

# OPINION

## Talk show host makeovers

### King of naughty turns nice

His bald gleaming head rushing into the fray always gave me a sigh of relief. His ominous presence enforced order in a world of chaos. The chant of "Steve! Steve! Steve!" heralded doom to breast milk drinkers, adult babies and transsexual lesbian midgets everywhere.

As of last week, that chant will no longer be heard. Steve Wilkos, the head of security for "The Jerry Springer Show," will probably have to find work breaking up fights between Rosie O'Donnell and Tom Selleck now that the producers of "Springer" have decided to tone down the violence and profanity of the top-rated daytime talk show.

USA Networks issued the statement last week that shows dealing with such issues as prostitutes and bisexuals would be replaced by Springer shows made B.C. (Before Catfights).

Now that the violence, nudity and profanity has been removed, making for a kinder, gentler Jerry, what is left? The answer simply is the Jenny Jones, Ricki Lake and Maury Povich world of free makeovers and the perpetual favorite, "I used to be fat. Now I'm all that."

It is possible for Springer to return to his B.C. days.

Before his turn to the dark side, "Springer's Final Thoughts" were introspective and offered hope on issues such as interracial relationships and raising children in the Ku Klux Klan. But after three years as the self-appointed Ringmaster, the integrity of Springer is as low as his guests' IQs.

This is because television begs the country to sell its soul to the highest bidder. No matter what the cost, obtaining the obligatory 15 minutes of fame is a higher priority than integrity or quality.

Springer, former aide to Robert Kennedy, former Cincinnati mayor and former television anchor, sold out his integrity and soon will pay the price when his show's ratings plummet and it is canceled faster than a transvestite can leap across a stage and tackle his/her hayseed boyfriend who jumped him/her for another queen of the desert.

The decision to edit out the violence in "Springer" episodes has been cited as a moral decision following the incidents in Colorado and

Georgia. Analysts said the production company has realized the impression the show leaves on the minds of television viewers and has decided to put an end to the violence.

If only USA Networks had reached this decision before they allowed the 300 lb. stripper on the show. That is an image television viewers could have done without.

But let's boil this moral decision down to the only terms television producers speak—money. Specifically, the \$25 million judgment awarded during the Jenny Jones case. If the need to end the violence was so pressing, then perhaps the violence, profanity and nudity would have been cut before Jonathan Schmitz killed Scott Amedure, a gay man who confessed on an episode of "The Jenny Jones Show" he had a crush on Schmitz.

For better or for worse, the rule of thumb is to go where the ratings are. Dollar signs get in the way of the ripped clothing, bleeding faces and broken chairs, and nothing else but money could

drown out the yell of the crowds as each of these fights broke out.

The audiences chant for more, and this year several audience members rushed to the stage and started fighting with the guests. Some audience members even got into stripping contests with the guests.

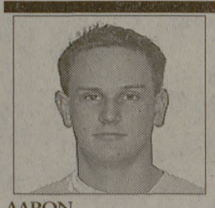
These people prove it is the audience that keeps these spectacles alive, not the producers or even Springer himself.

We tuned in to see who would walk out from behind the cheap brick facade onto the stage and get mauled. We got upset when the camera didn't show the blows, but cheered when they added the overhead camera, so we could get an uninterrupted view of the action.

We laughed as strippers drank their own breast milk or cringed when a girl admitted she was having a lesbian affair with her twin sister.

Maybe USA Networks' claim will hold this time, or maybe they will retool the show so all hint of integrity is gone. Maybe they will switch formats and compete against the WWF and WCW. It is easy to picture. Perhaps this time they will allow our good friend Steve to wear a referee outfit, and Jerry can call shots from ringside. He is, after all, the Ringmaster.

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AARON MEIER

### Queen of nice turns naughty

Rosie O'Donnell, supposedly the "Queen of Nice," has decided to become a political activist, a shift in programming about as appropriate as the "Capital Gang" doing stand-up routines during their show.

The first target of O'Donnell's moralist tangent for gun control was actor Tom Selleck. Selleck is a member of the National Rifle Association and has done a commercial for them. After berating him without warning on a nationally syndicated program, O'Donnell then demanded that the cast of the Broadway play "Annie, Get Your Gun" change the words to the tune "Anything You Can Do."

The reasoning? Annie, played by Bernadette Peters, sings that she can "shoot a partridge with a single cartridge."

When Peters found out about this demand, she refused to appear on the program.

The song that was played on the show was switched to "My Defenses Are Down."

Hopefully, Rosie's ratings will drop with the defenses. Just because this woman has a talk show does not mean that she has any more of a clue about an issue than anyone else in this nation.

However, her big ego and even bigger mouth have allowed her to charge off on a loony crusade.

Granted, the NRA has certainly made some block-headed decisions in its time, such as Executive Vice-President Wayne LaPierre calling American Law Enforcement "jack-booted thugs."

Anyone that compares U.S. crime fighters, be they federal or local, to the Nazi Gestapo should be forced to read a history book, then hit over the head with the book.

But despite the NRA's mistakes, one member of a group—in this case, Selleck—cannot be held responsible for the actions of a whole group.

After O'Donnell said she thought that there was a need for strict gun legislation and that the NRA was entirely at fault for these laws not already being on the books, Selleck accordingly said he could not speak for his organization.

O'Donnell's response: "You can't say that. Do

you think you can?"

All right, Rosie. Is it safe to say that you speak for all overweight New Yorkers? Probably not.

It is equally safe to say it is inconsiderate and unprofessional for O'Donnell to do what she did to an unassuming guest who was there, in Selleck's words, "to plug a movie."

It also shows total disregard for the audience of the show, who did not tune in to hear Rosie pontificate about any issue. If her lust for Tom Cruise is enough to turn viewers off, personally offensive attacks on guests will, too.

A quick note to O'Donnell: people do not watch the "Rosie O'Donnell Show" to be preached to. People do not become hosts of shows like this on their strong knowledge of current events.

This issue, as O'Donnell did note, is not "something to laugh about."

However, the reason most people tune in to her show is to laugh.

If they want commentary or opinion, "The O'Reilly Factor" or "Hardball" can be seen on their local cable system.

It is a tragedy that the kids of Columbine High School have been taken from their families, and many things should be done to prevent this from being repeated.

Rosie O'Donnell's approach to this situation, however, is not going to help.

If she truly wants to prevent this from happening again, she should lend her moral and financial support to other people or groups.

Any person who demands that guns be banned but does not have the courage to sever their ties with K-Mart—which sells guns—cannot be taken seriously.

After Rosie O'Donnell finished her personal assault on Tom Selleck's integrity, she said that she did not mean it personally.

A somewhat shaken Selleck looked down, and said, "It's your show, and you can talk about it after I leave."

If this is the way the supposed "Queen of Nice" is going to act, the people that watch will be right behind him.

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MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION



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### EDITORIAL

## The Battalion

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## SCHOOL TIES

### Severance of George Bush School from College of Liberal Arts brings benefits with conditions

As long as the interests of students and faculty members are given appropriate consideration, giving the George Bush School of Government and Public Service administrative autonomy will prove to be beneficial.

The recent announcement of plans to sever ties between the Bush School and the College of Liberal Arts stressed that this optimism is born of necessity. A rider on a bill passed by the Texas legislature will cut off funding to the Bush School unless it becomes a separate entity. Consequently, severance is the only sound financial alternative available to the Board of Regents.

Although the new legislation may have put pressure on the Bush School to separate earlier than officials had planned, the University must nonethe-

less be careful not to forget the interests of students and professors.

As the severance plan is implemented, administrators must work hard to preserve the academic integrity of the Bush School. It is primarily an institution of learning, and it would be a travesty if its independence turned it into nothing more than a training ground for public servants.

If, however, the academic mission of the Bush School is not forgotten, its bureaucratic independence could actually increase its prestige and importance on this campus, benefitting undergraduate and graduate students alike.

Therefore, once these precautions are taken, the severance of the Bush School could actually make it closer than ever to the University.

## Political reactions to violence fall short

In the wake of the Columbine tragedy and the Georgia shootings, everyone from talk show hosts to politicians have jumped on a bandwagon of legislative proposals.

With ill-founded solutions ranging from stricter gun control to endorsements for V-Chip television, the political powers that be are treating the symptoms rather than the causes of these recent events.

Instead of analyzing the real solutions to these problems, such as early recognition of potential threats and adequate counseling of such students and their parents, politicians have immersed themselves in gun control legislation, and it's easy to see why.

Passing a new piece of legislation gives politicians a reason to pat themselves on the back when, in reality, a new law is nothing more than a patchwork solution.

A psychologically deranged child will find the means to obtaining a gun no matter how many restrictions are passed regarding firearms.

Nevertheless, we continue to applaud the monitoring of the local pawnshop as if it is a breakthrough in prevention.

Next on the political agenda—a war against the media.

It seems no facet of the media is safe from this misplaced attack by politicians, professionals and parents.

Claiming violence is glamorized by the entertainment and news industries, these people would have everyone be-

lieve that no one can think for themselves.

The public are lambs being led to slaughter by a malevolent shepherd.

Vice President Al Gore, in a recent fund-raising speech reported by the *Miami Herald*, said, "We need more self-restraint in the entertainment industry and the broadcast industry. I reject the argument that [the media] doesn't make any difference, that it doesn't affect people."

If people are this easily influenced, then perhaps Mr. Gore should have reconsidered striding into the room to a Blues Brothers song. Let's hope none of his audience suddenly gets an urge to drive a car through a shopping mall.

**"Passing a new piece of legislation ... is nothing more than a patchwork solution."**

Blaming the media for influencing violent behavior is the easy way out.

Whether it's entertainment or news, the media is a reflection of the society that created it. It reflects human behavior rather than influencing it.

Politicians fail to accept this because it would mean finding real solutions instead of debating pointless issues and pointing the finger at the media after the fact.

Regardless of the extent to which our political leaders criticize news coverage and motion picture content, problems will persist because the real solutions continue to be overlooked.



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