

Lewd and vulgar: How we got that way

The Emerald has gotten caught in a lapse of journalistic standards that, we hope, represents an exception and not the rule in our pursuit of professionalism.

The Emerald supports neither sexism, gratuitous vulgarity nor the vacuous blood-thirst sometimes portrayed in athletic victory.

However, in a Nov. 28 story we reported the jubilation of Oregon's season-ending football victory over Oregon State. The story attempted a mood-setting approach that included the verbatim recitation of a vulgar, sexist parody of the OSU fight song, which the University's team sang in the locker room after the game.

In letters from offended readers, published on our opinion page, we took our licks for display of the parody. As the accompanying reprints show, we also drew criticism from OSU's student newspaper The Barometer, which demanded an apology and retraction of the Emerald's "insult," and from University Pres. William Boyd, who apologized to OSU Pres. Robert MacVicar for the Emerald's report.

Since the fight-song parody and its use in the news story has continued as a public issue, we thought we should discuss our viewpoint.

Though we share Boyd's contempt for the sexist nature of the locker-room parody, we wish he had limited his apologies to those sentiments. To apologize for the judgment of the Emerald, an independent corporation beyond his or the ASUO's control, is presumptuous.

Beyond that, Boyd's letter indicates that he can forgive the locker-room execution of the parody as the high spirits of a victorious team, but not its public revelation. This seems to parallel the Barometer's opinion that the "insult" derived primarily the parody's appearance in our newspaper, as though the Emerald somehow represents the collective personality of the University.

Both Boyd and the Barometer appear to have fallen into the fallacy of assuming that statements reported in newspaper articles reflect the editorial sentiments of staff and management.

If a news medium never reported statements, opinions and events its editors and reporters found tasteless or disagreeable we probably would be left with innocuous publications that distorted reports of events.

The question of good taste versus accurate reporting remains a difficult problem for most journalists. A example of its troublesomeness

OURS

arose in the firing of former Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz for uttering a crude slur against blacks.

The slur, which in its full, explicit and irredeemable offensiveness

was available to the press, was generally presented in such a "cleaned-up" version in news stories nationally that readers had only the vaguest notion of its despicable nature. Because the slur itself provided the ostensible cause of Butz' firing, we believe its misleading, bowdlerized presentation caused a disservice to the public.

A more immediate example of the perils of timorous editing appears in the Barometer's version of the

parody, which was reduced to cryptogram status by selective deletions.

In regard to our Nov. 28 story, we feel that our lapse in reportorial and editorial execution created an incorrect impression of the Emerald.

We see that lapse, however, as an arguable issue of professional standards, which has been the subject of considerable disagreement among the Emerald staff.

The story sought to convey, partly through recitation of the parody (which has, incidentally, a decades-old history), the enthusiasm generated by a football victory. The parody, however, did not cause the enthusiasm, but only reflected it, and so was not essential to the subject of the story.

In addition, its presentation in a story filled with accolades for the victory created an impression the Emerald implicitly concurred in the feelings and/or message of the parody.

Actually, the collective editorial judgment of this newspaper assumes that vulgarity, not an issue in a news story, as it was, in the Butz case, for example, should not be published.

We do not plan for our error to repeat itself. Our concern for our readers' sense and sensibilities comes second only to our commitment to cover and report legitimate news, features and commentary.

That does not, however, mean the replication of items such as the fight-song parody might not justifiably occur in future editions, in the context, for example, of stories about sexism on campus or campus graffiti or the scatological history of popular verse.

Many persons concerned with English usage believe this "liberalization" of the vernacular language has deteriorated our ability to press matters with creative pungence. That may well be true but, true or not, the latitude of the contemporary printed word has certainly broadened. To purge our published copy on the basis of an outmoded or altered literary standard would render archaic our style of expression.

To summarize then: The Emerald will still strive to be current, but not gratuitously crude; boldly accurate, but not irrelevant; and independent, but not insensible.

Insulting Emerald

OSU students recall the disappointment after the Beaver-Duck football game.

At the University of Oregon the scene was quite different. UO students were happy to win the Civil War again. But the Daily Emerald, UO University Press carried it too far.

I have been waiting for a copy of the Nov. 28 Emerald to arrive in the mail. I wanted to see just what had been said. And I am shocked. Editors of the Emerald have displayed unethical and insulting tactics by running the following: (Pardon my deletions)

OSU, our pants are off to you.
Beavers, b-, sons of b-
too.

We'll smoke your cigarettes,
We'll — your majorettes;
OSU — you!

From the Daily Barometer

This tasteless version of the Beaver fight song complete with missing letters was the beginning of the game recap article written by John Harris, Emerald sports editor.

Sure, they won. But such outright disregard of standards does more than offend.

UO President William Boyd sent a letter apologizing to OSU President Robert MacVicar. And it arrived before the Emerald was in the mail.

Above and beyond Boyd's apology, the Emerald should print a direct retraction of this insult. An apology printed in The Emerald and The Barometer should also appear.

Rivalry is healthy. Such brash insults are sick.

Dear President
Robert MacVicar,

I want to extend congratulations to you for a football season that offered convincing evidence that your program has "turned around." I wish this letter could be confined to that. Sadly, I have to go beyond that to extend not merely congratulations, but an apology as well.

In stories covering Saturday's game, two of the state's newspapers referred to the uncivil atmosphere in the Oregon locker room following the game. Their editorial policy spared readers the vulgar detail. Unfortunately, the same was not true for the Oregon Daily Emerald. Yesterday's edition had a byline story with an opening paragraph offering an explicit rendition of an offensive sexist parody on the Oregon State fight song.

I regret the incident. It was unbecoming and beneath the standards of taste

and humanness which our universities are trying to represent. We need not only to learn to win, but to learn to win with grace. But bawdiness in the locker room in a moment of high emotion following weeks of frustration is at least understandable.

In such circumstances, one remembers the French proverb that to understand all is to forgive all. To reproduce that bawdiness in the public print in the cool light of day is an offense of a different order. In years of living on university campuses, I cannot remember a more disgusting example of poor taste and poor judgement combined in a single paragraph. I am embarrassed for the University of Oregon, and I apologize to you and the students, faculty and staff at Oregon State University.

Respectfully,
William Boyd
President U of O

YOURS

'Christmas can be painful'

I was appalled at the Dec. 8 article "A Typewriter Warmed in Hell." Not only was it tasteless, it was poking fun at a sad reality. Suicide, any time of year, is not something to be made light of. Christmas is, for most people, a time to be with family and friends, sharing the security, warmth, and richness of loving and being loved.

For some people, though, Christmas can be the most painful time of the year. Imagine not having anywhere to go to spend the holidays, no home, no family or loved ones with which to share the spirit of giving.

Every journalist has a responsibility to his or her reading public. In writing his article on "creative suicide," Jock Hatfield proved himself an irresponsible, callous, journalist, and man. Jock, freedom of the press is a great thing, don't abuse it!

Merry Christmas!

Meggin Rose

Editor's note: On Dec. 6 we ran a letter to the Emerald supposedly from Richard Seven, which apparently was forged. Seven assures us that he has no quarrel with either University garbagemen nor recycling and did not write the letter. The Emerald usually verifies each of the letters it receives from readers and now apparently will have to check those purporting to come from staff members.

Trogloditic, but with style

There was this guy and, well, he looked familiar and since I don't know anybody I thought I'd ask, so I said, "Ah, excuse me," and that stopped him cold. He was baffled! He shook like an epileptic waif stuttering into the palms of his pink hands.

He was afraid to turn around; so, I decided to talk face to face. I barked into the dim twilight of his obviously starched eyes, "You troglodyte! I've shot three like you and couldn't eat any of them." He laughed the hollow laugh of a cheap huckster and threw a Kruggerand at the feet of a renowned black sociologist.

I didn't let that stop me, nor would I let him sweet talk me with his sleek style as polished as the marble tongue of a homosexual diplomat. This was no joke. With a suave l'enfer c'est les autres I darted a gnarled fist into the three-day-old beard, fake Coke bottle glasses, Groucho nose (who's he trying to fool?) and what looked like "things" stuck all over his face and dropped him like a bag of wet sheep dip and all of a sudden I saw this... this... body... stripped of illusion... stripped of broken images... a bare existence... a... a... President Bo... So I sent it away to a chrome-plated seraglio and forgot about it.

H. Cook
senior, philosophy

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