

Rush Limbaugh Show subject of controversy, criticism

By James Bernsen

THE BATTALION

With an audience of 20 million people a week on 626 radio stations, Rush Limbaugh has become a popular radio talk show host. Yet his conservative views and unconventional attitudes have made him as controversial as he is successful.

When the show went national on Aug. 2, 1988, only 56 stations carried his program.

Kit Carson, Limbaugh's chief of staff, said the growth rate of the show has been phenomenal, with as many as 5 million people tuned into the three-hour show at any given time.

"People said that after Clinton won the election, we wouldn't last much longer," Carson said, "but we've been steadily growing despite that."

Ben Downs, general manager of WTAW 1150 AM, said Limbaugh's show is probably the most popular one on the station broadcasts.

"In the Brazos Valley, he has a real big following," Downs said. "The first month, we had satellite problems and missed 30 minutes of the show. We logged 100 calls about it."

Downs said WTAW does not subscribe to any ratings service but judges the success of its shows based on advertising.

"We suspect he does well because of the support we get,"

Downs said. "For three to four weeks out of every month, we're sold out of ad time."

But, Downs said, the show is not without its criticism, which is frequent.

"Yesterday, I received a call from a man who said we were contributing to the downfall of America," Downs said. "You never get calls in favor of something. I'm sure if we got rid of the show, though, we'd be flooded with calls."

Joseph Thomas, president of Aggie Democrats, said some of the views Limbaugh expresses are intolerant and insensitive, but these views have a lot to do with the show's success.

"As a democrat, I think some of the things he's said have been despicable," Thomas said. "A lot of things he says I take with a grain of salt."

John Dempsey, assistant lecturer in the Department of Journalism, said the basis of Limbaugh's success is that the show is entertaining.

"He says things other people have been afraid to say," Dempsey said. "He's fearless and unapologetic."

Carson said studies done by the Excellence in Broadcasting Net-

work, which features Limbaugh, indicate that more people listen to the show for its entertainment value, by a 2-1 margin.

Phil Meuret, president of the College Republicans, said Limbaugh is a definite help to the Republican Party, and the strong conservative population of A&M is the reason for his success here.

"What he's saying is the same things we'd talk about around the coffee tables about what was wrong and right with this country," Meuret said.

"It's great to have someone with our values in the prominent position he has."

However, Thomas said he does not feel that Limbaugh has much power in changing the national view on situations.

"For someone who's conservative and already has those views, he probably reinforces them," Thomas said. "I don't think he is accepted in the mainstream."

Meuret said Limbaugh does have an effect on the people who listen to his show.

"When the budget was being passed, Rush told his followers to call in to Congress," he said. "The phones were flooded."

Recently, Congress has debated

re-enacting the Federal Communications Commission's Fairness Doctrine, which would require radio and television stations to present both sides of political issues. Limbaugh has claimed this action is an attack on him.

Thomas agrees. "I don't think radio stations should be required to show both sides," he said. "There's no problem today in getting both points of view in America."

But, Dempsey said, the moves to reinstate the Fairness Doctrine are not just in response to Limbaugh but to talk radio in general.

"People are more interested in what is going on, and Congress is beginning to take the heat," he said. "They claim the people are being misinformed."

If the Fairness Doctrine was reinstated, Dempsey said, it would have a chilling effect that would reduce political discussion.

Downs said even though WTAW is currently not required by law to be objective in its programming, the station follows Rush's program with liberal Alan Colmes' program.

Colmes does not have nearly as much success as Limbaugh, he said, but providing both sides is a good idea that the station follows.

"He comes on following the largest gathering of conservatives and takes a lot of heat because of it," Downs said. "But, he's up to the task, most days."

College Station Kettle hosts Rush Room at lunch hour

By James Bernsen

THE BATTALION

Fans of the Rush Limbaugh radio program now have their very own Rush Room in College Station, where they can listen to the show while eating lunch.

Jennifer Armstrong, manager of The Kettle on University, said the restaurant has enjoyed a bigger lunch crowd in the six weeks the Rush Room has been open.

Although the restaurant has received a lot of criticism for the action, it has received even more praise, she said.

"Some people that are more toward the liberal side don't appreciate it," she said. "But overall, I'd say it's 2-1 in favor of Rush."

Linda Brooks, a waitress at the Kettle, said she gets at least one complaint a day.

"We've lost customers because of it," she said. "Over time, I think we'll be ahead."

The Rush Room was the idea of Bob Brown, owner of the restaurant and a fan of the program, and is one of many rooms that have sprouted up across the nation because of the popular talk show.

Armstrong said this Rush Room is only an experiment, and if the lunch crowd grows enough, a Rush Room may be established at all three local Kettle Restaurants.

"The reason was the large conservative following here and the fact that the College Republicans is the largest organization on campus," she said. "We figured it would be a big hit."

Armstrong said so far, the idea has worked.

"It's improved things around here," she said. "We have a bigger lunch crowd with people coming in specifically for Rush Limbaugh."

Armstrong said the majority of the people that come in to hear the program agree to some extent with Limbaugh's views.

"Even if they don't agree with him, it gets them thinking, rather than just accepting things," she said.

Angel Flight committed to area service projects

By Carrie Miura

THE BATTALION

One Texas A&M University service organization is soaring to new heights this semester to help Bryan and College Station communities.

Angel Flight is a nationally recognized campus organization, funded by the U.S. Air Force, that focuses on community service.

Wendy Merrill, commander of Angel Flight, said, "Our major goals are to make a difference at A&M and to serve the Bryan and College Station area."

Angel Flight has dedicated its time to several service projects such as the Host Program at

elementary schools, the Still Creek Boys Ranch, the Adopt-A-Highway program and a Galveston beach clean-up.

Capt. David Onaka, faculty adviser of Angel Flight, said the organization has been a great support for prospective Air Force officers.

"Angel Flight wrote to the cadets to encourage them while they were at a four-week field training all over the country," he said.

Onaka, Class of '81 and an assistant professor of aerospace studies at A&M, said, "I don't know too many people who would pay money to work. They really have big hearts."

Angel Flight started three semesters ago with only five members.

Merrill said the group has gotten larger but he would like to see the group grow.

Angel Flight works on some of its projects in cooperation with its brother organization, the Arnold Air Society, a group which prepares cadets to be officers.

Doug Levan, junior Corps member and commander of Arnold Air Society, said, "We're here to help the cadets and to teach them the lifestyle they'll lead for four years."

Onaka said the members work on professional development, but their mission is service.

"The Angels have the groundwork started for the different projects, but the two organizations work together as a team and have a lot of fun doing it," Onaka said.

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KANM

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But even if KANM could get a license, Walvoord said, the likelihood of being able to broadcast is slim.

"Unless the University gives us in excess of \$300,000, or Robert Earl Keen, Jr., Lyle Lovett and Garth Brooks perform at our next benefit, I don't see it happening," Walvoord said.

KANM has not received funding from the University since four or five years ago, when they received a grant to upgrade equipment.

"The only reason we are able to remain on the air is through the graciousness of TCA cable," he said.

He said there is the possibility of broadcasting on AM, however because of the lower costs.

Walvoord said one of the strengths of the station is the wide variety of music it plays. His show, which show airs on Fridays, consists of blues, cajun, deco, alternative country, bluegrass and Christian music.

"The station has a number of disc jockeys who work in two to three hour blocks, with the freedom to play whatever music they want."

"The thing that makes KANM a fun organization is the autonomy that the students have," Walvoord said.

THE BATTALION

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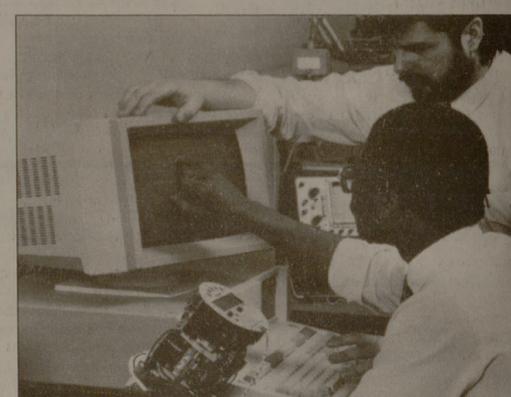
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