

## Staff Editorial

### Injustice served

On the night of Aug. 23, Dr. Tom Hoffman, an MSU English professor, and his wife Rebecca returned home to find a masked gunman in their house. The man kidnapped Mrs. Hoffman for ransom and fled with her in her car.

On Jan. 24, the Hoffmans were victims of yet another injustice: A Wichita County jury let the kidnapper off easy.

John Paul Fletcher, 33, of Wichita Falls, was sentenced to 11 years for aggravated kidnapping. If he behaves himself in prison, he could be out in five years.

The Hoffman family is upset, but everyone who believes in justice should be.

When the Hoffmans pulled into their garage on the night of the crime, Fletcher forced them inside the house at gunpoint. The alarm system went off, ultimately alerting authorities, according to an account in the Wichita Falls *Times Record News*. While Dr. Hoffman was forced to lie on the floor in the house, Fletcher pushed Mrs. Hoffman onto the back floorboard of the car and took off. After a multi-county pursuit, authorities found the vehicle parked on the bank of the Wichita River. The terrified victim was still in the back, her face covered. Fletcher left the scene but was apprehended a short time later.

Fletcher, a former tenant of the Hoffmans, later told the court he was having financial problems and had planned the kidnapping to get ransom money from the couple. He was later charged with aggravated kidnapping, aggravated robbery, aggravated assault and burglary of a habitation. He chose to have a jury, rather than a judge, decide his punishment. After three hours of deliberation, six men and six women decided on 11 years for the kidnapping charge. Fletcher got five-year probations for each of the remaining charges.

"We were kind of lenient," admitted the presiding juror in an interview with the *Times Record News*.

The juror, who didn't want to be identified, said Fletcher's previously clean criminal background was a leading factor. "He never hit her or forced her around or anything," he said.

He said the kidnapper "did show some compassion" by finally allowing his arthritic victim to get up on the seat. "We took that in his favor."

The juror said that the jury saw Fletcher as "someone caught up in a bind financially."

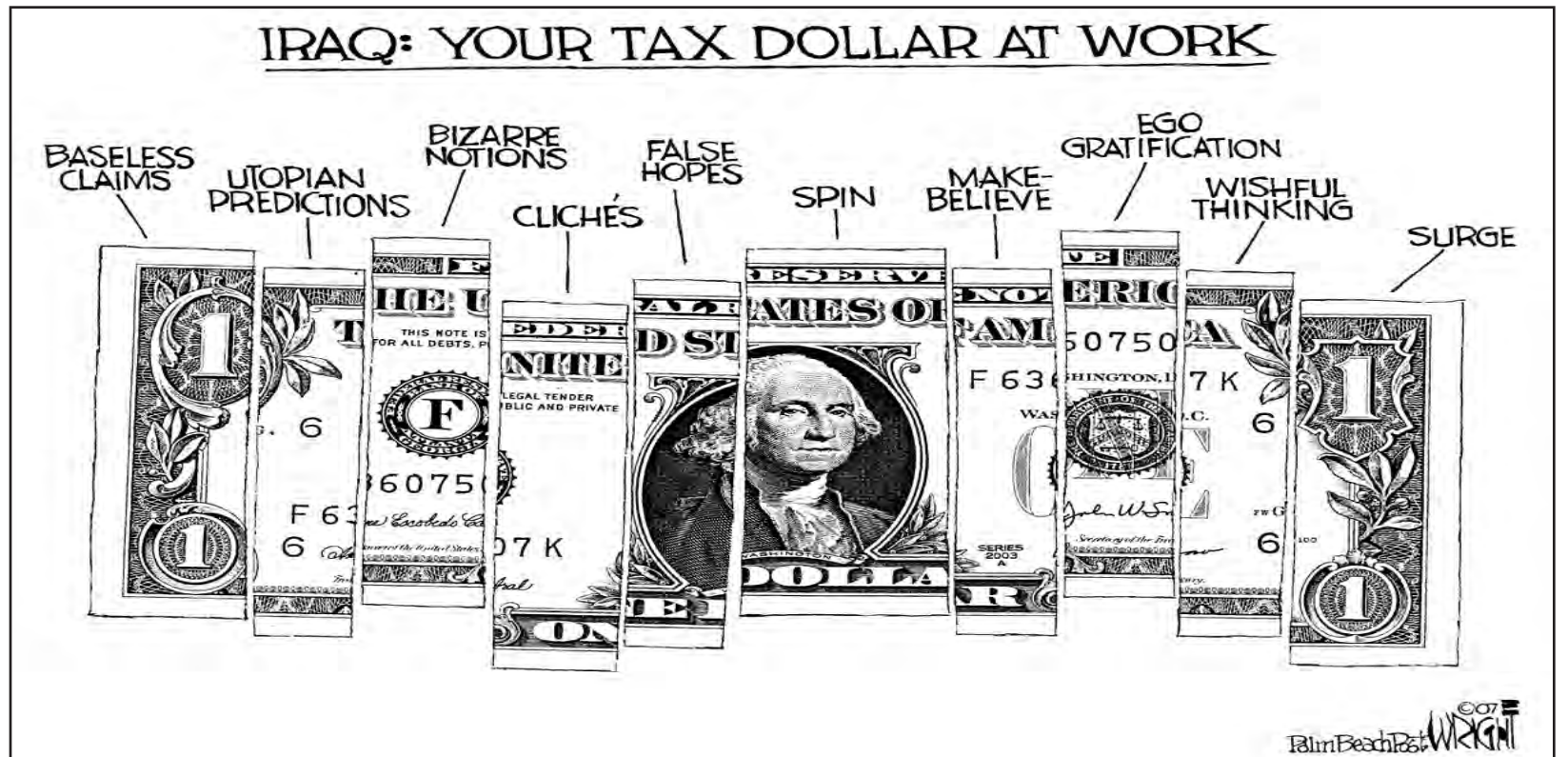
Shockingly, the jury seemed to identify with a kidnapper awash in credit card debt and owing on a vehicle and a Harley Davidson motorcycle. (Bring out the Kleenex.) Fletcher wanted a jury of his peers and he got one. They showed him undue compassion.

This isn't the first time for victims of a crime to feel slighted by a judge or a jury. The same thing happened after a similar kidnapping in Florida in 2000. Gerald and Carol Leary of Largo were robbed and kidnapped from their home by a man with an accomplice posing as a saleswoman. He forced them into the trunk of their car, which was later abandoned in a wooded area. The Learys were also upset over the sentence given their abductor. Only in their case, the kidnapper got 20 years, twice as much as Fletcher.

According to Law.com, a legal-news Web site, Texas is one of the few states in the nation that allows juries to assess punishment. Texas does not have state sentencing guidelines other than general ranges of punishment for specific offenses.

Everyone has a bad day, but does that give you the right to hold someone at gunpoint and demand a ransom for their life over delinquent credit card bills and an overdue car payment?

According to the Wichita County justice system, it does.



### Fast food annoyances hit close to home



CARRIE SULLIVAN  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It's amazing how little free time a college student has once classes begin. Most of us find ourselves too tired to think,

much less cook. So naturally I've been eating out quite a bit.

In the last couple of weeks, I've had some pleasant dining-out experiences here in Wichita Falls, but a surprising handful have fallen into a category I'd like to call "B.S." I mean, we're paying for quality service when we eat out, right? We should be pleased with the outcome, not ready to throw our butter knives at our servers. So in response to the overwhelming number of bad experiences I've had of late, I have composed a list of five essential rules that restaurant workers should always follow.

**Rule number one:** Get the f\*\*king order right.

We've all had this happen. I went to one of the deli places here in town and had a mouth watering de-

sire for a tuna melt. I ordered, quite articulately, that I wanted the "tuna melt." The waitress brought back a basket of food and without checking, I bit into a turkey sandwich. Growling into my bread, I looked, and sure enough, it was not tuna. The waitress was busy playing with her hair behind the counter and I was starved, so I just ate the sandwich. She didn't get a tip.

**Rule number two:** Show some maturity.

I went to eat at a fairly new restaurant here in town. As I was standing in front of the counter, searching the menu on the wall, the cashier started whining to another worker. "My feet hurt," she said, contorting her body to lean on the counter. She didn't look a day over 16. "I'm tired. My feet are really killing me. I just wanna go home."

I know it's the end of the day. And I'm sorry, sweetheart, but you, too, have to stand on your feet like the umpteen million other Americans that actually deserve a paycheck. Come on. For your own good, grow up.

**Rule number three:** Move, damn it!

The reason most of us eat out, especially fast food, is most likely because we don't have time to enjoy a

sit-down meal. So naturally we expect speedy service. At yet another deli restaurant, I must have stood in line for 10 minutes, waiting on the staff to build two sandwiches for the girl in front of me. They worked at a pace that would have pissed off snails. Then she put the wrong dressing on one of the sandwiches and emitted an "Oh, crap!" to her coworker before shrugging and continuing the sandwich anyway. (The customer didn't notice.)

The only reason I stayed was because my mouth was set on a bread bowl. But luck was not with me that day. When I finally ordered what I'd come in to eat, they were out of the item.

"You're kidding," I said.

"Nope," said the girl behind the counter. "Sorry."

I took a long, long, long, long time to figure out what I wanted instead.

**Rule number four:** Wear your hearing aids.

Driving through a chicken restaurant, I ordered my meal and all seemed to be going well.

Then the little voice box at the base of the electronic menu said, "Anything else?"

"Yes," I said. "Could you please add a roll?"

"What was that?"

"I'd like to add a roll."

Then he repeated my order back to me, minus the roll.

"Is that it?" he asked.

"Could you please add a roll?"

I stared at the box until a completely different voice repeated my order back to me. Without the roll.

"Anything else?" the new voice asked.

"Nope," I said, rolling my eyes. "That'll be it!"

**Rule number five:** Pay attention to what you're cooking.

My dad and I went to eat at a restaurant that serves breakfast all day. When the waitress served us our plates, Dad dug into his hashbrowns then stopped. He slowly pulled out a long, wide piece of paper plate, probably on the food before it was cooked. He informed the waitress and handed her the greasy trash. Management gave both meals to us for free, and we continued to eat, but the point is that things like that just should not happen.

So restaurant goers, be forewarned. Just because a warm body is there taking your order or cooking or serving your food, that doesn't necessarily mean there is a brain to go along with it. Happy dining!

### Promiscuous world trouble for young adults



KRISTLE CAREY  
MANAGING EDITOR

Lately I have been trying to figure out why so many people are promiscuous. I mean, is it really that enjoyable being with more people you can count on one hand, all in one weekend? Has society completely lost the concept of being faithful?

Too often I hear about another girl who has her heart broken by a "boyfriend" because he decided to sleep with another woman. The girlfriend is left feeling betrayed, helpless, used and as if the whole relationship was a lie. Basically, she ends up blaming herself for her boyfriend's stupidity.

This type of mentality really irks me because no woman, or even man, should have to put up with this kind of behavior. If that supposed "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" was so wonderful, do you really think they would have taken your feelings for granted?

We hear everyday about celebrity couples splitting because one or the other has been promiscuous. Look at the situation between Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie and Jennifer Aniston or the recent Justin Timberlake and Cameron Diaz break up. Both are examples of one partner being unfaithful. One might say it is because of their lifestyle. However, what can be said about the average American that does the same thing?

It saddens me that so many feel the need to sleep around with as many people as they can.

It seems that society has become a sex-driven entity that keeps sucking in more victims. With so many promiscuous people today, it is a wonder how marriages even exist any more. How can you trust someone else enough to believe they will stay faithful to you, and only you, for the rest of your life?

The TV show "Cheaters" has shown us the bad and ugly of unfaithful relationships, catching cheating partners in the act with undercover help and cameras.

Would the fear of being caught by lights, cameras and your significant other make someone more faithful? As the looks of things on the show, it is not likely.

Sex sells.

This is what the media tells us. Almost every music video you see today has half-naked women doing moves that would disgrace their grandmas. Little girls are dressing more provocatively because that is what they are being shown in television and movies. Is this really the model we want to show our children?

Sure, I have watched these shows, movies and music videos. However, I know the difference between watching something and actually behaving in that way. It seems that some people cannot decipher the two.

Chris Rock is starring in "I Think I Love My Wife," where he finds himself wanting to be single again, living the "free" life.

I, myself, am a Chris Rock fan. Rarely do I watch something with him in it where I am not laughing. However, when I saw the preview for this movie, I was somewhat thrown back by it: A married man, wanting to sleep with every woman he passes. Not my idea of a great movie.

I make it a habit not to judge others for their decisions. I think that is the beauty of having your own life.

## THE WICHITAN Editorial Board

Editor-in-Chief Carrie Sullivan

Managing Editor Krystle Carey

Entertainment Editor Jason Kimbro

Sports Editor Josh Mujica

Photo Editor Adrian McCandless

Reporters  
Matt Hulme  
Richard Carter  
Christian McPhate  
LaTia Banks

Photographers  
Hershel Self  
Lauren Miller

Graphic Artist  
SunKyu Yoo-Norris

Advertising Manager  
Christian McPhate

Copy Editor  
Konnie Sewell

Cartoonist  
David Stephenson

Adviser  
Randy Pruitt