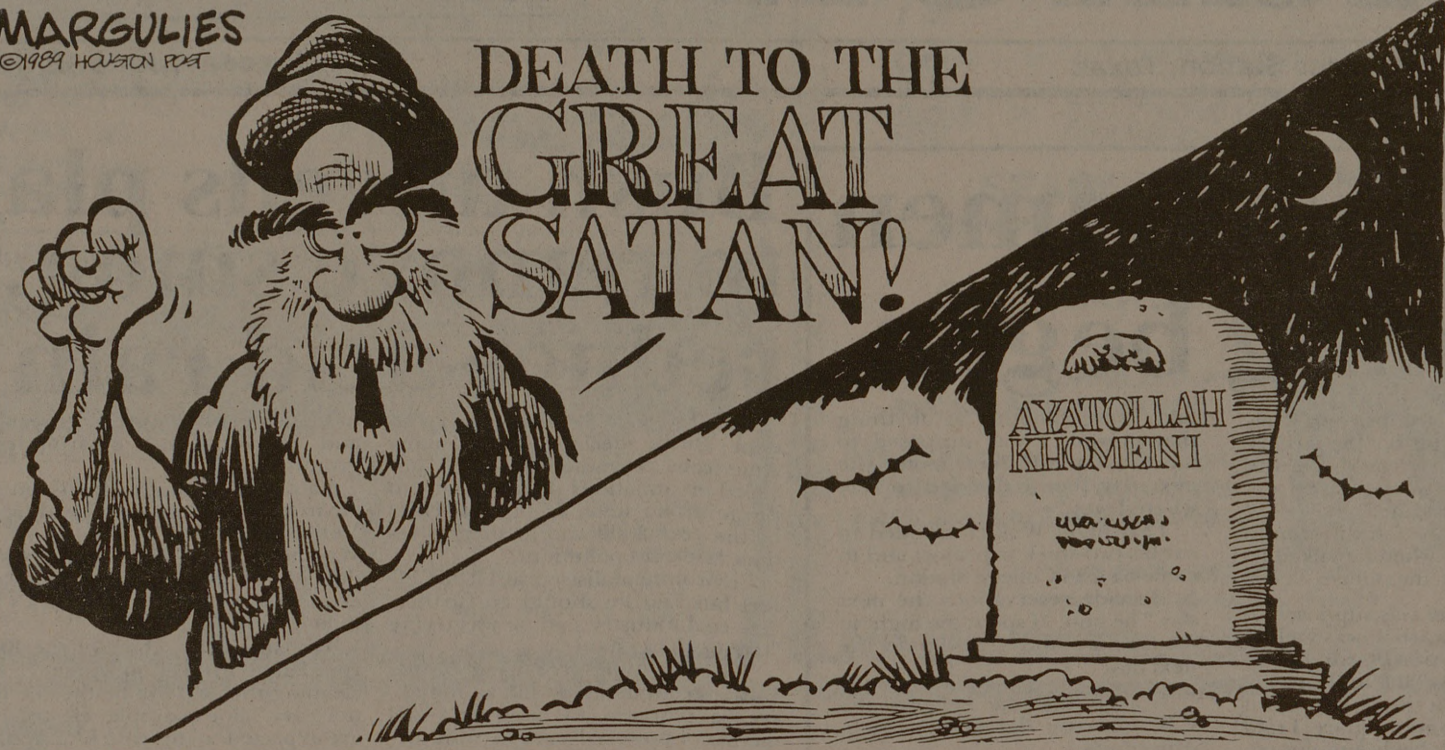


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Mail Call

Memorial service appalling

EDITOR:

I could not believe that *The Battalion* would dare to print a memorial ad for Khomeini. Freedom of the press is one thing, but printing an insult to every American is going too far. Khomeini's insane fanaticism has inspired the deaths of innocents in his country, and in countries around the world. For *The Battalion* to accept and print this ad shows its lack of compassion for the many victims of this criminal. It makes one wonder if *The Battalion* would have accepted ads for other murderers, such as Adolf Hitler, Lee Harvey Oswald, Stalin, or the leader of the Matamoros cult. I think *The Battalion* owes an apology to all students and former students for this lapse of editorial discretion.

Troyce Wilson '89

In support of fellow Aggies

EDITOR:

Thank you, the friends of the Chinese students, for allowing me the opportunity to help support the Chinese students and citizens fighting for democratic reform in your country. By printing up T-shirts and selling them in the MSC, you have enabled me to make a small contribution to this MOST important cause. As a student, I identify with my Chinese counterparts in Beijing, Shanghai and all of China. As an American, I identify with the freedoms they are fighting for — the ones I am fortunate to already have. Yet, it is a tragedy that man has made his world one in which freedom has to be earned with blood and tears.

Michelle Hart '89

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. Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words.

Ellerbee or not to be

And so it went. Linda Ellerbee's syndicated column from the opinion page of the *Bryan-College Station Eagle* that is. The recent question of journalistic ethics, caused by Ellerbee's appearance in a Maxwell House Coffee commercial, caused the *Eagle* to cancel the syndicated column by the most famous media personality to have been born in Bryan.

Linda Ellerbee, with 17 years of experience in the journalism field, is a public figure/business woman who has the right to appear in commercials if she so desires.

According to the 1923 code of journalistic ethics known as the Canons of Journalism, journalists must adhere to freedom of the press, responsibility, truthfulness, sincerity and accuracy. "A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust." This code has been revised and adopted numerous times by many a newspaper. Today, the code reads that "journalists must be free from obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know."

Ellerbee, when she decided to appear in the commercial, did not go against the code, acting in selfish greed for money as some have said. In reality, Ellerbee, who claims to be the toughest boss she's ever had, runs her own production company, Lucky Duck Productions, which produces television programs for public television and syndication.

Ellerbee was acting in the best interests of her business just as a network news company acts in the best interests of all its employees by forming advertising departments that raise advertising



Juliette Rizzo
Opinion Page Editor

dollars. Because of these departments, everyday journalists are free to do their jobs without having to personally worry about money coming in. However, in the case of Ellerbee's company, she was its only advertising asset.

The advertising market is full of actors, musicians, and sports heroes, pushing everything including deodorant, automobiles and insurance. So why should we hold members of the media to a higher scrutiny than other members of the public eye?

W.O. Cawley, Jr., managing editor of the *Eagle*, in defending the *Eagle's* decision to remove Ellerbee's column, cited a conflict of interest when a journalist endorses a product. Is there a conflict of interest if a columnist promotes a brand of coffee? Maybe if she were a restaurant critic or nutrition expert for a newspaper, a conflict of interest could be cited. But Linda Ellerbee's columns are opinion-oriented in nature, not coffee-oriented. She deals in opinions and one of her opinions is that she feels strongly enough about a particular coffee brand to endorse it.

One thing the *Eagle* should have considered is that Ellerbee's endorsement of the product did not affect the credibility of her writing. I can't imagine that

someone saw her commercial and thought that the validity of her opinions was suspect.

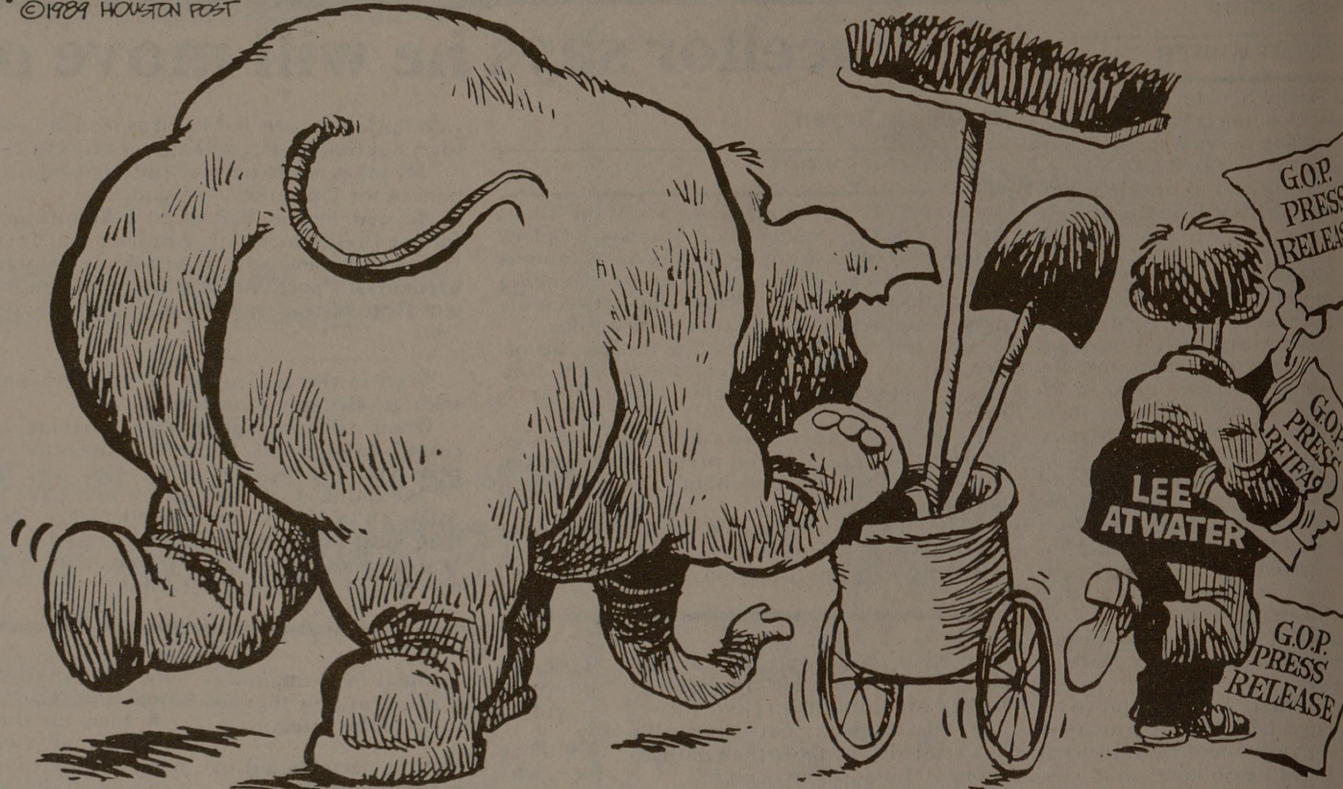
Those readers who didn't know who Ellerbee was at the beginning of this column comprise a large portion of the national television audience who will never see the commercial or even give it a second glance.

However, the average viewer who does recognize the news personality will not necessarily be persuaded to change brands or even buy coffee had he not in the past.

Well, just like the coffee is known to be good to the last drop, so were Ellerbee's columns in the *Eagle* good to the last one. Her writing was accurate, ethical, insightful and definitely entertaining. She never promoted the product in her columns nor did she even intend to.

The *Eagle* may have overreacted when it dropped Ellerbee from its page. Blinded by a false sense of ethical superiority, they failed to hold on to a good thing when they had it. As the old saying goes "it's their loss." Ellerbee will move on as she has in the past. The *Eagle* was just another medium she had to filter through.

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History may repeat itself

In January 1905 a large group of disgruntled workers massed outside the St. Petersburg palace of Nicholas Romanov, the last czar of Russia. They were hoping to present Nicholas with a 135,000-signature petition, asking for some basic concessions such as a constituent assembly and the freedoms of speech and religion.

The czar, who was away from St. Petersburg for the winter, didn't feel the assembly worth his personal attention and left the situation to the discretion of the St. Petersburg police, which quickly called in the army.

The result: Gunfire erupted, killing between 2,000 and 4,000 civilians bearing nothing but religious banners and icons. Bloody Sunday carried waves of dissent across the Russian states, intensifying the public opinion that the government was not listening to the peoples' requests.

A rash of strikes and protests, along with a disastrous showing in World War I, finally resulted in the resignation of Nicholas on March 14, 1917, and the rise of a short-lived democratic government headed by Alexander Kerinsky. This in turn quickly gave way to the Bolsheviks and Lenin the following November.

We had a similar situation arise on our continent. On March 5, 1770, in what Bostonians proudly call the first battle of the American Revolution, British troops answered a flurry of rocks and snowballs with a flurry of bullets, killing five. The hostilities grew, and war broke out five years later. By 1783, the Americans had driven the British out and established the United States of America.

The similarities between these events in history and the present situation in China are not difficult to see. And the results may turn out to be the same as well.

In both cases, the "subversives" were in reality nothing of the kind. The Russians loved the czar, for the most part, in the early years of the 20th century. Lenin was exiled in Austria and having enough trouble keeping his party alive. Likewise, the thought of completely throwing off the British yoke didn't occur until years after the Boston Massacre. The vast majority of the colonists were happy with being citizens of the most powerful nation on earth; they just wanted to be treated as citizens, with a representative voice in Parliament, not as a cheap source of labor and resources.

And likewise, the Chinese are not

Hal L. Hammons
Makeup Editor

looking to overthrow the communist system in their home country. But if the Chinese government continues its oppressive tactics, revolution may be the only option that remains.

The Chinese students, many of whom have been schooled in America or elsewhere in the West, realize the benefits that come from an open marketplace. And if the government of Li Peng and Deng Xiaoping will not provide one, history indicates the Chinese people will find one that will.

Troubled times definitely have arrived for Li's regime. They reacted the worst possible way to the protests resulting in what historians probably will call the Beijing Massacre. The bloodshed will only intensify the ready-growing sentiment that the government does not have the people's interest at heart. Make no mistake — protests will continue until the citizens of China get the rights they want. Considering the hardline stance of government at the present time, it may mean what few could have hoped for — full democratization.

The first half of 1989 indicates the coming decade may signal a tremendous turn toward democracy, not only in China, but across the world. Reform are already in progress in the Soviet Union, but the Soviet states and blocs are not satisfied. States like Lithuania and Estonia, once independent nations, want their independence back. Poland, if the recent elections are an indication at all, seems on the verge of voting the Communists completely out of office. And the trend can spread.

For the first time since the 1950s there is real hope that communism is not here to stay. It has inherent economic and social flaws, and even the core communist countries like the Soviet Union are beginning to see them.

This may be too outlandishly optimistic a prediction, but no one would have expected the protests in China, either, so I'm in the mood.

Communism as we know it very likely will be eliminated from the planet by 2050.

As with all columns, opinions expressed by Guest Columnists are not necessarily those of *The Battalion*. Persons interested in submitting guest columns should contact the Opinion Page Editor at 845-3314.

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.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

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