



BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

Delay the day

BY BRIAN R. BURKE
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

We all know the feeling: Immersed in a perfectly good dream, the voices of classic rock disc jockeys invade your subconscious. No matter what time an alarm is set for, it always comes on a few minutes too soon. Thankfully, one of the greatest innovations ever is usually within arm's reach of the bed: the snooze button, a procrastinator's favorite way to start the day.

According to USA TODAY, 40 percent of American adults use the snooze button every morning, with one-third of those late sleepers pushing it three or more times.

While the earliest American alarm clocks date back to the 1850s, sleep-deprived citizens would have to wait until 1956 for General Electric to introduce the first snooze feature. In the days prior to digital alarms, the snooze button was made possible by incorporating a new gear into the mechanics. The arbitrary alignment of this new mechanism and the pre-existing cogs left manufacturers with two options: either set the snooze feature for nine or

10 minutes. GE decided it would be easier to market a more punctual alarm that kept you in bed for less than 10 minutes. When digital alarms replaced the mechanical clock, the nine-minute standard carried over.

"People set their alarms for when they would want to get up and give themselves a little bit of extra time. Ten minutes would make most people late for work," said Allen Davis, service manager at Creative Clock in Eugene.

Nowadays, there's an alarm for everybody's needs. Snooze features come in a variety of time increments, though the 10-minute snooze is still a rarity. Creative Clock carries more than 100 different alarms and is the only antique clock museum on the West Coast. On the hour, chimes of all timbres simultaneously fill the small shop.

"We don't even hear them," Jeannie Innocenti, a Creative Clock salesperson, said. "It's like living by the railroad tracks. After a while you don't notice the trains."

While Creative Clock houses an impressive collection of German cuckoos and historical relics, most customers arrive in search of something to help

Alarm clocks haven't gained much respect since their creation 150 years ago, with most Americans pushing the snooze button at least once each morning

them get out of bed.

"Students come in looking for the loudest, most obnoxious alarm clock," Innocenti said.

Creative Clock has every type of shrill alarm imaginable, including a pink hula-hoop hippopotamus, a Jeep with spinning tires and a Dalmatian in a firefighter's helmet that barks "I love you."

"If that's your alarm clock, you know to wake up before it goes off," Innocenti said.

Interestingly enough, few of the employees at Creative Clock even use an alarm.

"I found that when I set an alarm, I'd always wake up just before it went off," Innocenti said.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, college students get an average of 6.8 hours of sleep each night, two hours less than recommended for optimal mental performance. A simple way to get out of bed in the morning is to open the blinds and let the sun shine into the bedroom. Sunlight halts the body's production of melatonin, a chemical that induces sleepiness. While this might not be enough to kick the snooze habit, it should get students to class on time.

DIET

Nutrition info could join daily specials on restaurant menus

BY ANGELA DELLI SANTI
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TRENTON, N.J.— Show a group of nutritionists a 10-ounce restaurant hamburger and a side order of onion rings and have them calculate the number of calories in the meal. Easy, right?

Well, not exactly. The food experts consistently underestimated the 1,550-calorie meal — by an average of 685 calories — in a study of 200 dietitians by the Center for Science in the Public Interest and New York University.

"If well-trained food professionals can't accurately estimate calorie content in a plate of food, you can be sure the average consumer is at a loss when looking at a menu," said Claudia Malloy of CSPI in Washington, D.C., which co-sponsored the study and is lobbying to force restaurants to provide nutrition information on the foods they serve.

New Jersey is among a half-dozen states considering food labeling laws for restaurants. Under a recent proposal in the New Jersey Assembly and pending in committee, chain and fast-food restaurants with 20 or more franchises would have to post calorie counts on menu boards — Big Mac, 590 calories; Starbucks' grande cafe mocha, 400 calories — and more extensive nutrition information, such as trans and saturated fats, salt and cholesterol, on menus.

Similar legislation is pending in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Illinois and Hawaii, and is expected to be reintroduced in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, though no state currently has such a law, Malloy said.

Many chain restaurants, from McDonald's to Subway, already make nutrition information available, although it's not always publicly posted.

Nutrition labeling bills may have gained momentum with the recent success of "Supersize Me," an Oscar-nominated documentary exposing the health risks of a fast-food diet, and publicity over a lawsuit blaming McDonald's for the obesity of teenage customers.

To the New Jersey Restaurant Association, such proposals amount to over-regulation for an industry already struggling to turn a profit.

"Our position is that the individual who is concerned about obesity should emphasize healthy lifestyle, personal responsibility, regular exercise and moderation," said Dale Florio, legislative counsel for the state restaurateurs.

No one on either side of the issue believes posting calorie and fat content will produce drastic changes in what people eat. But proponents say such information could lead diners to make healthier selections and would provide sorely needed information to those with health problems who need special diets.

"When they purchase foods at restaurants, most people are using their instincts and their desire," said Daniel J. Hoffman, assistant professor of nutritional sciences at Cook College in New Brunswick. "This is a nice compromise between telling people what they should eat when they're out at a restaurant and giving them information so they have the power to choose."

'The OC': Oh, so addicting

The FOX show gives the rest of us a glimpse (and some an obsessive gaze) into the drama that is life in the OC

BY AMANDA BOLSINGER
NEWS REPORTER

"Welcome to the OC, bitch!" And so the addiction began. It could have been just another show about teen angst, but FOX's "The OC" quickly gathered a cult following.

"I watch it every week basically," freshman Taylor Thompson said. "Sometimes I have stuff I have to do, but I get the lowdown from a friend."

The show first aired in August 2003 and is a soap-opera-like story of the lives of high school students in California's wealthy Orange County. It's about the not-so-perfect lives of the rich and beautiful and all of the drama that even the most exorbitant amounts of money can't fix.

The show features 20-somethings as 16-year-old high school students, but that's not an issue to the faithful followers, the older actors portray much more attractive students than most people gracing high-school halls. The drama is always full speed ahead as make-ups, break-ups, hook-ups and a formal party are critical components for every episode. For instance, Marissa's parents get a divorce, her ex-boyfriend starts sleeping with her newly divorced mom, and her parents don't know she has an alcohol problem.

"It's nice to watch other people and their drama and not have my own drama," freshman Christina Early said. Early began watching the show in fall 2003. She works most Thursday nights but tapes the show so she can catch up on it later.

"I asked for season one (the DVD set) for Christmas, but it was sold out," Early said.

Not to worry though, at least one person in the 456-member thefacebook.com group "OC addicts" must own the set and would be willing to loan it to her. The Facebook group is described as being "for anyone hopelessly addicted to the delicious drama that is the OC." The group has men and women. And there are law, business, sociology and landscape architecture students, just to name a few. There is no typical OC addict. Perhaps the addiction runs so rampant because the show can make nearly anyone's life seem "normal."

To carry the addiction further, a single Internet search produces fan clubs, message boards, newsletters, magazines, trivia, clothing, posters, music and even a drinking game created by the show's faithful.

"The OC" airs Thursday nights at 8 p.m. on FOX.

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