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First comes marriage, then comes love, then comes the baby in the baby carriage

by Yasmin Awad

You say “arranged marriage,” and people look at you with pity, disgust, or anger at the horrible, sexist injustice. They think of an innocent 14 year-old girl being forced to marry a big, hairy man twenty years older than her. Add a little wife beating and a pinch of marital rape and voila: another stereotype.

Arranged marriages are actually not that bad.

Traditionally, arranged marriage is when the parents choose the child’s future spouse with no input from the child. But that’s very rare nowadays and more modern approaches are practiced. Now, the parents choose several prospects, sometimes with the help and suggestions of the child. It could even be that the couple met from school or work. The parents will then arrange a meeting with the other person’s family. From there, the couple has a chance to get to know each other through e-mail, phone, or face-to-face meetings. If they like each other, they get engaged and eventually tie the knot.

So arranged marriages are more of an introduction service coupled with honest advice rather than a force or restriction.

It’s not surprising that statistically, arranged marriages are more successful and lasting than romantic types of courtship. The person knows that the prospective spouse is serious and the intention is clear. It’s not just a fling that will going to lead to nothing or heartache. When you’re married, you have to think twice about leaving the person, because there is more at stake. In the dating scene, if you get bored, you leave. Or if you fight, immediately comes flight. But if an arranged meeting doesn’t work out, you can shrug your shoulders and walk away. You don’t care much because you didn’t fall in love with the person yet. You don’t lose anything but time.

Also, love blinds people to potential problems in the relationship. When you fall in love first, you have unrealistic expectations and there is little room for im-

provement and a great chance of failure. You see your loved one as a superhero and automatically disregard their bad qualities. But romance and love die out very quickly when you have to deal with the real world. If everyone was a character in a Nicholas Sparks novel, pre-marital love would be ideal. But there’s a reason it’s called fiction.

Arranged marriages, on the other hand, are based not only on physical attraction or romantic notions but also on critical evaluation of the compatibility of the couple. Spouses in an arranged marriage begin without any expectations from each other, and as the relationship matures, a greater understanding between the two develops.

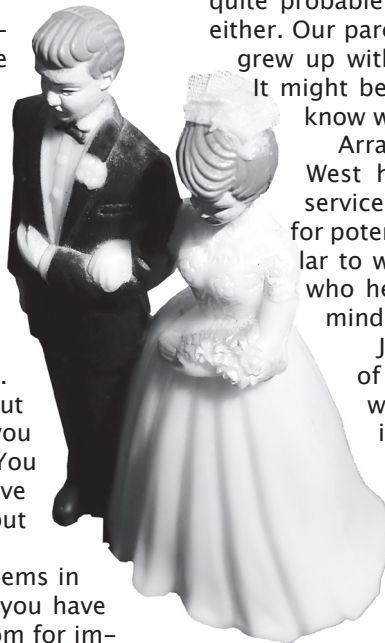
It’s always good to get a third party’s opinions, because they can look at the situation more objectively. It’s impossible for someone to be objective with their heart.

Parents have more experience and insight into what makes a good partner. And if the parents don’t like the person, it’s quite probable that their son or daughter won’t like them either. Our parents taught us what was right and wrong. We grew up with many of the same beliefs they taught us. It might be hard to believe, but sometimes parents do know what’s best for their kid.

Arranged marriages are so successful that the West has adopted similar practices. Hundreds of service sites have been created to help people look for potential spouses. Arranged marriage is also similar to when your friend introduces you to someone who he or she thinks you’ll like—with marriage in mind, of course.

Just look at *Romeo and Juliet*. It’s not a story of true love. It’s what happens when two people whimsically fall in love with ideals and—more importantly—don’t get their parents approval.

Yasmin Awad is a sophomore journalism major.



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Be Heard: *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions on virtually any topic. Email your ideas, feedback, or articles to hilltopics@hotmail.com.

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Run-off election features diverse candidates; it's a chance for students to make a difference

by Courtney Hebb

Sometimes I feel as though campus politicians run in circles and talk in circles, resulting in a lot of running and a lot of talking and limited movement forward. This is not intended to be an insult to officers who have served SMU students in the past, for I understand that oozing charm lubes the well-oiled machine that is SMU student senate. I also understand that there are many hours dedicated to doing the job well, and I'm sure I speak for all when I say we appreciate what they do, even if we don't understand what exactly it is that they do.

However, something has recently occurred to spike my interest in Student Senate and should grab yours as well. Folks, we have a presidential run-off—one that is potentially historically momentous and is sure to push Senate in a new direction allowing it to more effectively represent more facets of our campus. This stuff couldn't get any better if it were made into a mawkish Disney movie!

Democracy depends on strong opposition that actually gives voters a choice. Two different candidates with different backgrounds and different views allow students to pick the one that best represents their needs. In this run-off, we have two very different candidates: the established and the underdog. First, we have the runner for the status quo, who is also the established politician: Taylor Russ, the admirable sitting VP and the traditional candidate. He is Greek affiliated (with a house that offers a strong presidential past) and is experienced in Senate, climbing his way through the conventional avenues to set himself up for this race. Basically, he is tailored for this job and the trusted favorite. Then we have the girl who is forcing everyone to take notice and who is making this election fascinating. Most had counted her out, and many didn't even regard her as a formidable candidate. Yet she has garnered enough votes to demand a run-off. Michelle Wigianto, a student who is discontent with

the status quo, who has a vision for change, and who runs this uphill race to prove that there are people and issues on this campus that are not represented. She is not your typical campus politician, a GDI who never held a position in Senate, yet a student who, through starting her own organization, has gained a unique perspective on how Senate operates. If elected she would be the first minority female president in the history of our school. However, the most impressive anomaly regarding Wigianto's campaign is that she has been able to mobilize various groups on campus away from their political apathy and inspired them to vote, a movement of which all future campus politicians should take note.

Both candidates are strong and, in my opinion, would make excellent presidents. Yet regardless of who wins this run-off, this election has proven a couple of very important things. First, choices are good, and in this political sense, everyone should be "pro" choice. Too often, political candidates seem to be cut from the same cloth, acting like clones in suits rather than individual and distinctive leaders. Secondly, candidates should be responsive to all different types of students and different issues on campus. The voting population is not limited to the SAC and the Greeks. SMU is a big place and officers need to represent it all. Lastly, never count out the underdog and never be afraid to be the underdog. Sometimes an election is more than just winning; it is about surfacing the issues and encouraging discourse to promote change. So, whether you Trust Russ or Wig Out, remember to vote on March 7th and 8th for SMU's and for *your* next student body president.

Courtney Hebb is a senior political science and marketing major.

Correction: Last week's article about special interest senate seats and the Young Conservatives of Texas mistakenly indicated that last year's referendum had been sponsored by the YCT. *Hilltopics* apologizes to the group.



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With another Winter Olympic Games finished, all we have to appreciate is the fine art of curling

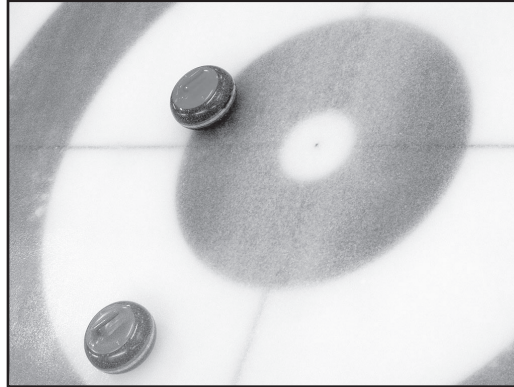
by James Longhofer

I'll be honest: I'm glad the Winter Olympics are over.

I've never been a fan of the Winter Games. Most of the big name sports played during these games are just not as exciting to me as the summer version. Figure skating boggles my mind since it is both boring and has incomprehensible scoring rules. (Seriously, how is Sasha Cohen able to claim a silver medal after falling on her rear twice?) Skiing can be fun as long there is enough crash footage to make the highlight reels of *Sportscenter*. Even the straightforward timed events are boring. Luge, skeleton, and bobsled aren't that exciting to watch, because the racers are not racing against each other but are instead racing against each other's times. This is just not as exciting as head to head battles. Even the fights between American teammates haven't spiced up the Winter Olympics. The Shani Davis-Chad Hedrick spat was overly played up by NBC in an attempt to find anything to make the Olympics more entertaining. In terms of American sports squabbles, the Hedrick-Davis spat is nothing. Compare their fight to the T.O.-Donavan McNabb fight, and you'll see what I mean.

Being boring is not the main reason I am tired of the Winter Olympics, though. The main thing that bothers me is the fact that America isn't dominating the medal count the way that we all want them to. Every Olympics comes with expectations of uncontested American glory. NBC knew this when they were marketing the Olympics. Every commercial bragged that the American team was coming off their best performance ever in Salt Lake City. However, those com-

mercials didn't mention that during those Olympics, America finished second in the medal count to Germany, which is exactly how America finished this year. The Summer Olympics are the place where America stands atop all other nations. The Winter Olympics often see us falling short to Austrian skiers, Korean speed-skaters, and Canadian hockey players. What fun are the games if they don't reinforce our belief in our own superiority?



The one bright spot in these games for me is that I have found the most hypnotic sport ever: curling. Curling is one of the odder winter events. It involves sliding heavy granite stones across an ice rink. To keep the stones going in a straight line, the players use brooms to reduce the friction on the ice in front of the stone. What should be a boring event is really entertaining to watch. It is a chess match on ice as the op-

posing teams knock each other's stones out of the scoring zone, which is known as a button. When I started watching curling, I lost track of time and quickly became fascinated by the furious sweeping and the excitement of watching stones collide. It turns out that I'm not alone: ratings are up by 700% on the networks for Olympic curling compared to what is normally on during the afternoon.

However, curling doesn't make up for what has been an incredibly boring and disappointing Olympics. The best thing about the Winter Olympics being over is that the next one is four year away.

James Longhofer is a sophomore political science, economics, and public policy major.



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Reader feedback: Real hilarity is not Cheney's accident, but how media has handled it

by Nicole Sarhady

In response to James Longhofer's article "Bush Administration's mishandling of shooting incident demonstrates incompetence, hilarity," I would like to point out that the response of the news media and Bush critics is what is really hilarious. Since when has it become a civil right to be informed of every event that takes place in the White House the second it happens? Not to mention the fact that Cheney-shooting-fellow-hunter event has no real effect on the economy, national security or Social Security.

While on vacation, the Vice President accidentally shot a hunting pal. This event, my research indicates, is not all that uncommon and does not qualify for top news coverage any way you slice it. The national media has a penchant for taking a non-issue and making it an issue, mostly due to its disgust for the Bush Administration. I don't recall hearing any uproar that the media was not informed immediately that Bill Clinton was accused of having an affair! As a citizen and productive member of society, I would rather be told about incidents when all the information is available than to be told only part of what took place. We all saw the devastating effects of the media presenting a story before all of the information was available in the Sago Mine disaster just a month or so ago. The same principles apply here that should have applied to the mining disaster: discretion and patience will prevent additional problems.

Waiting for twenty-four hours before distributing information about what took place was a logical and reasonable step by the Bush Administration to prevent any misinformation. It did not hurt anyone that the Administration waited—Whittington's family was informed, he was given the proper medical care for such circumstances, and there were no detrimental effects on the society at large. Why, then, is it so important for the media to know within minutes what took place during the Vice President's vacation? Is it maybe because they were running out of steam on their Bash-Bush campaign? Or maybe they just lacked top headlines, because the Dena Schlosser verdict, the mudslide in the Philippines, and the bird flu aren't newsworthy enough to be on the front page? All in all it seems to me that the problem lies in the media's desperate need to find fault in anything that the Bush Administration does, regardless of its reasonableness. That to me is what is really hilarious.

Nicole Sarhady is a junior business management major.

Lifestyle, not major, determines sexuality

by Amanda Wall

"Dad, I'm adding a women's studies major."

"You're not going to become a lesbian, are you?"

I was speechless for about 15 seconds (during which my father looked sincerely worried) before I managed a "no." Why would he think my major could change my sexuality? As it turns out, though, he wasn't the only one. My roommate actually got into a fight with her boss over it ("I live with her! I know!" "Oh, come on. She's a *women's studies* major?").

Over the past few months, I've gotten pretty defensive about the whole thing. When people ask my major, I watch with narrowed eyes for that peculiar look to cross over their faces—that carefully blank expression that means they are mentally re-cataloguing me into a separate, more alien group of people. My reaction may speak badly for my faith in other people, but I do realize that not everyone assumes that all women's studies majors are lesbians. Moreover, it's not that I would be ashamed to be a lesbian. I have such a supportive group of friends and I am comfortable enough with myself that I think I could come out of the closet—at least at SMU—fairly easily. What I object to is the perception that an academic department can have a sexuality or a gender.

For instance, men majoring in theater or dance are often assumed to be gay. Regardless of the actual numbers involved, there is an idea that those kinds of majors are gay majors, that they are girly or emasculating. I would bet money that there are men out there with the potential to be incredible dancers who had never thought to try because it's just not what "real" guys do. It's not just the departments in Meadows, though. If my grandmother walked into one of my English classes and saw the overwhelming number of young women gathered round a (usually) male professor, she'd call it a brothel. A friend of mine, one of the very few female electrical engineering majors at SMU, has confronted jokes, skepticism, and scorn in her overwhelmingly male classes. Some have suggested that women are just better at literature and men better at math and science, but that turns the issue inside-out. It is the perceptions of English as "soft" and engineering as "hard" that make the gender ratios so skewed.

Let's set the record straight. There is no such thing as an inherently male, female, gay, or straight major. Imagine my confusion majoring in both ultra-feminine English and "femi-nazi" women's studies. A bitch major and a butch major? It's enough to give a girl an identity crisis.

Amanda Wall is a sophomore English, Spanish, and women's studies major.

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