

Opinion

The Battalion

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Playing the Interview Game

They did it. They put me in the game and I don't even know the rules.

Rodney Rather
Guest Columnist

Hmm? What game am I talking about, you ask?

Why, the interview game, of course. It's funny how, when you graduate, society expects you to get a job and produce some sort of tangible evidence that you deserve to earn enough money to at least buy Table Scraps brand frozen dinners.

But I'm straying from the subject.

Whenever I go into an interview, with my sweating palms leaving small tributaries on the carpet of the office and with a throat as dry as cotton on the stalk on a blistering August day after a dust storm, the interviewer always asks questions.

Now that, in itself, makes sense. After all, an interview is supposed to give the interviewer relevant insight to the qualifications and character of the interviewee that relate to the position the interviewee is interviewing to get. But that's not what an interview really is.

The entire interviewing process really is a farce. Oh sure, the questions asked sound like legitimate questions, but if you answer them the way you would under any other circumstances, like if you

happened to strike up a conversation with the person behind you in the "12 items or less" line at the grocery store, you won't get the job because the interviewer wants an answer completely different from the real answer.

Let me illustrate this point. One of the more popular questions interviewers ask is, "Careerwise, where do you expect to be 10 years from now?" The answer they expect is something like, "Sir, I expect to be your boss 10 years from now."

For some inexplicable reason, potential employers like this response. In reality, normal folks have no idea what they'll be doing in 10 years, nor should they be expected to know.

Another question that can't be answered honestly — if you want the job — is, "What's your weakest point?"

This time, there are two possible answers you can give if you want them to take you seriously. The first is, "I expect as much from others as I do from myself." The other is, "I can't separate work from play."

What a flood of drivel. Sure, you might expect as much from others as yourself, but what if all you expect to do this week is roll out of bed before 1 p.m. and eat a box of Captain Crunch all by yourself?

And, although I can't be positive about the rest of you professed work-

holics, I have absolutely no problems parating work from play. If I did, I enroll myself in a mental institution to correct the problem.

Direct questions like these are out-dish enough, but perhaps the most terrifying sentence uttered from the mouth of an interviewer is "Tell me about yourself."

What does he want to know? Anything pertaining to what qualifies you for the job is either on the application lying on his desk or has already been asked. Should you start with reminiscences of your childhood, telling him about the days you spent in your room admiring the cracks in the ceiling, and work your way up from there, or should you tell him how violently you vomit when you have to stuff wet bread down the garbage disposal?

And when should you stop telling him about yourself, when he starts yawning and make audible guttural noises?

Somehow, I just don't think I'll get the hang of this game. For some reason, I keep wanting to say what I really think, which, although it isn't much, allows me to keep some dignity in my employment and homelessness and malnutrition and dandruff. And maybe he'll get the rulebook for graduation.

Rodney Rather is a senior journalism major and lame duck city editor of The Battalion.

Fiscal foolishness

Student Senate Speaker Jay Hays called Wednesday's meeting — in which the Senate recommended how 1988-89 student service fees should be allocated — one of the most productive in three years. It's unfortunate that much of the movement seems to be not progress but regression.

The budget says fee recommendations were made on the basis of which services are vital to students. If so, the Senate certainly has a skewed view of what is vital. The proposal would force the A.P. Beutal Health Center, the most "vital" service the University provides for its students, to cut its midnight to 8 a.m. services — months after emergency after-hours service was restored. Using an estimate that only two or three students per day seek care during those hours, the Senate labeled the service "not cost efficient." But in doing so it overlooked what most universities have recognized: the overriding need to provide quality health care for all students, especially those who can't afford outside care.

Meanwhile, the MSC received a whopping 27 percent of allocated fees, second only to the health center. MSC programs are of high quality and merit the funding they receive, but they are essentially a fringe benefit of higher education. Designating them as more "vital" than health care is ludicrous.

The newly created Multicultural Services Center fared even worse than the health center, with the Senate requesting that all its funding from student service fees be cut. But the reasons given for the cut don't hold water.

The center lists goals concerning minority students, and the Senate provides a breakdown of those goals into administrative and student prerogatives. Senators argued that all the student prerogatives already were addressed by student programs. In effect, the Senate argued that because only the administration's goals are unfulfilled, the administration should fund the entire program. But student organizations should be more involved in minority issues, and foisting the issues onto the administration only creates the impression that the Senate doesn't realize minority concerns are indeed "vital" in the development of all A&M students.

Senators also were displeased with the Multicultural Services Center because they said it catered mainly to black students and because only 65 students sought help there in September. Because of the low number of students vs. the six full-time staff members, the budget recommends that the staff be reduced to three people. But the Senate chose to base its decision only on the center's first month of operation, hardly a good indicator of the number and type of students the center will serve once it has a chance to develop.

These arguments, however, were a smokescreen for the real objection, that the administration created the center this summer, using student service fee reserves to fund it without seeking Senate approval.

In its introduction to the budget, the Senate said students have the "right and obligation" to decide how student service fees should be spent. That's just plain wrong. The Student Senate's recommendations are just that — recommendations. It's important to have student input into how student fees are spent, but the Senate should not dictate funding, nor should it let worthwhile programs be the victim of its political battles. The Senate judged the Multicultural Services Center not on its merits but on its potential as a weapon in a political power game. In so doing, it has used its authority poorly.

The proposal now goes to the Student Services office, which in the past has rubber-stamped it. This year, it shouldn't. And it can only be hoped that in the future the Student Senate replaces its political stupidity with some fiscal sense.

— The Battalion Editorial Board



Advice on how not to fight a newspaper

Most Americans bear grudges against the media. And many of the customers' gripes are valid. But when civilians try to muscle a newspaper, they need to know that they are playing around with something that is just as explosive as nitroglycerine and a whole lot trickier: pure-de idealism. Militant, basic belief.

Jim Wright
Guest Columnist

Newspaper people tend to think that telling the world what is going on is extremely important and that doing that is not just their individual job but their sacred mission.

Apparently, the Amarillo combatants are businessmen unhappy with the newspaper folks' efforts to cover the news. It's a free country, and they are certainly free to think that and act upon it.

But when any group tries to gag or muscle a newspaper anywhere, there is usually a rallying around the flag by news people everywhere. They are virtually unanimous in seeing attempts to gag any newspaper as a threat to free-

dom as well as their own interests.

There is, of course, another course of action that critics of a newspaper can take: starting up their own newspaper. Last I heard, presses, ink, computer terminals, reporters, photographers and editors were available on the market.

Gathering up a supply of these and going into the business is a situation that has not been common. Here's why: When local press critics decide to buck the local Bugle, they often fail to recognize some of the basics of the newspaper business.

For one thing, a newspaper needs to attract readers. To do this, a paper has to be something more than just the Bugle. A newspaper that cannot attract any readers other than the press critics who started it is going to be a very expensive hobby.

What it is not going to be, under those conditions, is a real newspaper.

If the people see the old Bugle still trying to tell what's going on and the other paper working to promote the sponsors' program, they are likely to stay with the existing newspaper.

A newspaper tries to tell its readers

about the bad things as well as the good things that are happening. Many of the press charge that we get much more enthusiastic about the negatives than the positives. But when you get a newspaper that gives only "good news," the result is invariably not a newspaper but a chamber of commerce publicity handout, a community propaganda document.

Before any group of angry critics starts one of these all-positive publications, the folks ought to consider whether the proposed publication can pass The Frosty Morning Test. Millions of Americans will run through the blue of dawn to pick up a newspaper, but one in recorded history has ever done this for a publicity handout.

The groups that mobilize in the name of demanding "a good newspaper" tend to forget that the life-or-death test of newspaper, of whatever quality, whether it does a newspaper's job well enough to earn both the readership and the quarters of the general public.

Jim Wright is senior columnist of The Dallas Morning News.

Mail Call

Sorry

EDITOR:

I'm writing in response to Ben McGraw's very eloquent letter concerning the signs of intelligent life at the R.E.M. concert.

I don't presume to speak for everyone as does Mr. McGraw, but I personally don't feel that I have to fight for my right to speak, nor do I expect or desire anyone else to do so for me. Far be it for me to speak for R.E.M. or their lead singer, Michael Stipe, but somehow I don't think they would want Ben McGraw or anyone else to protect their rights or attempt to solve the world's problems by raising arms to other human beings, not to mention murdering them. As McGraw so thoughtfully pointed out, there was much approval, cheer and applause in response to Stipe's comment, "If you're in the military, quit." This just might tend to imply that there is a reasonably large group of people at this fine University who agree (thank the Lord for small mercies.) Maybe the crowd's response to such a statement might mean that there are people on campus who know that countries cannot continue to battle one another and expect the world to survive.

McGraw had the choice to attend the concert or miss a great show. If McGraw does for some reason really enjoy R.E.M.'s music while ignoring the fact that the band consists of human beings who happen to be Americans and have as many rights as he does, than all I can say in response to his leaving early and missing out on a wonderful performance of the song "So Central Rain" is, I'm sorry.

Mara K. Moore '88

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 classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

BLOOM COUNTY

