

COMMENTARY

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Take this Fourth of July to reflect, give thanks

The coming Fourth of July celebrations will likely be somewhat subdued this week as the holiday falls on a Wednesday. While most will get that day off from work, the thought of heading to the office on Thursday will no doubt make most refrain from having that last round of beer or third hamburger off the grill. But while it is somewhat disappointing that we won't have the weekend to kick back and enjoy the heat of the summer with a barbecue, perhaps that is not such a great misfortune.

Too often the true spirit of holidays becomes lost in the frivolity of the celebrating. Few of us can readily admit that every Christmas has been one of spiritual self-analysis, or every Thanksgiving a day of truly being appreciative of our nation's bounty. The Fourth of July is no different, and I must admit that many years previous have witnessed myself celebrating the day in a dizzying run of bulk fireworks, grilled meat and cheap domestic beer.

Sure, it was fun, but I don't think I truly gave enough thought to what I was celebrating and why. And here in a town like Eugene, that is more important than many realize.

Here, it is often far easier to find support as a critic of our country than as a patriot. Quite often our streets are filled with angry demonstrators pointing to what they see as serious problems in our government, society and environment.

Both on campus and off, people seem more quick to tell you what they believe is wrong with our nation than what is right. To listen to these folks, one would think there wasn't anything right with our nation at all. And don't even get them started on what they think about the current administration.

Therefore, Wednesday is an opportune moment for both a reflective and subdued Fourth of July. I won't have the weekend to go wild, so I know I will make sure to remember how lucky I am to be an American, and I hope most people will join me.

Through the rights granted by the founders of our nation, we can spend every day complaining about the United States of America, so why not spend one day singing its praises?

Lower power rates good, but conservation is still needed

It was with some relief that the Bonneville Power Administration announced last week that it would be forced to raise its rates by only 46 percent. This is just another sign of how bad the energy situation has become here if we applaud a nearly 50 percent increase in power rates.

But if one takes into consideration the even bleaker outlook for our southern neighbor California, and the fact that it could have been a 75 to 250 percent increase, that puts the news in the proper perspective. While it will not be totally clear for a few days what effect the BPA's move will have on our local

rates, it is expected to be below 50 percent, and that is more good news.

The lower rate increase came through a multi-million dollar buy-out deal by the BPA and aluminum industry that has some, especially our congressman Peter DeFazio, claiming it's just another example of the energy industry's questionable methods and another reason for more federal control.

But we should all still hope that despite the small rate increase, these large energy consumers will continue to conserve their power and not pass on even larger rate hikes to the smaller customers. Instead they, and all of us, should become even more vigilant in power conservation.

While deals and more deals will continue, our energy woes will likely become far worse before they get better, and so all of us need to make a strong effort to conserve our power. There likely will never be one silver-bullet solution to this energy mess, but as consumers we can all save the little we can. This will not only contribute to alleviating the overall energy crunch, but will also save us some cash as well.

Smoking ban another affront to personal freedom

Well, they finally did it. Despite a promising piece of legislation that would have nullified Eugene's smoking ban and brought some reason to this smoky debate, a last-minute compromise will leave this city's smoking ban in place.

We really should have expected this smoking ban some time ago from a city that often leans toward progressive politics that always claim to be working in your best interest by taking away a few small rights.

Earlier this year, the Eugene Police Department was able to convince our city councilors to enact an ordinance that would leave private citizens responsible for paying police officers overtime if the officers broke up their parties. Then, our city manager decided Christmas trees were too offensive of symbols to be seen on public property, so despite dozens of angry phone calls, letters, e-mails and even a protest by the fire department, Eugene gave Christmas trees the boot.

Now our city is kicking smokers to the curb, literally, by deciding their habit is too offensive to be allowed in private businesses. No one in his or her right mind could promote taking up smoking, but one can argue that it is a person's individual choice to smoke or not, and a city shouldn't make that choice for its residents.

I for one spent this past Saturday night at a colorful drinking hole on the outskirts of Springfield. While some friends bemoaned the fact that they'd had their "last cigarette at Rennie's" this weekend, I just took my business elsewhere.

This editorial represents the views of the Emerald editor in chief and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Oregon Daily Emerald.

Rape is drastically underreported crime

GUEST COMMENTARY

Jane Eisner

They met at a New Year's Eve party and talked on the phone a few times before their first date. She was a 20-year-old student at the University of Pennsylvania, he a computer technician eight years older.

They spent the evening of Jan. 17 socializing in a Center City club and went back to his third-floor apartment on Ellsworth Street about 1 a.m. She had drunk about half of a glass of wine when he offered her a small white pill.

"If you take it while you're drinking, it enhances the effects of the alcohol," she remembers him saying.

She took it and fell asleep 10 minutes later.

Next thing she remembered was waking up in his bedroom, his body on top of hers. He was having sex with her, but she couldn't move, couldn't focus, couldn't keep her eyes open long enough to recall later how the bedroom looked. Finally, he drove her to within a block of her dorm, and she walked home shakily.

There are two notable aspects of this incident. First, the white pill was Ambien, a powerful prescription drug that is used to treat sleep problems and may cause memory loss. Philadelphia prosecutors and police say that they've never encountered Ambien used in this way and fear it may become another date-rape drug.

And, unusually, the female student agreed to prosecute the case. The police and district attorney call her one of the few brave ones, willing to move from the gray, cloudy area of self-doubt and blame into the light of accountability. It's a choice women often choose not to make.

Rape is the most underreported of crimes, especially in the combustible atmosphere of a college campus, where young adults with their first taste of freedom share dorms, bathrooms and who knows what else. Stoked by alcohol, drugs and the ambiguous rules of contemporary social life, it's not always

clear whether rape occurred, and if so, who is to blame.

As a result, experts believe that the sexual victimization of college women is grossly undercounted. Educational institutions are required by federal law to report all crimes on or around campus annually, but those data represent a fraction of the crimes that actually occur.

"There's always going to be much more than the police know about," says William T. Bergman, who ran the Philadelphia Police Department's sex-crimes unit and now is vice president for operations of campus-safety services at Temple University.

This disparity was highlighted in a study released in December by the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. After a confidential survey of 4,500 women attending two- or four-year colleges and universities with a student population of at least 1,000, the authors projected the rate of sexual victimization.

Their conclusions are startling. For every 1,000 women students, there may be 35 incidents of rape or attempted rape in a given academic year. "For a campus with 10,000 women," the authors estimate, "this would mean the number of rapes could exceed 350."

Apply that formula to some of the region's largest campuses and a span of doubt wider than the Delaware opens up between projected rapes and those actually reported. Penn reported two rapes in 2000; given the number of female undergraduates — 5,886 — there could have been as many as 206.

Even if the formula is wrong by half, the gap is enormous.

"The kids don't come forward," says Pat Brennan, director of special services for Penn's Division of Public Safety. "They fear the social isolation, especially when the offender comes from the same community. The initial response of most of our victims is to blame themselves."

Gina Maisto Smith, the assistant district attorney who prosecuted the Ambien case, says young adults have a natural aversion to admitting a mistake. "You're at Penn. Your parents are proud of you. You don't want to tell because you don't want peo-

ple to go around and think anything less of you."

Especially when, according to the victimization survey, nine out of 10 offenders are known to the victim. The stranger grabbing a student on the street is more the exception than the rule. Most offenders are boyfriends, classmates, friends.

Or first-time dates. The young woman in the Ambien case acknowledges that it would have been much harder for her to pursue prosecution if her assailant had been a Penn student.

It was hard enough as it was. "Originally, I wasn't going to tell anyone about it," she recalls while sitting in Brennan's softly decorated office. "I took a pill. I thought it was my fault."

Eventually she told a friend, then her resident adviser, then a hospital worker, then the police. She's remarkably clear-thinking. "People would rather try to forget about it than face all the challenges involved with coming forward," she says. "But there's no way you can forget about something like this."

The case never did go to trial. Last month, the computer technician tearfully pleaded guilty to indecent assault and a drug charge, was given two years' probation and ordered to undergo drug testing and counseling. Considering how difficult these cases are to prove, the resolution satisfied everyone.

"He will probably never administer Ambien to another woman again," Smith said. "She walked away with her self-esteem."

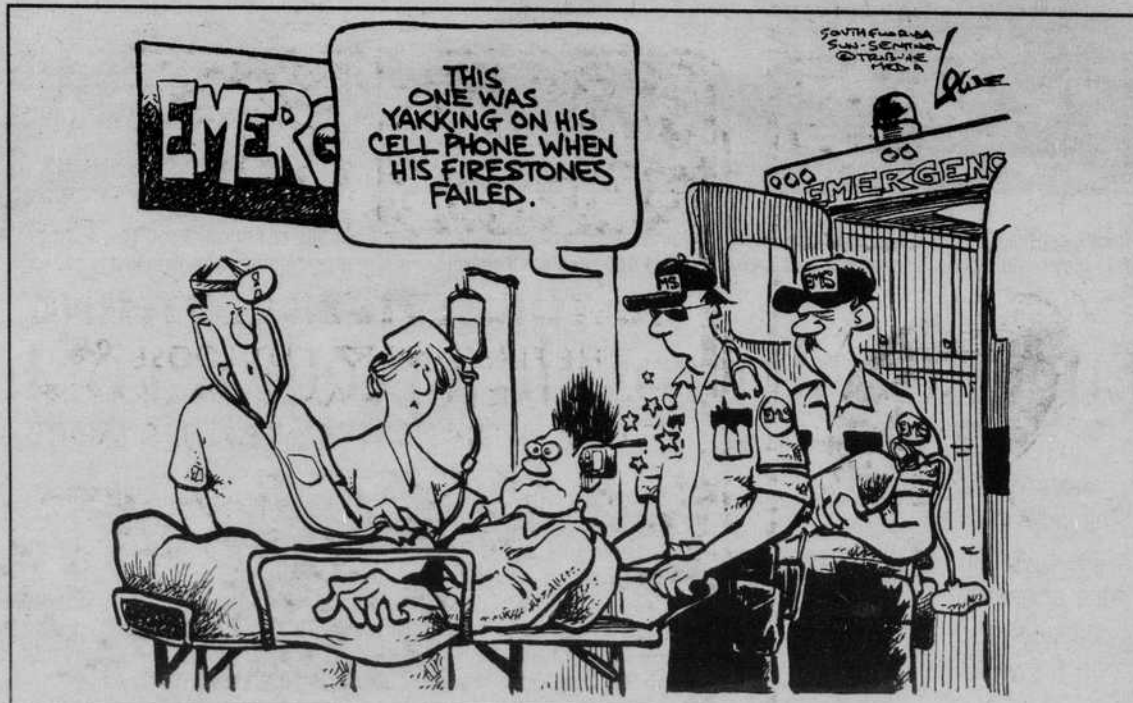
And with a resolute desire to embolden other women to come forward. No surprise that education here is essential.

Every year, Joanne Wszolek, Temple's campus police service coordinator, holds a safety orientation for incoming freshmen, trying to educate them about responsibility, boundaries, reporting.

"They got real quiet," she said of one session last week. "There wasn't one question, one comment. But I noticed the females nodding their heads, making eye contact. I felt they understood where I was coming from."

The silence may be breaking.

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