

# editorial

## Crisis reporting lacks specific guidelines

The Tylenol incident caused much fear in the hearts of consumers about the use of medicine and over-the-counter drugs. Many people are afraid to take a simple aspirin, much less a prescription drug. The Food and Drug Administration is also worried that the media coverage of the incident may cause unstable minds to see the case as a cue to do more horrible crimes.

The FDA is especially worried about the approaching Halloween season when the mentally disturbed have a holiday causing harm to children who are trick-or-treating.

The media coverage may have caused some people to have thoughts of harming others or may even have given them dangerous suggestions. The information released about the Tylenol case was, however, vital to everyone who heard it. Without the announcement many people may have lost their lives.

The worries of the FDA are not unfounded. They were correct in thinking that the Tylenol case would prompt other similar cases. Shortly after the reports of the incident in Chicago there were also reports of evil doings in California.

The media has a difficult dilemma to resolve. The information was needed to alarm the public and make them discontinue the use of the product until further investigation and testing was done. On the other hand, it did cause more harm in a state many miles away from where the original incident occurred.

There is no question as to whether the story should have been reported. The problem lies in reporting how the medicine was tampered with. There were detailed reports of how the capsules were taken apart and refilled with the poison. This was like giving step-by-step instructions to everyone or anyone who wanted to try it himself.

It is certain that many people wanted to know how the individuals tampered with the medicine but it was not necessary to report it. There will always be people who will get suggestions from any type of story. The media must be aware of the implications.

The steps taken by the FDA include sealed bottles and packages, stricter processing standards, and careful monitoring of employees. The media should also have some steps or regulations to follow on the subject of crisis reporting.

# letters

## "Death Row" receives criticism

I am responding to your "Death Row" editorial in the October 14 *Kaleidoscope*. I should begin by noting that whether or not to dignify such a mush-minded collection of misinformation and hastily drawn conclusions with a response required considerable thought.

Much of the freedom we may enjoy as Americans is dependent, either directly or indirectly, upon the "almost unlimited series of appeals" that our legal system has provided for us historically. Whether or not one wishes to indulge oneself this freedom is beside the point. [If not, the list of countries which do not provide their citizenry with this fundamental protection is exceedingly long.]

"It is startling to think that a convicted murderer might be given the chance to kill again." It certainly is. And perhaps equally startling is the fact that less than 2% of paroled murderers ever do kill again. Parole boards know this and, although a freed murderer repeating his [or her] crime is a horrifying thought, it is insignificant when compared to the alternative proposed by Hardee: treating perpetrators of violent crimes "in the same manner that the victims were treated." This is one of the basest, most reprehensible caricatures of justice imaginable. This "eye for an eye" mentality threatens the very essence of human dignity, indicates a perverse [or non-

existent] morality, and shakes the very foundations of social consciousness in a "civilized" world.

Capital punishment as a "deterrent to crime" is a tempting consideration but one which psychologists have indicated in one experiment after another holds no water. Negative reinforcement, typified by "spare the rod and spoil the child," is about as viable as a geocentric solar system.

And besides, whether murderers generally consider what their punishment may or may not entail is highly debatable. Raising the educational level and lowering poverty in a population is much more likely to meet with success.

"What kind of a legal system is this?" One which limps along and at times loses itself in its own red tape. But one which works better than most of the options and, without a doubt, is light-years ahead of the primitive proposition suggested by Hardee.

Even though appearances might indicate otherwise, I do not intend this reply as a personal attack against Hardee, as she is apparently just repeating what she has heard others say.

This is rather an outcry against any group who would turn their private sentiment into public policy - especially when these sentiments begin with such shaky premises.

Doug Brittain

## Library no solace for serious students

By Jennifer Blalock

How different the world is in 1982 than in yesteryear. Cars were bigger, people resided in houses instead of condominiums, and students were studious. And, of course, aiding the serious scholar was the local library where he or she could utilize the peace and quiet among thousands of comforting books. Everyone must remember Mrs. Whipple, the librarian in elementary and high school who checked out the books and "ssshhh"-ed the talkers. It is odd that at an institution of higher learning, such as UNCA, the library cannot be this way.

It is not that Ramsey Library is a bad library. It definitely holds a wealth of knowledge. The selection of magazines is excellent. Students can find books on almost any subject imaginable. The library also sponsors great exhibits, such as the Southern Appalachian writers exhibit on display now.

For many semesters I sought refuge there in hopes of catching up on some assigned reading. It was quiet, warm, and friendly. However,

the library has evolved from this standard to a place where every visitor is, among other things, suspected of thievery.

It is a pity that the actions of a few dishonest people have penalized every honest person on campus. Having one's bag searched is rather demeaning, after all.

And for some reason, there is now an annoying turnstile at the exit door with a noise contributing to the din in the library.

Many students are carrying on normal-toned conversations without a thought that their neighbors are trying to study. As if this is not loud enough, the librarians and their student associates also talk to each other from across the room and across the library.

Personal problems and conversations are being clearly advertised while serious students are trying to delve into their assignments. Library tours for students in bibliography classes are essential but perhaps should be conducted in a low tone of voice.

The "friendly neighborhood librarian" seems no longer in ex-

istence. Upon several occasions I see.

have attempted to enlist the aid of an available library employee only to receive a short answer and a sour face. Times are hard but a smiling face can really change a person's day for the better. For example, Dr. Devine's smile is very pleasant to

Perhaps someday soon, Ramsey will return to that great ancient standard. Until it does, I will either study in my cold car, or I will opt for the carol on the top floor in the furthest corner of the library.

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