

PRO CON

Was KBTX justified in asking TCA to pay rebroadcast fees?



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Columnist



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Imagine for a moment that you run a small company which sends out a free newsletter every day. Your expenses are paid by advertisers.

This newsletter is so well written and has such a large readership that people come from miles around to get a copy. Soon, a larger company begins to take your newsletter and make copies of it every day.

This company also takes many other newsletters from around town and makes copies of them. However, the company doesn't hand them out for free; they charge people a small fee to deliver it to their house. You begin to realize that this would be an excellent way to make some additional money. Unfortunately, the government prohibits you from taking any profit from the sale of your product.

This is not a hypothetical scenario. KBTX-TV in Bryan/College Station as well as many other TV stations in America have been faced with this problem for many years, and Congress has finally acted.

Until the passage of the Cable Act of 1992, a television station like KBTX was mandated by the FCC to broadcast its signal for free to all who wanted to receive it.

This, on face value, seems like a great idea. After all, radio and TV waves are public property, and if KBTX wants to broadcast on those waves, we should be able to receive the signal for free. Like many governmental policies, however, this one suffered from abuse.

Regional cable carriers like TCA — who, incidentally, have a government guaranteed monopoly in their area — began to take signals from KBTX and other local broadcasters and re-broadcast them into people's homes over their cable lines — charging us all a small fee of course.

Local broadcasters had no way of getting any of the profits from this rebroadcast, because, according to our legal system, their product was public domain. TCA has been getting away with this kind of extortion for some time. They

Why should these cable companies be able to charge the public for their transmissions if airwave transmitters like KBTX can get none of these profits? It's easy to guess how TCA would respond if the government told them that their transmissions were public domain. I am disappointed that KBTX has decided not to seek the cash compensation they rightly deserve.

Eliot Williams is a sophomore electrical engineering major

If the dispute between KBTX and TCA Cable had not been resolved, as of Oct. 6, the "Pride of the Brazos" would no longer have been seen around Bryan/College Station.

Fortunately, as of Wednesday, the two sides came to an agreement: TCA will provide KBTX with a "non-cash" compensation. A confidentiality clause prevents specific disclosure of the terms. Had the two sides not reached an agreement, it would have been the result of the TV station's own greed.

The 30 cents a month per subscriber — or roughly \$100,000 a year — that KBTX was demanding from TCA Cable to reproduce what is free to those without cable was a ridiculous request. And a stupid business move as well.

Network stations who make their money from high-priced advertisements generally cater to such patrons. One could argue that it is really the sponsors who decide what we watch on television. If I owned a company capable of advertising on KBTX, I certainly would not be inter-

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ested in advertising with a network that put my primary interest — reaching the largest possible audience — at risk for a quick and undesired buck.

Even though the dispute was settled with no loss to the sponsors, I suggest that they reconsider advertising with such an unprofessional network.

Throughout the controversy, KBTX spent countless dollars advertising over the radio about how TCA was not looking out for its subscribers' interests by threatening to drop the CBS station. The announcer sounded like he was delivering a public service announcement as he told a biased side of the story.

During the evening news, the newscasters dropped subtle and not so subtle hints about what should be done. The trailers that were added to the bottom of the screen for days were a helpful addition to a wealth of propaganda.

Viewers might easily have been persuaded to name TCA as the bad guy when they considered the possibility of not being able to see Letterman on his new channel or of missing a precious moment with last year's Superbowl champions. What the network failed to admit, however, is that anyone with cable could still get KBTX by simply reaching behind his or her set and disconnecting the cable. An inconvenience, but not a crisis.

Another CBS affiliate could have solved the problem by airing the programming we're convinced we couldn't do without. But TCA is prohibited by contract from airing any CBS station but KBTX. And KBTX called TCA a monopoly. What's that saying about the pot and the kettle?

The Cable Act of 1992 does indeed require cable companies to seek written permission from network stations to retransmit their signals, and I suppose the laws of free trade suggest that it was okay for KBTX to try to sell its broadcasts. At the same time, TCA had the right to decline the generous offer from across the street — and not be harassed for doing so.

Melissa Megliola is a senior industrial engineering major

Television shows I'd like to write

The down and out taking of Beverly Hills 911 cops

With all the controversy over television, we seem to forget that some shows are just stupid. "Full House," "My Two Dads," "Barney." But the honor has to go to "Beverly Hills 90210," the show that spawned a dozen equally awful clones.



MACK HARRISON
Opinion editor

With a little rewriting, however, the show could actually be enjoyable. Brenda puts the K-bar combat knife back into the ankle sheath, displaying a tattoo on her pale but perfectly shaped leg as she reloads the twelve-gauge pump-action shotgun. Two buckshot-ridden corpses — her parents — lie on the floor of the posh Beverly Hills mansion.

"That's for bringing me here," she pants. "I hate this shallow town with all its shallow people like Kelly, Brandon, Andrea — and me."

Brenda looks around secure in her knowledge that no police officers will respond to the shots. Her neighbors the Clampetts are passed out from the LSD she dropped into Granny's still. Brenda hops into a BMW convertible that costs more than some families bring home in a year and heads over to the high school.

As she pulls up to the school, she sees the rest of the gang hanging out on a bench. *How come we're always up here, but we never spend any time in class?* she asks as she readies the Vietnam-era surplus M-79 grenade launcher.

Flooring the gas pedal and swerving to hit as many upscale, snobbish high

school students as possible, Brenda fires an explosive projectile at the first teacher she sees: Gil.

That's for all those suggestive looks, she thinks as his arms and torso disappear in an inferno of white phosphorous. You pretended to care just because you wanted to sleep with the students.

"My God, you killed him!" sobs Andrea. "And I just shot his fiance so I could become a cheerleader and have him to myself."

Brenda turns toward her and sneers. "And you. You're 35 years old and you look it. What the hell are you doing in high school?!" Andrea's answer is drowned out by the roar of the shotgun. At this point a street person bearing an uncanny resemblance to Nick Nolte shuffles away from the area mumbling, "Call 911! Call 911!"

Even though they are terrified and surrounded by carnage, the surviving members of the group still manage to look like they were posing for a magazine cover. Brenda points her modified full-auto folding-stock AK-47 at Kelly — or Donna, she's not really sure anymore. Thousands of dollars worth of plastic surgery and makeup dissolve into a mask of horror as Brenda aims the assault rifle at the interchangeable blondes.

"Brenda, what ... ?" Donna/Kelly asks as the bullets tear into her gaunt rib cage. "Seven point six-two millimeter," Brenda replies in a voice cold as ice. "Full metal jacket."

A scream erupts from the other blonde. Brenda pulls a Taurus nine millimeter pistol and pumps a slug into Kelly/Donna. The perfectly toned body drops with a whimper.

"I never could tell you two apart," she whispers.

David looks on in shock. "She's dead. And I never even got to sleep with Kelly

— I mean Donna."

Brenda's gaze is as sharp as the blade she hurls at David's throat. His high-pitched scream echoes in harmony with the approaching sirens. *That's probably the best he's ever sounded,* thinks Brenda as she picks her next target.

Steve, who had been edging toward her, halts as she faces him. Before he can utter a word, she fires the anti-shark spear gun. The compressed CO₂ in the spear's tip inflates Steve like the airbag in a Volvo until his organs burst from his torso.

"Don't blow your cool," Brenda says as she turns back to Dylan and Brandon. She draws her samurai sword and steps closer to the pair. She stares deep into Dylan's eyes as she lops off his head. "Buff the Vampire Slayer" sucked. Sayonara, sucker," she says as she finishes him off.

Scores of police cars pull into the parking lot and cops pile out, taking aim at the siblings. "Where the hell is Axel Foley?" Detective Rosewood shouts at his partner.

"He's with Riggs and Murtaugh, chasing South African drug dealers in L.A.," Sergeant Taggart replies.

"Oh, well — let's waste 'em!" shouts a Los Angeles quarterback who looks a lot like Ken Wahl as he leaps out of a Rolls Royce.

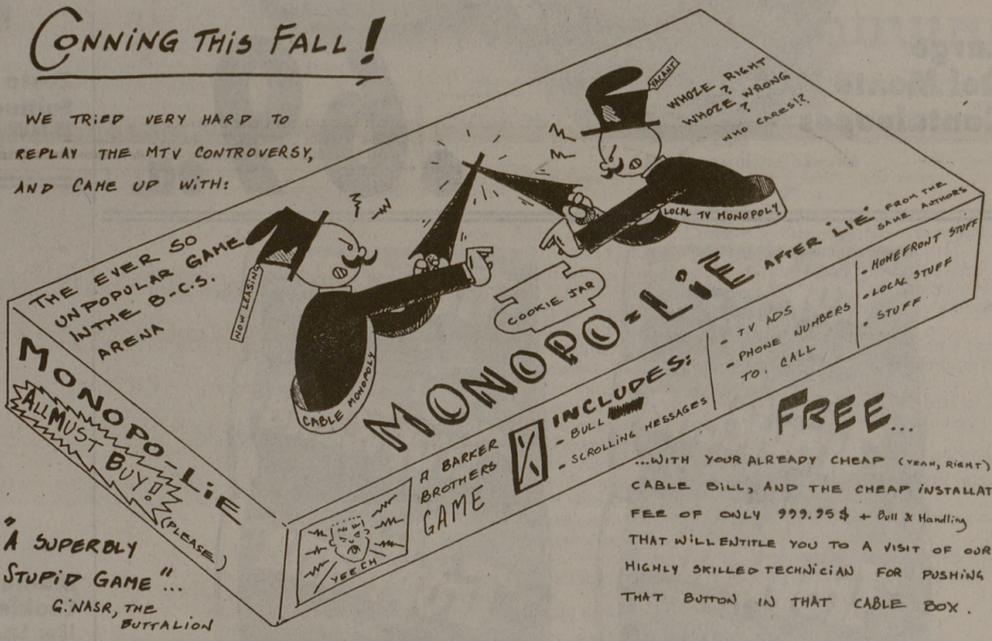
Bullets tear through the pair. Brenda drops Brandon and staggers to the street, where she falls in front of an asphalt layer that went out of control when its operator was hit by a stray bullet.

As the construction equipment bears down on her, she gasps with her last breath, "Brandon, 'Calendar Girl' was idiotic, too. You know, I could never tell you and Dylan apart, either."

Harrison is a senior agricultural journalism major.

CONNING THIS FALL!

WE TRIED VERY HARD TO REPLAY THE MTV CONTROVERSY, AND CAME UP WITH:



COLLEGE STATION, TX
SEPT 10
1993
MAIL CALL

Visitors to Aggieland deserve our courtesy

In the Sept. 7 Mail Call, Crissy Strickland described two young ladies who refrained from uncovering during yells at the first football game. These ladies could very well have been our guests, who were visiting from LSU.

They did not uncover or participate in yells, and we could think of no reason for them to do so, other than to quiet the persistent shouts of, "Uncover!"

This may be one of those gray areas sometimes encountered in A&M traditions; as a public service, would someone please tell us what the protocol is for visitors at yell practice and during games? We would have readily asked them to remove their caps in the MSC and given the reasons for doing so, but at the game we had only "tradition" as justification.

We are generally among the first to shout, "Uncover!" if we spot a forgetful Ag, but we don't see the need in being rude and abusive. "Take you ****ing hat off!" — really, how classy is that? Our guests were impressed with our description of the 12th Man legend and countless other traditions, and we even had them sawing Varsity's horns off during the Aggie War Hymn. We would hate to think that their

positive impressions of our fans and school were marred by behavior best left at their home stadium. So if anyone had the definitive word on visitors uncovering, male or female, please help us out.

In the meantime, be aware that visitors are among us and may not know exactly what is going on. Show the respect and courtesy that everyone has grown to expect from Aggieland.

Beat the hell outta O.U. and gig 'em!

Chris Straughn '95
Kurt Hemphill '94

Shirts show lack of respect for President

Only a week into the semester and some Aggies are already beginning the indoctrination process that is Texas A&M's second education. This letter goes out to all of the self-proclaimed Biblical scholars here in Aggieland. Whether one has committed adultery or lied to anyone, it is a sin and all sins are equal in the eyes of God. Jesus Christ himself said let that man who has committed no sin cast the first stone.

I don't know if the three shirts attacking the President are from the College Republicans and/or the Young

Conservatives of Texas, but this lack of respect for the President has gotten way out of hand. If anyone reading this letter has not committed a single sin in his/her lifetime, wear the shirts with pride. If not, leave the President alone. Even the KKK claims to not use hate to unify its members but the College Republicans insist upon it. Does that mean the KKK is more mature than the College Republicans? Ponder that, Aggies.

Anand Patel
Class of '95

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