

# Opinion

## Student leaders look to issues

Perhaps a new era of student political activism is dawning if the results of the annual meeting of the United States Student Association in Atlanta are any indication.

The University was represented by Kevin Kouns, Bill Snyder and Patricia Stuart of the ASUO. They, along with students leaders from colleges and universities across the country, predicted that Pres. Ronald Reagan's cuts in financial aid, his legislation requiring draft registration to receive aid and the administration's stand on the situation in Central America will motivate students to take a more active role in politics.

We hope this is the case, but remain more pessimistic than hopeful.

Former United Nations ambassador Andrew Young, now the mayor of Atlanta, spoke to the conscience of the students. "I saw this country turn to the right and I blame students for that," Young said. "I saw this country move forward when students entered the civil rights movement. By the same token, I think all of that came to an end because of the inaction and callousness and insensitivity of young people." Not many at the meeting disputed Young's analysis. Not many can dispute that when students turned their back on social concerns there was little done to correct the ills of society.

Gregory Moore, the newly elected president of the student association, directed the group to become more visible in local, state and congressional election campaigns in 1984. The student leaders wisely agreed. Students do not have as great an impact in a national campaign than they can have in a state representatives race. According to Moore, in this way students can support candidates they identify with and not have to choose between the lesser of two evils.

What will aid students in becoming a more respected voting group is the student association's "legislative scorecard" which evaluates Senators and Congressmen on issues such as education spending, tax cuts and the nuclear freeze. A failing grade in a category important to students might be the margin needed to oust a politician ignorant of student concerns.

The three ASUO delegates were elected to the association's board of directors. They are committed to bringing the issues of financial aid, employment and civil rights to University students. It doesn't take much for University students to be involved — simply listen to the issues, register to vote and vote. Is that more than students are willing to give?

## Verdict apt in RCYB case

The Emerald applauds the Oregon Supreme Court's decision to overturn the arson conviction of Nancy Whitley, a member of the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade. Whitley was convicted of first-degree arson in the Lane County Circuit Court in 1981.

The conviction stems from an incident in the EMU Ballroom where Victor Tomseth, a former Iranian hostage, was speaking. Whitley and the late John Kaiser set fire to a gasoline soaked yellow ribbon as a political protest.

While we do not condone the RCYB's reckless endangering of lives during Tomseth's speech we understand that they intended the act as a symbol of protest.

This seems to be behind the Court's overturning the conviction. They ruled that burning the yellow ribbon did not fall under the strict legal definition of arson. The prosecution would have to prove monetary value to the property damaged for arson to apply.

We agree with Whitley's attorney that the conviction didn't have political overtones. However, Whitley, being politically-oriented, said the trial was a "political railroad." It may serve Whitley to note that the conviction was legally not politically overturned. That the arson charge had the greater penalty instead of the lesser penalty of endangering may perhaps have been politically motivated.

Throughout the trial and the appeals that followed the RCYB tried to defend their action and reverse the subsequent conviction saying it came under the protection of constitutional free speech. That point, if argued, would have been a difficult one to resolve. It was a genuine political protest that turned dangerous because of rash thinking. If the RCYB was guilty of anything in the yellow ribbon incident it was stupidity.



## debbie howlett editor's note

There isn't anything I like better than spending the day doing nothing, no working, no thinking, no nothin'. This summer the Lane County judicial system afforded me many days to do nothing.

Before any of you conjure up the image of "editor as convict," I'll state emphatically that I wasn't behind bars, although at times I felt as though I might as well have been.

I was a victim of my own self gratifying need to be a "good citizen." I was called to jury duty and had neither the brains nor foresight to wiggle my way out of it.

Every time I brought up the subject of jury duty, people offered their impressions of the excitement of lengthy murder trials, of being sequestered, of Perry Mason looking them square in the eyes and announcing the murderer's true identity *tout de suite*.

Wrong. Any hopes for a glamorous trial are shot down after the first *voir dire*.

The only jury I served on during the entire month (most people only served on a few trials) lasted six hours. It was a murder trial, of sorts. A young man shot a neighbor's dog because he thought it was chasing his uncle's cattle. The jury ended up listening to the whole case, down to the most intricate detail only to end up deliberating three hours and finally, concede to the judge and the rest of the world, that we six reasonable adults, could not agree.

This was certainly not the most glamorous day in my life, although it might be a bit more glamorous than showing a two year-old steer at the county fair.

The rest of my tenure as a Lane County juror was spent in the jury assembly room, leafing through December's Reader's Digest, trying to find a joke column I hadn't read three times.

But I was keeping fast company, several University professors were hunting for the Reader's Digest I guardedly held in my lap.

My name was called to go through the *voir dire* selection process in one other instance.

The first *voir dire* I didn't "pass" was a bar room brawl. I was a little pissed, because it at least sounded more interesting than dead dogs.

The attorney for the defense, this pseudo-European looking nerd, looked me square in the eyes and asked me, with some lilt to his voice, if I was a feminist. "You see," said the man in a fatherly voice that didn't sit well with his 35 year-old appearance, "this case involves a man hitting another man because he insulted his wife."

"Yes, I'd consider myself a feminist," I answered in my sweetest Yes-I'm-a-feminist, crawl-under-a-rock-if-you-don't-like-it voice.

He said "thanks" and went onto the next juror. As it turns out I was the first person bounced from that jury.

Aside from feeling rejected (A trauma I think I've recovered from already), I wondered about the whole process of jurors and jury selection.

It is flawed in some respects, but it does offer as fair a trial as can be expected, and it gives the citizens (well, the ones registered to vote, anyway) the opportunity to be a part of the system in action.

I was glad for the opportunity to see "the other side" of the trial process. Maybe when I cover my first trial for a newspaper, I'll understand it better.

I got more out of the experience than just insight though. I was able to do literally nothing, twice a week, without feeling guilty.

## letters

### Overripe

A petition to legalize the drug marijuana in Oregon is being circulated. If you are hooked on this poisonous hallucinating narcotic, you will be expected to sign the petition. If not, look up these

words in your dictionary: hemp, marijuana, cannabis, hashish and cannabin.

This noxious weed was outlawed internationally 50 years ago, as was done with heroin about ten years earlier.

Now — do you want our children to be exposed to this

poisonous narcotic?

And remember the Communists creed — if they can corrupt one generation of young people the nation will fall into their hands like an overripe fruit.

George Trumbo  
Oakland, OR.

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