

ms, Sit up and take notice, 'experts' often make mistakes

Gym was my least favorite class when I was in junior high school. It's not like I was unathletic or a computer jockey with no desire for physical education — only banks had computers back then anyway. Instead a passionate distaste for sit-ups drove my hatred. All other exercises geared toward warming us up for some activity were tolerable at the least and almost enjoyable by comparison. Beads of sweat would roll down my face as some classmate held my feet and kept my knees from bending. Sit-ups were Satan's invention.

At some point, however, between eighth grade and my freshman year in the Corps, S. tan's rules governing kinesiological torture changed. No longer would Coach Beerbelly insist on straight knees as the method to increase pain and effort on hapless post-pubescents. And no longer would the demons in charge of official Army pain for my fish buddies and me insist on the old-fashioned sit-up from hell during physical training (PT).

Apparently some doctor or physical exercise guru with the ear of the president and all of gymnasium-dom decided that "conventional" straight-kneed sit-ups were painful, traumatic to the lower back and unnecessary for proper muscle development. This was a blessed

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proclamation and it liberated all youths held prisoner by this policy. What was regarded as an accepted common practice had been changed with the wave of an "expert." They were wrong about sit-ups. Satan lost a big one.

Throughout the '80s jogging became the exercise of choice for almost all Americans who could afford a warm-up suit, a pair of running shoes and a Walkman, which at the time cost over \$100. Otherwise intelligent and interesting people actually subscribed to jogging magazines. But — Oops! — it happened again.

Somebody on an important medical staff determined that jogging was actually harmful to your body. All that pounding and stress of one's entire body weight on only several square inches of foot space was doing irreparable damage to

bones and cartilage. It turned out that your grandma walking to the store each day was actually getting better exercise than someone jogging a few miles. In addition to this finding, there were occasional news stories of 40-year-old accomplished joggers dying of heart attacks, sometimes while jogging. Well, this was all the excuse many Americans needed to head off the social pressure to jog, not to mention buying a bunch of "training" garb. They were wrong about jogging. The '80s version of rollerblading was dead.

Somewhere around that time, books on low-fat living began to appear in stores all over the country, and slowly restaurants began to offer healthy items. It started with low-fat salad dressing, then grilled chicken. Nobody wanted to die and it looked like "low fat" was the way to keep the Grim Reaper at a scythe's length.

Margarine became king of the butter dish all over America. It was marketed on TV as though butter was cyanide spread. Every ad for the stuff remarked how deliciously similar it was to butter, but wouldn't kill your family like butter would. Because of this widespread belief, I grew up a margarine child and didn't even know the difference between the two. When I first sampled real butter I couldn't enjoy it for visions of arteries hardening in my mind.

A couple of weeks ago I saw a news story which reported how some medical researchers have determined that margarine is worse for your body than butter because it contains a type of fat that butter doesn't. What the hell?! I and countless others have been avoiding butter like the plague, and now this? What about all the Americans the margarine industry employs? Were we all just plain duped? Could we have helped it?

The events I have described happen to be those of the nature of health and medical advice, but the problem is really much larger. A small number of specialized professionals deciding how we are going to live and by which method. It doesn't matter so much whether the determining group means well or not, the outcome is still the same. Much of America doesn't understand triglycerides or tax law, health care reforms or fuel injectors, and therefore must remain totally trusting of those who do.

I guess the moral of this story is that we should go on eating what we want, exercising in the manner we choose and assume those who are supposed to know what they're talking about might not know anything at all.

Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy student

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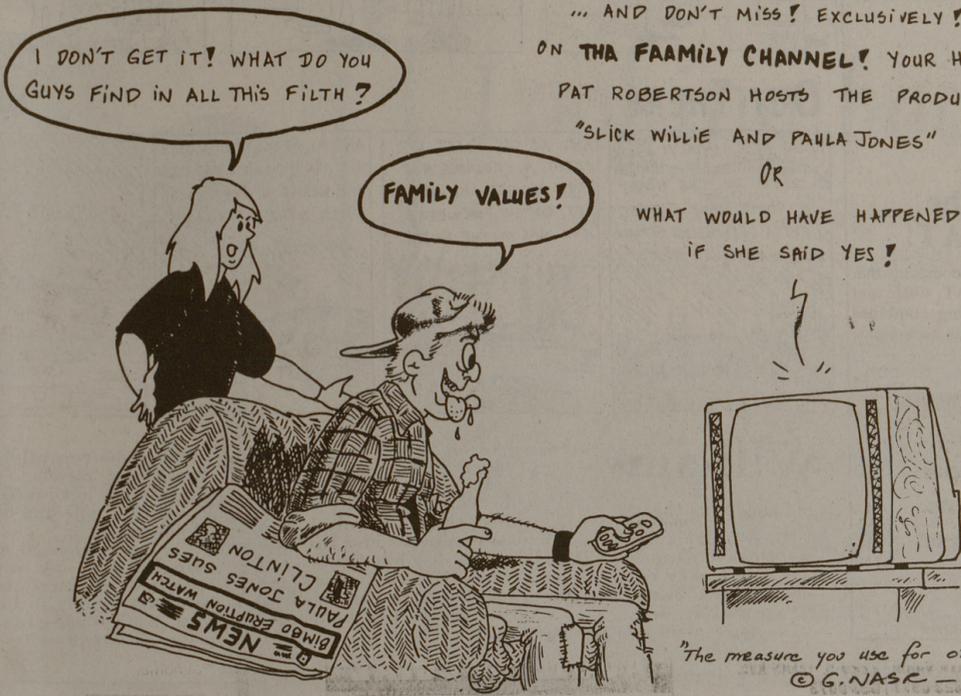
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Model adds weight to feminine ideal

Magazine's choice of 50 most beautiful people includes welcome surprise

Dancing lightly around a personal ban on self-debasement, I would like to share with you a heartening lesson I have learned. My butt is not really too big.

I prepared to flip through the "Fifty Most Beautiful People" issue of People magazine the other day, steeling myself to scoff and devalue the inevitable images of all the pencil-thin women who would doubtless wiggle across the pages while I sat wondering if I could really survive on a grapefruit a day.

I secretly wish I was not a size 14, but loudly proclaim to all that it is healthy and legal to actually weigh more than my shoe size. Before I even opened the magazine, I condemned the whole American way of life for women and the perpetuation of the famine victim look as the "feminine ideal."

Publications and advertising all seem to be dedicated to the maximum exposure of the gamine, twiggy archetype of a woman.

I reminded myself of historical lessons. Weight was desirable in women in older times as it signified a certain wealth attached to the woman's family. This is how I have managed to convince myself I am related to the Trumps even though I shop at the Twin City Mission.

As an industrialized nation, America has the honor to boast that almost everyone has enough to eat, and it seems the notion would still hold true that fat meant well-stationed in life and therefore result in more popularity. It seems being really poor is "in" this year.

I scowled darkly at the People, balking at a promise I made to myself to avoid popular literature and therefore evade the inevitable comparison of myself to images I see in magazines. But I decided I did not have anything else suitable to read, even though I was sitting in a library. Call it a streak of

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masochism. I opened up my Twinkies and the magazine and watched the Bone Parade.

At first, it was as I expected. The advertisements featured poster-women for the National Society of Young Bulimics. I wanted to boot my perfectly good but high-fat dinner. As I went further, though, I got a big, fat shock. There's a fat woman on page 80 who qualified as one of the magazine's Most Beautiful People this year. Imagine. Her butt is as big as mine and she is raking in all kinds of cash as a model for the Ford Agency. Her name is Emme and she measures 40-32-42. Most people on campus would call her a bus. Mainstream People calls her a success.

Emme's picture is a photographic reproduction of "The Large Odalisque," an 1814 painting by Ingres which held for many years as the ultimate standard of female beauty. A few women, (like me), still cling to the image in the painting as a reminder to themselves that there was a time when women were admired for curvature rather than negative space.

Mildly encouraged by this new image in a periodical other than the Delta Burke Quarterly, I moved on. "Maybe I can take my 20 extra pounds to the Ford Modeling Agency," I mused. I turned the page and there

was Heather Locklear, a size 3, "despite a taste for Taco Bell." I spit Twinkies all over myself trying to think about looking like Heather Locklear. The image of a marshmallow squeezing through a hair net comes to mind.

I consoled myself and turned back to read more about women's newest anti-hero and most men's horror. In the article, I find a fact that points to some bizarre probability-tampering. According to People, over 60 percent of American women wear a size 12 or larger. Why, then, are more than 90 percent of the women in magazines not anywhere near a size 12?

On "A Current Affair" a couple of years ago, there was a special on a woman who got fired as a nurse because of her weight. After a lengthy lawsuit, she went on to form a group of fat people who don't want to be called "overweight" because that implies that there is a weight standard that they should live up to. A line drawn in the whipped cream, so to speak, that once crossed, dooms one to being abnormal. She stated that she would actually prefer to be called "fat" because there is no implied boundary she has perniciously crossed just to gross everyone out. Could this become a mainstream idea?

Juliette Binoche, a French actress who also made it as one of the Fifty Most Beautiful People, put it best. Americans are all crazy about looking good, getting face-lifts and pulling an Oprah, but she says, "When you are in the dark, everybody looks the same."

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EDITORIAL

Clinton inconsistency

Pragmatic policies sacrifice promises

Will the real Bill Clinton please stand up?

To the dismay of human rights advocates and the delight of American businesses, President Clinton announced last week that he is renewing China's most favored nation (MFN) status and will no longer require improvement of human rights conditions as a requirement for maintaining current economic relations.

Meanwhile, Clinton signed the abortion clinic access bill into law, which mandates prison terms of six months to life and fines up to \$250,000 for people convicted of blocking access to abortion clinics or threatening patients and employees of the clinics.

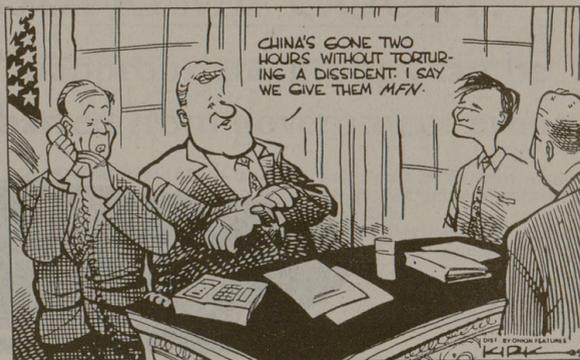
While Clinton should be commended for supporting the clinic access law, which is designed to curtail acts of violence by anti-abortion extremists, the president's flip-flop on China's trade status brings into question his resolve to follow through on the rest of his campaign promises.

During the 1992 election, Clinton chastised President Bush for placing economic concerns over human rights and pledged to revoke China's MFN status unless China made significant progress on human rights. This is not the first time that President Clinton has done a complete about-face from the promises of Candidate Clinton. He similarly criticized Bush during the election for his policies toward Haiti and Bosnia, yet has adopted those policies as his own.

To justify his most recent turnaround, Clinton said, "To those who argue that in view of China's human rights abuses we should revoke MFN status, let me ask you the same question I have asked myself: will we do more to advance the cause of human rights if China is isolated, or if our nations are engaged in a growing web of political and economic cooperation and contacts?"

This gross rationalization demonstrates how economic concerns have taken precedence over human rights in foreign policy decision-making yet again.

Clinton's latest Harris Poll approval rating, which has dropped six points since early April indicates only 42 percent of the respondents liked Clinton's performance. Whether his reversal is for better or worse, he cannot continue to break promises and exhibit such inconsistency in policy decisions without further losing credibility.



Mail Call

Texas stalking law protects victims

In November of 1992, I introduced Senate Bill 25 — the so-called stalking bill — to which I received the support of all 30 of my Senate colleagues who signed on as cosponsors. Representative Brian McCall carried this legislation in the House of

Representatives, where it received similar support. The intent of the bill, which was eventually signed into law by Governor Ann Richards in March of 1993, was to address a void in state law that prohibited law enforcement officials from intervening to protect citizens who were being harassed, annoyed, alarmed, abused, tormented, or embarrassed by a stalker. Previous law only allowed police to

come to a stalking victim's aid after a crime had been committed — which too often meant the assault, rape, or murder of the victim.

The language of this stalking bill centered around California's anti-stalking law, which in 1990 became the first of its kind in the United States. To ensure that this new law could truly protect Texas citizens, I met with stalking victims from all over Texas, as well as their family members, victim's rights advocates, law enforcement officers, and prosecuting attorneys.

Reports I have received from individuals and law enforcement officials in rural and urban parts of the state indicate that the anti-stalking law is a

useful tool. Hundreds of individuals have benefited from the protections afforded by Senate Bill 25, that just over a year ago would not have been available to them.

A meeting of the National Criminal Justice Association's Conference of Western States revealed that Texas is well ahead of the other 49 states in the amount of protection provided by its anti-stalking law (all 50 states now have anti-stalking laws in one form or another). Texas law includes two provisions not often found on other state's laws books; not only does it cover threats made to the intended victim, but also threats against their family and personal property. Further, the Texas

law allows judges to place conditions on an individual's release-on-bond and probation and allows the Texas Parole Board to do the same for parolees. Such conditions include disallowing any form of contact with the victim.

Stalking is a crime that occurs in many forms, involving not only individuals stalking persons of the opposite sex, but also stalking persons of the same sex and, as seen last week in Austin, adults stalking juveniles. Stalking is a complicated issue, making it imperative that the law's effectiveness be continuously monitored to ensure that Texas citizens receive the maximum possible protection from stalkers. If our anti-stalk-

ing law need to be strengthened, the Texas Legislature must make this a priority, while continuing to work with other states as well as federal agencies who deal with this issue.

Senator Mike Moncrief
Austin

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