

Taking fame to a new level

Washington, D.C., American people, suffering from an influx of politics-loving celebrities

"I'm considering running against you in the year 2000 because, though I do consider you a fine piece of [art], I cannot believe that any man can fix anything anymore."



MARIANO CASTILLO

Roseanne Barr jokingly used these words to give Warren Beatty a hard time about his consideration of running for president in 2000. While Barr's quote may be a funny example of celebrities going into politics, there is nothing humorous about the lineup of presidential hopefuls for the next millennium, which resembles an "E! Entertainment" parade more than a group of able, experienced leaders.

Since television began covering politics, it has slowly turned more and more to the entertainment value in it, until the two are now almost indistinguishable. Celebrity status has become an important political asset.

One illustration of how the famous have an advantage over others is shown in Al Gore and Bill Bradley's race for Democratic front-man status.

Bradley has a higher celebrity status than his fellow candidates, and it is propelling him ahead in the polls. It seems the thought of a president who can sell magazines by being on the cover and who would tower over other heads of state makes voters drool.

A better example of how popularity can be a resource is Texas Gov. George W. Bush, whose immense popularity from the legacy left by his father has led to millions of dollars in campaign contributions. Critics have been quick to point out flaws, such as rumored past drug use and using his father's Congressional connections to stay out of danger during Vietnam, but people seem willing to overlook the skeletons in candidates' closets if they are household names.

Bush is one of the most qualified candidates for the job, but voters should just acknowledge his past instead of giving blind support and skirting the controversial issues that arise.

Perhaps if David Duke had played professional football he would have been elected governor of Louisiana.

It seems in the new millennium anyone with a famous name and some money will throw their hats in the American political ring. The symbol of this movement is none other than Donald Trump who has an

amazing amount of support considering most voters only know him only because of his fortune.

Donald Trump is the last person America needs as president. Perhaps his consideration of candidacy should be taken lightly, as it has been reported the "Draft Donald Trump" Website is owned and funded by Trump, not voters.

Everyone used to joke politics in America is a game, but not until Jesse Ventura was elected governor of Minnesota did Americans realize how true that assessment is.

Ventura's election inspired two other professional wrestlers to seek public office — "Hollywood" Hulk Hogan and Rick "Nature Man" Flair are now both candidates for the 2000 presidential elections. If voters do not remove their heads from the television and pick their leaders based on merit instead of Nielson ratings, it will be only a matter of time before the WCW Party is formed.

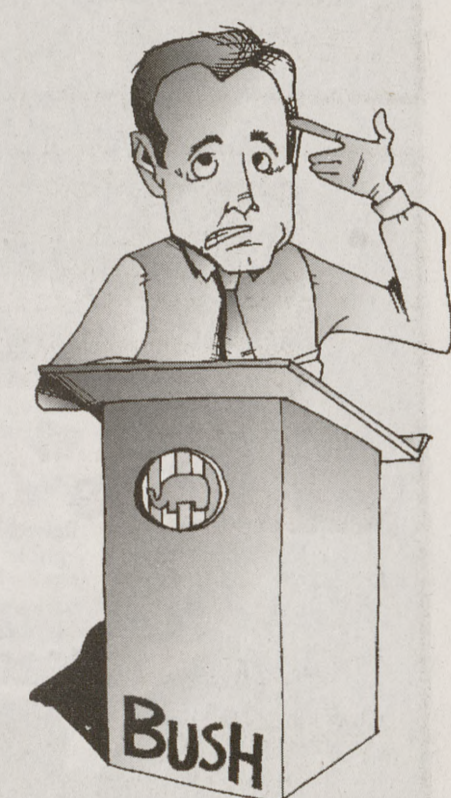
Celebrities taking advantage of their popularity to run for office is only part of the problem. The bigger problem is the societal one: voters see celebrities as saviors who will take America into the 21st century.

Supporters of the Grassroots Party have not been quiet about their plans to make Woody Harrelson their nominee for president. The party feels Harrelson's hemp-legalization, vegan and environmental movements are what America needs. Also, it probably realizes just the fact its candidate is an actor will double its votes.

Harrison Ford and Michael Douglas have not sought nominations, but because they both have starred in movies in which they played presidents, a draft movement to get them from the silver screen to the White House can be expected any day.

There even is a group campaigning to draft Michael Jordan as president. They actively campaign in cities and on the Internet. What if Jordan were to listen to them? There is little doubt he would stand a good chance of winning the position of leader of the free world despite having no previous political experience, just based on his popularity.

A similar group is petitioning to push Oprah Winfrey into the White House. Maybe she could win hostile nations over by recommending a good book. The problem with electing television and movie stars is that they like to talk too much, and a lot of what they say will be embarrassing to themselves



RICHARD HORNE/THE BATTALION

and, if elected, the nation. Ventura's comments about religion being a "crutch for the weak" is a reminder Hollywood candidates are not politicians who have done some acting, and vice versa.

The way presidential elections are beginning to shape up shows a flaw in American culture — putting popularity over actual experience. If voters

do not want to see the White House move from D.C. to L.A., they will have to cut through the fat to get to the issues and experiences of candidates to find the best leadership for next year.

Mariano Castillo is a sophomore international studies major.

"Junk" forwards, chain letters ruin helpful email revolution

As electronic mail revolutionizes the communication process, those who take advantage of this modern technology need to be conscious of its pitfalls and avoid them.



ELIZABETH KOHL

Aggies, given unlimited Internet access after paying the University's computer access fee, are especially susceptible to the everyday deceptions and hoaxes transmitted via email. Anyone who opens an in-box should be aware some documents are junk, and the circulation of these documents should be discontinued.

It is nearly impossible for an individual with an email address to avoid receiving a single forward or chain letter. Identifiable by the "fwd:" tag in the subject box, these emails include jokes, nostalgic stories, virus warnings, chain letters or even Bible verses. And in any given network of college students, there inevitably is one person who seems to derive immense pleasure from sending out as many forwards as technologically possible.

Of course, it is hard to resist "e-mooning" a friend or passing on a chain letter during a particularly bad week. After all, who really knows if those things are for real. Nobody wants their social life to falter simply because they did not keep the chain going by forwarding it on to many others.

However, there are those who have become "trigger-happy," unable to resist the simplicity of clicking on the forward button and cluttering the in-boxes of friends, coworkers and even employers.

Yes, some Internet jokes are funny, and some stories are worth reading. But excess will always ruin a good thing, and sometimes the text is not the only thing being passed on.

The larger problem is not in the annoyance of these letters, but in their irresponsibility, deceptiveness and viral capabilities.

Recently, an email circulated discussing the U.S. House Bill 602P. According to the document, 602P would apply a fee of five cents to every e-mail. The money would then go to subsidize the U.S. Postal Service.

This false Internet document was so widely circulated and believed that it drew the attention of Congress and the Postal Service, prompting both organizations to post disclaimers on

their home pages stating the bill was a hoax. 602P is a classic example of the anti-information being passed on through the Internet.

The more email is integrated into the everyday routines of Americans, the more believable anything passing through the Web becomes.

Out of laziness and habit, Americans believe anything typed out in front of them.

can send a document via email, and if they wish to do so anonymously, they simply have to change their identity information before hitting the "send" button.

If at least one person falls for the chain letter, government warning or other message presented, the email is virtually guaranteed to circulate through the Web in no time at all.

For now, it is nearly impossible to prevent hoaxes and chain letters from overcrowding in-boxes, but "delete-a-phobia" has run rampant in society long enough. Individuals who regularly use email are the ones who can best stop perpetuating the problem. Americans need to use their common sense.

If an email seems too good to be true or contains shocking new information, verification is only a click away.

Since most people who use email are typically those who already have some sort of Internet access, it would only require a bit more effort to go to company home pages to verify contests or email offers.

In many cases, companies have disclaimers posted or at the very least an easily accessible page dedicated to press releases. For \$1,000 at the click of a mouse, doing a little research first is hardly too much to ask.

Email users should also be aware forwards are one of the major sources for computer viruses. The attachment Happy99, for instance, illuminates the screen with a neat little fireworks display as it simultaneously infects one's computer with a hard drive-smashing virus.

Attachments are cool, but one should always run a virus scan before distributing any sort of file.

Email is an incredible tool for communication and will undoubtedly continue to be such in the next century, but anyone who uses this resource needs to be cautious.

It is bad enough friends become annoyed with forwards, but one day these forwards could be potential threats to expensive computer systems. The next virus warning, Internet contest or chain letter could be carrying a virus, and individuals who unconsciously hit the "forward" button without really being aware of what they are sending are the ones who will spread the junk the Internet has to offer.

Elizabeth Kohl is a junior accounting major.



Comic only reflecting true nature of "Aggie spirit"

I would like to commend the authors of the inane comic strip "Side Burn Club" for being faithful keepers of what I have observed to be "Aggie Spirit." Giving up on trying to be creative, they have resorted to merely mocking another equally inane strip ("Fish") every chance they get. Sure beats coming up with their own ideas, right?

However, it fits in well here at A&M, because what I have observed about Aggies is that most of us would rather bring someone else down than elevate ourselves. Case in point — the anti-UT propaganda thrown in one's face here. Aggies would rather put Calvin urinating on a Longhorn than an A&M sticker on their trucks, or wear an anti-UT shirt rather than an A&M shirt.

In fact, I would bet a viable alternative to the Vision 2020 plan, in many Aggies' minds, is managing to convince people UT is not a top-10 public university by 2020.

How about we all just concentrate on doing the best we can and let everyone else take care of themselves?

Sabas Abuabara
Graduate Student

Corps members show no respect for other Aggies

At Midnight Yell this past Friday night, my girlfriend and I brought a prospective student with the hopes of sharing the spirit of the University and encouraging her to attend A&M. When we sat in the front, so that she could

have a good perspective of the yell practice and a good view of Reveille, we were told by a freshman in the Corps of Cadets Company E-2 that no one but the Corps and their dates were allowed to sit in the first 20 rows.

When we refused to leave, knowing there is no such policy, the cadet sat with several of his buddies a few rows back and began talking in a voice loud enough for all to hear about how "the problem with this University is that bastards like this don't respect the Corps."

The fact that the so-called "keepers of the tradition" feel they must bully the rest of the student body and lack the decency even to keep their language clean in front of two ladies makes me wonder what traditions they actually keep.

While I have always been proud to be an Aggie, I was thoroughly ashamed at the example set by one of the most visible groups on campus and that this is the image visitors to our University see.

Courtney Sherman
Class of '00

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

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