

# COMMENTARY

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## Suicide leaves us all wishing we could help

It's hard to know where to begin talking about the suicide of a student. Unfortunately, it happened here. Eric Dylan Jones took his own life, and the action is important to discuss.

So far, the Emerald has printed two rather different accounts of the events that unfolded March 1. Neither of them were witnessed by our reporters and neither of them have been confirmed by a court case; they are the words of people associated with the case.

One side, represented by Jones' girlfriend — who says she was present for the incident — claims Jones was coming to the defense of his friends, threatened by intoxicated people. The other side, represented by football head coach Mike Bellotti and EPD spokeswoman Kerry Delf — neither of whom claim to have been present — say the attack appeared to be unprovoked or was a "sucker-punch" type attack, from Delf and Bellotti, respectively.

It is no one's place — including our own — to pass some sort of ultimate judgment about the incident if they weren't there. Everyone can sift through the available information, the past history of all the parties involved and try to figure out what's right.

But surely this incident couldn't have been the only thing that drove Jones to commit suicide. If he had turned himself in and mounted a defense with witnesses, what would the worst outcome have been? If his friends had come forward immediately with a different version of the story, couldn't the public image of Jones have been spared, or at least countered? What if the press hadn't found out Jones' identity for a few more days? Might he have turned himself in and still be alive?

All of this is Sunday quarterbacking. Maybe things could have been different. Maybe Bellotti could have waited for a legal forum to make comments proclaiming the "truth" of the event, especially when no rebuttal was available. But of more concern, perhaps, is how this incident became the final straw in a young man's life, and no one was able to stop it.

That is always the sadness of suicide, regardless of individual beliefs about its morality or about the worth of living in general. Those who loved the person wonder if they couldn't have done something different, something to change his or her mind.

The community should take a moment and remind themselves of some of the myths about suicide. Here are a few, courtesy of the University of Oregon Crisis Center:

• Myth: People who talk about killing themselves rarely commit suicide.

Fact: Most people who commit suicide have given some verbal clues or warning of their intention.

• Myth: The suicidal person wants to die and feels that there is no turning back.

Fact: Suicidal people are usually ambivalent about dying and frequently will seek help immediately after attempting to harm themselves.

• Myth: If you ask someone about their suicidal intentions, you will only encourage them to kill themselves.

Fact: Actually the opposite is true. Asking someone directly about their suicidal intentions will often lower their anxiety level and act as a deterrent to suicidal behavior by encouraging the ventilation of pent-up emotions through a frank discussion of their problems.

• Myth: Suicidal people rarely seek medical attention.

Fact: Research has consistently shown that about 75 percent of suicidal people will visit a physician within the month before they kill themselves.

• Myth: Once someone attempts suicide, that person will always entertain thoughts of suicide.

Fact: Most people who are suicidal are so for only a very brief period once in their lives. If the person receives the proper support and assistance, he or she will probably never be suicidal again.

The bottom line: If friends show signs of needing help, be there. With information and assistance, anyone can help a loved one who is feeling suicidal. Plenty of resources are available right here on campus, starting with the Crisis Center. Their Web site is at <http://www.uoregon.edu/~counsel/uocrisis.htm>. A search of the Internet yields hundreds of sites devoted to suicide prevention resources.

If you feel in crisis now, call the Crisis Center at 346-4488 or Whitebird at 687-4000.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THOSE IRAQIS CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR SADDAM.

DRUNK ON NATIONALISM? WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT?



Peter Utsey Emerald

## Concerns about our election coverage

My smiling face is shining out from this page once again this week because I want to be absolutely clear about our intent and our behavior with regard to the ASUO election stories that are currently running every day in the Emerald. We have received some complaints and concerns (see below), and I want there to be no misunderstandings.

Given 17 races and more than 60 candidates to interview, we've had to condense. We took 15-30 minutes worth of interview and distilled it down to just a few inches for each person. We selected only a few of the questions to print, based on which received the most complete or involved answers from the candidates. Then we removed the "umms" and "uhs," and fixed sentences that went nowhere. Then we shortened the interviews — often to less than one-third of their original size. We simply don't have the space to print everything.

For the record, this process is exactly what journalists do every day — not just for ASUO elections. The art of news is to sort and sift, and to present, in a fair and balanced manner, the representative portions of events in the world, so that a six-hour "support the troops" rally, for instance, can be turned into a digestible news story.

The important thing, as recognized by the Supreme Court, is that reporters not

distort the meaning or intent of the speaker by any cutting or "cleaning up" of the quotes. I stand by my staff in this case — we have not altered anyone's meaning.

And don't be fooled: Rarely do readers get a complete, original quote that is unaltered in every way. Often, newspapers use ellipses ("...") to indicate where they have cut material out. We do that in regular stories. In Q&A interviews, however, we do not. It is our assumption that readers know full well they aren't getting every noise uttered by the interviewee.

On our Web site, however, we have the full transcripts of the interviews. These are nearly verbatim. For clarity's sake, we did remove the "umms" and "uhs," and we did add punctuation to aid in understanding sentence fragments. To read these, go to [www.dailyemerald.com](http://www.dailyemerald.com), mouse-over the "News" link, and when the menu pops up, click on "ASUO elections."

As I said earlier, we have received some complaints and concerns about the coverage. Some of this has to do with genuine errors on our part. For those, I apologize. Errors happen, and we regret that part of life. We will correct them as soon as we are informed of them (or recognize them ourselves).

I won't print any of the complainant's names, and here's why: ASUO Elections Rules 2003, Section 6.12. The rule says that no candidate can use any campus resource to promote their candidacy if the other candidates can't also have equal access to that resource.

What does all that mean? It means we don't have the space in the newspaper to print comments and complaints from

every candidate. So I am not allowing it from any candidate. Likewise with letters of endorsement: Candidates can have their friends write letters, but we will not print any signed by a candidate, because we can not guarantee the space to print one from every candidate.

I will tell you we received concerns about our editing, which led to my earlier explanations. The other concern we heard was anger or frustration with the two questions we had for finance senators regarding rules. Let me explain our thinking.

Rules were a concern for senators this year — not because anyone was grossly negligent or because the rules were abused, but because they do have an importance and sometimes they are confusing. So we wanted to see whether people were familiar with the senate rules.

We were careful, however, not to say whether this makes a candidate more or less qualified for office. Such a judgment is for readers to make. We do not necessarily believe a candidate is automatically more or less qualified because of their ability or inability to answer rules questions.

However, candidates expecting to win the right to spend millions of dollars in student fees shouldn't balk at the idea of answering questions about the rules that govern the office for which they're running. I'm sorry, but that's what I think. This is politics. We were fair in our application of the questions, and we gave them very little space in the stories.

So concludes my explanation. Please continue to contact me with questions or concerns about our coverage. That's what makes a newspaper part of the community.



Michael J. Kleckner  
 The editor's office

### 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. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

### CORRECTION

Wednesday's story about candidates for ASUO Student Senate Seat 3 (ODE, April 2) was accompanied by a photo labeled **Colin Andries**, but it was not a picture of him. Andries is pictured here.

The Emerald regrets the error.

