

OPINION

Popularity before puberty

Young superstars earn their millions early, make college students wonder if they toil in vain

Nobody likes you when you are 23." This line from the 182's song "What's My Age Again?" proves the point: It is wise beyond your years.



AARON MEIER

In this day of the toddler-oriented pop culture, 23 is middle age, and a career in show business is pretty much over and done with by the time an actor or singer hits the big "3-0."

What happened to the good old days when actors had to struggle and work as waiters or bartenders before they had their first big break? Nowadays, a high-school diploma and a role in "Bye Bye Birdie" is all the acting credentials movie stars need to sign million-dollar contracts.

Meanwhile, college students are wasting their lives away trying to learn things when they are missing out on what might be the most lucrative years of their lives.

Take Killen native Jennifer Love Hewitt, age 20. Recently, she just pitched a movie to a studio with no script, just a premise, and they threw \$500,000 at her.

The idea of Hewitt having a great idea for a movie is as believable as her pitching Jutragena products. Will she ever know the anguish of a pimple? I think not.

I've got a few good ideas for some movies. I'd even be willing to settle for a paltry \$100,000 per idea. Sure, I haven't made my own music video where the sole visual focus is my breasts as I jump up and down, but I'm sure we could work something out.

Using my summer studying time wisely, I recently hit the Internet to look up the ages of pretty much every star who has been in the news this past year. People such as Sarah Michelle Gellar, 22; Natalie

Portman, 18; and Seth Green, the granddaddy of the list at 25; have all had their Clearasil taken away and have been shoved into the spotlight. After some painful math — including not only addition, but also division — of the 28 people selected, I found the average age was 21.35 years. Pretty sad considering the average age of the entire American population is getting older and is no where near 21.

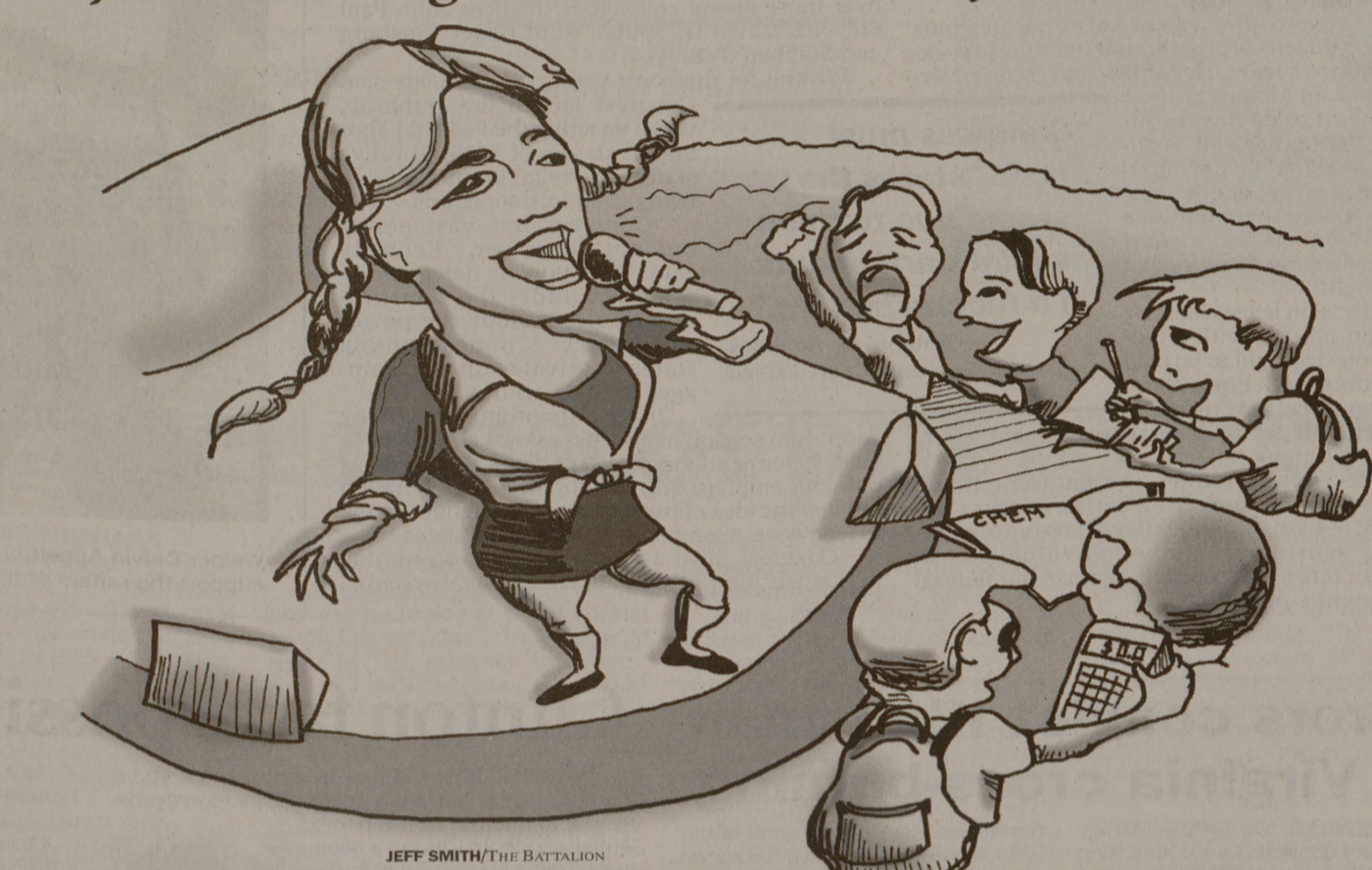
LeeAnne Rimes, 17, had a hit song titled, "How Do I Live Without You." At that age, the only person she shouldn't be able to live without is her parents not some boy she met at a 4-H meeting.

Singer Brandy, 20, had a hit this year with the line, "Have you ever loved somebody so much it could make you cry." Miss Moesha might have a set of pipes on her, but at such a tender young age, the only song she should be singing is a cover of Jennifer Page's "Crush."

VH1 has also declared Brandy to be a "diva" alongside the likes of Tina Turner and Cher. This week, MTV has unveiled an installment of their biographical series "Biorhythm" featuring Brandy. How long could the program actually be? She was born, she started singing, and now she's fighting with Monica about some loser. That's pretty much all that can be said. What are they going to do with the remaining 20 minutes of the show? Maybe they could start with Brandy's conception and pictures of her in utero.

But not all of the teeny-bopper upstarts rely on perkiness and clean complexions. Some are truly talented individuals making their impact on society. And these people are the ones who truly make the average college student feel like a has-been.

Drew Barrymore, whose 17-year career makes her the grand dame of the bunch, is only 24 years old and is one of Hollywood's top producers. Her production company has yielded three major hit movies (*The Wedding Singer*, *Ever After* and *Never Been Kissed*) in the past year.



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

She isn't the only producer still subscribing to YM magazine. Alicia Silverstone, 22, and Melissa Joan Hart, 23, also have their own production companies.

Singer Lauryn Hill, 24, won seven Grammy's this year, tying a record set by the legendary Carol King. Hill also has two children, has a truly inspiring faith in God and constant dedication to helping political refugees. She makes an existence

where looking forward to the newest episode of "Friends" seem pretty empty.

Young actors such as Edward Furlong, 22; Reese Witherspoon, 23; and Kirsten Dunst, 17, have delivered strong performances all before they were old enough to drive.

Dunst wasn't even old enough to see her own performance as the child-vampire Claudia in the R-rated *Interview With The Vampire*.

So while Jennifer Love decides which one of her potential costars has the biggest pecs and Lauryn clears away shelf space for her Grammys, the rest of us will suffer through an early mid-life crisis wondering where we went wrong in junior high.

Aaron Meier is a senior political science major.

Laws based on age limits can harm presumption of innocence

COLUMBUS, Ohio (U-WIRE) — In a recent speech in New Orleans, President Clinton advocated outlawing handgun ownership for those between the ages of 18 and 20.

"Incredibly, while those 18- to 20-year-olds cannot legally buy a beer or purchase a bottle of wine, they can walk into any gun shop, buy a handgun or gun show in America and buy a handgun," he said.

Not too long ago, people would have thought the incredible part was that 18- to 20-year-olds could buy a beer.

Not long ago in Ohio, the governor and state legislature had decided that 18-year-olds were responsible enough to consume alcoholic beverages, so long as the alcohol content was below 3.6 percent, meaning most beers and many wine coolers were legal.

But some bureaucrat in the Department of Transportation changed all that in the 1980s. The bureaucrat's name was Elizabeth Dole. Dole decided she should be the one to determine who was old enough to drink.

In other words, she wanted to be the national mommy. As Secretary of Transportation and National Mommy, Dole threatened to take away the federal government's highway money from any state that did not raise its

drinking age to 21. When Dole's law passed in 1984, only 18 states had a strict 21-year-old drinking age. Many states resisted Dole's mothering, but she was determined, taking the issue all the way to the Supreme Court.

"Gore thinks that if one has statistics then one can ignore ... due process."

She won, so Ohio dutifully changed its laws to suit mom. Recently, the 16-year-old driving age has also been under attack. In California, and five other states, you can't get full driving privileges until you are 18 years old.

Behind all these petty age restrictions is something more insidious — a deliberate chipping away of the presumption of innocence. This presumption, rooted in English common law, has been a part of our nation since it was founded.

Yet Gore thinks that if one has statistics then one can ignore that pesky part of the Constitution that talks about due process. He claims "18-year-olds commit 35 percent

more gun murders than 21-year-olds, double the gun murders by 24-year-olds and four times the gun murders by 30-year-olds."

Another statistic could probably be found showing that 30-year-olds commit at least twice as many "gun murders" as 40-year-olds. Why not raise the age to 31?

And those 70-year-olds are statistically much more violent than 90-year-olds, so why not raise the age to 71? We've got to keep those guns out of the hands of our 70-year-olds. Studies show they can't be trusted.

Al Gore's style of logic can be used to justify many other types of government misbehavior besides gun control.

In New Jersey, it was recently revealed that blacks were much more likely to be stopped by the highway patrol because of police statistics that say blacks are more likely to have drugs in their cars.

There is not much difference between these two cases. If you happen to be a member of a group that government statistics say is being naughty, you are immediately under suspicion, which slowly but surely degrades the presumption of innocence guaranteed to all.

Greg Weston is a columnist for The Lantern at Ohio State University.

Websites selling assistance with essays ill-advised, but not illegal

As commerce continues to blast into cyberspace, about a dozen Websites now exist to provide students with assistance on essays for their college applications. Assistance, that is, at a price.



CALEB MCDANIEL

According to an article in yesterday's *New York Times*, some admissions officials are upset by the explosion of these Internet services, which include businesses like MyEssay.com.

They fear the expensive fees and marketing strategies of the sites only intensify the nervous trepidation with which most students approach their applications.

But it does not take a 2,000-word essay to show these fears are ultimately unfounded.

Really, concerns about the sites are surprising because their services are nothing new. For instance, MyEssay.com allows students to submit a final draft of their admissions essays to a board of reviewers. After shelling out \$99.95 for the service, students receive criticisms and suggestions from the panel.

But the only things original about this package are its electronic medium and its outrageous price tag.

Students who are really serious about getting admitted into competitive colleges have always solicited the advice of others — if they are smart, that is. Besides, many companies outside of cyberspace already offer help with writing skills.

And universities must surely be aware that parents, teachers and peers are frequently enlisted for their comments on applications. Why cry foul when private companies are enlisted as well?

In the *Times* article, one admissions official tries to explain the supposed difference between free advice and Internet writing coaches.

"What bothers me is a lot of these services are, in essence, capitalizing on anxiety about the application process," said Karl M. Furstenberg, director of admissions and financial aid at Dartmouth College.

Furstenberg should face the facts. The anxiety of the application process is real, and it is not created by a simple mathematical problem — there are more applicants than openings at most top-ranked schools. Getting in is not easy, and it will inevitably be stressful.

So the fears of officials like Furstenberg simply do not add up. But the bills students might pay for the services do add up, and quickly, and it is questionable whether a few comments on an essay is worth the money, no matter who they are from.

For instance, MyEssay.com can charge upwards of \$100 for its work. CollegeGate, a similar service, offers packages costing up to \$500. It certainly does seem silly

to the tune of 100 smackaroos. Where there is a demand, there will be a supply.

However, despite this economic fact of life, some admissions officials go on to insist that the prices are unfairly high.

"Not all students can afford to pay these fees, and we think the process should be as fair as it can be," Furstenberg said.

Interesting, coming from an admissions officer for an Ivy League school.

Students who can afford Dartmouth will probably barely blink at the price range at MyEssay.com, and one should more quickly wonder whether making the best universities beyond the financial reach of many qualified students is fair.

Besides, services hoping to get a slice of the college admissions market have been around for years. Companies like Kaplan and the Princeton Review have sold academic assistance — and quite successfully — for some time. If Kaplan and Princeton Review are not unfair, then neither are essay-aid websites.

In reality, the perception of unfairness voiced by Furstenberg and others should turn its focus from the Websites to the college admissions process itself.

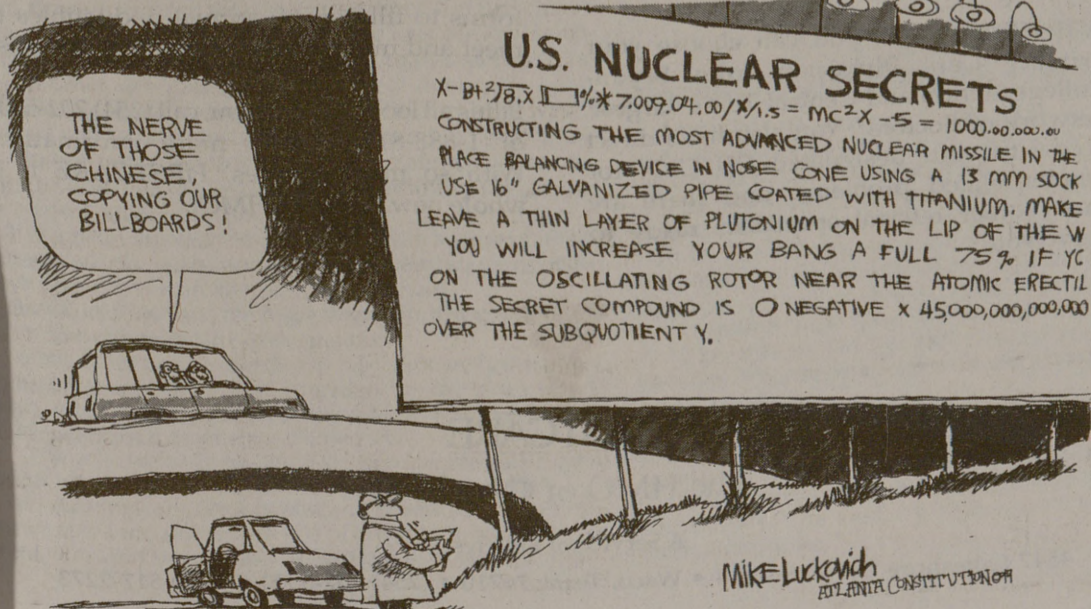
Perhaps colleges should reevaluate an application procedure which puts so much emphasis on one standardized test or one two-page essay that students are willing to spend hundreds of dollars to perform well on them.

But as things stand, the complaints being shouted about these Websites do not stick.

True, most students would be better off saving their money for the washing machines in the dorm than burning it on some essay edits. Nevertheless, while using the sites may be unwise, it is not unethical or illegal.

Unless, of course, one dares to ask whether the capitalist's penchant for poor consumer spending habits is morally questionable. And while that thesis may be a good topic to tackle in an application essay, it is beyond the ability of college admissions offices to answer.

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MIKE LUKOVICH