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Lifestyles of the rich and famous

Marv Albert's celebrity status should not interfere with moral system of justice



MANDY CATER
assistant
opinion editor

In ancient Greece and Rome, commoners looked to the gods in awe. They were seen as examples and ideals, even if their behavior was not always exemplary. Today, we attach the same sort of status to celebrities, where, perhaps, even less warranted.

Marv Albert attained great success and fame in the sports arena. His familiar play-by-plays include trademark lines such as, "Rejected," "Downtown," and "He could go all the way." Albert's distinct voice and over-the-top enthusiasm have made him a household name, one of the most recognized American sportscasters.

Albert's recent visits to the media have been less favorable to say the least. The man with the voice now faces charges of forcible sodomy and assault. The Associated Press reports that "a 42-year-old woman with whom Albert had a 10-year sexual relationship alleges he hit her as many as 15 times and forced her to perform oral sex on him on Feb. 22." Some accounts claim Albert executed three-way sex with the woman and another man.

Naturally, Albert is denying any wrongdoing in the suit, which means it basically a case of his word against that of the alleged victim. In cases of sexual assault without witnesses, the two parties involved have the responsibility of creating a case based on evidence and their credentials.

Herein lies the problem for the accuser. Albert's celebrity status gives him

an automatic upper hand where credentials are concerned. Americans know Albert, which makes for a difficult jury selection for the prosecution. Albert's affiliation with entities such as NBC and the National Basketball Association give him friends in some pretty high places, which could potentially turn into a power play against the alleged victim.

Albert has taken that ever-important first step in assuring his innocence: hiring an attorney with a good track record. Roy Black has taken the helm of Albert's defense team. Black is perhaps best known for winning another high-profile sexual assault case — that of William Kennedy Smith.

Albert's attorneys are already hard at work trying to turn the tables of blame. As is unfortunately common in most rape cases, the defense is opting for a "put the victim on trial" attack. The defense is expected to pursue theories that the woman exaggerated in her allegations or that she is trying to get revenge on Albert for some yet-unspecified reason.

Black and his boys are even going so far as to petition to limit the content of Albert's sex life that is admissible



in court, usually a right reserved to the alleged victim.

If Black and Albert succeed in the aforementioned ploy, it will wreak havoc on advances made by women in the area of sexual assault law.

Any society that hampers a woman's ability to prosecute against sexual violence obviously does not value women very much. A return to labeling women as sluts who "asked for it" sends women the message their sexuality does not belong to them, that it is viewed by society as worthless.

This is not to say that sexual assault cases should be treated differently from other cases; defendants should have the same opportunities to contend their innocence as they would in other crimes. However, "innocent until proven guilty" only should apply to the defendant. The victim should not be on trial.

Sexual assault is perhaps the greatest violation against another human being. It surpasses the physical attack; it is a psychological invasion as well. The repercussions are long-lasting, and even a conviction will

not take away the pain. Accusations of sexual assault should be horrifying, not so commonplace that people simply brush them aside. When these cases arise, every avenue of the justice system should be employed to assure an accurate decision. Sexual assault should make Americans angry, not cause them to become misogynists jumping on the "slut-hunt" bandwagon.

In Albert's case, preliminary evidence already links him to the female in question. Virginia State Police tests have found traces of Albert's DNA on the skin and clothing of the woman.

If further testing links Albert to the attack, juries and judges should not let the man's public persona influence their decisions. Too often in American society we project role-model status on celebrities simply for the sake of their celebrity. This unfortunately has the potential to become a mechanism for an individual to rise above the law.

Albert's case is important because it causes Americans to reevaluate persons honored with the title of role model. If evidence indeed proves Albert's guilt, he should be treated the same as any other sex offender.

In a perfect world, this would be an automatic. The woman could plead her case free from character attacks. She could be free from "how dare she" attitudes from the press and the public. The justice system could be counted on to bring down an honest verdict considering all evidence and arguments. Money would not be a deciding factor. And in a perfect world, a guilty verdict (if one emerged) would mean the woman could count on one more thing regarding Marv Albert: that he could go all the way — to jail.

Mandy Cater is a senior psychology major.

Democratic bumbling hinders frame of political parties



DONNY FERGUSON
columnist

Bipartisanship is the theme of the 105th Congress, it certainly did not apply to August's Congressional Softball Game. The Republican National Committee hammered the Democratic National Committee in a 26-0 five inning massacre that ended under the "mercy rule."

As if liberals did not have enough problems, the double-digit drubbing symbolized their march to political obscurity. Students looking to set their ideological bearings at Texas A&M can rule out liberalism, because the Democratic Party holds all the promise.

Dr. Kevorkian's waiting room.

Any party is a bummer if no one shows up. At last count, over 255 elected Democratic officials had ditched parties since 1992, the largest realignment since the demise of the Whigs in the early 1800s. One example of the Democrats' doldrums comes from Pennsylvania, where the House Democratic Campaign Committee ran classified ads searching for state legislature candidates.

"Are you a Democrat who would like to make a decent salary while doing some good for your community? Then you should run for state legislature," the ad

said. Of the few who responded, none could collect the necessary 300 signatures.

Even more humorous than the Democrats' sparse quantity is their poor quality. Texas Congressman Nick Lampson didn't wait long to flaunt his intellectual shortcomings. Then-tax collector Lampson appeared on talk radio with voters, who soon found out why he was labeled "Candidate Clueless."

Returning from a commercial break, Lampson was asked about taxpayer-funded abortion, an issue all candidates should have firm opinions on. Lampson's bungled response was a less-than-inspiring, "Tax-funded abortion? (long pause) Uh. (longer pause) Uh. (even longer pause) Can we take a commercial break?" Nick probably spent his August recess in a vain quest to find Waldo.

Amazingly, Democrats do get dumber. When asked what he would do to fight the national debt, U.S. Senate candidate Victor Morales said, "I don't know." The perpetually perplexed politician went on to confess, "I'm weak in business issues," and said plans to save Medicare and Social Security "don't exist in this brain of mine." Obviously, nothing does.

Lampson and Morales' brain-dead bumbblings are the least of the Democrats' problems. Louisiana State Rep. Louis Guzzardo was picked up in an FBI gambling sting. U.S. Attorney Kendall Coffey, a South Florida prosecutor, resigned after it was revealed he

bit a stripper at the "Lipstick Adult Entertainment Club." Predictably, the Marv Albert wannabe was appointed by none other than Philanderer-In-Chief Bill Clinton. South Carolina State Rep. Chris Pracht resigned after a 1994 drug smuggling conviction, only to run again in 1996.

And of course, former U.S. House Ways and Means chair Congressman Dan Rostenkowski was sent to prison for bouncing checks and cashing in his postage stamps. Under rules passed by the old Democratic Congress, the Chicago liberal still receives his \$98,900 pension (that's 309,063 first-class stamps.)

Drug dealing and stripper nibbling aside, most of the Democrats' public relations problems stem from their out-of-touch platform. Democrats bitterly opposed a Republican-proposed term-limits bill supported by 80 percent of the American people.

Democrats fought the balanced budget amendment and welfare reform, two Republican proposals also supported by 80 percent of Americans. They also launched an all-out assault against a Republican bill to make politicians live under the laws they pass, even though an overwhelming 90 percent of Americans sided with the G.O.P.

Continued attacks against tax cuts for working families, deficit reduction, lawsuit reform and Republican measures to abolish congressional perks such as

free haircuts illustrate just how out of touch the Democratic Party is with America.

The 1996 race for Vermont's Congressional seat illustrates just how liberal the Democratic Party has become. The day before Democrat Jack Long announced he would oppose Congressman Bernie Sanders, a self-proclaimed Socialist, he got a phone call from Rob Engel of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Engel informed Long that the DCCC would not support him and would instead campaign for the Marxist Sanders. "If there is a way I can hurt you, I will," Engel said. When asked why the DCCC dumped Long, Engel said the Democrats "embrace Mr. Sanders' socialist principles." No wonder the Democratic Party platform bears so much resemblance to the Communist Manifesto.

Cranially challenged candidates, ethically inadequate officeholders and a left-wing party platform directly opposing the American people have turned a once-powerful coalition party into a quickly fading rabble of ideologically empty, warmed-over Marxists. Liberalism is dead and the Democratic Party is out of touch, out of ideas and out of breath — not to mention they stink at softball.

Donny Ferguson is a junior political science major.

Yearbook plans help illustrate clear picture for Class of '98



ANNA FOSTER
columnist

No individual pictures of freshmen, sophomores or juniors will be included in the 1998 AggieLand. This will help make the nation's largest yearbook one of the best, as well.

Almost everything at Texas A&M is centered around students' class years. Wildcats, Elephant Walk, Aggie rings and other traditions highlight class years, and students always refer to their original graduating class, no matter when or if they actually cross the stage at commencement.

It only makes sense, then, to have the yearbook class-centered. When the Class of '98 yearbook is issued, it will have the Class of '98 in it, with their senior E-walk, their Ring Dance, and their graduation as the main focuses.

It is better to give expanded coverage of one class, the seniors, than to spread coverage thinly over all four classes. Future classes of Texas A&M students can look forward to the same treatment.

Amber Benson, editor of the AggieLand, said eliminating the underclassman pictures will give her more room to cover A&M and events happening this year. "It is not my intention to exclude anyone. I want to make the book more representative of the student body," she said.

Currently, one-fourth of the book is devoted to 10 percent of the student body. Any one purchaser of the AggieLand will know only a small fraction of the people who have their picture taken.

If more space is spent on the things all Aggies have in common, such as Muster, Bonfire and student organizations, the book will give a better picture of the student body than individual pictures of students.

A former student looking through the book ten or twenty years from now will remember the events, places and organizations of the University more than individual people.

This is a landmark year for the University. The opening of the Bush School, the completion of Reed Arena and the continual construction around campus will stand out in the history of the school more than the few students who bother to get their picture taken.

Underclassmen are not being left out of the book altogether. The same red-ass students who got their pictures taken are the same red-ass students who are going to be in the club pictures and who will buy the book.

Many people wait until their senior year to get their picture taken, and many wait until their senior year to buy the yearbook. It is good business sense to capitalize on those facts, not only to streamline the production of the book, but also to increase sales as well.

Other award-winning yearbooks at similar-sized schools have been doing this for years. It is about time A&M caught up.

Incidentally, Amber Benson is a junior. Even her picture will not be in the AggieLand. It does not bother her, though, because the next AggieLand will be all about her class — the people, places and events that marked her senior year.

Anna Foster is a junior journalism major.



MAIL CALL

Ethnicity knowledge enhances diversity

The key to breaking down the walls of ignorance is to first explore the facts. Ethnic minority groups always have encouraged excellence in education.

In the present, according to the National Education Goals Panel, African-American high-school students attend school at higher rates than other groups.

If one would research the Hopwood case, he or she would understand nearly 40 percent of the minority students enrolled in the University of Texas Law School had scores higher than Cheryl Hopwood.

The final clarification is that Texas A&M and UT are not losing minority students because of their

low performances; they are losing these students because of their high performances and the universities' inability to compete financially.

Remarks by people such as Lino Graglia are not warranted because they do not cite factual information as a basis for their generalizations.

These types of remarks make diversity training more important. The only way to combat psychological conformity to stereotypical images and negative perceptions of any ethnic group is to study that group and learn for yourself.

Martin L.K. Hodges
Class of '98

MIKE LUCKOVICH AT-LANTA CHRISTIANITY

