

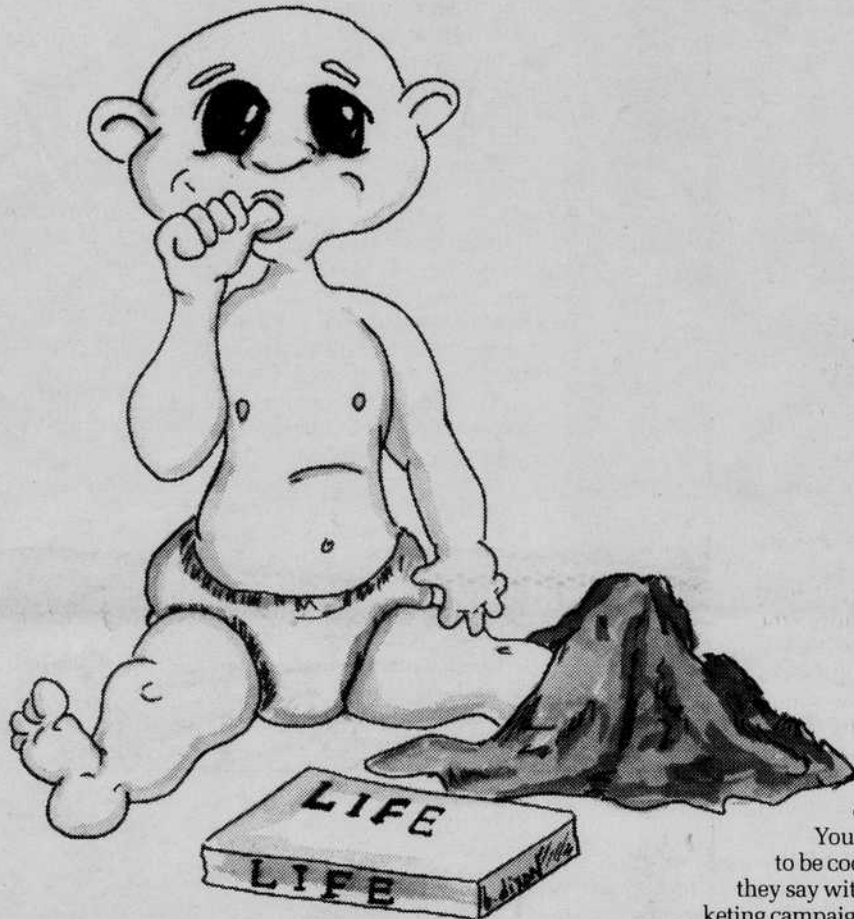
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# Perspectives

Oregon Daily  
**Emerald**

## Get a real life

As our lives have become more commercialized, the quality of the lives we live has taken a plunge



Bryan Dixon Emerald

Those of you set to leave these hallowed halls and emerge into the world of employment, student loan payments and adulthood face a particular dilemma. An opportunity, really. You'll either set out on the path of amassing a lifestyle or living a rewarding life. The choice is yours. But I thought I'd give you a little information that might prove helpful.

We live in a culture that increasingly prizes lifestyle at the expense of having a life, resulting in 70-hour workweeks, growing wealth concentration in the hands of the rich and surges in addiction, social isolation and depression. The top 1 percent of U.S. households owns 39 percent of the nation's marketable wealth, according to Economic Policy Institute figures, up from 22 percent in the late 1970s. But what a glorious lifestyle so many Americans have cobbled to-

gether. The need for a second home has evolved into the necessity of third homes, and \$2,000 courtside seats are *de rigueur* in Los Angeles and New York. The people we tend to put on pedestals are the Bill Gateses and Phil Knights of the world, who write \$20 million checks like we write \$10 checks to the corner market. They've earned their money and have the right to spend it as they wish — just like you and I do. I am not advocating communism or railing against the capitalist system. The results are already in on that count.

When you leave the cozy confines of campus life you'll be bombarded with messages pushing lifestyle over quality of life. Those free T-shirts you received for filling out credit card applications will morph into even greater inducements to sign on the dotted line. Companies will line up to sell you things you don't want and extend

you credit you don't really need. You need more of this to be cool, trendy and hip, they say with their glitzy marketing campaigns. Job-wise, you'll have a choice to do what you really want to do or perhaps settle for something lesser that might provide the job security and benefits parents often crave for their kids.

Lifestyle is sold to us through advertising and peer behavior. It's "keeping up with the Joneses," being who others want you to be instead of being who you are. It emphasizes how it looks, not how it feels. It's about accumulating and stockpiling things, rather than sharing and living simply. It's about what I have, what I own, not who I am. It values outside appearances more than internal qualities: integrity, serenity and character, to name a few.

Life to me is the excitement of living it, not being ruled by the fear

of losing what you have. It's deeply, internally satisfying, whereas lifestyle is a bit like eating cotton candy — it never fills you up and leaves you hungry for more. Life is authentic and natural, not refined, packaged and glossy on the outside. It's having your priorities in line, not putting the cart before the horse. Life is an inside job rather than an outside appearance. It has a spiritual as well as a material component.



Whit Sheppard

It's great to have nice clothes, to drive a car that works and to be able to do the things you want. My thoughts are not fueled by some Puritan streak but rather by the desire to be a voice that many of you won't hear, a cry in the blizzard of lifestyle-first messages you've been hearing since you first turned on the TV or picked up a magazine. Financial security is a welcome thing, and a reachable goal, especially for the college-educated. Life

and Lifestyle are not mutually exclusive concepts. They can co-exist quite peaceably.

The pursuit of lifestyle at the expense of a satisfying life is shortsighted and ultimately unfulfilling. We have a lot to learn from other cultures that value family time and mentoring their young far better than we do in our headlong dash for cash. "It takes a village to raise a child" has become "It takes 500 channels to raise a child." The results are plain to see.

I'm proposing that you rethink contemporary ideas of what "success" means. Emerson's notion of success: "... To laugh often and love much ... to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived ..." is not as hopelessly outdated as it may seem. Besides, have you ever heard someone say, "Hey pal, get a lifestyle"?

Good luck out there, you'll need it. Buyer beware.

Whit Sheppard is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached via e-mail at whitneys@darkwing.uoregon.edu.

### Letters to the editor

#### To each his own

I sincerely hope University President Dave Frohnmayer sticks to his guns. Brown is no longer the only university in the country to make a moral choice and stick to it regardless of the financial cost of those decisions.

The Worker Rights Consortium may not be an industrial watchdog, but I ask you: Is the industry

in question likely to promote an organization which may pull surprise visits? Perhaps the WRC should have industry representatives on its board so that fairness to the companies involved may be assured. However, such advance notification that an inspection is coming allows such companies to clean up their act before the inspection occurs, and then go back to business as usual when the inspection is done.

Nike CEO Phil Knight's deci-

sion to pull his own personal contributions to the University is his right, and I applaud him for following his feelings. I hope he does not expect the University to cave in and turn its back on what may well become an industrial watchdog group. That (group) may find issues that need to be resolved by individual companies for the health and welfare of their employees. I hope the Nike company does in fact work hard to promote and resolve these issues.

The University's athletic departments are sure to miss the support received in the past from Nike and from Knight, but that does not mean our athletes cannot overcome these issues.

Good luck folks, and congratulations to Frohnmayer. I only hope I can do so well.

Cheryl Fitzgerald  
FAA, fibers undergraduate

#### No more handouts

Kudos to University President

Dave Frohnmayer for respecting student wishes and not bowing down to corporate demands! After all, why should Nike CEO Phil Knight be consulted before the University president honors a student vote? Where was he during election time to express his views? Shame on the students who voted to join the Worker Rights Consortium and then denounced their positions once cash was waived beneath their