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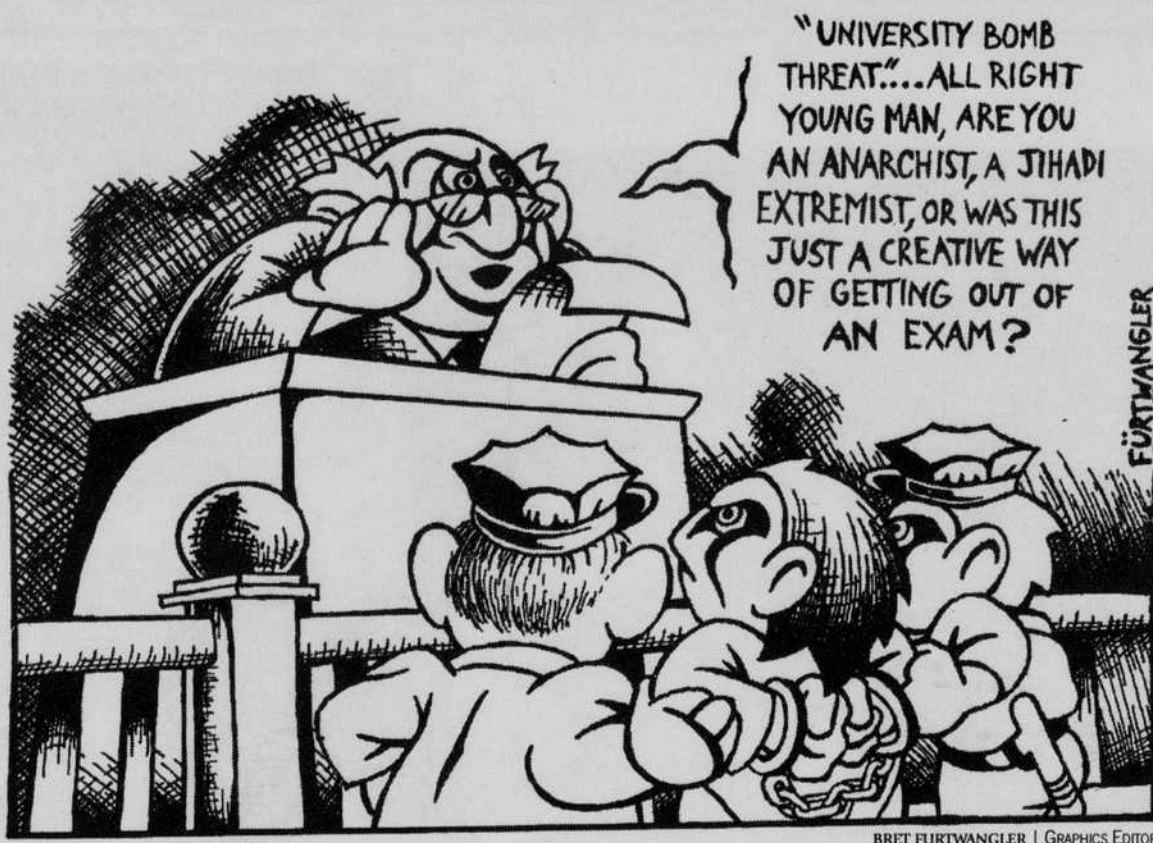
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BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

In my opinion

Tupperware fiesta vs. Dildo fiasco



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

Almost one year ago, a legal storm arose in Texas over a terrible, rather novel danger. It's got nothing to do with the war in Iraq, the 14th Amendment still exists, it's not even the fact that the students of the University will now be subjected to my commentary once a week. This particular issue concerns a much more peculiar menace: Women who deal in sex toys.

In November 2003, Joanne Webb of Burleson, Texas, was arrested with the threat of a \$4,000 fine and up to one year in jail for hosting "passion parties" in her home. Like a classic Tupperware party, primarily female clients learn about and purchase dildos, vibrators, lubricants and other such items that present extreme hazards to society, on par with disgruntled bounty hunters.

Webb, a 43-year-old mother, wife and former fifth-grade teacher, was issued the warrant for her arrest after explaining the use of and selling a vibrator to two undercover narcotics agents. I can only assume that masturbation, rather than illegal drugs, is now considered the leading cause of frequent violent rampages among urine-soaked methamphetamine users.

Webb was accused of violating Texas State Penal Code 43.23 c1: C. "A person commits an offense if, 'knowing its content and character, he promotes ... or possesses with intent to promote any obscene material or obscene device.'"

According to a July Reuters article, Webb's sale to these undercover officers, along with her parties, was deemed obscene because she was marketing these products in a direct manner and showing how to use them for sex. The sale of most porn shop paraphernalia is legal under these guidelines, because those products are billed as novelties. Now, I don't know about most of the general public, but I certainly consider the household vibrators of my roommates and mine to be

items with high novelty value. We always display these sex toys up on the mantle, right beside our 14th century Ming Vase.

Seriously, the distinction between novelty item and actual sex toy is a vaguely drawn line that seems to punish people, especially women, for masturbation. Would a piece of lingerie designed to attract sexual advances be an obscene item? Kama Sutra books? Or are sexual products only obscene if they involve the sexuality of a woman alone?

Intriguing questions indeed, especially when one considers the fact that purveyors of male masturbatory devices, such as Penthouse vendors, have not been threatened with time in prison.

Unless I've been overlooking strategically placed legal warnings ("Please note: These adult magazines are meant for novelty use only, and are not to be handled during personal touching."), I find it difficult to swallow the equality in restricting a primarily female-based source of finding sexual pleasure. Unfortunately, as with too many aspects of "modern" society, women and their desires are once more being pushed toward the margins.

Yet another Texas code makes the possession of more than six items designed or marketed as useful primarily for the stimulation of human genital organs illegal, whereas the possession of more than six firearms designed to stimulate the death of human vital organs is OK.

Both of these Texas obscenity laws seem, at their core, unreasonable. The primary purpose of Trojan's new "warming" condom is to stimulate genital organs; will I be charged with the crime of obscenity next time I'm in Texas and purchase a pack containing seven of those? Do one's odds of creating obscenity suddenly reach a critical point once there are six chances of a climax occurring?

There are much greater harms occurring here that support the basic assumptions behind this whole situation. By penetrating society with the message that women should not or do not have sexuality, problems such as sexual assault are given the chance to rise. The assumption that women lack the desire and ability to choose sex is a key factor in the creation of a rape culture. After all, if it becomes common belief that only men have sexual drives, all genders could easily subscribe to the belief that rape is therefore acceptable, as no person would ever have sex if men were not forcing women into it.

Furthermore, women who are constantly subjected to the idea that their sexuality is obscene or non-existent will easily be convinced that sex is less for their enjoyment than for the purpose of pleasing someone else.

This case serves to demonstrate that we remain a society in which the sexuality of men is encouraged in magazine racks and on TV, whereas the sexuality of women is met with legal action.

Thankfully, the charges against Webb were recently dismissed on the grounds that the case was a waste of county money. However, only positive growth in the rights of women, along with respect, acceptance and enjoyment regarding the idea of female desire, will help to resolve the real problem demonstrated by this ridiculous situation.

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Editorial

Emerald is top dog in world of newshounds

Hello, and welcome to the first edition of the Oregon Daily Emerald for the 2004-05 academic year. This issue marks the beginning of a special year for the Emerald.

We are in our 106th year as a campus newspaper and have served for 33 years as an independent student-run publication working to report for the University and Eugene communities.

This issue begins a new look for the Emerald: Color on the front page five days per week, a redesigned nameplate and a more vertical, clean layout.

The new design incorporates both traditional and modern styles evoking both the cutting edge of a college publication as well as the long and prestigious history of the Emerald.

The goal of the redesign is to make the paper more useful and easy to navigate. Our map and text breakout boxes will provide at-a-glance facts, quotes, diagrams and contact information. Online boxes will point to links on featured Web sites and to www.dailyemerald.com, the paper's Web site, for breaking news and online-only photos and stories.

The front page no longer features the day's weather. A three-day forecast now finds its home regularly on Page 3, but it will occasionally move to Page 4. By removing the bottom banner from the front page, the Emerald can provide more space for local, city, state and regional news.

The commentary page, always Page 2, has a more fluid design, permitting the publication of daily columns and editorials four days per week while creating greater flexibility for the number of guest commentaries, letters and illustrations.

During the summer, the paper transitioned from using Knight Ridder wire-service content to stories by The Associated Press. It is a change that will allow us to cover national and international issues better than ever on our daily Global Update page, usually on Page 3.

We have also expanded our freelance base to allow the reporting staff time for more in-depth pieces on issues that affect students and the community the most.

It is an exciting year for news with a variety of issues to tackle at the University, in the nation and internationally. Most of all, we want the paper to be relevant, accurate and interesting in its features, hard news, sports, entertainment and commentary work. We welcome your feedback and hope the time you spend reading the Emerald is as rewarding as it is for us to produce it.

ONLINE POLL

What do you think of Ralph Nader's exclusion from the November ballot? Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

- A. It's good; it will increase votes for democratic nominee John Kerry.
- B. It's good; Nader's campaign was removed for legitimate reasons.
- C. It's bad; it gives Oregon voters fewer choices in the election.
- D. It's bad; more votes for Kerry worsens Bush's chances.
- E. Who is Ralph Nader?

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OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.