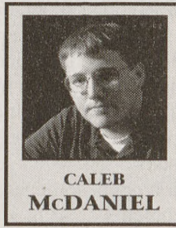


The burdens of being wealthy

Drawbacks of rapid growth in income deserve notice, not ridicule

The next time the television blares "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" viewers might want to consider carefully before making "we do" their final answer.



CALEB MCDANIEL

According to psychologists at the newly founded Money, Meaning & Choices Institute (MMCI) in Kentfield, Calif., prosperity may create more psychological problems than it solves, especially for the nouveau riche entrepreneurs made millionaires overnight by the "new economy." Dr. Stephen Goldbart and Joan DiFuria claim to have discovered a complex of depression, anxiety and self-doubt called "sudden wealth syndrome" (SWS). "The distress or impairment that people experience as a consequence of sudden wealth is in excess of what one would ordinarily expect," according to MMCI's Website. "These are people whose concerns about money become painful ruminations that ruin their daily lives, people whose feelings of confusion and guilt lead to self-destructive behaviors, people whose families are ripped apart and whose lives over time become devastated as a result of SWS." Needless to say, media satirists have had a field day with the para-

doxical suggestion that poor rich folks in southern California deserve sympathy for their "plights."

Abby Ellin printed a typically sarcastic commentary in the *New York Times*.

"Every day, I thank God that I'm not an Internet billionaire, that my last name isn't Kennedy or Rockefeller and that no one is paying me \$20 million to star in a movie," she wrote in the March 19 issue with her tongue planted firmly in her cheek. "After all, if I were worth an outrageous amount of money, who knows the trauma that would await?" Clearly, if the rich want pity, they will not find it in the press.

Nevertheless, in a society obsessed with dissecting the "millionaire mind" — the subject of a current best-selling book — the idea of those minds being troubled has piqued the attention of America's upwardly mobile. Judging from media mockery of Goldbart and DiFuria, most people chuckle at the "ludicrous" idea that money hurts. In this day and age, the idea that there are things money cannot buy is just a slogan to sell credit cards.

But perhaps the guffaws elicited by SWS are really nervous laughter.

After all, the United States' stability is built on its economy. This is a country that treats the pronouncements of Alan Greenspan like the utterances of an oracle and picks Jeff Bezos, the millionaire CEO of Amazon.com, as Time magazine's "Man of the Year."

If money is not "it," then what in the world is?

This dismissal of SWS as mumbo-jumbo is astonishing because the condition is one of the most culturally resilient truths there is. Turn to literature, and one can find enough melancholy millionaires to fill the Encyclopedia Britannica. Richard Cory, the Great Gatsby and Ebenezer Scrooge lead the list of birds trapped in their golden cages.

Turn to entertainment, and SWS is confirmed again. Nowhere is the Greek model of a hero's tragic fall more exemplified than on episodes of VH1's "Behind the Music." Tune in every week to meet a starlet who rocketed to fame and then plummeted into bankruptcy, depression and drugs. The world's major religions —

most notably the Judeo-Christian tradition — take SWS as a given. Ask the Hebrew writer of Ecclesiastes what it is like to roll in the dough, and he will give a depressing answer — it is like "grasping at the wind."

And Jesus himself would agree with the MMCI, according to the gospel of Luke. "One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses," he said. Far from promising happiness to the rich, he said the blessed were the poor.

This society is simply unaccustomed to the bluntness of the sermon on the mount: "Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation." But that statement sounds an awful lot like a first-century version of sudden wealth syndrome.

The facts must be faced. Goldbart and DiFuria are right. SWS is real, and it is nothing new.

The question facing Americans is how to react to the diminishing returns of material wealth. A certain amount of cash is necessary for human happiness — no one disputes that.

But excess breeds dissatisfaction and depression. At some point, the value of making more money needs to be fundamentally questioned, and the MMCI is doing just that.

Do not laugh at Goldbart and DiFuria. Listen to them.

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.

ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

Editorials appearing in *The Battalion* reflect the majority view of the editorial board members. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors.

EDITORIAL BOARD

MARIUM MOHIUDDIN
EDITOR IN CHIEF

BEVERLY MIRELES
MANAGING EDITOR
STUART HUTSON
CAMPUS EDITOR
ERIC DICKENS
OPINION EDITOR
KYLE WHITACRE
AGGIELAND EDITOR
DOUG SHILLING
SPORTS EDITOR
JASON BENNYHOFF
RADIO PRODUCER
JEFF KEMPF
NIGHT NEWS EDITOR
GUY ROGERS
PHOTO EDITOR
RUBEN DELUNA
GRAPHICS EDITOR
BRANDON PAYTON

MEREDITH HIGHT
COMMUNITY EDITOR
MARIANO CASTILLO
OPINION EDITOR
VERONICA SERRANO
AGGIELIFE EDITOR
DAVE AMBER
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY EDITOR
JASON LINCOLN
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR
NONI SRIDHARA
ASST. RADIO PRODUCER
CRISTINA PADRON
ASST. NIGHT NEWS EDITOR
JP BEATO
PHOTO EDITOR
ROBERT HYNCEK
GRAPHICS EDITOR
BRENT BARKLEY

THE GREAT NORTHGATE DEBATE

Merchant, city bickering over parking spaces needs to stop

A March 22 letter written by Susan Pledger, special events coordinator for Loupot's Bookstore, gave the City of College Station 30 days to vacate its Northgate substation which is owned by the bookstore. The city is leasing the space on a year to year basis, but now it seems the lease is up.

The owners of Loupot's and other area merchants are upset with a plan to remove spaces used by Loupot's, Aggieldand Drycleaners and other companies' customers who want to quickly park their car and run into the stores.

Evicting the city police may be Loupot's choice, but it is a mistake. Unfortunately, the city is not blameless either.

The city said the substation is beneficial for the safety and security of the Northgate area and that the plan

to remove the parking spaces was to provides better access for emergency vehicles.

This may sound like a necessary change, but alternate routes exist. Further, removing the free parking will increase revenue for the city's future parking garage.

The debate over Northgate parking has dissolved into petty in-fighting and bickering. Both the City of College Station and the area merchants have legitimate intentions. However, the manner in which these intentions have manifested is ridiculous. Removing a few highly convenient parking spaces and in turn evicting College Station Police from a helpful location does not accomplish anything.

Bernie Gess, owner of Aggieldand Drycleaners, said the eviction notice was simply an attempt to "get the city's

attention." But instead of trying to get each other's attention with childish behavior, the two sides need to focus on reaching a compromise and improving the current plan for Northgate parking for everybody's sake.

In all reality, having a police substation in the Northgate vicinity is an advantage that cannot be underestimated. Loupot's should not displace the city's substation. Likewise, the city should incorporate plans to leave the parallel parking spaces on College Main alone or perhaps guarantee a certain number of free 30-minute parking spaces in the new parking garage.

Certainly there is a solution that will appease both sides and end the senseless bickering between the city and its Northgate merchants.

MAIL CALL

The other issue is voter turnout. The only way 2000 cadets can decide an election is if the other 38,000 students don't go out and vote. Voter apathy runs rampant at Texas A&M, at no fault of the Corps.

While making cadets turn in "I Voted Today" stickers is a questionable practice, cadet turnout is something to be proud of. Voting takes less than five minutes to complete and is great practice for any future scantron exams you may encounter. You can also vote online if you are worried about killing a tree by using a paper ballot. There is no excuse for not voting.

If my fellow non-regs have a problem with the way elections have turned out, do not point fingers at the Corps. Just remember, everyone is an individual. Think for yourself. If you want things to change, you have to do more than complain. You have to get out and vote.

John Lyon
Class of '99

I do not think that the Corps choosing who to back in elections is unfair. It is the same as any other organization backing one of their members. I see where having the Corps back you could help you in the campaigning process, but the fact of the matter is, the Corps only makes up about 2 percent of this student body. You want a fair election? Get off your non-reg butts and go vote. That is the way to beat the Corps.

Trisha Smith
Class of '02

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

Dixie Chicks not guilty of promoting murder in song

Recently there has been quite a fuss in country music's chicken coop due to the Dixie Chicks' latest single, "Goodbye Earl."

With "Earl," the Chicks have concocted a kind of the drama and Louise for the 21st century, and they even gave it a happy ending. The song follows two girlfriends, Maryann and Wanda, who decide to kill Wanda's abusive husband, Earl, after one of his eventh-day Adventist beatings puts her in intensive care. The two women serve Earl a helping of poisoned black-eyed peas, and Earl subsequently turns up "missed" (in Wanda's trunk). However, he is not exact-

ly "missed" by anyone at all, and Maryann and Wanda live happily ever after, selling food at a roadside stand.

Domestic violence is certainly a serious subject, but the Chicks manage to make their "solution" all tongue-in-cheek, with Natalie Maines' staccato lead vocals and lots of upbeat guitar. It appears, however, that some of the country music industry guys have missed that tongue-in-cheek part: around 20 country stations tracked by industry magazine Radio & Records have chosen to ban "Earl" from the airwaves.

Yes, once again, the powers that be are getting their Wranglers in a wad over a non-issue. It probably is not too much of a surprise to most, as songs about difficult social issues have always been easy targets for controversy and disapproval.

John Pellegrini, a program director in Pennsylvania who has chosen not to air "Earl" said, "My question is, what do we do a song about next: school shootings? Just a fun one, one that might raise awareness?"

Well, John, it is not exactly a "fun" song, but remember Pearl Jam's "Jeremy"? Been there, done that. It is not just the stations who have been a little shaken up by the Chicks' song, but even the Chicks' own record labels. Sony and Monument were both concerned about releasing "Earl" as a single, but after its success in a live performance at the Grammys, they relented, and "Earl" hit the airwaves last month. One Sony Nashville representative finally realized what the song is really show-

ing: "Controversy is [what] the Chicks are all about. They have an irreverent sense of humor."

That irreverent sense of humor seems to have settled in just fine with the public, as listeners have not really joined in the protest. Lon Helton of Radio & Records said, "I think the public knows the Chicks have a great, edgy attitude."

That is right: The Chicks are "edgy," and the public likes it. People expect the Chicks to be out there pushing the envelope, and "Earl" is a good example of their drive to try out new ideas.

While it can be argued that songs in the music world definitely can promote some bad ideas and actions, "Earl" is not about promoting murder. For goodness' sake, in the song's music video, Earl is played by Dennis Franz, and Maryann (Lauren Holly) and Wanda (Jane Krakowski) take hilarious pleasure in deciding that black-eyed peas are the way to go (no pun intended). Something about Franz getting stuffed into a trunk is just plain silly, and it certainly adds to the perspective that "Earl" is mostly all in fun.

The song does deviate from all that fun in its underlying theme. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence has offered public support to the Chicks and the song, as it may help to bring the difficult issue of domestic abuse to the forefront of listeners' minds.

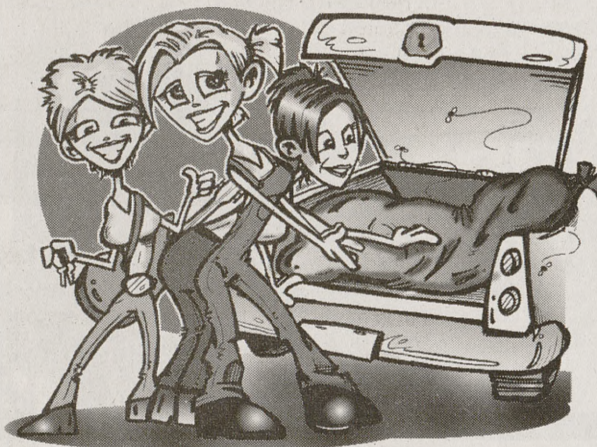
Though Maryann and Wanda's "plan" may not be the best or most legal solution to this problem, at least the song itself could help battered spouses realize there is always a way out. Dixie Chick Emily Robison summed it up quite nicely: "Sometimes songs get so serious that they make people very uncomfortable. 'Earl' is meant to be light-hearted and fun, and if in the process it brings a serious subject into the forefront, then that's great."

On the liner notes to *Fly*, a disclaimer appears under the lyrics to "Goodbye Earl": "The Dixie Chicks do not advocate premeditated murder, but love getting even." Getting even with all these paranoid radio station folks is going to be quite easy for the Chicks, who have two shiny new Grammys and a hit video on their hands. Take a ride in the trunk, station managers — "Earl" is a hit, like it or not.

Melissa Johnston is a senior English major.



MELISSA JOHNSTON



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

members

Paul Sartre, leader of the 15, 1980. He was 75 years old for over 40 years, his first

1943 His first play, "The Flies," is produced in Paris. It carries a message of freedom in the face of tyranny. It escapes Nazi censors.

1971 Publisher's first two volumes of four-volume biography of Gustave Flaubert called "The Family"



st was found guilty rape of a student here on Horace Champ, 28. Wanda was found guilty woman at Union College. Wanda's abusive husband, Earl, after one of his eventh-day Adventist beatings puts her in intensive care. The two women serve Earl a helping of poisoned black-eyed peas, and Earl subsequently turns up "missed" (in Wanda's trunk). However, he is not exact-

ly "missed" by anyone at all, and Maryann and Wanda live happily ever after, selling food at a roadside stand.

Domestic violence is certainly a serious subject, but the Chicks manage to make their "solution" all tongue-in-cheek, with Natalie Maines' staccato lead vocals and lots of upbeat guitar. It appears, however, that some of the country music industry guys have missed that tongue-in-cheek part: around 20 country stations tracked by industry magazine Radio & Records have chosen to ban "Earl" from the airwaves.

Yes, once again, the powers that be are getting their Wranglers in a wad over a non-issue. It probably is not too much of a surprise to most, as songs about difficult social issues have always been easy targets for controversy and disapproval.

John Pellegrini, a program director in Pennsylvania who has chosen not to air "Earl" said, "My question is, what do we do a song about next: school shootings? Just a fun one, one that might raise awareness?"

Well, John, it is not exactly a "fun" song, but remember Pearl Jam's "Jeremy"? Been there, done that. It is not just the stations who have been a little shaken up by the Chicks' song, but even the Chicks' own record labels. Sony and Monument were both concerned about releasing "Earl" as a single, but after its success in a live performance at the Grammys, they relented, and "Earl" hit the airwaves last month. One Sony Nashville representative finally realized what the song is really show-

RMET CATERING (979)695-0985