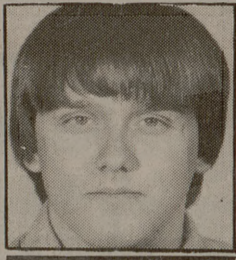


# Opinion

## Intelligence returns to Saturday morning television

I've heard that the average American spends more than seven hours a day watching television. If so, I must be below average.



Karl Pallmeyer

The people who know me might think it's strange but I really don't watch that much commercial television. I make heavy use of my VCR, but I rarely watch anything I can't fast-forward or rewind myself. I have the basic cable package so generously offered to us by the local cable company but I refuse to pay the extravagant fees for HBO, Cinemax or the Movie Channel as well.

It's not that I hate television — I spent almost five years getting a degree in broadcast journalism. It's just that there isn't much that I like to watch. Aside from reruns of classic shows like "The Beverly Hillbillies," "Star Trek," "The Twilight Zone," "Barney Miller" and "Lou Grant," I don't watch much of anything. But there is one show, one

that's almost brand new, I watch religiously every week: "Pee-Wee's Playhouse."

I discovered "Pee-Wee's Playhouse" one Saturday morning when I had a hangover. I was at a party the night before and my brain, on seeing how much alcohol I was consuming, decided it didn't want to be around for the embarrassing activities that usually happen after that much beer. I thought the best thing it could do was leave the party and catch a ride home with someone else.

That Saturday I woke up to the sound of the doorbell ringing. No, it wasn't the police with a warrant for my arrest on charges of throwing cheese dip out of the windows at passing cars or trying to find out how many women at the party were wearing underwear with elephants embroidered on them. It was just the paper boy with the morning paper. For some reason he always aims for the doorbell when he throws the paper. He always seems to hit his mark on those mornings when the slightest noise tends to cause my eardrums to expand to the point where my eyeballs want to explode under the pressure from inside my head.

I opened the door to get the paper and my brain decided it would come back in and give me a good lecture about the evils of drinking like a '69 Chevy at a gas pump. I was too tired to take a shower and too sick to think about breakfast but I didn't feel like going back to bed. So I turned on the television.

I was hoping to find some good old Bugs Bunny or Road Runner cartoons but I was out of luck. Quality entertainment like Bugs Bunny has been replaced with non-violent, so-called educational cartoons like "The Smurfs," "Jem" and "Muppet Babies." Most of the cartoons on today seem to be aimed at children with the mentality of breakfast cereals.

Things weren't looking good for Saturday morning entertainment until I turned to CBS just after 9 a.m. (an hour I didn't know existed). My life was changed forever.

In my state of post-inebriation I wasn't prepared for the overwhelming visual experience of "Pee-Wee's Playhouse." Pee-Wee Herman's playhouse is located in Puppetland, a

wonderful surrealist world where the furniture talks, the windows announce visitors, the flowers sing, the toys move on their own accord and a family of mouse-size dinosaurs live in a hole in the wall. There is a beatnik puppet band that plays cool jazz. There is an ant farm where the ants spend their time farming and throwing parties. There is a genie who will grant one wish a day. There is a talking magic screen where you can enter the picture after you have connected the dots. All of the food in the refrigerator is alive and it moves about and does crazy things (I've seen that happen in my frig as well).

Pee-Wee runs around his playhouse and does his best to have a good time. He talks to Chairry (the chair), Jambie (the robot), Globey (the globe), Conky (the cow), Cowtess (the cow) and Pterri (the pet pterodactyl). Each week the playhouse gang, Elvis, Cher and Opal, comes over to play. Each week Dixie and the King of Cartoons come by and show some of those wonderful old Disney cartoons from the '30s and '40s. Each week Conky has the secret word — something like door, that, okay or fun — and everyone screams whenever anyone says the word. Sometimes Pee-

Wee's older friends, Captain Carl, Yvonne, Tito the Lifeguard, Cowboy Curtis and Mrs. Steve, drop by for a visit.

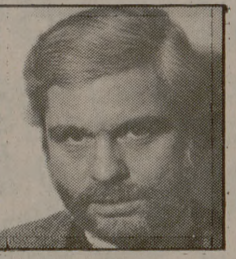
"Pee-Wee's Playhouse" is the product of the fertile imaginations of Peter Dinklage (Pee-Wee), Herman (Paul Reubens) and Stephen Johnson. Reubens developed his Pee-Wee character over the years in various nightclubs and appearances on "Saturday Night Live," "The Tonight Show" and "Late Night with David Letterman." Johnson gained fame as he directed and did the animation for Peter Gabriel's "Sledgehammer" and the Rockers Todd Rundgren and Devo. Mark Mothersbaugh provides the music.

It's strange but I get up each Saturday morning to watch "Pee-Wee's Playhouse." Even though I have a job and could tape the program while I sleep, I really feel the need to get up and watch it as it happens. It helps the weekend off to a good start. It doesn't have to mean anything, but it's fun.

Karl Pallmeyer is a journalism graduate and a columnist for The Battalion.

## Do we really want a unified Germany?

Of all the famous lies of our times — for instance, "the check is in the mail" — maybe the most unrecognized involves German reunification. It has been a staple of U.S. foreign policy since John Foster Dulles and it was the context behind President Reagan's recent taunt to Mikhail Gorbachev to pull down the Berlin Wall. But it remains, for both us and our allies, the scariest of prospects. Ultimately, almost no one wants Germany unified.



Richard Cohen

And yet, hints of a new arrangement are coming from Moscow. A recent Wall Street Journal report about the confusion Gorbachev has sown in the West quotes one West German specialist as speculating about the Russian leader's intentions. He might, we are told, be willing to establish a Central European neutral zone that would include Poland, Hungary and a reunified Germany. "Do the French want a reunified, strong Germany?" the specialist asks. "Do the Americans? The British? The timing is terrible for us, because it's Gorbachev's timing. But how could we say no?"

In the United States, we are deluged with so-called "generational" presidential candidates, almost all of them Democrats. Gary Hart was the first to proclaim himself the Pied Piper of the Baby Boomers. Sen. Joseph Biden, among others, claims Hart's mantle, and commentators have written reams about how America, at last, is changing leadership. The old World War II generation is quickly fading (although both George Bush and Bob Dole are veterans) and a new generation is taking its place.

But it is in the Soviet Union where the generational revolution has really occurred. Until Gorbachev, the Soviet leadership consisted of men who reached their maturity during World War II. What the Russians call The Great Patriotic War seared that nation. Russians died in the tens of millions. Cities were destroyed, some obliterated, while in some, such as Leningrad, a fierce cold turned the starving into macabre ice sculptures. Even today, reminders of the war are everywhere. Russia's suffering was almost beyond imagination and until now it was also beyond imagination that it would countenance a reunited Germany.

Gorbachev lived through that war — but as a youth. (He was born in 1933.)

It's not possible that he's forgotten it, but it is possible that he lacks the visceral anti-German sentiment of his elders. To him, the inconceivable may just be conceivable, especially if it confuses the Western Alliance and affords the Soviet Union the chance to revive itself economically. From the perspective of relative youth, he may at least see a way to detach West Germany and, ultimately, Western Europe from the United States.

A central European neutral zone is not a new idea. For example, it was suggested as early as 1957 by the American diplomat George Kennan in a series of BBC lectures. But neither the Soviet Union nor the United States wanted a united Germany. Both feared its strength. Both powers had invested such in their respective security arrangements — NATO in the West, the Warsaw Pact in the East — and viewed each other with incredible suspicion.

Gorbachev has changed all that. He poses as the peacemaker, a sunny man who has as many disarmament plans up his sleeve as a magician has colored kerchiefs. He has clearly captivated Europe. British and Dutch public-opinion polls show he is perceived to want peace more than Reagan does.

One word promiscuously used in Washington is "isolationism." It is meant to characterize those who question U.S. military involvement in such places as Nicaragua and Angola or, more directly, in the Persian Gulf. But if the word has any real application in the modern age, it is in Europe. The maintenance of our forces there is a real burden.

We constantly ask our allies to do more, but after listening to Gorbachev they might well conclude that less is more — that a benevolent, suddenly reasonable Soviet Union is no threat. Given the choice between the United States and the Soviet Union, they might choose neither. The appeal of neutrality, of isolationism, is hard to deny. So, too, are its economic benefits.

To the Soviet challenge of imagination and energy, the Reagan administration responds with historical halitosis — stale language and stale formulas. Seemingly oblivious to what's happening in the Soviet Union and Western Europe, the President went to Berlin for a photo opportunity. He challenged Gorbachev to pull down the wall and, earlier, suggested he favored German reunification. An old man, doing an old routine, clearly expected the old results. He implied the check was in the mail, but it's a lie. We don't have what it takes to cover it.

Copyright 1987, Washington Post Writers Group



## Why my mother always told me

"Isn't he cute? Can I have one?"

**Jenny Hynes**  
Guest Columnist

When I was 6-years-old, I never understood why the answer was always "no" when I wanted to take home a puppy from the pet store at the mall.

Now I understand. After just two weeks of listening to my puppy whine all night, two weeks of brushing layers of creamy-beige fur from my clothes and cleaning up God-knows-how-many "accidents" from my kitchen floor, living-room carpet, bedspread and every other puppy-sized space in the apartment, I understand why Mom never let me have one. She knew who would have had these pleasures.

"But I'll teach him to be good, Mom!"

Yeah — right, kid.

OK, so I've only had Sebastian two weeks and the little monster is only eight weeks old. But after being told a minimum of 16 times per day to "DO IT ON THE PAPER!!!," wouldn't you think he would have the idea?

I take him for walks twice a day, hoping at least to give him the idea of where he's supposed to "go." He likes these walks — has a great time playing with the other dogs in the neighborhood, harassing the cats (all twice his size) and rolling on other people's lawns.

This doesn't get the job done, though, which is to . . . well . . . you know. All it does is provide me with muddy paws to wash and more "accidents" to clean up later.

And about that creamy-beige fur on my clothes: that's not the only damage

he's done to my wardrobe. I also have holes in my socks, tooth marks on my shoes and shredded pantyhose. My "bargain" of a dog, only \$100 and an AKC-registered cocker spaniel, is getting more expensive every day.

Even more expensive than the clothes are the veterinarian's bills. Sure — he had already had his first shots when I bought him, but what about the treatment for fleas, tapeworms, ear mites, the second set of shots and the "puppy checkup"?

Yes, so far he's worth the cost, but this has all taken place in the first two weeks! "I'll feed him every day, and give him water — I'll do everything, Mom!"

Who can afford to feed a little guy who eats food that costs \$10.99 for a ten pound bag and doggie treats at \$1.67 for a TINY box? How can a 6-pound mutt eat so much food? Sure, he needs a lot because he's growing, but even infant humans don't eat one-third of their body weight daily.

"And he won't be any trouble because I'll teach him to be good, and not to bark, and to clean up after himself, and he'll never get in the way when you're in the kitchen, and . . ."

It's been difficult, but I can now walk, climb stairs, vacuum the apartment and fix a romantic dinner for two with a puppy following my every move, getting under my feet and attempting to crawl up my legs.

Adopting Sebastian seemed like such a good idea at the time. I had finally moved out of the dorm, my roommate had just gotten a kitten — and seemed to be enjoying it — and I had my \$200 housing deposit in my hands with nothing to spend it on.

What could be more fun than to buy that adorable little puppy that I'd always wanted?

And it was fun — until that first morning on the carpet, that first sleepless night listening to what sounded like airplane sirens in my kitchen and that first morning torn to a soggy, hole-filled wad.

We did have fun naming him, though. He couldn't be called anything obvious like Spot or Rover or Muffin. But what fit that cute smiling face — ears hanging down halfway to the ground, the soft, curly hair? Robert didn't fit, or Eddie (Murphy), or even Marmaduke.

Finally, it happened! We were sitting on the couch drinking Sebastian's Zinfandel with the monster in front of us — on piles of newspaper for a seat.

"I used to know a cocker spaniel named 'Cognac,' because her fur was the color of that drink," I said.

"Then how about calling this guy 'Sebastian,' after this wine?" my boyfriend said.

"A little monster like this needs a more descriptive name, like Shred or Piss-head," I said, glancing at my mess-of-an-apartment. "People to be warned when they meet him."

"Oh, I think they'll figure him out pretty quickly," my boyfriend said.

But sometimes they don't.

I took Sebastian to work the other night, and everyone oohed and aahed at how cute he was. When I tossed the little guy to the other side of the desk, someone grabbed him to give him a hug, saying, "How can you give him such a cute one?"

"Read my column!" I said.

Jenny Hynes is a senior biomedical science major and a guest columnist for The Battalion.

### The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of Texas Press Association Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Sondra Pickard, Editor  
Jerry Oslin, Opinion Page Editor  
Rodney Rafter, City Editor  
John Jarvis, Robbyn L. Lister, News Editors  
Homer Jacobs, Sports Editor  
Robert W. Rizzo, Photo Editor

### Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

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 Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4111.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.