



BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

■ Editorial

Intoxication often factors into violence and tragedy

The campaign against drinking and driving has been national, international, long-winded and personal to many. However, in light of recent events, especially those specific to the Eugene community, it seems that a different kind of campaign is swiftly becoming necessary: One against the violence and death that sometimes go hand in hand with intoxicated actions.

On June 10, University student Phillip Julian Gillins was attacked by at least one man in an alley between Kincaid and Alder street. After Gillins was struck by one of the men, he fell onto the concrete, sustained serious brain injuries and died the night of June 12 in the hospital. Gillins, his two friends, his attacker and the attacker's friends had all been at a bar earlier that night. The police are still searching for Gillins' attacker.

In a similar incident June 6, Scott Ynez Caraveo, 42, died after Joshua Martin Thebo, 21, punched him in the jaw. Caraveo's head struck the sidewalk and he sustained a fatal brain stem injury. The incident happened at about 9:30 p.m. on Lincoln Street near East 11th Avenue, and Caraveo died approximately one hour later at Sacred Heart Medical Center. Caraveo's post-mortem blood alcohol level was .31, nearly four times the legal limit for driving. Sgt. Scott McKee of the Eugene Police Department said that Caraveo's drunken state made him more vulnerable to the impact, according to the Register-Guard. No charges were filed against Thebo; the police said he acted in self-defense.

It is also widely assumed that alcohol may have been involved in the death of Joel Meyer, a University student who drowned during a recreational trip to Shasta Lake May 29. Five to 10 kegs of beer are reportedly present on each Shasta houseboat during the Memorial Day Weekend, and the Lake sees a large and unfortunate number of college students with medical issues related to drinking. Alcohol often acts as a lubricant to the series of events leading to tragedy.

June 16 the Corvallis Gazette-Times reported that Shasta County officials had released autopsy and toxicology reports for Oregon State student Gina Zalunardo. Zalunardo reportedly hung herself using a sweater the evening of May 7 at Slaughterhouse Island during a trip to Shasta Lake with other OSU students. The toxicology reports revealed that Zalunardo's blood-alcohol level was .14 and no drugs were present in her system.

Alcohol may be a legal drug for those over 21, but it is a drug nevertheless. When used incorrectly, carelessness, irrational behavior and violence can easily erupt, and students need to remember these facts. The good times brought to many by alcohol can only remain so when users retain the knowledge that when it comes to drinking, safety must come first.

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■ In my opinion

Store-bought happiness

It's the little ironies that sting the most, and this one is a zinger. Today, the headline on an MSNBC article read, "Fake impotence drugs at center of U.S. probe." The sponsored links next to that tasty piece of news were as follows: "Suffering from Impotence?" "Levitra Impotence Drug - Low Price" and "VIAGRA PUNCH: Get Real Pfizer Viagra Online."

It's nice to know that the hypocritical nature of advertising is showing itself off in a blatant manner. Unfortunately, U.S. citizens still do not see or truly understand the harms of a nation built upon the existence of a battle for the most material goods ("capitalism" if you will).

In this country, as well as elsewhere, many lives are built upon the desire to achieve an image. The problem is that those images are by their very nature unachievable. Companies do not strive to leave the consumer happy, they strive to leave the public constantly searching for more. Commodities in the short term are just building blocks used by advertisers to keep people buying more. Why be satisfied with just a big screen television when the happy family in the ad also has the matching speakers?

Instead of consumers buying one item and realizing that commodities aren't making them happy, they are led again and again by advertising to believe that their comparatively mediocre lives can only be bettered by obtaining every blender, workout machine and kitty litter box owned by those mystical commercial families.

It is a well known, proven concept in psychology that money truly doesn't buy happiness. Although lottery winners are in the beginning more happy than recently diagnosed cancer

patients, it has been shown that within a relatively short period of time, those amounts of happiness will even out. It is within the evolutionary nature of humans to find a level of contentment in their current situations.

The plight of sick or disadvantaged people should not be ignored, but it is important to understand that there is scientific proof that looking for joy in a new SUV is comparable to learning how to play the banjo or planting a tree.

And the best part is that most people already understand that fact; no one truly believes that deodorizing himself with a masculine shower gel will cause random girls to rip off his clothes in the middle of the street. But we continue to believe the core value of the consumer industry: Ridiculous as the products' commercials may be, those items will still bring us some amount of happiness.

The problems within that idea of happiness are themselves far-reaching. Consumers have been taught that commodities will make them happy, and advertising usually shows a utopian world that is certainly unaware of diversity or the real world. Most importantly, that pipe dream brought to us by commercials has (understandably) designed a utopia in which products are treated like gods. Characters in ads



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

spend all of their time using and lauding material goods; families, relationships, and all other aspects of life are important only when a product is involved.

In modern times, the dream world of commercials means that women especially are persuaded to spend sickening sums of money on clothing and makeup to overcome everyday sorrow, while men save up to buy cars and attract the women they think they want. Gay people are mostly non-existent, and some racial diversity pops up every now and then to fulfill a stereotype.

Commercials make the real world pale in comparison to ad-worthy items. Too many fathers work full-time jobs (instead of taking three days a week to join a local tennis team, or write a book of poetry) so that their children can spend \$10 more to buy socks at the Gap, while their mother loses out on her dream job because she has to stay home and keep the family's accumulated stuff clean.

Of course, all of this is not unexpected. The job of advertising is to sell products, and the job of products is to get themselves sold. It's no joke that the world as we know it would fall apart without the consumer insistence on vanity goods.

Can anything be done to end the quest of people striving to find happiness where it can never exist? Perhaps not now. But, once the United States loses its status as the superpower, peak oil hits and anarchy and terrorism are the only things that survive the ensuing nuclear winter, at least we've got something to look forward to.

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