

OPINION

Humans worship 'golden calf' of technology

It is an obvious sociological fact that human beings have a tendency to worship. And we'll worship just about anything.

God, Allah, living creatures, Jesus, wisdom and Satan are the favorites of those who believe and practice religions based on particular ancient scripture.

But as the veneration of man expand toward us from history, we find that only technology has attached itself to every man and will follow wherever he goes.

Whether you believe in the evolutionary history of man or the Judeo-Christian version makes no difference. Undisputably, man makes sacred what he might otherwise consider ordinary, including the concept of time or even disk drives.

These sacred objects are almost impossible to live without when their conception becomes a commonplace item.

Perhaps the most famous biblical example of this brand of worship is the story of the golden calf. A long time ago, a bunch of people got together, melted down their gold trinkets and made a god.

There was nothing particularly special about calves to those people. Nor was there value in gold other than as a medium of exchange and its glittery appearance. But when one was fashioned out of the other, special meaning became attached, and bad things happened to those who worshiped it.

Other examples of worshiped objects and ideas

FRANK STANFORD
COLUMNIST



throughout the history of man include the sun, the moon, rain, the sea, astrology, sorcery, cats, ravens, killer whales, fire, volcanoes, statues of anything you can imagine and even people — "special" people who, I might add, took a tinkle just like the rest of us.

Everything I have mentioned and plenty of other things as well, have all, at one time or another, been bowed to by people.

Men have died in battle for them, and women have been sacrificed to them. Societies have even been founded upon them.

But by far the most worshiped aspect of humanity — that no man literally bows individually, but as a species — is technology.

The god of technology touches every one of us on earth. Since the invention of the simplest sundial, chronological contraptions have ruled our very lives.

It's hard to imagine that a timepiece might have such power. However, if every clock on the face of the earth were removed and people were reduced to eye-balling the sun to estimate time, anarchy surely would follow.

At one time, man survived just fine without clocks. After all, a clock is just some melted gold, fashioned into a tiny machine and then sold — a machine we've worshiped since its conception.

An economy as complex and diverse as ours could never survive without clocks.

Stock exchanges would crumble almost imme-

diately, as the closing of the day's business could never be agreed upon.

Banks, employment, factories, shipments, airline flights, classes and everything that uses a schedule or is affected by them would become chaotic.

Clocks are not going to disappear from the earth, and it's almost impossible to imagine life without them.

However, at the rate technology is progressing, we undoubtedly are in an era before what may be the invention of the next golden calf or the next clock.

The god of technology touches every one of us. Since the invention of the simplest sundial, chronological contraptions have ruled our very lives.

In just the last few years, technology has surged into an era of mind-boggling possibilities. In the span of my short life, slide rules have given way to calculators. TRS-80 computers with "amazing" 4K memory have given way to giant computer systems and the Internet.

Word processor programs and portable laptop computers have made the use of typewriters almost obsolete.

But computers are just plastic, you know. Plastic, glass and assorted metals — including gold. They are melted, then shaped and finally sold to

worshippers. And we definitely worship them. The world's major stock exchanges function only with the use of computers.

Banks, employment, factories, shipments, airline flights, many classes, most business operations and all governmental operations owe their daily existence to computers.

What if every computer on the face of the earth were removed? Could we survive?

Of course we could. Our parents and even their recent ancestors, primitive man, survived just fine without computers ... and even clocks.

We would just go back to card catalogues, typewriters and slide rules.

However, just like life without clocks might seem utterly unimaginable to us, life without computer technology will seem equally impossible to future generations.

In this day and age, technology is much more interesting and exciting than an inanimate golden calf. We can fly to the moon and even engineer or alter new forms of life.

But the theme of the well-known biblical story, whether historically correct or not, still holds true with today's technological golden calf.

Special meaning should be given to important non-material entities — whatever those are for you — not objects fashioned from plastic, glass or gold.

Because bad things will eventually happen to those who worship them.

Frank Stanford is a philosophy graduate student

THE BATTALION

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EDITORIAL AWKWARD AWARD

G. Gordon Liddy should not have received a free-speech award.

Last Saturday, radio talk show host and convicted felon G. Gordon Liddy received a free-speech award at the National Association of Radio Talk Show Hosts convention in Houston.

Irony abounded as Liddy, who thumbed his nose at the law during the Watergate scandal, was honored for championing one of our country's most cherished rights.

Liddy, whose talk show is heard on more than 200 stations nationwide, did not deserve this award.

In choosing Liddy, the association has demonstrated a lack of understanding of the difference between the constructive use of free speech and the destructiveness of irresponsible, reckless speech.

Liddy's talk show has covered topics such as how to construct a bomb, the best way to shoot federal law enforcement officers, and target practice with pictures of President and Mrs. Clinton. In light of the Oklahoma City bombing and the attacks on the White House, such topics

are neither funny nor appropriate, and they definitely do not merit an award.

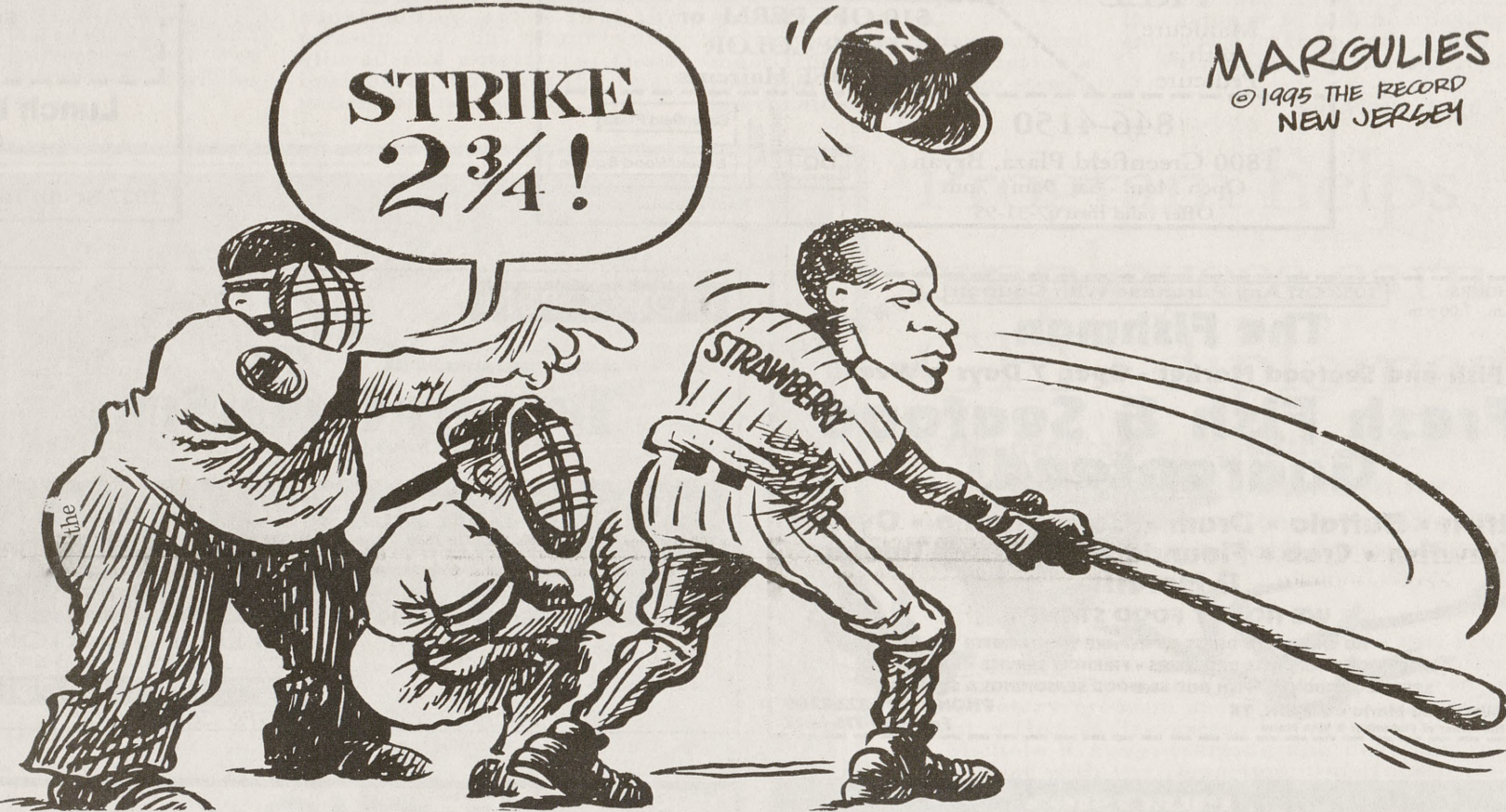
Particularly unfortunate about Liddy's selection is the fact that in the past the association has given the award to deserving people. They include former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo and Salman Rushdie, who risked his life by expressing his ideas.

Several members of the association were so outraged by this year's choice that they boycotted the ceremony.

Apparently, the association chose Liddy in order to bring attention to itself. It succeeded, but in doing so, it reduced its stature and the stature of the award to Liddy's low level.

Freedom of speech is a precious thing. Even today, people around the world die fighting for this freedom, and billions of people cannot speak freely without fear of punishment.

It is a shame that Liddy and the Association of Radio Talk Show Hosts chose to make a mockery of free speech.



MARGULIES
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NEW JERSEY

Schools must educate children about sex

In a time where some doctors are shot for performing abortions, thousands of teenagers are having children and an incurable virus is killing people every day, the adults of the nation still are afraid of talking with their kids about sex.

A few months ago, parents and teachers debates on the adoption of a few state-recommended health textbooks concerned parents in the College Station Independent School District.

Parents were concerned the books did not adequately emphasize abstinence and did not present contraceptives in an appropriate fashion.

Parents seem to fear that their kids are learning too much and becoming even more curious about sex. This fear is insignificant compared to the dangers when kids don't know enough about sex. The risk of AIDS, diseases and unplanned pregnancies is too great to deny children the facts they deserve.

It's great to preach abstinence. Not having sex is the best and only guaranteed way of avoiding sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies.

But how realistic is abstinence? Teenagers are curious. They have an overabundance of hormones raging through their bodies. And when someone tells them not to do something, they often desire to do it even more.

Teenagers tend to believe they are invincible, that they can't get pregnant or contract a STD. They believe it just won't happen to them. And if parents pretend sex doesn't exist, it will only re-enforce these myths.

All parents and educators would like to believe their kids are not having sex. They would also like to believe things like pregnancy and

STDs won't touch their lives. Unfortunately, this isn't true.

Coming from a typical, suburban middle-class area, I used to think that no one I knew would be affected by these situations. But having friends who have had abortions or gone in for AIDS testing has convinced me otherwise.

For years, the religious right has wanted the Constitution to serve as a list of what is and isn't OK according to Christian beliefs. They keep telling us the nation has lost its moral standards. But whose standards are we talking about here?

While it was "bad" for people to have sex before marriage in the '50s and early '60s, premarital sex has now become almost acceptable. And whether it's acceptable to religious leaders or the PTA, it's still happening.

Many claim that teaching children about sex sends the message that teens are expected to have sex. This isn't giving today's youth enough credit. There are many who choose abstinence and many who want to wait until they're "in love" before they have sex.

On the other hand, there are many who do have casual sex at early ages. We should arm these kids with the information that can prevent unplanned pregnancies and STDs.

While sex education used to be a responsibility left only to the parents, many are not giving their kids the facts. Some parents probably feel that not telling their children about sex will prevent their kids from engaging in it. However, kids just don't learn enough about sex from home.

If the parents won't teach them, they will look for the knowledge elsewhere. The best lessons usually are gained through experience, but this is no way to learn about pregnancy or STDs.

Today, it is largely the responsibility of the

schools to teach children about sex. They should accomplish this in the most direct and honest way possible.

Dr. Joycelyn Elders, the former U.S. surgeon general, discussed sex education in a recent Playboy interview.

"We need to teach responsibility so kids can make responsible decisions," she said. "Some will choose to abstain; we should support that choice. Some will not, and we need to support that choice, too."

Elders stirred up controversy when she spoke of masturbation as a healthy and normal part of sexuality.

Elders approached sex education by emphasizing the teaching of responsibility. "Sometimes our children don't understand and appreciate the consequences" of becoming sexually active.

Many factors play a role in why teens become sexually active. A typical one is curiosity. We can teach them that curiosity is okay, but that sex is worth waiting for. We should teach them the dangers of promiscuity, and to be responsible if they decide to experiment.

Another reason for teens to have sex is to gain acceptance from a group or love from another person. We should teach them to accept themselves and each other unconditionally and stress that sex and love are not always present at the same time.

Teaching our children about sex, contraception and STDs won't prevent all of them from having sex, getting pregnant or contracting a disease. It will only help reduce the numbers.

Because many parents are not adequately teach sex education, kids are not getting all the facts. It has become the schools' responsibility and the children deserve all the information we can give them.

Margaret Gordon is a junior genetics major



MAIL CALL

PBS shows bring in much revenue

This letter is in response to the pro-con column on June 27.

The strongest evidence in favor of Barnett's stance is Zane's emotional tirade.

The lack of any facts or quotes and the complete begging of the question by the article only proves that PBS has changed for the worse over the last few years.

Both Sesame Street and Barney are commercial hits that draw large revenues that should be applied to the show(s) rather than more of the commercialism that each uses.

It is difficult to explain why shows that generate millions of dollars in sales each year need to be on the public dole.

Ed Evans
Class of '96

A&M tennis camp enjoyed by youth

I would like to extend a very sincere thanks to the staff, coaches and camp counselors at the TAMU Summer Tennis Camp.

My nephew, Jamison, attended last week and had a hard bout of home-sickness for the first couple of days of the camp.

Due to the attentiveness the group counselors, my nephew got over his loneliness, stuck it out, improved his tennis and most importantly enjoyed himself and gained a bit more self confidence.

Again thank you for turning what could have been an awkward childhood memory into a very positive event.

Ronald Rushing
Graduate student

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