



Taking sides: Is 'family values' a legitimate political issue?

By ANTHONY LOBAIDO

By SHAWN RALSTON

"The life of the state rests, and must ever rest, upon the life of the family and of the neighborhood." — Theodore Roosevelt.

Why are family values important? Because rational discourse amongst the foremost atheist, Christian, liberal and conservative minds in America agrees that without a return to "moral community," eventually there will no longer be any politics and no more America.

Perhaps the debate over "family values" arises from the narrow parameters of the term itself — a microcosm under a larger umbrella addressing the survival of the human race. AIDS, nuclear waste and the destruction of the ozone layer are part of the larger picture.

Look what we have come to

Wake up, America. See your ten-year-olds having sex in the classroom, children raising children, teachers who must instruct from behind bulletproof glass, a population explosion amongst the poor and uneducated masses, twenty-five million abortions, pornography, teenage suicide and the scourge of drugs.

The brilliant French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville toured colonial America in a quest to find the secret of her greatness — and found it! "America is great," he wrote. "Because America is good. If America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

In the last thirty years the liberal anti-Christians never stopped hammering away at the cultural foundations of America. They have now seized control of America's schools, courts, churches and film studios, and have stolen the innocence of childhood from our children.

Does the religious right really care? No. Caring would require turning away from our sins and seeking the revival of moral community. Caring would mean throwing the television out the window and boycotting college and professional sports until they devolve into their proper place in society.

Inundated with immorality

Burn down Hollywood as "vice has become virtue and virtue has become vice." Do we need to watch Arsenio Hall tell us how large his penis is when thousands of Americans will die a hideous death from AIDS? Do we really need MTV to show a video in which Madonna seduces a small child? Should we watch gay men French kiss on the subway and feel guilty for wanting to vomit?

Perhaps it's purely an ideological war. Karl Marx wrote "Man is an economically determined animal who is a product of his environment." Jesus told us, "The evil which defiles the man comes from within his own heart."

Remember that while America has historically relied on its maverick democratic political system as the ruler of moral guidance, the religious right tells us that America's unofficial foundation has always been her King — Jesus Christ.

Since that King has been long since overthrown, you'd better hold on tight, America. Because left, right and center, you are in for one hell of a ride.

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The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows in the Mail Call section. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name.

We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy.

Letters should be addressed to: The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald / Campus mail stop 111
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Reading, writing, responsibility A&M president talks about campus newspaper

By DR. WILLIAM MOBLEY

I appreciate the invitation of The Battalion's editors to submit a periodic guest column over the coming year and to start with my views on The Battalion itself. Later this fall, I will share with you my views on such issues as funding for higher education, preparing for life in the global village, and tolerance.

It is appropriate to reassert the truism that The Battalion plays a very important role in this university community. It is the primary source of news and information for many on this campus. It is a primary forum for sharing and discussing ideas and opinions. It is a learning laboratory for budding journalists, writers, photographers, managers, leaders and for other students on their way to becoming informed citizens and communicators. It is a primary source of information and schedules on the myriad of events, meetings and functions that characterize this very active campus. It is an opportunity for merchants to communicate about their goods and services through advertising.

The impact of The Battalion reaches far beyond this campus. Many citizens of the Brazos Valley regularly read The Battalion. Articles from The Battalion are included in various media clipping service distributions to a variety of groups including the Legislature, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and various national education groups. Other media periodically follow up on stories in The Battalion. And, of course, Former Students and families from throughout the nation (and perhaps world) subscribe to The Battalion. The Battalion is a primary window to this University for many far beyond the boundaries of the campus. It is the eye through which many judge who and what we are, and are becoming, as a university.

The multiple roles played by The Battalion carry with them significant responsibilities. The fact that we are living, learning and working in a large, complex, diverse university requires that The Battalion be responsive to the variety of interests, issues and opinions associated with this complexity and diversity. The Battalion has a responsibility to contribute to the civil discussion, rigorous evaluation, and common enlightenment of ideas and issues, new and old. As a university with global interests and impact, with students destined for careers and citizenship in a global village, The Battalion has a responsibility to engage and enlighten us in a global multicultural manner. The Battalion has a responsibility for both reporting our shortcomings and also engaging us in the constant search for improvement, for better approaches, ideas and solutions. The Battalion also has a responsibility for reporting our individual and collective accomplishments — the good news that is abundant on this campus.

In performing its roles and exercising its responsibilities, The Battalion, along with other media, must rise to a high standard of ethics and professionalism. The overwhelming majority of Battalion staffers and of other journalists and

editors I have known are honest, fair and professional individuals.

When The Battalion runs a particularly critical, negative or controversial story, they and I both receive an influx of critical mail. If it is well-reasoned, it serves as constructive feedback and may be appropriate material for the opinion page or letters to the editor. On occasion, the mail is intemperate, emotional and irrational, and on rare occasion calls for closing down The Battalion, firing the editor, writer, etc.

University newspapers are protected by the First Amendment, just like other newspapers. Further, The Battalion is not a unit of the university's public relations department. Certainly we expect The Battalion to exercise sound professional judgment, to not needlessly test the limits of the First Amendment, and to professionally balance negative and positive stories. In lieu of an emotional, intemperate response to an article we find offensive, disagreeable or wrong, a more effective approach is to write a well-reasoned rebuttal or reply.

In the mid 1970s, The University of Maryland held a symposium on the media in the 21st century. One of the thoughts from that symposium that has always stuck with me was offered by Clay Whitehead. "This country consists of a government, an economy and a society of checks and balances. The press loves to talk about itself as a vital check on government and of course it is. The conscientious professional journalist is a guardian of the public interest. But yet, in the year 2000 the central question of a free press in a free society is the question originally asked 2000 years ago: 'Who is to guard the guardians?'"

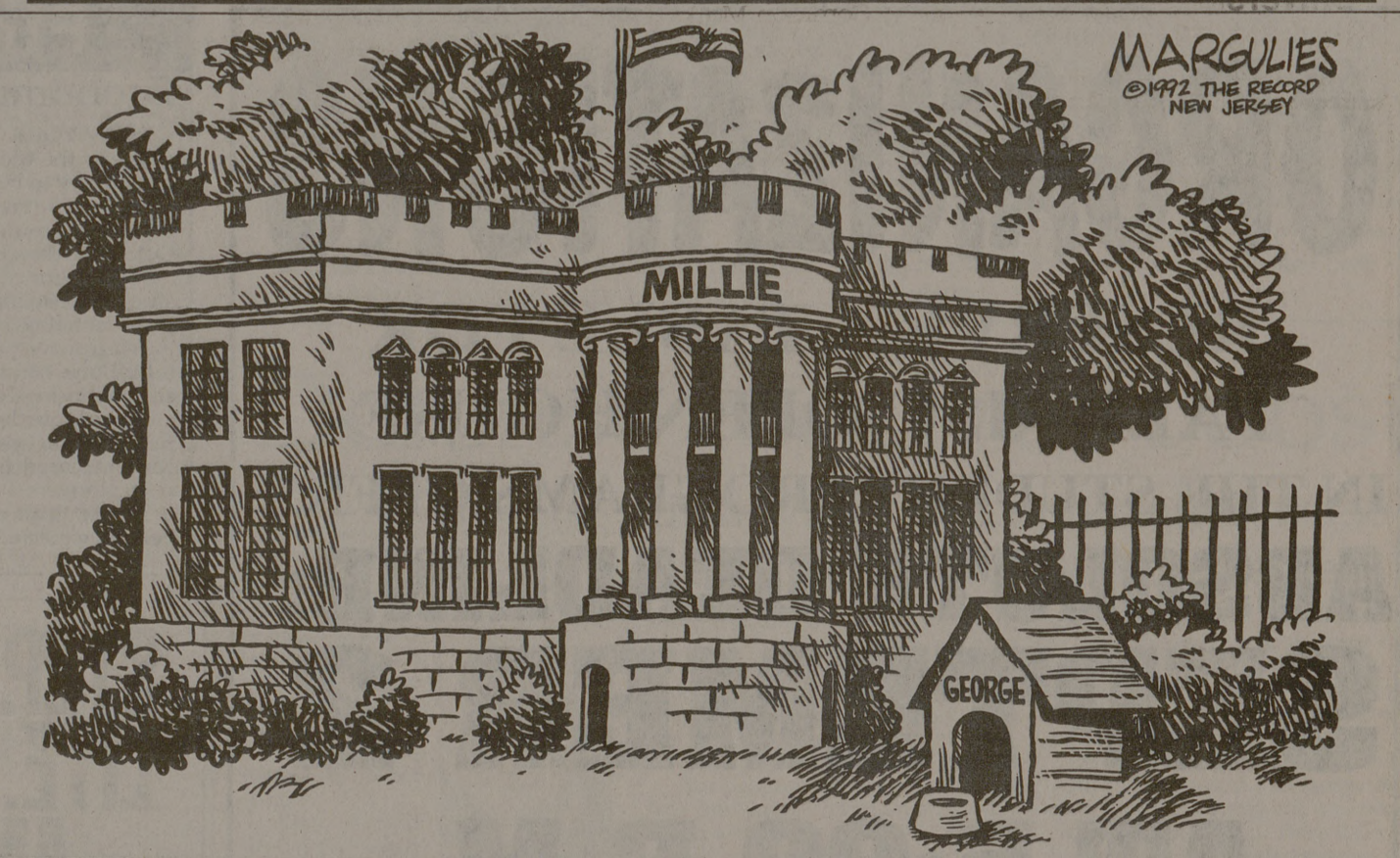
In my mind, the best assurances of a quality free press are public expectations of the highest standards of journalistic ethics and professionalism.

A superior university newspaper requires more than passive reading by its constituents. It requires active participation by its constituents. I know that The Battalion staff earnestly wants your input, opinions and constructive feedback.

I trust that you share my belief that The Battalion and its readers have important roles and responsibilities in the informational and intellectual life of this campus. I encourage you to become an active participant. If your time, talents and interests permit, seek out a role on The Battalion staff. For those not on The Battalion staff, you still have the opportunity if not obligation to take the time to share your ideas and opinions, hopefully in temperate and well-reasoned form, by writing to The Battalion's opinion page. Take the time to provide feedback to The Battalion's editors and writers. And yes, consider supporting the merchants who advertise in The Battalion.

In my opinion, we have an excellent university newspaper in The Battalion. It can become even better with our active involvement.

Dr. Mobley's column will appear on the last Monday of each month this semester



MAIL CALL

Battalion needs improvement

The menagerie of characters who put out this summer's numbers of The Battalion should not congratulate themselves on a job well done. From what I have seen, I think the paper has no higher purpose than to be a stage for a few persons' uninspired clowning. Here are some of its reprehensible features.

1) Articles ending in mid-sentence. The reader of The Battalion this summer not only had to make up his own mind, he sometimes had to make up his own ending, too.

2) Platitudinous articles. One piece, I recall, used 150 words to establish that

eating ice cream in the summertime is nice. Conclusion drawn by the reader: If you can eat ice cream, you can write for The Battalion.

3) Vulgar, bigoted, odd and mischievous opinion pieces. The slimiest one contained Mr. LoBaido's comments on sorority women. This sort of scurrilous baiting of people is disgraceful.

If you people would set standards for your work, The Battalion would cease to be an inadvertent joke.

Joe Campagnolo
Graduate student

Student says department lied

I am a student trying to work my way toward graduation in the fall. Like most students in my situation, a decent job is something I need to help me pay for tuition and other living expenses.

I was recently let go from a job I had here on campus in a department which shall remain unnamed. It was not a glamorous job. It was enough to pay my bills and have some extra left over

for short trips on the weekend to go see my girlfriend.

When I was let go I was told that budget problems prevented the department from keeping me on or hiring any other student workers this fall. Although I was disappointed, it seemed like a legitimate reason. However, I found out today that not one, but TWO student workers had been hired in my place only one week after my departure. I feel betrayed.

I expect, as many Aggies do, to be told the truth. Obviously, I was not told the truth in this case, and the department budget was used as an excuse to let me go. This is why I make my plea to department heads and others on this campus in charge of hiring students. Please, do not mislead the students that work for you. We work hard and are trying to make our way in these hard economic times just like anyone else.

Don't lie to your workers and use budgets as an excuse if that is not the real reason. I have been left without a job and have limited access to other jobs since I only have a bicycle. I might expect tactics such as these from sources outside A&M. But I expected better treatment from the university I attend.

Paul Brunell
Class of '91