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Hilltopics

University Honors Program

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## Hilltopics: Volume 4, Issue 8

Hilltopics Staff

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# HILLTOPICS

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volume four, issue eight  
week of february 4, 2008



## American Idol: Seven Seasons of Meanness

*Todd Baty*

For a nation that prides itself on hope, opportunity, and the fulfillment of dreams, Americans sure are mean sometimes. But I'm not just talking about that sorority girl who looked at you funny because you weren't wearing Gucci, or that haughty professor who talks to you like a kindergartner, or the Hilltopics author who just pejoratively stereotyped two very diverse people groups at SMU—these are instances of poor character that are probably present in any world society. The meanness that I refer to is one of the most popular television shows in history; it makes mean a multimillion dollar business. Any guesses?—yep, American Idol.

You are probably wondering what in God's green earth I am talking about. American Idol is just a silly reality TV show, how could it possibly be that bad? Hundreds of thousands of amateur singers have the opportunity to achieve their Hollywood dreams, that's a good thing, right? But often, in the midst of all the tears of happiness, the amusingly caustic mood swings of Simon, and the sometimes soul-lifting music, there are some very dark moments in an otherwise positive narrative—American Idol is outright mean to some of its contestants.

Take for example the auditions FOX editors choose to show you during the very first few episodes of the season. Of course, they spotlight contestants who have interesting background stories. Just last week I remember watching this one kid audition nervously in San Diego with had a paralyzed voice box (or something), but he overcame his physical and emotional obstacles to win a trip to Hollywood anyway—great story; good kid. But his story was sharply contrasted by the numerous failures FOX also chose to spotlight. One failure FOX was sure to exploit was a thirty-year old man who created two huge Chinese folding fans and used them as props during his audition. This man was obviously extremely fragile both in his disposition and emotional maturity. Before he had gotten two notes out, Simon was already telling him to shut-up and Randy was openly laughing. Of course, before, during, and after the video footage of his audition, FOX showed clips of an exclusive interview that even further dramatized how shy, quiet, and weird this man was.

But this wasn't the only example from the episode. FOX also chose to highlight a young man who had auditioned for American Idol over ten times and

**continued on page 4**

## INSIDE this issue

**Facebook:** One displeased student comments on all the new features on Facebook, page 2

**SMU:** Hilltopic's Todd Baty sits down with Mr. David Randolph, District Manager of Aramark, page 3.

**Bars:** Bars, bars everywhere, but not a place to drink? Jenny Simon reviews a not so conventional Dallas Bar 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](mailto: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.

## I New Notification: Facebook is in danger of being called "The Next Myspace"

by Josh Wood

I would like to take this opportunity to reminisce about the old Facebook and what made it so wonderful, as well as the unfortunate current trend this site is experiencing. In its early days, this social networking website was comprised of students only; a student email address was required to even register, and even then only email accounts tied to larger colleges in the U.S. would qualify. There was some prestige involved with having your own Facebook profile. Also, in these earlier days, personal profiles were simple. An individual's birthday, likes and dislikes, profile picture and wall were about the only things on the page. In 20 seconds you could scan someone's profile and learn everything interesting about them. Those were good times.

There are some changes that Facebook has implemented that are certainly for the better. The Facebook Marketplace, for example, is a wonderful application of a strong social network. Did the SMU bookstore offer you \$2.50 for that semes-

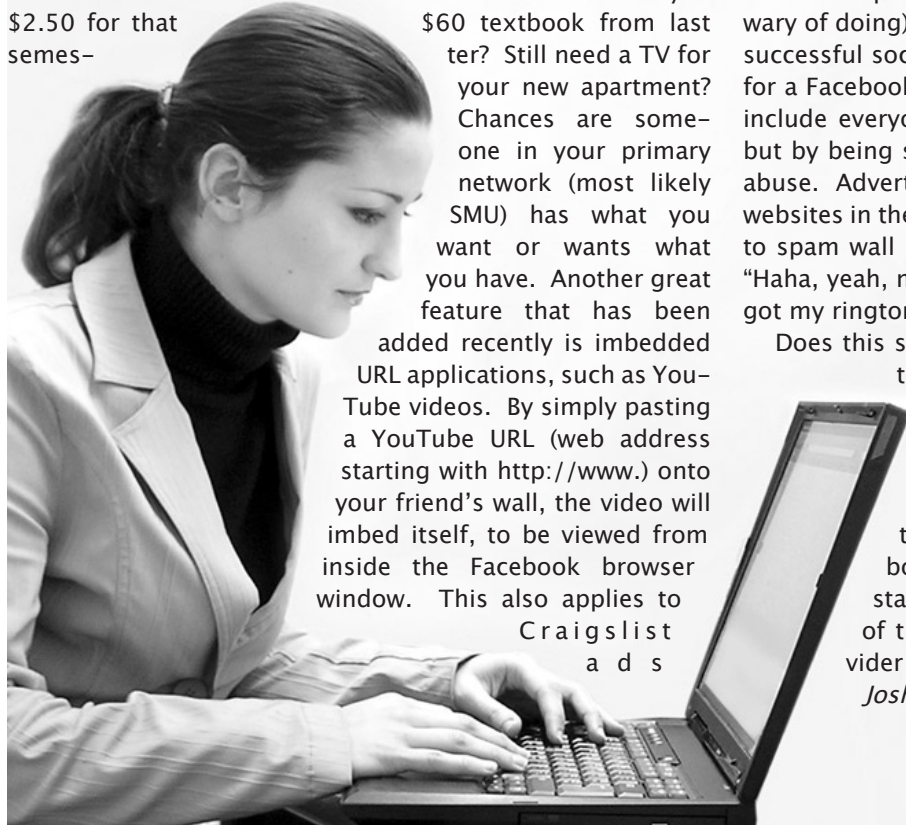
ter? Still need a TV for your new apartment? Chances are someone in your primary network (most likely SMU) has what you want or wants what you have. Another great feature that has been added recently is imbedded URL applications, such as YouTube videos. By simply pasting a YouTube URL (web address starting with http://www.) onto your friend's wall, the video will imbed itself, to be viewed from inside the Facebook browser window. This also applies to Craigslist ads

and other useful web pages. New features such as sleek imbedded applications and a user-friendly marketplace are welcome additions to Facebook.

Unfortunately, for every great innovation that Facebook has realized over the last year or so, there have been 10 bad applications introduced. The "Feed" annoys me to no end; do you think I care about what you posted on your third cousin's wall? Do I really need to see your attempt at a clever caption under the picture of that guy vomiting near a dumpster? No, and I don't care about someone's current status, which they happen to update every fifteen minutes or so. I have a problem with every other new application as well; one day, I got a notification that a friend had written on my "Advanced Wall", but I didn't even have one! The only way I would be able to view this content would be to sign up for the application, which basically signs away my rights to the information I have provided to Facebook (something I am extremely wary of doing). I also understand that people drive the most successful social networking sites, but now you can register for a Facebook account with any email address. It is nice to include everyone in the online sensation that is Facebook, but by being so inclusive, the system is (of course) open to abuse. Advertisers are now creating accounts to spam their websites in the marketplace. They are also creating accounts to spam wall posts, leaving completely fake messages like: "Haha, yeah, me too! Oh, and in case you were wondering, I got my ringtones at www...."

Does this sound familiar? It should, because this sort of thing has inundated the last reigning champion of social networking—Myspace. I check my Myspace inbox every month or so, and it is completely full of "Check out my sexy pics at" or "new ringtones, only \$1.99 at" or "Increase the size of your" message titles. Advertising bots that still roam the realms of Myspace are starting to infect Facebook, and it is only a matter of time before every porn site and ringtone provider makes their name known.

*Josh Wood is a junior electrical engineering major and can be contacted at [jlwood@smu.edu](mailto: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](mailto:hilltopics@gmail.com)**

## Aramark District Manager Talk about RFOC, the Potential for Alcohol on Campus, and more...

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 Mr. David Randolph, District Manager of Aramark Dining Services at SMU.*

### How did you come to work for Aramark as Director of Dining Services at SMU?

It is an interesting story, usually it is pretty straight forward—a job open[s] with Aramark, and we fly clients in, go through the whole process with SMU administration and then whoever is selected becomes the director. It could be an internal candidate that works here, like the Director of [Operations], but [not] in this case. To give you a really short version, I started with Aramark in 1995 on the East Coast: Furmen University, Duke University. The company asked me to move here in the summer of 2005 and open the University of Houston, which is [another] account of [Aramark's]. My responsibilities were University of Houston and SMU, the bigger accounts for us in this region. I had a resident district manager here and one in Houston, so I was kind of back and forth between Hobby and Love a lot. However, we started to have some issues here; it wasn't a good fit for the resident district manager here, so he moved on and then it worked out that I slowly let go of Houston. It really all came together because travel was beginning to become an issue for me, so by summer of 2006 I was here 100% of the time.

### How many campuses does Aramark serve in addition to SMU?

Aramark—we have several lines of business that we provide on campuses: we manage dining, we manage facilities, which includes plant management, stadium services, conference services... So to answer your question, we are on 600 college campuses in North America. For dining only, about 400 in the United State. We do 225 million meals annually.

### How long has Aramark been in the campus dining business?

Well, the history of Aramark started, in a short version, in the early 1900s. It started as the Automated Retailers of America (ARA) and it was basically a guy on horse-drawn carriage selling concession food going around from town to town. You know, it grew, to answer your question on col-

leges, in the 1960 [to include] campuses. Baylor and Longwood College are our longest clients and they argue over who was the first.

I believe it was during

the early '60s, though.

### How long has Aramark served at SMU?

Since 1995–1996.

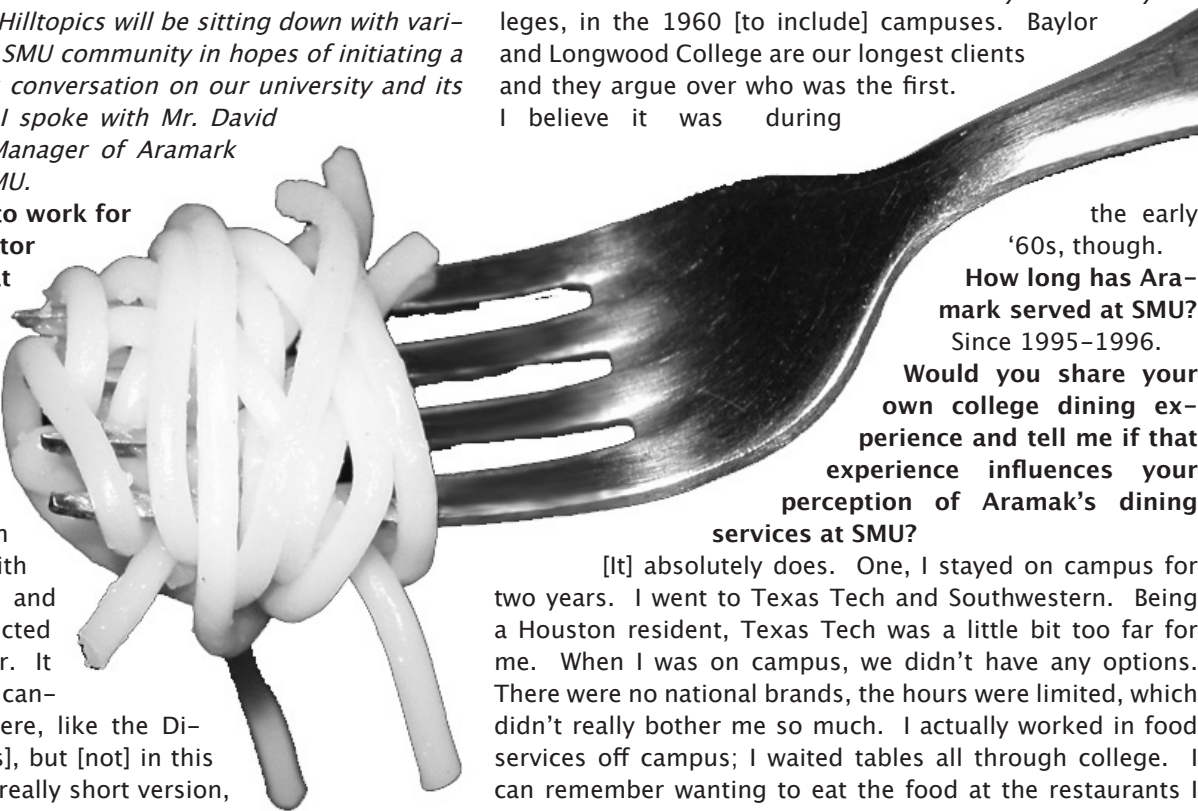
### Would you share your own college dining experience and tell me if that experience influences your perception of Aramark's dining services at SMU?

[It] absolutely does. One, I stayed on campus for two years. I went to Texas Tech and Southwestern. Being a Houston resident, Texas Tech was a little bit too far for me. When I was on campus, we didn't have any options. There were no national brands, the hours were limited, which didn't really bother me so much. I actually worked in food services off campus; I waited tables all through college. I can remember wanting to eat the food at the restaurants I worked at [more] than the food on campus. It was one line, you walk down and everyone got the same thing. It was the old-style cafeteria where you slide your tray and the lady—basically what you see in the movies. Bland [food]. I remember second [portions] were a problem. I remember not really feeling satisfied. I was kind of a big guy and I was running a lot. So yeah, does it impact me?—certainly. It was restrictive and I think in today's world, students feel it is restrictive too, and in some sense I think is too. It is part of the living experience as they go from Mom and Dad's home to here; it's a great stepping-stone, I think. You know it's frustrating to some students, but others embrace it and have a good time with it—I understand that. I was one of those: I was a very picky eater as well.

### Do you think that is the greatest challenge—to appease students' varied needs and tastes?

Well, the students on this campus are absolutely great—very positive and great to work with. Is it a challenge?—absolutely. The challenge is we have to elevate our services every year. What we are doing today has to be better next year at this time. If we were to sit down next year at this time, I need to be able to spit off at you, 'these are things that we've done.' Because if I'm not doing that, then I'm not keeping up with the next freshman class—that's life just in general. That's a challenge. How do we pace that? If we go too far, we have financial issues that come crashing down on us. If you don't go far enough, you get behind.

continued on page 5



## “American Idol” continued from page 1

had yet to receive a berth to Hollywood. This young man was accompanied to each of these auditions by his mother, who was not shy to admit that American Idol was her “life.” FOX then showed snippets of this young man’s other auditions, including one during which he dressed like the State of Liberty and was run-out by the judges before he was even given a chance to sing. Unfortunately, this young man’s dreams were dashed yet again, with a unanimous “no” from the judges. But the thing that really topped it off was when Ryan Seacrest greeted the contestant at the door and said (quoting loosely), “Did you expect anything different?”

Now, I don’t think that FOX set out to be intentionally mean to either of these candidates, but it does make one question their motive: why does FOX even bother showing auditions that are that embarrassing? The obvious answer is because they are entertaining—it is entertaining to watch a quiet, weird 30 year-old get ripped apart by Simon just as it

is entertaining to watch a habitual loser be denied his chance at Hollywood one more time. But it’s more than that, it is entertaining because it is funny; FOX airs the embarrassments of its contestants just so we can get a good laugh.

Normally, I’m not a fan of beating around the bush. I know, as a music major, that the performing arts profession isn’t for sissies; everyone is going to be judgmental of art, and invariably someone isn’t going to like it. But when FOX exploits the personal failures of its contestants in a manner that

quite frequently amounts to pointing and laughing, as if to say “Hey look at this loser; can’t believe he actually thinks he can sing!”, I’m a little disgusted. Of course, FOX is probably just feeding the public that which it desires, which calls into question the culpability of its actions, but I’m not about to open up that discussion. For now, I guess I’ll just have to change the channel.

*Todd Baty is a senior history and music major and can be contacted at [tbaty@smu.edu](mailto:tbaty@smu.edu)*



**“Aramark” continued from page 3**

**Is that what accounts for the annual raise in meal plan prices?**

Not really. The yearly rise, just like anywhere, [accounts for] our utilities go up, our food costs go up; there are food issues, price of labor; we have to give our folks increases, benefits, all those things you hear on the news—those things go up every year. That’s typically why you see the raises. Which, if you track the increases on your meal plan, they are usually lower than most of your other increases.

**Why are students who live on campus required to purchase a meal plan?**

Well, it is an SMU policy. It is common across campuses; not all obviously. It depends what the culture and living environment the school wants to present [its students]. We want you to be here—that’s the culture SMU is creating and we are part of that. Aramark is coming in to serve that culture.

**So what do you perceive the dining services’ role to be in the life of a typical student?**

Certainly there is the nutritional piece—that’s a basic. But certainly, we need to be able to provide you meals. The next thing is a place to be social. We need to provide that for you; a place that is safe to socialize in. You know, the next thing we are doing is trying to get to you. Mac’s Place, our special events, the Meadow’s cart: we are trying to get to you to be more convenient.

**There are rumors that the Task Force on Substance Abuse has recommended to President Turner to create a pub or bar on campus. Would Aramark be part of that plan?**

Well, we could be. That would be the decision of the university. I will say that my experiences, purely from a financial [perspective], with [pubs] are that they don’t work, purely because most of the students are underage. I will say that at Wake Forest we run a pub. We had a full-service dining [hall], with alcohol, at Duke. There are several places that [we do that at]. At the end of the day, it depends on the university. For the company, it’s a non-issue. We service beer and wine internationally. So it really depends on the university.

**Does Aramark manage the stadium services at Gerald J. Ford Stadium?**

We do, we started that in August. University Park, by the

way, is very [weird] with its alcohol, liquor licenses. It is very different than anywhere else. We may have trouble getting a liquor license because we are a for-profit company operating on a non-profit campus. So how it works at the stadium, there is a Stadium Club: they purchase the alcohol and we serve it. They collect the funds, and we just serve it. That’s only for the club level, of course. Obviously, we don’t sell it at the concessions.

**Is there an attempt to move toward selling beer at the concessions?**

Well, I think you’d have to ask Athletics that question.

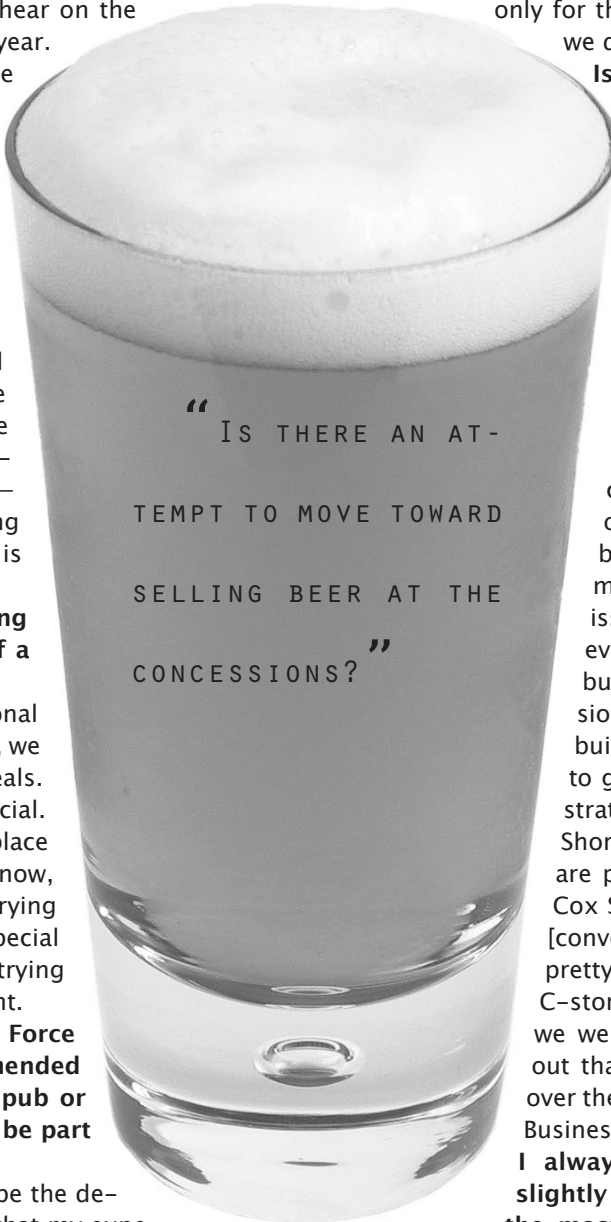
**What are things we can expect in the next academic year from Aramark?**

Well, we did a market-match, collected data over six to eight months and used all that information to evaluate where we need to tweak our services. We discovered we didn’t have much retail on this campus. We put-in Pizza Hut based on that. That was pretty much a no-brainer. Then we presented some more, much larger plans, with a lot of issues that aren’t really on the table even, concerning the Hughes-Trigg building. I know there is a discussion concerning the Hughes-Trigg building [and] about how it is going to grow in the future and its long term strategy. We would be a part of that. Short term, looking to the summer, we are putting an Einstein’s [Bagels] in the Cox School of Business. We have a little [convenience] store there [now] that does pretty well, but you know, it’s just a little C-store. Einstein’s came up a lot when we were looking at Meadows. It worked out that we are doing the Starbuck’s cart over there, and looking at Einstein’s [for the Business School quad].

**I always end these interviews with a slightly more personal question. What is the most influential book you have ever read, and why?**

Boy, well I mean at what period of my life? Back in high school, I would have to say *The Outsiders*. It may have been one of the first books I actually read, you know. Some of the business books that kind of fit in with the seven successful habits and doing the right thing. There is a correlation there with my personal life. I mean, aside from the Bible, of course.

*Hilltopics would like to specially thank Mr. David Randolph for taking the time to share his thoughts with us.*



“ IS THERE AN AT-  
TEMPT TO MOVE TOWARD  
SELLING BEER AT THE  
CONCESSIONS? ”

## Looking for something completely different: The Double Wide Bar Review

by Jenny Simon

If there is one thing that Dallas has, it's an array of unique bars. Since SMU is located in the heart of Dallas, students have the privilege of choosing between local college pubs like Barley House and Homebar, or a more glamorous and chic alcohol venue like Obar or Ghostbar. No matter where the SMU student body decides to conduct their debauchery, they have unlimited options all around town.

Everyone has his or her preference on bar atmosphere. Some people love swanky nightclubs and others prefer local dives with "character". No matter your individual preference there is one bar in Exposition Park that everyone should visit at least once. That bar is the Double Wide, a local novelty bar that has delightfully tacky décor that mimics a doublewide trailer. Located at 3510 Commerce St. Dallas, TX 75295, this classically trashy tavern grabs your attention because you can't miss the large paper mache tornado on the roof of the building.

The Double Wide is conveniently open seven days a week until 2:00a.m. Their happy hour

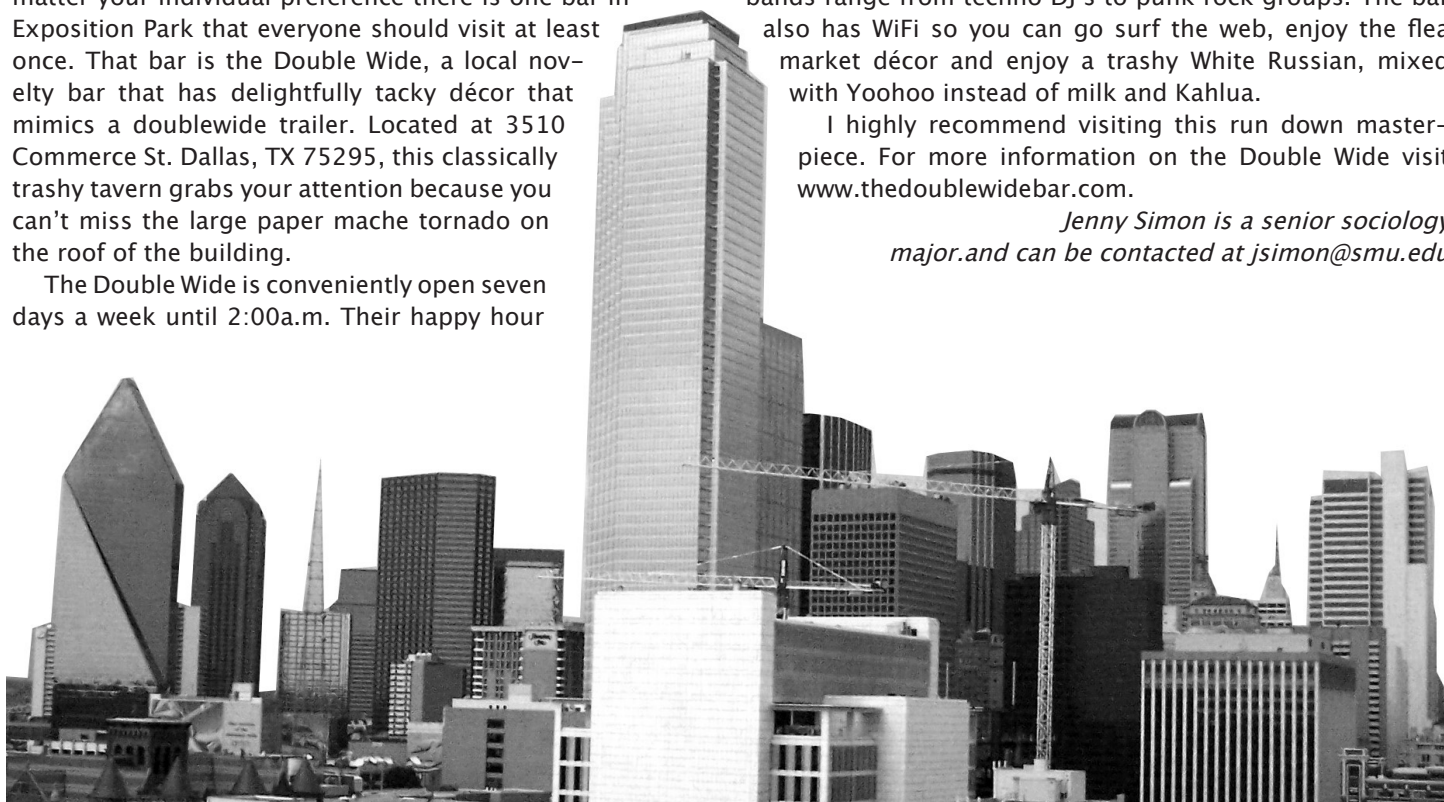
is Monday through Friday from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. and you can enjoy \$2.00 domestics and wells and \$1.00 off

you call it. The wacky original mixed beverages the Double Wide serves are one of the most interesting attributes that give this bar such character. Drinks like a Boone's Farm Martini and Yoo-hoo Yeehaw are served to make you feel less like a Dallas socialite and more like a teenage mixing your parent's alcohol with any and all of your favorite childhood drinks.

The Double Wide also has bands perform in the music venue attached to the bar. The bands range from techno DJ's to punk rock groups. The bar also has WiFi so you can go surf the web, enjoy the flea market décor and enjoy a trashy White Russian, mixed with Yoo-hoo instead of milk and Kahlua.

I highly recommend visiting this run down masterpiece. For more information on the Double Wide visit [www.thedoublewidebar.com](http://www.thedoublewidebar.com).

*Jenny Simon is a senior sociology major and can be contacted at [jsimon@smu.edu](mailto:jsimon@smu.edu)*



## Is My Sunday Morning Routine Contributing to the Downfall of American Society?

by Janet Arnold

Sunday mornings around my apartment don't follow any sort of routine, but there are a few things that my roommate and I have come to expect. We'll whine about all the homework that we don't want to do while watching that weekend's episode of "The Soup."

I love "The Soup." I would even go so far to say that "The Soup," a clip show similar to VH1's "Best Week Ever" which airs every Friday night on the E! Network, is the best show on television. I'm addicted to trash TV and "The Soup" is my crack. There is little I look forward to more in my week than cozing up on the sofa and tuning in to Joel McHale, the host on my TiVo. The half hour show features regular categories, presenting clips, along with snarky side, from various TV shows that aired during the past week. "The Soup" fills me in on any comedic gems that occurred on shows that I may have missed tuning in to.

One of the weekly features is "Reality Show Clip Time!" which, as I'm sure you can figure out, is a segment in which they show various reality show participants making fools of themselves. I have come to expect clips from Oxygen Network's "The Bad Girls Club." As much as I say I love trash TV, "The Bad Girls Club" is one low that I just can't sink to. From what I've gathered from the many clips on "The Soup," the girls on "The Real World" don't know how to drink nearly as much when compared to these self-acclaimed "bad girls", and are possibly saner too. The premise involves locking a group of girls who party way too much, and undoubtedly have some serious issues, in a house. Last week three or four girls were feuding with some of the other girls in the house and decided it would be a great idea to take the fight one step further by peeing in the kitchen sink and wiping their bums on all the food in the fridge.

Watching this clip, I couldn't help but think, "Oh God, I hope this doesn't air in other countries!" It, quite shocking-

ly, had me questioning, "Am I the reason people from other countries hate Americans?" In the end I had to admit that the answer was more than likely yes. I watch, and in doing so give my endorsement, to all the crap we should be embarrassed by.

The problem I then face, however, is my love for these reality shows and my unwillingness to stop watching them. From "I Love New York" to "Celebrity Rehab," I love it all and find it incredibly funny and ridiculous that people play these roles and characters just to get a little taste of fame. I don't mean to put myself above these reality TV stars by implying that I'm laughing at them. I feel more like I'm laughing with them as they laugh their way to the bank. But now I cannot help but think that the world is laughing at all of us.

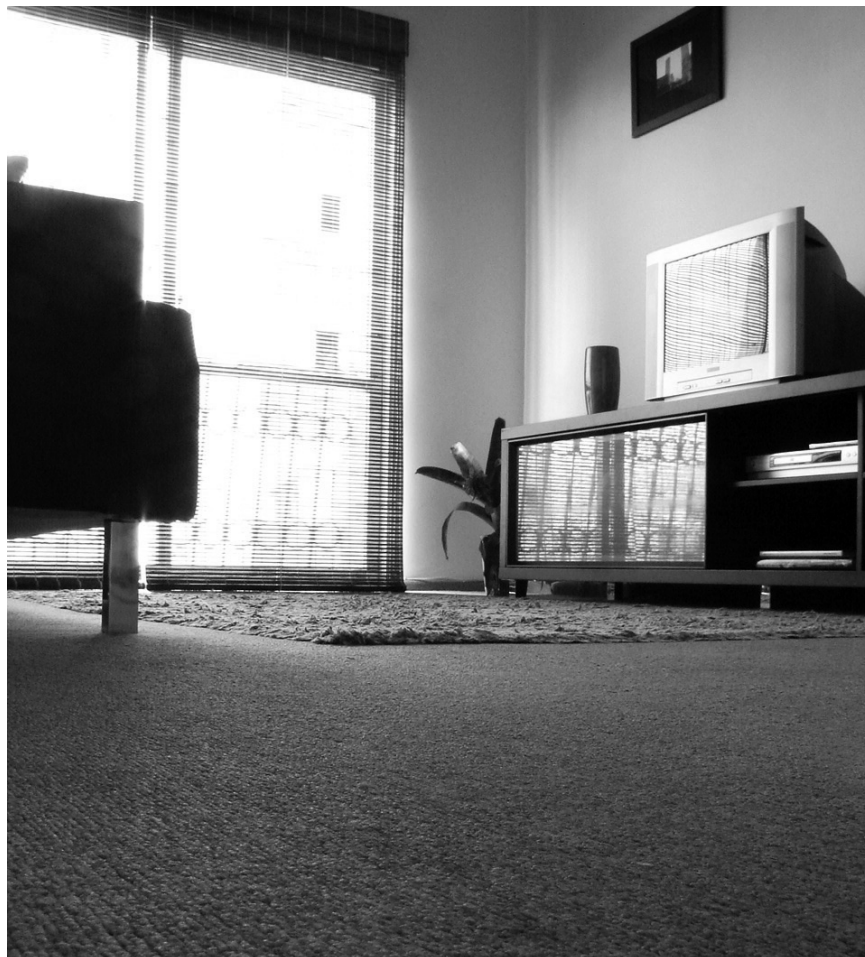
So, what's a girl to do? With the writer's strike, it looks like studios will just continue producing reality and game shows, and for good reason. People like me watch these shows in droves.

A great example is the train-wreck that is Janice Dickinson, former "America's Next Top Model" judge and world's first super model, and her reality TV show. It brought in more viewers than the Oxygen network has seen to date.

If what we, as Americans, watch is a reflection of our culture, we're all in a lot of trouble. I suppose there are wholesome and intellectual shows out there, but I'm sorry, I just can't watch "How It's Made" or "Golden Girls."

It's not surprising to me then that I know of no role models on television. I think it's tragic that the only person I feel comfortable with my little cousin looking up to is Lauren Conrad from "The Hills." But prove me wrong. I'm open to TiVo suggestions.

*Janet Arnod is a senior marketing and psychology major and can be contacted at [janeta@smu.edu](mailto:janeta@smu.edu)*







**SMU vs. Rice**  
**Saturday, February 9, 2008**  
**7:05 PM**  
**Moody Coliseum**



**Headline of the week:** "5 Killed When BMW Flies Off Elevated Airstrip, Hits Top Of Tree"  
<http://www.local6.com/news/15144329/detail.htm>



### Thumbs up:

- SMU closing for bad weather! Oh, wait...nevermind. Grumble grumble...
- Conan O'Brien's manly strike beard.
- To 35 Days untill Spring Break

### Thumbs down:

- The untimely passing of Heath Ledger. RIP.
- No chance for a sequel to A Knight's Tale. That movie rocked.
- The writer's strike causing us to miss our favorite shows...and spawning American Gladiator.
- Wind. And rain. No one in Texas owns anything heavier than blue jeans!



### Events of interest spotlight:

Feb. 4th – Priority Sign Up for Residence Housing begins. Don't be lazy, you don't want to get stuck with a bad roommate...again.

Feb. 5th – Tate Lecture series presents Martin Sheen. Closest you will probably ever get to meeting a president.

Feb. 5th – Super Tuesday: 24 states will hold primaries or caucuses, with 52% percent of Democratic delegates and 41% of Republican delegates at stake.

Feb. 3rd–10th – Meadows School of the Arts presents Shakespeare's As You Like It at the WaterTower Theatre (For more information and tickets, call WaterTower Theatre at 972.450.6232.)

Feb. 14th – Valentine's Day. Celebrating, love, romance, and cheap stuffed animals that gyrate robotically and play a grainy, chipmunk-style cover of "Love Machine".

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### SMU Fact:

On November 9, 1940, temporary bleachers at Ownby Stadium collapse during the homecoming football game with Texas A&M, injuring 38 fans—with mostly only minor injuries. Over 1,500 fans were in these "overflow" bleachers on very muddy land. The game went on, and the Aggies won 19 to 7.

TM