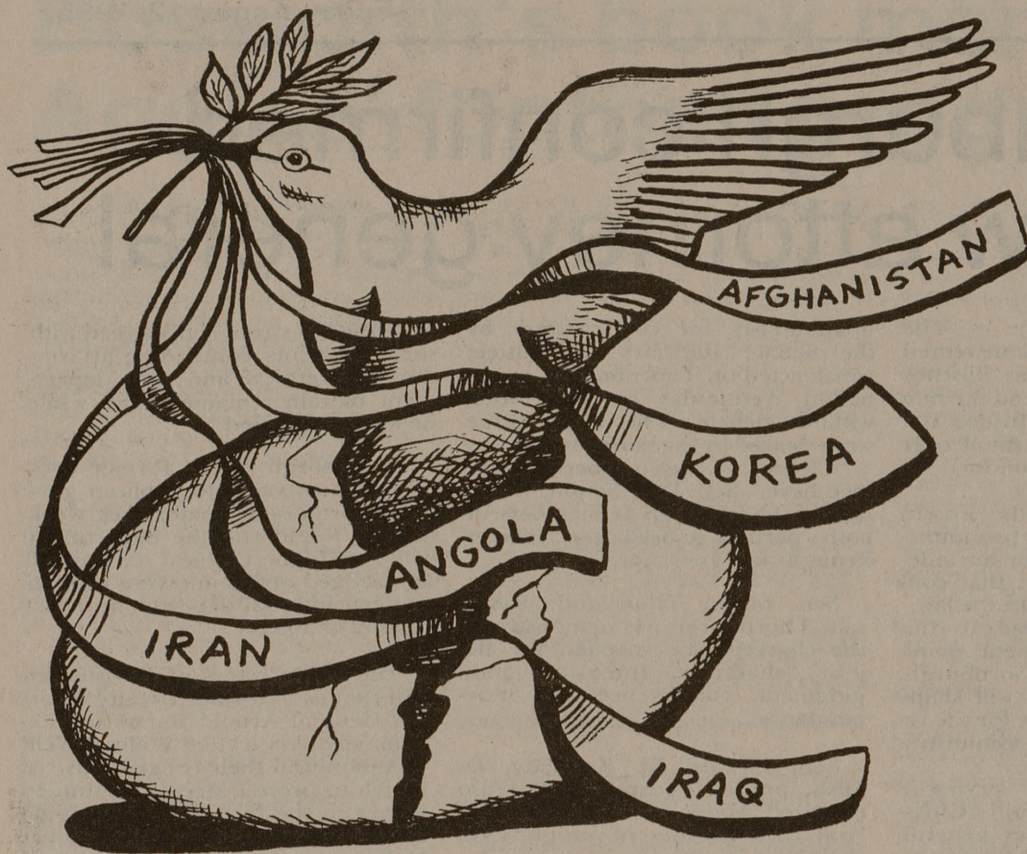


Opinion

Interstate fun with the family



C. Wells / Batt '88

Mail Call

Where have the real men gone?

My initial impression upon reading Mr. Ritzenbaum's article "Get that Commie filth out of here" was that he was surely joking. Could it be that he was really a liberal in disguise trying to make the conservative point of view seem ridiculous? Three paragraphs in and I began to get the strong sense that his article was definitely not intended to understand and represent "real men."

First, this male does *not* include himself among Ritzenbaum's idea of "most men in America." Of course, it will be easy to chalk me off as a limp-wristed liberal, since I admit to having spent some time working with the campus NOW chapter. Incidentally, in all of my experiences with this group, I did not hear even the vaguest reference to Marx; communism may have come from a quote by Karl Marx that runs something like, "the advancement of a society may be measured by the overall treatment of the women of that society." I believe this to be a fine observation. As for the members of NOW being merely ideological puppets of the Soviet Union, it is noteworthy that almost every woman I talked with in that organization had at least once been the victim of male violence. The feminists that I met forged their most basic principles not from communist propaganda, but from direct attacks against their physical selves. I'd be willing to bet that the males who assaulted these women were not of the limp-wristed variety described by Ritzenbaum — this latter, wimpy type of male would surely rather spend his time down at the local gay bar chatting about unions, Karl Marx and women's rights. The NOW member's more abstract arguments over minor issues like equal pay for equal work or legal protection from sexual harassment on the job came from everyday affronts that I suppose we should just keep our mealy, liberal mouths shut about.

Secondly, on the issue of Ms. Webb's supposed opinion "that males are evil," it might be helpful for Mr. Ritzenbaum to go back and reread a few of Webb's articles. My interpretation held that she perceives the typical American male as largely a product of his socialization, and that she believes that same socialization to be flawed. The United States is among the top five nations of the world in the category of violence against women. Let's face it: a country in which one of every two wives will be assaulted by her husband, in which one of every three females will be the victim of an attempted rape and in which one out of every four will be raped, must be doing something wrong in the education of its males. I think that Jill Webb also has a point about male violence and prejudice against women being a product of our socialization processes; for instance, in societies which worship female deities, rape is almost nonexistent. For me, this points out that the internal values of males have a great deal to do with their outward behavior; this does not imply, however, that men are intrinsically evil. Call me limp-wristed if you like — Mr. Ritzenbaum would even suggest that I am confounding the will of the Almighty — but my son is being raised to respect women as he respects himself.

And lastly, though it is disturbing to actually read Ritzenbaum's brand of politics in published print, it is gratifying to know that yahoos such as himself still have free access to public exposure of their ideas. Once those ideas are out in the open, you and I still have the right to reject and even ridicule the same — God, John Wayne or whoever willing.

Bill Sparks '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.

state fun with the family

During the course of our brief but well earned break between semesters I am going to embark on a legendary Jones family vacation. Now everyone at one time or another has found themselves on one of these family affairs and as a result may have mixed feelings about whether or not their sanity could survive another encounter with such family closeness.

I myself am blessed to belong to a family in which everyone truly likes each other and we all enjoy the limited amount of time we get to spend together. Yet even the closest of families when placed together within the confines of a car for say 13-15 hours will inevitably grind on each others nerves. I think the most memorable of car trips occurred during my youth.

Because of my father's job my family moved a lot; just about every 3-4 years we would pack up all the family's belongings and adventure off into another part of the country. All this means that my family spent a lot of time in the car, either moving or visiting friends or relatives who live in other parts of the country.

When my sister, brother and I were young my parents had two cars: an Audi Fox and the Vommit Comet. Since the Vommit Comet could go no further than the city limit, the Audi was our sole means of transportation for car trips. Picture if you will a family of five — including three rather obnoxious children all below the age of seven, all their luggage, toys, pillows, blankets, and all items of necessity: games, diapers, Dramamine, and candy all crammed into a very small car for 13 hours.

When on a car trip there are three basic dilemmas involved: 1) Getting gas. 2) Eating and 3) Urination. Now in my family you had better hope that #3 takes place at the same time as #1 be-



Barbara Jones

cause my father hates stopping. It has been only in the last few years that my father has stopped pulling over on the side of the road and forcing us to endure the humiliation of relieving ourselves right out there with Mother Nature. Meanwhile the rest of the family would snicker, honk the horn, flash the car lights on you or anything to futher mortify you at this very vulnerable of moments.

We, like all children because of our underdeveloped minds, would fight like cats and dogs when placed in that close of company. It would start with something innocent like "Sherrie keeps touching me!" or "Robby has his gum out of his mouth!" or "Barbie just called me a bad word!". Most of these little infringements were completely ignored by my father and were dealt with by idle threats from my mother, which were largely ignored. It was only when the squabble got out-of-hand or my father would accidentally, and I stress accidentally, get kicked in the back of the head during the course of one of our little fights that he (the enforcer) would get involved. My father dealt with us usually with threats. We could be 500 hundred miles from home and he would declare, "If I hear one more peep out of the three of you I am going to turn this car around and we are going home." It was only a couple of years ago I stopped believing he would actually do it.

The biggest fear of all however was in the event that my father would pull off on the side of the road. Because of my father's loathing for stopping, if we got so out-of-control that he had to pull over, there was going to be a beating. If our fighting was quickly approaching the unbearable stage all my father had to do was dip the wheels of the car off the shoulder of the road for one second and all fighting would cease.

Perhaps the most annoying of all our little stunts during the course of car trips was the eternal question, "How much longer Dad?" or "When are we stopping?" My father being the very logical man that he is came up with the cure-all

answer to these annoying questions: I reply to all these questions regardless whether we had another 3 hours, hours, or 15 minutes was "1 hour." Eventually after hearing the same hour" to every question we would ask would go back to fighting or whatever we were doing.

Because of the small confines of the Audi and the car-sickness my mother would suffer from having to turn around backwards to beat us when our fighting got out-of-control, my parents would play "car games" with us to occupy our devilish little minds during what had to have seemed endless hours of traveling. One of our favorite games was "My father owns a grocery store." In this game you would think of an item found in a grocery store, tell everyone else the first letter of this item, then everyone would try to guess what it was. My brother was really too young to play but would insist on being included. Unfortunately he only could think of things, pizza and watermelon. He would say "My father owns a grocery store and in it he sells something that starts with P." We would spend the next 15 minutes guessing everything from pickles to pimientos, then he would squeal with glee "pwatermelon!" delighted with himself that once again he had fooled us.

For those of you who find yourself accompanying your family on vacation have a couple of suggestions: First always bring a good book and a walkman in case the family "closeness" begins to lose its charm after the first 300 miles. And lastly when your father says "Do anyone need to 'go' before we leave" save yourself the humiliation and go while you can.

Barbara Jones is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Hyde, wake up and smell the Ovaltine

Friday evening an old friend called me long distance from College Station and let me know about the column written by Joe Hyde that appeared on Thursday in *The Battalion*. Mr. Hyde apparently made deprecatory and misleading references to the gay rights movement and to me.

Marco Roberts

Guest Columnist

For example, Mr. Hyde brought up the association between gays and AIDS, as if one led to the other, a tactic frequently used by certain "Christians." Of course, most reasonable and well-informed people know that homosexuality does not cause AIDS, that AIDS is spread through sexual contact of any kind, that in the countries to which AIDS has been traced the vast majority of those affected are heterosexual, and that the association of AIDS with gays is incidental to the fact that it was a homosexual male who brought the disease with him to the U.S. If it had been a heterosexual male who brought it to the U.S., the composition today of the population affected might have been somewhat different. Please note that gay women are less affected by AIDS than are heterosexuals in general. The problem is promiscuous males, not homosexuality per se. However, I know I can count on people like Joe Hyde to continue to ignore all the counter arguments.

The bulk of Mr. Hyde's poor arguments against gay rights are the same old tired arguments like the one above. They have been repeated over and over again and have long since been ad-

ressed and refuted in countless public forums and editorial pages at A&M and even in our courts of law up to the Supreme Court. Even I could come up with better arguments against gay rights. For this reason I won't address them. In any case there should be enough students at A&M capable of responding to the easy target Mr. Hyde provides.

However, I will take issue with his characterization of me as a "professional" student. First, he complains that I was here when he got her in 1982 and I was still here when he left in 1986. As it turns out I graduated in 1986 also. I am mystified at how he knew of me in 1982 since my name did not appear in print until I became active with Gay Student Services (GSS) in 1984. I do recall a group of fundamentalists who conveniently forgot a commandment ("Thou shalt not bear false witness") and went from door to door in several campus dorms in the fall of '84 and informed people that I was a "professional" student, that I had been at A&M eight years, and that I was 30 years old. I was in fact 22, and no, I didn't start school at A&M when I was 14.

Further, Mr. Hyde said that I could afford to drop out of school at my convenience. The fact is that in order to comply with A&M's regulations covering student organizations, I had to be in school full-time with at least a 2.0 in all my courses. I attended school anywhere from 12 to 18 hours a semester when I led GSS and maintained a part-time job which was my sole source of support. My education was certainly as important to me and my future as it was to Mr. Hyde and his future (probably more so

considering the poor reasoning, and high emotive tone in Mr. Hyde's column indicating he didn't learn much at A&M). What I think is really bothering Mr. Hyde is that, by his own admission he sat on his rear while I and others did not. All of the sudden Mr. Hyde finds himself uncomfortably facing that fundamentalist axiom: God helps those who help themselves.

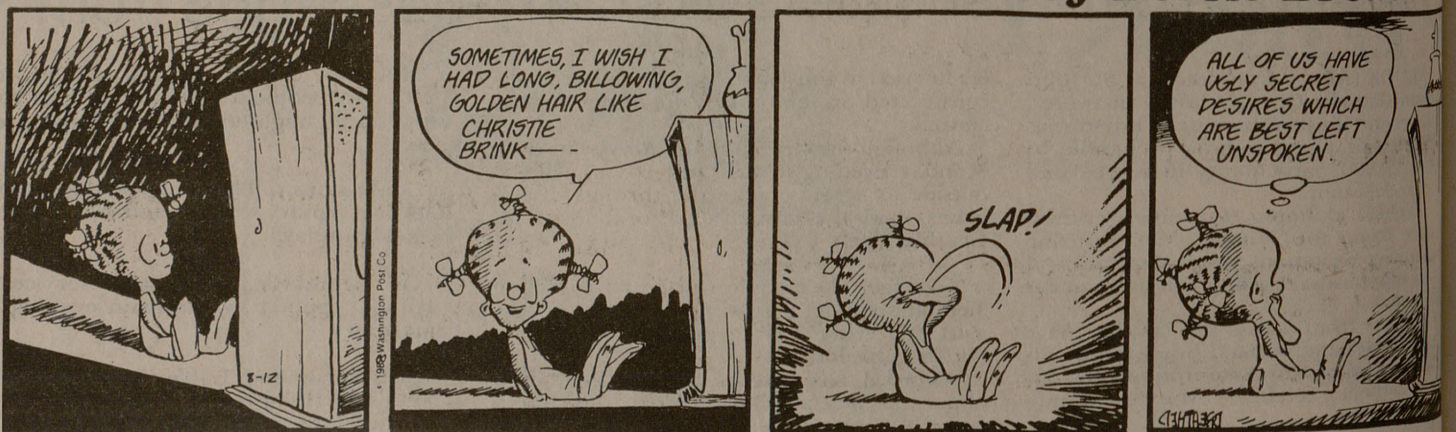
He should also keep in mind the GSS' battle for recognition lasted nine years in the courts, and I only led GSS through the last year of that battle. There were other gay women and men who laid the groundwork for what only led to conclusion. With or without me the victory would eventually have taken place.

When I was at A&M I battled not only with the likes of Mr. Hyde but also with radical leftists within the gay movement, who, believe it or not, thought I was too conservative. There are legitimate concerns about what the gay movement's agenda means to our society, some of which even I as former gay activist feel the movement as a whole has not addressed adequately. But it is difficult to address these when people like Mr. Hyde obscure the debate with rhetoric heavy on the adjectives but low on facts.

I am grateful for Mr. Hyde's column for one reason. The friend who called let me know about the column happened to be an old schoolmate whom I had not seen since I moved away from Mexico City 11 years ago. Had it not been for the column, we might have never seen each other again. The *Lion* works in mysterious ways.

Marco A. Roberts graduated from A&M in 1986.

BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

The Battalion

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