

Caught between morality and smut

Have you ever noticed how so many of the world's problems are caused by lines?



Robert McGlohon

Like little chip-shouldered boys the world round, ideologues and fanatics are forever drawing lines in the dirt, daring the other little boys to cross over.

Wars have been fought and countless people have died for the lines separating Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The lines dividing liberals and socialists, conservatives and fascists, libertarians and anarchists, have precipitated many a heated dispute.

We recently hit one of those mysterious lines, and will probably hit the same one again this December when more pictures of Vanessa Williams, the former and much ballyhooed Miss America, again grace the newsstands in the "January" issue of Penthouse magazine. This particular line is extremely fascinating: the difference between sexy and smutty.

There is no doubt Miss America is supposed to be sexy. Otherwise, why parade them around in bathing suits? And there is also no doubt the pictures in Penthouse are supposed to be sexy. Otherwise, how would Bob Guccione make money?

The problem lies not in being too sexy, but in crossing the arbitrary line between sex appeal and smut appeal, a line that shifts willy-nilly with time.

As little as two generations ago, women were expected to be covered from head to toe. To be caught without a hat was embarrassing. To flash a little ankle was scandalous. If morality is indeed transcendent, as the moral fascists of today so vehemently declare, you'd think it would be just slightly more permanent.

One of the more strident articles about the Vanessa Williams incident appeared last week in National Review, a fortnightly magazine edited by William F. Buckley Jr. In that article, which was

written by a Washington D.C. freelance writer, the reader gets the impression the ex-Miss should be put in stoned and branded an adulteress.

This is never said outright, mind you, but the author uses language such as "nice girl," "virginity," "a little trip to woodshed," "sinful," "vile, vicious pornography," and "arguably immoral" well, you get the idea.

As I was reading this diatribe, I asked myself "What possible good would it do to condemn this poor girl?" My question was answered.

Writes the author: "But, it may be asked, what possible good would it do to condemn this poor girl? The answer is that a condign fear of public shame serves important social functions, and we ought to think twice before abandoning it in the name of progressivism, enlightenment, or whatever."

Later in the article, the author claims, "When one realm of ethics and morality is abandoned — particularly an area like sexuality, which can so base human dignity — all of the other are likely to follow."

Imagine that: Sexuality debases human dignity.

What's interesting about this article is not the content — self-righteous grandstanding is boring — but the magazine in which the article appeared. William F. Buckley Jr. has had full editorial control of National Review since the mid-1950s. In addition to editing National Review, he writes books, a syndicated column and freelance articles.

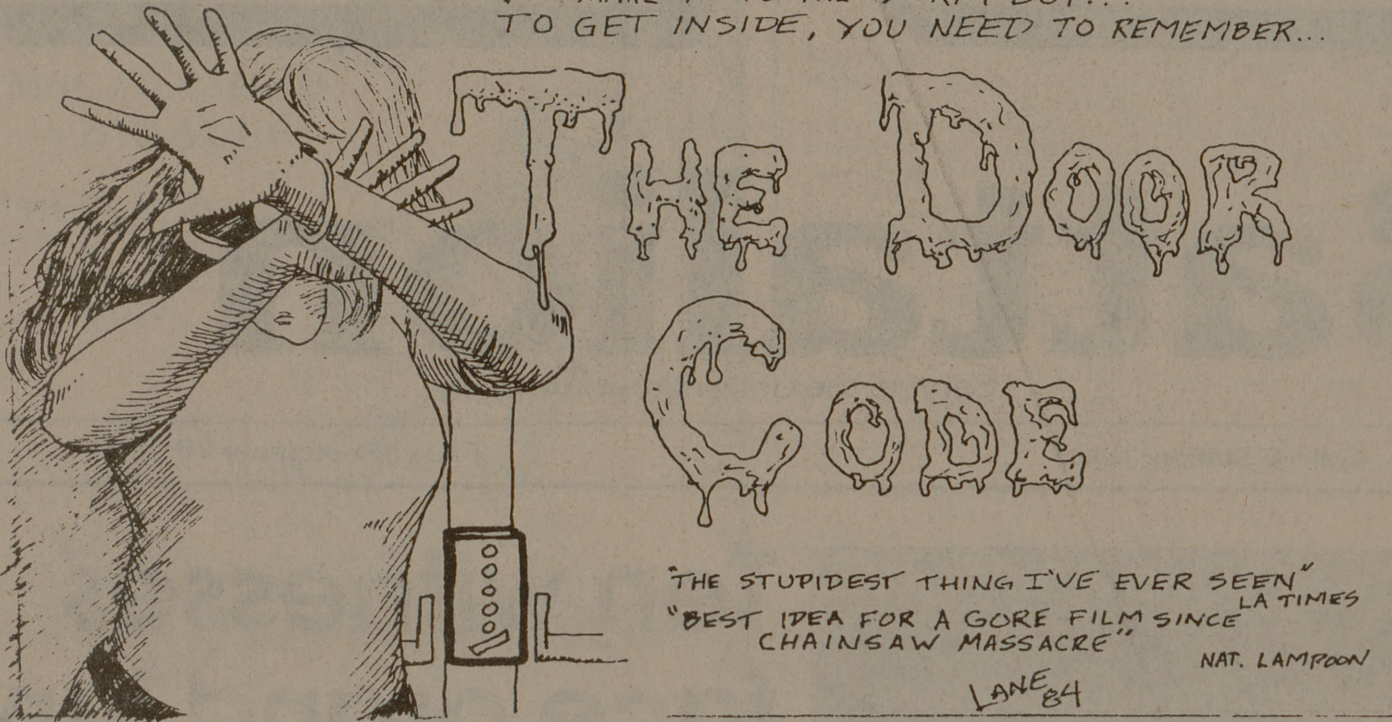
Here's the interesting part: one of Buckley's latest articles (which discuss why Jesse Jackson should never be President of the United States) appeared in the July issue of ... you guessed it, Penthouse magazine.

This brings us to one of those "moral questions social conservatives are fond of asking, namely:

"Which sin is most vile? Prostitution or profiting from prostitution?"

Bob McGlohon is a weekly Battalion columnist. His column appears on Fridays.

HE'S OUT THERE!
YOU CAN HEAR HIS HEAVY BREATHING!
YOU CAN SEE HIS STEELY EYES GLINTING!
YOU RUN AS HE REVS HIS CHAINSAW!
YOU MAKE IT TO THE DORM BUT...
TO GET INSIDE, YOU NEED TO REMEMBER...



"THE STUPIDEST THING I'VE EVER SEEN"
"BEST IDEA FOR A GORE FILM SINCE CHAINSAW MASSACRE"
LA TIMES
NAT. LAMPOON
LANE 84

Saving a life with a signature

The check was written. My name, address, phone number, driver's license number and ID number were in place. The eternal wait was on. Cashing checks at the Memorial Student Center definitely does not rank high on my list of stimulating things to do.



Stephanie Ross

I was looking at the people in line and the people walking by, trying to break the monotony. Turning my check, ID card, and license over and over in my hand, I grew steadily more impatient. I began the ritual of double checking my check, balancing my checkbook, looking at how my bad ID picture, and thinking about how my driver's license picture doesn't really look like me. Then I noticed the writing on the back of my license. For some reason, as I shuffled forward in line, closer to getting my money, I read it all. "Restriction and endorsement code. A. With corrective lenses..... DONORS

CERTIFICATION...."

The words in capital letters jumped off the little plastic card and hit me in the face.

They made me think, and as I thought, I felt irresponsible.

I had recently read two articles in two different newspapers about organ donations and thought "what a good idea — I should do that." But unfortunately that was all I did.

I never dug in my purse and pulled out my license to sign the donor line even though I was fully aware that I could.

Thousands of people are saved through organ transplants, and almost everyone has the capability to save, if only they would sign their licenses and discuss it with their parents or next of kin. Even if you sign the donor line, permission has to be given to the doctors by your next of kin to donate any organs.

How many people out there are like me — aware of what they can do, but don't do anything because we forget, or file the information to the back of our minds?

Recently a friend of mine died, and I learned that he saved someone else's life by donating his kidneys. What a wonderful part of yourself to leave behind. Knowing my friend did that made his life seem all that much more valuable, and it made his death less painful.

For some reason, he doesn't seem so far away anymore, even though I don't know the person who received his kidneys.

It's not often that we can give so much of ourselves.

Chances are that I'll never be in a situation that I can donate my kidneys, cornea, or heart to someone who needs them — but I'll never know.

Most donors are victims of car accidents. They didn't plan to be in those accidents, but for some reason they planned to leave enough of themselves behind to prolong life for someone else.

Next time I go home, I know I'll have something more interesting to say to my parents than how my grades are ...

Stephanie Ross is the editor of The Battalion.

LETTERS:

Bikes cause havoc for campus motorists

EDITOR:
I have a complaint about the problem of bicyclists at Texas A&M. The thing about bicyclists that bothers me the most is they have no consideration for the people who drive cars on campus.

The bicyclists run in front of cars and expect the car to stop. Bicyclists also tend to ignore stop signs. This makes the driver in the car wait at the intersection even longer.

I was wondering if they had special roads and trails for bicycles on the A&M campus. If they don't have them they should make some because having to drive on campus is tough enough but trying to avoid hitting someone who runs out in front of you on a bicycle is even tougher.

Jerry Mergel
College Station

Ags should take note of World Hunger

EDITOR:
I would like to let the Aggies know the current situation on World Hunger. As you read this and every minute, 24 people die due to hunger, 18 of them children. That's 35,000 a day.

There are solutions that exist. Hunger has ended in 75 countries (41 since 1960). You might ask yourself, what can I do?

Experts agree that hunger can be ended by the end of the century. The key missing ingredient is the worldwide commitment to get the job done. That commitment begins with you! You have "the Power" to make the end of hunger and starvation an "idea whose time has come."

Christopher Debrecht
member of The Hunger Project

Regents have no control over question of moving tracks

EDITOR:
I would like to comment on your editorial of Sept. 26, 1984 concerning the railroad tracks which pass the campus. In the article, you say that the Board of Regents needs to act on a Project 2000 proposal to move these tracks.

This sounds fine and dandy except for one small problem. The University does not own the tracks or the property on which they rest. This property is owned by the Missouri Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads.

If anything is to be done about this problem, these companies need to be sparked into action, not the regents.

As far as moving the tracks are concerned, lets not get on the Regents' case about an issue they cannot do anything about. They have more important things to concern themselves with. Like an almost finished Bell Tower.

Steven R. Hart
Class of '86

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Board of Regents have already discussed plans to pay the Railroad Companies to move the tracks. The major obstacle appears to be money.

Crossing needs markings not closing

EDITOR:
Being residents of an apartment complex adjacent to Luther Street, we often use the intersection of Luther Street and Wellborn. It is a far more convenient route to gain access to south College Station than the round-about way of traveling a half-mile down the road to the busy Jersey Street-Wellborn intersection, only to double back and pass Luther again.

With the addition of new housing complexes, it was obvious traffic would increase at this more convenient intersection.

Closing this intersection is not the answer, as this would only create more congestion at Jersey-Wellborn.

The addition of safety equipment, removal of sight obstructions, and even repaving of the road would make this crossing no more dangerous than any other, while providing motorists with safe and easy access.

The population should not be inconvenienced when the city could alleviate the problem in a satisfactory manner.

Mike Varner, Class of '88
John McLaughlin, Class of '88

Shelter thanks Saddle and Sirlion

EDITOR:
We at Sheltering Arms Children's Shelter want to express our appreciation to Saddle & Sirlion Club for choosing the Shelter for abused and abandoned children as recipient of proceeds earned at their recent horse show.

The donated funds will enable us to more adequately provide for the more than 100 children who need shelter care each year.

It is especially heartwarming when Texas A&M students reach out in caring concern to help others in our community needing hope and help. Their effort has a far-reaching effect toward making our community a better place to live!

Peggy Shafer
Administrator, Sheltering Arms

Aggie Band still gives goose-bumps

EDITOR:
"Ladies and gentleman - now forming at the north end of Kyle Field, the nationally famous Fightin' Texas Aggie Band!"

Its been years since I was down there on that field, but I still get goose-bumps all over every time I hear that introduction over the public address system.

Nothing compares to the feeling of having 75,000 people yelling and applauding as the band steps off on "Hul-labloo."

Each year the band seems to get better. The formations and drills get more difficult, and the members seem to execute them with more precision each week.

Saturday's halftime show during the Iowa State game was one of the band's best performances that I can remember seeing. They have never lost a halftime, and they never will. There is little wonder why the Texas Aggie Band is known as the "Pulse of Aggieland."

Scott Simpson
Former B.Q.
Class of '78

Clarification

In The Battalion's Wednesday Editorial, a report was quoted as saying the University should work towards moving the railroad tracks and the major highway from the middle of campus. The highway referred to was Farm Road 2154 — Wellborn Road. The Target 2000 project report is available at the Sterling C. Evans Library.

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Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the Editorial Board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.
The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

Letters Policy
Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.
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