

harry esteve

Sexist language

We writers are proud of our command of the English language. In fact we often get downright arrogant about it.

So when we are told that something is the matter with the way we write, we get mighty defensive — especially when our writing is labeled "sexist."

I've seen the collective hackles rise when someone points to a sentence like: "If a student misses more than five classes, he will fail automatically," and tells us it helps perpetuate sexism.

By traditional English standards, there is nothing wrong with the sentence. But by other standards that sentence and countless others like it place women in subordinate roles to men, making them seem less important or even nonexistent.

When Jean Ward, a journalism professor from Minnesota, spoke to a group of University journalism professors about sexism in newspapers, she faced the kind of defensiveness I'm talking about.

The professors pointed out textbook grammar rules and demanded workable alternatives. After all, it is hard for conscientious, liberal educators to be told they have been perpetuating the oppression of women.

Ward didn't have all the answers. When put on the spot, she couldn't think of an eloquent way of asexually labeling the head of a committee. Should it be chairperson? Chairwoman?

Too often the usage turns

into chairman for the males and chairperson for the females.

Ward primarily wanted the people who teach writing habits to future journalists to think about teaching them genderless language.

The Emerald has similar problems, although it is our policy to avoid sexist language as often as possible.

We call the heads of a committee "chairer." And we've taken a lot of grief for it. People aren't used to seeing it, and it "sounds" strange when they read it. But it gets the point across, without resorting to a sexual suffix.

We try to use a lot of plurals. Instead of, "A student will fail his class," we usually say "students will fail their classes." It's just as accurate, although the sharpness of the story's imagery might suffer.

Unlike many major newspapers, we don't use courtesy titles for men or women. If we write a story about law school dean Derrick Bell, he is simply called Bell on second reference.

When Jewell Bell was named as director of the University's Council for Minority Education, she was called Bell on second reference, not Mrs. Bell, or Bell, wife of Dean Derrick Bell. When we use wire copy we try to edit out all the "Mrs.'s and "wife of's.

These are small steps toward sexual equality and I'm sure we're not entirely consistent with our policy. It's hard to break defensive writers of bad habits.

But it is a part of the solution.



letters

Soft-cover

OK, most of us hear at this place of higher education don't like to waste money. But the passers-on of this education most times insist on ordering hardcover textbooks. We figure here at Watson Hall in the residence hall system that this is unnecessary. For instance, a book called "Understanding Social Psychology" published by Dorsey Press goes for \$21.32 but would undoubtedly go for \$4-\$5 less if it was a softcover.

So let's here at the University boycott hardcover books and force the publishing companies to go soft. If we take the lead, other universities will follow and we'll bring the publishers to their knees. So let's do it.

Geoff Ellsworth
soph. romance languages

Hazing

I was pleased with your article "Bill Outlaws Hazing." However, there are a few points of clarification I would like to make.

Statewide awareness of this potentially dangerous practice is the reason for this bill. No one sets out to hurt anybody and that is why they are called hazing accidents.

Also, in regards to your quote, "He (Nappi) says he does not know of any specific instances of violations at Willamette or other universities" is misleading. There are reports of hazing going on at all campuses. The University

of Oregon, Oregon State University, and certainly Willamette University are not exceptions.

We think it is safe to assume that there is some validity to these reports. The reports cover fraternities, sororities, and other campus organizations.

The purpose of this bill is not to accuse or punish any specific organization, but to make them aware of hazing's potential dangers. In no way does this bill focus on the Kappa Sigma Fraternity on your campus, it only exemplifies the consequences involved.

We hope to have the support of every Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic throughout the state in endorsing this bill. We believe it is an excellent way for them to show their commitment to eliminating these dangerous and outdated practices.

Steven Nappi
president, Delta Tau Delta
Willamette University

Tax money

The Eugene City Council's November hearing to reconsider its renaming of Eugene's Center for the Performing Arts was a farce. A display of upper-class solidarity and the eating of toads. The most subservient were the members of the Council who sold out their constituents a second time by unanimously upholding their original act of betrayal.

Heaping insult upon injury,

the Council has recently decided to use taxpayers' money to bail out the Center which is running nearly \$20,000 in the red after six months of operation. (A strange reversal of finances: Late in 1982 the local press told us that the Center was earning \$14,000 per month).

The discomforting news of the deficit was accompanied by the information that the Center could easily run at a loss for several years. Will the Council make an annual dip into the taxpayers pockets to keep the Center in the black?

Thanks to Eugene taxpayers, a local lumber baron and his lady, a munificent and humble pair, have a monument to themselves in their own lifetime. Let them rescue their monument from its debts. The barony will likely profit from the tax write-offs.

News of red ink flowing at the Center was followed closely by the revelation of "weaknesses" in its book-keeping system. Neither the Eugene Register-Guard nor electronic news sources went into great detail about the nature of these weaknesses.

Are they due to mere ineptness? If so, are the inept still keeping the books? Or does the problem go deeper? As a self-designated "Citizen of its community" does the Guard care? Is the Oregonian the only state newspaper public-spirited enough to do investigative reporting?

Guido Palandri
library

letters

Humanitarians

I have a couple of questions for readers to ponder.

1) Where were all the humanitarians who are demanding an end to aid to El Salvador on May 20, 1981 when our government authorized the Export-Import Bank to extend \$121 million of credit to communist Romania so they could modernize their nuclear power system?

2) Where were the demonstrators shouting "end aid to repressive regimes" when our leaders gave over \$300 million to the communists leadership in Poland last year?

Maybe a few answers might be: 1) These people favor giving our money to communist

oppressors but not to people fighting communist threats because they favor communist takeovers, 2) Religious and political dissidents who've been massacred by communists were just troublemakers and not entitled to "people" status thus justifying their demise and making it morally acceptable to assist communist governments, 3) Those people protesting aid to El Salvador would protest aid to the Soviet empire if they were more informed as to what's going on in the world.

You decide. What motivates those who panic when we aid an anti-communist country yet keeps them so quiet when we give assistance to the communists?

Douglas Green

oregon daily emerald

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letters policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in to the Emerald office. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, style or content.

"Your turn" is an Emerald opinion feature submitted by members of the University community. "Your turns" must be limited to 500 words and typed. This editorial column will not be edited by the staff, but selection will be based on appropriateness.

Letters to the editor and "Your turns" should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300 EMU.

Unsigned editorials appearing in the Emerald are based upon the majority opinion of the editorial board.