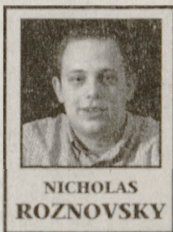


## Choose or lose sensationalism

MTV special series avoids solid issues, highlights insignificant tales of candidates' youth

For most college students, there is only one thing to do when election coverage appears on the television screen — change the channel. Many students claim that mainstream media coverage of the presidential election focuses on the sensational and ignores the issues that face their generation. Young adults maintain more concern with the environment and human rights than they are with the scandals of the candidates' pasts.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

Enter MTV — the favorite media outlet of young America — to save the day. Fear not disenfranchised students, the network which brought you "Beavis and Butthead" is trying to make the presidential race more accessible and meaningful to the youth of the nation. Surely MTV will wade through the media sensationalism and bring the issues that young adults care about to the forefront, right? Time for a dose of reality. MTV is merely rehashing the same stories that other networks have been obsessing about for months. The only difference is that MTV managed to set it all to music and make it look hip. Instead of attempting to educate the young voters of America, MTV is just trying to sell more ad space.

only MTV and its crack staff of political experts could provide. But wait a minute. These stories are neither new nor fresh. These are the same news items that have been plastered over the front page of every newspaper in the land for the past six months. All of these past inappropriateness have been revealed on the evening news, editorialized in the opinion page and debated on the Sunday morning political roundtable shows. The addition of goofy clips from the '60s and music from the *Forrest Gump* soundtrack cannot make any of these revelations more pertinent to college students than when they first appeared in the news months ago.

What happened to the issues? How does Al Gore plan to provide jobs for the next generation of American workers? Will George W. Bush be willing to cut trade with China if they continue to violate the human rights of their own citizens? Would Steve Forbes support an initiative calling for the legalization of drugs? The average young American would be better informed in casting their vote knowing how the candidates stand on these and other issues.

MTV discovered what the major broadcast networks discovered a long time ago — the issues can sell newspapers and magazines but only scandals and allegations can satisfy the short attention span of the average television viewer. To keep their audiences interested, news broadcasters increasingly find themselves like the entertainers on which they report. Why should MTV try to take the high road and refuse to participate in the media frenzy of sensationalism? MTV has found the ultimate blend of entertainment and scandal to satisfy the tastes of its young audience.

The only other "Choose or Lose 2000" program to air so far was a rock concert headlined by the band StainD. Done under the guise of empowering youth to vote, the music was loud and the students in the audience danced the night away. In the end however, no one learned anything remotely related to the presidential election.

A quick look at the MTV "Choose or Lose 2000" Website shows that the real focus of the series is not the education of young voters. It is just another shameless stab for a chunk of the viewing audience. Although



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

MTV claims that they will cut "through the spin of conventional media coverage to bring you an unobstructed view of election 2000 mayhem," the six wide-eyed camera hungry reporters that make up the MTV News Street Team look an awful lot like the new cast for either "The Real World" or "Road Rules." As always, MTV has found a new way to serve an old dish to the youngsters of America.

So now, wedged in between reruns of "Total Request Live" and yet another scantily clad hip-hop beach party in the middle of winter, college students can sit down and be spoon fed the same hype and sensationalism that their parents are getting from the evening news. Whether they choose to get their dose with a helping of MTV funk or not, students wanting to make an informed choice in No-

ember will still be left out in the cold. Unless the network makes a new effort toward providing actual thought provoking coverage, MTV's "Choose or Lose 2000" will be as helpful and informative to the average voter as Celebrity Deathmatch.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a junior political science major.

## The rings that bind

'Aggie Network' needs to examine power it exerts, accept Bonfire tragedy criticism with open mind

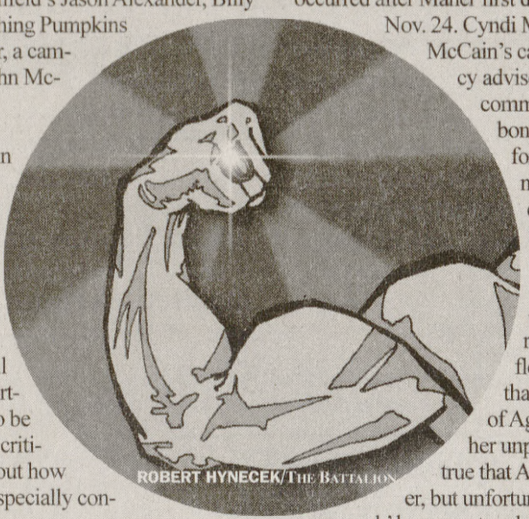
At this, now, Texas A&M is spending \$1 million to study why [Bonfire] fell. Apparently, Isaac Newton was not an Aggie. Students at A&M may not be laughing at this joke, but an audience last week on ABC's "Politically Incorrect" could not help but let out a chuckle. For host Bill Maher, the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse was among the biggest headlines last year and has discussed the topic during the show on several occasions.



MARIANO CASTILLO

Any decent person, Aggie or not, knew this was a mistake on the Website's part — it was wrong to disregard the lives of 12 students and to laugh at the grief of an entire state. Mass e-mails circulated the Aggie community, urging students to write to the administrator of the site and complain. There was nothing wrong with that. However, there was something wrong when a list of the site's advertisers were posted along with calls to write to the advertisers to yank the site. No matter how much it hurt to read the awful things the critics were saying, it must be remembered that they have the right to their opinions. Forcing the Website to remove opposing opinion by attacking its source of income reinforces the long-standing reputation that Aggieland is not a tolerant place.

Another network move that made little sense occurred after Maher first discussed the tragedy on Nov. 24. Cyndi Mosteller, Sen. John McCain's campaign national policy advisor, was a guest and commented negatively on bonfire. "I think they died for foolishness, unfortunately," she said. That comment was enough to make every Aggie's maroon blood boil. However, instead of criticizing Mosteller directly, McCain was flooded with mail stating that he had lost the votes of Aggies everywhere for her unpopular opinion. It is true that Aggies support each other, but unfortunately if the 'Aggie Network' becomes tangled in the political arena, based on one person's thoughts.



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

The best tactic in these tough months is to accept the criticism that A&M will receive and to at least make an attempt to understand why many citizens around the country see things differently. True, much of the criticism has no value, but one can learn about where and how the A&M society fits in.

Finally, refraining from excessive arguing and allowing public forums to run their course, support from non-Aggies will be stronger. Even on "Politically Incorrect," when Maher was bashing bonfire, model Ali Landry supported tradition and what it stands for.

The 'Aggie Network' is one of the most amazingly strong ties that an A&M student benefits from. When the network acts, it sets off change. It is up to Aggies everywhere that the influence it has been used fairly and responsibly.

Mariano Castillo is a sophomore international studies major.

## Clinton haunted by Filegate scandal

Everyone in the world knows about Monica the intern. Everyone knows about the draft dodging. Everyone should know about "Filegate," because America's privacy laws would mean nothing if they do not.



JILL RILEY

The term Filegate refers to the 900 confidential FBI files found in the White House by a House committee in 1996. Many of the files contained personal and sensitive information about prominent Republicans working at the White House during the Reagan and Bush presidencies. The files were obtained for the purpose of clearing the Republicans for White House access, but since most of them had already worked there, the likely purpose of the files was to dig up political dirt.

Even though Clinton managed to avoid the prosecutors' whips for almost four years by having his office personnel strategize to stall the Filegate lawsuit, the plaintiffs expect justice from Federal District Judge Royce C. Lamberth. They do have a valid reason for exasperation since their personal files were rummaged through by White House officials. It is understandable that federal employees should get checked out before working at the White House, but the Clinton administration looked at former employees' files, which had already been checked.

Clinton said, just days after his inauguration in 1993, "I promise the most ethical administration in the history of the Republic." The general public in America did not hold him to his vow. But the clock is ticking, hopefully, toward a time when justice will be served on a huge silver plate to Clinton, his wife and his assistants.

The *Wall Street Journal* said Clinton, "...is guilty of essentially the same thing over which Mr. Nixon was hounded from office — abusing his office to cover up criminal activity by himself and his accomplices, and misleading the public with a campaign of lies about it."

The *Wall Street Journal* is correct. Abusing power to dig up political dirt is wrong. Larry Klayman's Judicial Watch brought the lawsuit against Filegate offenders because Ken Starr gave up Filegate in late 1998. Simultaneous prosecutions against Clinton — Watergate and Lewinsky — were too much for Starr to handle. It is a sad fact when a nation elects, and keeps, a man in office that needs more than one prosecutor to manage his misdeeds.

The alleged White House perpetrators learned from their boss: When someone asks a question, give them the runaround.

Craig Livingstone, former head of White House Personnel Security, testified at a congressional hearing in 1996 that he was unaware an aide he hired requested the files. The aide, Anthony Marceca, submitted the requests and claimed he had not known the list of names was outdated. Maybe someone with more knowledge of White House personnel should be used for the next sensitive job, because this man broke the law.

Clinton called Filegate "an honest bureaucratic snafu." If this business was "honest," it seems odd that the Clinton administration would continue accessing files of employees who resigned because they felt "Filegate" was wrong. The fact that the Clinton administration would continue abusing a law shows total lack of respect for the law. It also shows their confidence — they expected to not be held accountable.

Another former White House staffer, Sheryl L. Hall worked for Clinton lawyers dealing with Filegate plaintiffs. Her duty, accord-

Jill Riley is a senior journalism major.

### MAIL CALL

#### RHA responds about new dorm

In response to Melissa Bedsole's Feb. 2 column.

We believe that Bedsole has every right to express her opinion on the issue of the newly proposed residence hall, but we believe that her "facts" are unfounded and untrue. Her opinion piece stated many things about the proposed on-campus dormitory that are only ideas and have not been determined as being definitive at this point. First of all, the only

thing that has been determined is the site of the new hall, at the former site of Law and Puryear Halls on the Northside of campus.

Mr. Ron Sasse, Director of Residence Life and the Residence Hall Association, works hard to provide as many quality on-campus options as possible and we believe that many ideas should be explored to achieve this end.

Regarding the proposed kitchen style rooms, the Department of Residence Life has constructed a full size "modular apartment" in McFadden Hall and an efficiency apartment in Hughes Hall as

pilot projects for students to live in and evaluate. Residence Life has been collecting information and getting student feedback for several years on apartment-style rooms. The new hall would be a luxury only in the sense that it is new. Room rates would obviously be more than the current on-campus rents, but isn't that to be expected?

Little has been decided yet on the entire issue. Room rates will not even be determined until right before the hall opens, leaving room for debate and compromise.

If you would like to help the committee that will be plan-

ning the new hall, feel free to call the RHA office.

Cameron Cushman  
Class of '02  
Director of Public Relations, RHA

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