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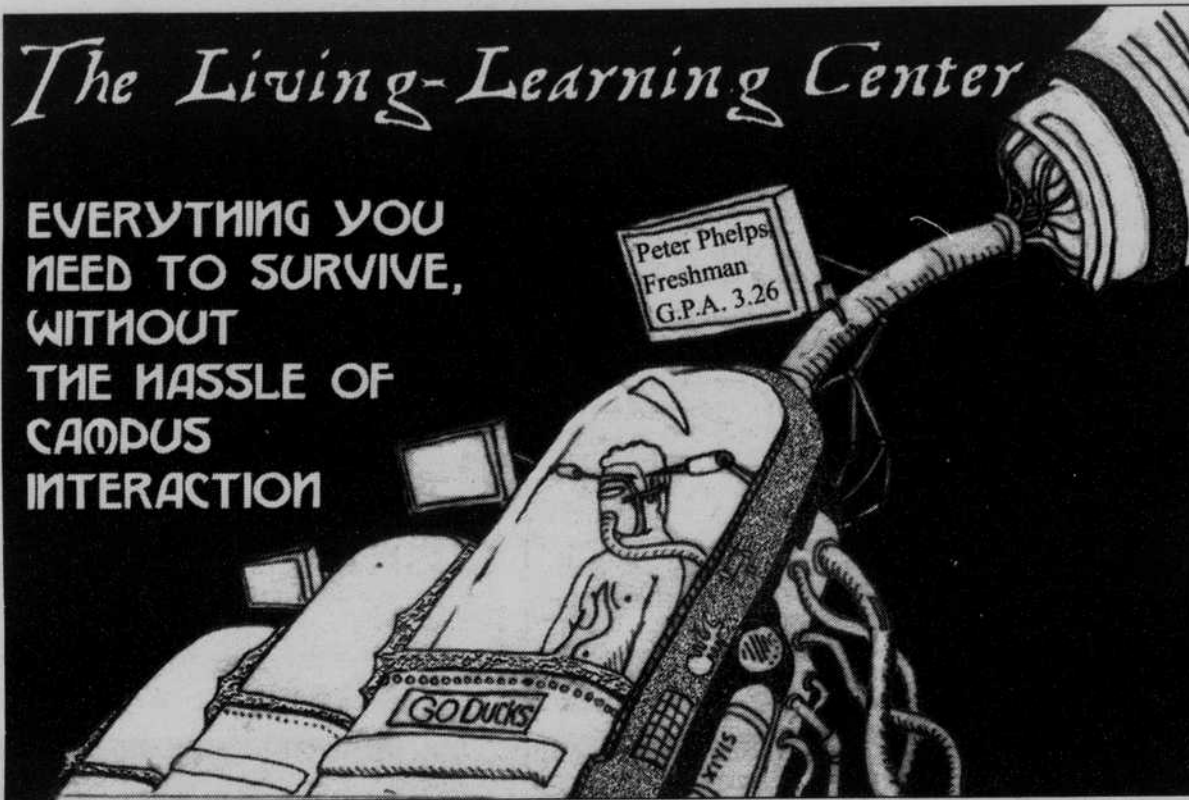
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AARON DUCHATEAU | ILLUSTRATOR

In my opinion

Assumptions the wrong pastime

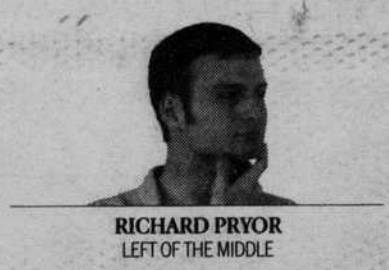
When you assume, you make an ass out of you and me. Doesn't sound too respectable, and yet somehow, assuming is a favored pastime these days. People seem to really enjoy getting up in arms about issues without ever spending the extra few seconds it would take to find out whether they actually had a reason to get up in arms at all.

Here's an example that might apply to you: The recent change in athletic ticket policy at the ASUO was, shall we say, controversial. An alarming number of people have taken it upon themselves to protest outright the disqualification of spousal equivalency tickets in a less-than-subtle manner. For the most part, they do seem to have a justified reason to be upset.

What protesters don't know is that currently the policy states that any left-over student tickets, not picked up by the Wednesday before a game, go on sale to students. Up to four tickets can be purchased and given to whomever the purchaser chooses, even people who aren't students. My oh my, that looks very much like a solution to the problem that would benefit everyone. And if only people knew about it, they might not be so ready to get upset.

That's just one example of an assumption based on misunderstanding, and there are plenty more. You've probably seen it 10 times a day, whether it's someone rushing past you on the street and almost knocking you over or your boss asking you to put in a little extra overtime at work. For all you know, that person rushing past is going to the hospital where his or her child is being born, or your boss has a sick relative in the hospital.

It's a common thing for people to automatically decide they know enough to justify an argument, or get upset,



RICHARD PRYOR
LEFT OF THE MIDDLE

without ever fully acquainting themselves with the facts of a debacle. The fact of the matter is, you just don't know what's really going on without asking, or even taking the time to do a little bit of research.

There are an infinite number of reasons why a person might do anything at any time. It's that pesky free will thing we are constantly struggling with. Somewhere along the line, it became in fashion for people to assume that the end-all-be-all reasoning behind any course of action must be because of the worst reason. The only reason someone would rush past you on the street is because that person is just plain rude; the only reason your boss would ask you for overtime is because he or she wants to slack off; the only reason a decision-maker would make a controversial call is because they want to. Sure, it's all possible, but is it likely? Doubtful.

Don't misunderstand me; I'm not saying apologize to the next guy on the street, love your boss and your local elected official. I'm not writing this article to give people the proverbial "right answer" or to tell anyone what to think. I'm writing this article to get people to think, period. Ask yourself, what is bothering me, and how much do I really know about that thing? How many preconceived notions do you really have? That is worth looking into,

wouldn't you say?

It is utterly within the realm of possibility that you are one of those people who will learn everything there is to know about a situation, like the athletic ticket situation, and still disagree. That's fine, it is your God-given right to disagree with anyone at any time. I mean, it is going to happen. People are going to have different viewpoints, and that is just the way it is. Free will, remember.

The difference between disagreeing without having asked any questions and disagreeing after having asked every question is that you actually asked a question. Now you know, now you can sleep at night knowing you have a good reason for thinking what you think and believing what you think.

There is an old saying: knowledge is power. It seems to reason, then, that we would all want to have as much knowledge as possible and be as powerful as humanly possible. If you can ask questions yet still disagree with whatever is bothering you, you'll now know enough to have a realistic shot at making a difference. You won't have to just get upset; you can actually do something about it.

It all boils down to: knowing everything there is to know about something has got to be worth something to someone. It takes 10 minutes to read an article in the paper or watch a news story on television about why a controversial decision was made. It takes two minutes to ask your boss if everything is all right when they want you to work overtime, and it takes a split second to give the next guy on the street the benefit of the doubt. No one wants to make an ass out of you and me.

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Editorial

Pedal to the metal for public safety

It's a sunny fall day and you're driving to Portland. With a straight stretch of road ahead, you press the gas pedal. Your speed climbs quickly to 85 mph.

Perhaps you worry that the blue and red lights of an Oregon State Police trooper will flash behind you.

Chances are, they won't. Budget cuts between 2000 and 2004 have reduced the number of troopers by 36 percent, according to statistics reported Wednesday in The Register-Guard.

Meanwhile, speeding citations have dropped 29 percent, driving complaints have increased 70 percent and crash complaints have increased 32 percent.

Speeding may not sound like a serious offense. Yet it's a factor in about one-third of motor vehicle fatalities, according to 2003 information from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

By contrast, alcohol was the sole cause of 25 percent of traffic fatalities in Oregon in 2003, according to The Associated Press.

The risks of speeding are even greater for people in their first few years of college. About 33 percent of males and about 19 percent of females ages 21 to 24 involved in fatal crashes were speeding, according to the NHTSA.

Drivers are also speeding faster than before. More than half of speeding tickets issued by troopers in 2004 were to people traveling faster than 80 mph, according to The Register-Guard article. Oregon citations for speeding at 90 mph and faster have increased 4 percent during the past five years, according to The Associated Press.

The solution to increased speeding is two-fold. Foremost, drivers must understand the risks of speeding and slow down.

Oregon's Legislature must also find ways to prioritize funding for public safety, specifically putting more troopers back on the roads. Using gas-tax revenue or a surcharge on car insurance premiums, methods that lawmakers have considered in recent years, would be a slight cost relative to the benefits of safer highways.

Speeders should also shoulder the burden. State Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, managed to pass a bill that will give speeders up to a \$1,000 fine and possible suspension of their licenses if they exceed 100 mph or have repeated offenses. These harsher penalties will help, but they aren't strong enough. Drivers traveling 80 mph in a 65 mph zone deserve more than a \$237 fine.

Let's put the pedal to the metal when finding ways to reduce speeding, not when driving around our state.

CORRECTION

• Wednesday's "University drops OMAS policy," should have stated that one student complaint sparked an investigation into the Office of Multicultural Academic Support. Charles Martinez should have been identified as the interim vice provost for the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, and that 10 students filed complaints with the Bias Response Team. The article also should have reported that only one of the OMAS classes was full as of 8:30 p.m. Tuesday.

• Wednesday's "Governor Kulonowski signs grant increase," photo caption misidentified House Bill 5584. Also, Gov. Ted Kulonowski should have been noted as signing a bill related to the Oregon Opportunity Grant.

• The name of Mathew James Hangsleben was misspelled in Wednesday's "Carry guns with caution."

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