

## Justice almost served to Smith

David Smith said for months that he wanted the mother of his murdered children to die.

Last week, she was found guilty of killing their sons, and no one can blame him for feeling that way.

But in a book he released last week, David Smith said, "I don't want to see Susan die, but if it happens, then so be it."

The jury's decision came down last week, and Susan Smith's life was spared.

If it had been a unanimous decision, the jury could have sentenced the convicted murderer to death. Instead, Smith was sentenced to life imprisonment with eligibility for parole.

The jury — or at least certain members of it — was right to spare Smith's life.

When Smith first admitted to killing her children, we were shocked and disheartened.

Despite her inability to look into anyone's eyes when making her pleas for help and her ever-shifting story about how her children were taken from her by a car-jacker, most people believed her story.

And when the truth was known, we felt betrayed.

None of us could feel the sting of that betrayal more than her ex-husband, the father of the murdered children.

The people of Union, S.C. also felt the incredible loss more than the rest of the nation. When Smith was taken into custody, mobs of people surrounded her car and phys-

ically and verbally expressed their anger and confusion.

How could they be expected to forgive her crime?

And yet David Smith says he does not want her to die. The mob has given way to a sensible decision by a responsible jury.

The people of Union were right to express their anger.

We should be expected to want the maximum penalty for a murderer like Susan Smith.

I think she should die, but then again, who am I to say?

I don't have some special wisdom that allows me to choose who should live and who should die.

And some people on the jury felt the same way. So they relied on more human abilities.

They tried to understand why Susan Smith would kill her sons.

A person must be sick to strap her boys into a car and let it drift slowly to the bottom of a lake.

But Smith was found to be competent to stand trial — she knows right from wrong.

So jurors probably thought of how she had been molested by her step-father when she was 15 years old.

They probably thought about the fact that she had slept with four different men in the months before she killed her sons — one of whom was her stepfather.

In the final judgment, they concluded she was a terrible person — possibly evil.

Their decision could not have been easy.

It would be convenient to wipe Susan

Smith from the face of the earth.

It would be great if the people in Union could forget what has put their small town on the map.

But the pain won't go away with the flip of a switch or the emptying of a syringe.

Susan Smith will be eligible for parole in 30 years at the age of 53. She has a long time to think about what she has done, and so do we.

Although it would be wrong to kill her, it would also be wrong to forget.

### This pitiful woman doesn't deserve the energy it would take to wish death upon her.

She is not the victim, Alex and Michael, her children are. She betrayed every person who has faith in human nature.

Complete justice would only be realized if parole was never offered to her.

This pitiful woman doesn't deserve the energy it would take to wish death upon her — much less the time and money it would take to fight through the years of appeals to enforce such a sentence.

The jury's action will let the family remember its innocent young boys, not some legal battle.

If David Smith has passed the point in his mourning where he wanted revenge, maybe we can, too.

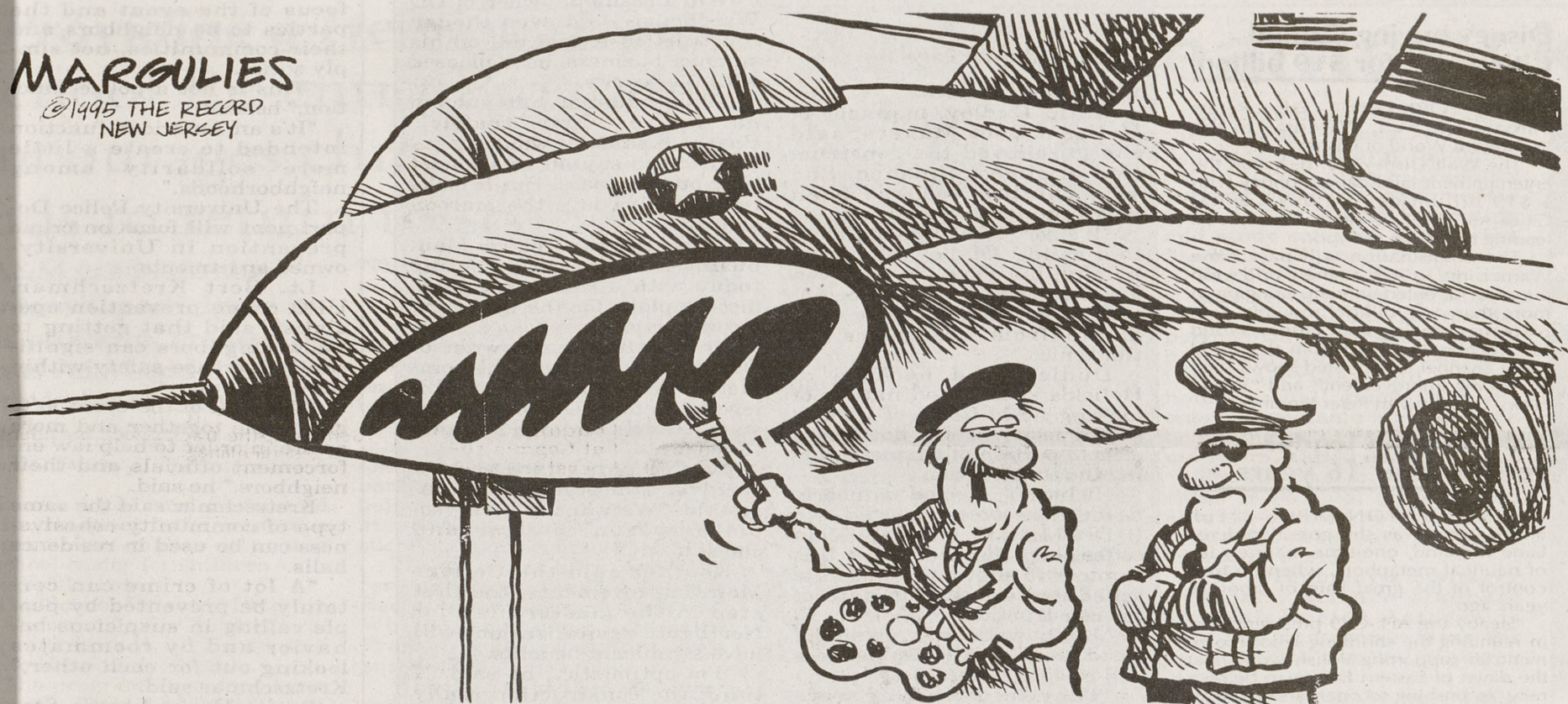
*Michael Landauer is a junior journalism major*

**MICHAEL LANDAUER**

AGGIELIFE EDITOR



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NEW JERSEY



**"It's the only way Congress would approve my National Endowment for the Arts grant ..."**

## Mercy killing provides end to pain, sorrow

In a nation where suicide and murder are both illegal, it is no surprise that the "right to die" movement is so controversial.

Euthanasia or "mercy killing" is the deliberate termination of the life of a person suffering from an incurable disease or ailment in a painless and compassionate way. It is performed out of humanity and concern for the people involved.

Many times, the choice is the patient's, but sometimes the choice is left to those who are close to the person suffering.

Passive euthanasia, as compared to active euthanasia, is a more humane process.

It involves the withholding of life-inducing drugs or treatment that could extend a person's life. Passive euthanasia simply allows nature to take its course.

The most well-known examples of active euthanasia are those performed by Dr. Jack Kevorkian and his "suicide machines."

Even though he has been arrested several times for his actions, Kevorkian continues to help people who want to end their lives. His only patients

**JULIE THOMAS**

STAFF WRITER



are those who turn to suicide as a last resort. They generally are extremely grateful for his assistance, patience and compassion.

Earlier this year, the Michigan Court of Appeals ordered Kevorkian not to assist in any more suicides in the state.

The three-judge panel decided that the doctor's "words and actions amount to an advertisement for criminal and unethical conduct."

This ruling is ridiculous. Kevorkian makes death as easy and painless as possible for these people who would most likely otherwise die in terrible agony.

In this respect, Kevorkian should be considered a hero.

Many people believe mercy killing can be compared to abortion — one can either be pro-life or pro-choice.

Pro-life advocates call for keeping the patient alive, no matter what the cost.

Although the laws concerning passive euthanasia are often ambiguous, it is an option

that has existed for some time by doctors and family members.

Most agree the quality of life is a crucial criterion in the decision whether to take extraordinary measures in saving or extending the life of a patient who is critically ill.

The main question is, "Who should decide?"

If all values hold true, it should be the patient's choice. If the patient does not have the capability to decide for themselves, then the patient's family should decide.

### No one should have to live in excruciating pain for the rest of their lives.

Many people believe that if this form of suicide is legalized, there will be a tremendous increase in people choosing not to suffer.

If the media and government would just let things be, the number of suicides would more than likely decrease.

As our population ages, and more and more people can expect to die of painful diseases and illnesses, we should re-examine our cultural view of

death.

Instead of perceiving death as a morbid concept, we should see it as the end to a life well-lived.

A living will is one way to make sure that your own wishes are fulfilled.

In these wills, you can appoint a "benefactor" who has the right to decide between life and death if you cannot make the decision for yourself.

No one should have to live in excruciating pain, to live each day knowing the next day will not be any better.

These people want a way out; they want their suffering to end. Euthanasia can provide this for them. Their pain will cease, and they can die in peace and with dignity.

Think about the children born with terminal diseases, people suffering from heart disease, cancer or AIDS.

Should these people be forced to live a life of pain? Should they have the right to choose between life and death? Should they have the right to die? Should they at least have a choice?

Of course they should.

*Julie Thomas is a junior accounting major*

## THE BATTALION

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## EDITORIAL

### BALANCING ACT

#### Congress should remember students while trying to balance the budget.

Yesterday, the White House announced that the budget deficit for this year will be \$33 billion lower than was predicted originally.

Hopefully, members of Congress will see this news as an indication that important federal programs, such as federally funded student loans, need not be eliminated or cut as drastically in order to balance the budget.

Much attention has been given in the past few years to the perceived need to balance the federal budget.

Republicans are pushing for a 7-year plan to balance it. The Clinton administration and congressional Democrats claim the Republican plan cuts too much, too fast, and that the budget can be balanced in a 10-year period with fewer cutbacks.

Because of this recent economic development, the Clinton administration has changed the Democratic prediction to 9 years.

Balancing the budget should be one of the top priorities of both Congress and the administration. The nation's \$4 trillion national debt continues to increase, and many federal programs are growing uncontrollably.

However, Congress should be cautious in its spending cuts. It should not slash spending so hastily that it undermines vital federal programs.

This past year, many Republicans called for the elimination of federally funded student loans as part of their budget-balancing package.

While serious attention should be given to the deficit problem, the adverse effects of these programs' elimination and cutbacks would burden students to a point that cannot be justified by the level of savings gained.

Many students depend on federally financed student loans to attend college. To deny students access to this program would deny many a chance to further their education.

However, many other important federal programs can be found under the same ax.

Programs ranging from free school lunches to AIDS research all face the possibility of either cutbacks or elimination.

Hopefully, yesterday's announcement of the lower deficit will cause Congress to reconsider its actions and will allow for more gradual and responsible budget adjustments.



## MAIL CALL

### Congress has not forgotten students

I am responding to Toby Boenig's guest column which appeared recently in The Battalion on June 29.

Boenig stated in his column, "The U.S. Congress is proposing major cuts in Pell grants as well as Stafford loans," adding that "There is a chance that Congress could decrease the funding for Pell grants." Also, he stated, "They [the Congress] have forgotten the importance of higher education."

I can assure Boenig that I have not forgotten, nor has the Republican Congress forgotten, the importance of higher education.

We all recognize that our nation's economy will advance, and our standard of living will improve, only if the American people are well educated.

We are all committed to ensuring that no young American is denied the opportunity to obtain a college education solely because of his or her economic circumstances.

Boenig charges that "the U.S. Congress is proposing major cuts in Pell grants as well as Stafford loans," and that "there is a chance that Congress could decrease the funding for Pell grants."

I feel obliged to inform Boenig that the FY 1996 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education authorization bill to be considered in the House next week authorizes significant increases in both the Direct Student Loan program as well as the Pell grant program.

In addition, the bill authorizes an increase in the maximum award that can be granted to a student under the Pell grant program.

The budget resolution, which passed the House recently, would eliminate the traditional pre-graduation interest deferral on Stafford Loans. Unlike the current system, in which interest on Stafford Loans is deferred until students graduate from

college, under the budget resolution, interest on student loans would begin accruing when the loans secured.

Regrettably, this change is necessary for two reasons.

The first is that for too many years, Congress has simply refused to live within its means — and the result is a \$4.8 trillion national debt.

The Republican-controlled 104th Congress is committed to reducing the cost, size and intrusiveness of government.

If we are to bring federal spending under control, all federal programs — including federal student financial aid programs — must be scrutinized to see if expenses to taxpayers can be reduced.

The second reason this change is necessary is the high default rate among Stafford Loan recipients.

The change mandated by the budget resolution will save taxpayers an estimated \$12.4 billion over the next 5 years. For the typical student, the change will increase his or her monthly loan repayment by \$21 to \$45, depending on the amount of money borrowed.

Unfortunately, in recent years, too many college graduates have forgotten that the responsibility to repay student loans goes hand-in-hand with the privilege of securing low-interest federal or private education loans.

I believe that Congress should do whatever it can to help young Americans attend college, if they wish to do so. At the same time, Congress has an obligation to taxpayers to balance the budget.

If we can achieve that ambitious goal, we can reduce long-term interest rates by up to 2 percentage points — thereby allowing more Americans to attend college, to purchase cars, to buy homes, etc. more cheaply than they could otherwise.

I hope this information is helpful to Boenig, and The Battalion's many other readers.

*Jack Fields  
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