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EDITORIAL

TV can't baby-sit Don't blame 'Beavis' for arson

The mother of a child who set a fatal fire said the cartoon "Beavis and Butt-head" caused her 5-year-old to ignite the blaze that killed his sister.

One question that has yet to be answered — or even asked — by those calling for the show's cancellation is: Where were this child's parents when this happened and why did they allow this child to watch a show that has been under a barrage of criticism since its inception in June?

More importantly, why did they allow matches within this child's reach?

Once again, a child does something wrong and his parent blames an outside influence.

This alarming trend continues to grow in America. It seems that at some unknown time, for some unknown reason the responsibility of child rearing moved from parents to television.

And at that same unknown point in time, the burden of teaching youth the difference between the very subjective and ambiguous definitions of right and wrong became the job of artists and musicians.

So, when a boy set fire to his mom's trailer home and killed

his 2-year-old sister, their mother instinctively pointed the finger of guilt at MTV.

When two Utah teenagers under the influence of drugs and alcohol attempted suicide, their parents blamed heavy metal music.

When a Houston gang member murdered a state trooper, he defended himself by claiming rap music made him do it.

The logic behind these attacks on pop culture is the same "attack the weed, but ignore the root" philosophy that has proven ineffective time and again.

Why do parents place the blame for their children's acts of stupidity on someone or something else? Whatever happened to individuals taking responsibility for the actions of themselves and their children?

Whether "Beavis and Butt-head" has any socially redeeming values is irrelevant. There is no point in calling for banning or censoring the cartoon.

Parents and other concerned individuals should concentrate on giving the next generation the guidance it needs — instead of blaming society for failing to do so.

ATF warms up for Waco raid in Idaho Federal agency has history of assaulting 'fringe' religions

Recently the ATF and FBI ended their siege of a remote compound that held members of a fringe religion. The siege — initiated by the ATF based on technical weapons charges — would be the ultimate fruition of over a year of surveillance and plotting by the ATF and in its totality resulted in the deaths of several innocent people as well as ATF agents.



ELIOT WILLIAMS
Columnist

Waco, right? Wrong. This particular siege occurred Aug. 30, 1992 in Naples, Idaho in what many experts are referring to as the prelude to Waco. The similarities in the case are so amazing, they seem to indicate a developing pattern in ATF policy.

In January 1983, Vicki and Randy Weaver left their home state of Iowa and moved to northern Idaho, in what their friends called an attempt to get away from the rat race and find a place where they could raise their children apart from the immorality of American society. It was established that Randy and Vicki were loosely affiliated with, or at least sympathetic to, the Christian Identity movement.

Christian Identity believers are, for the most part, white separatists — meaning that unlike white supremacists, they would like simply to live apart from other races as opposed to wanting to persecute or subjugate them.

The Weavers led a quiet life in Idaho on a

20-acre plot of land in the back mountains of Naples. Randy would occasionally take odd jobs to pay for things that required cash. They taught their children their unusual religious beliefs, but weren't particularly active in the Christian Identity movement.

The Weavers attended a few Aryan Nation meetings where, in October 1989, Randy was introduced to "Gus Magisono," really Ken Fadley, an undercover ATF informant in the Aryan Nation, who asked Randy to sell him two shotguns with the barrels sawed off and even showed him where to cut. Some of the more strict interpreters of our country's penal code would call this entrapment.

Although Randy was at first reluctant, he was strapped for cash. He finally sold "Gus" the guns for \$300.

By December 1990, Randy Weaver was indicted for manufacturing, selling and possession of illegal firearms. On Jan. 17, 1991, Randy was arrested and released on bond, his trial set for Feb. 20, 1991. But the letter Randy received from his probation officer said to appear in court March 20.

When Weaver didn't appear in February, Assistant U.S. Attorney Ron Howard, knowing Weaver had been sent the erroneous letter, got another indictment for failure to appear in court. Fearing he would be sent to prison without a chance to defend himself, Weaver spent the next year or so hiding from the government in his remote cabin.

In response, the ATF began an elaborate 16-month surveillance project. They paid neighbors to record the comings and goings of visitors and to take down license numbers. They placed agents around the property, usually in full camouflage gear. Agents scouted sniper

positions and discussed plans ranging from tear gassing the occupants to kidnapping their 16-year-old daughter.

The agents later testified that they never considered simply knocking on the door and serving the arrest warrant — this was a military-style operation from the outset.

All this preparation for an armed assault came to a head on Aug. 21, 1992. Sammy Weaver, Randy's 14-year-old son and Kevin Harris, a close friend of the family, followed their dog down the hill hoping to find a deer. Unfortunately, all they found were several well-armed ATF agents.

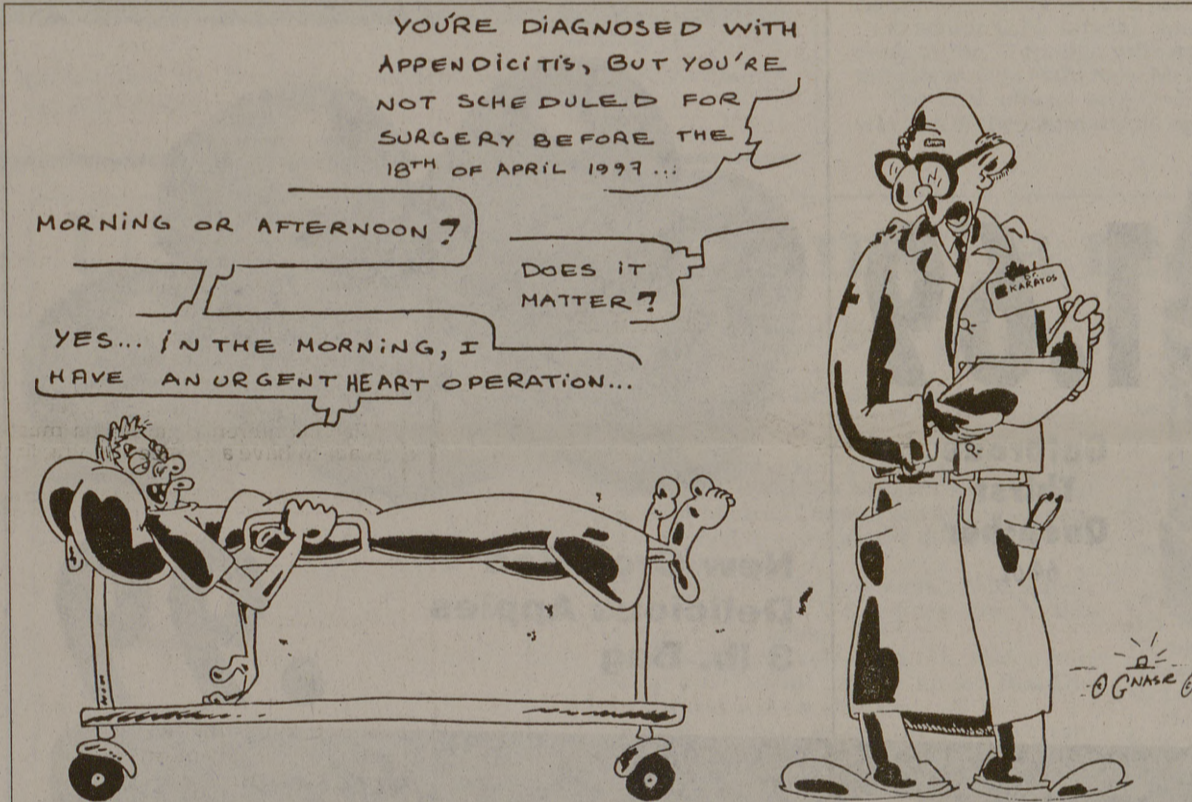
The exact turn of events is hard to pin down. A gun fight erupted leaving Sammy, the dog and one ATF agent dead. Kevin got safely back in the house before he was wounded by a sniper that killed an unarmed Vicki Weaver as she stood at the door of her house.

The survivors, including Randy, were eventually talked out without further gunplay. The case went to court earlier this year and Randy was found innocent of any wrongdoing.

The ATF outlived its usefulness many years ago. I was glad to see Clinton put the agency under control of the FBI after the Waco episode, but if the ATF's largest priority is the continual harassment of American citizens with fringe religious beliefs, why do we continue to fund it? Most experts agree that the licensing and regulatory capacity of the ATF could easily be absorbed by another agency.

We must dissolve this scourge on our civil rights before it gets out of hand. How long before they find your beliefs are on the fringe?

Eliot Williams is a sophomore electrical engineering major



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Jordan: Hero will be with us long after last buzzer sounds

America is in desperate need of a hero, someone who accomplishes what others only dream of doing. When our parents grew up, young boys and girls dreamed of being the President, the pinnacle of political success in our country.

Today, we sell T-shirts with slogans blasting the president. In some of the more desperate areas of inner cities, children may not know anyone who advanced to a professional career.

Even cartoons are devoid of heroes. Cartoons ten or fifteen years ago starred the superheroes who fought for "truth, justice and the American way." HBO is currently running a commercial that flashes a cell from Ren and Stimpy while the voice over mentions children's programming. Can a



MELISSA MEGLIOLA
Columnist

Chihuahua known for flatulating replace the Wonder Twins?

And of course, with the breakdown of the American family, Dad, the old standby, no longer exists in many households.

Last Tuesday, one of the last remaining heroes announced he is stepping down. Over the last nine years, Jordan has undoubtedly risen to the level of chief hero. During the commercial featuring children playing basketball on the playground, we hear, "Sometimes I dream that he is me."

The picture then switches to Jordan soaring through the air to effortlessly place a basketball through a metal rim. On the court he is magical. He defies gravity while exuding the grace of a learned gymnast.

To "be like Mike," is more than a blatantly associative advertising slogan, but a dream held by children across the country. Around the globe.

In Chicago Stadium, Bob Greene, author of "Hangtime: Days and Dreams with Michael Jordan," notices parents "pointing to Jordan as a parent might point to the Eiffel Tower or Venus de Milo."

Outside the stadium, the streets of one of Chicago's roughest neighborhoods are

lined with fathers and sons braving the winter weather to catch a glimpse of their hero driving by. The fathers, although few will admit to it, are as excited as their children by the thought of seeing Jordan.

Jordan, the hero, is also a legend. He was the boy who sat alone on the bus because the girls preferred to sit next to the athletes. He was the teenager who, during

It's not Jordan's ability on the court that makes him a hero. Jordan stops after every home game to talk to four boys who live near the stadium.

his sophomore year in high school, was cut from the basketball team. He is, at 30, the best player to have ever played the game.

"I used to say that Michael Jordan is the Babe Ruth of basketball," says Jerry Reinsdorf, owner of the Bulls. "Not anymore. Now I say Babe Ruth was the Michael Jordan of baseball."

It's not Jordan's ability on the court that makes him a hero. Greene, who spent a year with Jordan researching his book, was more amazed by what Jordan chose not to tell than by what he did. Only after verifying a rumor did Greene discover that Jordan stopped after every home game to talk to four boys who live near the stadium, caring enough to take interest in their grades and offer tutors if they fall behind.

"What does it cost me?" Jordan asked. "If I were to go home or go out to dinner knowing that they were waiting for me, it would ruin my evening."

Neither Carmen Villafane nor Daniel Spikes, two more of Jordan's most loyal fans, ever seemed to miss a game during the 1990 season. They both had courtside seats, the kind reserved for Chicago's wealthy and influential. Yet neither were rich or powerful, but instead inflicted by crippling disease. Each had met Jordan by chance, and each had a standing invitation to the stadium. They arrived well before the start of each game.

"If either of them was a few minutes tardy beyond the time they usually got there — Jordan would check it out,"

Greene observed.

He masked his concern by constantly joking around, but towards the end of Spike's life, Jordan spent many a night in his hospital room.

These are stories Jordan never offered to the man writing his biography. During a time when Jordan's private life often came under attack, it was stories like these he withheld from the press.

The career of Jordan the basketball player is over, at least for now. America is not happy. The news is being treated much like the death of Elvis.

"Chicago is in mourning," said one senior at the University of Illinois. "I think they are going to drape the city in black."

We feel as if our hero is gone. Our winter nights will no longer seem less gloomy as Jordan enters our living rooms. Tickets to see the Bulls no longer have the same value. The NBA is different.

But Jordan the hero, Jordan the person, will be with us for a long time.

Melissa Megliola is a senior industrial engineering major

COLLEGE STATION, TX
 OCT 13
 MAIL CALL
 1993

Limiting graduation seats alienates Aggies

This letter is to express my amazement and honest disappointment in the decision to once again limit graduation ceremony attendance.

It was quite clear that limiting attendance at previous ceremonies was a public relations nightmare with families and

alumni of our institution. Texas A&M officials even admitted openly this was not a viable solution and would most probably add an additional ceremony for future exercises.

The families of our students have spent thousands of dollars to send their children to this university, not to mention the fact that their tax dollars pay the salaries of the employees at A&M as well. It is quite puzzling to me, after the administration clearly stated this most likely would not hap-

pen again, that December graduation is limited in attendance.

I hope administration officials can live with the fact that grandparents, aunts and uncles will have to be told they cannot attend the graduation ceremony of someone they love because adequate facilities are not available.

My question is this, "Why can't A&M add additional ceremonies to accommodate this problem?"

It may mean more work for the University, but are we not here for our students? I sincerely hope there is a reasonable explanation for this action. I also hope that administration officials are not purposefully avoiding this problem to illustrate A&M's need for a more adequate facility (to the State) at the expense of the students and their families.

Be advised, this limiting of attendance to A&M graduation ceremonies could alienate students from supporting this in-

stitution after they have gone. What could possibly justify allowing students and families to have a bad impression of A&M at graduation? The saying "you learn from your mistakes" should be heeded here. A&M admitted making this mistake once... why do it again?

Darrell R. Pickard
 Agent, Class of '85

Pedestrians shouldn't second-guess bikers

I was riding my bike north on Houston Street. As I was approaching the Post Office, a girl looked straight at me and then walked out in front of me from the right. I thought nothing of it and corrected my course to pass behind her.

A moment later, she looked up in horror and stopped in my new line of travel. It was too late to do anything but lessen the impact. My handlebar caught her elbow and I was pitched headlong into the street (luckily, not in front of any cars).

The damage was minor. I got a few scrapes, a bruised foot and a torn bike seat (a mere \$30). She may have a bruise on her elbow.

The point of the story is this: Don't try to second guess a biker. We generally know what we're doing. If she hadn't panicked, that little mishap would not have occurred. She showed all the composure of a rabbit that gets killed on the highway because he freezes in your headlights, after you've already committed to that swerve that would've missed him.

One more bike means one less car.

Eric Holbrook
 Class of '96

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