

Baby BOOMers

Hoopla, praise for McCaughey septuplets ignores reality of parents' decisions

Time is money, as a mere six minutes produced a five-year supply of diapers, four boys, three girls, a year food supply and one house. The only thing Erica did not donate to the McCaughey septuplets was a fridge in a pear tree.



KENDALL KELLY
columnist

How wonderful it is that corporations, families and even government is in the spirit of giving this holiday season. Unfortunately it is that between all the rejoicing over the Brady Bunch of the septuplets, America has completely overlooked the reality of the McCaughey family. Rather than celebrating the birth of Bobbi McCaughey's seven clones, America should be learning from this family's grave mistake by observing the bad example they are setting for future generations. Take away the television news coverage and the number one front page stories sprinkled across the nation and underneath is a poor, middle-class family who can barely support the two-year old daughter they already have and has no business taking fertility pills they can end up with more mouths to feed and bills to clothe. Irresponsible decisions such as this one only speak the twisted view our country has regarding personal responsibility. Bobbi McCaughey personifies her maturity and lack of thought by her decision to take fertility pills. She, like so many other women, fell into the trap of bearing more children without the financial support necessary to provide for them. A lower-middle class family living in an apartment needs fertility pills about as much as Texas A&M needs another library. Participating in such activities shows selfishness and lack of thought in the development of one's children. Of course any mother would love to have a

second child.

Usually women yearning to begin a family mention things such as, "I am ready to get pregnant because I want a baby" or some other such hoopla about how their maternal instincts have shifted into high gear.

One moment women are longing for a baby and nine months later, a family begins. What often seems like a page out of a Berenstain Bears book often turns into a disaster. Women wanting children too often think only of themselves and their motherly cravings, forgetting what is in the best interest of the child.

Women become so anxious to have children that little thought is given to the possibility of waiting a few years until a couple is financially more stable.

Such is the case with Bobbi, Kenny and now the rest of the the McCaughey gang.

It is obvious that little thought was given to the financial standing of the family when McCaughey decided to pop a few pills. It seems that in situations like these, couples wanting a child think more with their hearts than they do with their heads.

I find it very hypocritical that when issues such as abortion arise, pro-life advocates practically set themselves on fire, becoming so heated in claiming that aborting a fetus "isn't in the best interest of the child."

Yet when a struggling family such as the McCaugheys take fertility pills knowing they will have financial difficulties that will hinder proper child rearing, the best interest of the child is forgotten.

Again, in all the press coverage and showering of gifts, the best interest of these children has again been forgotten.

America becomes so preoccupied with celebrating over this "miracle," we fail to see the real issue: Bobbi McCaughey should never have taken fertility pills to begin with. What she and her husband claim is God's will is really no more than a doctor's prescription and a large dose of irresponsibility.

Kendall Kelly is a junior Spanish major.



Charity should not cease with births of McCaughey children

Two weeks ago in Iowa, Bobbi McCaughey didn't just give birth to septuplets.



JEREMY VALDEZ
columnist

She gave birth to one of those rare stories that is very unusual, yet wholesome and palatable to the mass audience.

There was an exhausting birth, and now dramatic medical treatments in the nursery, and hopefully the heartwarming introduction of seven healthy babies into a loving home.

Why, then, am I left feeling low about this miniature baby boom? My initial "Go team!" mentality has given way to a flood of concerns about the actions of both the parents and those of us who are watching their every move. I am somber because being one who both chronicles and consumes the news, I search for a

larger context to place these events in. The bigger picture, unfortunately, is as full of superficiality and injustice as it is warmth and family values. These seven little ones are themselves innocent, but the attention given them highlights how unevenly and illogically we dole out our compassion in this culture.

For some reason, one woman who bore seven babies is getting more sympathy and support than the millions of women who have single births.

Since the marathon delivery, the McCaugheys have been promised, among other things, a new home, a van, a lifetime supply of diapers and baby formula, college scholarships for the children and an audience with President Clinton. An Iowa bank established an account for the McCaugheys and has been receiving donations from around the world.

Good for the McCaugheys. They have a tough task ahead of them and they are going to need all the help they can get. Without the support they are getting, it is doubtful they would be able to feed

the new litter.

What is unjust is the stigma so often attached to other women who are unable to support their new babies. Whether they are minorities or underprivileged whites, many mothers are accused of trying to "get rich on welfare" are told that they should "get some birth control."

Media portrayals have cast the McCaugheys as bystanders who suddenly had seven kids dropped in their laps. When reporters asked Bobbi McCaughey what she felt when she learned that she was carrying seven fetuses, she replied "sheer terror."

"At first, it was like 'God, why have you done this to us?'" McCaughey, 29, said.

It's odd how she asked what had God wrought when it was she who had been swallowing daily doses of Metrodin, a fertility drug that often causes multiple births.

The drug had already helped them to have Mikayla, their first daughter.

Indulging my need to wax religious, it seems that God provided souls for the

kids that the McCaugheys went to extraordinary and only semi-natural means to create.

Without going into the sticky moral and philosophical issues surrounding science-aided procreation, it is safe to say that the McCaugheys had at least some idea what they were getting themselves into.

That should not discourage the spirit of giving that has moved people to help Bobbi and Kenny McCaughey, but it should be hoped that some of that charity trickles down to the millions of mothers and children who are not on the cover of Time.

Certainly the average person cannot send money to every impoverished family, and our current system of government assistance is not particularly effective.

But the least we could do is make the underprivileged targets for respect instead of insult. And at least some time should be taken to consider the Thompson sextuplets. They were born almost two years ago in Washington D.C.

For some reason, the black infants failed to receive any attention, not even a local residential phone call.

The Thompsons were recently featured in a CNN story about the possible racial undercurrents that influence the media's coverage of multiple birth stories.

CNN reported that a small group of D.C. residents has formed a support foundation, but the story conspicuously omitted the foundation's address, even though the McCaughey fund's address was prominently displayed.

The McCaugheys may have received their attention because of their class, their race or simply because there were a few slow news days.

More than likely, a combination of factors was responsible.

No matter what catalyzed our national sympathy for them, let's recognize that there is room for improvement and consistency.

Jeremy Valdez is a senior chemical engineering and journalism major.



MAIL CALL

Male escort idea raises questions

Response to Chris Huffines' "Want a Male Escort" Dec. 2 column:
After reading Chris Huffines' column about male escorts, I was wondering about a few things. It sounded like an elementary school boy who is afraid of the dark and still wets his bed was whining in this column. As a sophomore in the Corps of Cadets, I have been running escorts for two years and have never heard a guy calling for an escort. However, if you really feel like you need an escort, call the Guard Room and tell them you're afraid of the dark and I'm sure they will walk you to your dorm and tuck you in bed. On the other hand, you could just be some homosexual who gets off on the idea of a male escort. In that case, I suggest you transfer to t.u. I'm sure you wouldn't have any trouble finding a guy to walk you to your room. After all "Steers and queers ... place but Texas."

*Zac Dietrich
Class of '00
via e-mail*

Tasteless jokes about safety offend

I hope few Aggies will give credence to Chris Huffines' column in Tuesday's Battalion, or at least, realize that joking about safety isn't funny in real life.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, available at: <http://www.fedstats.gov/bjs/press.htm>, men are two or three times more likely to become victims of violent crime, so let's not encourage careless behavior.

Huffines also jokes about "political correctness" in asserting equal spending on services for males.

The conservative (right) end of the political continuum also has a political correctness or a party dogma which they like to employ in their attempt to keep most people from actually thinking.

The conservative or traditional notion that "men" are indestructible is probably just as harmful as the left-wing dogma or politically correct notion that all men are rapists or abusers.

It may be true that Texas A&M is a safe campus, but a bit of research will show that male college students are mugged, beaten and killed on other campuses.

Let's not encourage our male students to be too reckless, Chris; men and women need to be careful out there. Again, A&M may seem quite safe, but few Aggies will be able to spend their whole lives here in Aggieland.

Most of us, male and female,

can afford the time to start practicing safe habits for the real world or, at the very least, taking safety seriously.

*Michael Osterbuhr
Graduate student
via e-mail*

Aggies not just current students

My coworkers and I were looking at *The Battalion* on-line as we are former students and are very pumped about Bonfire and the t.u. game last Friday. We were very upset to see the teaser for the top story by Karie Fehler that read "Texas A&M students' burning desire to beat the hell outta t.u." (or that the Fightin' Texas Aggie Bonfire only represents the current student body). We would appreciate it if your staff would remember that the former students of this great University do a lot to keep these traditions going.

*Amy Fonville
Class of '96*

*Carol Anne Doherty
Class of '91*

*Tracy Williford
Class of '79
via e-mail*

New tradition promotes religion

The "new Texas A&M tradition" of the Winter Spirit of Aggieland is geared to a limited student population and even inappropriate in its current form.

I am specifically referring to the erection of Christmas trees on campus as part of this "new tradition". We all know that Christmas is a holiday for Christians, who are the majority on this campus.

However, making Christmas trees a part of this "Winter Spirit of Aggieland" is promoting Christmas to the whole campus and gives the

University a Christian face.

One may even argue that such a display violates the separation of church and state clause.

For many of us, Christmas has no special meaning other than it corresponds with the winter break.

In fact, some people may even feel uncomfortable being a part of a celebration which they do not believe in.

So we need to consider our diversity on campus when organizing any program or activity which is representative of the entire University.

The concept of "Winter Spirit" in itself is fine, but we need to avoid giving religious undertones

to the displays.

*I. M. Latheef
Graduate Student
via e-mail*

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