

## LETTERS to the EDITOR

## Stick to real victim in NStar case

COLUMNIST Steve Bailey's attack on the father of and lawyer for the 13-year-old boy whose dog was executed by stray voltage from an NStar lamppost site ("The best messenger?" Business, March 11) is utterly gratuitous. The fact that the father has a criminal record is irrelevant since the father's credibility is not at issue. The facts seem clear: The boy's dog was electrocuted in front of the boy and bit the boy in its final agony; such electrocutions have occurred before, hence NStar was on notice of the dangers posed by its street facilities.

The attack on the boy's attorney, Boston criminal defense and civil liberties lawyer John Swomley, is even more unfair. Swomley's character is called into question because "one of his own main lines of business [is] defending alleged sex offenders." In fact, Swomley is one of the few successful lawyers in town willing to

undertake one of the most difficult and unglamorous civil liberties tasks in our legal system - representing prisoners who have served their lawful sentences and who, months before their release dates, face "civil" charges that threaten to keep them incarcerated for life as "habitual sex offenders."

Such "preventive detention," until recently thought to be unconstitutional, violates an ancient precept of our criminal justice system - people should be punished for what they've done, not for what someone thinks they may do. Bailey also disregards another time-honored precept when he visits the sins of the father upon the son. It is the son, remember, who is the victim here.

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*The writer is a criminal defense and civil liberties lawyer and author.*

## A fair plan to fix Social Security

MY FATHER WAS an analyst for the government and came up with the following solution for funding Social Security. The idea is simple and inherently fair:

The current payroll tax would be replaced with a flat tax on all income, personal and corporate. The percentage of total income would probably fall somewhere in the low single digits. This percentage would be determined by the amount needed for funding. There would be no exemptions or loopholes. Only families with incomes of \$25,000 or less would be exempted.

This would be a very difficult proposal to oppose. The percentage of income needed to fund the system would result in a tax cut for most Americans. Let's say families and corporations were asked to pay 2 or 3 percent of income to make Social Security solid. For most wage earners, this is less than the current amount paid via the payroll tax now used. Surely, a family making \$300,000 or \$1



MARGARET SCOTT ILLUSTRATION

million or more should be willing to pay the same percentage. After all, 2 or 3 percent of the \$30,000 family income is more crucial to the survival of that family than is the same percentage for families making \$300,000 or more. The responsibility for funding Social Security would be spread fairly through our society, based on the total of all income.

The funding of the system is an issue of national security. It is part of our duty to protect and defend all members of this, our American Family. We must not shrink the benefits of Social Security.

SETH JUSTMAN  
Weston

## When women valued full figures

ELLEN GOODMAN'S column on Kirstie Alley, her new television show, and women's obsession with their weight ("The fat of the land," op ed, March 10) brought to mind a story my mother recently told me about my grandmother.

My grandmother and her friends, all from Eastern Europe, were trying out the new scale at the local market. As each dropped a penny into the slot and took a turn standing on the scale, the women excitedly compared results.

Like women of today they were competing over their body image. But, these solidly built, hard-working women were delighted as the arrow on the scale climbed higher and higher. Their "full-figured, plus-size" bodies demonstrated their desirability (they were healthy), and, most important, their husband's success as a breadwinner.

CLAUDIA MAJETICH  
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## Brando said it, not James Dean

ALTHOUGH Doug Hansen's letter (March 10) touches upon Hunter S. Thompson's "penchant for street theater," there is a glaring omission in his attack - any specific mention of Thompson's written work that would prove his character as a "toy soldier for the radical left."

Having obviously never read Thompson's political writing, Hansen doesn't seem a good bet to trust when making a "moral assessment" of the author. The fact that Hansen attributes a famous phrase of Marlon Brando in "The Wild One" to James Dean in "Rebel Without a Cause" does not convince me of his pop culture knowledge or accuracy.

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