

Tuesday, December 2, 2003

EDITORIAL

Major events around globe do not stop for holidays

Ah, Thanksgiving weekend.

Every fall, the University grants students four days off at the time in the term when a break is needed most. Students temporarily slough off the yoke of academic obligations, visit with friends and family, and revel in the giving of thanks and feasting upon holiday treats. But, away from the bustle of academic life, it's easy to lose track of the goings-on in the world at large.

So, for your convenience, the Editorial Board has compiled a list of events — some uplifting and some tragic — from Nov. 27-30 (All dates and times are Pacific Standard Time).

Nov. 27, 6:31 a.m.: Air Force One landed at Baghdad International Airport and President Bush became the first U.S. president to visit the embattled nation. While the event was largely a well-orchestrated publicity stunt, the surprise holiday trip was only worth the effort if Bush genuinely wanted to show soldiers his appreciation (as we suspect he did).

Nov. 28, early in the day: In Casar, N.C., two teenagers and an 11-year-old drove up and down an area road, upsetting their friend's father, Ricky Van Mellon, an evidently angry man. Van Mellon produced a 9 mm pistol and fired three shots in a senseless act of violence, killing Jonathan Beck, 16.

Nov. 28, 6 a.m.: In an absurd act of moral failure, a bargain-crazed crowd at an Orange City, Fla. Wal-Mart trampled Patricia VanLester who was waiting outside the store to grab a \$29 DVD player.

"She got pushed down," VanLester's sister said, "and they walked over her like a herd of elephants."

Clearly, the holiday spirit hasn't yet found its way into every American's soul.

Nov. 30, 2 a.m.: Massachusetts firefighter Martin McNamara died while fighting a fire in the basement of a burning wood frame. While soldiers are hard at work in Iraq, McNamara's sacrifice bids us not to forget that there are civil servants fighting for the public's safety on the home front.

Nov. 30, early morning: A 17-year-old boy was shot at a San Jose, Calif. party, capping a weekend that saw five homicides in what a 2002 FBI report called the safest city in America with a population over 250,000.

Nov. 30, evening: Israeli and Palestinian diplomats landed in Geneva, Switzerland for Monday's signing of the so-called "Geneva Accord." The unofficial agreement marks an important step in the peace process, and is a welcome counterpoint to recent years of dramatic violence inflicted by both sides of the conflict.

Onlookers should remain skeptical, though. Not only have past similar agreements been largely impotent, but some politicians are distancing themselves from the accord, which calls for major concessions on both sides.

In less time-specific news, Lynn Wagner of Reedsville, Pa., finished his months-long project of cashing in more than 1 million pennies (more than \$10,000) he'd saved in 37 4 1/2-gallon buckets. With the help of family, friends, and even strangers, Wagner's feat reminds us in a stressful time that even the smallest differences can add up in a big way.

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. 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.

SPORTS FAN ON STRIKE

Legally, I'm not allowed to incite people into illegal action in a newspaper article. But legal issues have never stopped me in the past, so to heck with it! I'm doing it anyway.

Sports fans of the world, unite! It's time we took to the streets, started riots! Or, at the very least, we need to go on strike. I'm completely serious about this. When they ask me why I started the revolution, I'll just blame my mother.

See, after stuffing myself with stuffing this past weekend in Seattle, my father and I decided to indulge in a SuperSonics game. I wanted to catch up with my boy Luke Ridnour (I like to pretend we're best friends as I yell at him from seats so high they're actually above the scoreboard), and my father wanted to see this year's Sonics dancers. (Just kidding, Mom! I love you guys! Buy me lots of Christmas presents!)

So anyway, when we got home, we had the inevitable "How was the game?" talk with my mother. We told her about the \$25 tickets that were up in the rafters and how the players looked like green-and-yellow bees buzzing around their center-court hive. And we told her that anything closer would have cost us the mortgage on our house and three healthy children to do manual labor around Key Arena. And we told her that a single beer at the game cost as much as a case of Safeway-bought Heineken.

We told her these things, and she asked a curious follow-up question. She asked how much Luke Ridnour, an NBA rookie, gets paid per year. We told her somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2 million. She went off on the typical motherly tangent of "Whatever happened to the good ol' days when players played for love of the game and got paid pennies?" Just imagine if we'd told her how much Alex Rodriguez makes.

Anyway, we gave the sports-fan response, explaining that the high contracts are a product of the system, that if fans didn't go to games and buy merchandise, players wouldn't have money coming out the trunks of their Land Rovers. I think my dad



Steve Baggs Illustration

even tried to explain free agency at one point.

So my Mom, being the rational being she is, asked a very rational question.

"So why don't all the fans go on strike?" My Dad and I sat there, dumbfounded. She continued: "I mean, if the only way to stop the salaries going higher is to stop the flow of money, just don't spend any, right?"

I couldn't believe my ears. My mother was actually right about something to do with sports. We, the sports fans, should protest.

Blazers fans, I'm talking to you. No more players who belong behind bars instead of in them. No more parking that costs as much as a bottle of wine and tickets worth the whole vineyard. No more hot dogs so expensive you expect them to come on a gold-plated bun.

Sports, as entertainment, is a product. The only real way to remove a defective product from a capitalist marketplace is to stop consuming it.

Right here, right now, I'm calling a National Sports Fan Strike Day. Let's say ... Dec. 25. Oh wait, there're no sports that day. OK, how about today? Dec. 2 shall heretofore be known as



Peter Hockaday

Today is Hockaday

National Sports Fan Strike Day. Yes, I did just use the word "heretofore," and yes, I do have the power to decide these things. In my mind.

Can't you just imagine a Sports Fan Strike Day? No traffic by the Rose Garden, stadiums emptier than Damon Stoudamire's head. Would Rasheed Wallace still argue with the refs? Would Terrell Owens still pull pens out of his socks? Would Mark Messier smile? Would George Steinbrenner laugh?

Of course, National Sports Fan Strike Day wouldn't apply to college sports. I mean, certainly, college sports remain untainted. A college football arena wouldn't have luxury suites or gourmet food stands. A college athletics program wouldn't spend millions of dollars on seemingly frivolous endeavors like erecting a building-sized billboard in a far-away metropolis ...

Wait a minute ...

Nope, I don't want to go there. Oregon is in a severely flawed arms race, and that's a different column entirely, but an Oregon game is nowhere near as fan-unfriendly as pro sports are these days. While the Ducks want more fans, the Sonics are practically discouraging fans with high ticket prices. The only "fans" who can afford to sit near the Key Arena court are either really rich or got the seats through a corporate license. These "fans" would rather talk on their cell phones than clap for Luke Ridnour. Professional teams are pricing the average fan right out of fanaticism.

So, students, enjoy your free tickets while you still have them. Remember that, starting next year, Dec. 2 is National Sports Fan Strike Day. Tell your friends. And if it's just me out there at the Rose Garden, carrying my sign and yelling "Scabs!" at all the incoming fans, that's OK. If that's \$25 that doesn't go toward 'Sheed's contract, I'll be a happy man.

Oh, and one last thing.
 Go 49ers.

Contact the columnist at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

PETA has respectable motives

This letter is in response to the article "Preposterous PETA" (ODE, Nov. 14). Early in the article, Travis Willse provides insight into the tragic workings of a culture that has produced countless atrocities, of which animal research is only one.

It is easy (and convenient) to assume — when one is in a position of cultural power — that medical research does in fact increase human welfare. Of course, the opposite is true (as is evidenced by the ever-increasing levels of disease, violence, famine, psychological trauma and emotional isolation that have become the modern human experience, as well as the abusive and manipulative use of medical technologies in the global South, despite the dedicated science of the monolithic medical research industry), and animal research epitomizes the sorrowful results of such assumptions.

But that is not what worries me most.

Travis' inability to enter into a meaningful and equally rewarding relationship with a subjective and alive nonhuman other (Friskie) is more than symbolic of the fundamental basis of hierarchical and oppressive power dynamics that have shaped our cultural history. The tendency to degrade the value of others' lives by those who commit, participate in or approve of atrocities has facilitated the pervasive expansion of an ideology of domination and control that has had as its victims nearly every indigenous culture, landbase and nonhuman species.

Friskie's life is only Travis' to use when he reduces her to something less than alive and sentient. The same holds true for the victims of slavery, genocide, rape, clear-cutting and factory farming. The truth is, Travis, that you are not more worthy of life than Friskie, you just have power.

Science and industry have thus far only

managed to increase rates of cancer, depression, and other illnesses to unfathomable levels. Further research, further control of life, can only worsen this situation — however unlikely that may seem to those of us who, in some ways, benefit. If we wish to increase human happiness, and simultaneously address the atrocities of our culture, we must abandon our attempts to control and dominate, and begin to acknowledge the beauty of meaningful, respectful relationships; we must return to a life of engaged direct experience with the natural world.

While PETA's actions may seem indefensible at times, at least they are trying to formulate a response to one type of atrocity. They are making a first step to recognizing life where so much of our culture only sees tools for human utility.

Sean Prive lives in Eugene.