

Opinion

In praise of God, Country and the Hanoi Hilton

You get weird mail when you're the editor.

Granted, I don't see most of the press releases, letters and other random stuff that comes in our twice-daily batches of mail. But the other editors have a perverted sense of humor, so certain types of mail end up on my desk, usually marked "for your enjoyment."

Last week I got an invitation to be a charter member of the Ronald Reagan Republican Center. One enterprising entrepreneur is keeping me up to date on his Spuds MacKenzie battle. (It seems the corporate giants think his company's logo looks a bit too much like our canine Bacchus.)

The Battalion is a sustaining member of the Republican National Committee since we subscribe to party publications.



Sue Krenek

When our new membership card came in the mail, it ended up on my desk. (The card is supposed to signify my desire to elect a Republican president and increase GOP numbers in the House and Senate and at state and local levels of government. Right.)

Last week I got a letter that made me laugh. Then it made me mad.

Capt. Eugene "Red" McDaniel, retired from the U.S. Navy, wanted to know what I thought of the movie "Platoon." And the movie "Hanoi Hilton." Actually, he wanted me to cast a vote for one or the other. You see, he's conducting a survey of sorts.

But I'll let him tell you.

"Which will it be, the movie 'Platoon' or 'Hanoi Hilton'? Which one's wrong, which one's right?"

"Two versions of the Vietnam War."

"One for the history books, one for the trash can. Which version do you want them teaching our young people?"

You get the idea. McDaniel says "Ha-

noi Hilton" is "the story of American fighting men, who along, unaided, endured the worst their brutal communist captors could dish out. Yet they never gave in." "Platoon," he says, is "Jane Fonda and the radical left's version. America as villain. Americans as evil."

So much for objectivity.

When the truth comes out, it's that the survey is really no survey at all. McDaniel wants money, as much as you'll give him, so a conservative student organization can sponsor showings of "Hanoi Hilton" on college campuses. And the rest of his letter is a tirade designed to win you over and get your money.

Some examples:

"In a real sense, 'Hanoi Hilton' is about God and Country: Two values the Hollywood liberals hate with a passion." That's my kind of logic: If you didn't like the movie, obviously you hate God and Country.

"The values it ('Hanoi Hilton') speaks of — persistence, valor, faith, patience — aren't popular these days. Yet, they

are the same values which come shining through in 'Hanoi Hilton.'"

So now if you didn't like the film, you're opposed to valor, faith and patience. How can anyone fail to send money to such a noble cause?

The letter ends by asking you to cast a ballot for "Platoon" or "Hanoi Hilton." But as if he hasn't pounded his message home, McDaniel adds a last paragraph: "But if you agree our story of faith, courage and patriotism in 'Hanoi Hilton' must be heard by America's young people, please include your donation of at least \$15."

Then comes the clincher: The ballot itself uses boldface type wherever the words "Hanoi Hilton" appear. And the two options are clearly marked: "Pro America: Hanoi Hilton." "Anti America: Platoon."

Get the impression this guy's trying to influence the vote?

Anyone who's studied statistics knows that the wording of questions can influence the response they draw. If this was

intended as a survey, its results would be laughable.

But what's so disgusting is that the propaganda masquerading as the survey. When the results are in, McDaniel no doubt will gloat at the sided victory of "Hanoi Hilton." Here meet his real goal — to raise money distributing the film. But despite the stint as a POW, he doesn't have the courage to let his arguments stand alone, uncluttered by name-calling.

That made me angry, angry enough that I filled out my ballot — for "Platoon." I saw that movie, and it did strike me as liberal Hollywood propaganda. Mostly, it made me afraid of anyone who ever has to go into combat. I haven't seen "Hanoi Hilton."

I guess McDaniel thinks that makes me anti-America.

But I'm not. After all, I'm a card-carrying member of the Republican National Committee.

Sort of.

Sue Krenek is a senior journalism major and editor of The Battalion.

THE MISSILES ARE COMING!

I MEAN, IT'S POSSIBLE SOME MISSILES ARE COMING!

I MEAN, I DARE SOMEBODY TO PROVE TO ME SOME MISSILES MIGHT NOT COME!

I MEAN, I WAS REALLY ONLY ASKING IF IT MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE SOME MISSILES COULD COME SOMETIME--

I MEAN...



BEN SARGENT
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Universal Press Syndicate

Robertson's patriotism turned up MIA in Korea

Pat Robertson is eager to get down South where he can start scooping up those delegates. He says that's his territory because Southerners believe in the old-fashioned, hard-nose, patriotic virtues he likes to preach.

More than any other part of this country, the South believes that when the bugle sounds, a true American marches off to fight the enemy.

That's Robertson's problem. There are a number of ex-marines scattered across this country who say there was a time when Robertson didn't have that flag-waving zeal to fight.

One is Pete McCloskey, a former congressman from California, who was a highly-decorated combat Marine officer in Korea, where he was badly wounded.

McCloskey has more than a little contempt for Robertson, the tough-talking patriot.

That's because McCloskey knew Robertson in 1951, when both were young Marine lieutenants on a troop ship bound for the Korean War.

What McCloskey says he remembers is that Robertson used political clout — his father was a U.S. senator — to stay in Japan while others went to Korea, many to die or be maimed.

About 18 months ago, McCloskey shared his memories with a current congressman. The troop ship story got to the press, and Robertson was furious.

He said it was a political smear, that his powerful daddy did nothing in his behalf and that he had indeed gone to Korea to face danger.

If Robertson had let it go at that, the dispute would have been forgotten. But Robertson made what appears to be a political error. He filed a \$35 million libel suit against McCloskey.

Because of the suit, McCloskey's allegations haven't faded away. And McCloskey is no longer alone in having memories.

These ex-Marines have given sworn depositions to be used when the case comes to trial. If they're to be believed, Robertson isn't exactly a John Wayne character.

And to Robertson's discomfort, the trial is scheduled to begin March 8, Super Tuesday, when Robertson intends to harvest those patriotic Southern votes.

If the trial is held, what will the testimony be?

From McCloskey, we'll probably hear what he said 18 months ago about the troop ship voyage: "Pat was affable,



Mike Royko

garrulous had candid. He spoke freely of his desire to avoid combat and to have his father, Sen. Willis Robertson of Virginia, intervene on his behalf."

There will also be an old letter written by the late senator to a friend, who had a son, named Edwin, on the troop ship. In the letter the senator said:

"On yesterday, I received a letter from General Shepherd, stating that Pat and Edwin were going to an interesting and historical part of Japan, where they would be given some valuable training before proceeding to Korea."

The general he referred to was Samuel Shepherd, who was a family friend and commander of the Pacific fleet.

Later, the senator wrote another letter, saying he hoped that "the training" is completed the issue of Korea will either have been settled, the united line so stabilized that there will be no excessive casualties."

As it turned out, there were "excessive casualties." Not for Pat, who was in Japan, but for many of the Marines who couldn't get off the ship with him.

One who went on to Korea is now New York businessman. In his deposition, he says that it was "common knowledge" on the ship that Robertson had asked his father to use his political clout.

There's also a letter, written to his wife by a now-dead Marine officer, who is believed to have transmitted the programs from Robertson to his senatorial father.

In the letter to his wife, the Marine said a colonel had boarded the ship in Japan and picked several young officers to remain in Japan.

"It's interesting," he wrote to his wife "that two of them had said they wouldn't have to go to Korea. One was Robertson. . . I'm sure that his father being the senator from Virginia had nothing to do with it. . . It is interesting though, isn't it. See, that's what you get when you choose the wrong parents."

There's also a deposition from a former Marine captain who remembered a conversation with Robertson's pal, the other young lieutenant, before the ship reached Japan.

"(He) sat down beside me in the wardroom and said that he and Robertson were not going to go to Korea. . . We were going to get off the ship in Japan. There were other officers at the table and we all laughed and thought it was just a fantasy."

It turned out to be no fantasy. Robertson stayed in Japan four months while the others went into fierce combat. When Robertson finally went to Korea, he had a job for behind the lines.

Super Tuesday could be the start of a super trial.

Mail Call

We're not all that bad

EDITOR:

I must respond to Mr. MacDougall's column, "Who needs ethics . . . ?" He implies that I (as an MBA) am headed for a career of unbridled greed and moral decay. I don't deny that many businessmen engage in activities which are illegal/immoral/inconsiderate, but I resent the proposition that all businessmen are avaricious, mercenary creatures. Journalists are fortunate in being safe from moral dilemmas; they merely cry "First Amendment" and are free from responsibility.

First point: Businesses (and those who run them) don't exist in a vacuum. Those who follow shortsighted and negligent management policies do not remain in business long. Nor can a firm be profitable doing things the public is not willing to pay for. The consumer has a choice in accepting or rejecting the foods and services provided by a businessman as surely as he has a choice in accepting or rejecting an opinion provided in the media.

Second point: Ethics cannot be learned (or unlearned) while working for a college degree. Those who leave a university ignorant of ethical considerations were ignorant when they got there. Ethics can neither be taught from a textbook nor legislated. Courses in "ethics" seldom amount to more than a lesson in how not to get caught. To assume that MBA's have lower moral integrity than other students does us a grave injustice. From the looks of recent *At Ease* and *Battalion* issues, perhaps our journalism students could use a class in, if not ethics, then at least "eye-opening" (Naiveté 101?).

I apologize to any members of the Fourth Estate who are offended. I do not resent the article; I feel the press does a service by providing alternate viewpoints. Jefferson said he would far prefer newspapers without government to government without newspapers. I agree.

Alan Grantham
Graduate Student

Editor's note: Just to clarify, Battalion columnist John MacDougall is not a journalism student. He is a graduate student in A&M's MBA program.

Let's defend men

EDITOR:

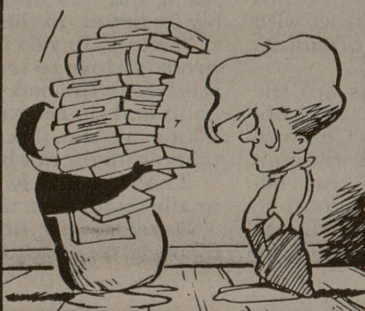
In response to Brian Frederick's column about feminist intimidation, he's right. It only takes common sense to reason why some organizations are best left to be all male. TAMU has seen its fair share of "changes" that are debatable as to whether they have hurt or helped those organizations affected. A goal that would be more challenging than writing about amazons in the college newspaper would be to write a platform strong enough and solid enough to stand up for the defense of men.

Rhonda R. Woolf '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

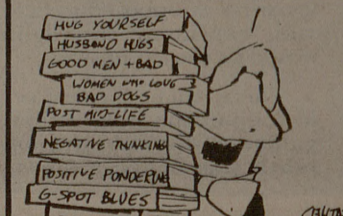
I RAIDED THE BOOKSTORE FOR SELF-HELP BOOKS TO HELP ME COPE WITH MY MID-LIFE SNIT...



AREN'T THEY WONDERFUL? A VERITABLE TOWER OF PSYCHOBABBLE!



MY GOODNESS, IT'S GREAT TO LIVE IN AN AGE WHERE THE EMOTIONALLY DISCOMBOLATED CAN SO EXPERTLY TREAT THEMSELVES!



WHAT, OH WHAT, MUST OUR ANCESTORS HAVE DONE?!



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