

## THE LURID LINDA

Tripp's humiliation deserved; lawsuit should be dropped



JOHN T. BAKER

the American taxpayers during the Whitewater investigations and stabbed former friend Lewinsky in the back by exposing the affair to the media, has earned any humiliation she received. Now, the mass media will taunt her a second time.

Tripp's attempt to pocket money from the repercussions of her own poor judgment is a slap in the face of America. This woman's indiscretions paved the way for her becoming a political joke.

Unfortunately for Tripp, any jury in possession of its common sense will deny her the compensation she seeks. Her political failures and public roasting should not cost anyone a single red cent.

### Tripp's attempt to pocket money from the consequences of her own actions is laughable.

History clearly speaks for her reputation. Before the Lewinsky investigation, she was the last person to see Vince Foster, the Clintons' personal attorney, alive.

Even earlier in her career, she played the friend to Kathleen Willey, a White House aide who subsequently filed sexual-harassment charges against Clinton.

Maybe a new career will unfold for this supporting character — business consultant. She may not handle her own business well, but she seems to have her nose in everyone else's.

Continual coincidental entanglements involving the White House might lead one to believe Tripp has a personal agenda. She may not have publicly declared war on the Clintons,

but her actions speak for themselves. She has never hesitated to throw the personal affairs of others onto the media bonfire, yet she wants compensation after getting licked by the flames.

Admittedly, Tripp may have acted with the best of intentions. She may have fancied herself a patriot.

But her actions brought further humiliation upon this proud nation.

Concerning the president, the public is more interested in maintaining respect for the highest office in the land than it is in explaining oral sex to their four year olds.

Scandals have always plagued presidents. And while America should not condone President Clinton's activities, it also should avoid bolstering the position of a tattletale.

When the presidency is allowed to be devalued, the United States as a whole is weakened. Linda Tripp personifies America's digression into a Springer-esque, tabloid-fueled society.

Like her earlier truth-twistings, Tripp's case is weak, damaging and uncalled for. Americans must not permit barber-shop gossips to gain financially from the public humiliation of political characters.

Her actions must not be celebrated with monetary reparations. Facing public censure for felonious wiretapping is the just desert for her actions.

For those who nonetheless wish to lend a hand to this would-be heroine, the Official Linda Tripp Website offers a solution.

For a donation to her legal-defense fund, fans can receive their very own "I Believe Linda Tripp" bumper stickers. The bumper sticker would look smart between "I Believe in Santa" and "Elvis Lives" bumper stickers. For the time being, though, Linda Tripp just needs to shush.

John T. Baker is a junior agricultural development major.



ERIC ANDRAOS/THE BATTALION

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MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA, GEORGIA

### VIEW POINTS

#### Signs of the times

On the ground floor of the Butler Building, standing just below eye level, are two windows with anti-bonfire signs put up over five years ago by Dr. Hugh Wilson. When Wilson first displayed the signs, the windows were vandalized and covered in all sorts of debris, including rotten food and mud. Now, five years later, the custodians and Dr. Wilson have stopped cleaning the windows and the signs stand behind a dark green film of mildew. The two signs, which read "Bonfire: dumb as dirt" and "Bonfire: arrogance, WASTE, stupidity" are dirty eyesores many students are accustomed to overlooking.

However, what is worse is the image these obstructed signs give to A&M's visitors. Most students at A&M are already familiar with the overwhelming response any criticism of Bonfire will evoke. But to visiting parents, guests and academic officials, the moldy reaction to a different opinion does not react well on A&M.

What the mess tells visitors is that students will stoop to any level to put down any hint of dissension. The University needs to clean and repair the windows and students need to respect the signs for what they are — one man's opinion, which he has the right to display, even if it goes against the mainstream view.

— Eric Dickens

#### Mugging manners

Bringing a lighter to Midnight Yell Practice is a lot like sending for a mail-order bride from the sumo culture. One never knows what one will get, but chances are it will not be good.

Any female using a lighter at yell practice is likely to attract every drunken man within a fifty-foot radius that is desperate for the touch of a non-synthetic woman, in much the same way that a week-old pizza draws undesirable insects.

The insensitive actions of these men disturb single women who are just looking for a little harmless fun.

Few women enjoy being groped by an intoxicated stranger who forgot to spit out his Copenhagen.

Everyone concerned would be happier if the above-mentioned men would use a little more thought when choosing their "prey."

If a man feels it is absolutely necessary to attend yell practice dateless and sloppy drunk, he should at least find someone as inebriated as himself to mug down with when the lights go out.

In this case, at least the woman will probably not remember the harrowing experience, thereby saving herself years of intensive psychotherapy.

If the drunken men in the crowd cannot show a reasonable amount of consideration, they should consider staying home with their respective synthetic women and watching "Jerry Springer Uncensored" reruns.

Plastic does not have feelings or self-respect.

— Jessica Crutcher

#### Bonfire losing its traditional spirit

Two years ago, as a freshman, I was very enthusiastic about Bonfire — cut and stack. I attended them all until I was turned off by the treatment that I received from a redpot.

One night, I was going to visit some friends who were camping out at stack.

It was raining, and I stepped over a log to avoid a mud hole. Suddenly, I was approached by a redpot who yelled at me and shoved me back to the other side of the log.

I am very petite — 5 feet 4 inches, 95 pounds — not a size that responds well to being shoved by a large male. Had he simply asked me to leave his area, I would have gladly left. Upon reaching my friends'

campsite, I was told that I had stepped into redpot perimeters, an area that females must not enter unless they have slept with a redpot. After this experience, it became obvious to me why one might hesitate on becoming a candidate for eligibility to enter the redpots' area.

I feel as though Bonfire has lost some of the teamwork and Aggie spirit traditionally associated with it — the things that

make our school stand above others — and a lack of common decency in general, nothing like the traditional Aggie spirit. I would love to be a part of building something as amazing as Bonfire, but not if it requires lowering myself to being treated as anything other than the lady and traditional Aggie that I am.

Lisa Kelley Class of '01

#### MAIL CALL

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## Beyond the Bottom Line

It is becoming increasingly clear that the Republican Party is the puppet of the nation's big businesses.

A bill passed last month along party lines in the House of Representatives, the most recent evidence of industry's undue influence on the GOP, would require most class-action lawsuits be transferred from state to federal courts. There are signs of preliminary support for the bill in the Senate, as well.

The law represents a triumph for industry and a blow to consumer rights. Because stringent rules in federal courts limit the quantity and types of claims judges can hear, the bill's passage would, in practice, prevent a host of currently viable lawsuits from being brought against large companies.

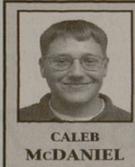
Such a proposal may appear benign on the surface, but it is a disaster in disguise. The bill would deprive individuals of the crucial ability to hold industries accountable for their behavior.

Most House Republicans support the measure because of huge lawsuits recently brought against tobacco companies. The crippling of tobacco by class-action lawsuits has made many other industries fear the power of litigation.

They should be afraid. Class-action lawsuits are meant to curtail corporate deviance with the threat of legal action.

Corporations, by definition, exist to maximize profits for their shareholders. They care about the bottom line. So the threat of class-action claims is one of the few things capable of keeping their profit-hungry hands in check.

It is not a stretch of the imagination to believe companies will gladly be naughty when it advances their interests. Thanks to class-action litigation, memorandums were uncovered proving tobacco companies knew they were deceiving consumers about the risks of smoking.



CALEB MCDANIEL

#### LEGAL ISSUES

Part 3 of 5

#### Class-action lawsuits: Proposed legislation would give unfair advantages to industry.

discovered the generic parts often did not fit well and reduced the performance and resale value of their cars. One of the lawyers, Elizabeth Cabraser, told the *Times* the parts "don't have quality control, and they're not crash-tested."

These kinds of revelations about business sleight of hand would remain forever secret if plaintiffs did not have the ability to bring class-action lawsuits against industries. Adam Smith's invisible hand may govern the market, but it does not guarantee it will be moral. To ensure moral practice, the long arm of the law is needed. The job of deterrence may not al-

ways be pleasant, but if the courts do not do it, no one will.

The legislative branch certainly cannot be trusted to slap the hands of businesses, because its hands are in the pockets of big business. These days, where there is money, lawmakers are not far behind. And since industries are a major source of campaign contributions, legislators are unlikely to pass laws which would severely restrict industry.

Instead, they are likely to vote in ways that will keep the campaign dollars flowing, passing laws which make their industry bedfellows happy and preventing laws which scrutinize and regulate business activities.

Therefore, it falls to the judicial branch to provide recourse for individuals harmed by corporate misconduct. Stripping the courts of this responsibility is a veiled blow to America's hallowed separation of governmental powers.

The bill is all the more surprising given traditional Republican dogma. Many of the same representatives who support the legislation were elected on platforms pledging to return control of many issues to the states. In an ironic twist, this Republican-authored bill calls for control to be wrested from the states and given to federal courts.

Aside from being internally inconsistent for the GOP, such a shift in caseloads would overburden already overflowing federal dockets.

A fine line must be walked when it comes to civil law. Litigation should not be used to accomplish the job of legislation, but neither should legislation encroach on the valuable role of litigation. This latest Republican misadventure draws dangerously close to the latter.

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.