

**PERSPECTIVES**

# Social death

*Advances in technology diminishes thinkers, creates hermits*



**MICHELLE VOSS**  
columnist

My computer were to implode tomorrow afternoon, I do believe, affording me a total of three minutes, I might feel a strange sense of relief to do a little jig of in my underpants. In fact, I might have a tranquil breeze serenely fanning my soul.

Why? Because in me lurks a person who wants all comers to die a shameful and lurid death.

Yes, America we are at a crossroads in existence as a culture, and we can choose between two directions.

On the left, rapidly developing technology. On the right, books.

Without hesitation, books would be my choice. Why? Because technology is saturating our lives to the point that have become slothful, even a tad bit dimwitted.

Rather than read the book ourselves, 90-minute rehashings of classics like *Moby-Dick* and *Great Expectations* keep bursting pop-culture.

Knowledge is no longer sacred.

Indeed, anything we do know is only a diluted 30-second sound bite of the accurate, literary work or cultural myth.

The problem lies within our increasing dependence on technology. Sure, the word "technology" is ambiguous, even overly invasive.

So, first off, let it be known that "technology" ain't so bad.

You got your microwaves, your ATMs, those little tags you put on your car so

you don't have to pay at the toll booth.

Great. But, what happens when America is so technologically advanced that we don't have to leave our homes? Food, clothes, lovers, even children will just be mail-ordered or some sort of vicarious virtual reality experience.

Initially, Americans will become anti-social hermits.

Yep, no more Howdy weeks with ubiquitous stickers, balloons and truck-loads of people screaming "the word." (Wait—that may not be such a bad thing . . .)

Anyway, Americans will just stay locked away in their high-rise, 500 floor, space-conserving, energy-efficient apartments, with no reason to leave home, except for that occasional dash for a bottle of Pepto.

Then, Americans will lose touch with nature.

Uh-huh, that's right, where have all the flowers gone?

Birds, trees, sunshine, grass will all be filtered through our TV/computer sets.

No more romping in fields of buttercups or picnicking by the bay—this will all be available on the Virtual Reality Outdoor Home Companion.

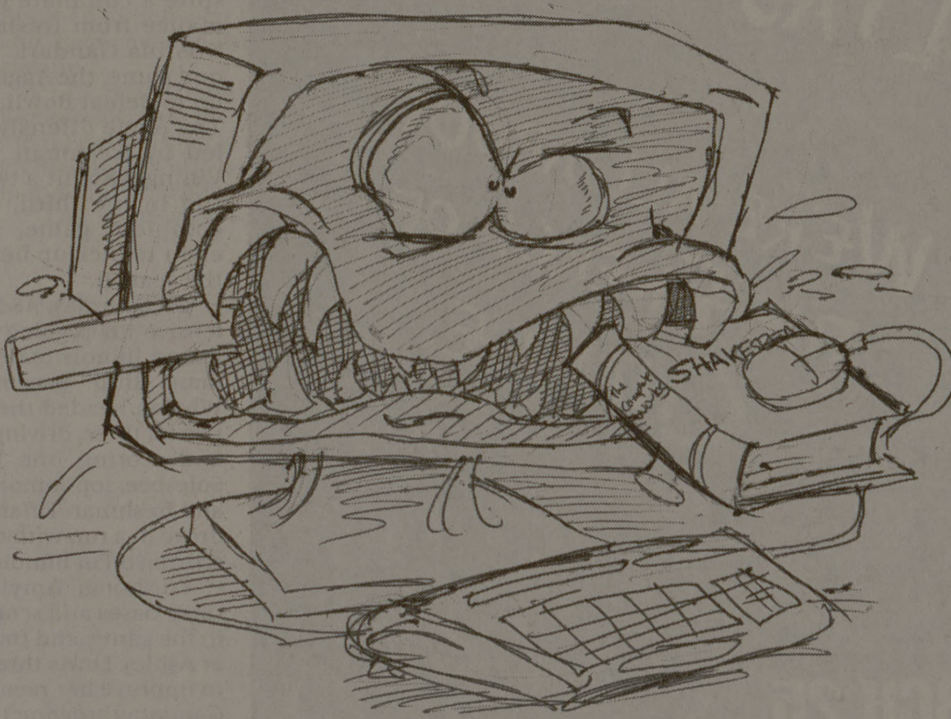
In the end, Americans will lose their imaginations.

American reality will become uniform since all of our thinking will be done by inanimate objects named computers.

Which brings us back to the beginning, all computers should die a lurid and shameful death.

Hold on a minute there, sister, you might be thinking.

Computers make our lives easier. Computers make us more efficient. Computers make us



smarter, etc., etc., until we've listed all of the trite and rather superficial reasons why we love computers.

Yet, from the perspective of a non-java-scripting, no-zip-drive-zipping neurotic, this world is evolving into a massive technocracy.

A technocracy wherein all economic resources, and hence the entire social system, is governed by scientists and engineers. (which ain't too shabby for most of the populous at Texas A&M.)

This would mean ubiquitous sci-fi cable channels and CBS's world-wide coverage of The Nagano Programming Olympics—just the thought of skinny Lechner nerds in pink spandex is terribly frightening.

In short, Lucifer is hiding in that little Intel chip in your computer. What could be more simple than convincing you not to think.

*Michelle Voss is a sophomore English major.*

**STUDENT LIFE**

# Vigor of Howdy Week crosses line



**CHRIS HUFFINES**  
columnist

Howdy Week has come and gone in its noisy, little way. And after this latest round of tradition-based atrocities, one would hope it is painfully clear that Howdy A&M is a group of vapid, squalling children whose idea of self-importance is imposing A&M's own version of political correctness on the general populace.

Let me make it clear right off, I support the tradition of "Howdy!" I think it makes A&M a friendlier place, and it has been a great pick-me-up time and again. A&M would be a far worse place than it is today if it were not for "Howdy!" and other fine traditions.

Which makes it almost physically painful to see Howdy A&M's abusing students' patience and eventually, destroying tradition, all in the name of tradition.

Howdy A&M! has routinely verbally badgered students who do not want to wear their little stickers or have actually walked up and put the stickers on who students who have clearly refused to wear them. I have seen it happen many times and have heard of it many more.

They have also paraded en masse around campus, bellowing "Howdy!" at students in what can only be described as an attempt to blast whatever small spirit remains in the common Aggie right out of them.

In yet another blatant display of maturity, Howdy A&M! also ran around campus waving "Howdy!" banners, accidentally flag-whipping innocent bystanders left and right. And, of course, the Howdy mobile. It just cries out: "Holy student organization gone wrong, Batman!"

Unfortunately, the people who claim to hold up traditions including "soldier, statesman and knightly gentlemen" act like immature, high school sophomores on a regular basis.

Those Aggies who fall under the category of "two-percenter" will never begin saying "Howdy" if, in their minds, it means having to act like those wackos from Howdy A&M! They would rather let the tradition die, and they do outnumber Howdy A&M! by a very large margin.

The problem is that here at A&M it has become avant-garde to ruthlessly advocate tradition, even at the expense of other Aggies or common sense. A&M has developed ultra-conservatives that masquerade as normal people and make G. Gordon Liddy look like a moderate. This is not a political term.

This ultra-conservatism means these students are resisting current change and trying to reverse recent changes. These ultra-conservatives move for "the good old days" with more furor than the Ku Klux Klan of the 1870s.

This can be seen everywhere from "it's always been this way" profanity on Bonfire pots to the traditional and damaging, polishing of Sully.

These students, who have embraced this ultra-conservatism, are embracing this philosophy for one reason. They feel they need an organization like Howdy A&M! to identify with and give their lives purpose.

Howdy A&M! provides students with a place to belong, something to define who they are and what they stand for. It gives them something to fight for and someone to fight against. Kind of like the Nazi party, but without the goose-stepping. Or the helmets. Or the war-mongering and genocide.

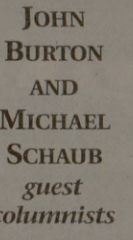
The members of the ultra-conservative groups like Howdy A&M! are using their association with these groups to set themselves apart because they need a group like Howdy A&M! to make them feel adequate, not because they truly believe in the methods Howdy A&M! uses to promote tradition. They need the group, and will do anything to stay in their "non-conformist" group, even if it means violently conforming to what the group believes. Meanwhile, as was said before, their activities are destroying the tradition they hold so dear.

This pathetic mind game is being supported by our student fees. Frankly, I do not want to be even partially responsible for subsidizing the self-disillusionment of my fellow Aggies. The ends do not justify the means. It is time for Howdy A&M! to find a way to restore tradition that does not undercut the very heart of Aggieland.

*Chris Huffines is a sophomore speech, communications major.*

**VOICE FROM THE CROWD**

# Lack of contraceptive options must never be reality



**JOHN BURTON AND MICHAEL SCHAUB**  
guest columnists

I want to be invisible. I do a rilla war. I paint my face and vel at. You r't know over until I're in a body bag." — Ralph, Jan. 1992

"I dead, I hurt in blast at Alma abortion clinic" — *Washington Post*, Jan. 1998

Family planning clinics ched and bombed with ople inside. An off-duty po-officer killed in a bomb t also left a clinic worker nded and maimed.

Age girls dead of infecns after resorting to illegal, k-alley abortions.

What exactly is "pro-life" ut that?

Between 1977 and 1989 ne, terrorists acting in the ne of "life" torched or nbnd 77 women's clinics in United States. In recent rs, clinic doctors and work-have been harassed, beaten, imed and even assassinated.

We realize, of course, most i-abortion activists are

peaceful, genuinely concerned people. However, the misleading and aggressive speech of these groups can incite violent action by paranoid and militant anti-choice factions.

Planned Parenthood's recent decision to expand services in Bryan drew significant protest from an anti-choice minority.

It would be unfortunate for our community to become the site of domestic terrorism as a result of such inflammatory rhetoric.

And we cannot help but be concerned by the conspicuous silence of local religious leaders on the issue of terrorism directed at family planning clinics.

A few years ago, the home and car of an influential Texas pro-choice advocate were shot full of holes, with the woman and her longtime companion in the house, the night before a national pro-choice rally in Washington.

The gunmen were never caught. That pro-choice advocate was Norma McCorvey—"Jane Roe" in the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case.

McCorvey, now an anti-abortion advocate, made no mention of the attempt on her life in her speech at A&M last month.

How quickly McCorvey has forgotten the violence that accompanies the "pro-life" movement.

McCorvey's speech, sponsored by Catholic Students Association, neglected to address such relevant issues as contraception, age-appropriate sex education and the complex issues facing America's urban and rural poor.

Indeed, few members of the audience (which seemed to be composed mostly of white, relatively affluent students) seemed to notice the obvious lack of pragmatic discussion by McCorvey.

In fact, we must wonder how McCorvey made such a dramatic change from reproductive rights pioneer to anti-abortion poster child less than a year after she published her landmark pro-choice book *I Am Roe*, which earned her the title of "a feminist Joan of Arc" from the *New York Times*.

McCorvey obviously stands to profit financially from her new anti-abortion book, *Won by Love*, and her videotape, *Reversing Roe*, both of which she has ostensibly released to gain money for her new effort, Roe No More Ministries.

Whether McCorvey's "conversion" is due to exploitation by the anti-abortion movement, to a sincere change of heart on the abortion issue, to her realization of lucrative deals to be made on "the other side of the fence," or a combination of these, is unclear.

What is clear, though, is her particularly malicious and obnoxious disparagement of Planned Parenthood, and organization whom she referred to as "Planned Death."

Planned Parenthood, which recently announced plans to expand its facilities to Bryan, has always been a favorite target of anti-abortion activists.

But lost in the rhetoric of these misguided protesters is the fact that the vast majority of Planned Parenthood services are not even related to abortion.

Unfortunately, extremists represent Planned Parenthood as an "abortionary." However, this does not reflect the diverse and important services Planned Parenthood offers.

In 1996, five million women and men received reproductive health and educational services at Planned Parenthood's nearly 900 clinics.

These services include con-

traceptive instruction, HIV testing, prenatal care, infertility counseling and literally thousands of adoption referrals.

In fact, through the provision of contraceptive services, it is estimated Planned Parenthood helps avert more than 235,000 abortions in the United States each year.

The proposed clinic in Bryan will bring these valuable services to the Brazos Valley, where a diverse population—ranging from college students to working-class men and women—can utilize these vitally important resources.

Poll after poll has indicated up to 80 percent of Americans support a woman's right to a safe and legal abortion.

We cannot allow a loud minority to rob the majority of a valuable community asset.

And to those who would have women return to the dark ages of substandard prenatal health care, denial of safe contraceptive options and dangerous back-alley abortions, we say: never again.

*John Burton is a junior bioenvironmental science major. Michael Schaub is a junior English major.*



**MAIL CALL**  
Free candidate publicity inappropriate in column

I must have missed the announcement that the new name for the Opinion Page was the "Republican Candidate Propaganda Forum".

Donny Ferguson once again used his column not to inform students and stimulate debate, but rather to espouse his personal politics and advertise for right-wing political candidates.

While a column urging students to go out and vote would have been much more appropriate, Ferguson instead chose to campaign and

cheer on his personal political heroes. One is left wondering whether these candidates paid Ferguson for this free public relations campaign.

A column is supposed to present a well-informed argument that serves to educate readers on a subject. Ferguson instead misuses his column to advance his own ultra-conservative agenda and provide free advertising for right-wing political candidates and ideas.

While it is certainly Ferguson's right to produce columns on conservative ideas, it is simply inappropriate to use his opinion column to provide free advertising for political candidates.

*Jon Appgar Class of '99*

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