

Television, parents share responsibility

By PATRICK BRANNAN

Television and motion picture violence has been in the news recently. There were Senate hearings held this past week on the issue and a number of incidents have been blamed on television or movies.

Over the weekend, at least three deaths were linked to an incident in the movie *The Program* from Touchstone Pictures. In the movie a couple of drunk college football players lay in the road. This past weekend two teenagers and a man, according to newspaper reports, were killed after attempting the same "stunt."

The scene has been cut from the film and removed from advertisements.

The death of a two-year-old girl was blamed on the television show *Beavis and Butt-Head*, MTV's most popular show, according to *Newsweek*. Her five-year-old brother started a fire after playing with matches. The children's mother, who was not home at the time, blames the character Beavis' fascination with fire as the cause of her child's death. The show which used to air at 7 and 11 p.m. has been moved to 10:30 p.m. and Beavis no longer utters his infamous words, "Fire, Fire!"

Opinion

In the hearing on Capitol Hill the television networks and the motion picture industry were given until January to clean up their act or face regulation.

I'll be the first to admit that TV has too much violence in some cases. But the question is, who is responsible? Who must deal with the consequences? Is the media supposed to reflect society or be a model to society? What role must parents play?

The TV networks and the motion picture industry must self-regulate themselves. The media play a major role in our society. TV and the movies hold an enormous amount of power and influence on people, especially children. Therefore, the networks and movies must understand that they have this power and control themselves accordingly.

There cannot be direct regulation by an outside force on the media. Attorney General Janet Reno said in the hearings that, "regulation of violence is constitutionally permissible." The First Amendment protects the freedom

of the press. This protects TV and the movies from forced regulation.

I have no problem with the fact that the government has asked the networks and the motion picture to voluntarily regulate themselves, but I think that any forced regulation or censorship violates the Constitution.

Brandon Tartikoff, former head of NBC Entertainment and now an independent producer, told *US Today*, "TV needs to be rapped on knuckles, yes. But at the same time it shouldn't take the rap for what's happening in society."

TV must regulate itself in regards to the material on the shows. As Eileen Shiff, a family studies teacher at a Arizona community college, said, "The media should use its powerful influence on children positively, as kids spend more time with the TV than their parents." Yet it must not be blamed for the problems of society.

Parents also have a responsibility to teach their children about reality and imagination, right and wrong, and to teach them moral standards. It is a sad fact that children spend more time with TV than their parents (just another

sad fact of society today). The parents are the ones who should assume the positions of role models for their children.

Our society today has become to much of a quick, little family-time society. We can see the effect it is having on our children. As Jeff Greenfield, ABC's media watcher, says, "My first reaction to the Beavis incident should be, gimme a break. Leaving a five-year-old with matches is not a good thing." American society should not rely on the media to set our moral standards.

In the Oct. 21 issue of *USA Today* there is a chart about TV violence. NBC had the fewest number of violent incidents per hour with a 2.91 rating while the Fox network had the highest with a 5.92 rating. Also the chart states that, "the average child watches up to 8,000 made-for-TV murders and 10,000 acts of violence by the end of grade school."

The media industry must take more responsibility and parents must become more involved with the education and leadership of their children. Children must have strong role models in their parents so they do not turn to characters like Beavis and Butt-Head as role models.

Sabbaticals help recharge faculty

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My ability to change direction, to adapt to a new project, is exactly why you are at a liberal arts college rather than at an institution whose purpose is to train you for a specific skill. Learning to fix air conditioners (as my nephew has decided to do) is learning a skill. Pursuing the curriculum and meeting the goals of

a liberal arts college is learning how to learn, how to change, how to be.

I want my nephew to learn his lessons well and to know how to fix air conditioners; I want my students to be able to adapt to the kaleidoscope of changes in the business world, the academic world, or the scientific world, and to be able to cross among them.

You may think that it doesn't matter that I am plunged into a new project and stretching my abilities to research and to write, but your teachers are better for the time they spend keeping themselves intellectually limber. You may find this statement grandiose; you may well think that I've been reading too much Victorian prose. Nevertheless, I mean what I say.

People who are trained to be scholars are often misunderstood. They can be seen as pedantic Dryasdusts who achieve erotic thrill from burrowing into arcane materials. Or they can be seen as elitist, tax-supported layabouts on extended vacations.

I may never teach a class on Leslie Stephen as a biographer, but what I'm learning will be a part of every class I teach — from composition to English 410. I'm still in the midst of my project, collecting note cards and citations. I don't know how or even if I will finish. I wonder (just as you do) how I will meet my deadlines. But I'm onto something, I'm engaged, I'm becoming. And I'm very busy.

Gun control aims at wrong solution

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by the emphasis on victimization. The celebration of the rebellious in society, and the deterioration of the family plays a role. These are harder problems to solve, but they are the real avenue to reducing our death toll on the streets.

Banning guns, though, is trendy. It is as if people believe that the violent tendencies will no longer manifest themselves just because the offenders no longer have weapons. Beatings, though, and the use of non-firearm weapons cannot be stopped by banning fists or cooking knives. The government is going to have to try a different approach if it wants to stop violence.

President Clinton and Attorney General Reno have each said that we need to tell the National Rifle Association to "get lost." Taking a stand may be politically profitable, but socially, it can only harm us.

'Noises Off' was well done

By CECILIA CASEY

On Oct. 6 students from North Carolina Wesleyan College visited the Rocky Mount Playhouse Community Theater to see "Noises Off," written by Michael Frayn. All of Vaughn Schutz's theater classes along with Vivienne Anderson's honors theater class attended the dress rehearsal of the play.

"Noises Off," or rather, noises off stage, is a farce about everything that could go wrong with a play's production and performance. Each actor played the part of both another actor and the character that actor was playing for "Nothing On," the play within the play "Noises Off."

This British play challenges technical theatre as well as puts directing to the test as it toys with the heart of "live theater" by showing just how wrong a play can go. Missed lines, faulty props, drunk actors, and lots of confusion create a behind-the-scene look at the silly side of theater.

Strong performances were

Review

given by Ivan Price, who had the double role of Garry Lejeune and Roger Tramplemain; Debra Arrington, who played Belinda Blair/Flavis Brent; Sim Wilde who played Seledon Mowbray/a Burglar; and Robert Bloomer who played the director of "Nothing On."

The play moved quickly and to spite the plot, it moved smoothly, with endless entering and exiting of the stage, a million short lines within both plays, as well as lots of physical running and jumping.

The plot was that the cast of "Nothing On" was rehearsing the play and trying to get ready for opening night followed by two nights during the tour of the play. The inner plot of "Nothing On" was that this couple who was in trouble for not paying their taxes was supposedly away in Spain, while their housekeeper stays in

their house to watch it for them.

The house is up for sale and the real estate agent brings his girl-friend there to have sex while he thinks the house is empty. The couple comes back from Spain and the five people keep missing each other as they go from room to room. A burglar then breaks into the house who happened to be the father of the girlfriend of the real estate agent. Throughout this the actors are having affairs, fights, nerves, and a baby.

Overall, the Playhouse did a good job of performing and producing this odd-ball play. For those new to theater it might have seemed bewildering to see actors doing the unthinkable, blowing their lines and messing up the set, but for those who are well familiar with the theater it was a delight to see the split-second timing, the dual roles of the actors, and the importance of the props become a play all to themselves.

Hopefully the Playhouse will continue to deliver plays that are as well acted and as well designed as "Noises Off."