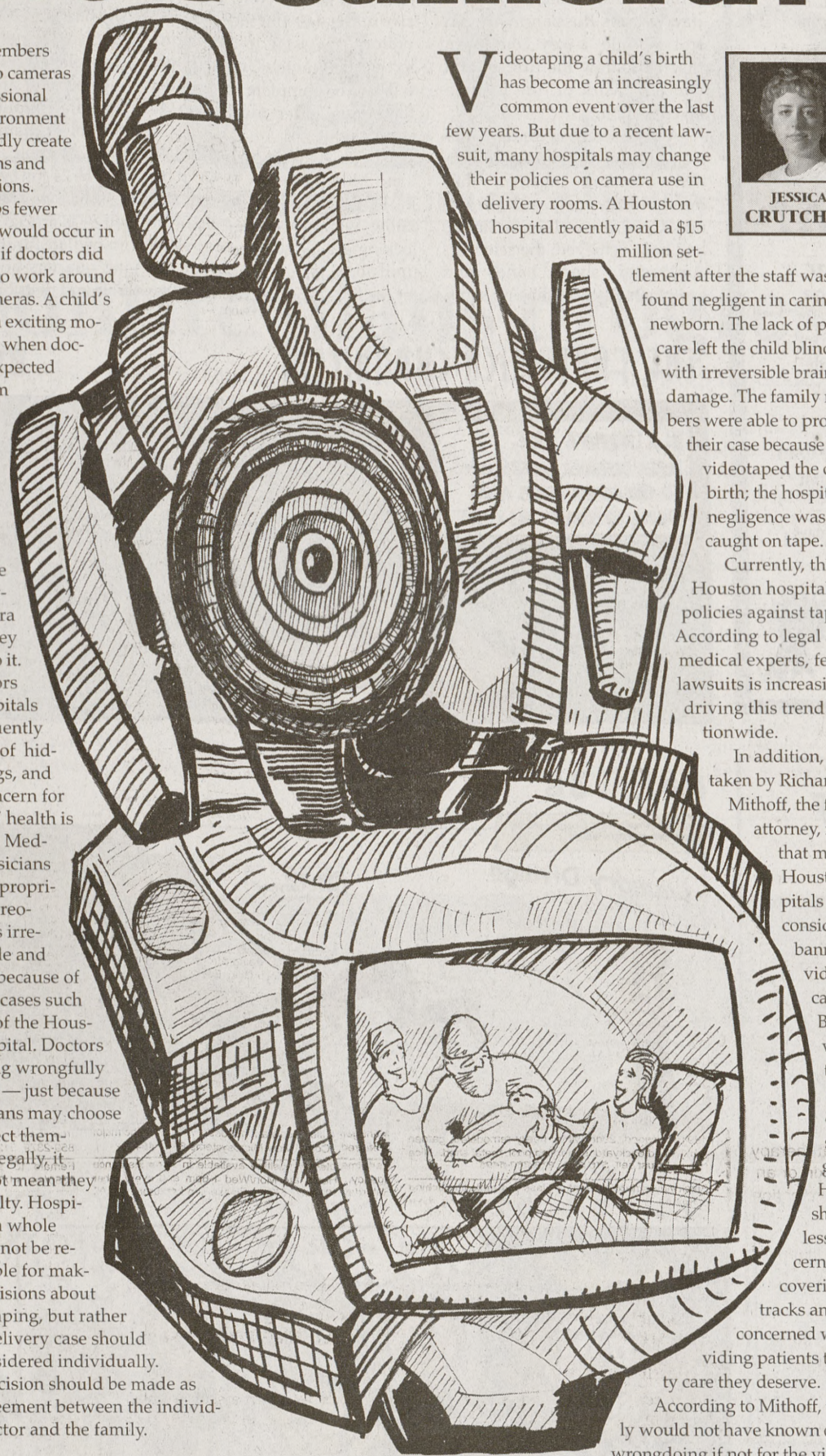


## Roll camera?



AMBER RASCO



JESSICA CRUTCHER

Recently, a Houston hospital decided to ban the videotaping of births after a family videotaped its child's delivery, catching the hospital's negligence on film. Accused of harming the baby, the hospital was forced to pay the family \$15 million to compensate for the child's resulting blindness and brain damage. Therefore, more hospitals are adopting the no-taping policy to protect themselves. Hospitals are not naive — they are cautious of this lawsuit-happy, money-making age. Because physicians are taking action to protect themselves, American voices have accused physicians of trying to hide their negligence. The Houston child's disabilities are undoubtedly tragic, and the hospital, doctors and nurses involved should do their best to make amends. However, the entire field of medicine should not be stereotyped as careless.

Medicine is a profession that operates like any other business. Companies sometimes make mistakes, but cameras are not always recording every minor error. Imagine customers walking into offices' back rooms and stores' warehouses, tracking every blunder made.

Doctors and hospital administrators give families the privilege of allowing them to videotape childbirths. Physicians acknowledge that childbirth is a special event; however, when patients abuse their privileges, consequences may follow. The no-taping policy is a hospital's way to protect itself, not an act to disguise negligence. Families are not having their rights infringed upon by being prevented from filming.

Hospitals are not taking anything away from families; there is no law giving families the right to videotape hospital procedures. The choice of whether the birth can be filmed should be made by the individual doctor.

Both St. Joseph's Regional Health Center and College Station Medical Center give each doctor discretion when it comes to filming births; the hospitals do not adopt a uniform policy. Each doctor should know his or her tolerance for distractions and pressure, and make an educated decision. Both hospitals recognize that leaving the decision with the physician is the best way to handle the issue.

Delivering a baby is a difficult procedure. Patients entrust the lives of their children to doctors, expecting the safe delivery of a healthy child. Most babies are delivered successfully; however, the media tends to report only accidents. If complications follow, the physician is automatically blamed. Most other businesspeople will never experience such pressure and videotaping births certainly does not sharpen a doctor's concentration.

Family members with video cameras in a professional work environment undoubtedly create distractions and complications.

Perhaps fewer tragedies would occur in obstetrics if doctors did not have to work around video cameras. A child's birth is an exciting moment, but when doctors are expected to perform to the best of their abilities, they should not have to tolerate an annoying camera unless they agreed to it.

Doctors and hospitals are frequently accused of hiding things, and their concern for patients' health is ignored. Medical physicians are inappropriately stereotyped as irresponsible and sneaky because of the few cases such as that of the Houston hospital. Doctors are being wrongfully blamed — just because physicians may choose to protect themselves legally, it does not mean they are guilty. Hospitals as a whole should not be responsible for making decisions about videotaping, but rather each delivery case should be considered individually. The decision should be made as an agreement between the individual doctor and the family.

Videotaping a child's birth has become an increasingly common event over the last few years. But due to a recent lawsuit, many hospitals may change their policies on camera use in delivery rooms. A Houston hospital recently paid a \$15 million settlement after the staff was found negligent in caring for a newborn. The lack of proper care left the child blind and with irreversible brain damage. The family members were able to prove their case because they videotaped the child's birth; the hospital's negligence was caught on tape.

Currently, three Houston hospitals have policies against taping. According to legal and medical experts, fear of lawsuits is increasingly driving this trend nationwide.

In addition, a poll taken by Richard Mithoff, the family's attorney, found that more Houston hospitals are considering banning video cameras. Banning videotaping of births only shows guilt. Hospitals should be less concerned with covering their tracks and more concerned with providing patients the quality care they deserve.

According to Mithoff, the family would not have known of any wrongdoing if not for the videotape.

made no sounds and did not move muscles when she was born. It also shows that the nurse waited nearly an hour before calling a doctor. In addition, a medical attendant can be heard saying, "Someone better get that tape and destroy it," toward the end of the tape. If this family had not videotaped its daughter's birth, it would not have been able to prove that the hospital staff was at fault for the child's disabilities.

Dr. Robert Zurawin rationalized the hospitals' no-taping policy by explaining, "We like to satisfy our patients' wishes ... but the conflict is it's a permanent record."

If hospitals were doing their jobs, this "permanent record" would not be a problem. Hospitals deal with life-and-death situations on a daily basis. Therefore, hospitals should have the most error-free procedures and employ the most competent people.

A qualified doctor should have no problem demonstrating his or her hard-earned skills in front of a camera.

In addition, legal reasons are not the only cause parents have for taping the birth of their children. The birth of a child is a hallowed event in American society, one that many parents wish to be able to enjoy time and again.

Denying them this opportunity shows a lack of both compassion and respect for the patients' wishes.

Cameras in delivery rooms can serve positive purposes for hospitals. If a child is born with a disability, the tape can help to prove whether the doctor was at fault. Although in the recent case, the tape proved guilty, if the doctor were not at fault, the same tape could have absolved the doctor of liability.

Everyone makes mistakes. But minor mistakes in a delivery room do not cause \$15 million settlements. Videotaping births will not result in dozens of lawsuits against doctors who accidentally drop the forceps.

However, it will protect parents and children from being the victims of gross negligence such as that which occurred in the recent Houston case. Hospitals that ban cameras in delivery rooms strongly allude to their guilt by their secrecy, and also show more concern for their own welfare than for that of the patients the hospitals are supposedly there to help.

It is sad the medical field has become so concerned with potential lawsuits that it has lost sight of what is best for those it serves.

**Doctors should be able to work with cameras in delivery room, removing them a needless reaction to Houston family's lawsuit**

Amber Rasco is a junior journalism major. JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION For example, the tape showed the baby. Jessica Crutcher is a junior journalism major.

**Not allowing video cameras during child delivery does not indicate guilt, is a decision for the doctors and family members**

## Buchanan and Reform Party an odd mix

**"P**itchfork" Pat Buchanan ditched his party last year, crying foul. Realizing he stood no chance of replicating his success in New Hampshire four years ago, Buchanan afforded his fellow Republicans a sigh of relief. After all, polling shows that neo-Nazism does not really play all that well with soccer moms and other swing voters.

So Buchanan headed over to the Reform Party cabin out in the woods, urging the little piglets to let him in. Apparently unacquainted with fables, the fledgling third party embraced him with open arms. Maybe it was dimly lit and they had had one too many.

It is not that Buchanan was handsome or charming. He just had a marquee name that might translate into 5 percent of the vote and more federal money down the line.

Anyhow, the party awoke the next morning all sore and full of remorse. Buchanan did not keep his word. And the wishful thinking sank down the drain like so much tap water. On the surface, it seemed as though he had something in common with the party's founder, the quirky Texas billionaire Ross Perot. Well, quirky is a polite way of saying grade-A nut job. But at any rate, both portray themselves as economic populists.

Of course, the only blue collar Buchanan has ever worn is with an Armani suit in some posh television

studio. The common man's common man jets about in a limousine and has millions to his name from all his past media gigs. But it would not be altogether fair to say the Reform Party embraced him with open arms. Its higher-ups had reservations from the start about Buchanan. After all, good ol' Ross had never written, "the Christian white male has been dispossessed." He had never chastised Jews. He had never praised Hitler's "genius." He never made Dr. Laura seem like a bleeding-heart liberal, the sandaled sort who sings "Kumbaya" around a campfire.

Perot founded the Reform Party partly on a platform of social libertarianism. This was explained to Buchanan, but the poor little oppressed white male just could not accept such harsh conditions. Like a small child, he just had to rail against homosexuality and abortion. After all, he always intended to use the Reform Party; he had no obligation to play by its rules.

And so, Buchanan marshaled his supporters to seize control of several of its state branches. The naked play

for power will grant him a favorable national delegation at the nominating convention and allow him to shape the party's future. While Jesse Ventura stole Ross's thunder, Buchanan literally wants to shanghai his party.

But Perot loyalists have mobilized against the neo-fascist demagogue, hoping to head off the coup.

And now only one man stands between Buchanan and the \$12.6 million. That man is John Hagelin. Running for the third time under the Natural Law Party banner, Hagelin is mounting a challenge to Buchanan in the mail-in primary. If successful, he would be among the first presidential candidates in American history to run on two tickets and have ballot access in all 50 states. Forming a third-party coalition is really a stroke of strategic brilliance. And in that vein, Hagelin has also been making every effort to connect with disaffected college-age voters. He even made a stump speech at Indiana University last November.

But, alas, Hagelin is an oddball. There is some truth to the argument that third-party candidates cannot win when everyone constantly says

they cannot win. But in Hagelin's case it is simply that he cannot win.

He is campaigning on the issues of preventative medicine as an approach to health care, banning genetically modified food and shaping policy through scientific consideration. Abbie Hoffman seems almost like a Washington insider by comparison.

And then there is the meditation thing. Schooled by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, he believes every social problem can be solved through meditation. Back in 1993, he even launched a meditation literature campaign in Washington, D.C. with the hope of decreasing homicide rates. And he has suggested that sending meditation gurus over to Kosovo would put an end to centuries of bitter conflict. Gov. George W. Bush talks about uniting the country and restoring trust in government.

Vice President Gore vows he will fight for the people against the interests of the rich and powerful. Hagelin just wants everybody to mellow out. If he could just convince Buchanan to give meditation a try, he would be set to go. After all, Buchanan is not exactly known for pulling punches and will give him one hell of a ride. Hagelin's campaign literature literally depicts his head floating up in the clouds. At long last, an honest campaign ad.

Joseph S. Pete is a columnist for the Indiana Daily Student at Indiana U.

**It is not that Buchanan was handsome or charming. He just had a marquee name that might translate into 5 percent of the vote and more federal money down the line.**

## Mail Call

### Each generation has its own best golfer

*In response to Mark Passwaters' July 26 column.*

While I agree with Passwaters on his assessment that Tiger Woods should not be labeled the greatest golfer of all time, I disagree with his putting that label on Jack Nicklaus. Was Nicklaus better than Bobby Jones, who won the pre-modern grand slam and retired at 29? Or Ben Hogan who won six majors after coming back from a near-fatal car wreck during the prime of his career that left him nearly unable to walk? My point is that they were all great golfers during their own generation.

How about instead of scrutinizing Tiger's recent run to the Nth degree, we just sit back and enjoy his already remarkable achievements.

Chris Sasser  
Class of '96

*Her continued insistence that the College Station Police Department (CSPD) write fewer tickets in order to reduce the backlog displays a problem facing America today. Many Americans fail to take personal responsibility for their actions, so instead of the court problem being caused by the multitude of people breaking laws in College Station, the problem is caused by CSPD enforcing the laws. She also mentions that it is an inconvenience for Aggies to have to return to College Station to attend the trial for their violation of the law. But if you obey the laws, there would be no reason to return to College Station for a trial in the first place.*

*It comes down to this: CSPD is doing its job, the courts are stuffed and need more space and possibly more lawyers to prosecute cases, and most importantly, people need to stop breaking the law in College Station if they do not want to be inconvenienced by the backlog of cases.*

John Denholm  
Graduate Student

### Decreasing tickets not a valid cure

*In response to Sunnye Ownes' July 26 column.*

While Owens raises awareness of the court backlog that is facing the city of College Station Municipal Court System, she fails to understand the necessity of law enforcement. If the people have a problem with the laws being enforced, then they need to elect legislators who will change the laws, not crucify the police officers who enforce them.

*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 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:*

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