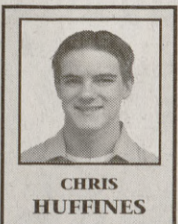


Money for nothing

Unimaginative game show plays down to viewers, motivating contestants with greed



CHRIS HUFFINES

It may be challenging for the contestants — after all, stress does make it hard to think — but a challenge would be nice.

Asking contestants to name the capital of Iraq or how many teaspoons are in a tablespoon may be worth \$200, but even as a stepping stone to \$1 million they are fairly silly.

Worst of all, the show is just slow and not entertaining. It uses expensive "Intellilights," the kinds found in major Broadway theaters, to execute one repetitive, annoying, futile effect.

The set is minimalist at best, and not in an artistic way. It takes Philbin and the judges seconds that stretch into an eternity to determine if answer "A," "B," "C" or "D" is correct.

And Philbin...well, Philbin just is not game-show host material. Even slaving away with co-host Kathie Lee Gifford, Philbin is too much.

In "Who Wants to be a Millionaire," it is all Philbin, all the time. He lacks the poise and polish of Alex Trebek or Pat Sajak or even Jimmy Kimmell. Being less skilled than the host of "The Man Show" and "Win Ben Stein's Money" is just sad.

But Philbin is well-known. He has "star power." Never mind his particular brand of star power is more like a black hole, sucking good taste into another dimension.

But Joe Six-pack, Joe Joint and Mary Jane Homebody all know who he is, and is that not more important than quality?

"Who Wants to be a Millionaire" is trash, and it should not be allowed to continue in its present form. Philbin should be barred from walking into a television studio, much less hosting a television show.

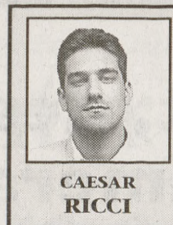
Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

Sanctions against Afghanistan persecute blameless civilians

Afghanistan and its people have suffered too much already. Twenty years of non-stop civil war has left millions of Afghans dead, displaced or utterly impoverished. Furthermore, the Taliban, the fanatical group that controls most of Afghanistan, maintains a state of terror that includes gross oppression and abuse of Afghan women. Now, adding insult to injury, the already devastated people of Afghanistan face international sanctions because the Taliban refuses to stop harboring suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden.



CAESAR RICCI

the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to help prop up a disintegrating communist regime. For 10 years, American-backed mujahedeen, or Muslim holy warriors, fought tenaciously to drive the occupying Soviet Red Army off their soil. Roughly one million Afghans were killed in the fighting, and another three million fled to refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran.

The Soviets' retreat from Afghanistan in 1989 did not mean an end to the terrors of war for ordinary Afghans.

The diverse ethnic factions which pulled together to oust the U.S.S.R. soon turned on themselves in a struggle for power.

It was in the midst of corruption and lawlessness that the now-infamous Taliban was swept into power.

denied all rights. Creating a system of gender apartheid, Taliban forces have prohibited women from going to school, working or even leaving their homes without the accompaniment of a male relative.

The Taliban also have imposed a strict dress code for women under which women must cover themselves completely from head to feet, with only slits in front of their eyes to allow them to see.

The Taliban's "morality enforcers" publicly beat and humiliate women who are found to be breaking their stringent moral edicts.

Most devastating to women, however, has been the segregation of health services.

The Taliban have forbidden women to be treated by male doctors, while at the same time preventing most female doctors and nurses from working.

Special hospitals have been created for women in which services are wholly inadequate. Amnesty International reports Afghanistan now has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

It is important for the Western world to understand the Taliban's treatment of women is opposed to the principles of Islam, which espouses equality and development for women.

Rather, the Taliban's actions are an extension of a historically chauvinistic culture and are a means of asserting dominance over Afghanistan's population.

The danger of economic sanctions is that they will be used by the Taliban to justify their harsh policies in the name of resisting "imperialistic powers" out to see the country fail, much as leaders in Iraq and Cuba have done.

Sanctions draw attention away from the most serious problems in Afghanistan and will unfairly punish the already suffering civilian population.

Peace is what Afghanistan needs most.

Once peace is made and Afghanistan has an official government, it will be easier to improve the condition of women in Afghanistan.

And for the United States, the prospects of capturing Bin Laden, America's most wanted man will be brighter.

Caesar Ricci is a junior plant and soil science major.

After King Kong, one would think New York would learn to keep the loud, obnoxious apes locked away. However, Regis Philbin is once again judging America's senses and sensibilities with his "unique" brand of game-show fun.

Unfortunately, his new game show, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire," has rocketed to the No. 3 spot in the Nielsen ratings not by being novel, professional or interesting but rather by pandering to the lowest common denominators of society.

While it would be illegal and maybe unethical to kill him, Philbin and his "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" game show must be stopped, for the following reasons.

First, the name of the show is pandering and pedantic. Everyone who isn't as rich as Bill Gates or his counterparts wants to be a millionaire.

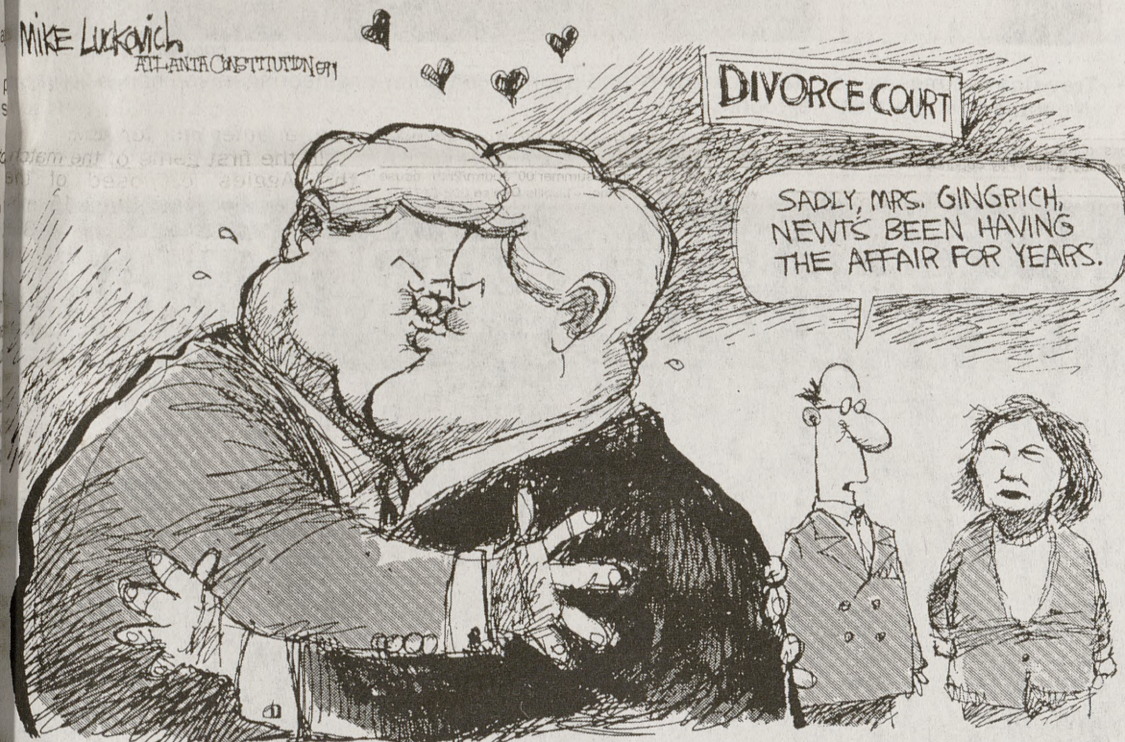
But as P. T. Barnum said, there's a sucker born every minute. And "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" plays to a sucker every minute on the minute.

The title casts the show as a television lottery, but while one has a better chance of being struck by lightning than winning the lottery, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" evens the odds a bit.

With "Lifeline" phone calls and audience votes, the show now has the same chance of winning money as being on the john during a major earthquake.

And while some may say "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" is "Jeopardy" without the pretentious, smart people and that weird answer-question thing, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" is more like "Hollywood Squares" without the funny celebrities.

Even more demeaning are the questions geared toward people with IQs just below household pets.



DIVORCE COURT

SADLY, MRS. GINGRICH, NEWS' BEEN HAVING THE AFFAIR FOR YEARS.

MAIL CALL

Project illustrates students' charity

I know college students sometimes are called self-absorbed, said to be looking out only for themselves, but Project Sunshine proved these stereotypes wrong this past weekend. The Aggie chapter of Project Sunshine traveled to Texas Children's Hospital in Houston and threw a wonderful fall carnival for the children.

The smiles on the kids' faces, as well as the laughter heard on the playground, told that a great time they were having. The carnival was a great success due to the planning on Project Sunshine's part.

I cannot say enough about these college students who took me out of their busy schedules to entertain children who need to take their minds off of the hospital, if just for a few hours. I was truly proud to call myself an Aggie that day.

Thank you again to Project Sunshine for all your hard and dedication to the children of Texas Children's Hospital.

Kyra Barnett
Class of '99

Marc Willis
Class of '03

Aggie family caring, dignified in tragedy

I am an "Old Ag" living halfway around the world, in Okinawa Japan. I have watched first

with horror, then with pride as the events of last week unfolded.

I have cried tears for those who have fallen, and prayed prayers for the families at this difficult time.

I have sat and listened with pride as students and University officials alike try to explain to others our traditions and what it means to be a part of the Texas A&M family.

You have demonstrated dignity, caring, and love, to the "outside" world at a time when it can be difficult to be under such extreme scrutiny.

I am a fourth generation Aggie and have always been proud to be a part of Texas A&M.

Thank you for giving me even more reason to wear my Aggie ring with pride and know there is no other place in the world quite like Texas A&M.

Lezlae Frazier Grubb
Class of '89

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:

The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com

Religious unity is never dangerous

In response to Stephanie Dube's 17 column.

This article about the dangers

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