

Ralls' death begins discussion on topic

The only minutely positive thing about tragedy is that sometimes, good comes out of it.

The death of 18-month-old Springfield boy Joshua Ralls ranks high on the list of obscene, needless tragedies. When a child is the victim of such outright abuse, anger follows.

While the facts are not all in on this case, the circumstances warrant a discussion of what can be done to prevent further occurrences.

Child abuse is one of the more heinous crimes. And the people who must determine what is and what isn't child abuse — nurses, schoolteachers and social workers, to name just a few — are in an extremely unenviable position.

Where to draw the line? Stiffening current laws would inevitably lead to a child taken from a home without due cause. Families have a tough enough job these days just staying together — they don't need any senseless heartache from the government.

Clearly, draconian child abuse laws are not a simple solution. Yes, more victims would be found, but spreading the net would also trap many innocents. The well-deserved stigma of a child abuser should not be given lightly or without sufficient reason.

Is it better to risk unfairly accusing a parent of child abuse, rather than risk the life of a child? Put so blatantly, yes. But the situation is not that straightforward. Knee-jerk reactions do more harm than good.

Then what is the answer? Perhaps streamlining the process would help. Because child abuse falls under so many different categories, social and legal, jurisdiction is vague and unclear. With so many different agencies having a say-so, the system moves with the monolithic slowness of a typical bureaucracy.

Too often, suspected child abuse is reported, and while the file moves through the channels, something sadly, tragically happens to the child. Then, legally, it is easy to prove child abuse, but far too late.

Gov. Barbara Roberts has called for a paring down of government agencies to improve the bureaucratic as well as fiscal situation. The groups dealing with child abuse should be her first stop.

For people interested, Ralls' funeral will be held 2 p.m. today at West Lawn Memorial Park and Evergreen Funeral Home in Eugene, 225 S. Danebo Ave.

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LETTERS

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On the evening of Jan. 25, I was invited to a party. Two friends and I rode our bikes there and locked them in front of the house. Things were going smoothly until the police (Eugene's finest) arrived ready for combat with riot gear and attitudes.

The party of less than 100 people was terminated, and everyone was cooperative and dispersing. The partygoers were forced to walk a "gauntlet" of about a dozen geared-up storm troopers — myself included — to leave the party.

As I hit the sidewalk, I attempted to go to my bike so I could leave as instructed. Just then, an officer aggressively grabbed me by my shirt and said I couldn't walk that direction on the sidewalk. When I attempted to explain the location of my bike, the officer raised her nightstick to my head as if she were going to bash it in. After I conveyed to her that I was well within my rights and unafraid, she let go of me and pursued another "sidewalk criminal," club in hand.

My question to the Eugene police is "What's your problem?" In my four years here, the EPD has displayed nothing but incompetence, over-aggressiveness and a fancy for dispensing trivial tickets. Yeah, you know, jaywalking, not coming to a complete stop on your bicycle at unnecessary stop signs, and, of course, the felonious act of skateboarding! I've received citations for all of these "illegal activities."

I, for one, am not down with the EPD.

Jim Savage
TCF

Accusations

I personally resent the accusations of Kirstie Schumacher (ODE, Jan. 21). She says I "can't comprehend the fear of the possibility of being raped."

This is true. I do know what

it is like to suffer the concrete realities of being beaten. I do know what it is like to fear for my safety at night. Now I know what it's like to be unfairly judged because I'm male.

Do you know what it is like to be told by a "public" safety service, "We can't help because you are the wrong gender?"

Everyone has a right to be safe from crime. As a society we cannot afford to establish a mentality that says "women being raped supersede men being assaulted, therefore, women receive a safe ride home and men have to fend for themselves." The inverse is equally unacceptable.

Stacie Palmer (ODE, Jan. 22) suggests we need to "have everyone, as people, work together to reduce the instances of violent crimes." Had she read more than the opening paragraph of my last letter, she would have seen I'm pushing for exactly the same thing.

Lastly, some advice to Lisa Harrell (ODE, Jan. 23). Recent statistics state that someone you know is more likely to rape you than a stranger. Depending on which study you choose to believe, 88-99 percent of all rapes involve people who know each other. Discussing this with your male friends will serve you better than fearing men randomly.

Jordan C. Lund
English

Gut buster

Lucas J. Gutman, did you watch *Grand Canyon* or did someone tell you about it?

If you want a film to be "real to life," then you better expect a lot of subplots. We as humans are not limited to simply one or two story lines. We deal with many different people everyday who have a story all their own.

I do not see where Steve Martin plays comedy relief. He is shot, has a personal revelation, discusses marriage, and tries to validate his work. This is comedy?

I'm sorry if every scene had meaning to it. Would you rather see Mack and his wife discuss their grocery list? I rather enjoy dramas with a lot of meaning. I usually like my entertainment to be relevant to life and not some "Top Gunish," good rock music, macho, T & A flick.

I expect reviews like this from the *Register-Guard's* movie geniuses and not you.

Scott Shea
Student

Best interests

What do those who are currently seeking the removal of ASUO President Jennifer Bills hope to achieve? Do they really think this is in the best interest of students?

With the funding crisis that is currently facing the University and higher education in general, it makes me sick that people will spend so much energy over the fact that the USSA constitution requires a traditionally under-represented person to be their affirmative action officer.

Does Henry Oberson really think it is in the best interests of the student body to focus on this issue? He doesn't seem to care that USSA is the single most effective student lobbying group in the nation.

It is clear that this is just another case of the immense amount of political bullshit that exists among students at this university. Only when people like Oberson grow up and decide to focus on real issues will students be taken seriously. No wonder the athletic department can get away with siphoning off so much of our money.

Andy Harris
Political Science

CORRECTION

In the Feb. 4 *Emerald*, Phil Zuckerman's commentary misquoted material from *Student Insurgent* articles. The word "Jewish" was used in place of "Zionist" and "Israeli," and several quotes and citations were taken out of context. The *Emerald* regrets printing these errors and apologizes for any confusion they may have caused.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159, EUGENE, OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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