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As Moussaoui's execution becomes more and more likely, death penalty seems bad on all levels

by Douglas Hill

In the ongoing trial of supposed "twentieth hijacker" Zacarias Moussaoui, our government has elected to pursue the death penalty, and despite controversy surrounding witness coaching, both judge and jury in the trial have deemed Moussaoui eligible for the death penalty. If anyone is eligible to be put to death, surely it is this man, right? He has admitted to conspiring to fly planes into the White House on September 11. If being a part of the worst terrorist attack in the history of the world doesn't merit capital punishment, what does?

Good question.

Maybe the proper way to examine this is to come at the issue from the perspective of the prosecution. Why put Moussaoui to death? Is killing Moussaoui likely to prevent future crime? While Moussaoui has the stated aim of jihad against America, he has already pled guilty, and the chances he would ever see freedom and the opportunity to act on his beliefs are very slim.

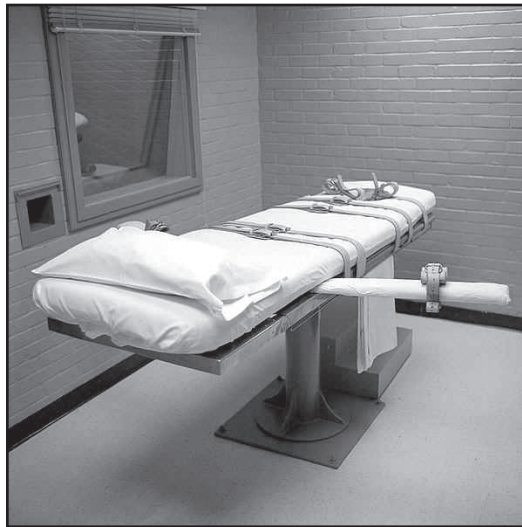
Would killing him deter other crimes? Statistics demonstrating a connection between capital punishment and crime deterrence are unconvincing at best, but the argument seems laughable in this situation; Moussaoui wanted to die on September 11, 2001—as a martyr. He failed to do so, and now our government wants to give him a second chance.

What about retribution? How can anything *but* execution be appropriate for someone as dangerous and evil as Moussaoui? This is, essentially, the only argument in favor of Moussaoui's execution that makes even a little sense, but even this claim fails both theoretically and in the specific realm of this case. Arguing for capital punishment as retribution is, in my mind, ethically dubious in any case. The purpose of our justice system is not to take state-sponsored

revenge on murderers, and while victims and families of victims of September 11 might feel some sort of emotional catharsis at the sight of Moussaoui on the gurney, those emotions are base and dangerous. No matter how many people the Justice Department murders, none of those victims will ever be brought back to life. But imagine you can accept revenge as a motive for state-sponsored killing. Does this case really fit the bill? Moussaoui has never actually killed anyone, only conspired about doing so. Furthermore, those who did do the killing died in the attacks along with their victims. Is it really our government's job to pile on one more body?

Americans see their government execute prisoners all the time, but most of the rest of the world is not so accustomed to capital punishment nowadays. Active death penalty programs are absent in nearly all of our allies. Britain, France, Canada, Germany, Mexico, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Poland, Denmark, Italy, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Greece, Turkey, Panama, Brazil, Chile, Argentina and South Africa (to name just a few examples) have all abstained from governmental murder for at least a decade. Meanwhile, our capital punishment policy puts us in the company of China, Cuba, Iran, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Syria, Egypt, Indonesia and Jordan. We like to believe our values are much more compatible with the governments of Britain and France than Iran and North Korea, but, in this case, actions speak louder than words. Is killing Zacarias Moussaoui really something you can be proud of your government for doing?

Douglas Hill is a junior international studies major.



INSIDE this issue

Life: Even for the courageous at heart, laying your pride on the line to chase after romance is not an easy task. Witness all the real life drama, page 2.

School: It's hard to beat Texas weather in April, but it's still important to see some of the world while you're young. Study abroad gives you the chance, page 3.

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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Looking for spontaneous romance? Chasing after love often proves to be easier said than done

by Michael Hogenmiller

Life is not without a sense of irony. On Monday night, after my article ran in *Hilltopics*, I found myself sitting at my laptop at a table in a Starbucks, plugging away at my keyboard as I hammered out a draft of a history paper. Across the table from me, glued in to her iPod headphones and writing at her laptop—identical coffee beside it—was an incredibly beautiful girl. She couldn't have been more than three feet away from me during the two hours we sat there. We awkwardly met glances three times.

I had just written an article that day, asking for everyone to act on their impulses and meet strangers, to spontaneously and recklessly chase love. I sent a text message to my roommate, describing my dilemma. My phone's predictive text explained how I wish I had the nerve to strike up a conversation with the girl across from me. She twirled a pencil and spell checked her paper. I wanted her to read through the back of the screen on my laptop, or listen to my key strikes and somehow make out my sentences about her.

Three paragraphs about her sat in front of me, and she picked up a vibrating cell phone and told a story to a friend about her afternoon and her run. I subtly turned down the volume of my iTunes so that I could hear what her voice

sounded like. It was warm and familiar; is it a boyfriend on the line? I think her name is Kelly. She calls him "baby" and tries to coax him out of a bad mood—lucky guy.

I wanted to tell her that my day was great. I wanted to be the audience to all of the crafty and endearing things she tucked away throughout the day, a narrative to lay out for him later. His name is Matt, and she complains that he's "pissing her off." It's sad to listen to the change from her cheerful tone to something more pleading and taxing.

Watching her pack up her things was torture, a long and drawn out five minutes. I racked my brain for something witty to blurt out, but I froze. I had nothing clever to say about homework or coffee tonight. She zipped up her backpack, turned away,

and as if to mock me one last time, she forgot her wallet. I didn't see it over the screen of my laptop, and the woman next to me grabbed it and ran after her.

Why do certain strangers, sitting across from us in coffee shops, silently and absent-mindedly grab our attentions so disruptively? How do people we know nothing about captivate us? Whatever invisible forces electrify the air between two strangers sitting in a Starbucks, I wish they'd jolt one of us into conversation now and again.

Michael Hogenmiller is a senior political science and music major.



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...politics, music, class, television, football, shopping, intramurals, fraternities, movies, the Mavs, sex, restaurants, religion, sororities, driving, study abroad, fashion, the war, parking, magazines, bars, the weather, professors, the Mustang Band, dating, books, nightclubs, Texas, club sports, or anything else ?

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You are only in college once, so sifting through the various study abroad options is critical

by Mark McDowell

One of my passions in life is traveling. While living in Texas might expose us to beautiful sunsets and to weather that changes so often you're not sure if you're in Canada or Africa, not exploring past its boundaries prevents us from experiencing the cultural diversity that we can only get by traveling. To think that a hundred years ago people rarely traveled past beyond the edges of their city makes me realize how blessed we are with the options that modern life has given us. We can see the world and meet its people.

SMU provides an important chance to accomplish many things at once by providing its study abroad options. To name a few, we get to continue our education, see the world, and take another step towards independence. I'm sure it's not easy taking the step onto an airplane that will take us so far away from the "comfort zone" that we have grown accustomed to here on the SMU campus. Unless traveling with a group of friends, we will be forced to go through the typical "first year experience" of being forced to make new friends in a new environment. Also many of the locations that we can choose from have a national language other than English. While I wish I had learned a foreign language, I didn't want to risk hurting my GPA by attempting to learn one.

SMU offers a total of 19 different programs: one academic year-long program, two exchange programs, four semester-long programs, ten summer programs, and two full year programs. While it's possible to study abroad anytime during the junior and senior years, the most common time chosen is the spring of the junior year.

I wish there were more than four options for the semester-long programs since I personally would only be able to fit in one semester abroad with academic requirements. Also

since I only speak English I am limited to only two of the four semester programs, Copenhagen and Australia. SMU needs to expand its semester-long programs to more than four locations since this is more often than not the period that people have time to do it. Perhaps the academic year-long program to England could be expanded to allow the option of going for just one semester. When I mentioned this to a lady at the Study Abroad desk, she said it couldn't be done since England was on the trimester system. However TCU allows one semester-long programs in England, starting in late August and ending in early December.

Another thing limiting my decision on where to study abroad is safety in some of the foreign countries that we can travel to. While Paris is a beautiful and charming city, there have been so many riots in the past year that I'm worried about how an American student's image would be perceived there. France is already upset with the U.S. over the whole Iraq situation, Muslims there are protesting against oppression, and cars are being set on fire in the streets. Copenhagen is in hot water over the cartoons depicting Mohammed, and Australia is getting very close to the terrorist attacks in the Philippines.

While I want to study abroad, I am just not sure which program to choose. I have heard nothing but positive stories from people who have done it before, and I'm sure I would have a blast wherever I go. The only advice I can offer everyone is to talk to someone who has done it before, and to research a place before you commit to it. You don't want to miss out on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

Mark McDowell is a sophomore accounting and economics major



What's happening on and around the Hilltop this week?

Monday: The Origins of Sacred Maya Kingship (through May 7, Dallas Museum of Art)

Tuesday: IT Waiver Exam (5:00, McCord Auditorium); French Film Festival, *Qui A Tué Bambi?* (7:00, H-T Theater)

Wednesday: *Phantom of the Opera* orchestra performances (through Saturday, Music Hall at Fair Park)

Thursday: First night of a new season of live thoroughbred racing at Lone Star Park (Grand Prairie, TX)

Friday: Good Friday (no classes); Easter Weekend festival (through Monday, Dallas Arboretum)

Queen of the stone age steps into the 21st century; *Hilltopics* editor finally gets a mobile phone

by Kasi DeLaPorte

Our loyal *Hilltopics* readers may remember an article I wrote in September proclaiming myself Queen of the Stone Age: i.e., the one person on the SMU campus, and probably in the world, without a cell phone. I used to get my kicks telling people I didn't own one, loved to watch their aghast faces contort in amazement that anyone who has breath could survive without one.

Well, the Queen has exited the Stone Age and entered the 21st century - the land of unlimited night-time minutes and downloadable ring tones. Last weekend, I succumbed to Verizon. Yes, I can hear you now, because I got a cell phone.

The time had come. In a month and a half, I'll be leaving my residence of the last four years, good ol' Cockrell McIntosh, and therefore will be leaving a pre-paid land line and dirt-cheap long distance. While I have been able to exist without a mobile phone, I wouldn't last long without any system of telephonic communication. The real world is looming around the corner; how else could I answer its call?

So, I went to the store with my boyfriend and his dad, who have so kindly agreed to add the extra line to their family plan. Marvin, the used-car-salesman-in-cell-phone-customer-service-representative-clothing, asked me about the most important feature I wanted in my phone. I, sheepishly, said I wanted one that makes phone calls. He then proceeded to tell me about V-cast and multi-recipient text messages and ring back tones and PDAs. I then proceeded to choose

the most basic model I could find - which still comes with a camera, mind you.

Marvin failed to sell us any extra bells and whistles, though he did convince me that I needed a phone cover *and* insurance. (I should have realized that if I'm paying for insurance to replace my phone in case I drop and break it, why do I really need to pay for the leather case to protect me from dropping and breaking it? And vice versa. I'll give Marvin a point for that sell.)

The next few days of new cell phone bliss were spent punching in the phone numbers of everyone I know, figuring out what all the little icons mean,

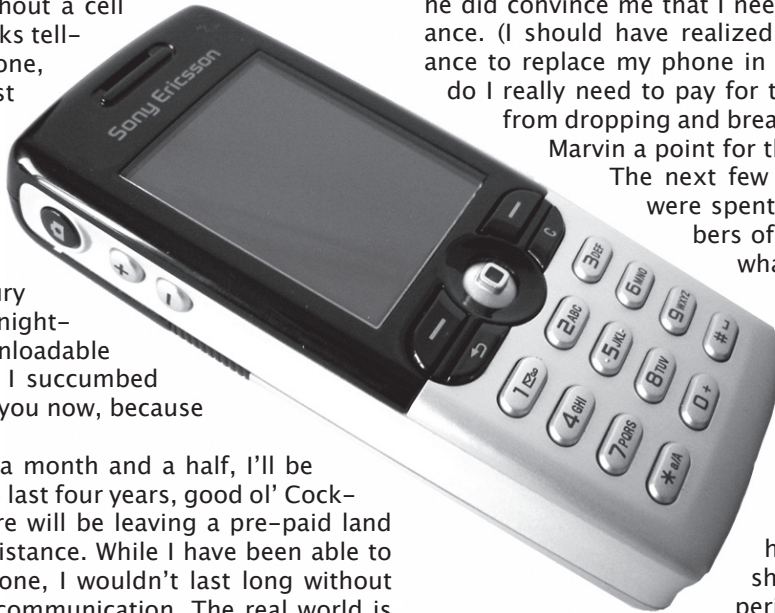
choosing my screen wallpaper, using unlimited minutes to say good morning, good afternoon, and good night to my boyfriend, and practicing flipping the phone open and closed with one hand. My only complaint so far is that it's really hard to hold a cell phone between your shoulder and your ear. If any experienced cell phone veteran has

any tips on that, I'd like to hear them.

In the end, I still enjoy walking between classes without talking on the phone. I will always think text messages are stupid. My phone will probably go off in class someday because I'll forget that I own it.

But, now that I have one, how could I ever go back?

Kasi DeLaPorte is a senior advertising and journalism major.




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