

JFK isn't a memory for many Americans

"Where were you when President Kennedy was shot?"

For the vast majority of people on this campus, the question elicits a blank stare and a shaking head. Today's college students, by and large, have no memory of Kennedy's assassination; most cannot even recall the '60s.

Of the 250 million citizens of the United States, 112 million — almost 45 percent — are less than 30 years old. When the nation's charismatic young president was shot down in Dallas 30 years ago, these people were not witness... they weren't even born.

Yet this country's media have nonetheless insisted that memories of that fateful November day will live in every American's heart forever.

It's clear that Kennedy is an enduring figure in the minds of those who were alive in 1963. The record of his deeds, the endless photographs of "Camelot," the perpetual rehashing of his tragic death — all these have combined to make him a hero even to those who were born long after he was killed.

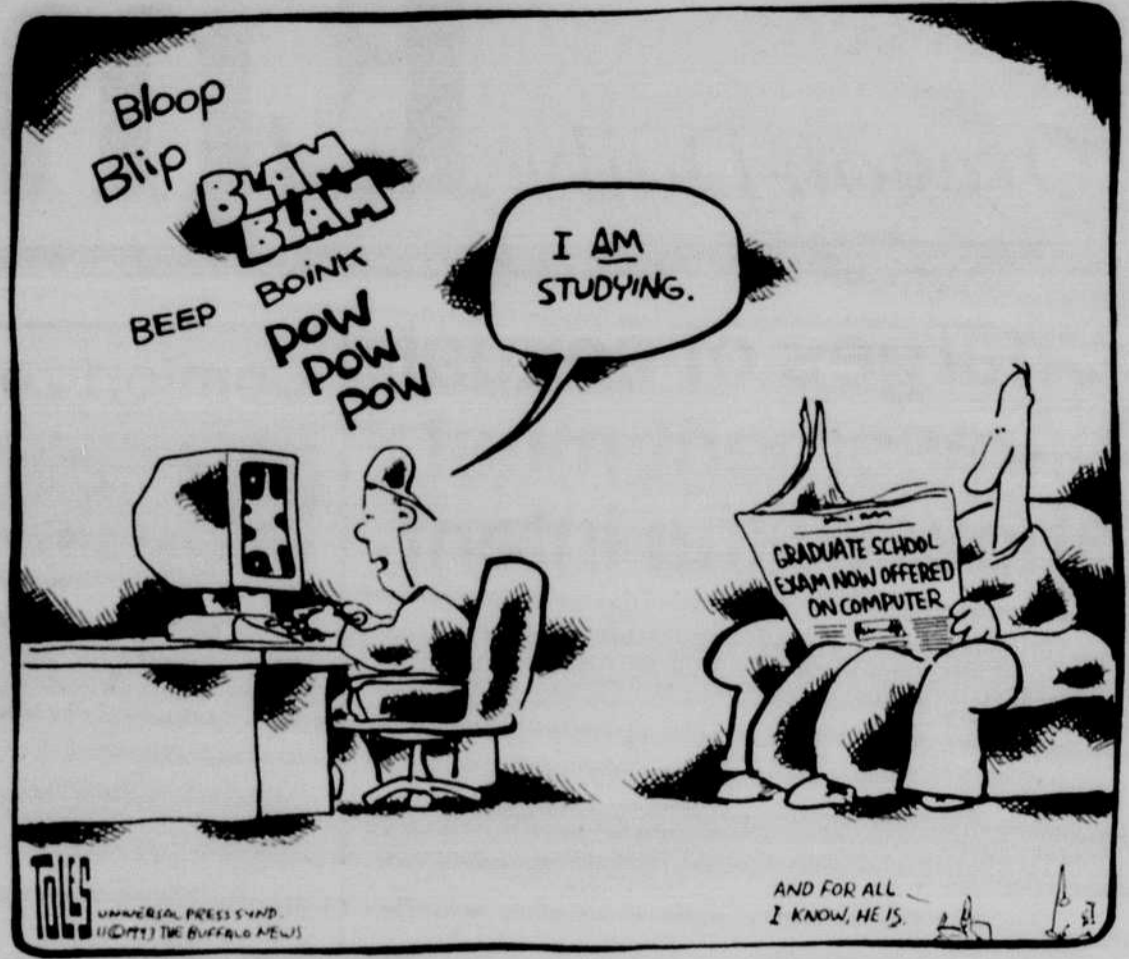
And yet there can be no tribute to the man that isn't tainted with opportunism. A 30-year anniversary is a golden opportunity for people to put their two cents in. In fact, lavish television specials and full-page newspaper spreads have all sprung up of late, not only to honor the fallen president but also, it seems, to perpetuate the notion that his assassination has left an indelible mark on us all... even though it probably hasn't.

Perhaps all this attention given to Kennedy is designed to keep those who knew him from forgetting him. But this claim is paradoxical. If his memory really is that indelible, would we need every other TV station or newspaper to remind us that "Hey, the memory of Kennedy sure is indelible, huh?"

A local TV station, KVAL, has created a multiple-part series on how the nation — not just Eugene, but the whole nation — reacted to Kennedy's death. The very fact that little KVAL feels qualified to comment on the nation's feelings in November, 1963, just goes to show how cliched and formulaic the discussions of President Kennedy have become.

You can almost picture the KVAL newsroom, with veteran news anchor John Doyle dividing up responsibilities for the series: "OK, now who's going to do the bit about how the nation loved to watch the Kennedys play football? Now, who wants to do the 'Where you were when JFK was shot?' piece? OK, then. Now, who's going to do the conspiracy segment?" And on and on. Nothing new, just toeing the standard Kennedy line.

There's no question that the Kennedy presidency, and especially its abrupt end, had a powerful impact on the destiny of these United States. The anniversary of the assassination needs to be acknowledged, but there's very little to be gained from the kind of acknowledgments that have so far dominated the media. All that's been created is a sort of thoughtless idolatry, a "cult of Kennedy," which, in its premeditated praise, doesn't do justice to the man, or to the people who admire him to this day.



LETTERS

Tunes

In response to "Norman's" letter, I'd like to say you're right. The current KWVA listening audience is familiar with the music that is played on the station. However, the point of my original letter (which was edited out) was that the current listening audience consists of maybe 20 percent of the student population. If the station is interested in the rest of us, then I think my suggestions are worth considering.

I am not suggesting KWVA turn into a Top-40 station (or anything near it), but that it be an alternative station that an average college student would listen to. Since the average college student is not a diehard alternative fan like the majority of KWVA's current audience, playing a few more recognizable songs could bridge the gap between KWVA's current and potential audience. That doesn't mean promoting million-selling bands and passing them off as alternative, but playing maybe two songs an hour by such bands. True, these bands are not "college radio" anymore, but just because they sold some albums and made the Top 40 a few times shouldn't oust them from college radio. And besides, there are plenty of recognizable songs by non-huge bands, like Belly's "Feed The Tree," Toad the Wet Sprocket's "All I Want," Alice In Chains' "Man In The Box," etc.

The bottom line is that this station is funded by the students, so it should be for the students. This includes the seemingly insignificant 80 percent of the University students who listen to more mainstream music and thus obscure alternative.

Granted, KWVA is for breaking in new bands, but a more effective way to do that could be to take a look at MTV — a bad word? MTV brought Nirvana, an unheard-of college-radio band, to the world by playing its "Smells Like Teen Spirit" video in between videos by Genesis

and U2, instead amid a bunch of other basically unheard-of songs on *120 Minutes* (which is essentially college-radio MTV). This way, the song got exposed to the average listener, and the rest was history.)

And finally, calling in requests is not a solution. It's just one song and back to the same ol' KWVA.

Philip Abraham
Journalism

Unity

I agree with Matt Fox's assessment that a religion's uniqueness is essential to its integrity (*ODE* Nov. 10). I also believe in the danger of blind unity. Yet considering our world's fragmented condition, and religion's historical role as a unifier, I do not believe that this danger should keep us from an earnest effort to find common ground. For a more grave danger exists in our failure to act upon the crisis at hand.

As we search for new methods of survival in a shrinking world, independent investigation of truth is essential. We should not fear unity, but rather blind imitation, which is the cause of prejudice, injustice and uniformity (such as the one found in the Nazi regime). Therefore, we should not be afraid to evaluate our common assumptions and interpretations, then compare them to the spiritual teachings at the hearts of our faiths. Nor should we hesitate to investigate the possibility that within these spiritual teachings is a continuous thread, uniting us under our one Creator, whom we have only called by different names.

I admit that this may seem like a distant hope, easily dismissed by those who contest that religions have never, and will never, agree. But it is hope, no doubt, that pushes us to new horizons. I believe this is our greatest hope; that in our beautiful diversity, we are all members of one human family. If found

within our hearts to be true, the love and trust to sincerely embrace our differences, and truly live in peace, would be ours.

Nathan Cooperider
Architecture

Ride on

In response to David Cole's letter (*ODE* Nov. 17), reducing car use is not a radical idea, nor a crusade led by a "bunch of hippie kids." Is the quality of air you breathe important to you? Do you enjoy breathing? It is indisputable that driving causes more air pollution in Oregon than any other activity. I am surprised a general science major would be so ignorant as to the state of the environment. Hello? Ever heard of air pollution? Global warming?

Cole suggests going somewhere else "if you find the air in Oregon too polluted for you." Oregon is one of the few states with a strong concern and consciousness for the environment — maybe he should go somewhere else. Ever heard of Los Angeles?

I think he missed the point of OSPIRG's "preaching." The purpose of the Alternative Transportation Fair and Curb Your Car Campaign is to encourage participation in and promote awareness about the alternatives to automobile-dependent living. Unless you have some other idea you haven't shared, there won't be a choice when there are no longer current and future sources of non-renewable fossil fuels.

Break the bike out of the garage, and ride to school or to work. What are you afraid of? Feeling great, getting a little exercise and creating a better place to live? If you have the option but are simply too lazy to incorporate walking or riding your bike into your lifestyle, why not ride the bus or carpool?

Try it!

Allison R. Wieland
Eugene

Oregon Daily Emerald

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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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