

Pornography is threat to moral, social climate

BY PAT TRUEMAN

AFA Director of Governmental Affairs

Twenty years ago, there was little in the way of a battle against illegal pornography. The Department of Justice considered pornography matters to be "victimless crimes." Hugh Hefner was an American icon but was considered too tame for the rapidly changing sexual appetite of those who consumed pornography. Thus, more explicit magazines like Larry Flynt's *Hustler* or Bob Guccione's *Penthouse* gobbled up much of *Playboy*'s market share and a more than ample number of new consumers to earn each perverted entrepreneur the title "porn king."

A sexual revolution was raging in America and pornography seemed to be everywhere, in theaters, in bookstores, on cable television, in hotel rooms and in most every convenience store. Something called "dial-a-porn" was being introduced for those who just couldn't get enough pornography elsewhere.

THE MEESE ROARED, THE DONKEY IGNORED

Ten years ago, a war on pornography was declared by Edwin Meese III, President Ronald Reagan's attorney general. Meese marshaled the forces of three federal investigative agencies - FBI, Customs, and the Postal Inspection Service - along with prosecutors in the 94 U.S. Attorney's offices throughout the country to aid in the war. Many of the major producers and distributors of hard-core pornography were successfully prosecuted and put out of business. Child pornography prosecutions too were dramatically increased. For a time the expansion of the pornography industry was halted. There was hope.

Five years ago, two forces in America converged to dramatically increase the volume and accessibility of pornography. Those forces were the Internet and Bill Clinton. The Internet is a series of interconnecting computers capable of storing vast libraries of material available to anyone with a computer and a phone line anywhere in the world. It is filled with pornography. Bill Clinton is, of course, President of the United States. His presidency began just as the Internet boomed. He ended the war on pornography, and he did so at precisely the time when that war should have been greatly expanded.

On the Internet anyone, even a child, can find *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Hustler*, and dozens of other pornographic magazines complete with pictures. An unlimited supply of pornography can also be easily viewed in what are called Usenet Newsgroups. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of pornographic Usenet Newsgroups titled and categorized according to content. There are Newsgroups designed to appeal to any sexual fetish imaginable, and many that are not imaginable. Men who wouldn't humiliate themselves by entering a porn shop now have a porn shop in their homes, their offices, or wherever their computers are located. Children are barred from entering porn shops, yet most have no barriers of entry to the Internet. Pornography has always threatened families. Now, Internet pornography threatens nearly every family.

President Clinton didn't explicitly declare a truce in the war on pornography. Instead he appointed people with little or no interest in fighting that war to the office of attorney general and to the 94 U.S. Attorney's positions throughout the country. U.S. Attorneys are the chief federal law enforcement officials. There are still some prosecutions but not enough to give those in the pornography industry reason for concern. Pornographers know the war is over.



Pat and Laura Trueman with (l to r) Claire, Elizabeth and Patrick.

During these past 20 years American Family Association has waged its own war on pornography, never counting on the efforts of the government to get the job done. There has been no let up in our war.

It's hard to imagine what America will be like in another 20 years if the federal government and concerned citizens don't also wage war

on pornography. Please get involved. Here are some things that you can do:

1. Let the President and attorney general know you want more pornography prosecutions - a lot more.
2. Let the manager of the convenience store, bookstore, hotel, or other businesses you patronize know how you feel about pornography. Be polite, but firm, and let them know you will take your business elsewhere unless their pornography policy changes. Organized efforts get the best results, so involve your church or civic organizations in your efforts.
3. If you have sexually-oriented businesses in your town contact the AFA Law Center to get help. The law may be on your side. Find out. Often such businesses can be regulated and even closed. A sexually-oriented business is a blight on neighborhoods just as pornography is a blight on minds.
4. If you have cable television, avoid HBO and Showtime channels. They carry pornography, even hard-core pornography, several times each week. Other channels may carry pornography as well and should be avoided. Remember, federal law requires that cable systems carrying *Playboy*, *Spice*, or other all-pornography channels must completely block video and audio for nonsubscribers. If your cable system doesn't, contact the Federal Communications Commission (see the June issue of the *AFA Journal*).
5. Know what your kids are doing when they are on the computer. If you want Internet access, find a "clean" access provider. There are some that will block pornography and other objectionable material.

What will America be like in another 20 years? Let's not wait to find out. Let's make it what we want it to be. 