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HILLTOPICS

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June Jones' Hiring is a Mistake: Here's Why

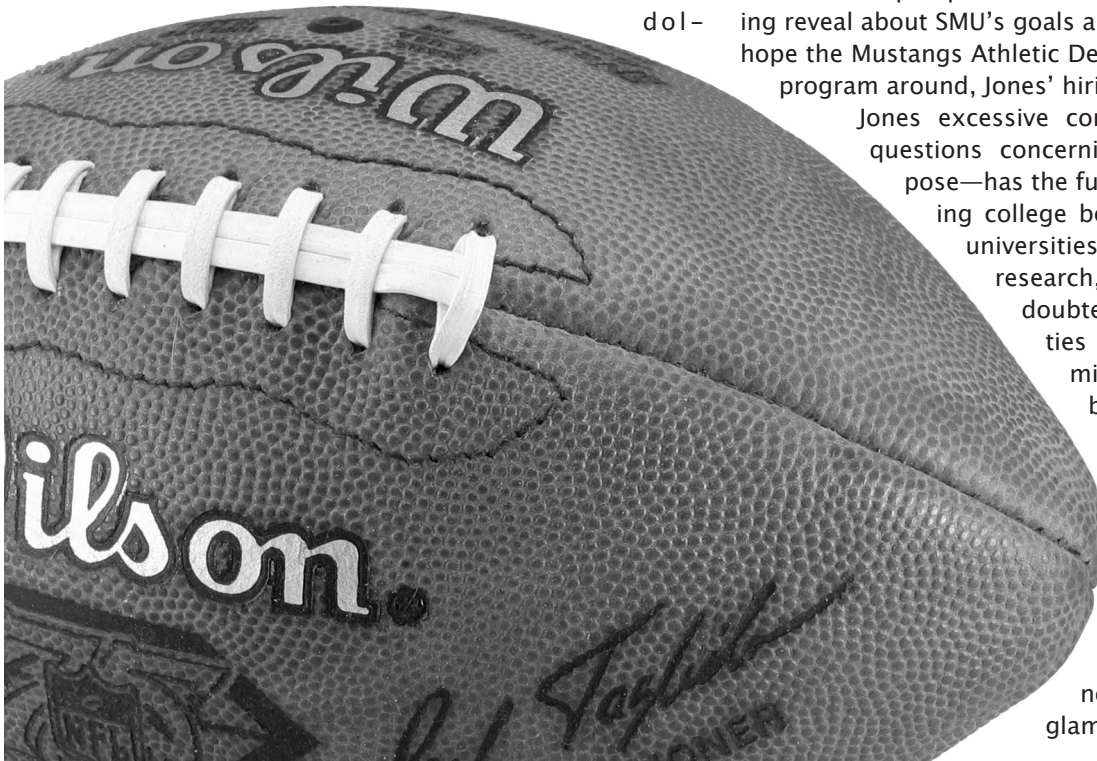
With the announcement of June Jones as SMU's next head football coach, the vacancy left by Phil Bennett almost three months ago has finally been filled, much to the excitement of Mustang fans everywhere. However, hiring the only Division IA head coach to go undefeated during the 2007 regular season comes at a high price for the university. With a five-year deal worth almost \$2 million a year, June Jones will receive almost \$10 million dol-

lars in base compensation over the life of his contract.

As a fan of college football, I can't lie: Jones' arrival on the Hilltop is very exciting. He seems to be, on all accounts, an excellent fit for SMU. But when I consider the superfluous affect athletics spending has on the quality of my education, Jones' hiring is yet another example of a horribly skewed system of priorities. What message does his \$2 million contract send to prospective students? What truth does his hiring reveal about SMU's goals as an institution? As much as I hope the Mustangs Athletic Department can turn its football program around, Jones' hiring is not good for SMU.

Jones excessive contract raises some sobering questions concerning SMU's institutional purpose—has the fundamental reason for attending college been forgotten? Colleges and universities are institutions for learning, research, and intellectual growth. Undoubtedly, extracurricular activities have their place within that mission, but their roles should be supplemental. Would anyone contend that football is central to SMU's academic mission? By hiring Jones to such an expensive contract, SMU has publicly announced its commitment to winning at football, but it has also simultaneously announced something much less glamorous: that \$2 million a year

continued on page 4



INSIDE this issue

Big Brother is watching: Beth Anderson weighs in on traffic cameras and their place in the community, page 2

SMU: Hilltopic's Todd Baty sits down with SMU's Professor Kobylka, to discuss issues facing, and hopes for, SMU, page 3.

Superbowl Madness: Will people tune in, turn on, and tune out during half time, Josh Wood discusses on page 6.

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@gmail.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.

Traffic Cameras: Lifesaver or Big Brother?

Once when I was in high school, a friend's dad received a ticket in the mail along with a picture of him running a red light. He had been caught and photographed by a traffic camera. He replied by mailing a picture of fifty dollars to the City of Houston. The City sent a picture of handcuffs back to him.

We've all seen these cameras, suspended ominously over Lovers and 75, and Mockingbird and Greenville. I know plenty of people who have been caught by them, and I've heard a variety of opinions on the subject. There is a substantial amount of public support for these cameras.

Many people see them as reasonable, effective tools for preventing car crashes and saving lives. Some are more skeptical.

Multiple studies suggest that the cameras do, in fact, improve traffic safety. Other studies show that intersections equipped with red light cameras often experience a dramatic increase in the number of rear-end collisions in concurrence with the decrease in the amount of red lights run. This happens because drivers who could safely and legally go through a yellow light will stop too soon in fear of getting a ticket.

The cameras are supposed to be there to protect us, but we cannot ignore the fact that they generate millions of dollars in revenue for the companies that build them



and for the government, as well. A study by the University of Central Florida found that by simply marking the intersections better, cities could reduce the number of red lights run by 74%. This also eliminates the detrimental side effect of rear-end collisions. If safety really is the issue, why aren't cities doing this?

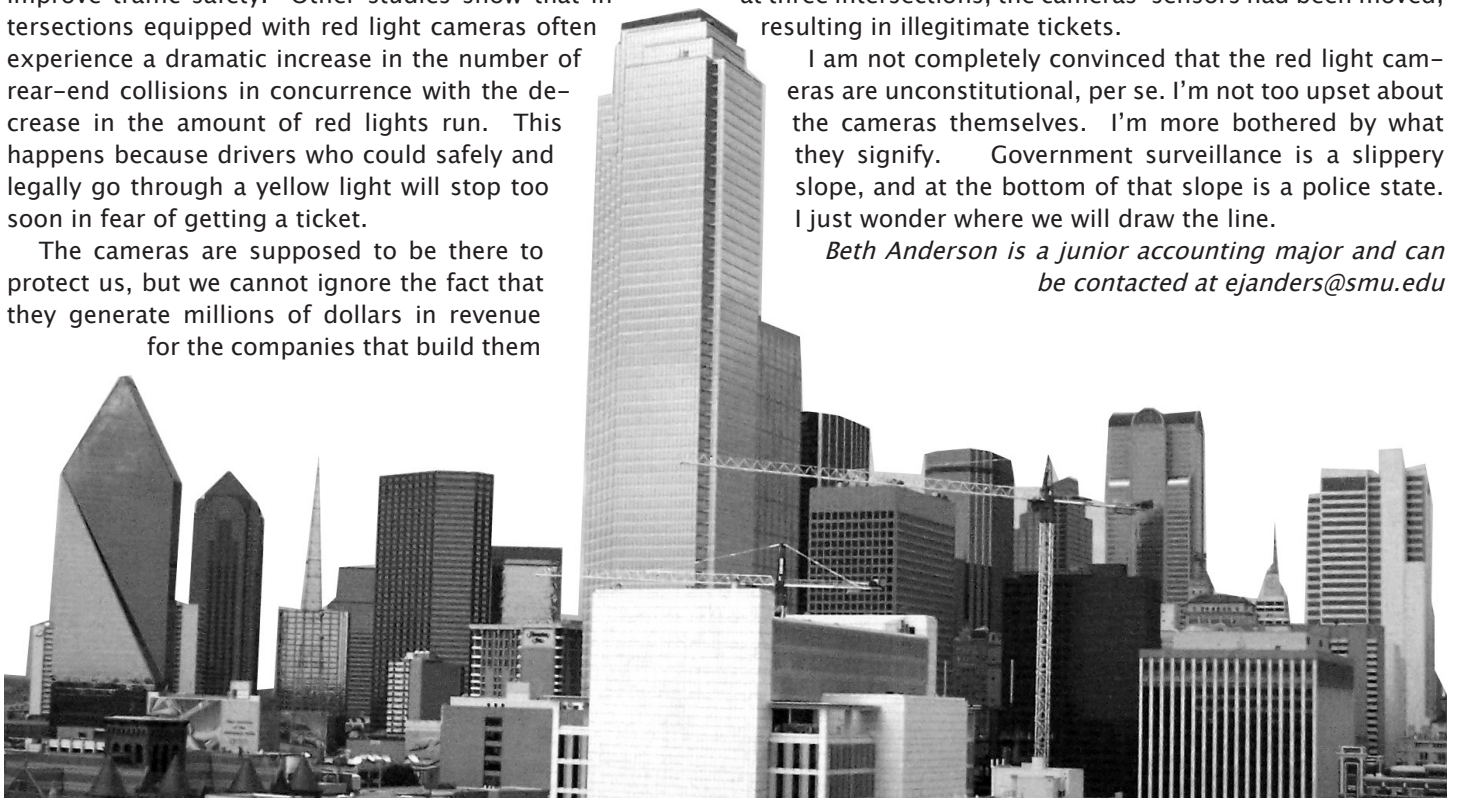
Some argue that the cameras violate due process of law and therefore are unconstitutional. According to the 6th Amendment, a person has the right to confront the witness against him. A class action lawsuit against the District of Columbia states

that the "process [is] impermissibly partial towards a verdict against automobile owners."

You could argue that the cameras are infallible, but you would be wrong. An investigation in San Diego revealed that at three intersections, the cameras' sensors had been moved, resulting in illegitimate tickets.

I am not completely convinced that the red light cameras are unconstitutional, per se. I'm not too upset about the cameras themselves. I'm more bothered by what they signify. Government surveillance is a slippery slope, and at the bottom of that slope is a police state. I just wonder where we will draw the line.

Beth Anderson is a junior accounting major and can be contacted at ejanders@smu.edu



Professor Kobyłka sits down with *Hilltopics* and responds to Six questions

by Todd Baty

This academic year, Hilltopics will be sitting down with various members of the SMU community in hopes of initiating a very open and frank conversation on our university and its future. This week, I spoke with Joe Kobyłka, Associate Professor of Political Science.

How long have you been a professor at SMU and how did you come to teach here? How has the university changed during that time?

I came here in the fall of 1983 so I've been here more than 24 years now. Long enough to have fathered children and had one child graduate from SMU. When I came I was 26 years old and I wasn't appreciably older than a number of the students I was teaching, especially in senior level classes. Obviously, I've gotten over that. Now I am older than some of their parents. When I was on the job market, I wanted to find a place that would allow me to do two things: teach and research. This desire grew directly out of my higher educational experience. I went to a small liberal arts college in southern Wisconsin called Beloit College, I wasn't lost when I went there, but I really believe that I found myself when I went there. I was awakened to things that previously I was completely unaware of, not only things that I had never studied before, but different ways of approaching things about which I thought I knew a great deal, and taking seriously interpretations that I'd never entertained [before]. Having experienced this for myself, I thought: 'what a great thing to do with people before their positions solidify and rigidify—what a great avocation.' I previously thought I would go to law school, but my undergraduate experience led me to study and teach the law from a political perspective. So I went off to graduate school at the University of Minnesota to pursue that goal. One of the things I discovered in graduate school was the joy of serious research. I had done undergraduate research, written a distinction thesis and things like that, but I had never really learned about bodies of literature. In graduate school, that is the first thing you do: you learn about what others have written about things that interest you. As you learn the literature, you begin to assimilate



yourself into it by asking questions previously not asked or not asked in the most interesting ways. In short, you become part of a conversation that began before your birth and will continue long after you shrug the mortal coil. So when I was on the job market I looked for a place where I could

teach seriously as well as do serious research. I wanted to combine, in a sense, what I had experienced at Beloit and Minnesota. I interviewed at a variety of colleges and universities, and SMU struck me as the kind of place where I could do both, so I came here. There are a number of things about SMU that bother me, but I can honestly say that coming here is one decision I have never regretted. How has SMU changed?—in a

wide variety of ways. Most to the good, some to the bad, and we live in the intersection of those two poles. Students, I think, are much better, not just in terms of SAT scores and high school success, but in terms of capacity to do college level work. I think we have also diversified the student body, though we have a way to go before we achieve a true reflection of the society and world in which we live. As a result, classes are richer; students bring different perspectives to them, and it is more fun to teach here than when I first arrived.

How was the General Education Curriculum different when you came?

I came just after the CORE was put into place, then the CORE was replaced with the GEC [more or less the structure we have today]. I had never been part of the planning process for [this]. One of the things I think our students lack, and this is largely our fault and not necessarily theirs, is a truly common experience. They all take Rhetoric, but really those two classes are the only coursework that is common. They have to take distribution courses, but those can be taken across the broad curriculum and they often times serve as a way for departments to fill their undergraduate courses. But in terms of truly common experiences—experiences in which you would get Cox, Meadows, Dedman, and engineer—

continued on page 5

“June Jones” continued from page 1

will not be spent bettering the education of its students or realizing its core mission, but on an extracurricular activity—a luxury, an appendix to the central experience.

This disappointing discrepancy between Jones’ hiring and SMU’s academic mission is exacerbated even further when one begins to understand how expensive his contract is, an issue that is communicated best through numbers. First and foremost, Jones’ \$2 million a year contract unquestionably makes him the highest paid employee at SMU. According to statistics published in the Chronicle for Higher Education,

Jones makes more money a year than our president and provost combined (the top two academic salary earners). Moreover, according to SMU’s Office of Institutional Research the average salary for tenured or tenure-track faculty members at SMU is \$86,102, or 4.3% of Jones’ expected annual compensation. Even more astounding is the fact that June Jones is now the highest paid football coach in Conference USA. In



fact, according to information released in a USA Today article, Jones’ lucrative contract is one of the highest in the NCAA, putting him in the same pay bracket as former Michigan coach Lloyd Carr, LSU’s Les Miles, and Florida’s Urban Myer. SMU certainly “Pony-upped” the money to get June Jones here, but is it willing to do the same to attract the best teachers, students, and administrators? The numbers suggest otherwise.

However, one might argue that though substantial, \$2 million is grossly outweighed by the amount of money SMU spends on its educational programs each year. But here is a short list of ways an extra \$2 million a year could be spent by SMU (all data from smu.edu/ir):

- 60 students could attend SMU tuition and fees free next year (2008–2009)
- \$3,159.55 could be added to the annual salaries of all 633 full-time instructional faculty members
- \$323.83 could be subtracted from the annual tuition payments of all 6,176 undergraduate students at SMU (2008–2009)

This, of course, doesn’t even touch the facilities improvements that could be made to older buildings, such as Fonden Library Center, Owen Fine Arts Center, or Dallas Hall. Nor does the list mention the faculty grants, undergraduate research programs, or scholarship funds that could be

started with that money. Sure, \$2 million a year is not a significant piece of the pie when one compares it to SMU’s annual consolidated budget of \$412 million, but that does not diminish its purchasing power.

Another common argument in support of the \$10 million, five-year contract is that an investment in June Jones is an investment in the multimillion dollar industry of college sports. Merchandise, ticket-sales, and media contracts can be highly lucrative ventures for universities, but it requires winning teams that can consistently compete in the big national games. Similarly, proponents of large athletics bud-

gets argue that an investment in football is an investment in alumni relations and by extension, alumni giving. Yet, it seems clear that the monster feeds itself; the money generated by athletics programs goes to furthering its own causes. Even when the athletic department is not turning a profit, it devours resources at an alarmingly increasing rate—what makes one think the profits from athletic revenues or alumni giving would

be used for academic initiatives? If SMU is willing to invest \$10 million dollars in a football program that has had one winning season and not a single bowl appearance in over twenty years, why should we expect that trend to change if SMU is ever able to manage a surplus?

Despite my disapproval of Jones’ excessive contract, I empathize with SMU’s situation. To be sure, everyone likes a winner and criticizes a loser; a consistently low-performing football program is a yearly embarrassment to a university and its members, especially when the humiliation plays-out (literally) on nationwide media outlets. But if SMU ever expects to achieve the academic stature it aspires to (see SMU’s Centennial Plan: http://smu.edu/leadership/plan_introduction.asp) or to advance its reputation in academia, it must have the courage to make difficult decisions to further its central goals. But Jones’ hiring is much more jarring than a mere display of cowardice on SMU’s part; it demonstrates that SMU’s core mission—education—is in jeopardy of being compromised by a plethora of competing interests. Jones’ hiring is an exciting moment for SMU Athletics, but it also represents a dark hour in the advancement of SMU’s academic experience.

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“Kobylka” continued from page 3

ing students together —we don’t have a lot of them. The GEC is something of a distributional system rather than a community or common experience. I don’t know what it was like before I got here, but now the GEC is often seen as a stumbling block in the way of getting majors and minors.

What do you think is SMU’s niche in academia and how does that relate to our goals as a university?

We have always had something of an inferiority complex. Ever since I’ve been here, the recurring mantra has been, ‘what is SMU?’ I think part of this is a function of being in the southwest and being away from traditional academic centers. Part of it is an evolution away from being a finishing school for Highland Park kids that didn’t go east for college. I think we went through that before I got here; I may have seen the tail end of it. Apparently, at one point in time, we had a vague sense of ourselves, but since I’ve been here we have been constantly searching for something to define us. That is my greatest concern for SMU. I am concerned that, in going through the process of figuring out what we are, we tend to focus on the atomized side of things and when we do that we tend to undermine the traditional liberal arts. Part of that, I think, is a response to societal forces—increasing professionalism, parents wanting to know what their kids can do with ‘x’ degree. Part of that is an institutional desire to be prominent on dimensions that increasingly define ‘status’ in American higher education. This leads to greater emphasis on professional schools and graduate programs. While they are not antithetical to undergraduate education, unless we are very careful they will detract from our emphasis on, and the importance we have traditionally accorded to, an education steeped in the liberal arts. These developments could exacerbate the difficulties of creating a more truly common undergraduate experience. When we recruit students, we often recruit to specific schools within SMU. It strikes me that one of the things we really need to think about, and Ron Moss [Dean of Admissions] is doing this, is recruiting students to SMU as a school. Doing so requires a clear vision what we think should distinguish an SMU student from other college students; the points of difference that make the experience of being a student here distinctive. The core of SMU’s being has traditionally been a certain kind of undergraduate education—relatively small classes, close relationships between faculty and students that extend the classroom beyond its physical confines. That is something that I fear we might lose if we focus obsessively on professional schools and the professionalization of American education. The great strength of the liberal arts, proven out over more than a thousand years, is that it educates the whole person and prepares the whole person to be free and live well. If one is prepared to live well, other things fall into place: one’s occupation, one’s family, one’s social life. I fear that our hold on that mission might

be somewhat tenuous.

Do you think SMU is capable of returning its focus to undergraduate education? What steps should SMU take in order to achieve this?

We are certainly capable of doing so and I think that is something we could do to make us distinct from other private universities of our size—to self-consciously put a strong liberal arts education at the core of what we do with our students. How do you do that? You work along two dimensions: student and faculty culture. I said earlier that students have gotten better, and they have gotten better in terms of their SAT scores, high school success, etc. What we need to do, and we began working on this with the First-Year Experience Task Force, is to take good high school students and—with intent, design, and real resources—make them college students in their first year here. You don’t enter college as a college student, you enter college as high school student. One of our challenges, especially in light of the routinization of education in elementary and secondary schools in America, is to better teach students the joy of learning in an institution of higher education. It is not simply a check list: ‘I’ve done this GEC credit, this GEC credit, and this GEC credit.’ Nor is it class attendance that ceases once that day’s class is over. Viewed in that way, education is simply a task that gets in the way of what students would rather do: to be free to be whomever they want to be. College should be about self-discovery, but at its best it is a guided self-discovery. It strikes me that we want to teach students to realize that they are more than social entities for whom classes are required speed-bumps on the collegiate road—that they can take what they learn in classes and carry it into their daily lives. I don’t think that we currently do that as well as we could, and I’m sure that we don’t do it as well as we should. Making academic work more central to the lives of students would likely also retard some of excesses of alcohol and drugs that plague the campus, as students wouldn’t have as much time to destructively self-pleasure. We need to intentionally create college students; we need to alter and broaden their perception of fun. There is a great line in Dr. Seuss’ *The Cat in the Hat*: ‘It’s fun to have fun, but you have to know how.’ One of the things that a strong undergraduate education should do is teach students that there are many types of ‘fun’ out there and the most enduring is an ongoing intellectual maturation that will sustain a person throughout life. This sort of fun is that which can only be had by an educated mind. It touches the sublime.

The other necessary change is in faculty culture. Actually, this is not so much a change as an evolution that would return faculty to greater contact with students—not just in the classroom, not just in office hours, but in the general formative development of the student. I think students mirror faculty to some extent, and the more interaction the better. When I think about my college experience, I think

continued on page 7

Can the Super Bowl halftime show keep viewers out of the kitchen?

by Josh Wood

On February 3th, when the New England Patriots and New York Giants take the field in Glendale, Arizona, there are two things I am not looking forward to seeing: the absence of the Dallas Cowboys, and the Bridgestone Halftime Show. This year's lineup includes such talented and hard hitting acts as Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, Kylie Minogue, Paula Abdul, and Soulja Boy. Are you excited? I certainly am not.

If you are unfamiliar with these artists, I don't blame you. Let me give you a little information on these stellar musical acts, as well as why they don't deserve to be on stage for the most watched sporting event in America. Kylie Minogue has been in the music scene for twenty years, but you wouldn't know it. She did have that smash single "Locomotion" (you know how it goes...) back in 1987, when I was less than a year old. After the steam ran out of "Locomotion", Minogue continued her career elsewhere, becoming a critical and commercial success in Australia and Europe (where footballs are round). She briefly appeared in American memories back in 2001 with "Can't Get You Out of My Head", then submerged into obscurity once more. Does two hits in 20 years get you excited?

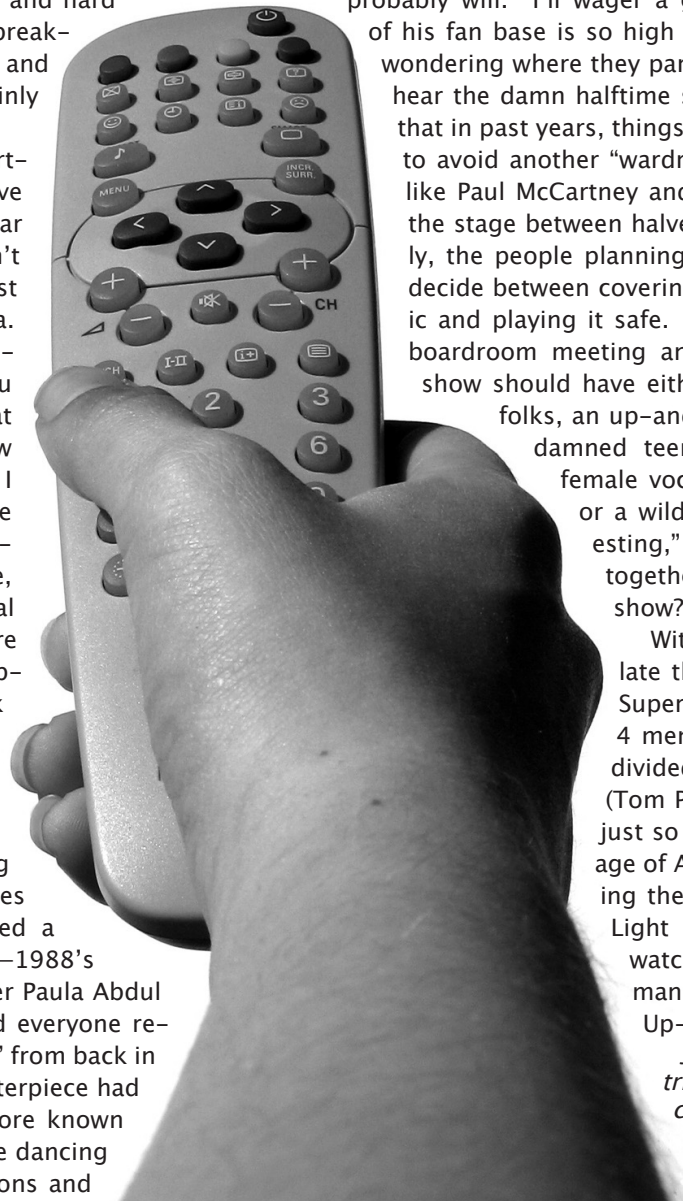
Paula Abdul, before becoming world renowned for her judging duties on "American Idol", actually released a song most people might remember—1988's "Straight Up". Can you name another Paula Abdul chart buster? I didn't think so. And everyone remembers Soulja Boy's hit "Crank Dat" from back in May of last year. While this rap masterpiece had a catchy steel drum beat, it was more known for the countless Tweens on Youtube dancing to lyrics that translate to sex positions and

ejaculating on women. And I thought Janet Jackson's nipple was taboo.

And who could forget the headliner, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers? Want the honest answer? Tom Petty's fans probably will. I'll wager a guess that the average age of his fan base is so high that they're either too busy wondering where they parked their car, or too deaf to hear the damn halftime show anyway. I understand that in past years, things have been toned down a bit to avoid another "wardrobe malfunction", with acts like Paul McCartney and The Rolling Stones hitting the stage between halves of football. Unfortunately, the people planning the shows nowadays can't decide between covering the audience demographic and playing it safe. They probably sat in some boardroom meeting and, after declaring that the show should have either "classic rock for the old folks, an up-and-coming rap star for those damned teenagers, some middle-aged female vocalist to mollify the women, or a wild card to keep things interesting," decided to just mash it all together. How about just a good show? Is this not a priority?

With all that said, let's calculate the star power of this year's Super Bowl Halftime show lineup. 4 memorable hits times 20 years divided among 3 artists plus 57 (Tom Petty's age) equals 84. That just so happens to be the percentage of Americans who will be washing their Chex Mix down with Bud Light in the kitchen instead of watching the enthralling performance of "Crank-Dat-Straight-Up-Free-Falling-Locomotion".

Josh Wood is a junior electrical engineering major and can be contacted at jlwood@smu.edu



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@gmail.com

“Kobylka” continued from page 5

about my friends, to be sure, but the greatest marks left on me were placed there by my professors. I think we need to challenge our students more; we need to require more writing; we need to require more reflection. We have better students than we have ever had before, and we need to ratchet up our expectations of them. We must expect, and demonstrate, that they are ready to be engaged every time they walk into class; that learning is an active relationship. When students are passive – and when we allow them to get away with lax preparation – we coddle them and impede learning. Real learning is an active relationship that requires hard work and preparation. It’s not a professor’s job to make students learn. It’s the student’s job to actively work with the professor to engage the material at hand. We need to encourage students to break out of their high school boxes and frame themselves on their own. We need to show them how to discover the things that excited and motivated us to devote our lives to study and teaching. We need to help them develop passions that transcend the immediate and orchestrate a meaningful life. People are going to change jobs repeatedly throughout the course of their professional lives. Training them in a vocational sense for what we know is there today does not well suit them to live another fifty, sixty, or seventy years. Teaching students to know themselves, their immediate context, their national community, and their global environment is really what liberal arts education has been and should continue [to be].

What is your assessment of the deaths of three students last year and what does that indicate about SMU’s academic culture?

I didn’t know any of the students, so I don’t know what led them to their tragic ends. I think the notion that classes are something you do as the price to pay to have a good time for four years in a wonderful social environment contributes to excesses. The more time students have to pursue immediate pleasures, be they dangerous or inconsequential, the less well a college is doing its job. If we expect more of our students academically, I think we’d get it. The students that I’ve had in the last ten year have been very, very bright and capable. One problem I have found is they are often very distracted. One of the mantras here as a first-year student is to ‘get involved,’ and it important to be involved—it helps you develop peer groups, it helps you understand people from different walks of life, leadership skills, etc. But those sorts of skills you can learn from institutions other than a university, so while getting socially involved is a good thing, it can’t be the primary thing. The most important thing in which students need to get ‘involved’ is their studies. Once you get involved in your studies, you will develop secondary involvements some of which will have a great deal to do with your studies and others which will have nothing to do with them. The point is they will never get in the way of your studies. Students need to limit their extra-circular involvement because the dike has many holes and the Dutch boy only has ten fingers. Get involved in the things that

seem to have value to you and support either directly or indirectly your academic experience—that’s what colleges are, academic experiences; otherwise, they become clubs, and I doubt many parents would pay whatever our costs are to send their kid to a club. Making academic life, and this starts in the classroom, the central focus of a student would be a huge step in developing a community in which excess is less noticeable and less pronounced.

What is the most influential book you have ever read and why?

If I was running for office, I would say the *Bible*. I don’t know if there is one book; in fact, I know there is no one book that brought me to some personal epiphany. There are many books I can point to as being important at different junctures in my life. When I was a kid I was a jock; I got through high school by being relatively bright, funny and clever. However, I read two books my junior year in high school—*A Separate Peace* and *Hiroshima*—that made me realize they were more than simply ‘homework assignments.’ They spoke to me. Those two stand out at that juncture of my life. In college, I read Plato’s *Republic*. I don’t know if it was the dialogic style or the fact that Plato’s approach was clearly not liberal, but *The Republic* made me think about political theory, society, and the ‘good’ in ways that I’d never imagined. This is going to sound cheesy considering what I do, but I also read extensively in the *Federalist Papers* as an undergraduate, and the link between them and my developing interest in law was huge. I have written extensively on them and obviously teach them, so [*The Federalist Papers*] remain with me. I recently read *Binge*, which I think should be required reading for anyone associated with higher education.

When my youngest son, Kevin, was about ten [years-old] he asked me: ‘Dad when you went to college did you know you wanted to become a professor?’—which is a perfectly reasonable thing for a ten year-old to ask. I said, ‘Kevin, when I went to college I didn’t know what the hell a college professor was.’ One of my periods of epiphany was the relationships I made with a handful of my professors as an undergraduate—the time they gave me outside of class for conversations, for critique, and for mature friendship. You can’t separate out the personal when you are talking about education. It exists in a context, and SMU has that context. Anyone can sit in a corner and read a book. Anyone can sit in a huge lecture hall, take notes, read texts, and pass classes. However, done correctly, the personal relationships you develop with your faculty and peers here will develop the bases for intelligent decisions and mature relationships beyond college. When you look back on your college years, you want to remember your friends and the ‘good times,’ but you also want to remember that point at which you became aware of who ‘I am.’ It’s a wonderful time in a person’s life, and I wish more students took greater advantage of it. You only get to do it once.

Hilltopics would like to specially thank Dr. Joe Kobylka for taking the time to share his thoughts with us.



SMU vs. UCF
Saturday, January 26, 2008
7:05 PM
Moody Coliseum



**Headline of
the week:**

“FDA: Cloned Milk And Meat Are OK
Consumer Activists, Though, Say It’s Not Kosher; FDA Seeks Comment ”

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/10/31/health/main581135.shtml>



Thumbs up:

- To June Jones as our new football coach
- To SMU women’s head basketball coach Rhonda Rompola established herself as the new leader for most career wins in SMU basketball
- To 47 Days until Spring Break



Thumbs down:

- To the trauma of Greek recruitment
- To Texas Tech’s academic accreditation being on probation... who’s looking at TCU?
- To it being 47 days until Spring Break.

Events of interest spotlight:

January 26—Democratic South Carolina Primary
 January 29—Florida Primary
 February 1–February 2—Republican Maine caucus
 February 5—Super Tuesday— 24 states will hold primaries or caucus

SMU Fact:

The average SAT score of the first-year undergraduate class has risen nearly 80 points in the last seven years.

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