

etc.

[PEOPLE ■ PLACES ■ WHATNOT]

humans in the news Associated Press

Making TV a turnoff

AUGUSTA, Maine — He made his name as a local public TV show host. Now Gov. Angus King is borrowing an idea straight from late-night television to encourage kids to turn off the tube.

King, longtime host of Maine Public Television's "MaineWatch," was the first governor to endorse the national TV Turnoff Week campaign scheduled for next week.

Borrowing from David Letterman, King has offered a Top 10 list of alternative activities, starting with "Read a book." Other ideas include asking people over 80 what they did before TV was invented and shooting hoops with a friend. He also tried to draw attention to possible links between TV viewing and violence, poor performance in school and other problems.

ed by Ms. Winfrey. A charge of indecent exposure against Winfrey was dropped March 29.

Ms. Winfrey's lawyer, David Vincent, testified Monday that Thompson-McLeod said he would drop the charge and the lawsuit for \$750,000, the amount being offered by tabloid newspapers for an exclusive interview.

Vincent said two out-of-town prosecutors then posed as lawyers for Ms. Winfrey and offered Thompson-McLeod \$250,000. He said Thompson-McLeod raised the demand to \$300,000 when he didn't get the money fast enough, then set up a news conference at which Kennedy discussed the claim against Vernon Winfrey.

Kennedy fired Thompson-McLeod March 14.

Bribery in the first

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A grand jury will investigate bribery allegations against a lawyer for the woman who accused Oprah Winfrey's father of sexual assault.

A judge ordered the panel to look into whether Frank Thompson-McLeod solicited a bribe to drop the charges and a \$3 million lawsuit against Vernon Winfrey.

Pamela Kennedy had claimed Winfrey forced her to touch his genitals and asked for sex in January in exchange for a scholarship fund-

Breaking out

FRANKFURT, Germany — Steffi Graf is taking a four-week break from tennis to stay healthy and avoid burnout.

In an interview released Tuesday, Graf told Sport-Bild magazine she would return at the German Open in Berlin May 15-21.

"If I continued to play now, I'd burn myself out, and I don't want to do that. The most important thing for me this year is to stay healthy, and I'm going to take as much time off as I need," Graf said.

Pulp Fiction

Since when did romance entail shirtless men and half naked women in a historical setting? When Fabio showed up, of course.

Stephanie Sonnenfeld
Asst. Features Editor

Avoiding romance novels is no easy thing. Try as you may, but you'll never avoid them because they are everywhere — everywhere being from K-Mart to Columbia's local store, The Happy Bookseller.

"They [romance novels] sell briskly, especially when they come out," said Rhett Jackson, owner of The Happy Bookseller.

But why do they sell at all? With plots often cited as worn out and with commonly criticized writing styles, why do romance novels remain so popular?

According to an article by Helen Holzer in The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, romance novels are an \$8.9 million a year business, with women spending \$1,200 annually on these books. But these figures mean nothing to romance novel readers.

"I guess I'm a romantic and it [reading romance novels] gives me a chance to get away from everyday things at school and live other people's lives," said Michele Varner, a freshman psychology and music education major from Rock Hill.

Varner estimates that she reads around two romance novels a month. She only buys two or three books a year and then trades the books with friends and reads theirs.

Good thing Varner's roommate, Mona McKnight, is also an avid romance novel reader. Like Varner, McKnight cites the escape idea and the easy reading of romance novels as the primary reasons why she indulges in these books.

"In the past month, I've only read one or two. During the summer I can pop off two a week, but here it takes me forever to read one," said McKnight, a political science freshman from Hartsville.

McKnight and Varner prefer reading novels by well known author Danielle Steele, yet there is a variety of other novels to choose from.

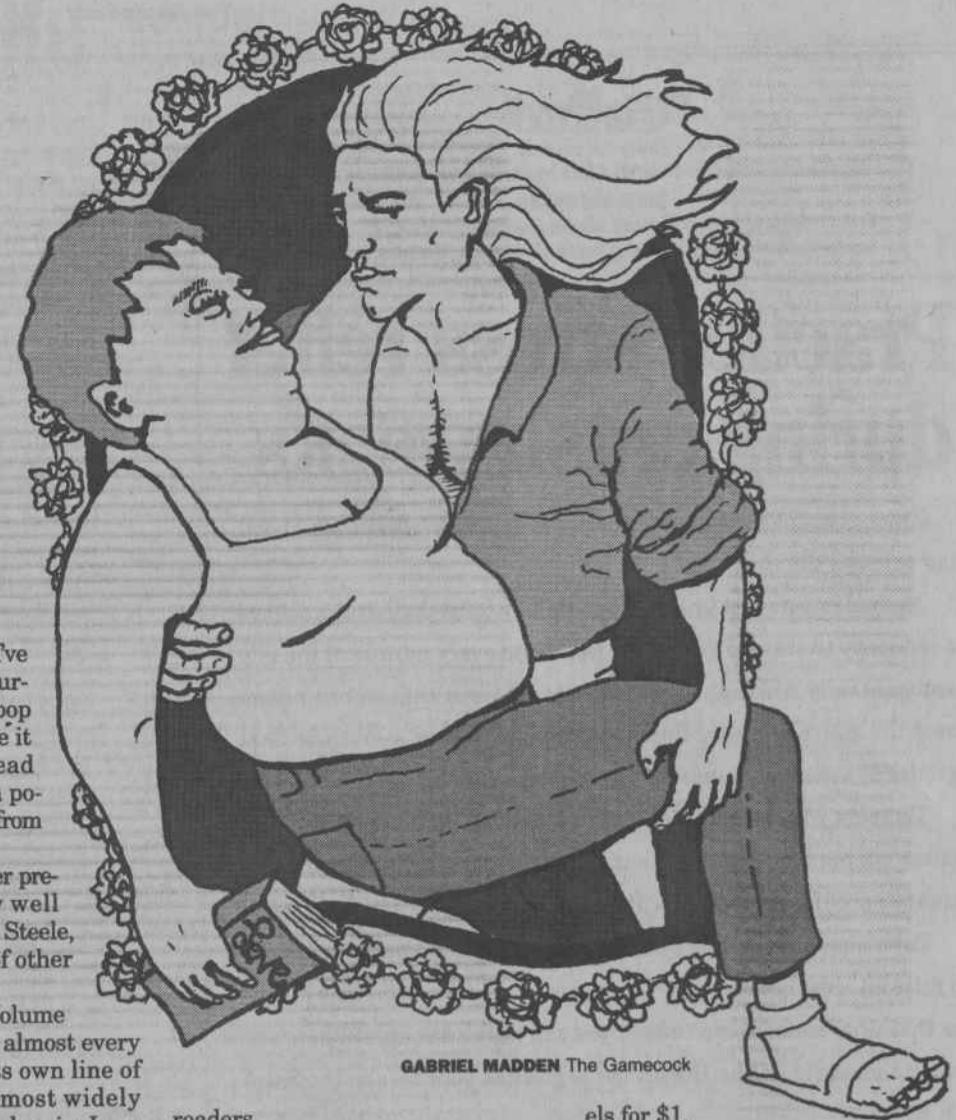
Charlie Sterne at Volume 1 bookstore noted that almost every publishing firm has its own line of romance novels, the most widely known being Avon, Harlequin, Love Swept, Silloute and Regency books.

Although popular romance plots take place in a historic time period with cover illustrations to match, romance novels, like everything else, are expanding their market to meet the needs of all readers.

Metro Atlanta writers Gwyn McGee (pen name Eboni Snoe) and Angela D. Benson currently have written romance novels with black heroines. These books, marketed under the name Arabesque, are published by Pinnacle Books as a part of the company's new line of multi-cultural romances.

The Los Angeles Times recently wrote an article noting that romance fiction is really straying from traditional young and innocent plots. Many are now being told from the male point of view.

But this diversity may not increase the appeal of romance novels to new



GABRIEL MADDEN The Gamecock

readers. "We found over the last 11 years that people in this general area don't buy romance novels," said Sterne.

The lack of romance novel sales may not be limited to smaller, privately owned bookstores in the Columbia area. For example, privately owned, but large, Oxford Book store on Pharr Road in Atlanta has the same sales problem with romance novels. Of the 450 titles the stores carries, there are 1,550 units with an approximate turnover rate of 10 percent, which Steve Shipman of Oxford called a "poor average."

"That's probably because we don't carry Harlequin," Shipman said.

Oxford's used and rare store, Oxford Too, has a better market for romance novels. Oxford Too employee, Laura Steeger, said there is a "very rapid turnover" on their romance market for many reasons. One reason is the store sells used five romance novels for \$1.

Paschal Swann, owner of White Buffalo Used and Rare Books in Cayce, attributed the sale of his stock of romance novels to his two for one policy. He said since the price for the books are so cheap, readers come and "buy up a handful" of books.

According to a Columbiana Mall Waldenbooks employee, Joan Hoftiezer, her store had sold 30 brand new romance novels so far this week and estimated that the store would sell probably about 100 romance books this week. Hoftiezer has noticed that most of the romance novel buyers are drawn to the historical plots and the age of the buyers "seems to be pretty much across the board."

"Older women generally buy the Regency series, which are set in the 17th and 18th centuries and there is not much sex in these books," Hoftiezer said.

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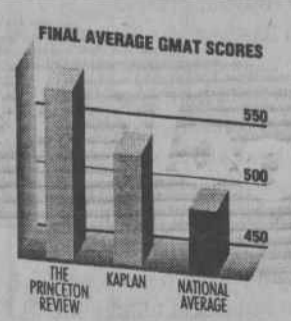
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