

Are we apathetic about willful misconduct?

Monday was a living hell. You rolled out of bed at 7:45 a.m. and rushed to your 8 o'clock class wearing Mr. T pajamas just in time to flunk a test as no one ever had before.

Tuesday was a nightmare sans Freddie Krueger. Your car had a flat tire in the rain while on the way to turn in your 31-page research paper for a bitch of a prof who won't accept any late papers — no exceptions.

Wednesday made Tuesday seem like a peach of a day. Your girlfriend dumped you for a woman and your dog



Anthony Wilson

committed suicide by drowning himself in the commode.

So Thursday's your night to party. Forget about all those troubles. C'mon, get happy. It's Miller time.

You go to the Chicken and after polishing off your fourth longneck, you notice your teeth are numbing and your hair is singing. You now have to make a decision. Do you stop drinking or do you continue to drink and risk intoxication and an eventual hangover? It's your decision.

Do you go through the same ritual on Friday and Saturday? Do you eventually expand your "party weekend" to include Wednesday and possibly Sunday? Whatever you decide, it's your decision.

If you don't believe it, just consult the

Supreme Court's recent decision to uphold the Veterans Administration's denial to provide certain benefits to alcoholics. The Court ruled by a 4 to 3 decision that in most cases alcoholism is caused by "willful conduct." And although genetic imbalances certainly play a part in many cases of alcoholism, it's about time someone realized that alcoholics are the ones responsible for their problem, not a diseased cell.

The Court was not trying to decide whether alcoholism is or isn't a disease, but it did attempt to define possible causes.

"Even among many who consider alcoholism a 'disease' to which its victims are genetically predisposed," Associate Justice Byron White wrote for the majority, "the consumption of alcohol is not regarded as wholly involuntary."

The "not regarded as wholly involuntary" part is what's important here. No one has ever become an alcoholic because he was held down and Mad Dog 20/20 was poured down his throat. Unlike the victims of cancer, alcoholics can do something about their disease when they start to notice its symptoms. They can stop drinking. It's their decision. It's too bad cancer isn't that simple.

It seems as if the entire country has fallen into a trap of not wanting to take responsibility for their mistakes. If a husband beats his wife, it's because he doesn't know any better since his father hit his mother. If a man rapes a woman, it's because she led him on. According to Jesse Jackson, most of the inner-city unemployed drug addicts are where they are today because society hasn't given them a square deal.

These excuses are ludicrous. There are no excuses. No one has ever become an alcoholic because someone, injecting heroin into a vein or drinking so much, so that he becomes addicted to alcohol.

And it's time we realized that we've stopped feeling so damn sorry for people with problems. And it doesn't mean that we shouldn't feel compassion toward their situations.

But it does mean that we should pity you. You acted on your own will. It was your decision."

Anthony Wilson is a junior major and opinion page editor at The Battalion.

Oh, for those days of campaign capers

Slats Grobnik slouched at the bar with a sad, far-away look in his eyes. His beer had gone flat. Every few moments he sighed.

I asked him what his problem was. "Oh, I'm just feeling nostalgic, just thinking about the good old days, how much fun they were, and how dull it is now."

What good old days have you in mind?

"Well, there was Gary Hart and Donna Rice, the Miami reporters hiding in the bushes, the trip to Bimini on the good ship Monkey Business. Ah, those were the days, my friend."

Yes, Gary and Donna livened up the primary campaign for a while.

"You bet. And then there was Joe Biden. What a guy. He figures his background is a little dull, so he turns himself into a Welsh coal miner. You know, if he hadn't got caught, he would have done good in the Pennsylvania primary."

Especially if he smeared some soot on his face.

"Those were the days. And you remember Pat Robertson getting all those votes in Iowa, and all the pundits running around screaming: 'The Bible-thumpers are coming, the Bible-thumpers are coming.'"

They can be impressionable at times.

"Oh, that was fun. And then there was Dan Rather trying to ambush George Bush, and Bush turning around and ambushing Rather. It was one of the greatest battles in the history of the fleaweight division."

Yes, as macho-man Bush would put it, Rather found himself in deep do-do.

"Ah, what fun times those were. And Bob Dole shocking all the pundits by telling Bush to stop lying."

The pundits can be a shockable bunch at times.

"And do you remember Illinois, and how at the last minute all the headlines were screaming that Jesse was closing the gap and might even win? And the pundits were all saying: 'Jesse can do it, Jesse can do it.'"

Yes, that caused considerable trembling in many a blue-collar bungalow.

"Then he lost to a nerd in a bow tie and they all said: 'Well, maybe he can't do it.'"

The pundits can be a flexible lot.



Mike Royko

"Then there was Michigan, and all of a sudden the pundits were saying 'Jesse can do it, Jesse can do it,' again."

That just shows how amazingly flexible they are.

"And then Wisconsin, with Jesse standing shoulder-to-shoulder with all those white auto workers in Kenosha, saying he was one of them? And how they cheered and said they loved him."

Yes, and as one of them told me: "He's the only candidate who says what I want to hear. Too bad he's black or I'd vote for him."

"And all the while there was Mario lurking in the background. Would Mario finally jump in? Would he be drafted? Would the party turn to him in its hour of need?"

Well, the timing seemed right. The nation is still on a pasta craze.

"And then there was New York. What a great show that was. Can you ever forget Mayor Koch? I'll tell you something, I was sure Jackson was going to win in New York. I thought he'd get the Jewish vote."

What made you think that?
"Because Koch said that a Jew would have to be crazy to vote for Jackson."

So?
"Well, the Jews always voted for Koch. So I figured that if anything proved they were crazy, that did."

There is some logic there.
"But where'd it all go?"

Where did what go?
"The thrills, the excitement, the craziness. It's like you had a wild party going on, with lots of laughs, but all of a sudden the fun people go home — Hart, Rice, Biden, Dole, Robertson, Cuomo, Koch. And all you got left is Dukakis. Hey, turn out the lights and go to bed."

There's still Jackson.

"Nah, Dukakis has a wrap. Now Jackson's just along for the ride so he can hog cameras at the convention. He says Dukakis is nice. That's as exciting as watching a knitting contest."

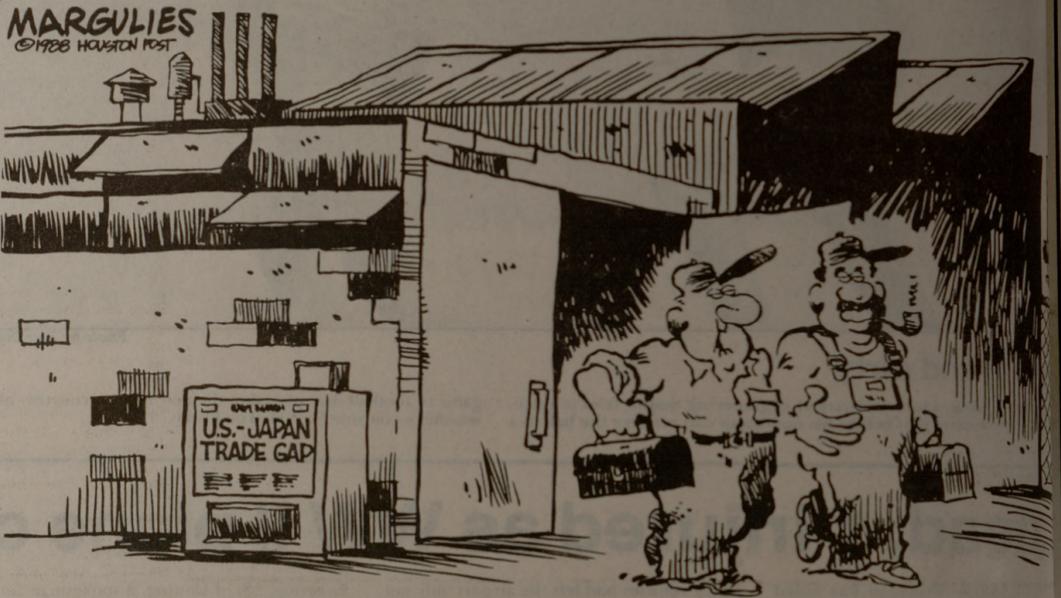
But we can still look forward to the conventions. And then the real campaign — Bush against Dukakis for president. Don't you think that will be exciting?

"Maybe. But it's going to be a long dull summer. Hey, do you think there's any chance Gary Hart will get back into it one more time?"

I doubt it.

"Yeah, you're probably right. He peaked too soon."

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"It's not keeping up with the Joneses that worries me... it's keeping up with the Yamimotos, the Nokaguchis, the Tokoshiros..."

Stamp prices could improve services

Now that the post office is charging us more to mail a letter, I think the least the post office could do is offer us a few more services.



Lewis Grizzard

I'm quite concerned, for instance about the fact you can't go to the post office to mail a letter or to buy stamps without having to stand in a long line.

Perhaps the post office could use the extra income from the increase in stamp prices to hire more people so the lines wouldn't be so long.

Either that, or they could give bonuses to postal workers who occasionally look up and actually speed up to keep customers moving.

I'd also like the post office to throw out any junk mail addressed to me before it's delivered to my house.

That's all I'm going to do with it, throw it out. They know what junk mail is at the post office. They could trash anything asking me for money, for instance.

I don't want to get any more mail from Ed McMahon either. He writes me more often than my friends and relatives.

And speaking of relatives, I wouldn't mind the post office going through the letters from my kin, either, and throwing out those I get from my Aunt Gloria.

Aunt Gloria is a sweet lady and I love her, but all her letters start the same way: "You're not going to believe what the doctors found Thursday..."

What then follows is a detailed discussion of how her various bodily parts are in horrid states of disrepair and how, if I don't eat a lot of prunes, stay out of the night air, and take oatmeal

baths, the same sort of things could happen to me.

These letters leave me terribly pressed. The post office could simplify me on the phone and say, "Your Aunt Gloria wrote you again," and that would alert me she is thinking of me, but wouldn't have to read of any anatomical catastrophes.

The post office also could do a better job with my bills. Have you ever noticed how all your bills come on the same day? The post office could send your bills one at a time, enabling you to avoid financial panic.

The post office could call and ask, "When would you like your credit card bill?"

"How much is it?"

"A lot."

"Don't send it until next week."

should be over the electric bill you sent me yesterday by then."

Let's see Federal Express top that.

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by Berke Breathed



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The Battalion

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