

VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY
OCTOBER 3, 1978

The right to die—coming high court issue

By CHARLOTTE MOULTON
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The current "right to die" movement is looming as a more powerful legal blockbuster for the Supreme Court than its 1973 abortion decision, whose shock waves have yet to subside.

Just as the court was faced with the question of "when life begins," advanced medical techniques, new laws and changing attitudes are pushing the justices toward the question of "when does life end?"

The growing interaction between the courts and the medical profession came to worldwide attention in 1976 through the New Jersey story of Karen Ann Quinlan. Her parents sued to disconnect a respirator which had kept her alive for 13 months, although she was not aware of her surroundings.

The couple won the case in the state supreme court, but the young woman lived on without artificial help.

In a later decision, with even stronger implications for doctors and judges, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court recognized the right of the patient to decline medical treatment when under the shadow of death. As in the U.S. Supreme Court's abortion opinion, the guiding principle was personal privacy.

"The constitutional right of privacy is an expression of the sanctity of individual free choice and self-determination as fundamental constituents of life," Massachusetts Justice Paul Liacos wrote.

"Prevailing medical ethical practice seems to recognize that the dying are more often in need of comfort than treatment."

The societal conspiracy that prevailed so long in America to hush discussion of death is itself dying — witness the hundreds of death education courses at all age levels under many sponsorships. The British import of the hospice, a homelike facility for the terminally ill, also is catching hold.

The federal government has stepped into the picture through an interagency committee to study the needs of the dying, possibly through narcotics law amendments to make heroin available as a pain reliever in terminal cancer.

The American Council of Life Insurance recently projected a scenario for the year 2000 of space colonies reserved for people over 70, with terminal patients being allowed "to program their own deaths in any way they see fit."

Movement in public opinion began a couple of decades ago with publication of

several books analyzing the ritual of the American funeral. The trend was continued by memorial societies, groups dedicated to providing simple, low-cost funerals under the deceased's own instructions written earlier to protect survivors emotionally and financially.

The societies emphasize signing the "living will," a document aimed at preventing use of extraordinary measures to maintain a human shell if all hope of recovery is gone.

With California pioneering, eight states have enacted right-to-die laws geared to the living will. The others are Texas, Arkansas, Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, New Mexico and North Carolina.

Opponents of this entire trend see it as the first step toward euthanasia or mercy killing. An American Bar Association group with expertise in the field has opposed the laws on grounds they are poorly drawn and raise more problems for doctors than they solve.

But the ABA has approved this definition of brain death to replace the common law concept based on heart and lungs:

"For all legal purposes, a human body with irreversible cessation of total brain function, according to usual and customary standards of medical practice, shall be considered dead."

Tennessee and Montana have enacted these 27 words into law. Louisiana and Idaho adopted almost identical language. Similar laws were passed by North Carolina, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Virginia, New Mexico, Alaska, California, Georgia, Michigan, Oregon, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Hawaii.

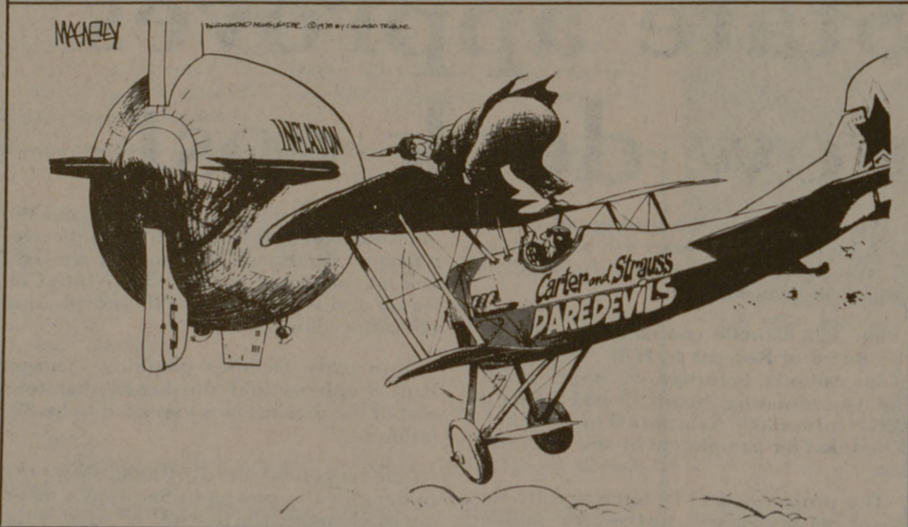
The principle will be injected into criminal prosecutions and lawsuits in areas ranging all the way from eye bank donations to insurance and probate.

Dr. McCarthy DeMere of Memphis, a doctor-lawyer who worked five years on the definition, said, "This is one of the biggest things that is happening in law today."

"It will reach the Supreme Court," he told UPI, "I don't know how or when."

The fact that death counseling may be engaged in by anyone, trained or untrained, has caused concern among professionals.

One is Dr. Dan Leviton, professor of health education at the University of Maryland, who heads the Forum for Death Education and Counseling. Leviton's course, which attracts about 300 students each semester, "takes up religious theories, the life cycle, how to handle grief, attitudes toward funerals and euthanasia."



The forum has already fashioned a code of ethics for counselors and would like to certify persons deemed qualified in the field. The organization is a kind of clearing house which publishes a newsletter and advises on instruction techniques and how to conduct workshops.

On the right to do with your body as you will, Leviton says the individual should weigh many factors: How old are you? Has your life been worthwhile? Are you in unbearable pain? What is your present environment?

"It's like abortion, there are no simple answers," he says, "but once the person is

satisfied that the answer is 'yes,' then he ought to be allowed to die."

Paradoxically, many classroom discussions of dying tend to focus on life. And in the end that could be their greatest benefit.

"Death education is more than a mere frill added to an already crowded academic curriculum," Leviton says, "for it has the potential of stimulating us to develop our priorities. It does stimulate us, as our research indicates, to communicate our esteem, respect and love to those dear to us before they die."

Considering how to die can't help but generate some thoughts on how to live.

TOP OF THE NEWS CAMPUS

Christensen to speak on poetry

Dr. Paul Christensen of the Texas A&M University English department will speak to the English Society on "Poetry as a Genre" at 7:30 p.m. in room 230 of the Memorial Student Center. Christensen has had a number of his own poems published.

Campus blood drive begins today

Registration for the 19th annual Aggie Blood Drive begins today and ends Thursday at Sbsa and Commons dining areas and the Memorial Student Center hallway. Donations will be collected Oct. 10-12. Preregistration is not required for donating. The Aggie Blood Drive is a joint effort of Alpha Phi Omega, Omega Phi Alpha and the student government. Since its inception 18 years ago, the blood drive has collected more than 15,000 pints. It has provided blood coverage for Aggies and their families in hospital and emergency situations. To utilize this service, contact the Welfare Benefits Coordinator in the Student Government Office.

Schedule information needed soon

All recognized student organizations should submit a schedule of November and December activities to the Student Activities Office, 221 MSC, no later than noon, Oct. 11. Cards for filing this information are located in 221 or 217 MSC. The monthly calendar for November-December will be composed from the information submitted.

LOCAL

Bryan power off this morning

A large part of Bryan suffered electrical power shortage early this morning when one of the major lines — directing power south of Villa Maria at Texas Avenue, to Foch Street — had power cut off around 12:30 a.m. A Bryan Utilities night clerk said a switching problem at the main power plant was reported at 12:20 a.m. Power was restored around 2 a.m.

Energy-saving seminar tonight

The Texas Energy Extension Service will hold an extra session of its home energy conservation and money saving seminar tonight at A&M Consolidated High School, Room 107 from 7-9 p.m. The seminar is a continuation of the session last Tuesday on ways to make your present home energy efficient. Larry Degelman, professor of architecture at Texas A&M University, will instruct participants how to analyze their home energy problems. Energy plan sheets will be used to compute cost and savings of various home energy conservation measures. Interested persons should contact the Texas Energy Extension Service, Texas A&M University, 845-8025.

STATE

Texas prisons called 'inhuman'

Inmates demanding better conditions in the nation's largest prison system carried their 6-year-old fight into a federal courtroom in Houston, Monday, accusing Texas of "inhuman" treatment and asking court-ordered improvements. Justice Department lawyer David Vanderhoof said the Texas prison system ranks first in constitutional deprivations. The lawsuits allege violations of inmate civil rights including overcrowding, inadequate medical care, lack of rehabilitation, use of inmate enforcers, denial of access to the courts and arbitrary punishment.

NATION

Court to hear bugging case

The Supreme Court opened its 1978-79 term Monday in Washington by agreeing to take up cases involving the rights of prisoners, motorists, music broadcasters and criminal suspects whose offices are bugged by the FBI. They announced they will hear arguments and rule later this term on a wide range of issues, including whether police may randomly stop motorists in their cars just to check their driver's license and auto registration.

'Trigger-price' defense begins

The administration opened its defense Monday in Colorado Springs of a "trigger-price" system to protect American steel companies against unfair foreign competition. Firms have charged that the levels of steel imports have undercut their sales. The Treasury steel firms that were suffering heavy losses directly related to the imports. Critics of the system say it appears to be inflationary because it boosts the price of products made from steel.

WEATHER

It will be mostly cloudy with a chance of thundershowers and a 30% chance of rain. The high will be in the mid-80's with the low in the mid-50's. Winds will be southerly 10-15 mph, becoming northerly tonight.

THE BATTALION

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words and are subject to being cut to that length or less if longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit such letters and does not guarantee to publish any letter. Each letter must be signed, show the address of the writer and list a telephone number for verification.

Address correspondence to Letters to the Editor, The Battalion, Room 216, Reed McDonald Building, College Station, Texas 77843.

Represented nationally by National Educational Advertising Services, Inc., New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday from September through May except during exam and holiday periods and the summer, when it is published on Tuesday through Thursday.

Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester; \$33.25 per school year; \$35.00 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request. Address: The Battalion, Room 216, Reed McDonald Building, College Station, Texas 77843. United Press International is entitled exclusively to the use for reproduction of all news dispatches credited to it. Rights of reproduction of all other matter herein reserved. Second-Class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

MEMBER

Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Congress

Editor Kim
Managing Editor Liz
Assistant Managing Editor Karen
Sports Editor David
City Editor Jamie
Campus Editor Andy
News Editors Debbie
Beth Calhoun

Editorial Director Lee Roy Leschep
Staff Writers Mark Patterson
Pendleton, Sean
Michelle Scudder, Mark
Faulkenberry, Diane Blalock

Cartoonist Doug
Photographer Ed

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editor or of the writer of the article and are not necessarily those of the University administration or the Board of Regents. The Battalion is a non-profit supporting enterprise operated by students as a university and community news. Editorial policy is determined by the

Letters to the Editor

Corps cadets get no respect at Sbsisa

Editor:

I'm writing this letter to express my disgust about what I saw going on at Sbsisa on Friday, the 28th, during the Corps' run. I really felt sick when I saw a row of guys dropping their drawers and mooning the C.T.s as they were passing by. There was also a growing number of guys who were spitting out profanity to the Corps.

There were also those who started prancing alongside the outfits in a very mocking manner all the way down the street as more and more joined in. Guys were actually running to join in on the side of the non-regs. It was all a big scene with no apparent reasoning behind it, however I noticed that some of those who were yelling obscenities at the Corps were Corps drop outs. In fact, the ones who were yelling the loudest and most derogatory sayings were guys who had dropped out of their outfits because they couldn't take the pressure.

To wrap this up, the Corps just kept on running and showed much more self control than their civilian counterparts, but could you imagine what might have happened if these cadets had shown as little self control as their mockers. If the Corps had stopped their run and turned around, I imagine that there would have been a lot of clowns turning chicken real quick.

I hope that the total lack of respect for

this school that we've all been seeing and reading about is not getting to be a trend. If you don't know what I'm referring to when I say lack of respect for the school, take a look in the Friday, Sept. 28, Battalion and read about all the damage done to Rudder Auditorium during the midnight movie, or read about the manure fight.

—Randy Spiars, '80

Aerial shots

Editor:

To those 130 inhabitants of Moore Hall who are having problems assessing and comprehending certain situations. First, we'd like to say that Dunn Hall is not occupied by women, but Moore Hall has always had problems determining sex. Is this the reasoning used in justifying community showers as an educational experience?

Secondly, we grant you the ability to figure percents (with the aid of calculators) but disagree in your assuming that fewer Dunn Hall residents participated in the water fight on the Northside of campus than signed the letter. For one of our residents verified by aerial photographs (as he flew over in his Lear jet) that 47.88% (227) members of Dunn Hall participated in our first raid.

The answer to why you didn't hear our challenge in the first water fight — perhaps the hard hats you were wearing impaired your hearing, or possibly you were hoping to use ax handles to pack more punch than our water. But we recommend that your 130 (I believe we need more aerial photos to substantiate your claim) Bonfire workers wait a few weeks. Then you may safely try and prove yourselves worthy of the glory bestowed upon your dorm by yourselves, (and change the dubious feelings that are associated with Moore Hall in all circles.)

We'd also entertain the proposal of a water fight, and we take this opportunity to speak for our fathers who have so generously agreed to your absenteeism from work. If you need a ride don't hesitate to call my chauffeur James.

—Jack Wensinger, 81
Steve Huff, 81

P.S. See you at the stack!

Tech views

Editor:

A copy of the letter "Dorm Democracy" (Thursday, Sept. 21) found its way up here to Tech, and since the Good Ag who sent it to me called me a Red Raider Redneck, I'm writing in support of Nissman, Smith, et al.

The outlawing of after-hours quads at Schumacher is obviously some sort of Communist plot, and I'll bet that the RAs involved support gay rights! Good luck in your crusade against pinks, J-boards, Democrats, and other threats to society.

—Art Fern
Texas Tech, '80

No deck for '79

Editor:

To my fellow classmates of 1979,

I write this letter with a high degree of frustration because I am looking at my choice SENIOR football tickets and wondering, "Why am I sitting in section 128?"

Zips of '79, it is time to revolt!! We have been deprived of good seats for too long, so I would like to make a suggestion. Let's all keep our precious ticket books to ourselves so that we and our dates may have the benefit of at least one or two decent games with something besides a good view of half the touchdowns and extra points.

If you feel that you have to trade with some deprived underclassman, PLEASE don't give it to anyone under the sergebutt class.

You may think this letter is uncalled for, but just remember that neither you nor I will get the pleasure of the third deck after

its completion next year. So let's enjoy that Fightin' Texas Aggie Football Team for our last year as students here with some sort of pride and respect for our "wonderful" ticket distribution system.

—Jerry Warwick, '79
Donna Ivey, '79

Working class

Editor:

I am starting my fifth year at A&M and thought I should write at least one letter to the editor.

This is in response to a letter written by Rhoni Mays (Tuesday, Sept. 19). First of all, I am in the "Class of '78" and I have as much right to be here as you do. The reason it takes some of us longer is that some of work during the school year and can't afford to take the required number of hours. Some of us don't have our school paid for.

Secondly, you weren't exactly Miss Goody-Two-Shoes when you wrote your letter to Marge Berhardt. Miss Stevens was merely expressing an opinion. I too believe she ought to be given a P.E. credit for being in the band at Sam Houston.

Miss Mays, in your letter you said it hurts you that someone can be so unfriendly towards someone you have never even met. Well, have you met Miss Berhardt?

By the way, Misses Childress and Parker said Highway 6 runs both ways. I came in one way and as soon as I get my degree I'm going out the other.

—Abel Salazar, '78

Embarrassing yell

Editor:

This letter is addressed to those residents of Crocker Hall who persisted in yelling their profane "hump it" at Midnight Yell.

Being a dorm resident myself, I understand the desire to show dorm spirit through humping it; however, your profane yells before Yell Practice were not only embarrassing to the students around you, but very disgusting as well.

Many parents and old Ags attend Yell Practice and enjoy seeing Aggie spirit and can even appreciate some of the good stories, but your filthy language exceeded the boundaries of common courtesy.

I know this is not an exemplary show of spirit from all the men of Crocker, but those of you who persisted in your immaturity — think twice before you degrade your dorm in public.

—Mary Helen Brown, '79

Slouch

by Jim Earle



"NO, I HAVEN'T READ IT TODAY. I'LL READ IT TOMORROW WHEN IT HAS ALL TH' CORRECTIONS MADE!"