



Frivolous lawsuits run rampant in America



James Cecil
Columnist

Last week a woman in Seattle filed a lawsuit against several makers of beer, wine and liquor, claiming they are partly responsible for her child being born with a mental illness called Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Because the woman drank excessive amounts of alcohol during pregnancy, the child was born with this syndrome that will leave him mentally handicapped for the rest of his life.

This child, never able to do anything on his own, will require help from his family and medical staff. The family is suing the producers of the alcoholic beverages to help pay for the tremendous expenses that will be incurred to care for the child.

Indeed, this is a profoundly tragic situation. But why are the parents blaming the makers of alcoholic drinks? The lawyer for the family says that there is no warning on the drinks stating that Fetal Alcohol Syndrome may result if alcohol is consumed by pregnant women. So, the companies are partially to blame for not warning this woman in Seattle about the impending dangers.

This is probably one of the most ridiculous things I have ever heard.

First of all, this woman made a decision not to abide by the generally known practice of avoiding alcohol consumption while pregnant. Doctors always tell pregnant women not to drink, smoke, or overexert themselves. This woman made her choices; she chose to drink. She drank half of a fifth of liquor each day! Clearly, she is responsible for her child's affliction.

Secondly, if the alcoholic beverage producers were to be held liable in this case, perhaps they would be held liable for all other injuries and damages that occur when people drink. A man who

fell down in a drunken stupor could suffer a fatal blow to the head. Then his family could collect money from the company that makes the liquor he was drinking because it didn't have a warning label cautioning people that consumption could result in drunkenness and injury.

This sort of liability could be applied to any product. Cutlery makers would be forced to have warning labels on knives stating that a person could die if he was stabbed by a knife. Cars would need warnings on the hood to caution pedestrians not to walk in front of them, otherwise automobile makers would be subject to lawsuits from people hit by cars.

This case in Seattle is just one example of a dangerous way of thinking our society has adopted. It doesn't occur to this woman to take responsibility for her actions.

Unfortunately, most people don't know that they should take responsibility for their behavior. Pointing the finger at other people seems to have become a national pastime. We are more willing to put the blame on someone else than we are to accept the consequences of what we do.

Those infamous television commercials for law firms are evidence of the system taking advantage of our weakness in blaming others for our problems. "Did you hurt yourself in some careless accident on the job? Did you embarrass yourself slipping on the floor at work? We can give you justice! We'll sue!"

The national agenda also has been influenced by this way of thinking. Today, issues that are emotionally based have ignored the central core of the issues and simple-mindedly demanded that officials in Washington, D.C. solve the problem.

The cause of problems — the reason problems exist — is never considered. Activists naively force the issues away from any real solution and want the federal government to take care of problems for the people. As we have seen, the government's solutions often forget

the human element and provide inefficient, wasteful programs.

The family in Seattle is just an obvious symptom of a much larger and

dangerous mindset. As soon as we take responsibility for our actions, we will know how to solve our problems. All of our headaches will come closer to a long-term solution if we remember to

look at the cause of our problems — our actions.

James Cecil is a senior economics major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Not your ordinary columns, but hey — they weren't meant to be

Seeing as this is my last column, for better or for worse, I wish the chance to explain what it is that I have tried to do this semester. My purpose was not to get a reaction, to piss people off — contrary to what many people believe. If that were my intention, I could have succeeded far more than I did. I wanted to get people to think, to wonder about what I was trying to get across.

I made some mistakes, but I have no regrets. I wanted to say something different than what others were talking about.

I have tried to address issues which are highly personal, as well as broader concerns — not just something one could get out of a city newspaper. Much criticism has been thrown against me because of this. It is, I have heard, supposedly not becoming of an opinion page. So much for creativity, personal expression, and innovation. I have had praise in opposition of this criticism as well, but it has been more silent.

The following is a piece typical of what supposedly does not "belong" on the opinion page. Take it literally as an expression of beauty, see it as the potential of man or society, view it as a religious metaphor, let it be a dream. I would like for you to read it leisurely, to find some kind of personal meaning, to enjoy it. Laugh at it if you wish.

When I first came to this University, I was impressed by its beauty. But one item of the campus struck me as something astounding. It was a tree, the oak right in front of Bolton Hall. Many students, past and present, also have touched its boughs and been just as impressed.



Todd Honeycutt
Columnist

As one views it from a distance, the tree appears to be a grand pyramid constructed by Egyptian artisans now gone. Pyramids have long been thought by some cultures and sects to have magical, life-giving, energetic powers. This tree has those powers.

It emits a psychic aura of health and well-being for all who desire to receive it. Under its branches you can feel safe and secure. It seems a shelter from the dark forces of the Evil Empire, from the misgivings of man, from the rain, harboring life and love, peace and tranquility. The tree is a mighty rock jutting from the raging sea.

The trunk is magnificent. For a tree, the trunk is perhaps the most important part. To destroy the trunk is to destroy the entire grandeur of the tree. The trunk is the foundation, the philosophy, the morals, the rational side of the tree. To be a great tree, the trunk itself must be great. A lesser trunk will snap at the first great force to come upon it.

And then there are the roots. I have never seen the roots, of course, but necessity dictates that they delve deeply into the earth and are entangled in a complex web. The roots serve as gatherers of nutrients, collectors of knowledge. For anything to grow, sustenance and substance are needed. And for

greatness such as we have before us, a vast supply is required.

The branches, the most visible part of the tree, are numerous and grand in their design. Some of them rise up to touch the sun, to grasp all that is good and wholesome. Some of the branches also touch the ground, reaching out to all that is evil and malevolent. Ever something great is corrupt to some extent. Perhaps the branches can be thought also to swing down to keep in touch with its roots, to stay "down to earth" while its head is in the clouds.

This tree is definitely venerable. Time is required to grow and evolve. Greatness is not achieved overnight. Time, while increasing wisdom and strength, adds a degree of brittleness to the tree. Many are the stories of a strong wind blowing over the old, strong tree while the young trees bent with the wind and were left standing. The old tree simply could not handle the winds of change. The great trees, this one included, bend with minimal fluctuations and keep their original form afterwards.

I highly recommend this tree to all of those who love nature, who are in times of trouble, who seek knowledge. This tree expresses the beauty of nature, the closest man can come in the physical world to the beauty of God. This tree serves as a constant, a bringer of hope to those who find that they are hopeless. And the tree, as many have known so well, is the best teacher, the highest example one can have.

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BLOOM COUNTY
by Berke Breathed

BROWNSVILLE... suspect in U.S. action with an... influenced drug... linked to 15 death... Wednesday... charges.

Serfin Hernan... Brownsville, was... on April 17... people who was in... day in McAllen... counts related to... and importation... "Well enter a pl... to each and ever... counts," federal pu... Recio told U.S. I... to Garza.

A U.S. magistrat... Friday ordered... without bond, pen... Garza on Wedne... action for Herr... Brownsville for M... pretrial hearings... May 26.

Hernandez, a m... anca, Tamaulipas... Spanish through... the arraignment... Officials have sa... de Hernandez w... organization's cul... according to susp... custody, ritually sa... lated some of th... ried west of M... Some of the five

Two Bryan teen... and charged with... via Texas A&M st... Bob Wiatt, direc... responded to a c... activity in Pa... modular dormitor... "At about 11:40... had heard the br... gotten into a vehi... plate number... "Some of my un... ed two indivi...