

Mail Call

Traditions not followed blindly

EDITOR:

Whether it was intended or not, Todd Honeycutt's Jan. 26 column contained several erroneous underlying generalizations.

Mr. Honeycutt, first and foremost among these was your broad and unsupported condemnation of the observance of traditions and of conservatism at Texas A&M. Repeatedly, you state that A&M students (at least those who observe traditions) do not rationally examine the faith they put into the traditions they follow.

At the same time, you question the conservatism which drives these traditions. Inherently, you are claiming that we conservatives who follow traditions at A&M are unthinking idiots who need to be enlightened by yourself and the Medicine Tribe.

Did it ever occur to you that perhaps students, liberal and conservative, have rationally examined the traditions they observe?

Did it ever occur to you that students whom you call apathetic might merely disagree with you as to the most effective method of action?

Did it ever occur to you that conservatives might actually think intelligently about why they are conservative? Did it ever occur to you that students could "... question their beliefs and morals and thoughts to determine for themselves if they are truly correct in their thinking" without being informed by you or the Medicine Tribe or Students Against Apartheid?

Obviously, by the tone and posture you assume in your column, the answer to all these questions is "no." Your patronization is especially repulsive considering that it is indicative of the blindness you condemn.

In the future, do not ask for respect for your causes unless you are prepared to show mutual respect for those you oppose. And perhaps you might follow your own advice before applying it to others.

Brennan Reilly '91

'Convenience' abortions are unnecessary

EDITOR:

In the Jan. 23 issue of *The Battalion*, I read an article concerning President Bush's denouncement of abortion, and I wondered how many women on this campus were considering abortion at that very moment.

I recalled recent statistics I had read concerning this tragedy: 15 million abortions in the U.S. since 1973 (more than all our war dead); one in three unborn children is aborted today, at least 97 percent merely for the reason of "convenience"; and some of our leading cities actually have more aborted births than live births.

How can we consider this as anything other than a tragedy? It's important that the decision which legalized abortion may be repealed soon, but we all know that abortion may continue in back rooms and dangerous conditions.

We will only put an end to this shame when men and women are willing to sacrifice their right to "convenience" in support of another's right to live.

Really now, which seems more important? I understand that unplanned pregnancy leads to many problems that seriously complicate life, but let me ask you this: Would YOU be willing to GIVE YOUR LIFE merely to alleviate some-one of their problems?

Millions of unborn children have been forced to do just that. If you are a woman considering abortion, I urge you, I implore you, I beg you to think, pray and seek counseling if necessary, before you commit an act of "convenience."

Richard Bohannon '90

Accompanied by 22 signatures

Reversal won't stop abortions

EDITOR:

I found James Cecil's commentary of Jan. 26 favoring the reversal of the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe vs. Wade* both naive and superficial. I have a rather special perspective on the issue since I was adopted as an infant by a terrific couple and today have two wonderful daughters of my own, one of which is severely disabled. If the woman who bore me had opted for an abortion, I recognize that I would not be here to enjoy the wonderful family that I have. I have also seen too many children neglected, abused and tortured because they were born to people that did not want them or would not care for them.

The gift of life is most certainly sacred, but where is Mr. Cecil's commitment, and that of the other so-called "pro-life" supporters, to protect those children from a life sentence to cruel and unusual punishment?

Just a few weeks ago, a four-year-old girl was raped in a Houston daycare facility by one of the staff. Doctors confirmed the incident and provided supporting documentation of it. Although the parents begged the authorities to file charges, they refused to do so because, in Texas, a child that age is not a credible witness! Mr. Cecil, that's what "states' rights" is all about.

I am a white man, born and reared in the South. I have paid a "Poll Tax" to vote. I was in Alabama in 1964 working with a man from Mississippi, when the real "Mississippi Burning" was taking place. To those of us old enough to know better, "states' rights" simply means inequality, intolerance, injustice, bigotry and prejudice.

Now I think abortions are wrong, too. I don't think they should ever be used as a remedy for irresponsible actions and unforeseen pregnancies. I know there are better alternatives.

Reversing *Roe vs. Wade* will not stop abortions. They will always be available in the hospitals for the rich (where they can be called "appendectomies") and the poor will simply go to sleazy, incompetent, backroom butchers or perform their own abortions with chemicals and coat hangers.

Mr. Cecil, if you and your "pro-life" supporters are going to demand that unwanted, unloved children be born to people that don't, won't or can't take care of them, you have an obligation to get out here in the real world and help us change the system. *Roe vs. Wade* was not about moral right or wrong, it was about personal freedom and the right of citizens of this country to choose what is best for their family situation.

James K. Raatz

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.

The Battalion

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Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

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MTV not suitable for children

Every day, some 30 million Americans can be found in the same place: sitting in front of their televisions being bombarded by an endless battery of sights, sounds, and rapid-fire images.

The colors are dazzling. The sounds, often deafening. The images are disconnected and surrealistic.

No, these people are not guinea pigs for some new form of aversion therapy. This is not "A Clockwork Orange."

For 30 million Americans, this is entertainment. Entertainment lovingly referred to as MTV — music television.

But before any of you devoted MTV fans start hurling accusations, let me just say that I am also a fan of MTV. Not very flattering — but true.

It is because I'm a fan that I am prepared to defend MTV to the bitter end. But only under one condition — we agree that the content of some music videos is not suitable for children and adolescents.

I was not exposed to MTV as a child. MTV broadcasted its first music video in August of 1981, when I was 18. For me MTV was an acquired taste, not one I grew up with.

My parents kept hoping my fascination with MTV was "just a phase" that I would eventually "grow out of." Much to their dismay, at the age of 26, I am still an MTV devotee.

I suspect my parents' feelings about MTV are not very different from the feelings of your own parents. In fact, those feelings could be summed up in a single statement uttered by my mother the first time she laid eyes on MTV:

"It's just like a nightmare," she said. And she turned away.

Since then, the subject of MTV is taboo at our house. I can only watch it when Mom and Dad are not around, lest I be given the third degree about my choice of channels.

There are many criticisms leveled at MTV, and I've found most of them to be true. But still I continue to watch it. That's the nice thing about being an "adult" — you can do things that probably aren't very good for you.

The problem is that 85 percent of MTV's 30 million viewers are between the ages of 14 and 34, with the majority being teen-agers.

As with everyone, I have lost much of the naivete and exploitability of my youth. When I get offended by what I



Stephanie Stribling

Columnist

see on television, I simply change the channel.

Young people don't have the same option. They are too easily influenced, particularly by a medium that targets young people as an audience and uses the very powerful instrument of rock music to get its message across. Of course it's appealing. It's supposed to be.

But we all know the fine line between fantasy and reality is not as easily drawn when we're children. Most of you were teen-agers not so very long ago. Think about all the time you spent immersed in some little fantasy.

Its critics say MTV is too sexual, too sexist, too violent, and too unreal.

They're right on. Studies have shown that portrayal of sexual feelings or impulses comprise 60 percent of music video content.

So what's new? Sex on television has always been a money maker. The reason for it should be self-evident. I could develop a list of examples, but there's probably not enough space in *The Battalion*.

As for violence, right on again. Violence and crime make up 53 percent of the content of music videos. But this has also been a very successful theme in television and cinema both. Look at the millions of dollars the "Rambo" movies hauled in.

As for reality, MTV is about as unreal as it gets. Ninety percent of the content of music videos involves the presentation of odd, unusual, or unexpected representations of reality.

But let's be reasonable. How real is "All my Children"?

Much of what we see on television is unreal — there lies its appeal. It is a form of escape — it is fantasy.

The visual content of music videos differs very little from what is portrayed elsewhere on television. But MTV combines this visual content with another

powerful form of expression — rock roll.

Some critics charge that the messy nature of rock 'n' roll, in addition to its untidy nature, is leading to the decline of Western civilization. People argue that its primitive beat and sensual nature, unleashed in us desires and passions meant to be unleashed.

What is music all about anyway? Is it an expression of passion that cannot be conveyed with words? It's not rock 'n' roll — Ravel's Bolero had the same effect on people. Has that weakened several centuries of music fiber? I suspect that's not the case.

Music has always been the language of the soul. That language simply changes its dialect from generation to generation.

So the problem with MTV lies not so much in its content, but in the way it is packaged — for children.

MTV represents adult themes, adult feelings, and adult situations in a package that is labeled for children.

It's like buying a bottle of whiskey as an adult, when I purchase that bottle I am expected to understand the risks involved with alcohol consumption.

But if the whiskey makers decide to package that bottle with Donald Duck on the label and sell it in toy stores, they are specifically trying to sell whiskey to children.

Some things were simply not meant to be given to children.

It is the same with MTV. Children do not have the capacity to understand the videos they are seeing will affect the value system they develop as adults.

When I watch MTV, it is within the context of a previously established value system that allows me to make my own judgment about what I see. This is not the case with children.

Can we censor the content of MTV because it may adversely affect our children?

No, just as there are many things we cannot and should not censor.

I want my MTV, but more important, I don't want it for my kids. When kids turn on the television, MTV is going to be an option for them. If we are allowed to selectively eliminate MTV channel, then I will give up calling altogether.

Stephanie Stribling is a senior journalism major and a columnist for *The Battalion*.

Bowling is just too strenuous

When I started hanging around bowling alleys, it was obvious that nobody was giving much thought to the public image of this ancient game.

I was one of the pinboys, a scruffy mix of neighborhood kids, winos and drifters. We worked the pits, scooping up the ball and speeding it back on twin-rails to the bowler, then tossing the pins into the rack and slamming it down for a reset.

The air was usually heavy with cigarette and cigar smoke. The bowlers' language could be even heavier, especially when they left themselves a tough split in a money game.

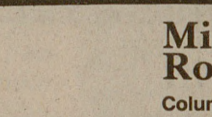
Most places had a memorable aroma: a blend of beer, sweat and smoke. This was before the days of air conditioning and armpit sprays. Today's health vigilantes would call in a federal agency.

Not that there was anything disreputable about bowlers. To the contrary. They were working people, and bowling league night was a major part of their social lives.

But most bowling alleys were no-frill joints. A bar, a short order grill, and maybe a few pool tables. The paint on the walls might be faded or peeling, and neighborhood idlers might be hanging around the pinballs, but as long as the alleys were properly oiled, the drinks honestly poured and priced, and the pinboy didn't get his head in the way of the ball too often, the customers were satisfied.

Of course, this was long before the bowling industry tried to gentrify itself. It was before bowling alleys became known as automation replaced the pinboy, forcing thousands of youths out of the pits, where they developed agility and strong backs, and into McDonald's burger assembly lines, where they developed high cholesterol.

There's no question that today's bowling centers are cleaner and more comfortable than in the past. And I can't quarrel with the business motives of the bowling proprietors. They now compete with racquet sports, fitness clubs, jog-



Mike Royko

Columnist

ging, VCRs, video games, and dozens of other recreations that didn't exist a couple of generations ago.

But I think they may be carrying their image consciousness a bit too far.

I say that because of the legal flap between Mary Lou Retton, the former Olympic darling, and a couple of national bowling organizations.

After Mary Lou bounced into America's consciousness, she signed a lucrative contract to hype the bowling industry. That's the American Dream: You devote your formative years to perfecting the world's greatest backflip for your country's honor and glory. Then you become a TV salesperson. If Thomas Edison were alive today, he'd be on television pitching appliances. Alexander Graham Bell would be telling us to let our fingers do the walking.

Although Mary Lou was not known for her bowling, that industry rented her image of good, youthful, wholesome athleticism. But now they've dumped her, and she's suing.

The bowling moguls argue that she is no longer a suitable spokesman because her body has been "maturing."

They won't come right out and say it, but it has been reported that she's been maturing too much from east to west. In other words, she's become kind of a pudgy young lady.

That's an image the bowling industry wants to shake. They want us to think of bowlers as lean and slinky. Sort of like pro golfers with greasy haircuts.

It's their industry, so I won't give them advice, other than to say that they are kind of stupid.

They overlook the polls that say the vast majority of Americans either weigh too much or think they do.

They also ignore the fact that the last place you would look for lean and mean athletes is a bowling alley.

You burn off more calories having dirty thought than by bowling a line two. The office cleaning lady gets more exercise than a bowler.

So if the bowling industry had any sense, it would welcome the new broader-beamed Mary Lou. The world would have her make a commercial, which she says:

"Hi, remember me, the famous Olympic athlete? Of course you do. I've been eating a lot of Quarter Pounders with fries.

"But, hey, don't worry. Do what I've done. Forget the back flips. Forget pumping iron and eating tofu. Just go bowling. There's nothing to it. Roll the ball a couple of times, then sit down. And if that tires you, let someone else keep score while you eat pizza."

The bowling industry doesn't realize that it is going to drive away its traditional constituency — the overweight-out-of-shape majority.

If they're determined to drop Mary Lou as their spokesperson, then they should get someone like my friend Stan Grobnik, who was elected the Pro Bowl Hall of Fame for having been simultaneously hit in the head with a ball and a pin, and not missing a rack.

Slats could articulate the three things that make bowling unique among participation sports.

"Hi, I'm Slats and I'm a bowler. Why do I bowl? Because it is a great sport. You spend 99 percent of your time sitting down.

"More than that, it's the only sport where the arena of competition provides the players with ashtrays. You ever see an ashtray in an aerobics class?

"But best of all, it's the only sport where you push a button and a waiter brings you all the beer you want. Bill Martin should have been a bowler."

My guess is that Mary Lou will lose her lawsuit. All she has to do is set up cameras in a few bowling alleys and film the athletes.

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