

## Lights, camera, lawsuit

MTV deserves to be sued for candid camera prank

While no one has accused MTV of being the most tasteful producer of entertainment, one would hope its executives possess at least a modicum of human decency. Apparently, one would be wrong.



MICHAEL WHITLOW

Recently, a couple from Washington, D.C. filed a lawsuit against MTV and Hard Rock Hotel for invasion of privacy, fraud and mental anguish over an incident involved in the taping of a segment for a new reality show. The show, entitled "Harassment," was intended to be the extreme sports version of "Candid Camera."

James and Lauri Ann Ryan, as unwilling participants in the show, checked into the Hard Rock Hotel and when they went to their room, found what appeared to be a murder victim's corpse in the room. Security guards and paramedics arrived quickly to take away the body and question the couple. The couple later discovered that the body was fake, the guards and paramedics were actors and the entire proceeding had been taped with hidden cameras.

The couple was understandably upset and filed the lawsuit in April, though it was recently moved to federal court. The suit included the Hard Rock Hotel because of its compliance with MTV's scheme, as well as the show's producer.

The fact that MTV even entertained this idea for a moment, much less moved it into the production phase, is appalling. No one ever said that all entertainment needs to be art, but exposing people to situations that are potentially traumatizing, and recording their reaction for a voyeuristic indulgence borders on inhuman. It also serves to illustrate the problems with reality television and MTV programming in general.

Reality television is first and foremost anything but reality. Yes, it utilizes individuals that are not paid actors, but it also places them in extremely artificial circumstances set up to elicit a narrow range of responses. Almost all of them are nothing more than glorified game shows, with a large monetary piece of cheese awaiting whichever rat successfully navigates the maze in question. Of course, we are allowed to sit back and laugh at the pain and struggles of individuals along the way. Shows like "Love Cruise" or "Temptation Island" make a mockery of human sentiment, and shows like "American Idol" expose the destruction of human dreams to public ridicule.

Of course all of this is okay, because as long as

you can swindle, backstab, lie to or outperform enough people, you win. Who would want the youth of America learning such ideals, especially in the hands of the leader of youth culture: MTV. After all, isn't this the same company that brought us "Jackass," a show that exalts notoriety above dignity or even personal safety?

The sad thing is that in all its years, in light of all its potential, this is where MTV ended up. A small station that became a cultural icon, that invented such campaigns as Rock the Vote in order to inspire young adults to vote in presidential elections, has fallen to the point of placing fake corpses in hotel rooms in order to get higher ratings. This is a company that was poised to motivate the youth of a nation into political activism and cultural unity. To be fair, they have still succeeded in this endeavor

to some degree. This success, however, is offset by their decision to spray human excrement on two teenage girls during the taping of a show entitled "Dude, that Sucks," which never aired as a result of other legal problems.

Instead of focusing their energy on enlightening and educating our nation's youth, MTV decides to film corpses, humans covered in feces, and re-run so many episodes of "Real World" that they have to create a second channel, MTV2, to show the music videos they no longer have time for on the original MTV.

Hopefully this lawsuit will succeed in showing MTV and other network producers they have a responsibility not to harm innocent people in the taping of their shows.

Michael Whitlow is a senior English major.



## Anti-Muslim speech harmful

This month, Southern Baptist Conference leaders began attacking the religion of Islam and its founder Mohammed. Not only were their comments extremely prejudiced, they were also hypocritical. The issues the leaders attacked are not limited to Mohammed's life and Islam.



JENELLE WILSON

Reverend Jerry Vines, in an address to the convention's pastors, called Mohammed a "demon-possessed pedophile." Other Southern Baptist Convention leaders such as President James Merritt have refused to refute the statements, saying that they are accurate.

It is historically acknowledged that Mohammed's last wife Aisha was nine or 10 when her father gave her to him. The practice of girls marrying at a prepubescent age was considered the norm of the time. All females during this period, including those written of in the Bible, married extremely early, usually between the ages of nine and 12, to ensure their "purity."

Mohammed, however, does not fit the definition of a pedophile. The typical pedophile is unable to find satisfaction in an adult sexual relationship and choose children because the innocent are less threatening than adults.

Mohammed's marriage to Aisha, according to historians, was simply one of alliance. His other wives were all over the age of 17, and nine were widows before they married him. Half were widows over 30 years of age.

Calling Mohammed a pedophile was simply an inflammatory and bigoted remark. Reverend Vines attacked Mohammed because he had 12 wives, but the practice of polygyny — one man having many wives — was not uncommon during this time either. In the Bible, both King David and King Solomon had hundreds of wives and concubines, yet they were still considered to be in God's favor. Many wives lead to numerous children, and children were considered economic commodities necessary to increasing family wealth. The more children a family produced, the more money they were able to earn.

Vines also said, "Allah is not Jehovah, either. Jehovah is not going to turn anyone into a terrorist that will try to bomb people." However, doing something God tells you to do and doing something "in the name of God" are two different things.

Christian fundamentalists frequently commit terroristic acts in the name of God. Groups such as The Army of God have bombed women's clinics and gay nightclubs in the past, as well as killed doctors and harassed abortion clinic employees. The Army of God manual calls for protesters to leave nails in parking lots, to flood clinics with water and even to rent construction equipment such as bulldozers to destroy buildings.

Neal Horsley, creator of the pro-life "Nuremberg Files" website, once published an online hit list. The list had hundreds of names, personal information and pictures of pro-choice doctors and clinic workers. Former President Bill Clinton and selected members of Congress were also on the list.

Horsley once stated that his website does not threaten anyone, but New York obstetrician Barnett Slepian, who was assassinated by a sniper while standing in his kitchen in 1998, was once included in Horsley's hit list. After his murder, Slepian was crossed off the list. The "Nuremberg Files" now publishes pictures of women entering abortion clinics on the Internet.

These are just a few examples of terroristic acts undertaken in the name of Christianity. In the months since the Sept. 11 attacks, President Bush continues to remind Americans that Islam is a peaceful religion, that the 19 men who carried out the attacks were not representative of all Muslims; they were fundamental extremists.

The bigoted and hypocritical Southern Baptist remarks will create more hatred on both sides of the issue. They will lead to more prejudice against people of the Islamic faith who are trying to distance themselves from the acts of the fundamentalists. The comments could also make targets of Christian missionaries around the world. For Rev. Vines to have made such comments shows a lack of historical understanding and a bigotry that America does not need in its leadership today.

Jenelle Wilson is a junior political science major.

## No more solicitors on campus

Consumers are bombarded every day with advertisements and solicitations. Businesses have carried advertising past the point of TV and newspaper ads by hitting untapped resources like college campuses to make a greater profit. While it may be lucrative for the businesses, Texas A&M should not allow solicitations on campus.



ANDI BACA

At the beginning of every semester, business representatives set up all over campus to pressure students to sign up for merchandise such as credit cards, newspapers and cell phones. The problem with solicitors is the selling tactics they use to gain customers. Many solicitors yell out announcements or personally address students as they pass by. Students often feel compelled to stop, even though many do not want to, especially when they pass the same booth several times a day.

With more important matters on their minds, students have more to worry about than filling out applications for credit cards they do not need.

The sales gimmicks companies use also take advantage of students. Solicitors know if they offer free stuff, they can draw more students in. Students, especially freshmen, can easily be lured into signing up for a five-year subscription to the *Houston Chronicle* by an oversized, cheap T-shirt.

As most college students are constantly short on cash, solicitors attempt to push credit cards as a money source to students. As the rate of students graduating from college with credit card debt

increases, colleges need to help students avoid debt instead of handing them the pen to sign up for a credit card.

Students might be less annoyed and pressured by solicitors if they set up their tables in a better location. If A&M insists on supporting solicitors they should confine them to certain areas only, such as the Memorial Student Center. Students expect to see tables with recruiters and solicitors inside the MSC and are less likely to feel annoyed by a solicitor.

Not all students may see solicitors as a problem. Students who live on campus might see it as a convenient way to get a cell phone or credit card. However, everything is convenient these days, and if a student really needs their own Visa card, it is not difficult to obtain one somewhere other than a campus solicitor.

If students were not bothered by them, they would not have to resort to ignoring solicitors or even finding alternative routes to class simply to avoid dealing with them. A college campus is not the place for businesses to set up shop and take advantage of the heavy traffic of students who just moved out of their parents' house and have no idea how to balance money, much less make a monthly financial commitment. Students already see enough propaganda on campus because of student elections and organization recruitment.

On-campus solicitation has become more of a nuisance to students than a convenience. A&M is an institution for learning and should be kept as such.

Andi Baca is a senior journalism major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Battalion coverage of Corps not biased

Having read the numerous accusations of systematic bias by *The Battalion* against the Corps of Cadets, I looked through past issues of the newspaper and found no evidence to substantiate the claim that *The Battalion* has an agenda to discredit the Corps.

As a former *Battalion* editor and Corps first sergeant, I know firsthand how Corps culture often clashes with news reporting. Overall, coverage of the Corps in *The Battalion* has been fair and balanced.

Last spring, there were 13 page one stories and photos about the Corps, and the Corps was mentioned in another 30 articles. Out of 71 issues, that is a high percentage of coverage. The Corps voter registration drive, the Corps sweeping the Yell leader elections and

the Corps Leadership Excellence Program were newsworthy and ran because they were of interest to readers. The same applied to the stories regarding a cadet arrested for pornography and, I am sure, to the stories about the photographs of alleged hazing.

Some of these stories are definitely embarrassing to the Corps and the University, but do not constitute bias against the Corps. I hope the bad continues to be reported, just like the positive is.

Every member of the Corps, not just its leaders, should be aware that as Keepers of the Spirit, the public and media will be more critical, as it should be, when its members do not hold themselves to the higher standard they profess.

Mariano Castillo  
Class of 2002