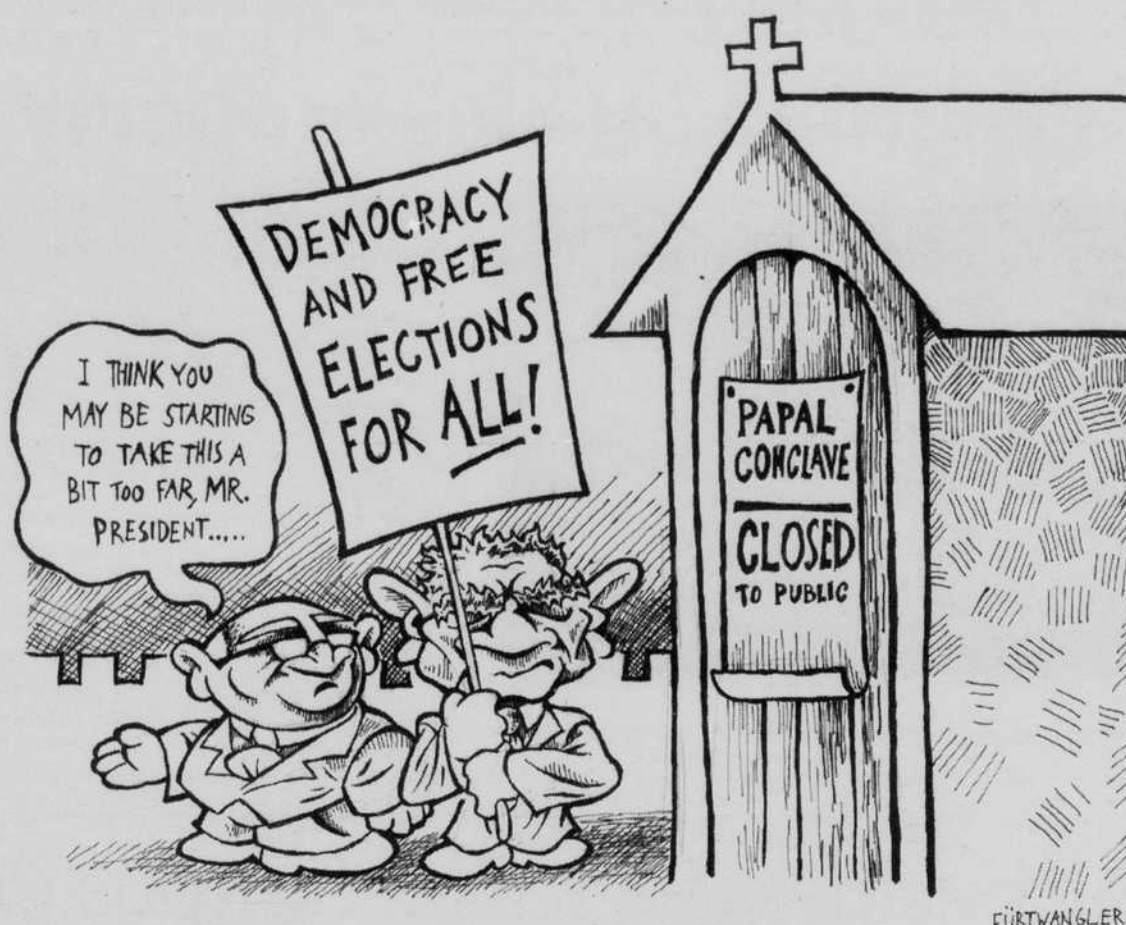


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In my opinion

Ode to a true activist

"Heroine n. 1. A woman noted for courageous acts. 2. A woman noted for special achievements in her field." — Webster's II New College Dictionary.

On Saturday, April 16, America lost one of its brightest stars. You may not have known her name or been touched by what she did, but she worked on your behalf all the same. She deserves to be mourned; she deserves to be remembered. Her name was Marla Ruzicka, and she was only 28 years old. Since the age of fifteen, she had been involved in activist work, helping humanitarian causes from China to Honduras. She died in Iraq still trying to save the world, racing along one of the most dangerous streets without a single piece of armor. The doctors found her at the scene, burns covering 90 percent of her body. Her last two words: "I'm alive."

For some people, it's not enough to make fiery speeches or buy bumper stickers or wave placards on the highway shouting "Honk if you hate war!" She didn't even content herself with writing snooty columns in some college newspaper. Instead, when she learned that the Pentagon wasn't counting civilian casualties in Afghanistan, she left her cozy home in California to count them herself. She had worked on behalf of dead and injured civilians of war since December 2001.

"In war, innocent civilians should not be hurt. It happens. Now, we have to see what you do to help the



JENNIFER MCBRIDE
QUASHING DISSENT

families that were hurt," Ruzicka told NPR in a 2002 interview.

Ruzicka's irrepressible good nature led her to form a non-profit organization called the "Campaign for Innocent Victims In Conflict." As part of the process of counting civilian casualties, she went door to door and hospital to hospital, speaking directly to the injured and the families of people deemed "collateral damage." Lacking the money for an office, Ruzicka often slept on the couches of journalists or other humanitarian workers in Kabul and Baghdad.

Despite a lack of funding, Ruzicka managed to contact and catalog over 2000 families who had lost one of their own to the war in Afghanistan. She also confirmed the deaths of 800 civilians killed by American air strikes. In Iraq, Ruzicka had just begun her work. Before her death, she successfully lobbied in Congress to give families of people killed in Afghanistan and Iraq almost \$13 million in compensation. She hoped the money could be spent on hospitalization and reconstruction. Even after doing so much more than

her share, Ruzicka kept on counting, not only the people Americans killed, but the people who were caught in Iraqi insurgents' crossfire as well. Beyond politics, she wanted to make sure each and every orphaned child had a name in her files. A few days later and she would have been back in the United States, fundraising and out of danger.

Marla Ruzicka was killed in the line of duty. She wasn't even a target. She was on her way to visit yet another injured child when suicide bombers caught her vehicle. It was only by chance that she was driving next to a convoy full of contractors. She was just another person to be sacrificed for the greater goal. The guerilla armies must be celebrating, as they have killed yet another well-intentioned person with white skin. As perhaps is fitting, she died side by side with her longtime Iraqi partner, Faiz Ali Salim. Marla Ruzicka touched so many and worked so hard. To me, she represents everything good and pure that is soiled by violence and repression.

I can think of no greater eulogy than her own words: "Yes, a number is important ... but not as important as realizing each number is a human life."

She had a special kind of courage that I can never match. Goodbye, Marla Ruzicka. We have truly lost an angel to God's sweet embrace.

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INBOX

Organ donors should be first to receive organs

More than half of the people who need an organ transplant in the United States die before they get one. Most of these deaths are needless. Americans bury or cremate about 20,000 life-saving organs every year.

There is a simple solution to the organ shortage — give organs first to people who have agreed to donate their own organs when they die.

This will convince more people to sign donor cards and will also make the organ allocation system fairer. About 70 percent of the organs transplanted in the United States

go to people who haven't agreed to donate their own organs when they die.

Anyone who wants to donate their organs to others who have agreed to donate theirs can join Lifesharers at www.lifesharers.com.

David J. Undis
Nashville TN

Editorial

Housing not responsible for its slew of problems

Earlier this year, after the 2004 Princeton Review rated our university No. 1 for "dorms like dungeons," the Emerald wrote in an editorial that such a low rank was no surprise and that creating a new Living Learning Center while ignoring the decrepit conditions of our older residence halls badly in need of renovation was a problem. Our blame was misplaced. Unfortunately, we now know that University Housing is plagued by problems — not of its own making — that are simply of a much wider scope than unattractive prison-esque building styles.

University Housing is required to pay the University more than \$250,000 in overhead fees each year, representing one of many auxiliary enterprises that helps relieve the University of overhead costs. University Housing money is also seriously drained by mandatory payments to the consolidated debt pool, a fund put in place to help small schools within the Oregon University System construct and renovate residence halls. Being a part of this pool means it is economically beneficial for the University to build new residence halls rather than renovate old ones because only increased occupancy will cause the debt fund to gain revenue. Additionally, the University apparently has no qualms about unscrupulously acquiring property using housing money, then using that property for a non-housing purpose, adding further trauma to a department that is unwillingly hemorrhaging funds.

It's easy to see the convoluted state of current University Housing, but it's also easy to see that it is hardly housing's fault. The University requires housing to pay extensive overhead fees when the housing department itself is in desperate need of its rightful revenue. It is especially significant to note that the University is currently designing a \$160 million basketball arena. This fiscal decision makes it perfectly clear that the problem is not lack of money, but lack of proper priority. It is unfair that students paying money to live in University dorms are actually paying money to create a sports stadium.

Likewise, it hardly seems fair in the case of east campus neighborhoods that once University Housing has purchased and renovated property, that space could then be used by the University for a completely unrelated purpose. If housing made an investment in any property, they are due all possible return on that investment. University Housing is being treated like a real estate agent, required to purchase property for clients out of its own pocketbook.

Housing is stretched in too many directions. It must pay funds toward the consolidated debt pool and buy real estate that is not even going toward housing projects, not to mention day to day wages and repairs. The least the University can do is end the indirect overhead assessment on housing until it can pay back the money owed to housing from previous property investments.

It's a question of how student money can best be spent. Students living in University Housing should be paying for exactly that: University housing. Yes, University Housing and the University in general should be a cohesive unit; however, it is unjust to ask housing, and the students paying for that service, to extend their already tight funds toward unnecessary overhead fees and unrelated areas of University growth.

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