

Opinion

The Battalion

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Moral guidance?

It's been a year of embarrassing revelations for presidential candidates, and now the Republicans are in on the act.

In Thursday's *Washington Post*, Pat Robertson admitted his oldest son was conceived months before his marriage and that he had concealed his wedding date. The information, though it has no relevance in Robertson's campaign, can only be considered ironic coming from a self-appointed guardian of public morality.

In a July interview, Robertson told the *Post* he and his wife were married March 22, 1954. The actual marriage took place Aug. 27, 1954. This discrepancy is not nearly as disturbing as Robertson's assertion that he had been honest with the newspaper, that he and his wife considered the date of their son's conception to be the start of their marriage.

Such a liberal concept of marriage seems foreign considering Robertson's vehement opposition to premarital sex. Robertson, like Jim Bakker before him, is looking more and more like a man who didn't practice what he preached.

Who's on the phone? The joy of knowing before you answer

Ma Bell has done it again.

Through a new service called Call Identification, she has reached out and touched a curiosity we all share. Telephone users now have the chance to know who is calling them before they ever answer the phone.



Sondra Pickard

What a wonderful and clever idea — and so simple. When the phone rings, a small screen hooked to your telephone quickly displays the number of the incoming call. The thought of it intrigues and excites me.

But of course anytime a company gets inventive and discovers something new and different, complainers come out of hiding. Those opposed to Ma Bell's new baby are ready and waiting — ready and waiting to knock down Call Identification at any chance they get.

Although still in its infancy, the service has been available on a trial basis in Orlando, Fla., for about a year now and may be offered to Bell customers in New Jersey and New York as well. Opponents in New Jersey, including the ACLU, are whining that Call Identification represents an invasion of privacy that could effect emergency hot lines relying on anonymous tips. Others say the service violates agreements between the phone company and customers who pay extra for unpublished numbers.

The director of the public advocate's Division of Rate Counsel in New Jersey has even gone so far as to say that approval of Call Identification would mean "we are being looked out for by our Big Brother — Big Brother Bell." And according to a *Houston Post* article, the New Jersey ACLU executive director says, "Call Identification must be seen as a new toy for the overzealous bureaucrat, the overambitious salesperson and overinquisitive neighbor."

A typical case of overparanoia.

If it ever catches on in the rest of the country, Call Identification certainly will not be ordered upon us, and neither is it ordered upon the Bell customers in Orlando. It is a service being offered, not forced. Organizations that rely on anonymous tips surely wouldn't implement a service such as Call Identification, and neither Ma Bell nor the government is going to make them. They should be interested in the tips,

not the bearers of those tips. Unless the organization decides to hook up Call Identification for some odd reason, nothing will disturb the caller's anonymity. It's easy. If you don't want the service, don't use it. Call Identification shouldn't discourage anonymous callers with worthwhile information for the same reasons, but if it does, there are just as many ways to make anonymous phone calls as there are public telephones.

The over-worried-about-privacy types with unpublished phone numbers may also run into trouble, but such secretive persons shouldn't invade someone else's phone number unless they are willing to divulge their own. Again, for that type of paranoia, a pay phone is a simple solution.

Ma and I are not the only Call Identification supporters. New Jersey state police said it was "a welcome relief" and see it as a way to beat obscene callers, reduce sales solicitation calls, and help trace numbers during emergencies. These reasons alone make Call Identification worthwhile, but its possibilities for personal use are limitless.

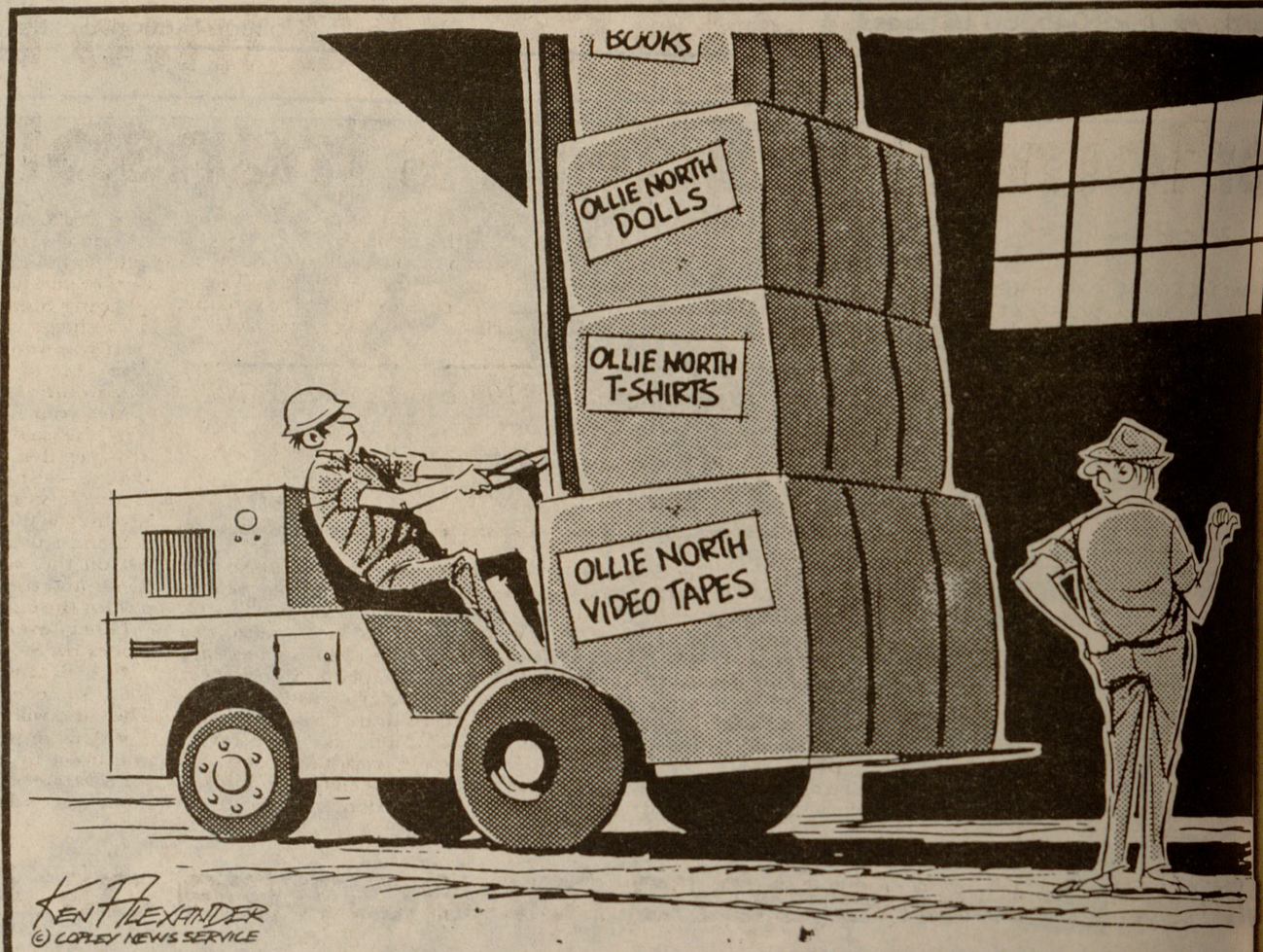
Once you have numbers memorized and matched with their respective persons — bingo! Just watch your Call Identification screen and you know exactly who's calling. I won't deny it, there are days when I don't feel like answering the phone, but I do it anyway, because the call just *might* be important. With Call Identification, unwanted phone calls are out and selective answering is in. If the number flashing on the screen doesn't interest you — don't answer!

And then there's always the prank caller who whispers nauseating nothings in your ear at 3 a.m. Call Identification is the perfect revenge. Just softly recite the number found on your screen into the caller's ear, being sure to include that you've traced the call, you know where where to find the caller, and that the police are on their way. It should work like a charm.

The ACLU can call me overzealous or overinquisitive, but why shouldn't I be? It's my phone and it's in my house. If a caller wishes to remain anonymous, I'd prefer they not call at all.

An invasion of privacy by Big Brother Bell? No, just another helpful invention by Ma Bell. I'll be the first in line if the service is offered in College Station, and I'll bask in its originality every time my phone rings.

Sondra Pickard is a senior journalism major and editor of *The Battalion*.



"WAY BACK IN THE BACK... BETWEEN THE HULA HOOPS AND THE PET ROCKS"

Breaking the cookie crew tradition

It's that time of year again. Those familiar blue notices asking for volunteers for the bonfire cookie crew are cropping up all over campus, and once again there are sure to be dozens of beaming young ladies lining up to pass refreshments to our hungry boys. Something different may happen this year, though. Some new tradition, however ridiculous it may seem, is trying to establish itself at our University.

As you may know, the two female cadet companies have been trying for quite some time to be allowed to help stack the bonfire. 1986 was the year that the women expected to be working inside the sacred perimeter.

You might remember that about this time last year, a female cadet named Simone Weaver was attacked by three students on the bonfire field, apparently because of a tradition restricting women from this particular field. You can imagine the surprise Simone must have felt when she was yanked off the oil barrel from which she was directing the crew stacking logs.

Bill Sparks
Guest Columnist

She must have been even more surprised as she was dragged off and thrown to the ground outside the perimeter.

Incidentally, it turned out that the three cadets who participated in the attack were subordinate to Ms. Weaver in rank. For this reason, she believed they had either been prompted to do this, or were under the orders of their direct superiors when they carried this out. Simone Weaver offered to drop the assault charges against them if they would reveal who had ordered them to do this, but being "good Ags," they of course said nothing.

It was not at all surprising that there were no orders issued from the Corps Commandant or from our Board of Regents demanding that women immediately be allowed to work inside the perimeter. By neglecting to do this, our leaders not only showed the female cadets that they were not concerned with their problems, but also short-changed the male cadets who, upon graduation, will be shocked to discover that all branches of the armed services now have women officers.

It was not surprising that male cadets did not come to Simone Weaver's defense. In fact, they did just the

opposite, arguing that the women had no business on the field and that it was a student affair anyway, organized and run by the students with the use of volunteered land. All of which are points, since the bonfire takes place on campus — on state-supported property — and is a nationally known symbol unique to this University. None of us should be surprised by the behavior of the cadets, who broke their promise to allow female cadets to participate in the stacking of the bonfire.

It seems like the easiest and safest out of this predicament is for all of us simply to insist that the female cadets back into the cookie crew where they belong and keep their noses out of the men's work. But with the passage of time and the putting out to pasture of a few old mules currently in influential positions, women eventually will be allowed into all areas of the Corps of Cadets on this campus. The big question seems to be whether certain male members of the Corps will cling to the immature behavior and disgrace of the past again this year.

Bill Sparks is a senior English major and editor of the newsletter for the campus chapter of the National Organization for Women.

Mail Call

Where there's smoke . . .

EDITOR:

It's too late to change things this year. Uh-oh, there's that word — change. And probably too late for a few years to come. But it's not too late to think about what we do each year about this time. We spend enormous amounts of money, time and effort to satisfy a tradition, the Aggie bonfire.

It's like getting really drunk: You spend a lot of time and money, and when it's over you have only losses — no gains.

We lose a field that could be nice but spends most of the year recuperating from tradition. We lose a little clean air. We lose wildlife habitat. Most important, we lose a little self-pride, because everyone who supports it knows in their heart it's not necessary.

Do you support needlessly wasting natural resources?

Keith Coffman '85, '88

. . . there's bonfire

EDITOR:

As all know, A&M is a school rich in tradition. There is

one tradition here that I have experienced once. As I understand it, it's a yearly event. I'm referring, of course, to *The Battalion's* yearly opinion column on bonfire. It's a typical *Battalion* column. It doesn't say anything positive about bonfire, perhaps our oldest and greatest tradition. We get to read how dangerous and how terribly wrong it is to destroy woodlands. Does *The Battalion* think that we aren't aware of this? Could it be that maybe the students believe that the benefits of bonfire (school spirit and student bonding) exceed the negative aspects? They obviously do or A&M wouldn't have bonfire year after year.

I see no reason this paper should bore us with things we are already well aware of. I guess the writer does it for attention. Karl Pallmeyer sure got attention last year, didn't he? I wouldn't have wanted to be him for all the love in the world. Anyway, why don't you surprise everyone this year and print a positive column? If you can't do that, do the next best thing and leave the page blank.

Chris Tiesman '90

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 retain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the class year, address and telephone number of the writer.

BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

