

Selling the recipe for death

Death by toxic pudding is not the way most people would want to die, but for some terminally ill people, this would literally be an answer to their prayers. The recipe



BRIENNE PORTER

Humphry simply offers information to audience

For this poisonous mixture was one of many things a cable access show on stations shown in two Oregon cities taught its viewers. Derek Humphry narrated the show, which is based on his book *Final Exit*. The show explained to the terminally ill what the three most lethal drugs are, how to obtain them and how to mix them into an easy-to-swallow pudding.

Humphry also has a video of the program and a Website which contains much of the same information as his book. The broadcast has raised debates about whether this show should have been broadcast on public access television. The key to these debates is realizing that freedom of speech is a guaranteed right. The debate is not about euthanasia, but about one person's right to offer information that some people want to hear. Oregon is the first and only state to have proposed a law allowing euthanasia. The "Death with Dignity" law allows terminally ill patients to request and receive lethal doses of drugs from their doctors. To broadcast this show within that context is understandable. Humphry is exercising his right to give the public what they want to know. Though many do not agree with the show being broadcast on public television, there are also many who do not want talk shows such as "Jerry Springer." But these shows are allowed to be broadcast because it is every American's right to produce television shows — even if

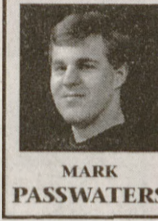
they offend some viewers. Critics argue there will be an increase in suicides if this show continues to be broadcast. To the contrary, after the first two airings of the show, the local police and crisis hot line reported that there was no suicide increase. This show caters to those people who are seriously ill and do not know about their right to die with dignity. The show does not promote committing suicide on a whim, rather it advises those who have thought about suicide and want to know the best way to go about it. It would be considered a simple self-help show if it did not convey such a controversial subject.

There most likely will not be an increase in the suicide rates of those who are not ill. If there happens to be an increase, they will occur within the population of those who are desperately ill. Some believe that the show will

Christian Medical and Dental Society, the show teaches viewers to eliminate themselves instead of trying to fix the pain. However, the show does not offer a spontaneous method of killing one's self. Instead, it shows a way doctor-prescribed medication can help one commit suicide. Humphry urges those who are temporarily depressed or mentally ill to ask a counselor, minister or doctor for help. The show does not promote suicide as a fix for everyone; it offers to desperately ill patients a way to relieve their suffering.

Many Americans are upset and angry that such a show can be broadcast on a

One of the few unfortunate effects of living in a capitalist society is the belief some people hold that everything is for sale. Recently, people have been selling things like Ty Cobb's false teeth and their own bodily organs. While uncouth, these all pale in comparison to what Derek



MARK PASSWATERS

and run carbon monoxide through a tube into the bag, quickly ending their life.

The idea that Humphry's video is being shown during hours when anyone can see it is disturbing. What is even more disturbing is his reaction to the concerns voiced by some that his video might not be used exclusively by those that are fatally ill. When asked on CNN's "TalkBack Live" what he thought about the possibility of teenagers obtaining his video, Humphry responded that he thought it was "marvelous" that his Website was getting requests from teenagers for more information or the tape itself.

Humphry claims that he is certain that these youths are interested in finding out about different methods of suicide in order to become more informed. A skeptical person may be of the opinion that Humphry is not concerned about who purchases his book or video because he will make money. It does not matter if the buyer is a 16 year-old who just broke up with his girlfriend or a senior citizen with Lou Gehrig's disease — any and all customers are welcome.

The fact that Humphry has placed more value on making money than on the lives of other people is very disturbing. The concept of euthanasia is one that evokes different, yet equally strong emotions across the country. Some people feel that assisting terminally ill people end their lives is merely ending their pain. Others feel that people who assist in the deaths of ill people, such as Jack Kevorkian, are murderers.

While many people condemn Kevorkian for his actions, at least he has the courage to stand up for his convictions. He has also made certain that the person desiring his help was

indeed terminally ill. Humphry, on the other hand, has no idea who he sells to and does not seem to care.

People that do not have serious physical problems are now more capable of ending their lives, due to Humphry's "assistance." Humphry, despite his assertions, is not simply providing a service to those who are in the final stages of their lives. If

Program too accessible for immature teen viewers

someone who is not fatally ill commits suicide using information provided by Humphry, Humphry should be considered an accessory to murder.

To make things even more despicable, Humphry is making financial gains through the loss of human life. Throughout history, people have made money on the pain and suffering of others. In Roman times, trainers of the finest gladiators lived in the lap of luxury. Mercenaries and assassins have made substantial sums of money by killing. Now, in a supposedly more civilized age, Humphry has continued the tradition. Instead of using a gun and a sword, he uses a computer and television camera.

What Humphry has done with *Final Exit* may be a new low in the annals of human history. In previous eras, people that made money off of the deaths of others usually had some contact with the victim. At the dawn of the 21st Century, Humphry can sit in Oregon and never face the person who has "benefited" from his work. Instead, he can stay at home and watch the money roll in.

While more and more people (ill or not), drop dead.

Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

influence those who are not of sound mind, such as troubled youths. The producers of the show put content warnings on the show before it was broadcast in an effort to prevent an immature audience from viewing the show. This precautionary tactic was an effort to appease the opponents of the show. The show does not offer methods of suicide that are accessible to youth. It offers guidance to those who are under the care of doctors.

A recent study says the will to live among the terminally ill fluctuates over 30 percent in 12 hours. According to such leading opponents of suicide like Dr. David Stevens, executive director of

public access station. They feel that subjects like suicide and euthanasia have no place on television, especially public cable access. Yet, if society regulates this type of show, the right to free speech will be lost and eventually even complaints about taxes would be against the law. Freedom of speech means accepting all speech — even the statements that the majority of the population are against.

Brienne Porter is a freshman chemical engineering major.

Ol' Army is going to hell

Old buildings on campus neglected

Texas A&M is a place of camaraderie, tradition and decay. Many buildings on campus are crumbling, while University officials deal with more important issues such as increasing the Student Recreation Center fee and building a new luxury dormitory. At A&M, students and faculty are required to learn and work in facilities that hardly meet modern educational standards. Administrators ignore this problem and put University funds into the renovation of non-educational facilities and buildings on West Campus.

Various older, historical buildings on campus are being neglected and allowed to deteriorate. In most cases, it seems that rather than preserve these relics of A&M history, University officials prefer to spend government and student funds building new facilities farther and farther from main campus.

The Academic Building, an icon of this campus, retains its majestic facade but is deteriorating on the inside. This structure is in dire need of repair, but, after all, it only houses the departments of modern and classical languages, music and sociology. It seems easy for the administration to tuck away these "inconsequential" faculty members and students into a disintegrating facility that has plug-in water fountains and an elevator that rides like a lawsuit waiting to happen.

A classroom on the second floor is typical of many on campus and reminds one of a PBS documentary on the struggles of living in an inner city neighborhood. The plaster is cracked, the pale green paint on the walls is peeling and the ceiling tiles are water damaged. The only sign of technology in the room is an overhead projector on a rolling cart, while underneath the windowsill, in holes left by crumbling plaster, there is some kind of excrement.

The Old State Chemistry Building, better known as the Analytical Services Building, is in even worse condition. Walking through its halls reminds one of the setting of an Alfred Hitchcock movie, yet it almost holds an archaic charm. The paint and plaster is worn and there is an emergency shower outside the door of a professor's office. This edifice has pipes running along the inner walls and window unit air conditioners.

Why do the building planning committees insist on building costly new facilities when there are several others that need structural work in order to preserve A&M's history, tradition and safety? An uproar would occur if a proposal was made to tear down the Academic Building; however, no one seems to care quite enough to fix it. The fact that renovations were and are being made to Kyle Field and Sbsa Dining Hall point, not so subtly, to the idea that at A&M sports and food services are more important than education. The buildings that are the most dilapidated and sorely need of repair are those where classes are held.

A&M officials seem content to continue to allow main campus buildings to decay while building new ones across the tracks as a solution to the problem. West Campus expands while students attend classes on main campus where the facilities are hardly a sufficient learning environment. The decision needs to be made either to tear down some of these structures and rebuild or make some serious renovations and updates to them.

Aggieland is a place that prides itself on tradition and rich history. If visitors come to campus and see educational facilities falling apart and excrement in classrooms, they will wonder how much importance is placed upon students' education — the reason for this institution's existence. As buildings on main campus continue to decline, administrators need to address the problem rather than ignore it and realize that the solution requires more than a new coat of paint.

Summer Hicks is a senior English major.



SUMMER HICKS

Various older historical buildings on campus are being neglected and allowed to deteriorate.

Rudy Giuliani's actions justified by situation

In response to David Lee's Feb. 14 column.

Is Lee suggesting that being sued is a realistic indicator of whether or not one is in the wrong?

Does he not realize how easy it is for a public official in a liberal city like New York to draw a lawsuit? And please tell me how someone can lose "virtually" every lawsuit that is brought against someone—either they lose or they don't lose.

Lee mentioned several things in his rambling critique of Rudolph Giuliani and I must comment on some of these. First, he listed as an example of Giuliani's disregard for the First Amendment the incident involving city funding for an art museum. In this case, the museum was showcasing an art display that was offensive to people in the Christian faith. Thus, the Christians of NYC should not be forced to pay for this exhibit through their own tax dollars. This was a common sense ruling. As Giuliani said, "If I can do it, it's not art."

Second, Lee listed as an example of Giuliani's disregard for the Constitution an incident wherein he attempted to curtail advertising for a hostile press on one of the city's buses. This is an extremely petty argument. I can find similar acts of self preservation with any notable public figure over the last three hundred years, provided I had the records and time. People do these things when they are embattled (such as Giuliani is).

Lee states, "In both of these cases, it is ridiculously evident that Giuliani abuses his power." I ask, how much is Hillary paying him to forego his journalistic integrity and write this article?

In the last paragraph, what he is trying to say is that we should all care that Giuliani may soon rule on issues affecting all Americans, and that we should all be concerned for the future of the First Amendment. This is an utterly idiotic assertion. Lee needs to at least make a credible argument when casting his pearls before the swine.

Andrew Ballenger Graduate Student

Abandoned in more ways than one

In response to Melissa Bedsale's Feb. 10 column.

Melissa Bedsale deserves commendation for speaking out in her article against unjust laws that fail to punish those who abandon their newborn babies. It is quite obvious that abandonment of a helpless child is a heinous act of infanticide.

Unfortunately, abortion is another crime against the innocent that is unchecked and is even encouraged. Ironically, the article mentioned abortion as an alternative to abandonment. Abortion, by its very nature, is abandonment. Babies abandoned soon after birth are left, helpless and frightened, only to begin and end their life in a dumpster. Similarly, babies abandoned by process of surgical or chemical abortion are also left, helpless and frightened, only to die within the mothers womb (and sometimes outside) and then tossed in the dumpster.

Scientifically speaking the only difference between an unborn child and the rest of us is age and place of residence. The foolish argument that a human can only exist under the condition of physical independence of another human being can easily be dismissed, not only by common sense, but by simply observing the fragility and dependence of other "recognized" human beings such as the elderly and newborns.

This explains why newborns are not as protected, now, from murder by negligence. It was only a matter of time until the government crossed the in-existent line between harming the born and unborn and, through the facility of litigation, allowed mothers to reclaim the children they abandoned.

I agree when the article states that the "Dumpster Baby Statute" is a "complete injustice to an innocent child." However, it stands as fact that after 25 years of atrocious slaughter of our innocent unborn children, we should not be surprised about the degraded rights of our newborn children.

Christopher Plant Class of '01

Different perspective on racism issue

Being born and raised in Guatemala, a country with people from different ethnic backgrounds and a strong tendency to clas-

sify its population in two groups "indios" (Indians) and "ladinos" (non-Indians), racism is something I have observed in the groups' actions toward each other.

After reading some articles in the Battalion about this topic, I would like to express some ideas about it. Due to my ethnic origin, I would be categorized as a minority (Hispanic). However, I have never experienced any sign of discrimination or thought of myself belonging to a "minority" just because we make up a small percentage of the student body.

If one day someone discriminates against me because of my ethnic origin, my reaction would be one of sadness, thinking about how that person has such a small brain. Racism is not a matter of percentages in a population, but rather a mental conception toward people based on its ethnic origin.

Having access to a position should be based on ability and not on ethnic origin. Let us suppose that three people are competing for a position: an African American, a white and a Hispanic; then the position is granted to one of them just because he or she belongs to a minority or a majority and a quota is supposed to be reached, and not based on ability. This would be an unfair decision to the other persons.

We should consider people as they really are — human beings — and not based on their ethnic origin.

After writing this article and walking back home, I left Kyle Field behind me imagining the Twelfth Man yelling "Beat the hell outta racism," thinking, those are the real Aggies, and feeling proud to belong to this family.

Carlos Monroy Graduate Student

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