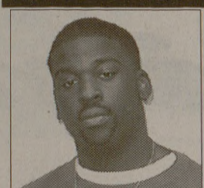


Truth and consequences

Honesty not always best policy, especially when truth might inflict more pain than a lie



DEMOND REID

I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Ms. Lewinsky." The art lying is as American as apple pie.

Ever since Columbus hopped the Santa Maria and told the natives "Don't mind us, we won't be here long," lying has been at the heart of this country.

Winning the Heisman Trophy, the "I didn't slice up my ex-wife with a kitchen knife" type lies, untruths are important to everyday life. Lies are the Elmer's Glue that holds this fragile society together.

From "the check is in the mail" to "size doesn't really matter" lies are so deeply woven into our social fabric that rather than question them, we simply cover ourselves with their warmth. It is important to understand that just as there are different degrees of lying, there are also different degrees of lying.

There is a major difference between innocent little white lies and lies so big and so black that they make Shaquille O'Neal look like Macauley Caulkin. Lying for personal gain is never good, but lying in the name of politeness is acceptable. It is not absolutely necessary to tell your mother that she looks like a wailing cat caught in a paper shredder every time she breaks into a chorus of "Wind Beneath My Wings." Just smile, tell her she sounds fat and pray no one's eardrums begin to bleed.

Honesty is not always the best policy. The lies we are as important as the air Americans breathe and water Americans drink. Imagine a world where everybody told the truth all the time. It would be a world with no lies is about as appealing as Planned Parenthood Tripp in a G-string with a see-through bikini top. A lieless world would bring about the end of the advertising industry. The advertising industry has been built on lies, because without lies nothing would ever get sold.

In the hands of advertising executives the truth has been poked, prodded and violated more times in a drunken prom date. Drinking Gatorade will make anybody like Mike. No woman's body will throw into a series of orgasmic thrusters if she uses Herbal Essence's shampoo. And no matter what Frito Lay would like for consumers to believe, it is possible to eat just one chip.

In a completely honest society, not only will the advertising industry take a swift kick in the behind,

but the annual ritual known as Thanksgiving dinner will take one as well. Without being able to lean on the crutch of polite deceit, a family dinner would be about as enjoyable as having a root canal performed by Muhammad Ali.

In a world without lies, when Aunt Edna plumps down her special Spam and marshmallow casserole on the dinner table, there are no options. Usually a fib, such as saying a recent conversion Islam does not allow partaking in pork by-products, would do the trick. But without the ability to lie, the truth — that Dennis Rodman's dirty jock strap would taste better than the satanic concoction she has made — would come out.

Without small lies, male-female relationships would never last. When the "Does this make me look fat?" question pops up, a lie is a man's best friend.

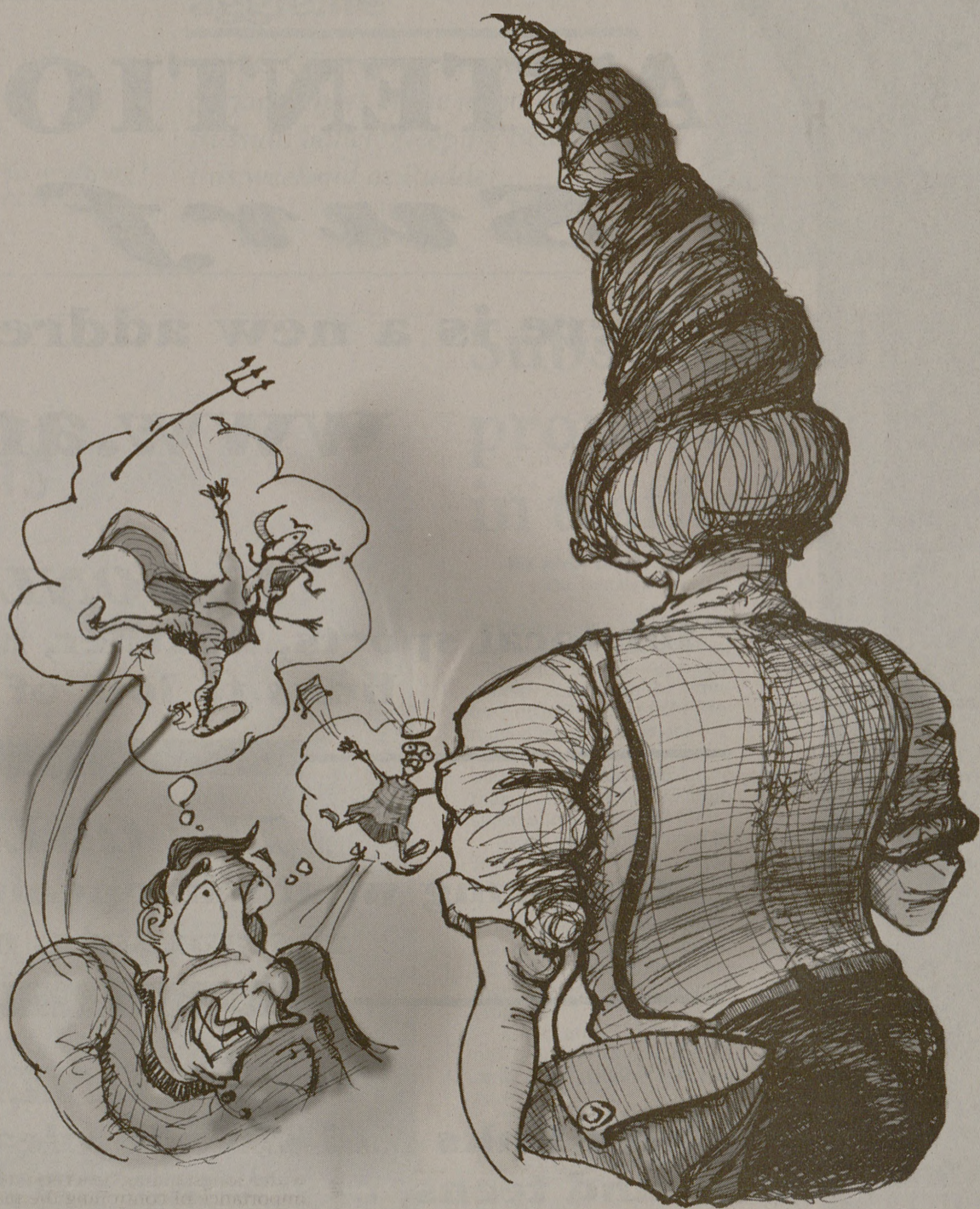
Without the ability to lie, a man would have to tell his woman that it is not the clothes, but the 12-pack of bacon wrapped donuts she woofs down every morning that make her look fat. The truth is the ultimate relationship killer.

Not only do we need to lie, but we also need to be lied to. The truth is a big boy and it packs one heck of a punch and as a society we cannot handle that punch.

Which explains why the American public has elected the Duke of Deceit himself, Bill Clinton, to the office of the presidency twice. Bill Clinton has done for lying what Michael Jordan has done for basketball. Bill Clinton could not be anymore slippery even if he was wrapped in banana peels, dipped in KY-Jelly and sprayed with WD-40. But Clinton's lies are necessary. They gave the country a rallying point. His lies are like dime rocks to the crack head that is the American public because no matter how many he gives out, the country still wants more. During the whole zipper-gate fiasco, Clinton's approval rating rose all the way up to 70 percent. That is simply amazing. Seventy percent. Jesus's rating never toppled over 50, but then again he never lied.

Everybody does it, but nobody wants to admit that they tell lies. Lies are just the little soldiers that protect the country from imploding on itself. No matter how anyone slices it, lies are a necessity and it would be impossible to live in a world without them.

Demond Reid is a sophomore marketing major.



MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

Current system of electing judges should change to appointment

The judges of the Texas Supreme Court are elected to office in a method that encourages corruption and a dedication to the hope re-election.

The best way to solve this problem is elect the judges, not appoint them.

In the current system, the judges are elected for very short terms. The head of the Supreme Court runs for office every two years and the other judges run every four years. The short terms are bad because they do not leave the judges time to really concentrate on being judges. Instead, as soon as they are elected, they begin to start planning their next campaign.



LISA FOOX

Further, the election process is one that screams corruption. Opponents of the current system point out that with the voter turnout in Texas being as poor as it usually is, the people who elect the judges are the ones most affected by them.

Namely, the lawyers.

It does not make sense to allow lawyers and those who are an integral part of the courtroom process to elect the judges who will make decisions affecting them. It is not likely a judge would rule against a lawyer who was instrumental in getting the judge elected.

In a similar fashion, the judges are exposed to another element of corruption. If a wealthy businessman invests a great deal of money into a judge's political campaign, he might expect favors in return.

If the businessman appears in the

courtroom later, it is likely the judge will be more lenient on the wealthy man in hopes of continued support in the next campaign.

Sure, this is not how society likes to view the campaign process, but the notion of bribery is not far-fetched.

Obviously, there are supporters of the current political system. However, their main reasons for support are not entirely accurate.

First, supporters claim the election process is one which represents the people. This is not true, mainly due to poor voter turnout. Again, those who vote are usually those directly involved in the judicial system.

Moreover, proponents believe these judges, if they are not effective, will not be re-elected. This argument is a misconception because judges are often supported in their campaigns by wealthy busi-

nessmen. They will have the funds to run for office successfully, which could ensure they are not ousted from office even if they are not effective judges.

So, there needs to be a new system. A current proposition, in the bills numbered HJR49 and HB1361, is that these judges should be appointed by the governor and, seven years later, they should come up for political re-election. The appointments are to be made by merit.

This system is a plausible one. If the judges are appointed by the governor, the system will escape the flaws created by the election process.

The merit-based qualifications for achieving Supreme Court status need to be specified. If clarified, the qualifications should ensure that "family-and-friends" appointments by the governor do not occur.

However, there needs to be one small

change to this proposal: a recommendation that judges be appointed for a longer term of 14 years.

Judges in New York are elected for this time period and they have an incredibly strong judicial system. Further, this plan eliminates the constant fear of being ousted from office, which allows the judges to concentrate on more important issues than their next political race.

Overall, it is necessary to implement a system of judicial appointments instead of elections. The results of this will be a better and more equal judicial process and a more fluid and fair society.

The Supreme Court judges make decisions that reflect how Texas views a variety of issues. Therefore, it is the responsibility for Texans to ensure Texas is well-represented.

Lisa Foox is a senior journalism major.

MAIL CALL

Greek attitudes exemplified by Greek member's mail call

In response to Andrew C. Davis' Feb. 15 mail call.

It is true that as students at Texas A&M we could not say that others are less than Aggies. The reason for Pablo White's mail call was to point it to Greeks here that maybe they should reconsider their attitudes towards those of us who are not involved in the Greek life.

The issue at hand was not about the work that fraternal organizations do but with the way they carry themselves. You managed to prove him right in your mail call when you imply that only homebodies with friends live in dorms and particularly Northside.

Though I have never lived on campus, I have friends who live on Northside, and to put down a part of our campus that continues to keep our traditions alive the way Northsiders do, just shows off elitist attitudes of Greeks.

Jason Adam
Class of '01

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu

Talk radio callers, hosts generate lots of anger

Someone once came up with a saying that optimists see a glass as half full, while pessimists see it as half empty.

Obviously, this inventive soul was not a fan of talk radio, or he would have decided that the glass is no good and nobody cares about it anyway.

Talk radio is a craze that has grasped the whole of the nation. It is also a good indicator of what the nation as a whole is thinking and it appears the nation is not happy. If this is really how people are thinking, we are on the verge of having interpersonal relations in America imitating a bar brawl.

Whether the show is news talk or sports talk, most (and at the national level, almost all) shows are decidedly negative. People call in to these shows to rant and rave about all sorts of things, and almost none of the callers have anything good to say — unless saying that your team (commonly referred to as "we") are going to beat the dogs on the opposing team senseless the next day can be considered optimistic.



MARK PASSWATERS

People are using their First Amendment right to free speech to say all sorts of inane things, varying from saying the Philadelphia Eagles will win the Super Bowl to wondering aloud about Troy Aikman's love life. Many people who call radio shows sound like they are angry enough to eat their young, then gripe that they lacked flavor.

People call Rush Limbaugh to say Bill Clinton is an insult to cigar smokers everywhere. People call the more liberal talk shows to say that Ken Starr is a meanie. People call Dr. Laura Schlessinger to complain about their uncaring spouses. People call into Jim Rome's "Jungle" to give "memos" to athletes whom they have decided are no good.

Not too many positive vibes are found in these neighborhoods. Maybe it has something to do with waiting on hold for upwards of two hours; people that are content usually do not want to waste this much time.

Someone riled enough to tell the nation that they think John Elway wears a skirt is more likely to stay on hold, while the person lauding Cal Ripken's charity efforts will find something better to do.

Or, maybe it has something to do with the people hosting these shows. When hosts of a show invite — no, re-

quire — their callers to tell some celebrity to "bite me" before they hang up (as Papa Joe Chevalier on One-on-One Sports does), they insure there are not going to be too many optimists calling in to say how much they love life.

Are there any set parameters on how to get a show? It would appear that the only real requirement is to be bent out of shape at the drop of a hat. Rush Limbaugh used to work for the Kansas City Royals, and Slesinger got her break after calling into another radio psychiatrist's show to complain, surprisingly enough.

It would seem that talk radio has developed its own brand of Darwinism. With angry hosts willing to cut off callers after "how ya doin'", the world of the radio caller is a place where only the strong or the really angry survive.

This is best symbolized by Rome's motto for the dwellers of his "Jungle": "Have a take, don't suck, or you'll get run." In non-Romespeak, this means that a caller had better know what they are going to say, don't even consider doing something that he considers screwing up, or they are talking to a dial tone.

Fear of national humiliation is more than enough to keep the average person away from the telephone.

If the pulse of the average American is racing as fast as the hosts and most callers of talk shows these days, the heart attack rate is going to skyrocket. Let us all hope that these people are just freaks of society and not a true representation, because if they are, we are becoming a fundamentally mean nation.

Rodney King asked during the L.A. riots, "Can't we all just get along?" The answer coming over the airwaves would appear to be "hell no." While call-in shows are mostly amusing, this could be pointing to a far bigger problem.

These people, and maybe America as a whole, needs to lighten up. Are all of these "problems" real or invented? Save the anger for things that deserve it; many issues discussed on radio are not worth that much thought. Taking time to put things into perspective might be a better use of those hours on hold.

If America does not nip the trend of anger in the bud, it will spill over into real life.

A nation that hates each other is a far bigger problem than figuring out what to do to that free agent that went to St. Louis for more money.

Mark Passwaters is a graduate electrical engineering student.