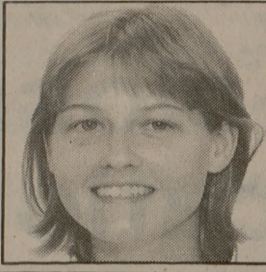


Opinion

Giving hope is the only cure for the hopeless

Last summer I was in Houston serving chicken fried steak and longnecks trying to save money for the fall. During that time I worked along side a woman I'll call Joan. She was 37, smart and well read, but she had never looked for a better paying job than the sports bar where we were waiting tables. Joan had a lot of problems that our society tries to solve. Her boyfriend beat her up; she drank constantly; she smoked three packs a day. She had dropped out of high school 20 years earlier, and she had given up on herself.



Jill Webb

Ever the naive idealist, I tried to help Joan. I told her she could get her G.E.D., apply for a student loan, go back to school, and get a better job and a new life. I listed ways she could become independent. I gave her books on how to get out of abusive relationships. I even offered to give her some money and let her stay with me until she could find a place of her own. But Joan just laughed away my suggestions. She said it was too late for her, so after countless frustrating attempts to help her, I left Joan alone. The last I heard she was living with a man who had threatened to kill her.

Joan needed something none of my ideas or any government programs could give her — hope. Until people like Joan get hope, then they will never enter the struggle to improve their lives. We need to send hope checks with welfare checks. We need to serve hope in our soup kitchens. Social workers need to carry lots of hope. There are several ways of giving hope, but none are as easy as writing a check or giving advice.

The first way to bring hope is to treat people like adults. When we treat the

people we are trying to help like children, we are furthering their own devastating assumption that they are helpless. Many times it is easy to assume that people who have a lot of problems, especially mental problems, are some how less grown up than we are. We tiptoe around them with our wise words and thoughtful ideas, acting as if they heard our plans for them they would go to pieces. Everyone has a valuable opinion; we need to listen to the people we are trying to help. An extension of being an adult, and the next way to give hope is giving people real responsibility.

People without hope need to begin to feel that things just do not happen to them, that they can make things happen to change their lives. Responsibility is a privilege on one hand and a necessity on the other. It is a privilege because freedom comes from responsibility, and it is a necessity because everyone needs to feel that they matter, that what they contribute in this life makes a difference to others. An individual's function in society cannot be overlooked because what we are to the rest of society is an important aspect of life. Similarly, people without hope need to feel as if they are part of humanity.

For some reason we like to separate ourselves from those who need our help the most. We seem to have an irrational fear that hopelessness is contagious, that if we associate ourselves with "those" people that we will somehow be haunted by their problems. We have to develop a sense of unity among humanity that our industrial society has started to strip from us. Even people we have not met need to matter to us. They need to matter just because they are people, because they have feelings and dreams and children and because they need hope.

It is easy to say "if I were you." I used to think, if I were Joan I'd leave that jerk. I'd get a little apartment and go to school and work until I dropped if I had to to make some kind of happy life for



Carol Wells/BATT 88

myself. But I cannot make those kind of statements anymore because I realized that I'm not Joan — I have hope. If Joan were like me she WOULD leave, but she is not me and I have to accept that and try to help her on her own terms. It is not going to do any good to treat people who need hope as we would be treated, because people who have lost hope do not see things the way that hopeful people do. If they did they would not feel so trapped. We have not lived the hopeless's lives and until we do we can't say, "if I were you."

It seems like the conservatives' solution to the hopeless problem is to do nothing and let the people get motiva-

tion from suffering. This does not work. Hopeless people are used to suffering, they think it is their lot in life, and they just end up getting worse and worse. The liberals' solution is to give the hopeless lots and lots of money. This only wastes money and makes the general public angry at the hopeless. Neither solution does anything to get at the root of the problem. They are simply cop-out solutions. I think what we need to do is start listening to these people. We need to start talking to them to find out why they feel this way, what they really need, when they began to feel that tomorrow was not going to be any different than today. We need to find out what made

them give up, lose hope and lose purpose in their life.

Without hope there can be no happiness, and it is a tragedy that some people go through their lives miserable and can make things better for people treating them as adults, giving them responsibility, and accepting them as of "us" not one of "them." None of the solutions is as easy as patting our backs for making a donation saying "work harder," but as long as we are trying to listen, to learn, to reach out to people and help, there will be hope.

Jill Webb is a senior secondary education major and columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

I really will give Y.O.U. money

EDITOR:

Now that the summer is over, the students in the Y.O.U. program are preparing to return home.

Before you leave I would like to take a moment to say that personally I am very glad to have had you on my campus and to know of your program. I feel that your program contains the essence of what Aggie Spirit is all about: to use one's resources and abilities to help those with the potential and desire to succeed but who have not been shown that their destiny is controlled only by their own vision and dedication. Your lives are in your hands and you have now been shown that you can do with it as you will.

Although you do not know me and I do not know you personally, I would like to make an offer. When you graduate from high school you will all follow different paths. Some of you will go to vocational school, some of you will enter the work force immediately, some of you may enter college. A few of you will return to A&M. To those of you that pursue higher education at my Alma Mater I will provide financial assistance, to the extent possible, so that you can concentrate on your studies and not where your next meal is coming from.

Dale Adams '88

Keep your fire to yourself

EDITOR:

It is extremely disturbing to know that the firemen can park anywhere they please, without getting a ticket, when students have to pay money and only get to park in student lots, which are being minimized by construction. So you say "Park in a different lot!" Well, I do not feel like taking the shuttle back to my dorm. If I knew I was going to be taking the shuttle, I would not have spent the money on a parking permit. Back to the firemen situation. It is bad enough that they take our parking places, but when we do finally find a place, as we are walking by them we get whistled at and perverted gestures are made. This may seem petty to some people, but to those of us who do not enjoy their unnecessary comments, it is very annoying!

Jennifer Jones '92
Cara Murray '92
Lorri Walker '92

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Censorship won't save the day

I don't know if you've noticed, but there's a terrible odor coming out of the office building at 51 West 52nd St. in New York — the home of CBS-TV, the self-proclaimed Messiah of TV journalism for the past 40 years.

Robert Dowdy
Guest Columnist

I thought that when CBS cancelled the "Smothers Brothers Show" in 1969 from Administration pressure (pressure which the network euphemistically called 'public interest') and then reinstated the Brothers in prime time nearly 20 years later, that it had learned its lesson. To wit: it received its license to control a portion of the airwaves with one proviso: this authority over the most powerful medium ever created is a public trust that can never be compromised.

Well, kids, they've done it again.

Not only do I have to put up with Brent Mussberger blabbing his banal, and often very partial, commentary about every sport known to man, regardless of whether he knows anything about said sport; not only do I thank God that I have cable television, so that I am not in thrall to the CBS Entertainment Division. Now, one of my favorite shows on CBS — one of the few worth watching — is being censored. And CBS, through it all, is denying the mur-

der, while the bloodied knife is falling from its hand.

The show in question is "The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse." I can hear you snickering in the back. "Mighty Mouse" is, quite simply, one of the funniest half-hours on television, despite its Saturday morning slot. It and "Pee-Wee" are the only two not pushing a product — either dolls or breakfast cereals — and they are the only two with intelligence behind them beyond knowing how to thread an animation machine. "Mighty Mouse" is surreal, anarchic, funny and (dare I say it?) can only be appreciated by adults. It would get better ratings behind David Letterman.

But, I digress. Cut to the chase, Rob.

The Rev. Donald Wilson, head of the conservative American Family Association, complained that during one episode Mighty Mouse looked as though he was snorting cocaine, when in fact he was sniffing a flower "in typical cartoon fashion," as described by CBS's Entertainment President Kim LeMaster.

I've seen this particular episode three times, and can vouch for LeMaster's comments. It's no more harmful or suggestive than any of the other surreal episodes.

But whether or not he is snorting cocaine is irrelevant. The episode has been censored. And what is scary is that CBS is denying something which has obviously taken place. Here are some actual quotes:

"The principal thrust of this episode is to show the redeeming quality of and kindness," said LeMaster. "The nothing in the story line, the dialogue, the behavior of Mighty Mouse, would suggest otherwise."

Referring to the censored frames, imator Ralph Bakshi said, "These seconds of footage have been taken out of context by individuals who seem to be searching for sinister undertones in a cartoon... Nothing could be further from the truth."

Quite true. But who made the decision to cut the scene out of the episode? Rev. Wilson? No. It's not his property. Bakshi? No. He's under contract to CBS, and must ultimately accept the network's decisions concerning censorship. That leaves only one candidate, CBS, who has bucked under censorship pressure, and screwed the audience in the process.

Now I know that CBS doesn't give a damn about its responsibilities to the public and, specifically, to its ever-dwindling audience. Does CBS wonder more and more viewers are switching cable to watch the thirtieth rerun of a classic movie or turning off the set getting some fresh air? It's because any endeavor, as the stakes get higher and higher, the temptation to compromise gets easier and easier.

Robert Dowdy is a May graduate. He is currently a freelance writer in Houston.

The Battalion

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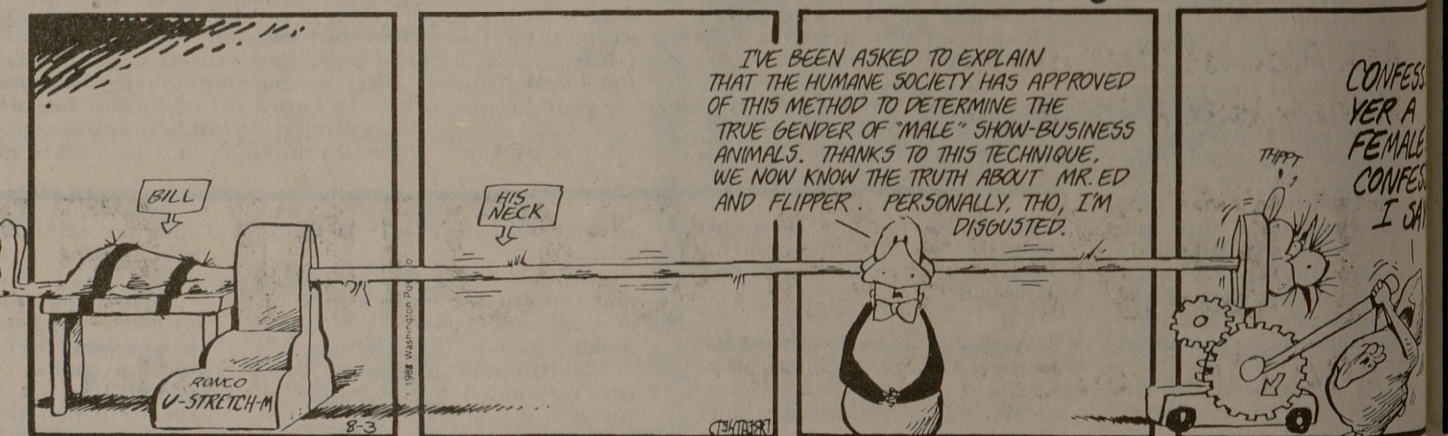
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