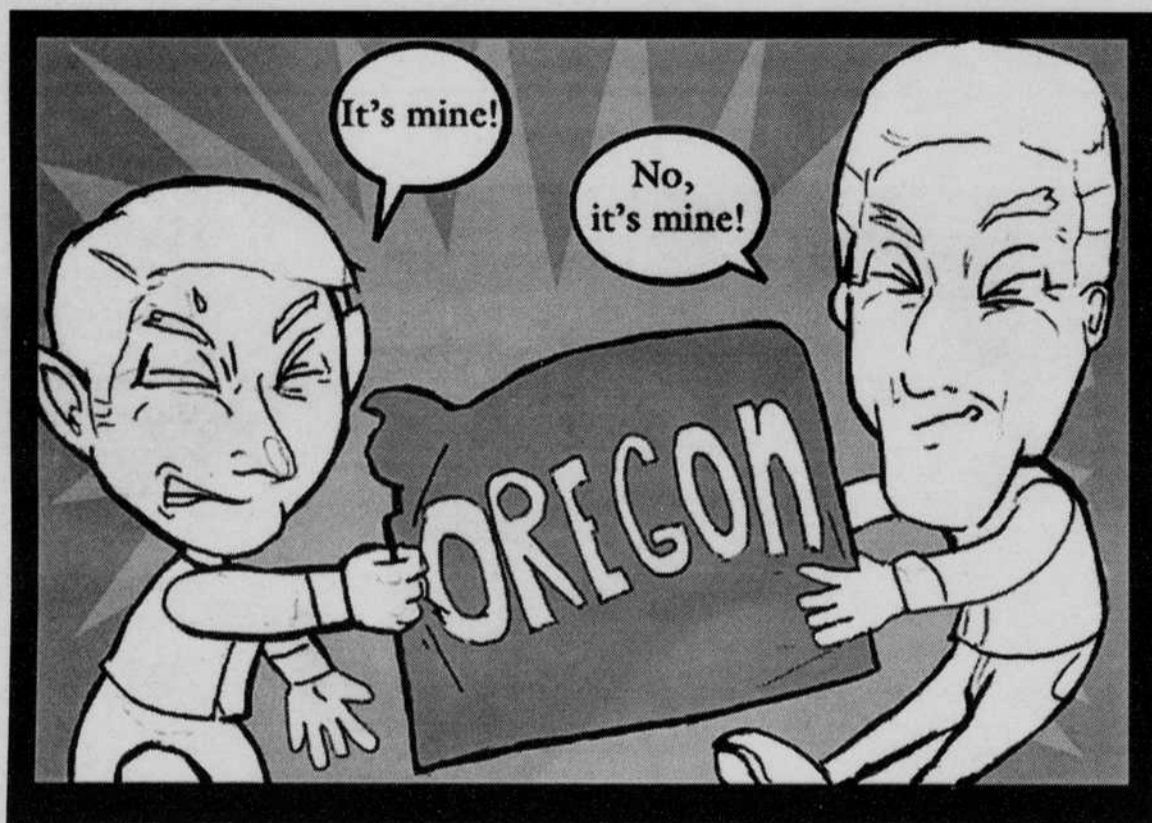


# COMMENTARY

Thursday, August 12, 2004



Aaron Sullivan Illustration

## Star p<sup>o</sup>wer

So apparently Kate Hudson's marriage is on the rocks, Mary Kate Olsen is out of rehab and recovering from a crack addiction and don't even get me started on Ms. Martha Stuart. The question here is why do I even know these bits of information? Celebrity gossip has become an essential American pastime, whether you pick up a National Inquirer while waiting in line at the grocery store or you buy four or five tabloids a month, we've all become addicted. Don't deny it! How else do you know what a "Bennifer" is, or who the lucky adolescent dating Demi Moore happens to be? What's worse is you're considered in "living-under-a-rock" status when you don't know the latest dish. Why do we put ourselves through this? I've got a few ideas. You're probably going to disagree with me so go ahead and start gossiping now about how awful you think I am.

We read gossip magazines because our lives aren't interesting enough without them. As we go through our monotonous routines it's only natural to crave something out-of-the-ordinary and even though Michael Jackson's alleged history of pedophilia doesn't concern us at all, the story provides a brief break from our dull existence. Sorry Michael, it sucks that your deprecation serves to make my life the slightest bit more exciting but what are you going to do about it? Hold your infant over a railing three stories above



PORSCHA COLLETTE CAREY  
 WORLD ON A STRING

pavement to give the paparazzi something new to talk about? Sure, why not. For those of us who are conversationally challenged, divulging our knowledge concerning the details of the lives of celebrities makes us seem hip and cosmopolitan. Gossiping about people you don't know is couth; gossiping about people you do know is trashy.

We read gossip magazines because it makes us feel better about ourselves. Tabloids put the stupidest, sleaziest and most degrading moments of a supposedly perfect celebrity's life in print. Who wouldn't feel better about little love-handles after seeing Britney Spears' air-brushed flabby mess of a mid-section on page thirteen of *Globe Magazine*? A common-person's second divorce seems minuscule in comparison to the many love affairs of Elizabeth Taylor. It's easy to seek the worst in others to make our worst seem less so. There's no need for

me to point out the unhealthiness of that previous statement.

We read gossip magazines so we can feel like the insider. Reading the JFK Jr. family secrets in the August 2004 issue of *TV Guide* can make a person feel like he or she knows something the world doesn't. Maybe like a close family friend to whom JFK Jr. himself revealed his most personal details. This false sense of reality is also very unhealthy. Tabloids don't let the dead rest in peace. Why are there still headlines about Princess Diana (see August 2004 *Examiner*)? She has been dead for more than six years now, what does it matter if she was slightly unchaste?

Knowing these "secrets" doesn't avail anything for us. In fact, by dishing the private matters of the lives of others, we're doing exactly what we'd hate for someone to do to us. We're the first ones to stand up and say how much we hate petty hearsay but we're also the first ones to discuss whether or not Janet Jackson's breasts are real. A little hypocritical? I think so.

So those are my theories of why celebrity gossip is all the rage. Pick them apart, share them with your friends and disregard the sentences you don't like, but don't you dare tell me you have no idea of who Justin Timberlake is dating right now.

porschacarey@dailymerald.com

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Today's issue is the last of the Emerald's regular, twice-weekly summer publications, but the Emerald isn't finished for the summer. On Wednesday, the Emerald will publish its annual Law School edition to welcome students (or welcome them back) to the University's School of Law. On September 20 the Emerald's Back to the Books edition — a six-section paper welcoming the general student body back to the University — will hit the newsstands. Game Day supplements featuring the Ducks' football games against Indiana and Oklahoma will hit the stands on Sept. 10 and Sept. 17, respectively.

As always, see the Emerald's Web site, www.dailymerald.com, for updates and breaking news.

## WMD focus in Iraq invasion deserves criticism

The scathing Senate Intelligence Committee report issued July 9, which found the CIA had misled and misinformed the American public about the 2003 invasion of Iraq, calls to mind several questions and issues.

For one, how can any nation-state function without having an 'intelligence' branch that is largely unaccountable? The alternative of complete transparency is simply unacceptable: If the CIA were to divulge everything it learned as it gathered information, our enemy would be immediately and fully apprised of what 'we' know. Clearly, we must have an intelligence agency that acts with a large measure of autonomy, but the kind of stupidity and deception displayed in this latest instance — which is hardly the first — shows that major reform is in order.

As a Bush supporter, and one who supported (and still supports) the invasion of Iraq, I feel compelled to affirm that most of the responsibility rests with the president and Colin Powell. While I basically trust Bush's intentions on the issue of terrorism — i.e., he was not "about the oil" but was and is really trying to defend America — the simple fact is that Bush should have done a far more diligent analysis of the CIA's findings before going into Iraq. Perhaps all the more so for Colin Powell, who arrived at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. as a fully fledged career military man of the highest rank. Simply put, the two of them should have known better, a lot better.

But the root problem here has nothing to do with the CIA's reckless deceit, nor the invasion itself. The problem is that the White House spun the rationale for invasion based solely on WMD. A wiser course would have been to base the invasion on the fact that America and the world needed to be allowed into Iraq in order to be able to look for these weapons. The fact is that virtually all Americans believed the felonious Hussein wasn't letting the world in because he had something to hide, and we all had plenty of good reason to believe that based on his abnormally public Hitlerian past. Such an invasion was necessary because in not allowing the world in, we outsiders were left to speculate that Hussein was developing a lot more than chemical weapons.

Had Hussein had nukes, he would have probably let one fly in order to assert himself as the new Islamic savior, or so many of us believed that this was very plausible.

The UN surely wasn't going to do anything to stop this. Neither were the politically ambitious Euros, Germany and France. In light of all the shameful escapism and politicking, Bush had all the rationale he needed to go into Iraq, but he resorted to a CIA-sponsored sound byte to make things simpler for the American public to digest, I guess. This spin, not the actual invasion, was the mistake for which he should be rendered accountable.

Mark Grant lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Article presents one-sided view of lawsuit

As a journalism major at the University and a member of the Kappa Tau Alpha journalism honor society, I am appalled at the lack of journalistic integrity shown by Ben Brown in his Aug. 3 article, "Man sues University for denying him appeal."

As a human being who recognizes the impact that psychological abuse can have, I'm also

appalled at the lack of courtesy he showed.

Firstly, Brown should not have allowed James House to use our campus newspaper as a soapbox for his allegations. This article was very one-sided, allowing House to perpetuate his perception of events, stamped with the authority of the Oregon Daily Emerald. It portrayed House as an underdog oppressed by a "pathological liar" and a university system full of mindless employees who believed her without case. Aside from

a single quotation and some paraphrasing, this two-page article is written almost entirely from House's perspective. A basic sense of journalistic responsibility to report the whole story could, and should, have corrected these problems.

Secondly, Marisa Hastie, the supposed "pathological liar" presented in this article, is one of the kindest and most trustworthy people I've ever met. The fact that many intelligent people in the campus community believe her account of events makes me wonder why the

article was so slanted against her.

Additionally, as the victim of a documented case of harassment and stalking, I'm disappointed that her identity was so publicly revealed. It sickens me that with all the trauma she's been through on account of House, she should be continued to be raked through the mud by a campus community that should be supporting her.

Shasta Kearns Moore is a junior studying journalism.

Oregon Daily Emerald P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403

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