

Monday • July 21, 1997

American-made television

Extremist views persist on MTV, C-SPAN; CNN represents middle man

Truth, justice and the American way used to be touted as similar ideals. In the 1950s, Superman pursued and defended these three things every day on television.

In the 1990s, Americans have come to expect a little less from their television heroes. The television climate today is blending the American way into a medium composed of elements of two diametrically opposed extremes of the American consciousness.

This middle ground American way fields an interesting blend, deeply rooted in the opposing natures of C-SPAN and MTV.

There can be no better pair of opposites. C-SPAN is known for its gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House of Representatives; MTV is known for its gavel-to-gavel coverage of every musician whose been indicted or arrested. Both channels try to play as few music videos as possible.

C-SPAN offers real, uncensored, unanalyzed rhetoric straight from the mouths of politicians, non-fiction authors and weird people such as Janet Reno. MTV offers unreal, censored, overanalyzed rhetoric from the mouths of record producers, music artists and weird people such as Marilyn Manson.

Because they are both cable networks, there is an element of competition involved. MTV offers a program that features a bunch of young men and women living together in London, screaming at each other about peanut butter and dirty clothes.

C-SPAN offers a program that features a bunch of old men and women living together in London, screaming at each other about taxation and NATO expansion. Of course, there's more than "The Real World" and "Prime Minister's Questions" to the success of both of these networks pinning the American public between rock music and hard political reality.

C-SPAN appeals to the collective dis-

trust of centralized government that all Americans harbor to some extent. When politicians begin to assemble on Capitol Hill for another festive legislative hoe-down, people want to know what's going on. C-SPAN provides direct, simple and complete coverage of everything going down in the House of Representatives.

The network isn't perfect. Analysis by experts, although sometimes annoying, is necessary to develop healthy political views. C-SPAN offers the straight speeches, but without analysis, they don't provide a complete picture for all viewers.

More importantly, if the Senate floor and the House chamber are seen as sacred places where not many people can participate, then C-SPAN also serves an important para-social function for the viewer. Subconsciously, viewers easily can feel satisfied feeling that they fulfilled their civic duty just by watching the television.

MTV, on the other hand, has made a mint by playing commercials for rock bands 24 hours a day. Not only does this lower attention span significantly, but it also opens the door for specialty cable networks. Currently, an individual can receive everything from sexual advice to commentary on world events, including the latest pop hit as a soundtrack.

MTV embodies a pretty significant part of society's view of success. In every alternative video there is either a lust (disguised as love) or popularity motif revolving around a band's millions of screaming fans. Rap videos are even more notorious, as every rap star has an expensive car, a mansion and a few super models lying around the living room.

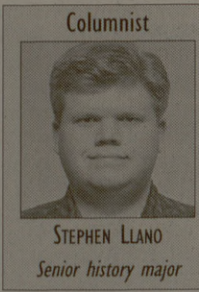
This new definition of success — where big problems such as drugs, gangs, unrequited love and sexual misconduct are resolved in less than five minutes — has caused Americans to expect fast food service for full

course problems. Other programs, such as MTV News specials do provide an important voice for young people, but they also act as tokens toward real societal change. Instead of taking up action themselves, young people are satisfied to see Kurt Loder talk about it for them.

Being sandwiched between MTV

and C-SPAN isn't all that bad. Most Americans tolerate a bologna blend of both: CNN. Complete with the raw sound bite from a speech or debate, the story is resolved in a couple of minutes. Add that catchy music, James Earl Jones, and traveling around the world in 30 minutes seems quite cool.

There should be a balance, but settling for straight mediocrity does not make for a balanced intellectual diet. Some sort of challenge to news material is necessary, but as long as people continue to define themselves as being in the middle, intellectual challenges will appear as sparsely as music videos.



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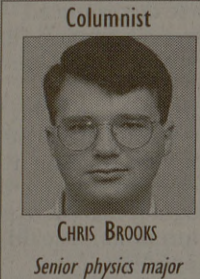
GRAPHIC: Brad Graeber

World environment faces uncertain timetable of crisis

"Save the planet. It's the only one we've got." This is just one of many over used cries for attention from brain dead celebrities. Occasionally, though, these people come up with a good idea. Conservation and recycling are ideas that need to be embraced by everyone — including conservative groups such as the Republican Party.

Everyone has an ancestor, usually a grandmother, who can be described as, "darning a sock until it could stand up by itself." Recycling, conservation and "saving for a rainy day" are time-honored traditions in this country. Perhaps Americans in the 19th century did not recycle and conserve the same things people in this day are concerned about, but the spirit was the same: Don't use something up that you might need later.

Many conservatives in this country, Rush Limbaugh being one of the more notable and vocal, decry conservation efforts as unneces-



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sary. These individuals might be right. But just because there is enough of something, is not an excuse to waste it. Conservatives claim to be holding to traditional American ideals, so they should embrace the "waste not, want not" philosophy of the past.

Again, every once in a while, the people on the west coast come up with a good cause. The hysteria over global warming, however, is as bad a cause as conservation is a good one. Dr. Steve Baum, assistant research scientist for the Department of Oceanography at Texas A&M, said that it will be at least 15 years before scientists can know whether or not global warming is a problem of critical proportions.

According to World Climate Report, the projected global warming for the next 100 years will cause approximately an eight inch rise in the sea level, which is a 0.08 inch rise per year. This is nothing significant. A good hurricane would not even bother itself with a 0.08 inch increase in sea level

while it is busy with its several feet per hour flood. It seems that no one can get worried about this.

Apparently there has been a 0.5 degree rise in the world's average temperature in the last 100 years — suggesting there is global warming. Whether it is a big deal or not, perhaps people should try to stop it. This would be a great idea if people were actually the cause.

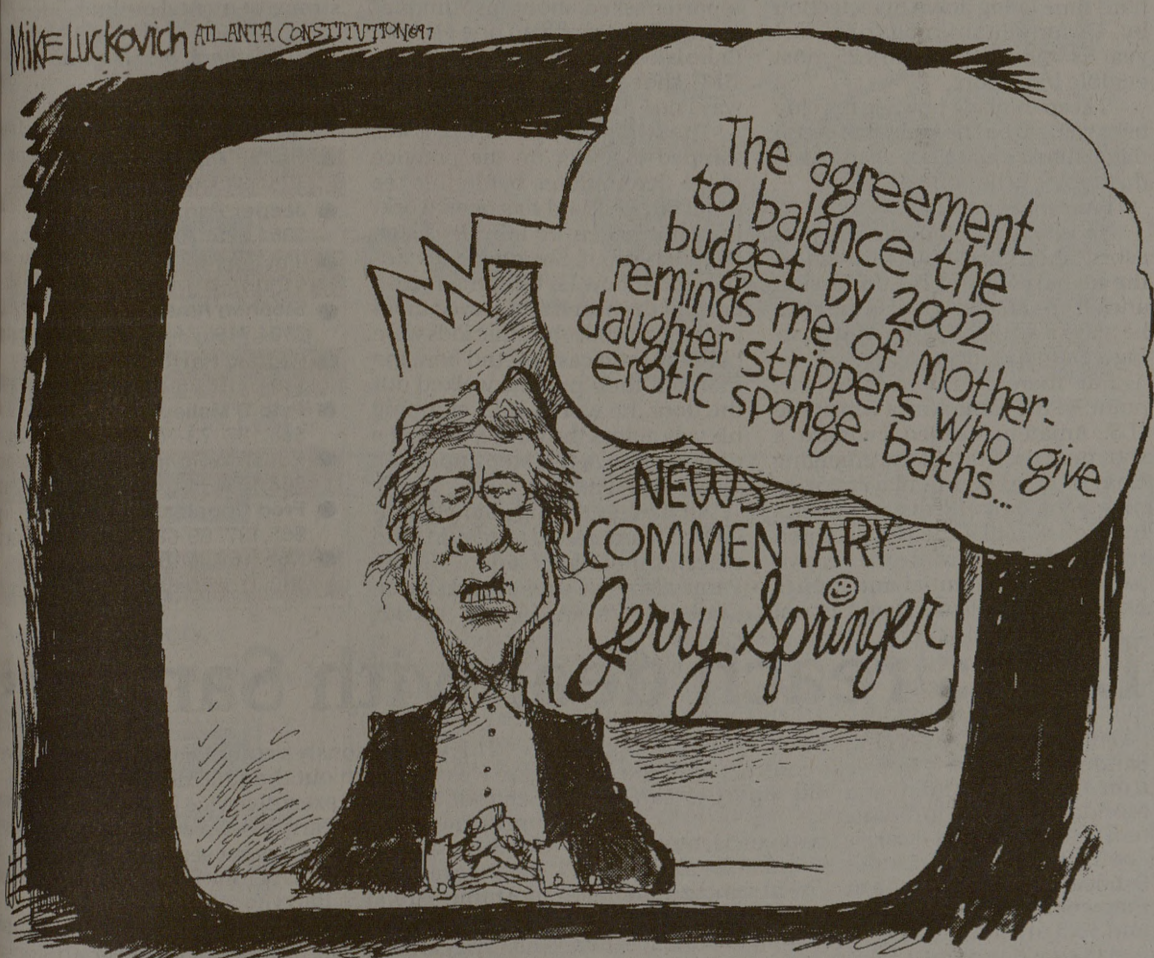
Sallie Baliunas, a Harvard astrophysicist, told the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources that evidence shows as much as one-half of the temperature change over the last 100 years can be attributed to changes in the output of the sun.

Although the warming of the sun is not necessarily a good thing, there is nothing humans can do about it. On the subject of natural changes in the world, some scientists say that the earth is technically still coming out of its last ice age. This translates loosely as, "some warming is to be expected," which means that if global warming is occurring, the government is very likely wasting its time and the taxpayers' money trying to fight it.

The \$250,000 question, though, is whether there is really global warming. Baum said that the preponderance of the data suggests that there is global warming, however World Climate Report wrote that the 20 years Earth has monitored its weather using satellites has shown no global warming trend. In fact, for the month of May 1997, global temperatures averaged 0.04 degree Celsius below normal.

Studies also show that ice sheets in Greenland have thickened since 1980. And although there have been plenty of heat waves lately, World Climate Report asserts that there have not been an unusual number of them, nor have any of them produced any amazing temperatures. Even the much touted heat wave of July 1995 was ranked 50th for this century.

Global warming is either a minor problem or a hoax — nothing to get excited about. This is not to say that being concerned about the environment is bad. People just need to be careful in picking battles that are worth fighting.



MAIL CALL

Kinesiology exists for coaching staff

In response to Chris Brooks' July 17 column:

The reason students have to take four kinesiology classes during our college careers is because the University needs to justify its unnecessarily large coaching staffs.

If it wasn't for kinesiology classes, these extra coaches wouldn't be affordable.

Perhaps this money could be better used for academic endeavors rather than huge coaching staffs.

Carl Roth
Class of '99

Students create parking problems

In response to last week's column and news stories on PTTS:

What a bunch of whiners. I'm a

parking officer at Texas A&M, and if you're interested, I can and will tell you what the problem involves.

The problem is that we have a large group of people who are spoiled or believe that the rules don't apply to them; or, since Mommy and Daddy are paying, why should they worry? After all, it was not their fault they received \$600 worth of citations and were towed twice this semester.

It's time for a little reality kids. We have between 27,000 and 28,000 parking spaces. I've been told that this is second in the nation behind Ohio State. We also have 42,000 students, 8,000 staff members and probably thousands of visitors or vendors on campus everyday — you do the math. Anyway, if it will help, here are a few simple rules:

1. Just because a patch of pavement is flat does not make it a parking space. If it does not look like a parking space, it isn't. The green stuff is grass, so don't park there either.

2. Read the parking rules. It's amazing, but someone actually wrote all this stuff down for you to comprehend.

3. A 30-minute space means 30 Earth minutes.

4. A University business space is for people conducting business for the University, not because "I'm going to class and

that's University business," or "I work for The Battalion."

5. Bike lanes are for bikes, not cars trucks or boats.

6. This one is simple guys. If your wheels are not going round and round, in our opinion you're parked — even if you are in the car.

7. If you are on campus, you need a permit. There is no place to park for any length of time without one (see rule #3).

8. About the check you wrote to pay for the eight tickets you had the first time we towed you ... well it bounced, and we're going to tow you again.

9. PTTS did not put your car there ... you did.

James Wallace
Class of '95

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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