

Saga of the Bobbitts should be forgotten

"Not guilty, by reason of insanity."
Thank God it's over.

It was a story that made men all over the world squirm in their seats, a story that gave many advocates for battered women something to rally around. It was the most talked-about story in the news for months, and now it's finally over: Lorena Bobbitt was found not guilty of maiming her husband by a jury of her peers on Friday in Manassas, Va. — a jury persuaded that she was insane when she took out a kitchen knife and proceeded to cut off her husband's penis.

Lorena Bobbitt should not be considered a symbolic heroine for battered women.

Most of the people doing the talking about this case seemed to think it was an awfully big deal: a precedent-setter, sure to have long-standing effects on the way the American justice system reacts to cases of battered women fighting back.

Maybe that's true, but there's more to the Bobbitt case than such concerns. The public's fascination with the Bobbitts is voyeuristic and prurient. While some intellectuals have tried to justify their interest by talking about precedents being set and barriers being broken, legal experts have their doubts about whether the Bobbitt saga will have a significant effect on justice — if it has any effect at all.

So what has this story really been about? It has been about a bizarre act of violence. If Lorena Bobbitt had shot and killed her husband, it might've made the national news the night it happened. Afterwards, it would've been forgotten. It would've been lost in the news shuffle, lacking a magical word like "penis" to hold the public interest.

No one should be all that surprised by the jury's decision. There are only three possible verdicts: guilty, not guilty and not guilty by reason of insanity. There is no question that Lorena Bobbitt did in fact maim her husband, so she is "guilty," in a nonlegal sense, but the choice to cut off her husband's penis was not a choice which would be made by a sane woman.

In fact, all the arguments that indicate that Bobbitt was somehow justified in assaulting her husband in this way are counterproductive and dangerous. Our legal system does not recognize retaliation as a justification for this kind of violence. Self-defense, yes. Retaliation, no.

Lorena Bobbitt should not be considered a symbolic heroine for battered women. She had no legal or moral right to do what she did. We can understand her reasons, but that doesn't mean we should recognize them as valid.

The best avenue for battered women is for them to leave. No one is saying that it's easy, but it's often the only way out. The Bobbitt case does not change that.

If this case has made any woman feel entitled to attack her abusive husband, then it has done a grave disservice to all battered women. They cannot escape responsibility for their actions. They should not be encouraged to try.



LETTERS

Well done

I think perhaps Diana Collins-Puente should look again at her five years of "sweat, blood and tears" on this campus. She says she came here to "achieve change, to better the lifestyle and the educational system for people of color, for lesbians, gays and bisexuals, for women and non-traditional students. What I have found out is that these goals cannot be accomplished." (*ODE*, Jan. 14).

I would point out that that is a goal that could take a lifetime, and to not see it fulfilled in the way she might have envisioned may be disappointing. While she no longer will be ASUO vice president, she will be affecting change in the world.

I would also point out that there has been change in those areas and she has affected it. I, too, want justice for all people. I want women like Collins-Puente to be working toward their goals.

I especially want you, Diana, to know that you have made a difference on this campus. You have a certain fire and passion that wakes people up. People do not necessarily want to be woken up. People have to look at things they might not want to see when they are so rudely awoken. People do strange things in reaction to being woken up this way.

You have made a difference, you do make a difference. Sometimes it is the "small" and seemingly insignificant things that end up making the biggest difference. Look back at your five years here and see what you've accomplished, whose life have you touched? There is a lot more than you even know. And thank you for being you. Please don't stop speaking up for what you believe in, and keep in mind that everything you do does make a difference. If you know that you are making a difference you may take some pretty bold actions that you might not otherwise take.

Sandy Murphy
Sociology

Fair trial?

As one person (protester) whose picture was beamed all around the world from a Packwood protest at a Cottage Grove yurt factory, I can tell you that I am fed up with liberal opinions like Martin Fisher's (*ODE* Jan. 20).

Consider this, Mr. Fisher: there are no fair trials in 1990s America for the women who have come forward or for Mr. Packwood.

Matter of fact, I believe that if the liberal press would have done some investigative reporting prior to Mr. Packwood's election in November 1992, he would not be hiding behind any office, let alone the U.S. Senate.

Now, as it stands, Mr. Packwood cannot be recalled; is homeless (trailer-less) in Oregon; has tried to hide behind a drinking problem; has apologized for his inappropriate handling of women's bodies; and now has taken back his apology and is attacking his women accusers. And to top it all off Mr. Fisher, he will only come back to the state he represents when it suits his purpose.

Now, Mr. Fisher, let me ask you, since you are willing to wait for "the results of the investigations." If a homeless, alcoholic man abused not one, not two, not three, but 26 women in Oregon, would you wait in your "old-fashioned notion," leaving this man free, gallivanting around the country in hopes that someday, somehow, somehow he would get a fair trial, or would you take action now?

Rick Gold
Eugene

Not guilty

When *Emerald* readers learn about a student who has allegedly committed a crime, they usually forget the word "allegedly" and readily assume the accused is guilty. Whether the person

was indeed guilty or not will never be known to the reader, for in most cases the judgment will be months later and by then it's not hot enough any longer to be printed.

To protect the alleged perpetrator and the victim, I suggest to print only the initials of the persons involved or not to mention their names at all, as is common practice in most civilized countries and in the *Emerald's* own police beat.

A case at hand is the alleged first-degree rape committed by a physics graduate student, reported in the Nov. 12 *Emerald*. The case has been dismissed by the prosecutor. Yet, it will be almost impossible for my colleague to restore his damaged image in the community. This letter is intended to help just that.

His name should not have ever appeared on the front page of the *Emerald*. It is not only unnecessary, it is adverse to the healthy atmosphere of the University community to embarrass students publicly with such allegations. It does not serve justice, but punishes an innocent person.

Martin Guthold
Physics

Fishy

Bob Packwood has a defendant, *Emerald* columnist Martin Fisher, who wants Packwood to stay a senator until he gets a trial. Hey, Fisher, shall we bring back Richard Nixon, who was never tried? I personally asked Packwood, "Are you saying you can't get a fair trial as an average citizen that you need to use the clout of the Senate as a shield?"

He should resign simply because he loves Oregon. He should want us to have a senator who is not an embarrassment and politically impotent. As usual, Fisher's reasoning is suspiciously fishy.

David Oaks
Eugene

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