

Booby-trapped

New Barbie doll makeover bridges gap to modern women, young girls



MANDY CATER
assistant
opinion editor

After 38 years of resembling a Playboy Playmate, Barbie is getting a makeover. That's right, the once Unix Cupidom plastic beauty is evolving up for a new destination: modern America.

Barbie is easily one of the most popular toys in history. We have full according to The Wall Street Journal, since her debut in MS. 790-U.S. 1959, more than one billion Barbies have been snatched and swapped by children, collectors and nostalgia buffs.

In the almost four decades of Barbie's impres-

people run, the doll has undergone only three previous makeovers.

The premiere Barbie was a pouty-lipped siren.

In M.G. Lord's *Forever Barbie: An Unauthorized Biography of a Real Doll*, the author notes the original had an "averted submissive gaze that characterized female nudes ... from the Renaissance until the 19th century."

The sexual revolution of the late 1960s saw

Barbie emerge with a bright-eyed forward stare

accompanied by doe-like lashes.

The current model made its first appearance

in 1977. This familiar version was that of a super

beauty: shock-blond locks, a gleaming smile and

bright eyes. According to Mattel execs, this look

is "conquering, friendly, approachable — the 'we

can do anything' look."

Despite sporting new coiffures and keeping up

with evolving mascara trends, Barbie has kept

the thing constant: her gravity-defying curves.

For decades, Barbie has been a plastic rep-

resentation of an American ideal: unattainability.

Barbie's frightening hourglass figure pushes the

boundaries of reality. Her voluptuous bosom,

pencil-thin waist and curvy hips have long been a

symbol of impossible beauty.

In fact, calculations indicate that, if translated

into an actual woman, Barbie's dimensions would

be equivalent to approximately 38-18-34.

Mattel claims this decision is independent of any negative comments directed toward the doll, but instead says it is attempting to accommodate "children's desire for greater realism." In addition to the new figure, the new Barbie line is planned to also include various ethnicities and hair colors.

Although the decision is probably driven more by revenues than some higher social desire to raise the self-esteem of young girls, the corporation is to be commended for the decision.

The accolades should be directed at new Mattel chief executive Jill Barad, whom The Wall Street Journal calls "the most prominent CEO in corporate America." Under Barad, a great deal of growth, both financially and in product diversity, came about. Barad helped introduce the line of career Barbies, and even the sometimes-heckled wheelchair Becky has been a positive addition to the Barbie family.

Many grumble Barbie is an American icon and should remain in her current centerfold-like form. They warn that kids will not want Barbie if she is like them.

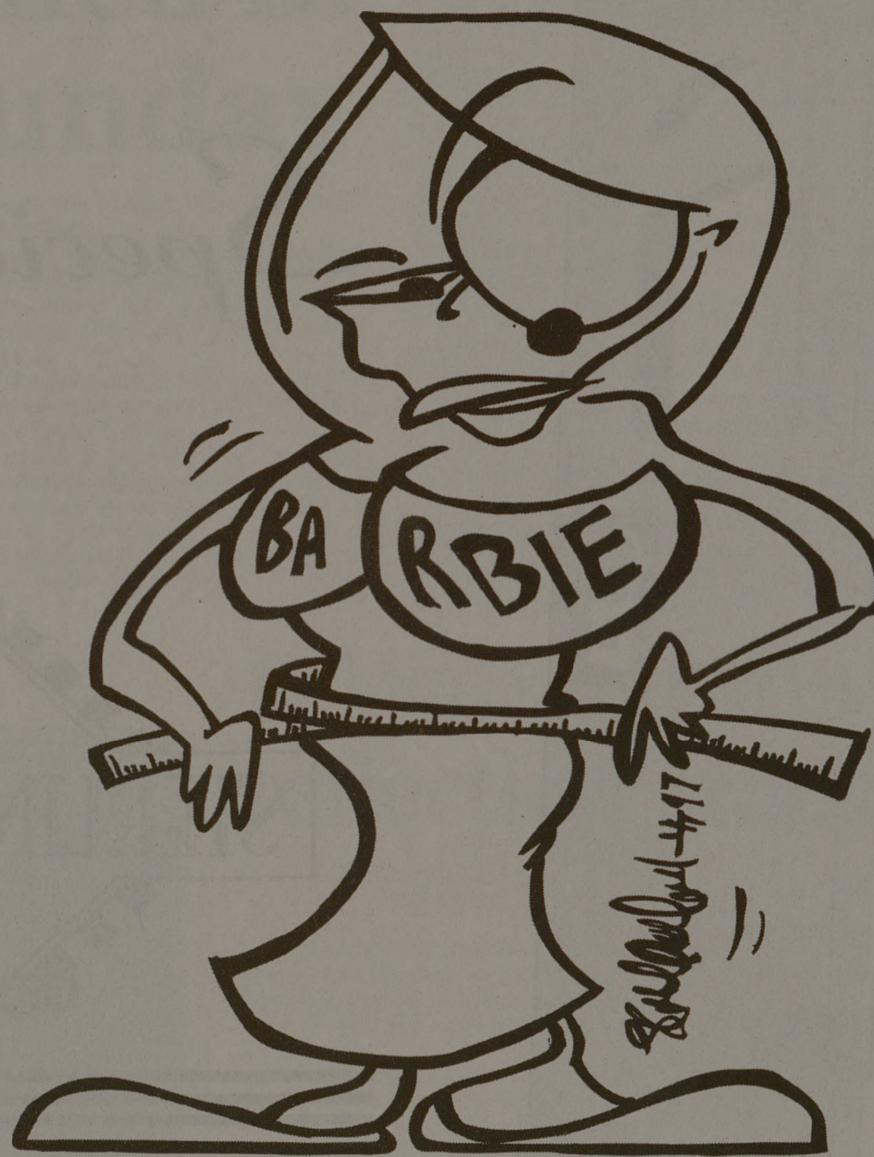
If Barbie is the icon they claim, her popularity will endure the downsizing on the horizon. In fact, if girls see a Barbie that better reflects someone to whom they can relate, it is difficult to believe they will not embrace the toy.

Today's America is a diverse population, including people from all walks of life.

Instead of complaining about defacing an American symbol, people should look to what Barbie could symbolize with the new additions.

Young girls and women are blasted with enough unattainable images every day without having toys reinforce the same idea. Barbie's metamorphosis should be viewed as a change for the positive, sending the message women really do get better with age.

Mandy Cater is a senior psychology major.



Ol' Army Days help drive Tom Short out of Aggieland



CHRIS HUFFINES
columnist

That's right, boys and girls. Once again, Tom Short, everyone's favorite conduit of the Almighty, has come and gone.

The Antonio Banderas of evangelists was here, doing his best to spread the faith through the gun-toting mariachi rhetoric Aggieland has come to know and love. And as usual, the angry mob was right at Short's heels, dogging his every word. It was such a beautiful sight it brought a tear to my eye, a song to my heart and a smile to my face.

Yes, it just swells my heart with pride to see Aggies helping Aggies run a preacher out of town. Not since the good Ol' Army days of Salem and

Sadly, religious persecution has, for the most part, faded away in the United States. It is a good thing A&M is doing everything it can to keep the tradition alive.

believe differently, and are not afraid to say so.

This is exactly what A&M needs: more hate, more prejudice and more fear among the classes. Nothing else will keep the dissidents in line.

To those who have been abusing and ruining Short's sermons, I say, "Good job ... keep up the fine work," and of course, "Keep those jack boots polished."

To those who have supported Short and his lonely crusade to rescue us from ourselves, I say, "Good luck."

Chris Huffines is a sophomore speech communications major.

Bio-environmental groups pollute America



JOHN BURTON
columnist

Hundreds of groups exist with eco-friendly names like "Citizens for the Environment" and "America the Beautiful." These names, however, are only fronts for mining, logging and packaging industries.

Most of these organizations are part of the Wise Use Movement, which developed in response to the timber conflicts on the northeast United States. The Wise Use Movement was founded in 1988 during a conference in Nevada. Among the attendees were the Exxon "oil improves wildlife viscosity" Corporation and "Citizens for Equal Rights Alliance," a national alliance of anti-Indian groups.

The phrase "Wise Use" is great — who would be against wise use? When you pull off the false face, however, you find a powerful organization of resource exploiting industries benefitting from the weakening of environmental laws.

Ron Arnold, leader of the Wise Use Movement, said, "Our goal is to destroy environmentalism once and for all."

Four hundred delegates — most of them Republicans — attended the Wise Use conference to "share ideas." One idea was the Wise Use agenda: opening public lands to more grazing, mining, logging and oil exploration. At stake were environmental laws designed to protect air, water and land.

Of course, one would think Republicans would attack every scrap of government waste and abuse they found, but they have not.

In fact, in the issue of cattle grazing in the west, they encourage government waste at the expense of Americans.

Most western ranchers do not like "big gov'mint" coming into their lives and telling them not to pollute the environment. However,

"big gov'mint" looks lovely when it subsidizes their operations. The federal government only charges them about a quarter of what private landowners charge for grazing rights, and the Republicans refuse to change this policy. So much for the "free market."

This is government welfare for cattle. Providing environmentally destructive operations access to ruin federal land — our land — at a subsidized price is ridiculous in the age of cutting wasteful spending.

The Heartland Institute, a right-wing political organization, has its own newsletter called Environmental News. It sounds great. What could be so bad about an organization whose newsletter is called "Environmental News?" Plenty.

For instance, its "scientists" say ground-level ozone pollution is actually good for us, because it screens out ultraviolet radiation. The problem with this rationalization is the fundamental differences between ozone pollution and the naturally occurring ozone layer in the stratosphere. Confusing ozone pollution with the ozone layer is like confusing Jesse Helms with Jesse Jackson.

Another issue of Environmental News touts the "land reclamation efforts" of coal mining companies. It basically portrays these companies in a happy, trustworthy-enough-to-date-your-sister kind of way. They want to "protect the environment for future generations to enjoy," according to the newsletter.

Yet it fails to mention how the mining industry exploits resources due to the outdated 1872 mining law — a law they fight to keep in place. This law allows corporations to pay only \$5 per acre of land mined. Under this program, over \$272 billion of the public's resources have been extracted while the American public only received \$5 per acre.

Further, there are no environmental provisions in the 1872 law. As a result, over 12,000 miles of streams are polluted with acids and toxic chemicals. Another problem is 56 aban-

doned mine sites are now listed among the nation's worst hazardous-waste sites.

It is estimated taxpayers will have to pay up to \$72 billion to clean up these areas. Often times, mining companies will mine a site, abandon it and declare bankruptcy, thus leaving the public with the cleanup bill.

This behavior does not sound like protecting the environment "for future generations to enjoy" — yet this is what groups in the Wise Use Movement want us to believe.

One of the strongest Wise Use groups is "People for the West!" a Colorado-based organization. Members describe it as a "grassroots" group, yet in 1992, 12 of the 13 members of their board of directors were mining industry executives.

People for the West! was created by financial support of mining interests — such as Chevron and Hecla — which donated over \$1.7 million.

If this is "grassroots," then McDonald's is a mom-and-pop cafe'.

People for the West! also claims support for "science-based" environmental legislation and policy. By explicitly stating it supports "science-based" policy, it implies other environmental groups do not. Thus, the truth is twisted even more.

These wise-use groups portray themselves as seeking balance in the environment debate.

They attempt to establish enemies to divert people's attention from the real issues. They label environmentalists as radical extremists who are hurting the economy and costing taxpayers millions of dollars, even though their own industry costs taxpayers billions of dollars in cleanup costs.

But money and the environment is not the only problem here. As Ron Arnold, founder of the Wise Use Movement said, "Facts don't really matter — in politics, perception is reality."

John Burton is a junior bioenvironmental science major.

This is what I found to be so humorous about him.

I am sure he is overqualified when it comes to talking about Christianity, but it seemed he did not have a clue when it came to debating other topics, such as science and other forms of religions.

Of course the supporting acts were just as good as the headlining one, in the comedic sense that is. There were the serious debaters, whose solid arguments made Short squirm.

The ever relentless hecklers were at hand.

Their witty interjections made it all worthwhile. Guest appearances also were made by the C.A.T.S. (Christians Against Tom Short), and by a group who offered to mediate the sale of souls to Satan.

In short, no pun intended, I hope Short comes back at least once a semester.

You may find him to be a respectable man of God, or an offensive hypocrite. To me it is all

just sinfully good fun.

Majed Azouagh
Class of '00

Tradition of Bonfire overlooks the trees



MAIL CALL

Campus preacher provides good show

For all those who didn't catch Tom Short's preaching performances last week, you missed out on one of the most entertaining shows of the semester.

Short was hilarious, a regular "Seinfeld," if you will. He should seriously consider a career in stand-up comedy.

For four days he did his carnival span, the main attraction being himself. His preachings made some sense, but they also contained many inconsistent and erroneous statements.

As November 27 draws near, I feel compelled to make some critical comments regarding the Bonfire tradition.

I cannot help but feel opposed to any activity that exemplifies waste and degradation of the natural environment to the extent that Bonfire does.

As our world's air quality gets more polluted, how can people stand behind an event that not only dumps unneeded pollution into the environment, but also destroys thousands of trees?

Trees that are the planet's only defense against ever increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide gas.

"But all those trees are re-

placed," is the refrain I have grown used to hearing.

It would clearly be more ecologically responsible if Texas A&M would supplant Bonfire with two massive tree plantings every year, in an effort to make our world more livable.

I would suggest the thousands of hours devoted to building Bonfire would be better spent helping the community through service projects.

How many houses could be built for the homeless in that same time? How many young children tutored? How many thousands of pounds of litter cleaned off the street?

Instead of continuing the decadent and selfish ritual of Bonfire, I encourage everyone wishing to show Aggie pride to participate in selfless and giving acts that truly show the breadth of our spirit and love of our community.

Erik Stock
Min Park
graduate students