

■ In my opinion

seizing a **SECOND CHANCE**

As yet another school year begins, I'm faced with an interesting opportunity. I'm going to get the chance to have two senior years.

I had been planning to finish up at the University this spring. However, a number of factors colluded to persuade me to continue my education for another year. So here I am ... back for more.

Second chances don't come often in life, so I'm going to make the most of this one. I'm going to do this senior year differently than I did my last senior year. For better or worse, it'll be different; when it's done, I'll be able to add a few more items to the list of things I've tried.

For one, this year will be different because there won't be nearly as much pressure as last year. All my transcripts have been sent off to the Law School Admissions Council, so I don't need to have a nervous breakdown every time I get a B. So even if I don't develop full-blown senioritis, I can at least relax a little bit.

Another big way I plan to make this year different is the way I approach the myriad services to students on this campus. I'm paying just less than \$200 per term in mandatory fees. This time, for the first time in my college career, I'm going to get my money's worth out of those fees — and then some.

I'm going to attend every sporting event I can get tickets for, every outdoor club trip that fits in my schedule and every seminar that even remotely interests me. I'm going to read every issue of every campus publication, except for that one publication whose name I won't mention here. You know the one I'm talking about. No, not that one, the other one.

I'm also going to exercise in the student recreation center until I either toughen up or seriously injure myself, whichever comes first. If I do toughen up, perhaps I'll give intramural sports a try. If I seriously injure myself, the student health center is just down the street. So either way, I'm set.



GABE BRADLEY
THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Speaking of health, I'll probably eat a lot of meals at Panda Express. I love Maple Garden, but MSG is a "sometimes" food.

Speaking of new construction on campus, how much does it suck to deal with the disruptions attendant to construction knowing that you'll be long gone from the University before students are able to enjoy the benefits of these projects?

Inasmuch as we've already wandered onto the topic of random things around campus that piss me off, what's with the noise? On the day Bush was inaugurated for his second term my afternoon class was

delayed 15 minutes while a crowd trampled noisily down 13th Avenue. For the first couple minutes, I chuckled to myself about how pathetic it is to complain about a decision after it's too late to change it. Then, I began to watch the clock as the delay dragged on.

It dawned on me that I was paying about 60 cents a minute for this nonsense. I briefly considered going downstairs and demanding a check for the \$9 I had wasted to sit in that classroom and not learn. "Don't these people realize this is a school?" I thought to myself. Apparently not. And they're not the only ones.

Every time I've taken an afternoon class even remotely in the vicinity of the EMU Amphitheater, my academic endeavors have been assailed several times per term by various combinations of hackneyed folk music and hokey spoken-word performances.

Though I still intend to go to every student function I can, I have one request for the hard-working folks in

the ASUO who plan these delightful events: Use a little f***ing common sense, please!

There's absolutely no excuse to blast loud music and bad poetry from giant speakers in the middle of a school when there are literally hundreds of students within earshot who are paying lots of money for the opportunity to learn.

I'm not saying we shouldn't have fun. I love fun. I'm the president of the fun fan club. But there's a time for fun and there's a time for taking seriously the investments we've all made in our education. Please, I beg you, save the noise for after normal class times or move it to a more appropriate venue.

So with that curmudgeonly rant, I'm back for another year of school. That also means I'm back for another year of columns (i.e. curmudgeonly rants). I'm ready to let the good times roll and the hate mail start pouring in.

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■ In my opinion

Prioritizing politics: They're not No. 1

Has anyone noticed a motif in the topics of conversation lately? Politics: It's all people talk about these days. Everything is "the Bush administration this" or "the war that." Does anyone remember when we had more to talk about than just the issues that were voted on almost a year ago? It is a point of constant intrigue for me.

To support this theory, I actually went out and asked people what one issue they had a strong opinion on. The answers I got were superficially varied to an extent, but they all came back to politics one way or another. A good example of this was a friend who had a strong opinion about gas prices. This was certainly an issue worth exploring; however, after he explained his opinion a little more he found a way to blame the entire problem on George Bush and the current administration. Politics finds its way

into yet another facet of our daily conversational topics.

What really had me gripped with interest were the rare moments when I passed by high-school-aged kids, or younger, locked in heated debates about who should have been elected and why. What made it more fascinating was how invested in the conversation they were. A simple debate quickly escalated to dramatic proportions before managing to elude any kind of resolution. I had to suppress a slight chortle at the irony regarding how worked up these kids could get when they aren't even old enough to vote. They were treating the conflict as though it were a life and death matter, yet they are really, more or less, powerless to do anything about it. Talk about setting yourself up for a fall. If this zeal and vigor holds out, perhaps the number of voters in the next election will



RICHARD PRYOR
LEFT OF THE MIDDLE

be larger.

Thinking back on my own middle-school and high-school years (something I try to do as little as possible), I can recall this trend. I can remember being surrounded by arguments regarding ballot measures that would affect the outcome of lives, elections that would determine people's sanity and other such paramount issues. In my youthful naiveté, my concern was only for what I would be eating for dinner that night, or where I would end up that weekend.

Whether a particular girl had a crush on me, or whether I was going to pass algebra occupied the forefront of my mind while, sadly, the State of the Union address fell by the wayside when "Saved by the Bell" was on. Imagine my surprise when I realized that wasn't the norm.

Don't get me wrong. I can get into a spirited political discussion as well as the next guy, and I certainly have my opinions. That said, I've noticed that quite a few people seem to take "spirited discussions" just a little bit too far. After the elections ended in 2004, I heard from a worker at the Health Center that there was a boom in counseling and that people came in who claimed they couldn't even go to class or work because they were too distraught with the election results. There has got to be more going on than just the presidential election.

Don't people have jobs and class-

es to worry about? By and large those things don't cease to exist because of some political movement on the highest levels of the government that is barely even felt by the typical working-class individual. People seem to place entirely too much stock in the inner workings of governmental systems, and it shows when so many conversations keep coming back to the default topic of politics. Those people who voted did their civic duty; there's really not a lot left to worry about until the next election.

There's a lot happening in the world today, most of it right in our proverbial backyards. Many conversation-worthy events are occurring all around us. It seems like such a waste to spend all our time debating politics while life passes us by.

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■ Guest commentary

More than money: ASUO works for students' well-being

The Associated Students of the University of Oregon is your student government. Elected every spring by the student body at large, the ASUO controls the incidental fee (essentially your student tax dollars) that brings students a number of services throughout the year. Ride the bus with just the flash of your ID? There it is. Football tickets? You know it. Student Rec Center? Absolutely. Not to mention a host of culture and activity nights, student unions and services to promote the physical or cultural development of students. Most on-campus extracurriculars that you can participate in are at least partially

funded by the fee.

But student government is about much more than simply the allocation of your money, and the ASUO doesn't look much like the student council you had in high school. The ASUO is the greater voice for students and leads campaigns on and off campus in support of issues that affect students. In the past, the ASUO has helped push the Eugene City Council to adopt housing standards to protect everyone in the city who rents a house or apartment. Last year, the ASUO helped register more than 30,000 new student voters in Oregon, including more than 7,500 new voters

on our campus alone. This year, we will work for a new meal point system for students in the residence halls, collaborate with the Career Center and local businesses to create more internship and job opportunities for students in the Eugene-Springfield area, and take a tough look at the growth of the incidental fee itself.

The incidental fee provides a number of amazing services and benefits to students. Without it, the college experience becomes devoid of most leadership opportunities, intramurals, clubs and events. Students would lose much of their organized voice on and off campus without the

fee, as well as the opportunity to participate in the thousands of events and activities that are made available each year and enrich the college experience.

This fall, the ASUO in collaboration with programs and departments will continue the tradition of Weaving New Beginnings, a reception dedicated to incoming students and faculty of color as well as allies. The event serves to create a stronger community for all on campus. The Street Faire will take place as usual, bringing rare and creative vendors to campus and providing new students an early taste of Eugene.

Most importantly, as the representative body for students on campus, the ASUO is responsive to you. We work on issues that affect students at the campus, city, state and federal levels. As students, our power resides in our numbers, and our numbers start with you. The ASUO is a great way to get involved on campus through volunteering, staff positions and internships for credit on projects and campaigns of your interest. Our office is in the breezeway of the EMU, and we need your help.

Adam Walsh is the
2005-06 ASUO president.

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