'Dead' TV gives people healthier, happier lives

■ **OUR OPINION:** Minds and bodies can benefit from an unplugged TV

"Kill your television" reads one of the more provocative bumper stickers on cars throughout the Eugene-Springfield area.

In retaliation against irritating commercials and trite 30-minute sitcoms in which complex problems are solved in 30 seconds of dialogue, it's amazing more TV sets aren't seen flying out of second story windows — or other violent acts of television homicide.

Falling short of demanding death for all TV sets, beginning last Wednesday, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that calls itself TV-Free America launched its third annual campaign to persuade as many Americans as possible to turn off their TVs for seven whole days. While it isn't known whether the organization advocates violence toward TV, it does recognize the dangers of the shallow, materialistic lifestyles portrayed on the tube and the falsity of "instant gratification" promoted by commercialism.

TV-Free America organizers predicted the participation of nearly 3 million people during its "National TV-Turnoff Week." With only two days left in the campaign (today and Tuesday), there is still time to get on board the turn-off wagon.

The organization's goal, according to Henry Labalme, executive director of TV-Free America, is for people to realize how much time they are wasting and what they are missing out on by watching television.

"The mission of our organization is to encourage Americans to reduce, dramatically and voluntarily, the amount of TV they watch in order to promote richer, healthier, more connected lives, families and communities," Labalme told the Associated Press last week.

"Our feeling is that anything is more productive, creative and ultimately rewarding than sitting around watching TV," Labalme said.

Labalme's organization even created a list of 101 ways to utilize the time that would otherwise be spent in front of the TV screen.

We would like to offer up a few suggestions of our own.

The following is the *Emerald's* Top Five list of stuff to do in place of zoning in front of a droning TV set:

- Go get an ice-cream cone or frozen yogurt with a friend
- Enjoy Eugene's outdoor beauty by climbing to the peak of Spencer Butte
- Take in a cool perspective of the city from Skinner Butte (head for the cross)
- Walk over the Autzen footbridge for a view of the Willamette River
- Read a good book or do some homework

We would also like to present you with a small challenge. Write or e-mail us with what you did (or would do) instead of watching your favorite TV show. We will do our best to print as many of your responses as possible.

Although we hate to be party poopers, please don't send us experiences that involve illegal, abusive or destructive activities — they won't be printed.

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. A member of the Associated Press, the Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union.

Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board; signed columns represent the opinion of the columnist.

The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

Editor-in-Chief: David Thorn
Managing Editor: Marcelene Edwards
Night Editor: Andrea DeYoung
Community: Sherry Rainey, *editor*. Melissa Lebahn, Dawn Paugh, Brian Womack
Higher Education: Regina Brown, *editor*. Jean M. Borst, Laura Kapshire, Jennifer Schmitt
Student Activities: Jennifer Carter, *editor*. Ashley Bach, Kristin Bailey, Doug Irving
Sports: Trevor Kearney, *editor*. Andrea DeYoung, *assistant editor*. Chris Hansen, Pete Schneider
Entertainment/Supplements: Nicole Krueger, *editor*.
Freelance: Lara Pittman, *editor*. **On-Line:** Joshua Olson, *editor*.
Editorial: David Bartlett, Nicole Kristal, *editors*. Kelly Andersson, Jesse Bolver-Clancy, Keith Cunningham, Larry Hafli, Kay Krautscheid, Sonja Sherwood
Copy Desk: Kari Hastings, *copy chief*. Paige Bills, Anna Beth Grimes, Tracy Picha, Paul Van Sickle
Photography: Mathew Stiffler, *editor*. Andrew Brackenrick, En Min Chang, Elena Garber, Shannon Kilduff, Darcie Wenman
Graphics: Dennis Bolt, Matt Garton
General Manager: Judy Riedl
Advertising: Becky Merchant, *director*. Anne Amador, Lee Yan Beh, Yujin Chi, Marco Ching, Justin Gober, Nikki Harper, Matt Johnson, Heather Johnston, Sarah Mitchell, Trina Shanaman
Production: Michele Ross, *manager*. Ingrid White, *coordinator*. Shawna Abele, Rachel Cunningham, Laura Daniel, Nicole Herzmark, Carrie Jones, Tara Knight, Molly McCanta, Carly Schlenker, Allison Stormo, Michael Young
Business: Kathy Carbone, *supervisor*. Judy Connolly **Distribution:** Jeff Johnson, John Long, Ferenc Rakoczi
Classified: Tara Gaultney, *manager*. Jenifer Neel, Jodi Selten
Newsroom ..... (541) 346-5511 **Display Advertising** ..... (541) 346-3712
Business Office ..... (541) 346-5512 **Classified Advertising** ..... (541) 346-4343

Critical listeners find wisdom, insight

> *Journalism is one of the best of all possible occupations.*

Last Monday I had the opportunity to listen to James Fallows, Washington Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and author of the book *Breaking the News*, give the annual Johnston Lecture. Two days later, I had the opportunity to listen to a critique of his lecture by several of my classmates. The critique made me wonder if we had attended the same lecture.

Fallows' lecture topic was "Can We Afford to Hate the Media?", and most of my classmates' complaints were that he seemed to spend more time promoting his book than he spent exploring the topic. When I looked at my notes from the lecture, I saw that he did indeed make several references to his book. Most of them related to thoughts or examples that illustrated various points.

What confused me about my classmates' critique was the strong focus and resentment toward these references. Why did that seem so important to them and so unimportant to me? It took me a few days to finally figure out the answer to that question and when I did, I was reminded of a conversation I had some years ago with a captain of the Marine Police in Brunei.

Larry Hafli

The captain was a devout Muslim who was delighted at the opportunity to have a long conversation with an American who could speak at least a little of his language. We spoke of many things, but mostly of the similarities and differences between our two cultures.

At one point in the conversation, he lowered his voice and quietly asked what I thought of the book written by Salmon Rushdie. I told him that I hadn't read it, but was surprised that Rushdie was condemned to death, in absentia, just for writing a book.

The captain explained that in Muslim society the Koran is considered sacred and to write something false about it is a serious crime. He could not understand why Westerners didn't seem to realize this. I explained that in America there are very few limits on what a person can write, and that we, the readers, are just as free to accept or reject what is written.

The same applies to speech. In America we accept that profound wisdom can sometimes come from fools and idiots just as we accept that even the most prestigious speaker can sometimes be full of it. The captain just shook his head and mumbled something about "crazy Americans" and the conversation turned to more important matters like fishing, ocean currents and tomorrow's weather.

The reason that conversation came to mind should be obvious. There were at least 200 people in Fallows' audience, and I'm willing to bet that each walked away with a different set of thoughts about what they had heard. Some of my classmates walked away with the impression that they just sat through part of a book-promotion tour. I came away with something else.

Fallows said that he felt journalism is one of the best of all possible occupations for three reasons.

The first is the satisfaction that comes from using bits and pieces of information to make something tangible such as an article, a book or a news package. The second reason is that journalism can provide opportunities for constant education, although not all journalists take advantage of those opportunities. With constant education comes the possibility of constant growth, both as a journalist and as a human being. The third reason is that journalists are often able to exert influence over public life without having to pay the full price that politicians and other civic leaders do.

Fallows finds many of today's journalists desire to exert influence over public life. He believes that journalists have a responsibility to give the public both information, or "intelligence" to use his term, and context. They have a responsibility "to tell the public what is good and bad, safe and threatening and to provide news that is whole and steady."

He cited the media coverage of Ron Brown, the recently deceased Secretary of Commerce, as an example. While Brown was alive the media characterized him as a "stain on Clinton's Administration" and "a cinder that should be removed from the public eye." At Brown's funeral, he was repeatedly eulogized as a person who could find win-win compromises between the most opposite forces; Fallows asked why this quality was never mentioned by the media while Brown lived.

I offer Fallow's comments and the reactions that some people had to them only as an example of what is possible when a little critical thinking is employed. I was there to evaluate the lecture, not the speaker, and so it doesn't matter to me if Fallows was pushing his book or not. The essential thing was to listen to what he said and then to sift through it for any useful grains of wisdom that might be hiding there. If a stranger or a fool can provide the key needed to unlock the most perplexing of mysteries, think about how much more a person of intelligence and understanding can offer. All one has to do is to listen and sift.