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PERSPECTIVES

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Welcome to campus: Enjoy, but don't stay

University life is fantastic, but it's mostly fun and games

I came to college like anyone else, scared to death about making friends and a future. Those first few weeks, buildings such as Johnson Hall and the Museum of Art cast their shadows; professors hammered out their expectations; waves of students flooded campus, and I felt like a dot. I thought I might find a place in a world of such monolithic dimensions, but I wasn't hopeful.

Three years later, I see how wrong I was. Little did I know that the University is hardly a place to be scared of. Instead, it should be exploited for its opportunities, held in relatively low regard and taken for what it really is: a playground.

Opinion



Ashley Bach

The taxpayers of Oregon have been nice enough to provide us, the state's youth, with a campus on which to learn how to be grown-ups. Some people call college a microcosm of the real world. It is, but it pales terribly in comparison.

As students of the University, we have a baby government to play with, a baby constitution, a baby court to interpret it, a baby police force, a baby higher power (the administration) and even a baby paper.

At first glance, it sure looks like the real world. And trust me, many people have been fooled. But what we really have is a fantasyland, like in "What Dreams May Come," where we can conduct wild experiments and realize our wildest dreams — and yet experience little of any substance.

And while many of us are playing on the slide of professionalism or climbing the monkey bars of careerism, very few of us understand what we have before us.

This is why the ASUO controls a \$7.2

million budget and screams out constantly to the student body, "Look at me! Look at me!" This is why a bizarre group known as the EMU crowd frets over every minute and gossipy detail of student government and student groups (witness the uo.org.asuo newsgroup or the Oregon Commentator). This is why people stay enrolled at the University much longer than it takes to get a degree.

They think the University actually matters.

Of course, this doesn't mean we ignore the opportunities given to us. We can get valuable training — and enjoyment — in our "baby" environments, in class and ultimately in a degree, the final reward. But the best experience comes from internships, practicums and getting out of our little world. Employers know this, evidenced by the reams of college grads and Ph.D.s working cash registers across the country.

In the end, it all comes down to perspective. I like college myself. After that initial fright my first year, I settled down and

realized that at no other time in life can you be surrounded by thousands of

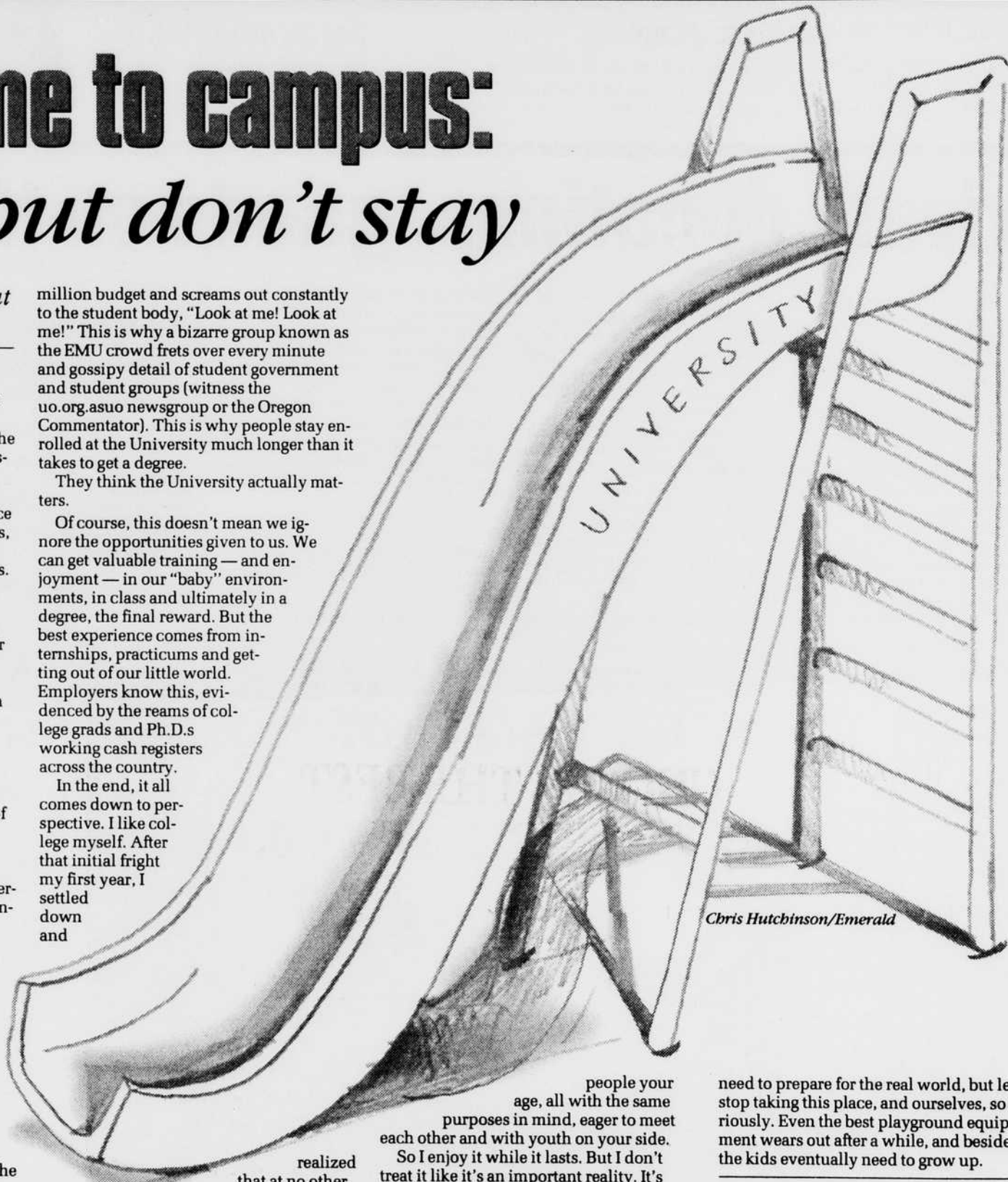
people your age, all with the same purposes in mind, eager to meet each other and with youth on your side.

So I enjoy it while it lasts. But I don't treat it like it's an important reality. It's fleeting, a stepping stone and in the grand scheme of things, not all that important.

Let's all have fun here and do what we

need to prepare for the real world, but let's stop taking this place, and ourselves, so seriously. Even the best playground equipment wears out after a while, and besides, the kids eventually need to grow up.

Ashley Bach is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.



Chris Hutchinson/Emerald

