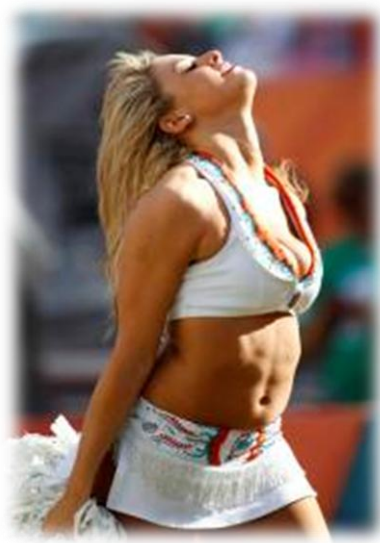


# Guest column: Cheerleaders or pole dancers?

Scott Lilley

I recently attended a high school football game - and a pole dancing routine broke out.

Were you there? Did you applaud? I didn't. It broke my heart.



Thump, thump, thump went the beat. Bump, bump, bump went the rumps of the dance team brought out to entertain us at halftime. There were about 10 of them, all young ladies mostly under the age of 18. As I sat watching this talented group - for,

indeed, they were rhythmically gifted - I wondered if anyone else observing the spectacle before us was thinking what I was thinking: Is this right? I mean, right in the moral sense? Along with the rump bumps were chest shimmies, hip thrusts, hand slides and come-hither looks. In other words, the kind of sensuous mechanics you'd expect to find at a strip club.

The girls are not perpetrators, they are victims. They are innocent bystanders engulfed by a tidal wave of self-indulgence unleashed in the late '60s. Forty years later, the result is a country drowning in a sea of narcissism. Once-revered traits such as modesty and humility have been slowly eroded, indeed replaced, by the daily lapping of vainglory and pride.

I guess they get this stuff from pop culture, mostly television, aka the boob tube or idiot box - a device so influential on social mores that a wise society would do well to regard it no less dangerous and powerful than Pandora's Box. Well, we blew that, didn't we?

The kind of behavior once reserved for burlesque shows, seedy bars and men's social clubs now is proudly paraded in front of parents at football games.

I suppose nobody cares anymore. They once cared, about a generation or so ago, I guess. But it appears

they've given up. That part of the population that believed virtue and good taste mattered, the Silent Majority as President Nixon once called it, has, for the most part, acquiesced to Hollywood vulgarities.

The reprobate is now normative.

It's nothing new. Societies tend to devolve toward their base nature unless kept in check by a higher moral virtue. The early Christian apologist Tertullian, writing circa 200 AD, lamented the deterioration of morality in Roman society: "What has become of the laws . . . that put down the theaters as quickly as they arose to debauch the manners of the people?"

In America, that higher moral virtue was represented by the Judeo-Christian ethos. Not any longer. Those values, once the very backbone of our society, have been minimized, marginalized, mocked. And it shows, doesn't it?

Like the proverbial frog placed in a pot of cold water and then slowly boiled to death without realizing its imminent demise, American culture is no different. It's become acclimated and desensitized to bad taste. So much so that parents at high school football games now applaud underage, teenage girls proudly "struttin' their stuff" in skin-tight outfits with bellies on full display.

Is this right? Do school administrators think this is right? Or are they victims as well, squinting to locate Moral North through the gauzy haze of behavioral relativism? Adults should be setting the standards, saying here's the line, don't cross it. But are there lines anymore? Come to think of it, are there adults anymore?

I have a very liberal and liberated female friend, a mother of three, who is appalled at what she sees. She wonders just how far the

women's liberation movement has really come when American culture is infested with young women displaying their wares like prostitutes on the front porch of a brothel. She says if this kind of behavior were going on in the home, adults would be arrested for child abuse. A bit of hyperbole perhaps, but a point well taken.

So, 16-year-old Susie and her friends now flaunt their sexuality in public to suggestive lyrics fueled by a driving backbeat and a hip-hoppy bass line. A generation or two ago, parents would have dragged their children off by their ears if they saw such histrionics performed in public.

Now they applaud.

I didn't. I wanted to cry instead. Did you?

**Scott Lilley lives in York Township.**

*The author says American culture has become acclimated and desensitized to bad taste. High school cheerleader routines have become as blatantly sexual as pro football cheerleaders. Here, a Miami Dolphins cheerleader is shown during a game against the Philadelphia Eagles. (AP)*