

# Campus Forum

As a newspaper, we're rather fond of the First Amendment. We take very seriously the guarantees of free speech, freedom of the press, freedom to assemble peaceably, and the right to petition government for a redress of grievances.

But does free speech have limits? It most certainly does. If we incite a mob to sack and pillage Capitol Campus, our free speech right to do so is less important than the government's right to preserve order.

The one area the courts haven't been able to straighten out is pornography. Supreme Court justices and their clerks have spent thousands of hours and the better part of a century trying to define what is pornographic. After all that time, they still haven't done it. What is pornographic in Oklahoma may be just another movie in New York. To paraphrase one justice, you know pornography when you see it, but you can't define it. So how do you make it illegal?

You can't.

That doesn't, however, make pornography right, or good, or socially beneficial. It doesn't help discourage the abuse and subjugation of human beings. And of course, it doesn't recognize the natural right of people offended by such material to be free of exposure to its effects.

So is pornography wrong and bad and socially harmful?

Maybe. The law can't help in such situations, but people can. Those who oppose certain films, shows, or publications can make their displeasure known through peaceful demonstration, communication, letters to newspapers, and by not patronizing the offending event. Those in favor can turn over their cash and perpetuate the status quo. Both sides can discuss the situation intelligently, publicizing both their evidence and their opinions.

We at the *Capitol Times* feel that the opposition from certain quarters over the planned showing of "Debbie Does Dallas" here is legitimate, but possibly over done. We would guess that the film will have only a marginal impact on the morals of its viewers compared with their experiences to date. If anything will suffer, it will be the campus' prestige, and there, too, the damage should be slight. Nevertheless, we respect the views of those who oppose the film on religious and other grounds.

We think those who would justify anything--no matter what--on First Amendment grounds are being shortsighted and *simplistic, just as those who would claim the right to control others' expression are going too far.*

Maybe the best way to deal with the situation is for SUBOG to voluntarily limit the frequency and publicity of such showings, recognizing the divided opinion of the student body. The panel discussion that is to follow the movie is also a useful forum for those who wish to use it, although we think it was inappropriate for the administration to make the panel a condition for showing the movie.

We favor a more balanced schedule of popular, contemporary films on campus, not just cult films and classics. And we favor a healthy respect for the competing interests of free speech and morality.

See you at the movies?



"YOU GUYS ARE LUCKY I DIDN'T CATCH YOU FISHING OR SWIMMING..."

## Porno flicks: still free speech

By Mark S. Guralnick

I am astonished by the censure of the movie, "Debbie Does Dallas," which is scheduled to be shown Friday night at the Student Center. Who cares whether Debbie Does Dallas at Penn State for one night? It's being held in a student activities center, on a weekend night. No children are invited, and nobody is being forced to see it. To make a stink about one X-rated film being shown one time to an adult population, on a voluntary basis, is simply silly.

What's astonishing, however, is that the students and administrators condemning the film have forgotten what the freedom of expression and academic freedom are all about. This is a public property -- a state university. It's not the Archdiocese of Dauphin County, the American Legion Post, of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The morality of the film is irrelevant; this campus is not in the business of teaching sexual morality. And besides, what's moral to one person is immoral to another. For example, I think failing to maintain a nuclear generating station properly is immoral! A fictional film of an ex-cheerleader sharing her body with athletes, businessmen and innumerable others is probably more stupid than immoral.

But banning stupidity is unconstitutional too.

Those doomsayers who think

Dangerous Debbie will promote obscene behavior have no basis for their arguments. Almost 30 years ago, federal judge Jerome Frank said in *U.S. v. Roth* that "if the government possesses the power to censor (expressions) which arouse sexual thoughts, regardless of whether those thoughts tend probably to transform themselves into antisocial behavior, why may not the government censor political and religious publications regardless of any casual relation to probably dangerous deeds?"

As for those critics who would prefer to have X-rated movies approved first by an administrative review board or a student standards commission, I call your attention to the first sentence in the Bill of Rights (The First Amendment provides that no law, in this case, no rule or policy, shall be made abridging the freedom of expression). To censor certain movies because of their content constitutes prior restraint -- a doctrine in the law that is now a half-century old. To censor the movies because they are potentially dangerous to some groups of people is still a prior restraint (See the *Pentagon Papers* case, *New York Times Co. v. United States*, 1971).

My office is lined with textbooks containing case after case supporting my argument.

But forget the law for a moment. Forget the irrationality of making a stink about one outdated movie being shown voluntarily on one night. What about the principles of

academic freedom?

The U.S. Department of Education, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Penn State have long advocated a free, diverse, and intellectually limitless learning environment in which new ideas, robust debate, and alternative forms of expression can be aired. It is through this academic freedom that we all learn and grow and ultimately come to develop our own moral guideposts, political opinions and philosophical paths. To let our students or administrators restrain or even delay the airing of any one medium essentially undercuts our freedom to make informed choices.

So I don't care if Debbie Does Dallas, Donna Does Dayton, or Diane Does Detroit. What concerns me is that Penn State's Capitol Campus maintains the same legal, philosophical, and practical principles of free expression that allow us to debate issues in class, challenge matters at city hall, espouse Communism, Atheism or Secular Humanism, to advertise tampons, bloody films about terrorists, or legal services to say what we want, see what we want, think about what we want and vote for who we want, and to publish a campus newspaper which sometimes assails the very people for whom it is written.

Mark S. Guralnick is an attorney-at-law and assistant professor of Multi-Media Journalism at Capitol.

## Capitol Times

Thursday, February 14, 1985  
Vol. 19 No. 9

Published by students of Penn State's Capitol Campus, Middletown, PA 17057

The *Capitol Times* welcomes letters from readers. Letters intended for publication must be signed by the author and indicate his/her club or organizational affiliation, if any. The *Capitol Times* reserves the right to edit or reject letters at its discretion.

Letters published do not necessarily reflect the views of this newspaper or its staff.

Neil Myers.....Editor-in-chief  
Don Strausburger..Managing Editor  
Tony Perry.....Contributing Editor  
Beverly Halbrook..Advertising Mgr.  
Jeffrey Keck.....Business Mgr.  
Lisa Mauss.....Production Mgr.  
Cathy Shaak.....Sales Rep.  
Gulnar Manji.....Sales Rep.  
Angelo Vecchio.....Sports Editor  
Mike Dudek.....Graphics Artist  
Janice Shatzer.....Composer  
Bob Price.....Photographer

Contributing Staff  
Carman Amerson  
Annette Childs  
Jennette Dell'Alba  
Bill Eason  
Myra Fink  
Beth Horne  
Maria Kent  
Stacy Krnjaic  
Joseph L. Michalsky  
Ken Stiggers  
Rachel Vance

Adviser - Mark S. Guralnick