

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Inattentive driving too dangerous to ignore

A recent trend among city legislators across the country has absent-minded drivers paying the price for getting distracted while on the road. Cities in nearly 40 states have explored some kind of legislation to decrease the number of distracted drivers, according to several national traffic-research groups. Now is the time for the city of Eugene to jump on the bandwagon and participate in similar legislation before the accident toll caused by inattentive drivers mounts.

Most recently, the city of North Bend, Wash., passed a distracted driving ordinance to punish inattentive drivers. Effective Jan. 1, drivers within North Bend city limits will be fined an additional \$300 for violating traffic laws while failing to pay attention to driving. The law notes smoking, shaving, talking with passengers and using electronic equipment (such as cell phones) as some of the distractions covered by the legislation. The law follows dozens of related measures, including New York state's outright ban on cell phone use by motorists in June.

Drivers who are sidetracked from paying attention to the road by cell phone conversations, stereo equipment or even fast food have caused a plethora of accidents in recent years, and the numbers keep growing. Creating consequences for drivers lacking common sense is a last-ditch effort to get drivers to pay attention. Being aware of traffic and road hazards used to be a given when on the road, but distractions are easier to find when more time is being spent driving.

Eugene is no stranger to inattentive drivers and the city should consider legislation to combat the problem. Too much attention has been given to discussing the placement of the Sprint PCS cell phone tower on the east end of campus instead of the adverse effects of cell phones on drivers. The tower may increase phone consumption as a whole, which would put more phones in the hands of students driving to school.

The bottom line is Eugene has a commitment to keep roads safe for all drivers. Distractions have reached epidemic proportions in the information age and legislation must be taken to protect responsible drivers from those lacking common sense on the road.

Editorial Policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.



Steve Baggs Emerald

Cheers to the U.S.A.

This holiday break I found inspiration and a nifty new hat at the same place.

Like most other students, I spent the month off at home with my family. I hail from the small town of Sonoma, Calif., which is also home to the finest wines of the California region. My time in Sonoma was mainly spent partying with high school friends at night and during the day either sitting on the couch switching from ESPN, Comedy Central and CNN or going through physical therapy to recover from a severely broken ankle I suffered this summer.

Needless to say, while I was relaxing I soon found myself drifting into a kind of stupor. I stopped reading newspapers, watched CNN with a bored eye and became generally uninformed and lazy.

I don't know what could have awoken me from this state; I probably would have just drifted through the holiday season until I came back to Eugene. But as is so often the

case in life, I was struck by an awesome inspiration in the most unexpected place.

In what some would call a juxtaposition of opposites, right over the Napa County line and outside the strip mall and subdivided town of Fairfield, Calif., which is located in Solano County, about 45 minutes away from Sonoma, is a Budweiser brewery. My girlfriend, Christine, suggested that it would be fun to take the free tour, and so my friends and I decided to go.

The four of us took the 30-minute tour and could not help but be impressed. Most people might know Budweiser is the No. 1 selling beer in America, but few may realize Bud Light is the second. One out of every two beers sold in the United States is made by Anheuser-Busch.

Each day the five main breweries brew millions of gallons of beer, and the Fairfield operation alone makes more than 2 million a day and can fill 2.6 million 12 oz. cans or 1.4 million 12 oz. bottles a day. There are 45 beechwood aging tanks at the Fairfield facility that hold 50,000 gallons of beer each, which is impressive until you consider that the St. Louis, Mo., brewery has three times the number of tanks. Anheuser-Busch can make more beer than most countries. Even though the Budvar brewery in Czech Republic may have coined the Budweiser name, Anheuser-Busch has

made it a world-wide legend.

Taking all this in from our tour guide (who actually graduated from the same high school as my friends and me), I was inspired by not only the Anheuser-Busch corporation's awesome beer production capability, but also by our own nation. Only a country like the United States of America has the power and resources to devote to such a product as beer. Sure all those specialty beers that folks here in Eugene love are great, I like them myself, but I discovered on that day in Fairfield that Budweiser can be seen as a symbol of our national power. And when you see the enormous capacity of the Budweiser plant, you begin to understand the power of this nation. When I considered this I realized that I was indeed lucky to be a part of America and that shell of indifference began to crack. I regained some of my enthusiasm and lost that laziness. So the next time you see me in a local watering hole, I won't hold it against you that you may be drinking a Black Butte Porter, but I'll be drinking a cold Bud and toasting the U.S.A.

Oh, and the hat? I picked that up at the brewery gift shop.

E-mail columnist Andrew Adams at andrewadams@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.



Andrew Adams
 Columnist

Letter to the editor

Same God, different logic

The Sept. 11 disaster was clearly a product of religious belief, yet few dare to condemn religion and lack of reason as the cause.

Historically, violence arises among religious societies because its members abandon reason to accept the core contradiction that is their "afterlife." The Bible opens by rejecting "the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge," thereby pre-empting reason's development in its readers' minds. Without reason, how is one to negotiate with one's neighbor, except with a club?

Osama bin Laden worships the same God as Christians and Jews, but according to a different version of the holy texts. He just takes his bible literally: "... Then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them ..." (Quran, 9.5).

For centuries, it was unacceptable to condemn witchcraft's contradictions. Today, media writers believe it unacceptable to condemn religion's contradictions. It is time that changed.

Richard Bramwell
 Milton, Ontario
 Canada

In Memorial

Today the world mourns the loss of 69-year-old popular culture icon, Dave Thomas. The Wendy's fast-food restaurant founder passed away Tuesday following a 10-year battle with liver cancer.

He led the fast-food franchise to international success after opening the first restaurant in 1969 and was inspired by his daughter when naming the business. Currently, Wendy's is the No. 3 burger chain in the United States.

Thomas will long be remembered for his appearances in nearly all of the Wendy's commercials since 1989. The light-humored advertisements featured Thomas clad in a Wendy's apron, behind the counter flipping hamburgers, staying true to his humble roots. He appeared in so many ads that he joined the Screen Actors Guild.

Thomas made a less public name for himself advocating for adoption rights. Thomas was adopted as a child.

In 1986, Thomas considered running in the Ohio gubernatorial race as a Republican. He said he wanted to "pay something back" for his success.

The Emerald salutes this humanitarian and advertising legend. Thomas will be tremendously missed by the Emerald editorial board, and probably the legions of University students who frequented his restaurants.



THOMAS