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COMMENTARY

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Friday, May 10, 2002

Point / Counterpoint

Family or career?

Hughes' decision should be praised

It takes a real woman to put family first, and Karen Hughes, senior counselor to President George W. Bush, has done just that with her recent departure from the White House. Not only has she resolved to spend more time with the people who matter most to her, she has also stepped up and shown that being a mom and a career woman is no easy task.

As a result of her high-profile relocation to Texas, eyebrows have raised at the role gender has played in her situation. Hughes has been received both warmly and harshly by the media. Some criticize her for abandoning President Bush during this turbulent time in America.

However, Hughes has been a key part of the White House staff and will continue to advise even after she leaves Washington. According to Bush, "Karen Hughes will be changing her address, but she will still be in my inner circle." He even goes so far as to support her decision with his personal insight of her devotion to family. In times like these, it is especially important to be involved in the lives of those closest to us. Hughes has taken the initiative in creating a better environment for her family, an action that should not be remembered only in the wake of tragedies. Indeed, it should be top priority on everyone's schedule.

Unfortunately, the need for money and possessions often puts quality family time on the back burner. Women are put in further complicated circumstances because of the simple desire for the best of both worlds — balancing a loving family and a successful career. Not to say men do not want the same, but society often identifies

GUEST COMMENTARY

Lindsey Newman

men as breadwinners, while women fall into the role of emotional supporters in the household. Women should theoretically be at home taking care of the kids. That is why it becomes increasingly difficult for women to get ahead in the business world.

According to a 2000 survey conducted by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, more than one-half of working women have no paid sick leave to care for a baby or an ill family member. One-third have no flexibility or control over their work hours, and a staggering 74 percent say their employers do not offer child care benefits.

Does anyone else suspect a conspiracy here? It is true that men may not receive these benefits either, but it is logical to conclude that if both husband and wife are employed, at least one should be able to provide child care. Perhaps the main reason men do not get these same "privileges" is simply that they do not ask for them.

Regardless of your opinion of Hughes' decision, if you think it frivolous or commendable, it is definitely a reality check. People — men or women — choosing to put their family on a pedestal is all too common today. I hope people see the positive side of Hughes' actions.

Lindsey Newman is a senior at Willamette High School and a spring intern for the Emerald. Her opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Fathers marginalized by Hughes' exit

GUEST COMMENTARY

Michael Lichens

Last week one of the most important women in Washington resigned in order to spend more time with her lawyer husband and 15-year-old son at their home in Austin, Texas. President George W. Bush's most trusted adviser, Karen Hughes, may have a noble reason for leaving, but it is typically something that can only occur with the women of Washington. It could also point to the increasing marginalization of fathers.

A top White House advisor leaving is not unheard of; during the Clinton Administration, America saw the president's domestic policy adviser, Bill Galston, leave for family reasons. What makes Hughes' situation unique is that the media took her resignation (and her reason for doing so) at face value and did not spin it politically. When Galston left office, many in the media took it as a sign he was failing his job or was caught in a scandal. It's true, when a man claims to leave his job to spend time with family, many suspect there is another reason. In the case of Hughes, however, I believe that she really does want to put family first.

The media's acceptance of Hughes wanting to spend time with her son and husband is, in many ways, something that would not occur with a male counterpart. U.S. News and World Report's Gloria Borgers has asked the question on many minds: "Would Hughes have to leave if she was a guy?" Most men don't have to leave work for family, and many times it is not even an option.

The media reaction to Hughes' decision has me wondering about the perception of father figures in America. The media will

jump on fathers wanting to leave their jobs for quality time with the kids, while it is almost expected from mothers. Father figures are often perceived as less important to the family structure than the mother figure, which is why Hughes is able to leave the political arena without much scrutiny. If Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld wanted to leave office to spend more time with his children, he'd likely be criticized.

It seems to me mothers in Washington are expected to raise children and keep the family together while fathers continue their careers. As counter-feminist as it may seem, family men of Washington are usually asked to sacrifice family time for their jobs because the mindset is still focused on mothers looking after the family.

The idea that fathers are not important is something that the Bush Administration has expressed by letting Hughes leave her top White House position. Even after years of progress by the women's rights movement, mothers are still expected to be the sole guardians and protectors of their children. Meanwhile, men are expected to provide for the family and continue their careers. Until that stigma has changed, and stay-at-home dads become more common, we can't really say we've changed.

Michael Lichens is a senior at Willamette High School and a spring intern for the Emerald. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Letter to the editor

Vote Castillo to support public education

I was glad to see that The Register-Guard had the wisdom to endorse Susan Castillo as the most qualified candidate for school superintendent. As its endorsement pointed out, Castillo is well-known and well-respected in this area because of her past media experience and her past service in Salem representing the people.

Rob Kremer, who is being supported by Bill Sizemore, is using a computerized phone message to falsely state that Castillo is a member of the extreme left. Castillo is not an extreme anything.

As a person who has spent most of my working career in the field of education and who presently represents Springfield on the Lane Community College Board of Trustees, I know that Castillo is a supporter of public education and that Kremer is not. Our schools are all facing the necessity of making major cuts, because in large part of the efforts of Bill Sizemore and his supporters.

To me, the race represents a clear and stark choice. If you want your schools to have their budgets cut further, then vote for Kremer, the Sizemore clone. However, if you value education and recognize the importance of public education to your children and the economy of Oregon, vote for Susan Castillo.

Dennis Shine
 Springfield

CORRECTION

David Zev Harris' name was spelled incorrectly in Thursday's news brief about his visit to campus ("Reporter to speak on Middle East conflict," ODE, May 9).

The Emerald regrets the error.

Peter Utsey Emerald



"IT'S TIME FOR A REVISION."