

America's cultural sec

Shameless tabs run rampant

by Susan Dittman
Battalion Staff

"I Had a UFO Baby," "Grace's ghost haunts Caroline," "Johnny Cash Murder Attempt," and "Liberace Talks: The REAL story about palimony man and me" were just a few of the headlines in this week's issues of weekly tabloids of The National Examiner, The Globe, The National Enquirer and The Star.

But editors of some of these magazines claim their products don't lie, don't talk about sex, do have professional, respected staff writers and are highly entertaining.

Obviously, they are not the only ones who find them entertaining.

Michael Irish, executive editor of the National Examiner, said the 7-year-old weekly sells about one million copies every week.

"We figure three people read every copy that is sold," he said, "so it's really about a three million readership."

Irish said they get most of their story ideas from other publications.

"We have a team of people that scours other publications to get story ideas," he said. "Some of the ideas we dream up ourselves."

Although many weeklies concentrate on celebrity gossip stories and scandals, Irish said they don't invent the scandals.

"Our task is more to entertain and find new angles on running news stories," because the papers are read for entertainment, he said. "Plus it is a lot less expensive than the glossy magazines."

Middle-aged females, "the 38-year-old housewife with one and a half kids," are the most common readers of supermarket weeklies, Irish said.



Jock Veitch, editorial administrator of the Star, said their 8-year-old weekly has a circulation of 3.9 million.

Veitch said they publish eye-catching gossip stories because "we just don't want to be boring."

But, he said, they also try to include something about everything.

"We try to balance each page," Irish said. "We'll have a medical story, a celebrity story and a horror story all on one page."

Veitch said the Star is sold mostly because the cover and the headlines are eye-catching, but include much sex in its issues.

"Because we are a mass-circulation paper, we have to make sure our paper is clean," he said.

Both Veitch and Irish said the reporters and editors who work on their publications are trained journalists.

Veitch said most of the Star's small staff were trained at other papers and magazines before

joining the Star.

Irish said the National Examiner is not used as a training ground for journalists.

"We have a very highly developed sense of professionalism," he said. "People who work for the Examiner come from everywhere. I came from a London newspaper."

Well, maybe these tabloids do serve a purpose and make readers aware of current events. After all, does the New York Times know that Hitler is now living in the U.S.?

Will Donna learn the truth? Tune in tomorrow

by Ann Ramsbottom
Battalion Reporter

Attendance is perfect; some students are forced to sit on the floor. All eyes are glued to the subject matter; concentration is at an optimum.

The lights are dimmed and you can hear a pin drop.

The location: Commons TV room.

The subject: All My Children.

Like thousands of soap opera addicts everywhere, these victims are going through a daily ritual of All My Children, Ryan's Hope, General Hospital and The Young and the Restless.

Some schedule their classes around them, some eat during them, others study by them.

"You wouldn't believe what I go through to get home and watch my soap," Dan Winn, a graduate student in civil engineering, said. "Sometimes I have to make up excuses to get out of the lab."

Malcolm Davis, an animal science junior said that he scheduled his classes around them.

"I have a Monday afternoon lab that I couldn't schedule around," Davis said. "Sometimes I have to skip lab if something good is about to happen."

Davis is a soap veteran of ten years. He had to quit watching soaps while he was in high school but, he said, he kept up on the episodes through the soap opera reports in the Saturday edition of the Dallas Morning News.

Though several students said that they first started watching

soaps because their mothers always watched them, they gave different reasons for their addiction.

"It's a good way to relieve pressures," Davis said. "It's good to watch someone else experience problems. They make my problems seem so small."

Valerie Reis, an industrial distribution junior, said she watches soap operas because of the excitement and mystery involved.

"It's just like an unfinished story," Reis said. "One problem is resolved and in the process, a new problem is created."

Winn said that he enjoyed the soap operas for their suspense.

Doak Lambert, a junior in animal science, said he watches soaps to kill time. But he did say there is a certain amount of curiosity involved.

Byron Mack, a mining engineering junior said that he thinks soaps are entertaining and relaxing.

Whatever the reason, many soap opera followers get somewhat emotionally involved in their favorites.

In the Commons TV room, there seems to be a common feeling about most of the characters. Whether doctor, lawyer, big businessman or prostitute, the villains are hissed and the heroes cheered.

"Everybody wants to see Jenny Gardner and Gregg Nelson stay together," Davis said.

Reis explained; Jenny and Gregg are back together after a long separation caused by Liza Colby's manipulating and black-

mail. Liza really wants Gregg for herself.

Another plot in the same soap opera involves a wealthy businessman, Palmer Courtland, and his wife, Donna.

Donna is going to have a baby. She doesn't know it, but Palmer isn't really the father. Chuck, Donna's ex-husband is the father. Palmer knows the

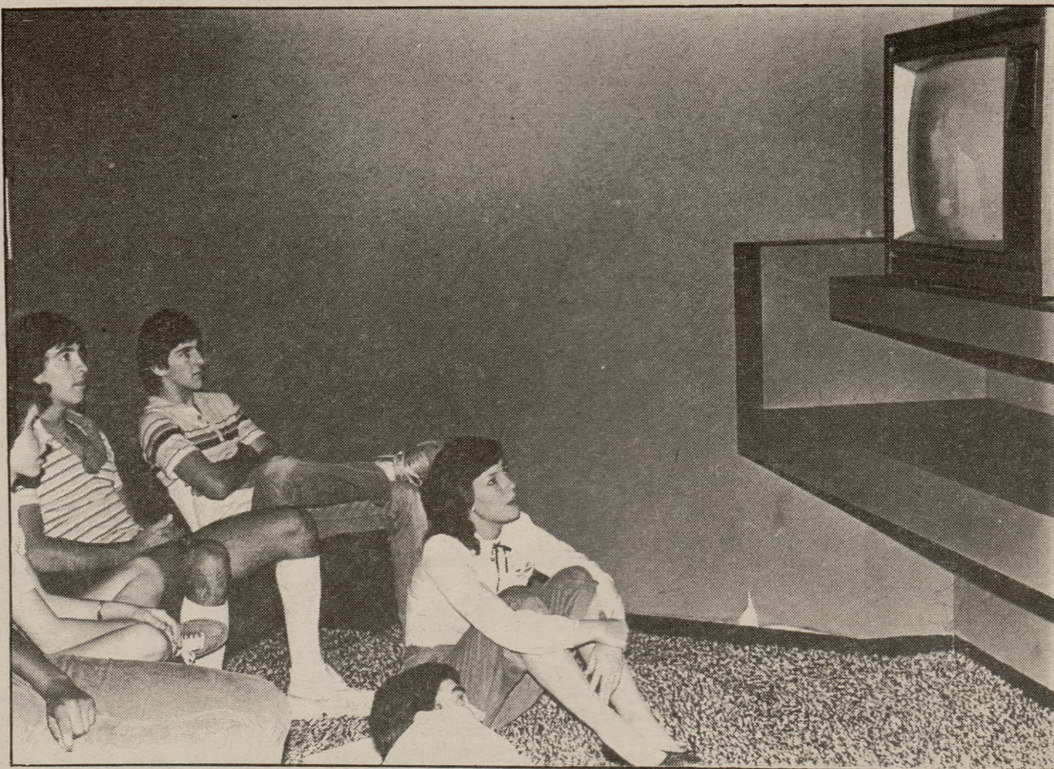
truth. He's sterile and couldn't possibly be the father. Donna doesn't know that her husband is sterile. Palmer is frustrated. Being the pillar of ethics in Pine Valley, he can't reveal anything.

"You don't have to watch very much to know what's going on," Reis said.

Nevertheless, Davis said that

soap operas can easily become an obsession.

"There are certain episodes you just can't afford to miss," Davis said. "For instance, when they recently named the new president of Ewing oil company on Dallas. It's like the time they revealed who shot J.R. you had to have been there."



Caution — interrupt soap viewers at your own risk.