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Hilltopics Staff

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HILLTOPICS

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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.

With school on Presidents Day, we lost a lot more than a day off

by Christa Beal

As some of you may be aware, last Monday was an important day for our country. No, we didn't announce the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Nor did Vice President Cheney resign due to overwhelming public disapproval. Last Monday was Presidents Day. Most of you reading this probably weren't even aware of this fact unless you happened to go shopping at the Presidents Day Sales.

Officially named Washington's Birthday, most institutions refer to the third Monday in February as Presidents Day to include former president Abraham Lincoln—also born in February—in the honors. If you think back to the days of elementary school, you probably remember enjoying three Mondays off during the winter: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Washington's Birthday, and Lincoln's Birthday. By the late 1990s, most institutions had condensed the two former presidents' birthdays into Presidents Day. With the beginning of our college education, this day (along with Veterans Day) faded into memory.

Why have we felt the need to sacrifice these federal holidays for a couple days of our summer or winter vacations? While federal offices, banks, and many corporations were closed for the day, SMU students were trudging to class on another long Monday. Now, I don't claim that I would have spent my day off contemplating the legacy of our former presidents, but that doesn't quash

the importance of the holiday.

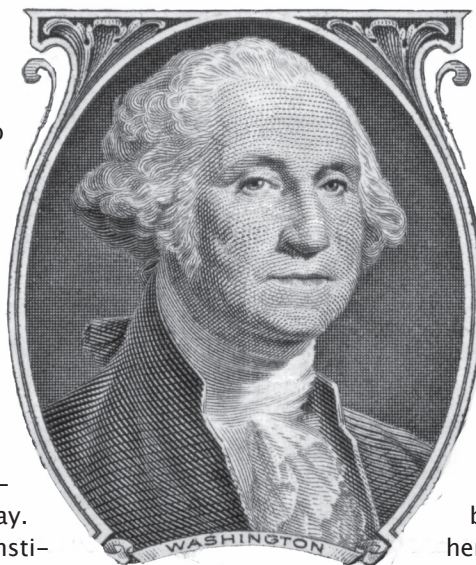
By observing Presidents Day, an institution allows people to take a step back, and, even if just for a moment, remember those who worked ceaselessly to develop the great nation we enjoy today. George Washington was not only "The Father of Our Country," but a brave general who established the original Purple Heart in 1782. In fact, the Purple Heart

bears his likeness in gold and the words "For Military Merit" are engraved on the back.

George Washington believed in honoring those who have done great things for our country, and every injured serviceman who has been a recipient of the Purple Heart treasures this badge of recognition. Presidents Day is not just about honoring past national heroes, but recognizing today's heroes as well.

In the midst of a devastating war, we need to take every chance we can to honor our veterans and those serving active duty. Maybe we didn't get last Monday off and maybe you will shrug this article off as the ranting of a lazy student who wants to sleep in. Hopefully, though, you will take a moment to remember those who have sacrificed their time or their lives to fight for our country. For or against the Iraq War, we must stand by our soldiers and not overlook this chance to recognize their contribution.

Christa Beal is a junior political science and advertising major.



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 7:00 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.

Boycott the *Daily Campus*: one reader voices her disappointment and encourages action

by Katy Rowe

While I'm partial to doing sudoku in class, Friday's issue of the *Daily Campus* really was the straw that broke the camel's back. This semester the *DC* has been filled with inaccuracies, a lack of information, personal attacks, and a complete lack of journalistic integrity and ethics. Especially in the last three weeks, the *DC* has relied on rumors to print negative pieces about the Student Senate and Senators. The Environment Committee and Bush Library articles were written with information mainly from Speaker's Podium—the first ten or twenty minutes of the Senate meeting—and a biased alumnus

and former chair of the environment committee, from whom they printed not one, but two editorial pieces on the issue within the same week, without printing a single piece from Student Senate in response until the following week. Their "news" articles on these issues included negative statements about Senators Ben Hatch, Reed Hanson, and John Jose in particular—one of whom is a current columnist for the paper and another a former columnist. Ed board has commented that Senate hasn't done anything all year—but how would they know when they haven't attended Senate meetings all year? The *DC* will pop down for a few minutes if there's something "controversial" going on, but that's about it. On Friday, Ed board wrote about legislation that will be voted on in the student elections. They decided how they would write before they called any Senators to ask what the legislation was. They did not ask for a copy of the legislation. They probably didn't ask for copies of legislation on the Environment Committee or Bush Library issues, either. Also on Friday, the *DC* ran a piece by Austin Rucker where he quotes John Jose, from a Senate meeting that Rucker did not attend, and where neither Jose nor any one else said what Rucker quoted.

Editor-in-Chief Mark Norris wrote a note in the *DC* a couple of weeks ago about a business school email that changed things around and blamed the *DC* for mischaracterizing

something in an article. In this note Norris said, "We work very hard to make sure what you read is factual and trustworthy." From what I have seen and read in the paper the past few weeks, this is not the case. On top of their lack of information and their personal attacks on Senators, other editorial pieces have been printed that are mostly personal attacks on the author of the piece they're responding to. I refer you to the response to Matt Haley's article on the Bush Library, as well as many other responses to other people's opinion pieces on this same topic. Look at the piece about wanting non-seniors

to stay out of the Homebar.

The *Daily Campus* is in serious decline. I tried addressing these issues with them two weeks ago, but they have not printed my letter

to the editor, despite printing many other pieces about things that happened well after I wrote and sent in my letter. This is not about me complaining that they wouldn't print my letter in a timely fashion, but about their lack of ethics and printing of false quotes and writing articles without all the facts—or even most of the facts. With the incredible lack of research in their articles, they are doing nothing but spreading misinformation to the student body. They have refused to run articles on things that matter to students such as the new Human Rights Program, but there's always room for more Associate Press stories. I suggest that students boycott the *Daily Campus* until the paper gains some ethics and integrity in reporting. Stop sending in opinion pieces. Make them go back to finding editorials from other papers to print—at least those papers actually do research on their topics. Don't vote in their polls. Don't give interviews or quotes for them—they'll just misquote you anyway. I also hope that Senate and student body officer candidates don't give interviews to the *DC*. The paper's record on Senate has been less than favorable and accurate.

Katy Rowe is a senior English and anthropology major



Do you have an opinion about... politics, music, class, television, football, shopping, intramurals, fraternities, movies, tests, the Mavs, sex, restaurants, religion, sororities, driving, study abroad, Umphrey Lee, fashion, news, the war, parking, technology, magazines, bars, baseball, the weather, professors, the Mustang Band, dating, books, nightclubs, Texas, the Daily Campus, pets, club sports, or anything else ?

we're listening at hilltopics@hotmail.com

Are Gov. Perry's surprising health care policies transforming Texas politics?

by Carter Twitty

Governor Rick Perry's has polarized his base, confused his opponents, and earned national attention for his recent executive order making it mandatory for all Texas schoolgirls to receive the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine. He has elicited similar reactions from all these parties after proposing to sell the Texas state lottery to finance cancer research, public education, and health insurance for low-income adults. Much has already been said about how surprising these moves are from the staunchly conservative Governor. These policy shifts have certainly enraged many members of his constituency, and the HPV vaccine order has garnered its own special enmity from both sides of the Texas state House and Senate for usurping legislative oversight. Others have voiced their concerns that these uncharacteristic policy initiatives could be overshadowing the corporate interests that may have influenced many of these recent decisions.

These concerns are valid. No matter what your moral position is on the requirement for sixth-grade girls to receive the HPV vaccine, it is a fact that Governor Perry is attempting to bypass the state's legislative process. The increasing medical aid to the uninsured and providing more money to cancer research would come at the cost of public school funding that would have to be made up somewhere else. No one is sure exactly how much revenue will be made from the investment of the proposed \$1 billion gained from the sale of the state lottery.

Whatever you believe, it is hard to ignore the apparent strength of the Governor's policy shifts. I couch that last statement with "apparent" because it is too early to tell exactly how successful these initiatives will be. Bills have already been filed in both the House and Senate which attempt to preempt the Governor's executive order and who knows how far the Legislature will go in attempting to realize the goals set in his State of the State Address. However, at this time, Governor Perry is strongly holding to these goals and the quality of his convictions is undeniable. He is not waffling on the issues. He is not pandering to his own party base. And he is not simply going through the motions in his final term as Governor. He is trying to look at the big picture for Texas and, right or wrong, he is trying to take real action to improve the lives of Texas citizens.

One could argue persuasively that his actions are ineffectual and simply diverting funds from other projects equally as worthy, if not more so, than those he is focusing on now. Facts are there to support that stance. The governor's projection of \$1.26 billion in revenue from the sale of the lottery is an estimate of nine percent return on any investments made with that money. There is no way to know exactly how much revenue will be generated by these investments. And anything falling below these projections will force the government to find the money elsewhere. This could have serious consequences for public education, cancer research, and health coverage for the working poor; the three groups for which trusts are to be established by the sale of the lottery.

Governor Perry's executive order for the HPV vaccine is also coming under attack from many inside his political base due to concerns that it promotes promiscuity. This argument will likely never be resolved as people on both sides of it are as diametrically opposed to one another's point of view as on any issue. However it is fascinating to see how a historically strict conservative governor can so emphatically go against the grain of his own party because he feels it is in the best interest of his state. Executive power, as we have seen recently on the national level, can be a very dangerous thing if exercised unchecked. However, it is hard to deny the virtue of its expediency if used to improve the lives of the citizens over which it governs.

Carter Twitty is a senior English major.



Mon. 2/26	Tue 2/27	Wed 2/28	Thu 3/1	Fri 3/2
DEP: "Picture This" Exhibition M c E l v a n e y lobby @ 11 am-1-pm	Food Chain on Black History Month Women's Center @12-1		Women's Symposium @ 11am-6pm	SPARC Awareness project Hughes-Trigg West Bridge @ 11am- 1pm
Black History Month PC Quiz Bowl Hughes-Trigg Forum @6-7 pm	Vincente Fox Tate Lecture Searies Student Forum: 4:30 pm Lecture: 7:00 pm	Food For Thought Service House @ 5:15	Women's Symposium	Human Rights Speech with Dr. Halperin Hughes-Trigg Theater @ 5:30 pm
DEP: "Picture This" Facilitation M c E l v a n e y Lounge 8-9 pm	For more info on the Tate Lecture, visit http://smu.edu/tateseries		Darfuf Film Service House @ 7:30 pm	

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"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." -Mahatma Gandhi

Enough is enough: when did celebrity gossip become news and how soon can we make it stop?

by Yasmin Awad

While watching TV one afternoon, a scrolling information bar appeared on the screen. I got anxious— could it be a tornado watch? Freezing temperatures tonight? Maybe it was an amber alert.

But no. It was a far, far more pressing issue.

Britney Spears shaved her head.

This was so incredibly imperative, in fact, that it dominated the news from Fox to CNN, just as Anna Nicole Smith's honorable demise and Lindsay Lohan's drug problems do. While questions about Britney's buzz buzzed around the US and much of the world— the main question that I kept wondering was— who cares?

Personally, I have enough boredom and normalcy in my own life — I don't need to read about a star's.

It's pathetically disgusting how the news of celebrity break-ups have become more news-worthy than civil wars and unjust killing in third world countries. Apparently, Smith's death was a tragedy, but the death of hundreds of people (civilians in Iraq, South-Asians in an earthquake, etc) is a statistic. The news should update us on politics, judicial rulings, and news surrounding the war on terror. But because of ratings and the public demand for soft news, we are instead being graced with a hefty dose of updates on where Johnny Depp was last seen grocery shopping or Jessica Simpson's new Louis Vuitton.

And it's not just that we love hearing the juicy details— we really care about what happens to our favorite and not-so-favorite celebrities and their love lives. From their first meetings to their starry-eyed proposals and six-figure weddings, followed inevitably by their fiery divorces, we can't get enough.

And the media knows what it's doing. As Hollywood says, the only bad news is no news. It's funny how actors get engaged or adopt a new African child right before the opening of their new movie. It's the typically pathetic Hollywood ploy to cry wolf and everyone comes running—and they do.

This rise in soft news is threatening democracy itself. Tabloids diminish the public's information on public affairs and interest in politics. Instead of worrying about Clinton's policies, the world was more interested in his sex life. The issues that truly affect the people are not emphasized.

I'll admit that my interests are peaked with just one glance at the supermarket checkout rack. It's entertaining to read about the drama surrounding Paris Hilton or who most recently checked into rehab. But that is what it's supposed to be. Infotainment. Why is it creeping up on headline news and on the front page of newspapers?

Let's get back to real news and real reporting. Only when important life-changing events replace the mundane news of celebrities in our media will society care about the important things.

Yasmin Awad is a junior journalism and biology major



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A letter to the editors: *Hilltopics* feedback

Dear Hilltopics Staff—

On behalf of one of your regular readers and someone who does care about the activity of our Student Senate here on campus, I wanted to thank you for all of the helpful information you put out about the candidates in this week's edition of Hilltopics. Although to me it is yet another sign of Student Senate's current lack of ability to reach out and inform the student body that they didn't put out any information about the candidates on their own, I'm glad that someone did it, because it was greatly helpful to me in making my decisions on who I want to represent me in our student government. Thanks for all of the work that I know goes into the publication every week; please know that it's very worthwhile to at least one student here at SMU.

God Bless.
Katy Dunn