

Opinion

Don't cut the smut

In these days of rock record rating systems and groups marching to ban pornography, it's good to see that an organization such as the National Council of Churches understands the dangers of censorship.

Despite a two-year study, which found that sex and violence in entertainment can lead to aggressive behavior, the council opposes censorship of motion pictures.

"The NCC has long defended garbage in entertainment in order to avoid curbing artistically valuable presentations," said James M. Wall, editor of Christian Century magazine. "Better to permit the bad than curb the good."

Banning a certain work — literary, musical, artistic or cinematic — because certain people, even a majority, find it objectionable prohibits freedom of expression, thus violating the First Amendment.

The danger of censorship usually lies not in the banning of the item in question, but the implication the ban could have on similar items.

Censorship should be opposed not because it "protects" society from certain "evils" but because beneficial works inadvertently can fall victim to the censor's desensitized scissors.

The NCC deserves commendation for recognizing the dangerous repercussions of censorship.

The Battalion Editorial Board

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The Soviets are treated to a typical interview with the President.

Despite my qualifications, I don't belong in orbit

NASA has announced that it will choose a journalist to fly into orbit on a space shuttle flight next fall. The passenger will be selected from thousands of journalists by the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Education.



Art Buchwald

Minimum requirements are that the candidate be a citizen of the United States have five years of journalistic experience and be working at the time.

The applicant must pass a physical examination and be able to demonstrate an ability to communicate to mass audiences in the broadcast and print media.

I'm aware of what you're thinking: I would be the perfect person to take the flight! But before you nominate me I have to warn you I have no interest in going into space.

Sure, I know your argument. I am probably in better physical shape than any journalist in the country, and could handle weightlessness more easily than most. And there is probably no question in your mind that I could do a better reporting job. So why won't I fly? The main reason is I have to think of myself before my country.

This is the downside to the shuttle flight. They say I would have to give up four months of my life to prepare for the three- or four-day NASA flight. Since I've already had intensive training flying the Eastern Shuttle to New York I don't see why I need more.

The next thing that bothers me is that the candidate has to promise not to violate someone's privacy of his fellow astronauts. This makes no sense. If you can't violate someone's privacy you have no right to call yourself a journalist. Space, for all its grandeur, is still the story of human beings holed up in an aluminum cigar, standing on their heads, hurtling around the globe while TV records them waving to the camera.

I have other reasons for turning down the flight. One is that I will be required to pool all the information I gather with every other reporter on the ground.

Why should I risk my life so everyone else can get my story? Pooling with other reporters is unfair because the only reason for a journalist to go into space is to make his colleagues look stupid when he returns.

The idea of NASA giving a journalist a free trip in a shuttle could present a conflict of interest. Let us say, for argument's sake, the food is lousy, the crew is fooling around and the much-touted walk in space doesn't live up to the advertising. How can you report freely what really goes on behind closed doors on a shuttle when NASA is picking up the tab?

The final thing that bugs me about the offer is that we journalists were NASA's fourth choice — after Sen. Jake Garn, a Saudi Arabian prince and a schoolteacher named Christa McAuliffe, who goes up next, isn't planning to keep what she sees a secret either. By the time a journalist is launched there won't be one new thing in space left to see.

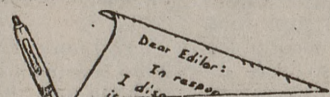
I have only given a few reasons why I

don't want to go up in the shuttle. I'm not surprised that when you first told the story of NASA offering to show professional communicators into the sky my name immediately came to mind. And I hope I haven't disappointed readers by withdrawing from the competition.

Some of you, in your enthusiasm, may have submitted my name. So, please write to NASA Journalist Space Project, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C., and tell them to take me out of consideration. I don't want the NASA people to select me and then find out, to their embarrassment, I'm the only member of the media who doesn't want to go.

Art Buchwald is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

Mail Call



Collectors welcome, tactics not

EDITOR:

We, the women of Clements Hall, wholeheartedly support bonfire, and many of us have been happy to contribute to this cause. However, the rude and ungentlemanly collecting tactics used by the men of Moses Hall is greatly distressing to us. We do not appreciate anyone entering our room without our permission, which has happened to many residents of our hall. We would much rather answer the door than have a male barge in uninvited. This will save everyone involved unnecessary embarrassment.

We welcome anyone collecting for bonfire but must insist that our privacy be respected. Please knock and wait for an answer.

As a final note, we wish to comment on the letter submitted to the editor by Kevin Revere addressing this topic. Although we refuse to stoop to his level, we would like to say, "Mr. Revere, your lack of maturity is now obvious to us."

Kathy Shipley '87
Accompanied by 30 signatures

Congratulations and requests

EDITOR:

I would like to congratulate The Battalion on its excellent review of the Night Ranger/Cheap Trick concert. It was quite timely, but I have yet to see a review of the Aggie Players' production of the musical "archy & mehitabel" which was performed in Rudder Forum on Oct. 4, 5, 10 and 11 as was advertised in The Battalion.

It is my understanding that part of The Battalion's function is to keep Aggies informed of the current events at A&M, or is it true that the Aggie Players are, as its slogan states, "The best-kept secret on campus?"

Michelle Cohen

Basking in linguistic ignorance

EDITOR:

Eddie Klein had better cover himself quickly — his ignorance is sticking out all over the place.

Klein, it seems that Penelope Ode does not know about the subject of her article. After all, who knows the custom of tipping better than a waiter or waitress?

It seems that in your haste to refute Ode's allegations, you bask in a pool of linguistic ignorance. Nowhere have I ever heard that a tip was "to insure promptness." Consulting Webster's second New Riverside Dictionary, I find on page 717 the definition of the word "tip." It reads, "A small sum of money given as an acknowledgement of services rendered."

Oddly enough, the synonym listed is, in fact, "gratuity." I would think that you would know something about the subject of (your) article before writing about it. And while it is true, we are not in Europe, may I point out the fact that good manners are in good taste around the globe. In America, good manners include tipping, or a short note left to explain why no gratuity was offered.

One might also point out that, although Ode may have overstepped herself when she referred to Corps members as "overgrown social midgets," your calling

her "asinine" was in equally poor taste. I can also see no basis for your accusation that she "spread hate," and your suggestion that she leave A&M solely because she presented you with an unfavorable viewpoint was puerility at its finest.

I think apologies are in order from BOTH sides.

Scott Ferguson

A fruitless pursuit

EDITOR:

I do not know who is more at fault: MSC Great Issues, for charging one dollar to listen to Marc Berkowitz talk of atrocities committed more than 40 years ago in Auschwitz, or The Battalion, for allowing such an ad to ever be printed.

What happened to six and a half million Jews during World War II is indeed a sad and despicable incident, one which merits commemoration. But for Berkowitz, Simon Wisenthal and others to relentlessly pursue the matter, as if there is something which can be done to change history, is quite a fruitless pursuit.

Preventing a massacre such as the Holocaust through public education and awareness is one thing. To act and speak with feelings of vengeance is yet another.

To charge any fee in reaching either goal is a travesty in itself.

Brian A. Koontz

The man behind the stats

EDITOR:

In reply to Daniel K. Miller's letter of Nov. 4 concerning accurate data, I would first like to apologize for causing any mental anguish upon him. The statistics that he refers to are mine.

When I had originally decided to address the bicycle problem, I contacted the A.P. Beutel Health Center hoping to find some catastrophic number of bicycle related accidents. What the health center told me was reasonably concise, they claimed that on a slow day there were about five bicycle related accidents.

The bicycle problem is just that, a problem, the statistics, however general in your eyes, still show one hard fact: there are still accidents occurring, and in my eyes one accident is too many.

If the bicycle problem concerns you rather than just the statistics, or anyone else that reads this rebuttal, I encourage you to do something about it. Voice your opinion to The Battalion or voice it to the student services committee of student government.

Billy McCaskill
Senior Liberal Arts Senator
Student Services Committee

If you don't like the stories...

EDITOR:

In regards to the recent letters you have received concerning the stories at yell practice, I would like to say if people are so against hearing these stories why don't they just stay away. People seem to take the stories the wrong way. They are not meant to embarrass, they are meant to entertain.

Lee Crews '89

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