

The Emerald staff gives thanks for a great year

■ **OUR OPINION:** Despite many challenges, we have a lot to be grateful for

Loath as we are to wallow in sentimentality, the *Emerald* staff has established a tradition of taking a moment at this time of year to reflect on all the many people, events and policies for which we are grateful.

Our list this year was difficult to assemble only because we have so many things to be thankful for and so little space to express ourselves. Our apologies to those who made it into our hearts but not into our list.

This year, the *Emerald* is thankful that:

- 1) The Senate sent Bob Packwood packing.
- 2) The Ducks are headed for the Cotton Bowl.
- 3) We get four weeks for winter break.
- 4) Kevin Hornbuckle is now living in our ward only 50 percent of the time.
- 5) The Amazon drama has had its denouement, and half of the housing is being refurbished in another location.
- 6) The many people who revolted against the idea of using locators and cellular phones in the wilderness will not be using them when they go hiking.
- 7) The O.J. Simpson trial is over, and the media must seek out something else to over-promote to death.
- 8) Race is not an issue for 99.9 percent of the campus population.
- 9) The federal government can shut down for a week and it has no effect on our lives.
- 10) We cover the news instead of writing about other campus publications.
- 11) We won best overall college newspaper in a national competition.
- 12) We can still afford an

education (barely).

13) We live in a community where everything is controversial.

14) Our mascot is not the Beaver.

15) The federal speed limit has been repealed. (Eugene to Portland in 30 minutes or less. Guaranteed.)

16) The Eugene Police have set up shop in front of 7-Eleven and are doling out \$90 jaywalking tickets for our protection.

17) The rain has cleaned more than dirt off of East 13th Avenue.

18) We can express our opinions without being arrested.

19) We didn't print the Unabomber's manifesto.

20) We're not turkeys with genetically enlarged breasts.

21) We now pay a \$50 technology fee for a computer service that used to cost \$10 dollars, and we get worse service to boot.

22) The Gap will guarantee that all University students get jobs after graduation.

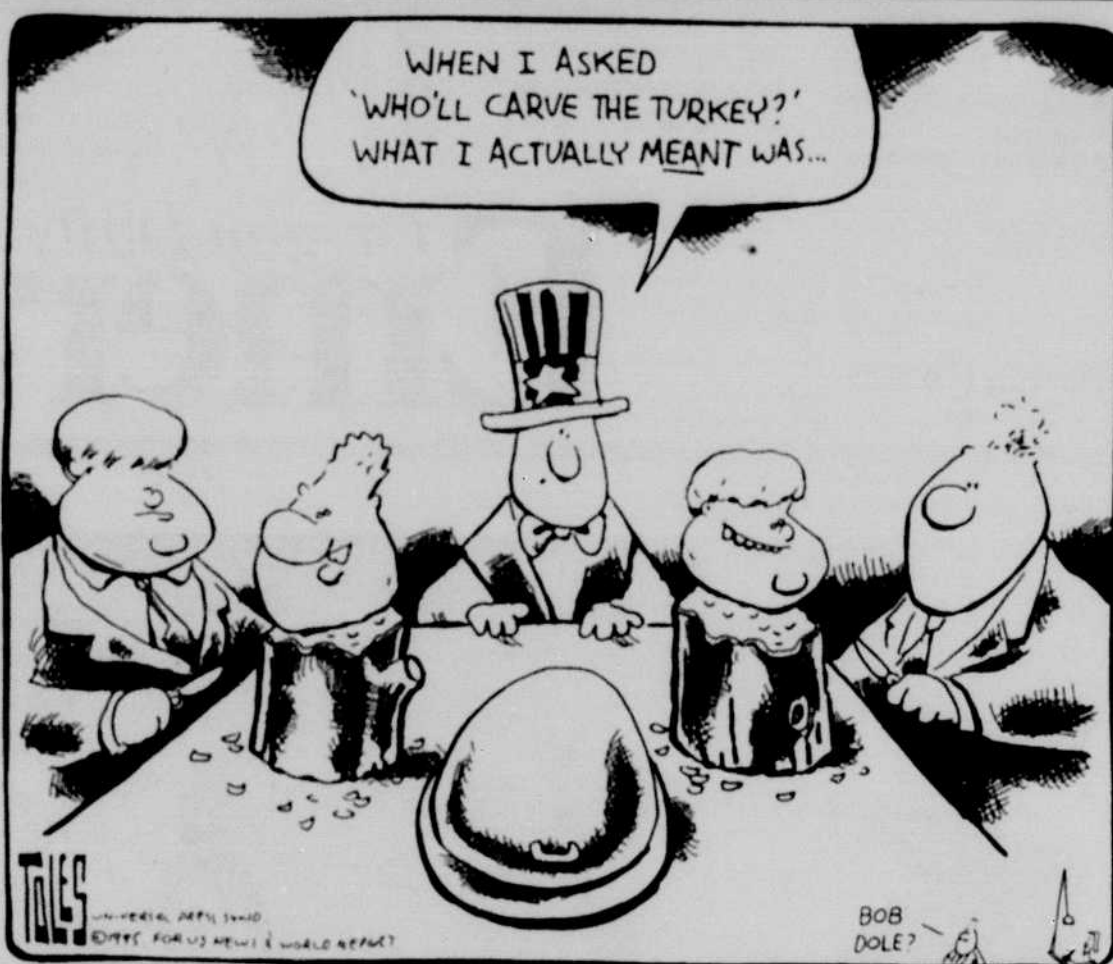
23) Rush Limbaugh and Newt at least have each other.

24) Yitzhak Rabin's assassination has not caused an eruption of violence in the Middle East.

25) We get to come to work and do what we love every day.

Above all, however, we are thankful for many of the things that don't lend themselves to snappy one-liners or sarcastic asides.

We are thankful on this holiday that we are not homeless and that we will have food to eat and warm homes to return to. We are thankful that we are healthy enough to get out of bed each morning. Most important, we are grateful for our families and friends who fill our lives with joy. Without them, nothing else matters.



Sweep away cynicism, and give thanks

During a meeting this summer, my fellow columnists and I were each assigned one holiday to cover during the school year. When I heard that mine would be Thanksgiving, I was ecstatic for two reasons: One, my fear that I would have to spend a spring weekend researching Arbor Day would not be realized, and two, Thanksgiving is my favorite secular holiday.

Of America's major non-religious holidays, Thanksgiving is the only one that is not a competition.

Halloween is a competition to see who can come up with the best costume.

Christmas (which is a secular holiday at least in our country) is a competition to see who can give and receive the best gifts.

New Year's Day and the Fourth of July are competitions to see who can get invited to or throw the best party.

Thanksgiving however, is simply a chance for us to spend time with the ones we love and reflect on the things for which we are thankful.

Unfortunately, in our enlightened age, this holiday has come under stringent attacks from a number of groups. Some say that the peaceful imagery that represents the first Thanksgiving does not do justice to the horrors the Pilgrims brought upon the Native American population at the time. Others, I kid you not, say the celebration is discriminatory against vegetarians because turkey is the traditional meal for the occasion.

What arguments against Thanksgiving do not take into account is that visions of William Bradford with gold-buckled shoes and a black hat, and even the meal itself, are not what is important about this holiday. It is a time for introspection. It is a time of, as the name implies, simply giving thanks.

How often do we actually stop for a moment and think about all that we have, such as: our health, our families, our friends, our country and, as students, the plethora of opportunities that we have before us.

This is what Thanksgiving is about — to look up to the higher powers in which we believe, to the people who help us along the way, and to ourselves, to be grateful for all that makes this life so wonderful, and even in a broken world, so worth living.

If we look at our generation, our music, culture and idols, the emphasis is consistently and almost unfailingly on the negative. A film such as *Kids*, which is merely thinly-veiled kiddie porn, is lauded for its realism because of its pessimistic slant. Trent Reznor, Kurt Cobain and Eddie Vedder are incessantly filling our ears, so that just in case we have forgotten, we can be reminded of how crappy life really is.

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In some ways, they're right. Life can suck at times. There is isolation, pain, death, the situation in Bosnia, Colin Powell's exit from the presidential campaign, an ever-growing deficit that old-school politicians are going to do their damndest to increase, New Age music — the list could go on indefinitely.

But wait. Let's think for a minute. What about laughter? Ella Fitzgerald? The Ducks' bid to the Cotton Bowl? Smashing Pumpkins? The 49ers beating the stuffing (no pun intended) out of Dallas? That eternity between the moment you look into someone else's eyes for the first time and her or his lips touch your own? My God, there is a wonderful world out there, and simply dismissing the whole enchilada as a big mess of sadness and misery is not only defeatist, but absolutely wrong.

We must remember, we live in a nation that for all of its problems, has the most liberties and freedoms of any in the world. Radical feminists such as Catherine MacKinnon and radical free-market conservatives such as Milton Friedman have equal freedom to express their views, whether we agree with them or not. Our generation has never seen our home soil invaded in an act of war. Aside from the far-left fringe of the sixties and the far-right fringe of the nineties, terrorism in our land is highly unusual.

There is so much for which we can be grateful, so much that we have to celebrate. As we see the homeless in our midst, the starving across the world and the war-torn regions of other nations, we must keep in mind that our ingratitude for what we have will lead to our inability to assist those who have nothing.

If we are not truly and honestly thankful for the many blessings in our lives, we not only do a great disservice to ourselves, but to those who need us as well.

Have a happy and safe Thanksgiving.

Primo A.J. Fontana, a senior majoring in economics, is a columnist for the *Emerald*.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* welcomes your opinions on this and other issues. You may submit a letter no longer than 250 words to the *Emerald* offices at Suite 300 in the EMU or send us your thoughts via e-mail at ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

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