

Wednesday, November 26, 2003

EDITORIAL

Quacks & smacks

Smacks to professors who hold classes the day before Thanksgiving. Sure, today is "formally" a school day, according to established "schedules" sitting in Johnson and Oregon halls, but there's no *real* need to have a quiz today, is there? Is there?

Quacks to the football team for quashing the feeble Beavers' attempt at a Civil War win. The Ducks' 34-20 blast over their Corvallis counterparts was deftly executed, and capped off a rollercoaster-ride season that has left Oregon bowl-bound.

Smacks to naysayers who complained that the new on-campus cell phone tower might pose a threat to flying wildlife. If birds can dodge buildings, they can certainly fly around an inches-thick pole. Making lame, last-ditch arguments doesn't further your point, regardless of the merits of installing a cell phone tower.

Quacks to the snow last Wednesday. A wintry break from the monotony of rain and end-of-the-term stress is just what the meteorological doctor ordered. **Quacks**, too, to the smiles that the precipitation prompted.

Smacks to Michael Jackson. The walking one-man circus — large animals and all — has been arrested on charges of child molestation (he settled a civil suit related to a similar case a decade ago). Jackson has already set up a Web site to act as a "source of official communications," and his hijinks have only worsened already mushrooming media attention on the case.

Quacks to the Federal Communications Commission for requiring that most mobile phone numbers be more, well, mobile. Now, most of the cell-connected throngs will be able to keep their phone numbers if and when they switch carriers. The change lightens the burden of inconvenience not only for cell phone users but for anyone who calls them, too.

Smacks to the Civil War attendee who found the time to dress as the embattled Jackson. Despite whatever limited shock value parading around as the pop star may have (and whatever desperate clawing for attention it may satisfy), it really only serves to distract genuine fans from an otherwise enjoyable event.

Quacks to those who are donating part of their four-day weekend working to serve Thanksgiving meals to the needy. A few community servants are doing their best to bring something close to the less fortunate members of our community.

Smacks to the Bush administration for opening Alaska to oil drilling. While the administration has allocated large amounts of funding to alternative energy source research, the potential for environmental damage — and the small potential gains in fuel supply — make this trade not one worth making.

Quacks to the Knight Library for being open around-the-clock next week. Administrators heard students' voices last year, and they're responding in perfect synch.

Smacks to the Oregon State football team, some of whose members failed to show as scheduled for the "Put the Civil War Back in Civil War" event at Edison Elementary. Ducks (and the Duck himself) went to Adams Elementary in Corvallis. What gives?

Quacks to the re-released Beatles album "Let It Be ... Naked." While the new album won't ever supersede the original in importance (nor would it be reasonable to expect it to), it's a welcome way to re-experience some of the Fab Four's later work in a different light.

Smacks to ASUO for effectively faltering on its promise to notify students of the imminent tuition hike. Waiting until after students register for winter classes doesn't help them plan their finances for the term any better, even if the actual increase itself is small.

And finally, **big quacks** to the life of Professor Emeritus Bill Loy. Not only was Loy a highly accomplished instructor and cartographer, he was also a caring and respected person who worked to improve the campus and Eugene communities.



Steve Baggs Illustration

No thanks.

Thursday is Thanksgiving, the day that Americans will gorge themselves into food-induced paralyzes while celebrating a holiday that has lost all meaning.

Americans eat more food on Thanksgiving than any other day of the year, followed by Super Bowl Sunday in second place. According to the American Dietetic Association, the average American will consume 4,500 calories on Thursday, more than twice the recommended daily allowance.

But what a great representation of American culture this holiday is. We have so much crap in this country that we can afford to be some of the most wasteful, improvident beings on the planet.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, nearly one-fifth of this country's food goes to waste. The Environmental Protection Agency reported in 1998 that Americans produced about 220 million tons of solid waste or garbage. Every day, each American produces 4.6 pounds of solid waste, and in that garbage is an estimated 106 pounds of food waste annually. Only four percent of the 14 million tons of wasted food was composted, the rest was either incinerated or left to rot in a landfill. We spend \$1 billion dollars every year to dispose of leftover food.

Despite that waste, average Americans manage to get more than enough food in their faces. The North American Association for the Study of Obesity noted a nearly 30 percent rise in the adult obese population from the late 1980s to 2000. Currently, more than 60 percent of the population is

overweight. The National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases, a branch of the National Institutes of Health, claimed that 300,000 adult deaths in this country each year are the result of unhealthy

ing about where it came from and what it cost the rest of the planet — in terms other than monetary.

The mythology of American perfection is born from our perception of a never-ending well of resources. Our take-take-take lifestyles drive us ceaselessly and ant-like in a selfish quest for luxury. If you don't buy Product X, you're a loser. If you don't use those magical beauty products, you're doomed to a life of hideousness and loneliness. And, how can you ever survive without the convenience of Product B?

Because we're so wasteful, we are now taking our insatiable thirst for more to the rest of the world. If we can't generate the materials to support our needless accumulation of possessions within our borders, we'll export our me-first attitude and get everyone on the bandwagon.

In our desperate flailing to live the good life, we never stop to consider who we're stepping on to make our lives so much "better." We've pack ratted so much crap in search of the holy grails of convenience and status that we can't get away from it long enough to think things through.

And that is why, while everyone else is sweating a gravy funk and dodging flying rivets from splitting pants, I'll be spending this Thanksgiving cold, naked, shivering and sobbing in my empty bathtub.

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Joseph Bechard
 Cultural obstetrician

eating habits. In a recent call to action against obesity, the surgeon general lamented that in 2000, obesity cost our fine country \$117 billion.

Aside from the 11 percent of Americans who experience food insecurity this year, most of us haven't worried too much about starvation or where our next meal is coming from. And that is what the whole celebration is really about. After much starvation and privation, the people of the Plymouth Colony experienced a bountiful harvest and they celebrated with a feast. Finally, they didn't have to worry about food for a while.

So how do you celebrate Thanksgiving in an environment where there's always a bountiful harvest? We should spend a good, long day away from our crap think-

Prevailing American sentiment supports iron fist

It has always amazed me how single-minded liberal elites are so quick to claim moral high ground in arenas that are obviously entirely out of their league. No better example seems available than our bellicose, if not entirely elegant, Joseph Bechard. Really now,

editorial staff of the Emerald, the least you could do for those of us who actually can read past a third-grade level — and I realize that this is a rarity here at the University — is utilize the spell-check on your iMac, or at the very least hire com-

petent copy staff who doesn't epitomize the insatiable incompetence that has radiated from your publication. Or has the accepted English lexicon evolved to include the word "costed" now? ("To Angry Peacemaker," ODE, Nov. 5).

To answer your more pressing question, Mr. Bechard, the American public is really not what is considered the Willamette Valley "norm," i.e., hippies and flower babies. Most Americans feel like singer Toby Keith does: angry and vengeful at a group of hateful, ignorant and despicable people who are bent on the destruction of this country not because of some abstract objection to imperialism, but rather because of the free-

dom and liberty that we enjoy each and every day. Not because we have slaughtered innocent women and children by the millions (and, of course we know that countries like Libya, guilty of the worst human rights violations imaginable, are applauded by ignoramuses like Mr. Bechard when they take leadership of the United Nations Council on Human Rights), but because we support the only representative democracy in the Middle East. These are people that believe killing Muslims who do not agree with their particular vision of Islam and the Koran is the only moral thing to do. After all, heretics, according to these self-proclaimed protectors of

the Islamic faith, are not deserving of life and liberty. And these, sir, are people that deserve "understanding"? No, these are people that deserve harsh actions and unmerciful reprisal.

So no, Mr. Bechard, I have no loss of love for such people as these. They are backward, uncivilized brutes, and barbarians who deserve nothing more than an iron fist and a boot, respectfully, in their posterior. Viva Keith and the millions of Americans who patriotically purchase his music!

Scott Austin, a 2000 University graduate, lives in Eugene.

GUEST COMMENTARY