

How have this week's local floods affected you or people you know? Tell us about your experience.

OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

BY MAIL: P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
BY PHONE: (541) 346-5511
BY E-MAIL: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu
IN PERSON: Suite 300, EMU

Commentator fails in its task

By turning to petty shots at 'fascist cops' and rambling commentaries on nothing, the magazine is ignoring its conservative roots

My freshman year, I wrote a column for the *Oregon Commentator* that bashed the *Student Insurgent* for how poorly it looked and read. The *Insurgent* was using about 50 fonts, pictures of staff members on the front page and hand-written captions.

To write today's column, I was sorely tempted to replace the words "*Student Insurgent*" with "*Oregon Commentator*" and just reprint the damn thing. My former magazine



Thom Schoenborn

has resorted to whining instead of reporting and being sarcastic instead of funny.

The *Commentator* also looks terrible. The pictures

are too dark, too pixelated and quite often don't have a damn thing to do with the stories. The one graphic highlight is the striking young man next to former publisher Justin Good in the now-permanent editorial photo.

These graphical shortcomings can be overlooked. There was an exodus of graphics-oriented veteran staffers over the summer. Coupled with a new design, problems can be expected. The staff told me they're more aware than anybody about the design problems.

What should not be over-

THE REAL MISSION?

Excerpts from the *Oregon Commentator's* mission statement:

■ Our main purpose is to show students that a political philosophy of conservatism, free thought and individual liberty is an intelligent way of looking at the world — contrary to what they might hear in classrooms and on campus.

■ We believe that the University should be a forum for rational and informed debate — instead of the current climate in which ideological dogma, political correctness, fashion and mob mentality interfere with academic pursuit.

■ The *Commentator* has had a major impact in the "war of ideas" on campus, providing students with an alternative to the left-wing orthodoxy promoted by other student publications, professors and student groups. During its 13-year existence, it has enabled University students to hear both sides of issues.

looked is the increasing liberalization of the magazine I used to call home. There is a difference between cynicism and conservatism, between sarcasm and humor. The *Commentator* is blurring these lines more with every issue.

For me, the *Commentator* was about the idea that America is a pretty darn good place to live and that we should appreciate the lives a free country allows us to lead. It was about the promise of free booze, too, but mostly of freedom.

In the Nov. 5 issue's "Nobody asked us but..." section, the staff whines about the police blocking off the street during the Halloween night bust of a party gone bad.

Apparently, a police officer was a little less than cordial with the offending staffers. A story about the officer and his lack of manners would have been great. A story about the police verbally abusing people would have been better. Instead, the *Commentator* resorted to *Insurgent*-style journalism, calling the police officer "a fascist bastard" and describing the possible sexual inadequacies of the officer.

Besides becoming inane, the

Commentator has also become watered down. Ed Madrid's piece on ASUO Executive big burritos Matthew Scotten and Glen Banfield was completely toothless, if not downright pandering. If either of them sticks around to run for an office next year, I wouldn't be surprised to see excerpts of Madrid's article in their campaign literature.

The idea of offering space to more liberal writers is fine. As I understand it, that is the history of "Another Perspective." Offering a platform to image-conscious feminist Alex Tasaday and Student Senate President Kalpana Krishnamurthy for the "One Shot" column pushes the entire content of the paper further to the left.

The *Commentator* compounds the problem by allowing the conservative writers to pontificate on just about nothing. Their "stream of consciousness" style of writing, as former editor Ed Carson described it, leaves readers, who desire and expect more from the *Commentator*, disappointed.

The *Commentator* is the only conservative magazine on campus. The *Emerald* editorials lean to the right, to be sure. But nearly

all the news stories in the *Emerald* are about a symposium, discussion group, meeting, protest or some other liberal news-manipulating event.

On a more personal note, I was quite worried about how the *Commentator* would function this year. I felt during my tenure as editor for the *Commentator* that I did not always put out a quality product, especially near finals. But I was convinced current Editor-in-Chief Farrah Bostic could crank out a quality product with the fantastic staff she had.

Instead, everyone quit over the summer and all hell broke loose. My worst nightmares became more vivid with each issue published.

A new issue came out earlier this week. The graphics were smoother and the content was much more conservative than before. It was even funny. As I tried to read the parody of the *Emerald* retraction to the newsroom, I laughed so hard I cried.

But former Publisher Owen Brennan Rounds was in the *Commentator* office on layout night writing and editing. How much did he lend to the process that improved everything? I suspect quite a bit. Owen has a tendency to not take a backseat, especially with his pet project.

However, I'm convinced that the ever-increasing liberal editorial content, the whiny humor and the sloppy editing will all continue once Owen returns to Portland. It looks different and it reads different. The *Commentator* is not the magazine it once was.

Thom Schoenborn is a copy chief for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

LETTERS

Make an ESCAPE

Every term, student groups sit in the EMU promoting their organizations and events. However, only a few students take advantage of what they have to offer.

ESCAPE Field Studies has hundreds of opportunities for students to get involved in their education. Unfortunately, many of these positions go unfilled every term because students are either too busy or too lazy. I question how this University could be one of the top activist schools in the nation. Furthermore, don't expect a degree to be all you need. Employers want people who have work experience in real world settings.

If you want to get hands on experience, then you should take advantage of one of the many opportunities that ESCAPE and the University have to offer. Your tuition pays for unions and student groups to operate, so take advantage of it.

Donovan Pacholl
Journalism

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

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Photography: Mathew Stiffler, editor. Andrew Brackensick,

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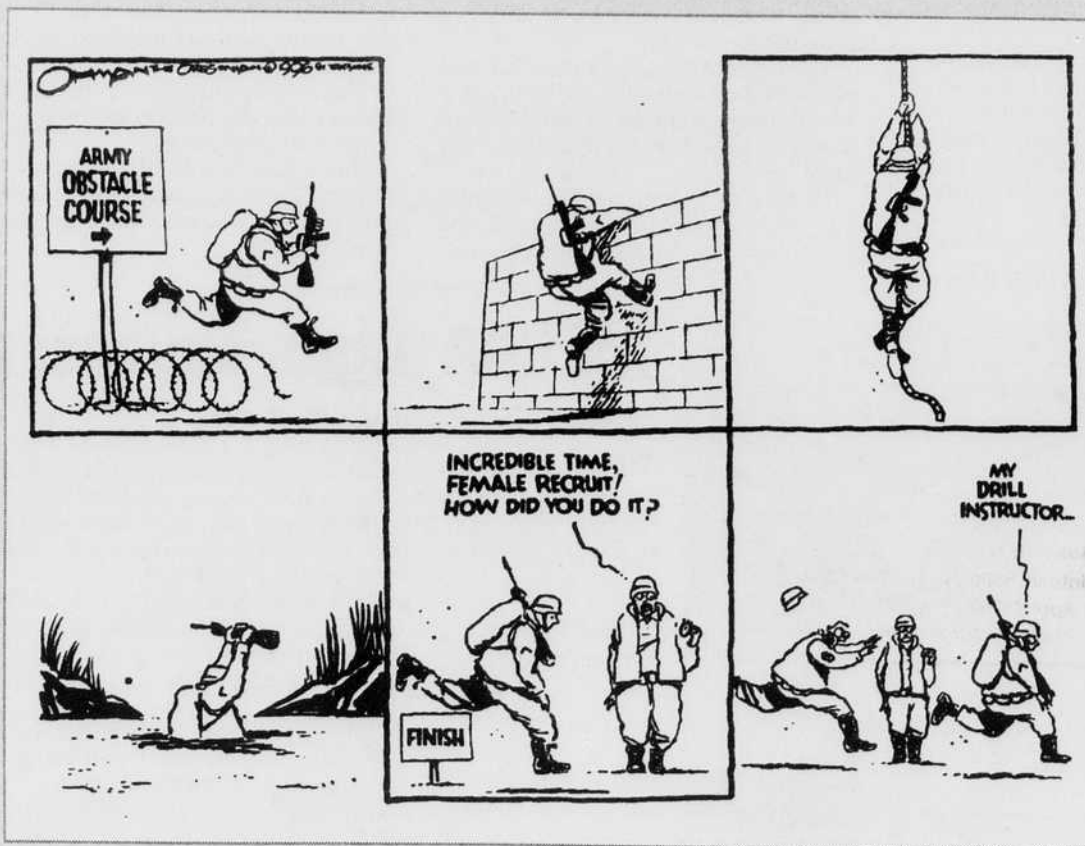
Distribution: John Long, John Paull, Ferenc Rakocz

Newsroom: (541) 346-5511

Display Advertising: (541) 346-3712

Business Office: (541) 346-5512

Classified Advertising: (541) 346-4343



CONTACT US

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Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.