

COMMENTARY

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Friday, April 19, 2002

Yesteryear's Editorial No ordinary bench ...

Between the art museum and Susan Campbell hall is an old, green, dilapidated bench. Tradition reserves that bench for only those students who have attained the rank of senior. It is their privilege, and theirs alone, to make use of the bench which has seated seniors since 1910.

It was in that year that the graduating class decided its gift to the University should be something just especially for all graduating classes — a bench reserved for their use. At one time it was placed under the "nicotine" tree. Later it was removed to a shady spot in front of the old library, now Fenton hall. As far as we are concerned the bench's journeys were completed when it was moved to the present site back of the art museum.

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But to the seniors that bench is a symbol of having reached that last mile — the last stretch before graduation. It belongs to them. And next year it will remain in the same role for the class of '46.

Misuse of the senior bench, we think, sums up the whole question of loss of tradition on this campus. We are hoping such a violation doesn't happen again because in future years some of our best memories of the Oregon campus will be the long standing traditions that governed our way of life.

Do not dismiss that sacred bench with a mere flip of the hand for it represents four years of hard, unceasing work. Many have been the seniors who have made use of its spacious, although hard, seat. Let's keep it just for them.

This editorial was taken from the April 19, 1945, edition of the Oregon Daily Emerald.

Letters to the Editor and Guest Commentaries Policy

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.

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Noblesse oblige found alive and well

(U-WIRE) EVANSTON, Ill. — I had an epiphany on Thursday. I was sitting in Northwestern University's Fisk Hall listening to left-wing British journalist Robert Fisk, a veteran foreign correspondent in the Middle East, when it came to me ... but more on that in a moment.

First, a little background on the esteemed Mr. Fisk. He first came to my attention in December when he wrote a column for his newspaper, *The Independent*, headlined: "My beating by refugees is a symbol of the hatred and fury of this filthy war."

According to Fisk's account, a mob of Afghan refugees in Pakistan savagely assaulted him. The men beat him with their fists and large stones. One young boy even tried to steal his bag — which held his money, credit cards and passport.

Fisk fought back and managed to get away with the help of a good Samaritan, a Muslim, who stepped between him and the attackers and probably saved Fisk's life.

A harrowing tale, but not all that unique. Daniel Pearl, a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, was kidnapped and murdered by a group of Muslim extremists after being forced to record statements denouncing

America and Israel.

Fisk was lucky. He survived. Yet in an almost Christ-like act of forgiveness, Fisk pardoned his attackers. According to him, their violent behavior was not their fault. It was America's.

"The Afghan men and boys who had attacked me, who should have never done so, but whose brutality was entirely the product of others, of us," he said.

I asked Fisk if he would have found the attack justified if the roles were reversed, if it had been an Arab journalist attacked by a group of grieving American relatives of those who died in the World Trade Center.

What he said surprised me. In Fisk's view, Americans were too educated and too civilized to ever do something like that. Following this reasoning to its logical conclusion, the Afghan refugees who attacked him were little more than savages.

Aside from the obvious fallacy that Fisk makes in assuming that one needs a college education to know the difference between right and wrong, his statement shows a kind of colonial mindset of noblesse oblige that I thought had long since been buried but apparently is still alive and well in the dogma of the modern leftist.

This is the epiphany I spoke of earlier. Many of the liberals whom I have encountered on this campus seem to be motivated in whole, or in part, by this ideology of noblesse oblige. They are comfortably middle- and upper-class — secure in wealth, education and social privilege. They are superior to the general population, and they know it.

Of course, that superiority brings with it guilt. This leads them to tear down the very institutions that gave them their privileged positions, while at the same time, they try to raise up those hopeless "savages" who cannot achieve success on their own.

Fisk made that very clear when he excused the Afghans who so brutally attacked him because the "Great Satan" made them do it. So pathetic were those people in his eyes that they lacked even a rudimentary moral agency.

Fisk, like so many other liberals, pities those whose causes he champions. There is no respect or compassion — only pity motivated by guilt.

Noblesse oblige, indeed.

This column is courtesy of Joshua Elder of Northwestern University's campus newspaper, the *Daily Northwestern*.

Peter Utsey Emerald



Letters to the editor

Hot water and heating restored as fast as possible

In response to the article "Residence halls lose heat during weekend" on April 17, I would like to personally apologize for any inconvenience to hall residents during our brief and limited loss of hot water in the Hamilton Complex and of heating in H.P. Barnhart. While some of the content of the article was factual, the hearsay was misleading, prompting me to draft this letter.

On April 13, a hot water heater in Hamilton failed, causing there to be no hot water in Tingle, McClain and Cloran halls. Since we store replacement water heaters, we were able to install the new one in record time. Normally, reordering this equipment takes up to three months, but planning and coordinated efforts made it possible for hot water to

be restored by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 16.

On April 10, the heating system malfunctioned at H.P. Barnhart. The replacement part was due to arrive on Friday, April 12 from Illinois, but did not arrive until Monday, April 15, at which time the repair was completed. Unfortunately, the large, seven-story building takes up to 10 hours to warm back up, so some residents may not have felt the heat until Tuesday.

Maintenance of older buildings presents many challenges throughout the year, but I am pleased to say that our staff rises to the challenge daily. Although this situation was beyond our control, any amount of time without heat or hot water is truly an inconvenience, and I again sincerely apologize to our residents.

Mike Eyster

Director of University Housing and Assistant
Vice President for Student Affairs

Safety measures should be tempered with caution

In the aftermath of Sept. 11, and with all the publicity concerning an alleged increase in campus crime, there has been much demand for greater security at the University (with the Emerald's editors in the forefront).

I would urge caution here, and remind the community of what Benjamin Franklin once said: "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

The Founding Fathers knew the dangers inherent in submitting to the dubious protective instincts of authority. We, too, should be aware that the goal of any governmental power structure is not so much to protect its citizenry as it is to maintain its position at the apex of the status quo.

Bill Smees
University staff