According to Aggieathletics.com, "A&M's season home attendance (set) consecutive record-breaking seasons in 1999, 2000 and 2001," but what makes (or made) Kyle Field an intimidating football venue is not so much the sheer size, but the intense noise.

Students yelling at the top of their lungs make communication difficult for players, but yelling takes more than a strong stomach, it requires heart.

One could probably refer to the increasing trend in football attendance as a sort of pseudo school spirit. Students who originally had no intention of wasting their Saturday at a football game are jumping on the bandwagon now that they have a team they can brag about. Unfortunately, there is no substitute for the Twelfth Man spirit. That sort of spirit requires total commitment, regardless of the football team's record.

Jim Foreman is a junior mechanical engineering major.



GRACIE ARENAS • THE BATTALION

Bush shouldn't bring up flip-flopping



JOHN DAVID BLAKLEY
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So the Bush campaign wants to talk about flip-flopping? Look at this president's record, sprinkled with a variety of inconsistent and contradictory positions, statements and policies. President Bush calling out John Kerry for

flip-flopping makes as much sense as Fox News accusing CBS of having a bias. It is a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

While running for president, Bush spoke frequently of his concern for the protection of the environment, a topic that polls well among voters across the board. The Environmental Plan put forth in his 2000 campaign declared that if elected, "Gov. Bush will work to establish mandatory reduction targets for emissions of four main pollutants: sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury and carbon dioxide." Three years later, giving in to the special interests of big business, Bush decided in a letter to Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE), "I do not believe, however, that the government should impose on power plants mandatory emissions reductions for carbon dioxide."

One of Bush's more famous statements during the 2000 campaign came when he stated, "If we don't stop extending our troops all around the world in nation-building missions, then we're going to have a serious problem coming down the road." If only President Bush had taken the advice of Gov. Bush. Three years later, on the eve of war, Bush proclaimed, "We will be changing the regime of Iraq, for the good of the Iraqi people."

Days later, former Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who commanded U.S. troops in the first Gulf War, told MSNBC that the Army was being pushed to the breaking point. "We're running these people ragged," he said. Last month, Bush announced his intentions of pulling troops from South Korea while North Korea is beginning to make nuclear weapons and has shown a willingness to export them to terrorists. Over-extension of troops has the United States now pulling troops from a nuclear threat to clean up a mess made in a nation that never posed a danger to the United States.

Gay marriage has become a hot topic this election year, mostly due to Bush's proposed federal amendment to ban gay

marriage. However, once again President Bush and Gov. Bush have fundamental differences of opinion. Gov. Bush believed that gay marriage is a state issue, telling Larry King in 2000 that when it comes to marriage law, "The states can do what they want to do." But President Bush, seeing a prime opportunity to exploit another wedge issue to divide Americans, called on Congress to pass a constitutional amendment defining marriage nationwide as a union between

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a man and woman. So much for Republicans championing states' rights.

Just two months after he was elected, Bush told the American people, "We're going to keep the promise of Social Security and keep the government from raiding the Social Security surplus." The Social Security surplus, like other budget surpluses, had been achieved during President Clinton's eight years in office. Less than one year later, the raiding on Social Security began. Bush's 2002 budget proposed using \$1.4 trillion from Social Security funds to pay for separate programs through 2013, according to The New York Times.

Most of the flip-flop rhetoric from Bush aimed at Kerry has been related to the invasion of Iraq. Ironically, he has been flopping around on this issue like a fish out of water since the day he misled the United States into war. Perhaps his memoirs will tell the American people why he chose to invade Iraq, because his statements do not paint a clear picture.

On Sept. 25, 2002, Bush asserted, "You can't distinguish between al-Qaida and Saddam when you talk about the war on terror." On Sept. 17, he changed his mind, stating, "We've had no evidence

that Saddam Hussein was involved in Sept. 11 (attacks)." As far as weapons of mass destruction, the president's main selling point for the invasion of Iraq, Bush could not have been any clearer on their existence, telling the American people two days before the invasion that he had "no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised." In January, the administration finally admitted what many suspected: There were no weapons of mass destruction. Bush's weapons inspector David Kay told the public, "It turns out we were all wrong, probably, in my judgment. And that is most disturbing."

The instances stated above are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the president and flip-flops. In April, Bush touted that the war on terror is winnable. He changed his mind in August, telling Matt Lauer that the war cannot be won and, after receiving flack for the switch, returned to his original belief that the war is winnable. After 9/11, Bush opposed the idea of an independent 9/11 Commission until September of the same year, when the idea became popular among the public. Widespread support for the Department of Homeland Security swayed his opinion to support its creation, as he openly denounced such an institution in March 2002.

He pushed No Child Left Behind through Congress and has failed to fully fund the program.

Remember Bush stating he wanted Osama bin Laden "dead or alive?" It must have slipped his mind in a press conference in early 2003, when he professed, "I don't know where he is. You know, I just don't spend that much time on him...I truly am not that concerned about him." All this without a 20-year Senate record.

If Bush wants to talk about flip-flops from the past, let the discussion begin. However, it may be more beneficial to the American people, and his reelection bid, if he spends more time on the campaign trail explaining the two core issues of this campaign — dealing with a floundering economy and rescuing Iraq from ensuing chaos.

John David Blakley is a junior political science major.

MAIL CALL

Democracy takes time to establish

In response to Jonathan Smith's Sept. 24 column:

All people want today is instant results for everything. I remember the feelings of anger and thirst to punish those responsible on 9/11, and I still have those feelings. However, I am realistic to look at the fact that the world is a big place with numerous places for Osama bin Laden to hide. We will find him and the full might of American justice will bear down upon him. We must give our forces time. The same is true for a Iraq, it has taken a year to remove a dictator and set up an independent government. Remember it took America three years to win it's independence and more than a decade for us to set up the government we have now.

Democracy takes time, this country had deal with violent resistance when it was first formed. New policies have gone into effect, new agencies have been created, with the goals of protecting all Americans. They must be given time as well, granted they need to be quick in order to intercept any other threats to our nation. It's very easy to criticize the guy in power because you don't like his beliefs and go looking for reasons to say he is a bad president. Give President Bush a chance because he actually stood up and took a stand, unlike John Kerry who jumps across the line every day.

*Robby Mallory
Class of 2007*

Having 'plumbing' doesn't require use

In response to a Sept. 24 mail call:

Mr. Dwyer was correct in stating that premarital sex is "detrimental to the physical, emotional, psychological health of individuals, especially adolescents." It is flat out a bad idea to engage in sexual activity before marriage, especially as teens and young adults. Just because the plumbing is in doesn't mean the house is ready to occupy. Premarital sex rarely yields healthy, beneficial consequences for those involved. And many people who have engaged in premarital sex often wish that they hadn't.

As to Ms. Kiser's comment that premarital sex often takes place in loving relationships, that's sugary sweet, but how many loving relationships do people plan on having before marriage? And there are also many people who don't engage in sexual activity because they are in loving relationships. However, Ms. Kiser does have a point in that people do have the right to make the decision for themselves, and to do that, they need to be informed about the consequences of each option before them.

*Elisa Janacek
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