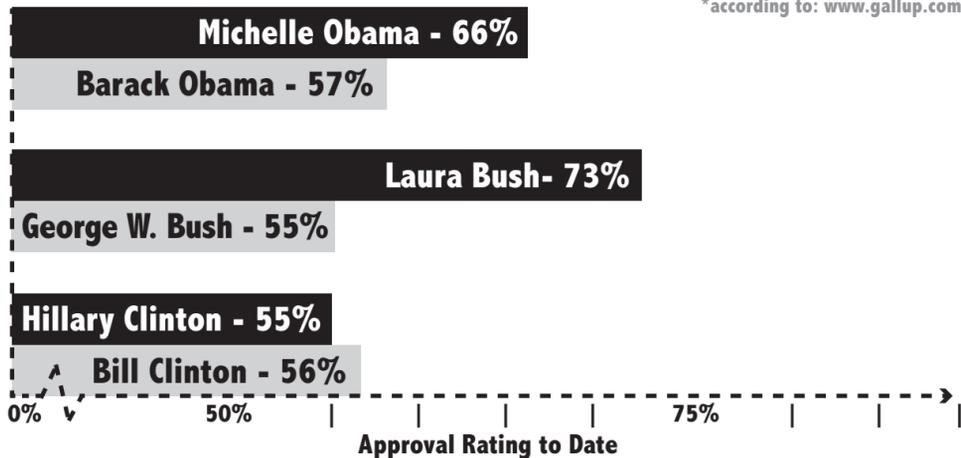


Average Favorable Ratings of President and First Lady

*according to: www.gallup.com



Boy Scouts shouldn't be misjudged



Robert Overmann

As an Eagle Scout of Troop 311 of Jackson, Mo., I can attest to the challenges of Boy Scouts. I've backpacked through the wilderness, camped during frigid conditions and was forced to live and cooperate with others. One challenge I never dealt with, however, was an abusive adult leader.

Recently, the Boy Scouts have faced a wave of negative publicity as claims of covering up sexual abuse have surfaced. From 1970 to 1991, there have been "more than 125 cases across the country in which men allegedly continued to molest Scouts after the organization was first presented with detailed allegations of abusive behavior," according to an Aug. 5 L.A. Times article. During my time in Scouts, I occasionally heard jeers too vulgar to print claiming Boy Scouts is an organization of child molesters.

Let me be clear: those who abuse children, sexually or otherwise, deserve to be punished to the fullest extent of the law. That said, are 125 cases of mishandled alleged sexual abuse actually statistically significant? During 1973, Boy Scouts saw its peak enrollment of 4.8 million Scouts — almost double the 2.7 million Scouts enrolled today, according to a Feb. 18 Washington Post article. Let's be honest — 125 cases of mishandled abuse throughout decades of Scouting and tens of millions of Scouts is barely a percentage point.

This misleading statistic, however, undoubtedly will alarm parents and prospective Scouts alike. It will perpetuate the stereotype of Scout leaders as child molesters and deter adults from taking part in their son's personal growth out of fear of being labeled a sexual deviant. Personally, I have never come into contact with an adult Scout leader who wanted anything other than to help young men to become mature, responsible adults. To these leaders, my own father included, I'm endlessly thankful.

I've learned essential survival skills, personal responsibility, gained a strong work ethic and developed my own well-thought-out sense of morality. I've made promises to be a lifelong friend and developed a passion for the outdoors. Camping with my troop, friends and father was, for a time, what I looked forward to most. I had the opportunity to learn to sail and travel outside of the country for the first time. I enjoyed what possibly was the best and most challenging two weeks of my life when I attended Philmont Scout Ranch, backpacking close to 100 miles in the New Mexican wilderness with nothing other than my friends and the supplies on my back. Scouting gave me the confidence to pursue and explore what I wanted to.

I'm a firm believer in the Scouting program. I cherish its impact upon my personal life and credit it largely for my personal development. I feel as if my experience is not the exception, but the rule.

I'm nothing short of bitter about the Scout executives and adult leaders who made the cowardly decision, in direct violation of the Law and Oath they supposedly follow, to cover up these incidents. These leaders made a conscious decision to cover up incidents that darkened the futures of the Scouts involved and Boy Scouting as an organization.

To any youngsters who read this newspaper, I wholeheartedly encourage joining the Boy Scouts. Don't listen to any jeers you might hear from your friends. In any organization in which millions are involved, there will be wrongdoing. It is important to view these incidents as a fault of individuals, not the fault of the entire organization.

As I write this in front of the flag box I received at my Eagle Scout ceremony, I am reminded of the Scouting principles I, and all Scouts, have pledged our sacred honor to: to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent. Those involved in covering up the abuse of young men in Boy Scouts certainly don't embody these ideals. As a former Scout, please don't judge the organization by the misdeeds of these few.

Robert Overmann is a junior English major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.

First Ladies influence votes



Lacy Murphy

Today's presidential hopefuls have a secret weapon, and it's not a campaign staff or good fundraising — it's their wives.

They're more than a partner in life. They also are a political partner. While first ladies always have been a fascination, none have played such integral roles in the election campaign like political wives do today. They used to be just a pretty accessory, but now they are fully-fledged political power players. It's not good enough to merely stand next to her husband with perfect hair and a frozen smile as a politician's wife today.

If the role of the first lady has changed so much, why do we still keep our traditional perception of them? Our views about the actions of our first ladies need to change right along with their roles. We need to keep in mind that with every good deed they do, they also are doing it as a means of campaigning for their husband.

There's a special recipe for the role of

the modern first lady nowadays. She must appear to be a normal woman. A wife and a mother. She must be humble, yet confident, refined and eloquent, yet sincere. She has a quietness about her, but we all get the sense she also is tough as nails. She is a private person who has a certain reluctance that America finds absolutely enthralling. She speaks with a quiet charisma that captivates audiences and inspires those listening. She also must appear to believe so wholly in her husband's abilities to restore America to its original beauty that she is willing to sacrifice her normal life and privacy in duty to her country. And if this perception helps the president get reelected, then that's just an added bonus, right?

Face the facts, people — The first lady is a specially crafted public persona no more real than the President's public façade. At the Democratic National Convention, Michelle Obama said, "When people ask me whether being in the White House has changed my husband, I can honestly say that when it comes to his character, and his convictions and his heart, Barack Obama is still the same man I fell in love with all those years ago."

The first lady's modern role is to humanize her husband. She makes him seem more likable, softer, if you will. I'm not saying first ladies are simply wolves in sheep's clothing. Many of these women undoubtedly are committed to a better America. Voters just need to make sure it doesn't affect their voting because, according to recent data, it does.

Michelle Obama currently has a 66

percent approval rating, according to a May 2012 Gallup Poll, which makes her approval rating higher than the President himself. She also is more popular among Republicans and Independents than President Obama while Democrats viewed the President and first lady equally. This illustrates that even though voters of other parties might not approve of President Obama, they still can approve of his wife, which probably means President Obama's campaign team will use Mrs. Obama more in their efforts to win this year's election.

More women also plan to vote for President Obama in the upcoming Presidential election with 50 percent of women preferring him to other presidential candidates, while 42 percent of men prefer him, according to an August 2012 Gallup Poll. It would be in the best interests, therefore, to push Michelle Obama on women voters even more in hopes that more women will identify with her and thus vote for President Obama.

Be careful, voters. America's first ladies have done great things for this country. That is indisputable. However, the first lady doesn't run the country. Pay attention to the real political candidates. Learn what their platforms are and vote for the candidate who best reflects your values. This is a presidential race, not a Miss America pageant.

Lacy Murphy is a junior French major from Springfield, Mo.

How does the persona of the first lady influence your vote for president?

"It honestly doesn't affect my vote at all. What influences my vote is the stance of the candidate."

Jordan Young
Sophomore

"I think she has a bit of an effect on how we see the candidate, but she doesn't have a huge effect on my vote."

Caitlin Weiman
Sophomore

"I don't usually follow politics but I think Michelle Obama has a positive impact on Obama's campaign."

Krystn Nickolaus
Senior

"It doesn't affect how I vote. I look more at the policies than the personal life of the candidate."

Jay Godsy
Senior



AROUND THE QUAD

Secret recordings benefit democratic process



Adam Rollins

During May, Mitt Romney made some strongly controversial remarks to a private gathering of well-off campaign donors. Little did he know that behind two glass flower vases, a stack of napkins and a cute little peach candle, a video camera secretly was placed and began its stealthy recording even as Romney stood to introduce himself.

This video, recently released by motherjones.com, exhibits Romney having a candidly good time with his backers. As many already know, their open exchange included some politically-incorrect statements, includ-

ing Romney's rather honest assessment of the American voter spectrum. His — perhaps slightly skewed — opinions about Americans who depend on welfare included his statement that "47 percent of [Americans]... believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing," according to the full video transcript posted by Mother Jones.

First of all, how did we go four full months without hearing anything about this video? The owner of that camera was either saving the recording for a time when they could make some big bucks off of it, or they were a Democrat spy waiting for the right moment to unveil their secret weapon to media sensationalists nationwide. Secondly, the secret recording of an individual is ethically questionable at the least. We probably shouldn't be encouraging this sort of underhanded behavior.

And yet, I think this video is awesome. That makes me a hypocrite, but here's a list of reasons why you should agree with me anyway: one, this is just great material with high entertainment value. Two, this video basically sums up all the important issues being addressed during the 2012 presidential election from a fresh perspective. Three — and this is

the important one — leaks like this are a huge benefit to the democratic process.

These secretly recorded videos aren't going away. During the internet age, regardless of ethical concerns, these leaks are likely only to become more prevalent.

Normally, what we as citizens are exposed to are carefully scripted, media-focused press releases and rally speeches. The primary purpose of these cautiously-worded speeches is to say something without really saying anything, to make a very general statement devoid of any snippets that could be manipulated out of context. It's simply refreshing to hear an important politician actually elaborate about some of his plans, opinions and beliefs, even if he had to be secretly recorded to get the information.

This doesn't apply only to Romney. I would love to come across a clip of President Obama smoking a cigarette and telling Joe Biden what he really thinks of rich white people. I wish we could see embarrassing little videos like this all the time, from many different politicians and officials, because it gives us a more honest picture of the people we put in charge of our nation.

We need more videos like this because informed decision-making is the strong pil-

lar upon which our democracy is founded. Unfortunately, politicians are overly-hesitant to provide real information about themselves and overly-ready to vilify their opponents with nearly slanderous exaggerations. When I choose a representative, especially the guy who is going to be setting the national agenda for the next four years, I want an honest assessment of all their qualities, good and bad. Unfortunately, this is not the nature of politics. Voters are presented with polarized conceptions of the candidate — who is either a saint, according to his own party, or nothing short of a corrupt scumbag, according to the opposing party.

If the only way to get political candidates to openly express the really juicy details of their social, economic and foreign policy beliefs is to record them secretly, I suppose I'm willing to look the other way on such a questionably ethical practice. But it has to be done by an independently-minded conspirator. No party-sponsored espionage — that would just be playing dirty.

Adam Rollins is a sophomore communication major from St. Charles, Mo.