

Opinion

Titanic lessons

After years of searching and romanticizing, the Titanic has been found. The mystery surrounding the "unsinkable" ship is fading. There is talk of raising the vessel, or at least recovering the treasure she is supposedly holds.

But the Titanic has a greater message than sunken treasure or lost romanticism. It can teach us about our dependence on technology. Every time we drive across a bridge, we put our lives in the bridge builder's hands. Every time we step on a plane, we put faith in the designer's abilities. But things can go wrong.

The Titanic was supposed to be unsinkable. Yet on its maiden voyage it hit an iceberg and plunged to the bottom — taking 1,503 lives. Only 700 people could fit in the 14 lifeboats and four life rafts available.

Despite our many technological accomplishments, our devices can fail. When peoples' lives depend on the safety of those devices, the designers must be certain that safety systems are adequate.

We often stake our lives on others peoples' abilities. But no matter how well a ship or bridge or plane is built, no ship is "unsinkable", no bridge "uncollapsible," and no plane "uncrashable." Without proper safety precautions, dependence on the safest machines can lead to tragedy.

Whether the Titanic is raised is unimportant. Whether the discovery takes away its romanticism doesn't matter. But the moral of this "unsinkable" vessel should never be forgotten.

The Battalion Editorial Board



"LOOK, WEINBERGER... WE'VE GOT THE MOST ADVANCED ANTI-SATELLITE WEAPON IN THE WORLD... WHY CAN'T WE SHOOT DOWN HALLEY'S COMET?..."

Guardian angels save us from evils of rock 'n' roll



Loren Steffy

I will sleep easier at night knowing that my tender ears will be safe from the dastardly lyrics of nefarious rock 'n' roll musicians. The National PTA and the Parents Resource Music Center have decided they know what is acceptable and objectionable in the world of music, and they have vowed to shield us from the horrors of free expression.

The two parents' groups want a ratings system imposed on the recording industry to warn parents about lyrical content. Tipper Gore, one of the founders of the PRMC, claims an "R" rating should be put on albums which contain "explicit sexual language, profanity, violence, the occult and the glorification of drugs and alcohol."

Saying we should be warned about these kind of lyrics is much easier than actually putting a rating on them. How will the PRMC or the PTA determine "violence." Anti-war songs such as "Run Through the Jungle," "Hey Joe" and the "I-Think-I'm-Going-to-Die Rag" discuss violence, even though their message is one of peace.

Warren Zevon's "Excitable Boy" describes how an aspiring maniac rapes and kills his date for the senior prom, but the message is not to glorify the act.

The song shows the irony of pushing violent crimes off on emotional problems.

The Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" was dubbed a celebration of LSD by advocates and adversaries, but the author, John Lennon, swore he got the idea from his son Julian. Apparently Julian came home from school one day with a drawing which he called Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds.

When are lyrics really "glorification of drugs and alcohol" and when are they a child's scribbblings?

The first time my fiance heard Rush's "2112" she got furious. She felt the group was trying to force immoral values on their listeners. I interpreted "2112" to be a fictional tale set to music, and the song my fiance was objecting to merely the musicians playing out a role which was essential to their story.

I think Prince is the biggest no-talent bum to ever set foot on a stage. He can't play the guitar, he can't sing and he can't write music. I find his appearance repulsive and his lyrics tacky and pointless. But my philosophy professor says Prince's music must be interpreted metaphorically, not literally.

Music, in any form, is art. Art is expression.

Placing restrictions on music is just like restricting magazines, books, comics, theatre, painting or sculpture. If the music industry wants to

impose restrictions on themselves that's their business. The motion picture and comic books industries have already done that. Television and radio must meet the requirements of the federal government.

But allowing a group with one narrow perspective to slap a rating on artistic expression of each and every musician is the next best thing to censorship.

So when I go to sleep at night, I hope these self-appointed guardian angels will be out there, protecting me from the free expression of others.

Loren Steffy is a junior journalism major and the Opinion Page Editor for The Battalion.

Mail Call

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.

No use for rudeness

EDITOR:

I couldn't help but write regarding Anne Stancavage's response to Sally Taylor's article concerning Kenny Bob Parson's article. I am upset that any guest would be so rude to a host. My parents brought me up to be polite to people, especially when I was visiting them. Where does Ms. Stancavage and her eight friends get off bad-mouthing a state that has been nice enough to let them come in and get a quality education?

If I had my druthers I would send her back to where she comes from, and quickly. I have little use for rude foreigners and their bad attitudes for a state that I call home. If you dislike Texas and our attitudes so much I will be more than happy to tell you how to get on any interstate away from here. And you may take your friends with you. I think we should treble the out-of-state tuition again for rude people.

Robert Baldwin

totalitarian system in which the citizens of the country have no opportunity to inject their opinions into the government. Those who dare to criticize the Soviet government are harassed by the KGB and forced into internal exile in Siberia. The Soviet citizen on the street in Moscow is not free to express their opinion as is Brendan Wyly.

The U.S.S.R. is a regime with no respect for human life. Even the most liberal members of Congress readily acknowledge the Soviet use of chemical weapons against villages in Afghanistan. Yuri Andropov, the deceased Soviet leader, while serving as the head of the KGB, approved the Bulgarian plan to assassinate the Pope.

Wanting and desiring peace in the world is a goal all rational people share. However, we must live in reality and in reality the world is full of people who do not share Americans' respect of individual liberty and freedom. Remember the communist regime of Pol Pot in Cambodia who systematically exterminated one-fourth of that country's population? Hatred of communism is a logical emotion.

Douglas Jones

Naturally high on life

EDITOR:

I attended my first Silver Taps last night — to see Aggie tradition in action (after three semesters as a grad student). I was impressed by the size of, and silent respect shown by, the crowd that took time to attend.

It reminded me of the lesson I learned from a nearly fatal cycle accident — life is a gift. It is not to be taken for granted, as so many of we young people seem to do.

I've recently begun to see the duties that come with caring for this gift. Duties to myself, my society and the Higher Power that has let me keep it. They may be as simple as wearing seat belt (or a helmet). Or as difficult as not using drugs, and drinking responsibly or not at all. That may require professional help. Alcohol and driving killed 23,500 last year (Sunday Post, p.19A).

Meantime, y'all enjoy the gift. The natural high of life is wonderful.

Art Ochoa, Jr.

Not accepted by all

EDITOR:

I have never written in defense of a fraternity, but in all fairness I must do so today. Brendan Wyly, on Sept. 12, complained about an ATO party with the theme of "catch a commie" and went on to say that communism is a political and economic philosophy accepted by millions.

The U.S.S.R. is a sovereign nation but communism is not "accepted" by their population. Let's be objective and call a spade a spade. The U.S.S.R. is a brutal

At thirty-five, you're over the hill

(Whilst Art Buchwald is on vacation we reprint some columns from the past.)



I was at a magazine office the other day and one of the publishers said to me, "I have to reduce my average-age readership by five years."

"What is the average age of your readers now?" I asked.

"Thirty-five. As far as my advertisers are concerned 35 is much too old an age to appeal to. It's the under 30s who are spending most of the money in this country. When you hit 35 you start pinching pennies."

"That's because the people who are over 35 have children who are spending money, and we senior citizens don't have as much to spend ourselves."

"Don't think the advertisers aren't aware of that. The money power in this country belongs to the kids. They spend more on records in one year than their parents do on grass seed. They also go to the movies and the fast-food restaurants, and buy make-up and pantyhose that come in eggs, and jeans and leather jackets. They make the American way of life what it is today. That's why the advertisers want to please them so much.

People over 35 are drags on society as far as buying power goes. Advertisers don't like that."

"It isn't our fault," I said defensively. "At one time we used to spend money like water too. I think advertisers owe us some loyalty. We supported them for a long time."

"You can't let sentiment get involved when you're selling. You have to aim your copy at the person who has the money burning a hole in his or her pocket."

"If you publish a magazine or put on a television program that appeals to people who are mature, you could drive this country into a recession. You must target your ads for that vast ignorant segment of the population which will buy anything, anywhere, any time. The advertiser does not want to waste his money on someone who is worried about tomorrow."

"So just because we're discriminating, people over 35 are bad advertising risks?" I asked.

"I would say those over 30. When you cross the 35 age barrier the advertiser wants you off our subscription list, 10 feet from the newsstand, and doesn't care if you're sitting in the room when he's selling beer on television."

"As far as he's concerned you're just taking up needless room on the planet. When you get into your 40s and 50s, the advertiser insists that our computer spit you out."

"Wait a minute," I said. "Let's backtrack a bit. It's true that those of us over 35 are not the big spenders we once were. But where do you think the money comes from that your advertisers are fighting for? If we didn't supply the dough to our kids they wouldn't have a dime for all that junk that makes them such important consumers to the advertising world. It's our money that is making them the hot prospects of the business community and forcing magazines, movies and television shows to cater to their idiotic tastes."

"That's quite true," my publishing friend agreed, "but let's be sensible about this. On a cold snowy evening, would you prefer to stay home or go to a Pizza Hut?"

"Stay home."

"And your son and daughters?"

"Go to a Pizza Hut."

"So there you are. You might read an ad for a Pizza Hut in my magazine or see one on television. But it's your kids who will go out on a snowy night and buy one. So why the hell should we talk to you?"

"Why are you talking to me?"

"Because you're a friend and I wanted to tell you personally that because of your age I can no longer carry you on our subscription list."

Art Buchwald is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate

The Battalion

USPS 045 360

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. Editorial staff phone number: (409) 845-3316. Advertising: (409) 845-2611.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843.