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Hilltopics Staff

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HILLTOPICS

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week of march 28, 2005

Steroids, senators, feeding tubes, and Fox News: Why the media and congress need to get a clue

by Douglas Hill

The U.S. is currently debating the selling of F-16 fighters to India; Easter Sunday found the pope unable to speak for health concerns; it's been less than a week since the bloodiest school shooting since Columbine. But none of these were the lead stories on the Sunday morning news. I had to hear about vegetable-turned-news-sensation Terri Schiavo. Pathetically, though, that was a relief from the constant barrage of an even less important story: steroids in baseball.

Consider first the case of Schiavo. This woman has been in a coma since I was in kindergarten. Her feeding tube was removed briefly in 2001, but presumably we didn't hear about this, as 2001 was full of, you know, real news. Her parents want her alive. Her husband wants her dead. Congress passed a special bill, the text of which was, to paraphrase, "Gee, it's really mean to take away that feeding tube, and we sure wish there were a legal basis for having it reinserted, but, shucks, this is the best we can do." Jeb Bush wants

custody. The cable news networks just want this to go on until the pope dies. And, come to think of it, I think Schiavo's religion has something to do with it, too.

Al- most as excit- ing — and, thus, we are led to believe, news- worthy—is the issue of

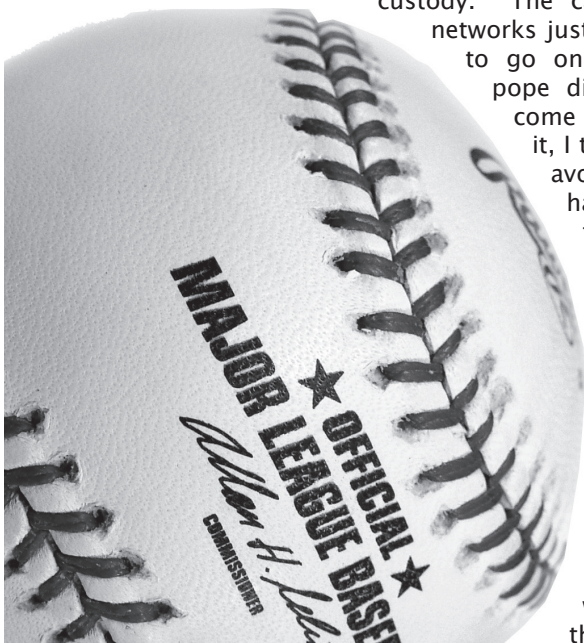
steroid use in baseball. Apparently, around the same time Terri Schiavo's eating disorder put her into a coma, Jose Canseco was juiced up on 'roids, which allowed him to grow a mullet faster and hit a baseball farther than almost anyone else in pro sports. Other stars got the hint, and 15 short years later Jason Giambi and Mark McGwire testified before Congress, which I learned about through a 45 minute special on Fox News.

My problem with all of this has nothing to do with the facts of these two situations. It really is very sad that Schiavo, her husband, and her parents are in this awful situation, and no matter what Jeb Bush or William Rehnquist does about it, someone's life is about to be tragically changed. Similarly, baseball has a long, important, uniquely American heritage, and, although I'm not sure how severe of a problem it is for Barry Bonds to use a hormone to help him hit a baseball 50 more feet, it's sad that the real ambassadors for the game today are calling the legitimacy of Major League Baseball into question. Something, obviously, should be done by someone to correct both of these situations. But why do I need to know about it?

If there were nothing more important for Brit Hume and Paula Zahn to talk about, then this would make more sense. This is not, however, a "slow" time for news. The U.S. is fighting a war. Social Security reform is going to affect tens of millions of Americans, the vast majority of whom lack an understanding of the problem and proposed solutions. But still we hear about Schiavo and Canseco.

As disgusting as it is that our media have spent their time and resources on these stories, it is exponentially more frightening that our Congress has spent equal time and resources. There are televised hearings in which Mark McGwire argues with congressmen about whether or not "the past is behind us," and a legislative body that can't confirm a judge without a filibuster drafted, debated, and passed, in a matter of hours, a bill to try to help Jeb Bush save Schiavo's life. When the media waste their time, at least we can take comfort in the facts that we didn't elect them and that we don't pay their salaries.

Douglas Hill is a sophomore international studies major.



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On the web: Go to www.smu.edu/honors/hilltopics to read all of the stories in this issue and more. You can also submit your thoughts to hilltopics@hotmail.com.

We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to hilltopics@hotmail.com by Wednesday at 8:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

Point-counterpoint: Women's spring fashion

Ladies, please put some clothes on...

by Gaines Greer

Spring has blessedly arrived on the Hilltop, and I think we're all grateful to be shedding the North Face fleeces with which our 50° winter burdened us. But, with this removal of layers, a more disturbing springtime rite of passage has taken place. As in years past, countless females at SMU are again conducting the annual ritual of purging their closets of all clothing that might be considered "modest" (i.e. falling below mid-thigh).

I'm not a conservative who's going to bemoan rising hemlines as a sign of society's declining morals. And I'm not going to offer a feminist diatribe about women who disrespect themselves by wearing such scant clothing. Instead, I'm just an ordinary female student who's tired of staring at the clouds while walking to class due to a dislike of looking down and seeing some coed's ass hanging out of her skirt and her chest hanging out of a too-small top. So to women of the Hilltop, I have a desperate, and most likely futile, plea: please, put some clothes on.

It seems so simple, doesn't it? Before you leave home in the morning, you put clothes on—specifically, clothes that clothe you, not just clothes that are a shirt or skirt by technicality only. Surely all of our mothers taught us that when we were young. I know that when I was growing up, my mother gave me a multitude of advice, 75% of which I discounted; but you know what part was so sensible that it was inescapable? The part about adequately clothing myself.

But since parental guidance obviously wasn't effective for so many women on the Hilltop, let's try some other approaches as to why they should put some clothes on. If you regularly sit through lectures in the charmingly decrepit classrooms of Dallas, Hyer, Fondren, and Clements Halls, you know that the desks aren't exactly in mint condition—in fact, they're probably older than many of us students. Now think about sitting in those same well-worn desks in a super-short skirt: bare buttock to desk contact... gross.

I think it's a safe assumption that some women wear skimpy clothing to attract the attention of guys. If that route works for you, far be it from me to belittle a successful plan. But consider this: you're not just attracting the attention of the handful of guys that you might be interested in. That creepy guy in your psych class who always tries to engage you in a conversation... yeah, he's most likely loving your tight outfit, too. And at the same time, you're probably being unfavorably judged by several of your peers and professors.

I'm not saying that the women of this campus should change their dress code to burkas, and I'm not even suggesting that we go back to wearing jeans now that the weather is warmer. Instead, just keep in mind that, as the saying goes, clothes do make the man—or in this case, the woman—so please, put some on.

Gaines Greer is a senior English and German major.

Ladies, please take some more clothes off...

by The Men of Hilltopics

The editors of *Hilltopics* often disagree. The mature exchange of differing viewpoints stands as the cornerstone of our publication. However, after hearing Gaines Greer's opinions on tasteful female attire for the spring season, the male editors of *Hilltopics* were so appalled that a rejoinder was necessary. The girls of SMU must unite against the dangerous suggestions of Miss Greer and her anti-liberty sect.

Obviously, the fashion designs endorsed by Miss Greer are frighteningly dangerous in the ever-warming climate of North Texas. According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heat stroke claimed the lives of 6,615 Americans from 1979 to 1995. Although we did not read the entire report, we assume that many of these unfortunate deaths could have been prevented if the victims had not been wearing excessive clothing. As such, a girl in spring clothing is merely showing mature apprehension for her well-being. The men of *Hilltopics* are genuinely concerned about the health of the SMU community, and so, we recommend that girls exhibit a wardrobe of mini-skirts, midriffs, and low-cut tops. Don't become a statistic!

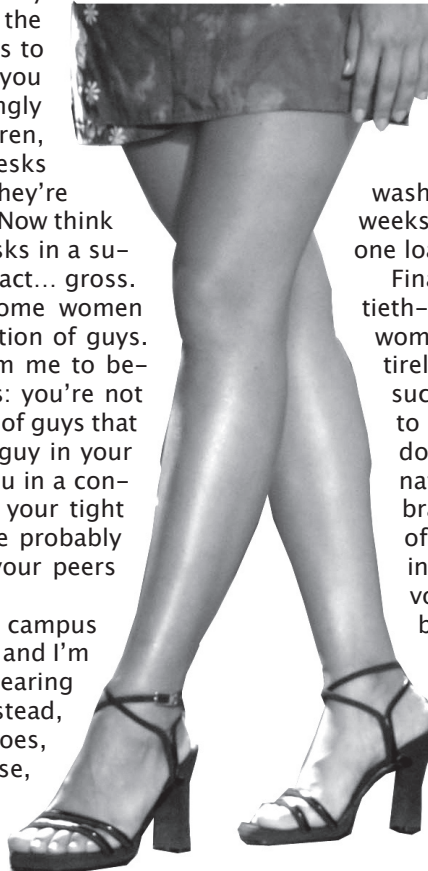
Next, conservative clothes are terribly uneconomical. We are told that girls' clothing is priced per square inch of fabric. Thus, less-revealing outfits are more expensive than tight-fitting clothing. We've never been inside a Victoria's Secret, but we can only assume that selections from this store cost less than \$5.00 apiece. The economic benefits of smaller

clothing are amplified by home appliances. A girl covered head-to-toe in fabric must run her air conditioning constantly, which costs a fortune, especially as fuel costs continue to increase. Additionally, she must waste precious hours doing multiple loads of laundry. With a decently large washing machine, a productive girl can fit two weeks worth of Spring-appropriate clothing into one load of laundry.

Finally, we wonder what the women of the twentieth-century would say about the regression in women's rights advocated by Miss Greer. With tireless effort, revolutionary thinkers and leaders, such as Betty Friedan and Virginia Woolf, worked to alert the world that the paradigm of a male-dominated society was illogical and discriminatory. Thirty years ago, women burned their bras on college campuses in a powerful display of equality. Now, alas, many girls are discarding the advances of their predecessors and voluntarily donning the shackles of inequality: burdensome, uncomfortable clothing.

The choice is simple: heatstroke, poverty, and oppression, or comfort, wealth, and liberty? We applaud your decision!!

The men of Hilltopics are all single...or will be as soon as their girlfriends read this article.



Hammering Ethics: Rep. DeLay abuses Terri Schiavo tragedy to cover personal ethical lapses

by James Longhofer

The length that some politicians will go to for the preservation of their careers is astounding. Take Tom DeLay, the House Majority Leader, known to friends and foes alike as "The Hammer." Last week, the scandal surrounding DeLay centered on his connections to Jack Abramoff, a powerful lobbyist. Abramoff, along with DeLay's former press secretary, Mike Scanlon, defrauded six Indian tribes of a total of \$66 million.

DeLay had a lot to fear last week because the Washington Post published an article reporting that he made a golfing trip to Scotland in 2000 that was paid for with funds from the Indians tribes and was, therefore, a violation of the House ethics rules. This was just the latest in a string of bad press for the Hammer. So in the face of these allegations, DeLay did the most logical thing: he threw off the press by exploiting a family's personal tragedy. Tom DeLay became the congressional champion of the parents of Terry Schiavo and threw his considerable legislative weight behind passing a law that moved her case out of the Florida state courts and moved it into the Federal courts. Tom DeLay saw an opportunity to take the allegations of his ethical lapses off the headlines and excite his conservative base; the rule of law obviously doesn't matter when political points can be scored.

Let's ignore the fact that the legislation recently passed by the Congress and signed by the president (who cut short a vacation just to sign the bill) is probably unconstitutional.

Let's also ignore the fact that it throws out over twenty legal opinions written by Florida judges. Finally, let's ignore the fact that the Congress has decided to place itself into a state matter and choose one side over another in a family dispute. Instead, let's look at the incredible job that Tom DeLay has done at exploiting a mother's pain in order to save his political career. On the floor of the House of Representatives, DeLay went out of his way to grandstand about the "moral obligation" he felt to create a media frenzy around the pain of a family and the "moral obligation" he felt to circumvent the judicial process. I would have an easier time taking him seriously if The Hammer weren't doing his best to escape a scandal that had intensified shortly before he inserted himself into the Schiavo case. I would have an even easier time believing The Hammer if I hadn't heard that Congressional Republican staffers circulated a memo about the electoral benefits for the Republicans from passing the bill. I have to give you credit, Tom. It takes real talent and chutzpah to find a way to get personally damaging accusations off the public radar, please your conservative base, and put your political opponents in a bind all at once. But I know that if I were in Schiavo's position, I would rather die than be used as a shield for such an ethically-challenged politician.

James Longhofer is a first-year political science, economics, and public policy major.

Life, liberty, or malice: Terri Schiavo case demonstrates danger of 'next-of-kin' rules

by Courtney Underwood

The Declaration of Independence established our right to life and liberty, but what exactly does that mean? The recent controversy surrounding Terri Schiavo has illuminated the fine line between freedom and life. Furthermore, this case has set the precedent of placing a dangerous amount of power upon an individual's spouse or legal guardian.

This situation begs the question of whether you think that starving and dehydrating an individual to death, whether she is in a completely vegetative state or not, is an appropriate and humane form of death. Personally, I would rather just have someone come in and shoot me, or better yet give me a big shot of morphine; starving to death and being buried alive are situated right at the top of ways that I would least like to die. While it may be that my personal penchant for food has skewed my perspective, I still believe that even if everyone thought I was completely brain-dead, I would still be quite appalled if I was left to die a slow, quite hungry death. But alas, I digress. I just believe that there is a problem when death row inmates are killed in minutes while this poor, innocent woman is in a hospice having the life drained out of her for days.

On the other hand, you may believe that Ms. Schiavo is a prisoner to technology, a valid point. Does the fact that we can keep someone alive really mean that we should? We are all used to the idea of unplugging a loved one from life support, but removing a feeding tube seems to many like a much more inhumane and drastic measure—but is it? Perhaps we need to call in a few philosophers to determine if the concept of life is truly biological, or if it resides somewhere within our ability to think. Since the words of many distinguished

academics have yet to bring us all to agreement on this issue—as illustrated in the controversy of stem-cell research and abortion—I won't try to answer this question for you.

Instead, I will move on to another issue involved in this case. The constantly increasing power of spouses and other legal guardians in determining whether their incapacitated "loved ones" will live or die fails to consider the possible motives involved in their decisions or testimonies. Maybe we would all like to believe that a husband's decision will always be in the best interest of his ailing wife, but I think we are jaded enough to know that is not always the case. For example, it is not as though Mr. Schiavo has nothing to gain from his wife's death; further, his insistent claim that she said she would not want to be kept alive artificially was never mentioned until seven years after the incident first occurred. Regardless, we now have an extremely powerful legal precedent of allotting as much power as a living will to a spouse's recollection of his partner's desires.

So, after a husband beats his wife into a coma, we are going to ask him if she said she would want us to pull the plug? Though an extreme example, it is not an unrealistic concern since one out of four women is beaten by her husband. While domestic violence is not an issue at the crux of this case, the allowance for a spouse to trump the rest of an individual's family members in determining what his/her partner's wishes might be in terms of medical intervention is something that may be detrimental to the lives of many victims of domestic violence and their families. If you think that I'm wrong, I hope that you are right.

Courtney Underwood is a senior psychology major.

Even Democrats agree that a Bush presidential library would be a perfect fit for the Hilltop

by Emily Jordan

Although the White House has not made any decisions regarding the location of President George W. Bush's future presidential library, the prospect of SMU being the site of the presidential library has been floating around not only the SMU community but also the national news media. Similarly, the Clinton Presidential Library's opening in November 2004 was also big news, and the impact of the Clinton Library on Little Rock illustrates that regardless of whether or not one agrees with President Bush and his political beliefs and actions, having the 43rd president's library on our campus would bring significant benefits to SMU.

As a Clinton supporter and an Arkansas native, I have visited the Clinton Presidential Library on multiple occasions, and its impact on the small city of Little Rock is nothing short of remarkable. The area of town known as the River Market was in dire need of revitalization, and the presence of the library in this area has been a major factor in the area's revitalization. On any given day, classrooms of Arkansas school children, church buses full of adults, and any number of individual out-of-state guests flock to Little Rock just to see the Clinton Library. In fact, one flier announcing the opening of the Clinton Presidential Library touted it as Little Rock, Arkansas's "globecoming." From this Arkansan's view, Little Rock has definitely "arrived," courtesy of the Clinton Presidential Library.

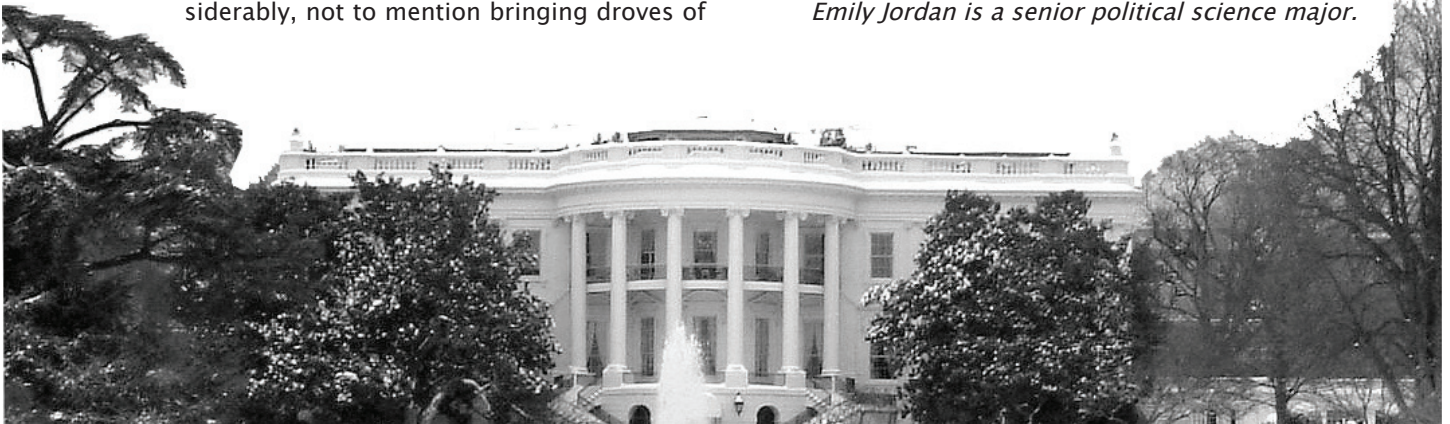
While we all know that our beloved Park Cities have no need for "revitalization," SMU continually strives to improve its standing as an institution not only in Texas, but also across the country. Having the Bush library on our campus would increase SMU's name recognition considerably, not to mention bringing droves of

visitors from Texas and across the country to our campus. Undoubtedly, some young children and students who would potentially visit the Bush library—and consequently the SMU campus—would be inspired to attend our fine institution as a result of that previous "campus visit."

Logistically, having the Bush library at SMU would also bring certain benefits. Since the Laura Lee Blanton Building was built, SMU/Yale Boulevard has become a main entrance to campus for visitors and current students, and according to a recent conversation with President Turner, the area between US-75's access road and the Blanton Building contains plenty of space to house a presidential library complex. In fact, President Turner cited the fact that only six acres are required to build such a complex, and approximately six times that amount is actually available within that vicinity. Such a complex would also probably add to the aesthetic value of our already gorgeous campus.

Although I did not vote for President Bush and am also not a supporter of his political party, I can honestly say that as an SMU student and future alum, I am pleased that SMU is actively working to get the Bush library on our campus because I would be proud to claim that my alma mater was home to such a facility. And who knows, maybe the presence of the library on our campus would spark additional academic programs, much like the Clinton Presidential Library was the impetus for the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, which will open in August 2005 next to the Clinton Library. Although it is unknown whether SMU will be the site for 43's library, current students should support SMU's efforts to obtain the facility.

Emily Jordan is a senior political science major.



Hilltopics Staff

Craig Zieminski: Editor-in-Chief
Courtney Underwood: Managing Editor
Andrew Baker: Business Manager
Gaines Greer: Copy Editor
Emily Jordan: Copy Editor
Jared Dovers: Development Manager
Douglas Hill: Graphics Editor

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