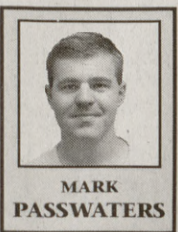


## Candidates in 'Jeopardy'

Media sensationalism takes presidential election focus off of important campaign issues



MARK PASSWATERS

interview, he was asked to name the leaders of four foreign countries and was able to name only one. The fact that perhaps two people out of 100 would have gotten three of the four correct was irrelevant.

Bush was embarrassed while the cameras were rolling. When the public considers the ticker at the bottom of the "Headline News" screen in-depth reporting, such blunders are a big deal.

What relevance should Bush's blunder have on Campaign 2000? In a fair world, probably none. But in an era where the 30 second sound bite rules, this goof-up actually can cause considerable damage to the governor's reputation.

What Bush should do is develop a cohesive foreign policy, instead of memorizing the name of the Armenian president.

The current administration's foreign policy has as many holes in it as the Washington Redskins defense, and an actual foreign policy would be a refreshing change. With people like Dick Cheney, George Schultz and Condoleezza Rice working for Bush, a coherent policy is possible.

This, however, brings forth another question for our game: Can a foreign policy be shown on the six o'clock news? BZZT! Next contestant.

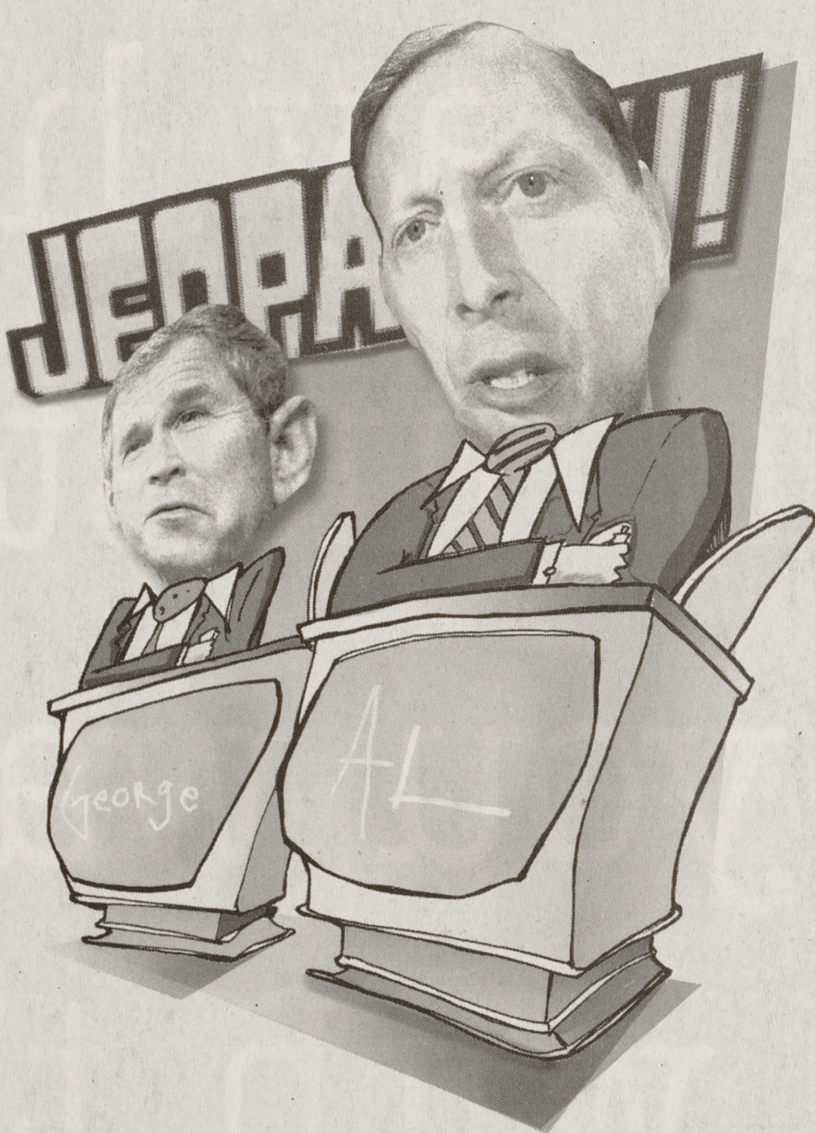


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MARK MCPHERSON/THE BATTALION

And then there is Vice President Al Gore. More charismatically challenged than Ben Stein on Valium, Gore has spent the last several months trying to reshape his image. Such an abrupt change from the Gore America has known — and fallen asleep listening to — for the last six years raised eyebrows in the media community. Who has been engineering this transformation?

For \$15,000 a month, it is Naomi Wolf. Wolf, a well known feminist and the author of *Promiscuity: The Secret Struggle for Womanhood*, has been brought on as a "personal advisor."

To this point, Wolf's influence on the Gore campaign has supposedly been limited to picking out Gore's outfits — she seems to prefer beige or tan — and helping to make him into an alpha male.

A follow up question, for 10 poll points: What is an alpha male?

Apparently, being an alpha male requires being more assertive and showing a dominating personality. Apparently, Gore's normal demeanor is very beta, and this does not look good on the TV screen. As a result, the *Washington Post* noted, "do not be surprised if, someday soon, you hear Gore growl."

Naomi Wolf's makeover of the vice president has become fodder for the nightly newscasts. But is it really

worthy of all the media attention it is getting? Maybe if the vice president were to show his alpha maleness by nailing President Clinton with a flying elbow at a Rose Garden ceremony. Otherwise, can't the media find something better to cover?

Gore is attempting to emphasize the differences between his Health Care Plan and the other plan by beta male Bill Bradley. To this point, his attempts to get media eyes on the health care issue have not mirrored their interest in the campaign dominatrix, Wolf.

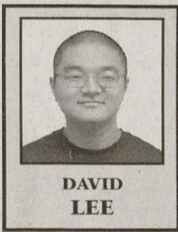
Our panel has another follow-up question: Isn't the possible future of America's health system more important than whether some feminist likes Al Gore's purple ties? BZZT! Please drive home safely.

The average American attention span is apparently 30 seconds. As a result, the media attempts to cram as many juicy details into their clips or columns to make sure people continue to read them. While this may increase one's libido or laugh content, it does not increase their knowledge on a variety of serious issues.

The race for the White House has degenerated from "News Hour" to "Celebrity Death Match." What is going to happen next? Actually, scratch that question. People who are truly interested in knowing the serious issues of the campaign might not want to find out.

Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.

## Hatfield victim of bad parenting, extortion



DAVID LEE

cases, the Rehms cashed large checks at various Nevada casinos. "There were numerous withdrawals from the account," Hatfield's lawyer, Kelly Watson said. "Many were automatic teller machine withdrawals. Some were in large sums, from \$9,000 to \$20,000, taken from places like Harrah's and the Silver Club Hotel Casino."

What was the Rehms response to these facts? Nothing. Instead, they repeated their empty professions of love and devotion to Hatfield.

"We might not have done everything right, but we did the best we could," Denise Rehm said. "We went through this too."

Oh yes, that makes perfect sense. One loves their disabled daughter so much that they allegedly fight with her to the point

where she has to move out of the house. Then they supposedly go off and gamble away her money.

"It makes me angry; it hurts and defaces everything we did for her," Martin Rehm said. "That money went to her needs and her wants."

Since when did blowing a couple thousand dollars at the blackjack tables go toward Hatfield's needs and wants? One wonders how much the Rehms would have spent if there was more fund-raising money in the account.

"Frankly, Jelena didn't want to go public," Watson said. "But she heard through family members that her mother wanted to do another fund raiser. She felt she had to go public."

Through September, the account was \$2 overdrawn," Watson said. "We doubt any of the money will be recovered, but Jelena wants to let the public know they have been exploited."

If the allegations are true, the Rehms picked her clean. A young woman with a physical disability had to leave her home without a cent to her name because of her parent's greed. If it was not for this lawsuit, they would have tried to scam the public into pouring more money into their pockets.

"I don't know what to say to Jelena except we love her," Denise Rehm said.

Whatever.

David Lee is a junior economics major.

## Government infringing on freedom of press

The local government is having an argument with CBS, and is showing all the signs of developing it into a boxing match. The public should be warned to be very careful when deciding which side to cheer for.

In one corner is the rich, powerful network corporation that has control over some information the government wants. The network producers do not want to give up outtakes of an interview between Shawn Berry and Dan Rather. Berry is being tried for the dragging death of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper. Two other men, Lawrence Russell Brewer and John William King, have already been convicted of the murder and are currently on death row.

In the other corner is the Jasper district attorney, helped by the good people at the FBI. They want transcripts of the interview and Dan Rather's testimony to help convict Berry. When CBS producer Mary Mapes refused to surrender the records, she found herself in jail. Freedom of the press takes an uppercut to the chin. The necessity for this information is disputable at best. The case against Berry is monumental.

He was implicated by King and Brewer. His pickup truck was used in the dragging death.

One cannot help but think that his conviction is a foregone conclusion, whether the government claims that the "innocent until proven guilty" principal is in operation here or not. Furthermore, to fail to convict Berry would likely spark a lynching — if not of Berry, then the judge and jury. In short, this man has no hope of acquittal.

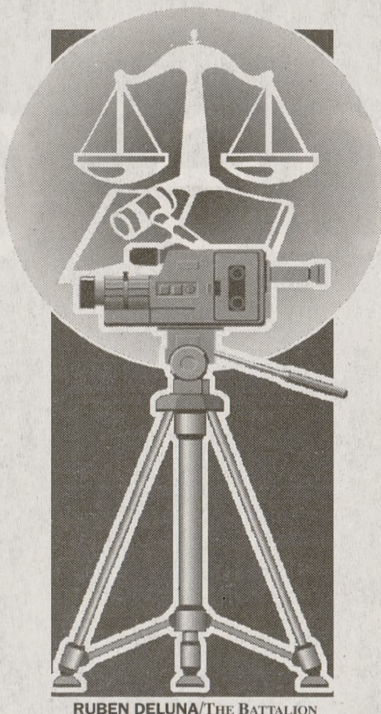
The overwhelming evidence against Berry makes it all the more curious that the prosecutors think they need more evidence. Although there is no law that protects journalists and

their sources in Texas from being forced to disclose information, there are some practical considerations.

By insisting on having the CBS transcripts, the district attorney leaves himself open to the accusation of evidence-tampering. Does the government really want the information badly enough to endanger its case? One would hope not.



ANN HART



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Many years ago, the infamous Al Capone escaped apprehension by the law for a number of years. His activities were monitored, his phone lines were tapped, but there never seemed to be enough evidence to get a conviction. Frustration led someone to check on Capone's income-tax return, and as a result, Capone got an all-expense-paid trip to the penitentiary.

The lesson learned with Capone was not lost on the federal government.

From that time until today, the methods have changed a little but the underlying premise remains the same — when all else fails, go fishing.

At first, prosecutors asked for certain documents by name, and gave reasons why they were needed. That practice has degenerated into asking judges to subpoena "all business records for the period from A to B."

CBS is reluctant to turn over its records for the reason of maintaining its credibility. If someone knows they are likely to find their interview with the press used as evidence against them how likely are they to reveal anything others could view as damning evidence? The Fifth Amendment would become operational with sources, and the scoop would never be the same.

Besides the fact that the government does not need additional evidence against Berry, their argument that he may have perjured himself is irrelevant. Suppose he did? What exactly are they planning as punishment? Will he serve the sentence for perjury before or after lethal injection or life in prison?

Nevertheless, there is an important principle at stake, namely freedom of the press. If journalists must decide between principles and jail, it is only a matter of time before the principles go south.

When journalists must avoid sensitive issues or face government harassment, freedom of the press is effectively abolished.

Ann Hart is a senior English major.

Parental responsibility has

ink to an all-

low.

Last Friday

-year-old Jele-

Hatfield of

mo, Nev. filed

awsuit against

parents,

mise and Martin Rehm. She

timed that in the past year her

other and stepfather squandered

more than \$100,000 in donations

sed for her medical expenses.

Hatfield is not new to the me-

dia spotlight. Early last year, she

is battling for her life against

sterial meningitis, an illness

used by a bacterium that infects

the blood and inflames the lining

of the brain and spinal cord.

The Associated Press reported

at Hatfield

is near

ath when

**If the allegations are true, the Rehms picked her clean.**

## Aggies should help keep campus clean

When picking up a copy of *The Battalion* in front of Harrington Building on Thursday, I once again trudged through a pile of inserts that had fallen from the newspaper. I find newspapers and other trash blowing across the streets and fields of our beautiful campus. As Aggies we are all proud to say that we go to A&M, but if we are not proud enough to dispose of our trash in the many receptacles provided, then people who visit A&M will go on seeing the various objects that litter our home.

Although I do not pick up all the trash people have left sitting

around, I do try to pick up some of it, as gross as that is. For those of you who do care enough to pick up after yourselves, I congratulate and thank you. I urge all Aggies to use the trash cans that are everywhere, and help keep our campus and earth clean.

Katrina Lynn Smith  
Class of '01

## Slocum's question receives criticism

In response to Erika Doerr's Nov. 12 article.

Slocum said yell practices have not always been at midnight. "Many years back, yell practices were held after chow, which would be around 7:30 or 8 p.m., and was initially for A&M students," he said. "As the years progressed,

former students and families began to attend, therefore evolving into Midnight Yell Practice."

R.C. must be referring to Really Old Army Days?

From 1957 to 1961, we had two yell practices during the week immediately after chow. That is correct; but we held Midnight yell practice at midnight before home games. Midnight yell was in addition to the Tuesday and Thursday yell practices.

O.W. Sandy Fine  
Class of '61

Is R.C. Slocum begging to be fired? First, he and the coaching staff destroy the football season through ineptitude. Then he kicks Dante Hall off the team because of a few parking problems. Finally, he suggests that the time for Mid-

night Yell be moved up. Maybe if Slocum worried more about winning football games and less about this other stuff, then I could still be planning on going to New Orleans in January. Slocum needs to get his job done, and let the rest of us worry about Yell Practice.

Thomas Reed  
Class of '95

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:

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