



Houston Objectivism Society

Vol.6, No. 1 January 1993 Newsletter

“Valuation Theory” at February Meeting

Chuck Earls will present a paper discussing mechanisms for making complex decisions. He will attempt to develop a framework applicable to both business and personal values. The paper answers the question “How do we make choices in full context?” in a personal situation, and ultimately “How do we properly place a value on a business” in a business context.

Chuck’s work on this topic originated in questions related to his own profession, which consists of buying and selling businesses. The paper is a status report on his thinking on this topic, and he welcomes feedback from HOS members. It may be helpful for attendees to review Ayn Rand’s article “The Objectivist Ethics” (the first article in *The Virtue of Selfishness*) prior to the meeting. In addition, Chuck would like to send his formal paper to attendees for reading prior to the meeting. For that purpose, please RSVP Chuck prior to Feb 20 at

The meeting will be held on Saturday, February 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the apartment clubhouse of Brian and Dawn Phillips (see map on page five). *The earlier time is intended to allow more opportunity for socializing after the paper presentation.*

Xmas Party

In December Joe and Mollye Blackburn hosted a Christmas party for HOS members at their beautiful home in River Oaks. Party goers were treated with drinks and a buffet featuring a wide variety of dishes. These included pork with tonnato sauce; honey baked ham; Italian chicken; Italian sausage in crust; shrimp dip; cookies and carrots, celery and cauliflower pickled by Joe and Mollye.

After a period of friendly socializ-

ing, serious attitudes developed for the progressive gift exchange. Numbers were drawn to determine the sequence of picking gifts, with each participant free to open a new gift or expropriate any gift previously opened. Needless to say, the drawing was accompanied by grim gnashing of teeth, occasional hysterical outbursts and greedy giggles. As gift selection progressed, the Blackburns locked the doors for “security” reasons. Even so, a certain bachelor attempted to leave, after selecting his gift, in order to tend to his “sick daughter”.

At the end of the gift exchange, everyone pitched in to help the Blackburns restore furniture to the upright position, and the party continued. Most of the participants were pleased, although I haven’t seen such a hair-pulling scrap over a box of chocolates since watching my sisters fight over entry to the bathroom.

Actually, there’s a chance that I may have possibly...exaggerated a little bit about this party. But it was a treat for all. Thanks, Joe and Mollye, for a lovely time.

Ayn Rand at Your Local Theatre

by
Dwyane Hicks

(Thanks to Yaron Brook for providing additional news releases.)

Atlas Shrugged

The January 1993 issue of *The Intellectual Activist* announced the following:

ATLAS PRODUCTIONS, a newly formed, four-member firm, has purchased from the Estate of Ayn Rand the film rights to *Atlas Shrugged*. The principals are: Karen Arthur (a top-level director of television series [“Cagney and Lacey”], feature films, and mini-series [“The Jacksons: An American Dream”]), Craig Anderson (producer of many Broadway shows, films, and Hallmark Hall of Fame movies), Gloria Alter (a theatrical producer who general-managed “Penthouse

Legend” in New York City), and John Agliodoro (Chairman and CEO of United Medical Corporation). As reported in *Daily Variety* (December 3, 1992), “[Mr.] Anderson said the project shapes up as an ‘enormous movie,’ potentially budgeted in the \$40-\$50 million range.” The movie will be a feature film, not a mini-series, with a minimum length of three hours.

Also from *Variety*, according to Anderson, “the writer’s assignment is open.”

This is the second time *Atlas Shrugged* has been sold, the first time to American Spectator, reportedly for \$600,000 (*Daily Variety*, April 20, 1988).

At this time, there is scant information on which to speculate about the prospects of *Atlas Shrugged*, the movie. Of the four partners of Atlas Productions, at least two are supportive of Objectivism, Alter and Agliodoro.

Producer Anderson and director Arthur have previously worked together on the CBS movies *A Bump in the Night* and *The Secret*. In addition, Karen Arthur has directed the following movies: *My Sister, My Love* in 1976, with Carol Kane and Lee Grant; *The Cage* in 1978; *Return to Eden* in 1983, an Australian television mini-series; *Lady Beware* in 1987, with Diane Lane and *Bridge to Silence* in 1989, a television movie with Marlee Matlin.

Of these, I’ve seen only *Return to Eden* and *Lady Beware*, but, at the risk of hasty generalization, it might be informative to examine characteristics of these movies, especially since movies are dominated by the director.

Return to Eden is a revenge story, featuring a homely but rich woman who

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has been, unknown to her, married for her money. The woman is then betrayed in a non-subtle way: her husband and her girl friend from childhood throw her into a river to be eaten by crocodiles.

After surviving this ordeal, the heroine is not only patched up but secretly made anew by a plastic surgeon. She returns to her old surroundings with a new face and identity, provoking passion from her previous mate and eliciting envy from her childhood friend. From there, the heroine takes her revenge.

The story is well told, without wallowing in sentiment, but the production values are sometimes off, due perhaps to their source being Australian television. And this source is probably the reason for the movie's greatest fault--its second half seems as interminable as Clinton's inauguration proceedings.

Lady Beware, a theatrical release, does not suffer from the same padding. Diane Lane (the prostitute in *Lonesome Dove*) arrives in the big city and forges her own career with dramatic department store layouts, which attract not only the attention of customers but also that of your typical neurotic stalker.

Both movies feature a victimized heroine who makes a conscious decision to fight back, and does so on her own terms, i.e., without depending on a man and without resorting to self-destructive methods. Both movies focus on values and on values of character. Gratuitous violence, sex and expletives are absent, but Arthur is no prude. In fact, the implicit base of conflict between the protagonists in *Lady Beware* is their different views of sex, hers--special and celebratory, his--guilt-laden and condemnatory.

Both movies are competent but not excellent, but neither are their scripts. Given such scripts as building material, Arthur proves herself to be a competent, civilized story teller, with a thoughtful appreciation for values and dramatic underlining. My movie guide describes one of her movies, which I haven't seen, as somewhat melodramatic. This term is currently

used in an ambiguous way. Properly, such a criticism should be applied when the value of the subject does not measure up to its emotional treatment, e.g., as with the treatment resulting from any daytime soap's estimate of having a baby. But the criticism of being melodramatic is usually the result of cynicism, a jaundiced view exemplified by Paul Newman's view of *Star Wars* as superficial and unhuman or the widespread attack on *Flashdance* for being "unrealistic". Thus, the criticism of "melodramatic" is often actually a positive distinction.

Arthur's movies remain fixed on dramatizing the conflicts of value, rather than emphasizing the sensational concretes. Thus her movies are somewhat more "quiet" but more substantive than most. The two endings of *Fatal Attraction*, not an Arthur movie, provide an example of the different approaches. The story involves a dangerous but pitiful woman who becomes a threat to a family. In making the movie, two endings were filmed: one in which the woman realizes what she has become and commits suicide, leaving the audience to contemplate her tragedy. The other ending turns her into the-monster-who-will-not-die, a cliché of suspense from horror movies, drawing all focus away from the meaning of the story. Had Arthur directed the movie, I'm sure that the second ending would not have even been filmed.

I can't speak to the prospects of the script for *Ailas Shrugged*, but the participation of Karen Arthur as director is encouraging.

The Fountainhead

Another prospect for theatrical release is the re-make of *The Fountainhead*. The following was released by BPI Entertainment News Wire on September 12, 1992:

Director Phil Joanou has been set to helm writer-producer James Hill's upcoming theatrical remake of *The Fountainhead*, which the duo plans to take to the studios after a final draft of the script is completed this fall.

Hill has just completed a first draft of the screenplay, adapted from Ayn Rand's classic 1943 love story of architecture and politics.

The film was originally made by Warner Brothers in 1949, with King Vidor directing Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal.

Though no casting has been set, Hill said, "If I can get a Jack Nicholson to play Wynand, the rest of the movie will cast itself."

I've seen no further information about this project, but my first reaction is negative in regard to the producer's estimate of Wynand as the crucial character to cast: shades of *Batman*, where the evil Joker and Penguin metaphysically dominate the story (a currently wide-spread phenomenon, derived, as Ayn Rand has observed, from altruism's view of good as impotent).

As a director, Hill is most known for *Born Free*, the most successful of four movies made by Hill about animals.

Joanou is the director of *U2: Rattle and Hum*, a stylized documentary of a rock concert tour; *Three O'Clock High*, a teen version of *High Noon*, and *State of Grace*, his first big-budget movie. I haven't seen *Three O'Clock High*, but *State of Grace* is a gritty story of an undercover cop who returns to his Irish neighborhood to grapple with thieves and murderers, his childhood friends. Like Terry Malloy, the character played by Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront*, the protagonist must choose between principle and "the old neighborhood". But where Malloy, a thug, is won over by the manifest need for principle; the undercover cop in *State of Grace* cannot bring himself to jeopardize his "friend", a freaked-out perennial drunk, who beats up loan-shark debtors and blithely murders for his boss.

Where *On the Waterfront* has eloquence and moral authority, *State of Grace* has gutter language and angst. And the undercover cop is finally able to act only when the source of his conflict is removed from consideration by means of the cop's own incompetence. (As a side note of interest to fans of Ayn Rand, who was one of the "friendly witnesses" before the House Un-American Activities Committee, *On the Waterfront* was director Elia Kazan's defense of such anti-communists, in metaphorical form.)

Maybe I'm missing something, but I would expect a superficial

understanding and appreciation for *The Fountainhead* from Hill and Joanou, based on the foregoing. One imagines Roark, barefoot with long hair, a "left-brained creative type" in front of the dean, a "right-brained analytical type". Roark goes to work but quickly comes into conflict with "materialistic corporate stooges", who want him to compromise. How about Madonna as Dominique? She has blond hair and she's been certified as unconventional...

It's not pleasant to project such scenarios, but of such are the possibilities. At this point, my money is on Atlas Productions, and no news about *The Fountainhead* may be good news.

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Investing in Tomorrow

by
Joe Blackburn

The Ayn Rand Institute was founded to help spread Ayn Rand's philosophy, Objectivism; but only about 50% of the Houston membership makes annual donations.

Bringing about a radical change in the intellectual foundations of the culture and, ultimately, a free and rational society depends, to a certain degree, on the effective efforts of the Institute.

For the Institute to be successful, it needs donations to fund its operations and programs. Each HOS member should support the Ayn Rand Institute by making a donation every year. Your donation is one of the best investments you can make in spreading Objectivism. Send your donation to:

The Ayn Rand Institute
4640 Admiralty Way, Suite 715
Marina del Rey, CA 90292

HOW CONTRIBUTIONS ADVANCED OBJECTIVISM IN 1992 (Provided by ARI)

IN HIGH SCHOOLS: ARI received nearly 4,000 entries in the 1992 *Fountainhead* Essay Contest, mostly from students reading Ayn Rand for the first

time. ARI introduced an *Anthem* Essay Contest for 9th and 10th graders and sent announcements for the 1993 contests to 60,000 teachers and 5,000 students. ARI sent 15,000 *Fountainhead* Guides and 6,000 *Anthem* Guides to teachers of English literature.

AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: Supported 95 campus clubs, including clubs at Stanford, Michigan, NYU, Duke, and British Columbia. Arranged and helped finance 40 live talks and debates by John Ridpath, George Reisman, and other members of ARI's Speakers Bureau, bringing Objectivism to thousands of students and faculty across the U.S. and Canada. Sent 80,000 pamphlets and other printed materials to clubs for distribution at club events and information tables, bringing the total number to nearly 300,000 since ARI began. Published and distributed study/discussion questions to use with seven ARI video tapes. Published and distributed to clubs a suggested reading list on Objectivism and two new "anti-political correctness" articles: "Western Civilization vs. Primitivism and Ethnicity" by Michael Berliner and "The Enemies of Christopher Columbus" by Thomas A. Bowden.

AMONG GRADUATE STUDENTS: Began a new series of doctoral-level seminars in philosophy taught by Harry Binswanger to a new group of eight graduate students. Three former members taught courses at the "Objectivism '92" conference in Williamsburg, VA.

AMONG UNIVERSITY FACULTY: Continued promotion of Leonard Peikoff's *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* with ad campaigns in 18 academic journals.

TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC: Prepared and distributed Op-Ed articles on buying American as un-American and on the Christopher Columbus controversy. The articles were printed in 25 daily newspapers with a combined circulation of more than 5 million readers. Published an article in a real estate magazine on the immorality of

rent control. In addition, ARI was the subject of a 2,500 word article in *Los Angeles Magazine* and a short article in the *Los Angeles Sunday Times Magazine*.

OUTSIDE NORTH AMERICA: Delivered to a Moscow publisher--for publication in early December--the Russian-language text of *The Morality of Individualism*, the collection of key Ayn Rand articles on ethics and politics, and began planning an essay contest based on this volume. Provided pamphlets and tapes to Objectivist groups in England, India, Israel, Australia, and Scandinavia. Financed a special *Fountainhead* Essay Contest in India.

TO ARI DONORS: Hosted a banquet in April to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the publication of *Atlas Shrugged*, including talks by leading Objectivists on the history of the novel.

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"Preaching to the Converted"

by
Warren Ross

Recently I attended a social gathering that was attended predominantly by Objectivists. On two occasions during the evening, someone used the phrase "preaching to the converted" or "preaching to the choir" during conversation. I have heard this phrase used over the years, usually by Libertarians who wish to imply that Objectivists only talk to themselves, but I was dismayed to hear it from Objectivists.

Anti-concept

This phrase is a combination of an anti-concept and an ad hominem attack. Like all anti-concepts, it is a package deal: It has an alleged meaning coupled with an actual meaning, and attempts to combine the two and damn both. The alleged meaning refers to the occasional failure of individuals to identify the context of knowledge of their audience (see below for religious

implications). Such failures to identify the context of an audience may occur for a couple of reasons: Because of the complexity of the issue, one might simply forget to take one's audience into account fully. Also, one may have taken great pride in learning a valid answer to the issue and is thereby tempted to demonstrate one's achievement. In any case, a person may be telling his audience something it knows already. This is the characteristic of those poor writers and speakers who have little original to say but wish nonetheless to have an audience (or find themselves thrust in front of one).

The **actual** meaning of the phrase is: discussions among Objectivists. Conceptually, it is important to distinguish between the second-rate writer/speaker referred to above and the completely appropriate study group discussion, in which members engage in detailed discussion or chewing of philosophical points they already know on some level. In these groups (or at least the better ones), something new is being said: New concretizations are made, new implications and integrations of existing ideas are identified within the members' context of knowledge. These groups are engaged in **understanding**, not repetition. But this fundamental distinction is obliterated by the "preaching to the converted" phrase.

It is further crucial to distinguish between the second-rate writer/speaker and the world-class scholarship and discussion that goes on at the Objectivist professional conferences like the Jefferson School or Conceptual Conferences. Naturally, to discuss Objectivism at the high level of these conferences, the audience must consist of only Objectivists, preferably those advanced in the subject. At these conferences, almost everyone in the audience has studied Objectivism for years. They come, not to hear Objectivism repeated, but to feed their hunger for knowledge and intellectual kinship, which can only be satisfied by the professional thinkers who are the leaders of the Objectivist movement. (Rational people may disagree about how much of the professional Objectivists' time should be devoted to teaching other

Objectivists advanced material versus teaching non-Objectivists about the essence of Objectivism. However, professional Objectivists such as Michael Berliner and members of the ARI Speakers Bureau devote a large percentage of their time to teaching outsiders the rudiments of Objectivism. In addition, teaching other Objectivists advanced knowledge improves the students' ability to make articulate assaults on the harmful aspects of our culture.)

Again, the "preaching to the converted" package deal fails to make a proper distinction, and lumps all who discuss Objectivism together. The hack or neophyte who incompetently rehashes his dim grasp of Objectivist ideas is lumped together with Leonard Peikoff and George Reisman (and in past years with Ayn Rand herself): All are said to be "preaching to the converted" because there may be substantial numbers of people in the audience who already agree with some of what they are saying. To lump together such disparate individuals--philosophers with confused teenagers, Objectivist scholars with mere admirers of Ayn Rand's books--is to engage in definition by nonessentials, with "discussion with those who agree with some or all of your ideas" as the mistaken defining characteristic. Such a definition can have no legitimate cognitive value, and in actuality is used to damn the many proper and valuable forms of discussion by associating them with simple rehashing.

Ad hominem

But the "preaching to the converted" package-dealers go much further. This is the ad hominem part of the combination, referred to earlier. As the language implies, the phrase is intended to smuggle in the idea that Objectivism is a religion. The image conjured up by the phrase is that of a religious authority dispensing dogma to an unquestioning audience. Those who understand Objectivism know that this characterization is false and malicious, and they should never use the phrase (or tolerate its use) for that reason alone.

There are two types of individuals who may use this phrase, and I have

advice for each. The first are those who actually do believe Objectivism is a religion. My advice is: Why don't you come right out and say it? Then see if you can defend that idea. And see if you will be sanctioned by those who actually do understand and live by Objectivism. Of course, I don't expect such individuals to accept my advice. The very reason they use a package deal is that they are dishonest and wish to smuggle in their ideas casually in conversation without debate. (They also use a plethora of other such phrases: "hard-core Objectivists", "Rand-worshippers" and "ex-communication".)

The second type of individual who may use this phrase is someone who is an authentic Objectivist, but who unthinkingly picked up the phrase from those who invented it. To this individual, my advice is: Check your premises and pay more attention to the precision of your concepts. Don't let your intellectual enemies dictate your ideas by the slogans they use. If you think someone is merely repeating ideas in a context in which his audience already knows them (this does indeed occur), then say that. Try to convince the person to change his presentation, or change his audience. But don't adopt the package deal yourself. In " 'Extremism' or The Art of Smearing", Ayn Rand wrote:

"Let me remind you that the purpose of a definition is to distinguish the things subsumed under a single concept from all other things in existence; and, therefore, their defining characteristic must always be that essential characteristic which distinguishes them from everything else.

So long as men use language, *that* is the way they will use it. There is *no* other way to communicate. And if a man accepts a term with a definition by non-essentials, his mind will substitute for it the *essential* characteristic of the objects he is trying to designate."

Thus the very real psycho-epistemological danger of using an intellectual package deal is that it inevitably leads you to damn the hidden actual meaning (Objectivist discussions and conferences) by associating it with the obviously blameworthy meaning (religion or context-dropping).

Finally, I have some advice for

those who hear this phrase in conversation. You may not agree with the implications of the phrase, and wouldn't use it yourself; yet, you are puzzled by it and don't know how to respond, especially when it goes by (as it usually does) in a blizzard of casual conversation. My advice is: **Don't let it go unchallenged.** You can challenge it politely, especially if you don't know which of the two types of individuals you are dealing with. Simply say: "I noticed a few minutes ago that you used the phrase 'preaching to the converted/choir'. Considering that this phrase has two concepts in it that are derived from and are solely applicable to religion, I was wondering in what way you thought the phrase refers to Objectivism?" This challenge should make the innocent person stop and question his use of the phrase. The very open-endedness of the question should give the dishonest person enough rope to hang himself, either by causing him to state his premise explicitly or by causing him to engage in such obvious evasion that you know what his views actually are anyway. And in either case you will have the satisfaction of knowing you stopped, or at least checked, the spread of a harmful catch-phrase within our own movement. \$

gated to selflessly provide that kind of massive social transition even if it were possible.

The very process that Somalia, and much of Africa, needs is the one that Africans rejected thirty years ago when they kicked out European colonists and the principles of Western civilization. Africans have been starving and slaughtering one another ever since.

The only country with the means of helping Somalia--the United States--was itself the result of colonization, *a process whereby the values of Western civilization are brought to a land, the values which, in the words of Dr. Michael Berliner of the Ayn Rand Institute, "make human life possible: reason, science, self-reliance, individualism, ambition, productive achievement."* The successful experience of America, a land of all races, and the disaster of Somalia show that these values are values for all people and that multiculturalism is dangerously wrong: Western principles are needed by people of all races and languages, and inferior cultures are deadly.

Contrary to the detractors of Christopher Columbus, his voyage of discovery is still needed, not only to the shores of Africa but to university classrooms.
Dwyane Hicks

derstand Hicks' views, one must understand what is meant by tribalism and Western ideals.

Tribalism is the result of rule by brute force.

Philosophically, it is the product of irrationalism and collectivism.

If men accept the notion that reason is not valid, what will be left to guide them and how are they to live?

Obviously they will seek to join any group which claims the ability to lead and provide some sort of knowledge acquired by some sort of unspecified means.

Western ideals are fueled by three inexhaustible sources of energy: the sanctity of human life, individual rights and objective law.

The United States was founded and once flourished under these principles. Although it has fallen short in some areas (individual rights, for example), we should nevertheless still try to achieve them.

The so-called "ethnic cleansing" that is going on in Serbia and the gangs that robbed, pillaged and burned in the Los Angeles riots are no different from the various gangs that are starving their fellow countrymen in Somalia. These atrocities are the height of tribalism, not Western ideals or cultural elitism.

Dale Schwartz



Text shown in italics was dropped by the newspaper editor.

Houston Chronicle--12/14/92

The introduction of American troops into Somalia is a fitting cap to the presidency of George Bush: pragmatic, unthinking and indifferent to long-term consequences for the U.S.

Even expatriate Somalians seem to be more concerned for the future than our government officials. They know that however successful our mission will be, it will be brief and superficial.

Turning a land dominated by tribalism into a society which appreciates and recognizes the sanctity of human life and individual rights is not a two month process, and no country is obli-

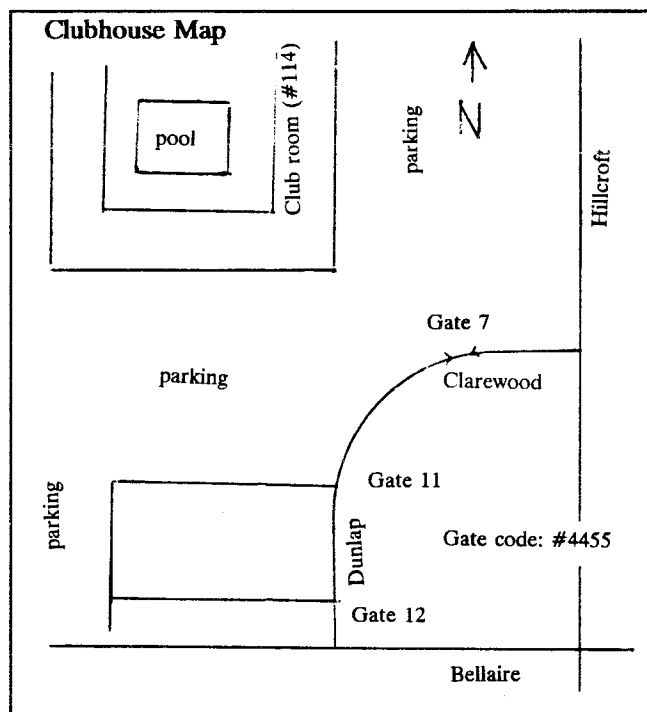
Houston Chronicle--1/12/93

Regarding Dwyane Hicks' Dec. 14 letter concerning tribalism and Western ideals and the subsequent criticism he received from K. Osayande (Dec. 24), who stated that Hicks' views are the height of cultural elitism:

Osayande completely missed Hicks' point.

Hicks' views that Somalia needs less tribalism and more Western ideals is right on the mark.

In order to un-



Announcements

\$ Any signatures you might have for the zoning referendum should be sent to Dwyane Hicks at this time. (No amount is too small.) Five thousand more are being gathered. Other activities by the Houston Property Rights Association include the hiring of a man to lobby and inform city officials and reporters about the zoning issue. You may have noticed from local news stories that the public is starting to notice how zoning will adversely affect them.

\$ We welcome announcements or advertising, whether for business or personal items, such as selling a car. You will be charged a fee, mutually agreed upon, only if our display results in a sale.

\$ Our readership includes many subscribers outside of Texas. We welcome the submission of articles from all subscribers.

\$ Publisher Bob Stubblefield and editor Linda Reardan are doing a great job with *The Intellectual Activist*. While maintaining its schedule, TIA continues to provide subscribers with articles which educate and entertain. The January issue featured a portion of Ayn Rand's set of instructions to the director of *The Fountainhead*, "Freedom of Opportunity, Not Equality of Opportunity", an excerpt from Dr. George Reisman's forthcoming book, *Capitalism: A Treatise on Economics* and "Pragmatism and the Harvard Case Method of Business Education", an article by Dr. Jerry Kirkpatrick. Subscriptions are \$24 for one year (six issues) in the U.S. at TIA Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 262, Lincroft, NJ 07738-0262.



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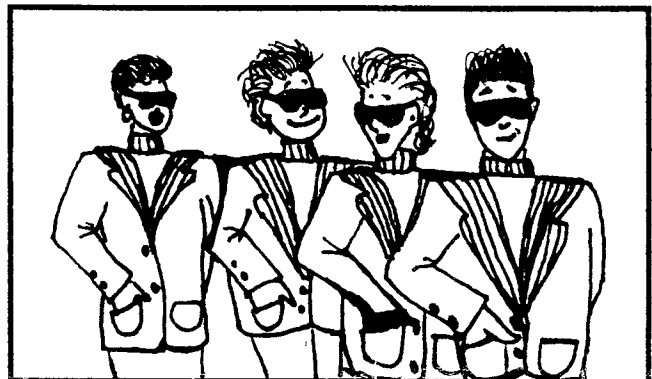
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Brian Phillips Dawn Phillips

Al Truist and Friends

by Dawn and Brian Phillips



Meet Calvin Lective. His friends call him Cal.
He's cool! He's together!
He's not afraid to be different.
Just ask him--he'll tell you...



...or better yet, ask his friends.

HOS President *Warren S. Ross*
Editor: *Dwyane Hicks*

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Dwyane Hicks
J. Brian Phillips
Warren S. Ross

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