

TECH TALK

Privacy reached by Internet

...rules are made to be broken.

...thinks the anyway, while the nation whole was in ar over the lite House Under coverage, an- story passed igh the AP wire out hype, with- proar, and out notice.

...hile newscasters were luridly talking it "semen stains," a story was being ed out that universally concerns the ing public sector that uses an Inter- ervice.

...involves the Navy, one of its men, a ca- sailior named Timothy McVeigh (no ren- to the convicted Oklahoma City ber), and a possible breach of the "t Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy. he story in brief: Senior Chief Petty Of- McVeigh sent a non self-identifying e- concerning a toy drive to the wife of a w crewman. When the woman re- ed it, she noticed the return address of a \$3.50 rch" on e-mail.

...Using the America Online member di- ory, the woman looked up the profile his address and saw that it listed "under marital status and under bies listed "boy watching."

...he mentioned this to her husband, eported it to a commanding officer, e sent it further up the chain of com- id.

...rom that point, a Navy investigator un- ally, by AOL's account, obtained the full e and address of McVeigh from AOL. e resently the Navy is attempting to dis- s McVeigh by using the information, e McVeigh is charging that the Navy viod the 1986 Electronic Communications acy Act by procuring the information ut him without a warrant.

...ow the question is where the wrong g originated.

...maginably, at the Navy's irresponsi- y ignoring its own policies. The "t Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" poli- ould presumably dictate the Navy's duct on such matters.

...owever, that policy was disregarded flurried attempt to deny a 17-year r his career and pension in the so- ed name of procedure.

...n their endeavor to force a man out of ob by means of a basically anonym- e-mail, the Navy has allowed ho- hobia to rear its ugly head. Only one e McVeigh's five profiles even mentioned — McVeigh told "Good Morning erica" that he only put "gay" in the file to "get to see who he could talk to." ough his response is somewhat dubi- , the fact of the matter is that the Navy epped its bounds by pursuing the rmaton.

...f AOL had not wrongly given out the fidential information, the Navy never id have been able to confirm that the file was McVeigh's.

...Therefore, no one else would have wn it was McVeigh either, unless he an- ced his sexual preference more pub- , and the Navy has yet to show proof occurred.

...ut more importantly, one must won- why in the world AOL submitted this rmaton to the Navy investigator, who tified herself as only "a friend or ac- intance" of McVeigh's.

...s confidential information really that e ssible? These are worrisome questions n age that is increasingly technologi- y oriented. AOL, and other such Inter- providers, are supposed to be "safe." eople hand over their personal infor- tion, as well as their credit card num- s, and they should be able to exact a ain amount of anonymity.

...Anonymity is one of the main draws of e, and its 11 million subscribers rein- e that point. People enjoy to trying out erent personality facets under the pive guise of a screen name. Their full ntities should be protected, not just be- se they are paying customers, but be- se it is the law, and should be upheld e ss a warrant says otherwise.

...hough AOL has now promised to "in- ate additional measures" and to "rein- e [their] privacy policies and proces- es," the system has been jarred.

...eople now know that somewhere g the lines personal privacy was ached, and that knowledge will re- nd long after McVeigh's case is gone n the courts.



BEVERLY MIRELES
columnist

Beverly Mireles is a freshman microbiology major.

LONE STAR LOWDOWN

Where's the beef?

Texas charges when Winfrey brands meat thumbs down

On April 15, 1996, vege- tarian ac- tivist Howard Ly- man appeared on "The Oprah Win- frey Show." Lyman told a national viewing audience that common cat- tle-ranching tech- niques in the Unit- ed States could introduce danger- ous diseases to American consumers.

With a reaction that she would later regret, Winfrey turned to the camera and had this to say about Lyman's report: "It has just stopped me cold from eating another hamburger." The studio audience chuckled. But leaders in the beef industry were not in a laughing mood.

They were in a lawsuit mood. And they are hoping that they will be laughing all the way to the bank. Cattlemen from Amarillo and the Texas panhandle are arguing that Winfrey's burger belittlement was directly responsible for a sharp decline in cattle prices in the summer of 1996.

The price for bad-mouthing the beef? A \$10.3 million lawsuit. The case is based on Texas' food libel laws, which make it a crime to say mean things about meat. Yes, these laws really do exist. Really.

Because of Oprah's misfortune, it will be some time before Ricki Lake takes a shot at poultry products, and it is safe to say that Maury Povich will keep his feelings about beef to himself. Talk show hosts have gotten the message — taking on the beef industry could mean \$10 million less in their pocketbooks.

But the real lesson to be learned from this brouhaha has nothing to do with beef. It has to do with common sense. The most disturbing thing about the case is the claim that enough people order their diets on the authority of Oprah Win-



CALEB MCDANIEL
columnist

frey's talk show to significantly damage an entire industry.

The fact that the cattlemen have been taken seriously is what should scare people the most. Think about it. The allegation is that Oprah Winfrey has enough influence to trample agricultural markets underfoot with one careless remark about Big Macs. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

Even if Oprah wins this case, the fact that she was credibly sued should concern us. The lawsuit implies that there are people out there who base their world-views on Winfrey. These people might live next door to you.

If the beef industry is right, then people have forgotten that talk shows should not be mistaken for news shows. Celebrities like Oprah Winfrey are not paid to present well-balanced views and well-reasoned arguments.

They are paid to entertain. So it ought to be a given that the information provided by talk shows should be approached with suspicion.

Interestingly, in an article published just one month before Oprah's fateful April episode, sociologist Dr. Vicki Abt of Penn State University cautioned talk show viewers.

"TV talk shows offer us a world of blurred boundaries," Dr. Abt said. Distinctions between "credible and incredible witnesses [and] truth and falseness" are often "manipulated and erased for our distraction and entertainment." Consequently, Abt urges talk show viewers to be "screen smart" about what they watch on TV.

In other words, do not believe everything you hear. More specifically, do not believe everything you hear on "The Oprah Winfrey Show." Oprah is not an authority on beef, and vegetarian activists like Lyman are not likely to provide objective facts about their carnivorous enemies.

The moral of the story is this: take everything that you hear on a talk show with a grain of salt. And if you think that



advice is so self-evident that it goes without saying, I have four words for you — "twelve million dollar lawsuit."

In a critical article on talk shows, sociologist Clay Steinman confesses that if the leaders of "the talk show genre determine knowledge and tell us how the

world exists, I must be honest — I am scared." And if Oprah Winfrey can turn an entire industry on its head with a wave of her hand — I am scared, too.

Caleb McDaniel is a freshman history major.

WORLD ORDER

Hussein's popularity due to 'image' problems

Saddam Hussein lost the Persian Gulf War in 1991, and now he is losing again because of what Americans call an "image problem". The Image War between the United States and Iraq is a '90s version of the Cold War fought with gestures and words rather than massive weapons programs and military intelligence.

The United States is fighting the Image War by stacking the U.N. Security Council's weapons inspection teams with Americans. In their latest move, the United States appointed William Scott Ritter Jr., an American Marine in charge of military intelligence in the Gulf War, to lead the newest inspection team.

No wonder Iraq has branded him a spy. With his prior military service against Iraq, Ritter is the Image War version of Eisenhower, storming sites where the United States believes weapons are being hidden.

Another front in the United States image attack is the manner in which some of the inspections are conducted. While most inspections involve the inspectors driving to the selected site at an appointed time, some of the inspections more resemble Delta Force Commando raids. Most notably, inspectors in black uniforms and full combat gear stole into one of Hussein's presidential palaces, ostensibly to look for weapons of mass destruction.

With these raids, the United States is furthering its image as the only world superpower that holds the



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columnist

right to ignore the sovereignty of other nations in pursuit of their own goals.

Since the Image War is fought with posturing and positioning rather than specific policies, if Hussein were to cease hindering the weapons inspections and allow the inspectors complete autonomy, the conflict between the United States and Iraq would not end. Rather, the Image War would only escalate to a higher and more dangerous level because Hussein's compliance would enhance the image of the United States.

The Image War is a zero-sum game — there are no winners or losers. The participants only have the choice to end the war or to perpetuate it. Hussein can end the Image War by changing his image to match that of Western political leaders, thus effectively eliminating any opposition to the United States, causing the War to stop in its tracks.

To become a more U.S.-friendly figure, Hussein should start by abandoning his military uniforms and berets and donning the black or navy "power suit" popular among Westerners.

A military uniform is the costume of those who fight with tanks and artillery. The Image War demands a new outfit that shows the world that Hussein is a nice, conforming gentleman like everyone else.

The next step in Hussein's daytime-talk-show make over is to shave his mustache. A hairy upper lip is almost non-existent on Capitol Hill, as U.S. lawmakers opt for the clean-cut all-American look.

The worst action Hussein could take, resulting in image suicide, would be to grow a full beard. A Middle Eastern man with a beard strikes fear into the hearts of most Americans because of the popular

notion of Muslim terrorists bent on destroying buildings and hijacking planes.

The final stage in Hussein's transformation is the Image War equivalent of a long-range thermonuclear device: the smile. Americans smile at everyone from their best friend to the stray dog they just met on the street. Most other countries are more reserved in their show of affection.

More effective than all the SCUD missiles fired during the Persian Gulf War, a plastic smile is able to destroy any Image War foe by showing that its wearer is a warm person who just wants to feed his people and would not dream of creating weapons of mass destruction.

An effective image change to thwart a foe would not be without precedent. When Chinese President Jiang Xemin paid a formal visit to the United States, he wore a suit, shook hands with everyone and smiled incessantly. Because of these many image victories, the United States mentioned the 1989 massacre of students in Tiananmen Square only in passing.

Xemin was left off the hook with a non-committal admission that the countless human rights violations in China were probably a bad thing, but the United States made no plans for future action against China if they do not clean up their act.

Hussein, you have the power to end this nonsense by depriving the United States of an enemy, causing the Image War to backfire. You have the power to get the United States off your back, not by changing your policies, but by the painless but powerful process of changing your image, for in America, image is all that matters.

Stewart Patton is a junior sociology major.



MAIL CALL

Football, illegal parking cause problems, not PTTS

For once, the parking problems on campus are not caused by Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services. They are caused by a combination of two factors: the football program and illegal use of off-campus parking tags by on-campus students.

Let's face it. The football program's expansion has become an unstoppable

monster on campus. First they took the Reveille gravesite with as little publicity as possible, then the 12th Man memorial, then Mt. Aggie and now a much-needed parking lot, which conveniently disappeared over the winter break, when no one would have the chance to notice.

Additionally, the on-campus students who have difficulty getting good parking spaces seem to have set up a black market in blue (and probably other) parking tags. I get to campus at 6:00 a.m. every morning, and I park in the blue lot between Kyle Field and KAMU. Every day, I see the same cars parked in the same spaces in the rows closest to the southside residential area. I would be willing to bet that other parking lots have similar permanent residents.

Since the earliest I have ever seen PTTS out patrolling is 7:30 a.m., I would imagine they are unaware of this problem, since the traffic flow onto campus is picking up by then.

For those of you who use this lot during the day, I would advise you not to use the familiar tactic of waiting in line for a space to

open up in the first three or four rows of that lot. Those cars do not move, and likely will not change much until the end of the semester.

Hopefully PTTS will devise some way to monitor turnover of parking spaces to prevent more on-campus students from using the off-campus spaces illegally.

Travis Lull
Class of '98

Column overlooked talent, achievements of faculty

It is reassuring to know that Czelusta has taken such a keen interest in the world-class status of our University. Finally, after seeing this term bandied about for quite some time, someone has informed us of the actual standards required in achieving this distinguished endorsement. Please tell us the name of the institution responsible for this accreditation. When are we up for review?

A university as large as this one cannot be deemed inferior simply because not every college or department is among the

very best in the nation. I have yet to see the evidence for our professors' "intellectual underachievement," but I'm certain such a blanket insult is misguided. The College of Veterinary Medicine is, in fact, regarded as being among the very best. The new Bush School has already brought world leaders to discuss important political issues. Additionally, members of our talented faculty, some in departments not recognized for outstanding achievements, convinced me that hard work would truly be worth my time. Are these characteristics of a subpar university?

I have tried to recall my conversations in the past week as suggested. They don't seem to be as daft as he said they might. From this, I concluded that Czelusta is indeed "uniquely surrounded by buffoons." I realize, however, I have no business calling anyone a buffoon. The most clever response I could come up with regarding to his column had something to do with the direction Highway 6 runs.

J. Rhodes Murphy
Class of '96