the summer issue
### Mission Statement

The Oregon Commentator is an independent journal of opinion published at the University of Oregon for the campus community. Founded by a group of concerned student journalists Sept. 27 1983, the Commentator has had a major impact in the “war of ideas” on campus, providing students with an alternative to the left-wing orthodoxy promoted by other student publications, professors and student groups. During its seventeen-year existence, it has enabled University students to hear both sides of issues. Our paper combines reporting with opinion, humor and feature articles. We have won national recognition for our commitment to journalistic excellence.

The Oregon Commentator is operated as a program of the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) and is staffed solely by volunteer editors and writers. The paper is funded through student incidental fees, advertising revenue and private donations. We print a wide variety of material, but our main purpose is to show students that a political philosophy of conservatism, free thought and individual liberty is an intelligent way of looking at the world — contrary to what they might hear in classrooms and on campus. In general, editors of the Commentator share beliefs in the following:

- We believe that the University should be a forum for rational and informed debate — instead of the current climate in which ideological dogma, political correctness, fashion and mob mentality interfere with academic pursuit.
- We emphatically oppose totalitarianism and its apologists.
- We believe that it is important for the University community to view the world realistically, intelligently and, above all, rationally.
- We believe that any attempt to establish utopia is bound to meet with failure and, more often than not, disaster.
- We believe that while it would be foolish to praise or agree mindlessly with everything our nation does, it is both ungrateful and dishonest not to acknowledge the tremendous blessings and benefits we receive as Americans.
- We believe that free enterprise and economic growth, especially at the local level, provide the basis for a sound society.
- We believe that the University is an important battleground in the “war of ideas” and that the outcome of political battles of the future are, to a large degree, being determined on campuses today.
- We believe that a code of honor, integrity, pride and rationality are the fundamental characteristics for individual success.
- Socialism guarantees the right to work. However, we believe that the right not to work is fundamental to individual liberty. Apathy is a human right.
If you are reading this, then you can be reasonably certain that you are currently in Eugene, Oregon. Which is fine, unless you are reading this between the months of June and September. If so, what the hell are you doing here?

Shouldn’t you be waterskiing Tahoe, bottle of Coors in hand, sporting a killer tan? As penance, drink a gallon of whiskey, douse yourself with sunless tanning lotion, and run wild through the Millrace.

That’s the best you’ll do around here.

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R A D I C A L S O N
Being a liberal at this school is easy. Being a conservative here is a bit harder. But defecting to the right at the UO is... well, you’ll find out.

By Napoleon Linardatos

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T H E G E N I E I N T H E B O T T L E
Luddites notwithstanding, Napster and its file-sharing brethren are poised to usurp the music industry, bring down the status quo, and piss off Lars Ulrich all in one fell swoop.

By Ben Nahorney

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F R E E P O R N
MP3s are not the only information available online to draw censure: even an institution as sacred as internet pornography is on thin ice.

By Amber Plaunty

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P A T B U C H A N A N U B E R A L L E S!
No no no, we’re not serious about that. We’re conservatives, not fascists.

By Jason Larimer

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Yes, that’s right. Right here.
These are dismal times for U.S. electoral politics. We are told that we have two identical candidates supported by two identical parties, fueled more by money than by popularity, and that participation is at an all-time low. Illustrative are news articles from the summer:

Republican nominee G.W. Bush has collected $100 million in campaign contributions, the most any candidate for office has ever raised. *The Nation* reports that 52 percent of Americans believe special interests have the most control in Washington (Congress topped out at 19 percent, voters with only five).

And who can forget that UPN’s “WWF Smackdown” beat out CBS’ Democratic convention coverage, as cyber-journalist Matt Drudge gleefully reported.

Based on the analysis of mainstream television pundits and newspaper columnists, the numbers indicate that the election is out of the voters’ hands, money is increasingly more important than individual efforts, and no matter who wins, we are going to elect a President we don’t want this November. Dissatisfaction with the mainstream candidates is an American institution all by itself, it seems.

Perhaps, however, there is a light at the end of this electoral tunnel. In recent elections and this year in particular, so-called third-party candidates have captured the American imagination like we haven’t seen since Eugene V. Debs pulled in nearly a million votes in 1920. The argument that both parties have too much influence has been a persuasive one for a long time. Ross Perot, Pat Buchanan and Ralph Nader would all like to claim their title as political vanguard, but even Theodore made his own unsuccessful bid on his own Progressive Party ticket in 1912, and we’ve already covered socialist hero Debs.

To that end, some polls show independent non-affiliation rising, especially with the younger and (currently) less politically active. Ask around, and most twenty-somethings registered as an elephant or donkey have more than their share of reservations. Party loyalty at the University of Oregon is pretty much limited to the College Republicans, but crowded their meetings are not.

More recently, the issue of campaign finance reform has become the hallmark of reform-minded politicians seeking attention. Spearheaded by John “Luke Skywalker” McCain until he predictably tripped over Super Tuesday, the cause was promptly picked up — albeit clumsily — and waved around by Al Gore for all to see. The push to close the “loopholes” left open by the 1976 Supreme Court *Buckley v. Vallejo* ruling has become a cause célèbre among younger voters.

However, it must be said that neither a “true third-party system” nor an overhaul of the laws regulating campaign contributions are going to save the American electoral process.

For instance, the likelihood of a strong third party to compete seriously with the mainstream is too improbable to consider. The emergence of two recently popular alternatives, the Greens and the Reformers (née United We Stand America), has excited many a voter and even converted a fair number — but what have they done to change the shape of the political landscape?

The problem is not in the party system itself, but in the way people choose to organize: just as your average booze hound could opt for an Anchor Steam or Sheaf Stout at the local 7-11, he is more likely to pick up a forty of Pabst Blue Ribbon. Humans have the tendency to organize themselves, and in political participation, this is evidenced by the emergence of the large party “machine.” Not only do they want to win, but they can attract the most number of voters by finding a candidate who appeals to a multitude of demographics. Hence your free-trading Democrat who criticizes the sensationalist media (Gore’s selection, Joe Lieberman) and your pro-choice, moderate Republican (Hillary’s...
opponent, Rick Lazio). In today’s political nomenclature, they are not “contradictory.” Instead, we say they are “balanced.”

Compromise, of course, means that no one is happy. Perhaps the “lesser of two evils” should be rephrased as “the candidate you disagree with least.” It isn’t that the electoral system does not produce good candidates, it’s just that there is no consensus on what makes a candidate good.

The major parties are themselves a conglomeration of concession and acquiescence. In fact, they’re a lot like the coalition governments in France or Germany. Republicans and Democrats may have one platform, but each is born out of compromise among the many factions and wings under each umbrella. Just because Jerry Falwell and P.J. O’Rourke will both be voting for Bush, don’t think that means they have the same views on religion, or drugs.

That the two parties are so similar speaks volumes about the political nature of Americans. The ideological differences between the mainstream left and right are so miniscule, one wonders why they waste the time of holding elections in the first place. Minority political views are ignored not because they are threatening and politically dangerous, but because not very many people share those ideals. The support just isn’t there, and no matter what Pat Buchanan or Ralph Nader may tell you (and on this they sound eerily similar), most Americans realize that everyone will eventually benefit from the promulgation of NAFTA. Truly, the American public agrees on a lot more than they don’t. Sure, many people are concerned with the income gap and what they perceive as dishonest corporate practices, but these are the relatively insignificant breaks of living in a free society. Just because Microsoft bullies its way into new markets doesn’t mean we should all divide into Prince Kropotkin’s agrarian mini-utopias.

So where is this new third rail going to come from? Unless there is an unequal rift in one of the parties, or a new issue pushes itself to the fore, it isn’t. Even then, the likelihood of a third party to consistently poll around 30%, or even in the double digits is incomprehensible. This is not a bad thing in and of itself; just because a third party is not as widely popular as the Big Two does not mean they are not important contributors to the process. Often a third party’s most useful function is to introduce new issues or attract a protest vote. Ralph Nader has been roundly criticized by left-wing groups who fear the election of George Bush, but here Nader is doing the right thing. Even if Al Gore does overcome this burden and become President, the party is aware of a shift in their base, and will factor their force into future legislation.

The other major issue which has more tangible support is campaign finance reform. It may seem a good idea to limit the amount of money any one person can donate to a political campaign, but the rules it draws around what is and is not acceptable means of participation are in many cases unethical.

Currently, donations to political parties and political action committees are not regulated; under many proposals, the hypothetical efforts of Bill Gates to pour millions into Republican party coffers would be illegal. To the many concerned with the persuasive power of money, this is comforting. But what about the non-hypothetical millions that Robin Williams or Barbra Streisand raise for the Democratic party by giving special concerts, open only to the elite and monied? This form of participation is allowed, but it takes no great thinker to realize that one individual made all of that money possible — even the loopholes have loopholes.

Secondly, money is only so influential in politics; it is far from an absolute. More often than not, money follows support rather than the other way around. John McCain was not rolling in money until the week after he won the New Hampshire primary; if Bush loses in November, McCain is the presumptive go-to guy for 2004. If money did convert efficiently into votes, we would be in year four of the Forbes administration, or year eight of the Perot era.

Whether the aggregate of society truly is skeptical or not, all Americans would like to think that they are worldly voters on whom no fast ones could be pulled, and they act accordingly. The twin powers of money and organization are only as good or bad as the cause for which it is used. So long as we live in a free society, all participants deserve the benefit of the doubt, in all the ways in which they choose to participate.
nobody asked us, but...

Cartoon Eyes and Cartoon Suits

Apologies are far and few between up here in Room 205. That is, unless someone knocks over your beer; then, it’s just a matter of tact. Nevertheless, we are compelled to straighten out a misunderstanding about our most recent issue.

Throughout July and August, Issue XIII (right) routinely disappeared from distribution boxes around campus, particularly from our box behind PLC, next to the Knight Library.

It wouldn’t be the first time, and usually we can chalk it up to the hippies or whatever group has been maligned by the most recent issue. However, following an interesting conversation with one of this campus’ unsung icons, it turns out that the real culprit is Hatoon: the talkative “crazy lady” outside the library.

According to Hatoon, “All the children of the world are being born with cartoon eyes,” and somehow, the OC is responsible. While the OC categorically denies any and all connections to such a cartoon-eyed newborn syndrome, we regret any actions on our part that may lead one to think otherwise. Neither the management nor the staff of the OC would condone such a thing, and we would like to go on the record as to say so explicitly, so there are no further misunderstandings.

Now please, Hatoon, leave the goddamned issues alone already.

What do you think of the Oregon Daily Emerald’s new cover design?

- Officially I gave Jack all my best wishes, but when I told him I just loved the new look—that was just my final act of sabotage. Muahahaha!
  
  Laura Cadiz, former editor

- So long as they don’t run that story on my obsessive collection of Abercrombie & Fitch catalogues, they can do whatever they want.
  
  Mike Bellotti, football coach

  
  Jenny Mowe, Ducks center

- You know what’s cool? The cover of the Emerald. You know what’s real cool? The cover of the Emerald: on ether!

  Guido, Chemistry major
Who the hell are these guys?

We have no problem with the concept of campus authorities; any college needs good security — but it sure as hell doesn’t need anymore assholes. One weekend in September, an OC editor and a fellow alcoholic, were “victims” of the assholes we all know so well as the OPS.

The two were peacefully walking through campus — one with an “accidentally” opened twenty-two-ouncer — when an overly enthusiastic OPS officer who, more often then not probably tells people he’s a real cop, stealthily shadowed them at a distance of about three yards. What a psycho. He stopped them and gave the normal talk, which they had no great quarrel with. Then, however he called the good old EPD who also probably tell people they’re real cops. The Eugene officer proceeded to give the aforementioned alcoholic a ticket for his open container. Not all that big of a deal, but it pissed him off.

Why did he have to call the cops? There was no real reason. Seriously though, judging by the the way this guy was tailing them, another one might as well have jumped out of a tree or descend by way of parachute. It seemed at times that he was getting aroused during the incident, while marveling at his carefully planned approach to his subsequent triumph over... who? Two guys walking across a campus that they pay to attend, holding bottles filled with some kind of liquid.

The UO campus is private property, and since he pays through the nose for tuition and fees, it would make sense that he be allowed to do as he likes on his own piece of ground. The officer could have asked him just to pour it out without involving the EPD, and he may well have done it.

Who the hell are these guys? I normally don’t mind OPS, although they can be annoying, and they drive around in their stupid marked cars — as if anyone ever paid attention to them — but I do mind when they hire idiots like this guy.

Correction

In “At Year’s End,” from the June 21 edition, the Commentator erroneously reported the name of the individual to file the first grievance against the Gabbe/Larson campaign during this year’s elections. The actual grievant was student senator Jennifer Greenough. We regret that historical revisionism is not our forte.

Things to do

• Listen to KWVA from 6:30-7:00pm on Tuesday nights, and get on the air by calling 346-0645. Reader listening is encouraged. Listener participation is required.
• Whatever you do, do not accept a “Lemon Leprechaun” — from anyone, for any purpose, at any bar. We’re looking out for you.

Woodstein! Bernwood!

Dear Oregon Commentator,

The reason I’m writing this letter is to tell you a true and almost unbelievable story that just happened to me and my wife in two south coast school districts. If this story doesn’t offend your sense of justice and decency, nothing will! Please bear with me as I attempt to convey exactly what happened. It’s a story of two school superintendents, arrogance, and abuse of power.

The following is a brief summary of the essential elements.

I have been employed as a high school counselor for almost a year now at North Bend High School, North Bend, Oregon. My wife works as an English teacher in neighboring Reedsport High School, Reedsport, Oregon. I recently suffered from what was diagnosed by my psychiatrist as a “major clinical depression.” I was hospitalized for four days and placed on suicide watch. I am home now taking two anti-depressants and on a medical leave of absence. Three days after requesting a form (801) for worker’s compensation, my wife was not rehired at Reedsport High School in spite of a stellar performance, high praise from building administrators and co-workers, and after stepping in at mid-year to clean up a nightmare of a situation left by a former first-year teacher. My wife had put her heart and soul into that job. She was absolutely devastated.

Also, something else happened that was very curious. Two days before my wife was not re-hired, the superintendent of North Bend Schools called me and wanted to talk. I went to his office. During our conversation, he just happened to let me know that he was a personal friend of the Reedsport superintendent, where my wife worked. He said he and the Reedsport superintendent go to church together. He also just happened to inform me that superintendents are a “tight knit” bunch of guys that “stick together.” He volunteered all of this information.

My wife and I have talked a lot about this whole situation and the series of events that occurred. We are fairly well educated people who don’t rush to judgement in matters. However, after much discussion and deliberation, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind or my wife’s mind that they conspired to try get [sic] me to drop the worker’s comp claim as well as any possible lawsuit.

After talking with the teacher’s union representative, we were told that there have been other similar “horror” stories in the past. One sad part about this kind of story, nothing can usually be done about it. Most people like us don’t have the resources to pursue or investigate it. The other sad part is that these kinds of people continue to get away with these kinds of acts that devastate people’s financial and emotional lives.

Also, my wife wants you to understand a little more about the school district she taught in (Reedsport, Oregon). Not only does it have one of the lowest “state report cards” (can be verified on-line), but also things were so out of control in the classroom that she was asked to “rescue” at mid-year that the principal informed her that students were setting fires in the classroom and throwing objects at the former teacher. My wife agreed to take the teaching position at mid-year because she was
Broken Mojo

Feigning surprise, the Eugene community discovered in early September that the University of Oregon had been chosen by *Mother Jones*, in their September/October edition as the most politically active campus in the contiguous forty-eight. *Mother Jones* is a periodical which categorizes itself as “progressive,” thereby increasing the likelihood that their reporting will not focus on issues that will lead to anything resembling “progress.”

Before you get all excited and start making signs for the next rally, you champion protesters, don’t forget that you owe it all to Phil Knight. As the article “Real Reformers, Real Results” mentions, the signing of the WRC “provoked the ire of Phil Knight, Oregon alum and CEO of Nike, which is a founding member of the FLA. He withdrew a $30-million pledge to the school’s athletic program and vowed he’d never give again.”

Funny that, since the *Willamette Week* reported this summer that Knight has already donated money to the business school since his ugly break up with President Frohnmayer.

So what is *Mother Jones* trying to say? Well, they dub Eugene the “anarchist capital of America.” However: a) They’re not the first to notice that, and b) Is that something to be proud of?

In fact, this is the second time since 1996 that the UO has topped the list. So put the balloons away — the party was over years ago.

¡Viva la Agua!

Okay, nobody asked me, but why does there seem to be an annual liquid revolution on this campus? One year coffee is all the rage, everyone walks to class with their java jugs displayed for all the world to see, and then they have to talk about it, for gosh sakes. “Oh shoot, I’m out of Coffee.” “Thank goodness for Coffee! I was up so late last night!” As if coffee is the savior of all that is good in the world.

But wait, the Liquid Revolution strikes! The coffee drinkers become water drinkers, and suddenly it’s *au naturel* to carry around plastic bottles of plain water as if this juice came directly from the fountain of youth. What’s worse is that everyone carries around the worst excuses for water jugs; you've seen them — the screw on caps hanging from hippie packs with the compulsory duct tape attached. Apparently duct tape is the secret ingredient for this tap water, even if these “revolutionaries” just fill their bottles of ambrosia straight from the tap.

What makes this all worse is that this water craze isn’t limited to single groups. On the high end, you can find Evian in sizes from the personal hand-held bottle, up to the two liter varieties.

What will this year hold for our campus? This writer is going to push for mugs of PBR. Since I’m generous, I’ll even allow duct tape and a fancy slogan if that’s what floats your boat.

...the man on the left, former OC Publisher, the man behind the Daily Fart, Max’s bartender and OSPIRG/State Board of Ed. litigant: Owen William Brennan Rounds.

When he’s not drinking himself into a belligerent stupor, the esteemed Mr. Rounds finds time to write speeches for Mr. Rudolph Giuliani of New York City.

Rounds’ predecessor, Mr. Chuck Deister, is a former press secretary for New York governor George Pataki.

With Eugene and New York under our control, the OC has completed the first leg of its quest for world domination.

Happy reading!
...that you not attempt to put one over on the University Bookstore during your stay at the UO.

Indeed, it may be advisable to steer clear of the Bookstore entirely, as this bill from the collections agency demonstrates.

We have withheld the name and account number of this unfortunate soul, perhaps to send a message: he was an everyman. His loss is everyone's loss.

He could be you or me, your best friend, my roommate, or your best friend's roommate.

His credit rating will be missed.
The pasty dweeb of a professor at the front of my class is trying in vain to lecture a few dozen students at the 300 level. Judging by his inability to make up answers to the questions posed, his general lack of teaching skill, and a tenuous grasp on the course material, I’d say this person isn’t a day over fifteen. As I lose interest, stop taking notes and start reading a magazine, it strikes me: this is no professor at all, but merely another damn GTF staring blindly into the headlights.

“GTF” is campus vernacular for “Graduate Teaching Fellow.” This title belies the job it represents, which is the illegitimate mongrel child of a lazy professor and an overworked teacher’s assistant. Because professors have better things to do than teach classes, many have handed over the responsibility (or at least the grunt work of teaching and grading) to overburdened GTFs. Most GTFs are greatly unprepared for co-teaching a class or leading a discussion session in a topic that they are themselves still studying. A GTF is primarily a student in pursuit of a degree, just like everybody else, albeit with one or two extra years of a substandard public education under his or her belt. Being a GTF is a lot like being an intern: lots of work, no respect, little money, and lots of struggling to keep their incompetence under wraps.

Officially, professors are here to teach classes and add prestige to the university. They often do not teach discussion sections, conduct review sessions, grade papers or even hold office hours. In such situations, these essential course components are left to the somewhat qualified and multi-tasking GTFs, who end up doing the same work for a lot less pay.

This is as universal to the college experience as the beer bong: we pay a lot of money to attend college under the guise that we will be taught by learned professors who are masters in their respective fields, but we instead fall prey to the old bait-and-switch. Often a professor is too busy to actually teach, thanks to their research, book deals and commitments to out-of-state think tanks.

Thus, the GTF moves from the teacher’s assistant-like duties of taking roll call and passing out papers, to delivering lectures they didn’t know they had to give and conducting discussion sections. The problem is that GTFs are still in the process of mastering their field when professors pawn off their classes to them - basically the equivalent of asking a candy striper to punch out a knee surgery. In other words, the person in charge is flying blind and bring the rest of the class down in a fiery tailspin equalled only by JFK Jr.’s Cessna.

The idea of Graduate Teaching Fellows is not inherently bad, and it can be valuable practical experience for those who aspire to teach. A major flaw with the program, however, is that the standards determining who gets to be a GTF are inadequate, if not nonexistent. Basically, if you’re a grad student, you are allowed (that is, forced) to be a GTF. Despite the fact that many GTFs end up flat-out teaching college-level courses, there doesn’t appear to be a uniform set of hiring qualifications. It doesn’t matter if a graduate has no interest in or ability to teach: all that matters is that they are a grad student. A pending Masters degree seems to be the only prerequisite.

The GTF evolved out of the teacher’s assistant: primarily roll-takers and handout-distributors for gigantic core curriculum classes. Professors still taught discussions until universities became overcrowded, and until professors felt more pressure to
establish their professional reputations and secure their tenure. To pick up the instructional slack, GTFs have had thrust upon them the duties previously reserved for those with actual doctorates. GTFs seem to be responsible for more and more aspects of a course. They can’t help it if they’re inept; they shouldn’t be teaching in the first place.

Let it be said: there are a lot of really terrific GTFs at the University. For one thing, GTFs are frequently more accessible than are professors. The graduate who taught my Writing 121 class held us to a high standard and made me work unbelievably hard for a B minus. Ironically, she had no plans to teach anything ever again. It’s interesting to note that Writing 121 isn’t taught by full-fledged professors at all. Instead, GTFs from various departments teach it for the small honorarium that helps to offset the tremendous cost of graduate school. Of course, their dream of going to graduate school and spending all of their time studying to master an area of knowledge has been hijacked by the University, which has them working too hard at too many hours for too little pay.

Of course, if an inept GTF can teach the same class as a professor, that makes the two positions virtually interchangeable. Why have professors at all when students are perfectly capable of teaching each other? If graduate students can competently educate their undergraduate peers, some of these professors might not be quite so esteemed and authoritative.

Then again, GTFs are typically still young, and can thus be just as immature and uninterested as many undergrads. Coupled with an especially preoccupied professor, this can create an utterly useless educational experience. For instance, my Visual Communication professor passed control over to her two GTFs, the first of whom, could not speak English. The second admitted to having never read the textbook. All three were completely ineffectual; the class was a consummate waste of time and money.

What made the GTF crisis all the more clear was James Fentress’ Biopsychology course. Fentress was a guest professor who would often miss class, unbeknownst to the two GTFs, who would promptly patch together something to present in lecture. Fortunately, these two knew their stuff, though not as much as Fentress himself. Many basic questions were left unanswered or answered on an ad hoc basis. Fentress frequently left the GTFs to cover for him while he jetted off to psychology conferences. Many times, they had to jam a week’s worth of lectures into a single hour of discussion, while at the same time writing tests, grading papers and somehow managing their own course load.

GTFs are also generally helpful. This is especially true for biology courses where classes tend to be very large and fairly difficult. Many science professors are here for their research first and to teach second, yet a few still take the teaching duties seriously. Their research is of utmost importance to them, and that’s fine because the relationship between research and universities has long been clear. My real beef is with liberal arts and humanities professors who avoid teaching - they aren’t doing research. At best, they’re writing a book. Perhaps this is why being a college professor is such a plum job - you get paid for writing a book at your own pace, which ironically, 99 percent of America is already doing, although they aren’t getting paid for it.

As of late, the most controversial flaw in the GTF program is the inability of more than a few to communicate fluently in English. International graduate students are subject to no more pre-employment scrutiny than are their English-speaking brethren during the GTF selection process. GTFs exist so as to be of help to students; when they cannot communicate verbally, they are more trouble than they are worth. Often, the focus of a foreign-GTF-led class shifts from learning, to merely trying to figure out just what it is being said. Still, it’s not the fault of these particular GTFs; they are likely as frustrated by the language barrier as their students.

Using the aforementioned preoccupied professors as an example, the GTF crisis may find a solution via imitation. Since professors don’t bother to show up or do the work they are supposedly here to do, then I also will not bother with my commitment to the university either — attending class, doing homework, learning. I too can pawn off my work on someone weaker than myself. In retaliation, I propose another position, with a whole new acronym to represent it: the ULF, or Undergraduate Learning Fellow.

It is almost contemptuous how professors blow off their students. Hiring a ULF is a way to return the favor. Basically, when I feel the need to do research (surfing the Internet for porn) or attend a conference (binge drinking in Canada), I’ll just send my ULF to class in my place, armed with a vague outline of notes beyond his skill level. I will also make him do my homework and force him to mentally retain what I would have mentally retained had I actually gone to class. For this I will pay him ridiculously low wages, give him even less respect and make him perform other duties not listed in the job description, simply because I am just too busy writing my book. Finally, I will tell him that all of this is educational, and for his own good.

I just hope he speaks English.

Brian Boone, a senior majoring in Journalism, is an Associate Editor for the Oregon Commentator
n “American Beauty,” Kevin Spacey plays a middle-aged man who is fed up with his middle-class life. His wife is a greedy woman occupied with the lesser, material things; his neighbor is a repressive (and repressed) religious right-wing military man. While an excellent movie, it nonetheless plays on common stereotypes about conservatives. It is also far from alone.

In “JFK,” a president is murdered because he wanted to “change things.” In “Philadelphia,” a gay man infected with AIDS confronts the corporate fat cats that fired him. If you want more of the same, read mainstream newspapers, watch mainstream television, and since you are a college student, you can always attend your professors’ lectures. Bottom line: In this world it is not hard to be a liberal. The liberal mindset is pervasive, persuasive, and most students opt for the political path of least resistance.

I was one, once, and I was very proud of it. To me, the world could be easily separated into the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The good was us, the liberals: sensitive, benevolent, informed, open-minded, caring, intelligent and compassionate.

The bad was them, the conservatives: sexist, homophobic, greedy, short-sighted, racist, narrow-minded, philistine, egotistical, warmonger plutocrats.

The ugly were all of those poor souls who didn’t know any better and many times thought the same way the bad did: children of a lesser God who didn’t recognize or understand their class interests. Probably they would go to church (an opium derivative, as Marx tells us), vote Republican, own guns, or all of the above. All in all, very unfortunate.

I grew up in Greece. When I left, the first place I stayed was in New York City. For every American liberal, New York is the ideal city, or at least the best possible. It taxes everything, and it has intellectuals, minorities, artists, politicians, activists and commentators galore. After seven months I had to move west, and at first, I was hesitant. I was afraid that Oregon might be a conservative state. Soon after I arrived, the fear started to fade, and was in fact completely eradicated when I enrolled at Portland State University. In class after class, my politics were repeatedly validated. Back then, I thought, “How open-minded and outspoken these people are.”

At PSU I met Richard Brinkman, an Economics professor who specialized in evolutionary economics. What’s the definition of evolutionary economics? Capitalism is too “conspicuous,” therefore we need social democracy: everybody votes on what everybody else does. Professor Brinkman believed that the United States economy had stagnated in the past thirty years; she should reform herself and copy France, the nation of thoughtful indecision. And why not go a little further? She should copy Sweden, the nation of socialism with results.

I went to various lectures around town, most notably one given by Noam Chomsky, hero of the disaffected left. However, it was Chomsky as usual: corporate conspiracy this and military conspiracy that. I learned nothing new or interesting from this or any other speech I attended. No matter how hard I sought new ideas, the professors and activists sounded all too predictable, uniform, and tedious. I was so desperate that I once attended a meeting of the Socialist Workers. This meeting had all of the usual suspects: the odorous student activists, minimum wage laborers, and of course, female sociology professors.

When they had nothing new to say, it was time to visit the library. I read works by thinkers of the left like Michael Sandel, Richard Rorty, Cornelius Castoriadis, Stephen Toulmin, Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer. Fatefully, I once picked up a copy of libertarian F.A. von Hayek’s Mirage of Social Justice. This was a great mistake: the seeds of doubt were planted in my
mind. I could live with it so long as I didn’t pay much serious attention to my doubts and instead concentrated on my beliefs.

After two years at PSU, I transferred to the University of Oregon, for no reason apparent to me. Nothing special happened during the winter of 1998, and lucky for me, because I was still trying to find my way around campus. If it were the right building, it would be the wrong time. If it were the right floor, it would be the wrong room.

Eventually, I actually started attending the classes I’d registered for, and by spring term, the weather had become very much unlike Oregon. That term I signed on as an Economics peer advisor. Other than random students asking for directions (the same buildings, times, floors and rooms, which I now “knew” so well), peer advising proved a rather harmless duty.

There I met Jonathan Collegio, now late of the Oregon Commentator. Our political differences revealed themselves quickly, and we started calling each other the appropriate names: he called me a “commie,” and I called him a “fascist.” At the time, Collegio was busy with his mini-war against OSPIRG, the Honesty campaign. Back then, nobody thought that he stood much of a chance. A solitary Collegio shouting his brains out through a megaphone hardly seemed a threat to the dozens of colorful OSPIRG supporters parading up and down 13th Avenue for their cause. When the polls closed and the results came out and OSPIRG fell, no one was more surprised than I. It was a classic David-and-Goliath story: a tiny group of conservative-minded students trumped the UO’s best-organized and best-funded student group.

How could it happen? Probably because many students like me voted against OSPIRG. I wasn’t against them per se — I agreed with the purpose of the organization — but the Honesty campaign had successfully made the case that OSPIRG was corrupt, and so I voted against them.

I felt guilty for doing so. Thus, I sought redemption. I considered joining the Student Insurgent, but after reading a couple of issues, I decided this was a bad idea. The Insurgent’s most distinguishing characteristic was its commonness, as if the articles had been copied directly from USSR textbooks. Each issue was identical to the previous. The only difference would be that the articles appearing in the back were now in the front, and those at the bottom of the page were now at the top. Dry, monotonous, pedantic, humorless and rigid, it clearly represented the tendencies of contemporary critical thinking.

For a very long time, my leftist beliefs had been in decline. As time progressed, I found myself defending not coherent arguments, but nostalgia for an earlier era. I remembered remnants of those days in the eighties when I believed that the socialists who gained power in Greece would work for justice, and for progress. Today I cannot forget the pathos that reigned in the streets back then. I was five when the new leader, Papandreou, promised a “third way” between capitalism and communism.

Eight years later, everything would go wrong in the worst possible way. Was the system wrong, or were the people? The convenient answer was the people. A failure here or there was the result of a few irresponsible individuals. The system was perfect. The only complication? Its utter failure.

Though my leftist impulses were now fading fast, I did my best to remain a liberal. Witness Collegio recommended to me Barry Siegel’s Economics 494, Issues in Modern Economic Thought. I understood that this would be a holy war. We would read “The Constitution of Liberty” by Hayek, the patriarch of laissez-faire who had first upset my ideals in Portland few years earlier. To prepare myself, I revisited books by Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor. I would be ready. Barry Siegel turned out to be an awfully kind and knowledgeable man who welcomed students’ arguments. After awhile there was practically no lecture: just open debate.

For the first time in my life we were not instructed, but debating with the professor, and in some respects, with the author. Every phrase and every word coming out of Siegel’s mouth was examined and re-examined. Nothing went unchallenged. Some students were angered because we argued so often, but it was a learning experience. After the course’s end, I gradually came to terms with the fact that I was a liberal no more.

It was a painful process, since I still had feelings for the nobler liberal causes. With the more I read, the more comfortable I became, and after awhile I felt that I had reached an internal balance. For the first time, my politics and my personal life were guided by the same principle: do nothing.

From a philosophical point of view, I am no longer a social animal. I am a libertarian, or perhaps a conservative with strong libertarian leanings. Whatever my exact ideological disposition, things had fallen apart. The communistarian statues within me were seized and torn apart by an unruly populace who would not be deluded any longer.

Five years ago on a summer night in Greece, a family friend was talking to me about my pilgrimage to America. A leftist activist for the last thirty years, he told me in a tone full of certainty and melancholy, that “Greeks who go to America become right-wing.” Silly nonsense, an impossibility, I thought.

Stubbornly I replied, “Not me.”

_Napoleon Linardatos, who holds an utterly useless degree in Economics, is a staff writer for the Oregon Commentator_
A revolution is underway in the way people listen to music, and at the heart of the battle is a program called Napster. What makes Napster, as well as other MP3 file sharing programs, so different from traditional means of gathering and listening to music is that it gives people the ability to find any song they want through a simple search and download it on the spot. Traditional musical formats, such as radio and compact discs, could be seeing the end of their dominance in the music industry.

This revolution hasn’t occurred without controversy. Napster has forced the music industry to sit up and take notice, particularly because of the issue of copyright laws. Sued by the leading companies in the industry and its lobby, Napster is now entwined in a legal fight for its survival. But will programs such as Napster be squashed by the reigning powers of the music industry or will MP3 file sharing technology change the way we listen to music?

File sharing is not a new technology. Since the advent of the computer file itself, they have been shared between computers, even on the most primitive of networks. An activity as common as downloading a web page is a form of file sharing; the files from the page are copied and then stored in a temporary folder while you view the web page.

MP3 technology is also nothing new. In 1988, the Moving Pictures Expert Group (MPEG for short) was founded to establish a file format that could decrease the size of video and audio files to workable sizes. In 1992, the MPEG organization released their first video and audio file format, called MPEG-1. In the mid-1990s, after a number of updates and revisions to the MPEG format, the MPEG organization released a standard called MPEG Audio Layer III (MP3 for short) – a format specifically created for digital audio.

After the format was released, software programmers began developing programs that made it possible to copy compact disks and store them as MP3s on a computer hard drive. It was only a matter of time before someone devised an online system for swapping

Whether Napster survives its legal battle or not will be nothing less than irrelevant for anonymous, widespread file sharing across the internet. Once the genie is out of the bottle, it’s not going back in.
MP3 files between computers. Many computer users began allowing other people to download MP3s from their computers, but finding songs was often a time consuming process.

MP3 search engines followed thereafter, but in January of 1999, MP3 file sharing took off like never before. A freshman at Northeastern University named Shawn Fanning programmed an MP3 search engine which he called Napster. Napster combined the convenience of a search engine with an Internet Relay Chat (IRC) program. This made the program enormously popular with online music fans, allowing them to talk with one another while exchanging files. After marking up over 300,000 downloads from CNet’s Download.com, Fanning formed a company around his program in July of 1999. The number of Napster users has exploded since then, currently boasting over 4.9 million users.

However, the popularity of Napster grew amid controversy. In December of 1999, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) filed a lawsuit against Napster, claiming that the program facilitated “contributory and vicarious copyright infringement” by allowing users to download copyrighted material without the permission of the artists or the copyright holders.

Napster has countered these claims by arguing that the program does not store or distribute copyrighted material, but only allows users to search for MP3 files. The downloading of the songs occurs through a direct connection between the users – not through Napster.

Napster has cited two federal laws in its defense: first, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 states that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) cannot be held responsible for illegal activity committed over their networks. Napster also cites the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) of 1998, which set aside protections for online software, literature and music. The DMCA also sets aside liability protection for ISPs – protection that Napster argues it has a right to.

A number of recording artists have joined into the Napster debate over the last few months; musicians such as Metallica and Dr. Dre have forced Napster to ban users who have downloaded their music without their permission. Both artists have argued that because they never gave consent to give out their music for free, Napster is facilitating piracy.

In an interview with ABC News, Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich compared the differences of the file sharing currently taking place over Napster to Metallica’s early days when they encouraged fans to trade demos of the band’s music.

“It is very simple,” Ulrich said. “When we sat down and started trading our early demos, we were the ones that mailed them out. We were the ones that initiated it… It wasn’t somebody else who sat there and took my demo tape and against my free will decided to start trading it with everybody.”

Other artists have come out in support of file sharing technology, viewing Napster and similar programs as the inevitable future of music distribution.

Chuck D, leader of rap group Public Enemy and founder of Rapstation.com, looks at file sharing programs as a revolution in the way the music industry operates. Chuck D made the following points in a letter to the New York Times: CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

As it has been for most every medium, pornography could be found on the World Wide Web since its inception. Despite objections from a variety of groups, supporters of online freedom have fought numerous battles to protect pornography from censorship.

Free speech was the central argument made by the American Civil Liberties Union against U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno and the 1997 Communications Decency act, which sought to regulate the content of files shared over the internet. While the First Amendment to the Constitution provides for the most obvious defense of online pornography, there is another force at work to preserve this prurient liberty: free enterprise.

Individuals and/or organizations try to earn a profit by providing products that satisfy people’s needs and wants — this is the key principle of business. This industry isn’t exactly hurting for money; as a whole, it has been fabulously successful. Playboy Enterprises alone reported average quarter sales in 1999 of $74 million. Seth Warshavsky built an empire and is now worth billions; a veritable Bill Gates of internet pornography.

Pornography is a legal business, and the rules governing businesses worldwide protect it as well. The government should not regulate Internet pornography any more than it already does, because it would infringe on its rights as a profit-driven business.

In a free-enterprise system, companies that can efficiently manufacture and sell products that consumers desire will probably succeed. Similarly, if a business cannot sell its products efficiently, it will most likely fail. There is obviously a market for pornography and plenty of industries to supply the market with needed products; however, by attempting to ban internet pornography, the government further limits the channels through which pornographers can conduct business. It crushes the rights of
1. The day of the one-dimensional, naïve artist is over…
2. 95% of all music will be free, at least for a period…
3. The whole financial structure of the entertainment business is in the process of getting redefined.
4. NAPSTER has turned music into baseball cards and the consumer base of kids are leading the pack, ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT MUSIC.
5. With a million artists joining a new way of getting music across the world via the MP-3 and internet, new ways of artists making money will eventually be discovered or rediscovered
6. As in kindergarten, everyone will be re-taught how to share…
7. NAPSTER, MP3, downloaded music and sharing is the ‘new radio for the O-DEC’…old school artists, get over the fact and adapt…

Citing frustration with the record industry, Courtney Love, the lead signer of the band Hole, likened the status quo to “share-cropping” (see sidebar) and stated that “recording artists have essentially been giving their music away for free under the old system, so new technology that exposes our music to a larger audience can only be a good thing.”

The Artist Formerly Known as Prince went through a highly publicized falling out with his record label, finally breaking free from Time Warner Records in 1996. Recently, he called the increase in popularity of file sharing programs as a sign of the music lover’s growing frustration over the way record companies control the music they hear.

“[Record companies have control] over how the air waves, record labels and record stores, which r now all part of this “system” that recording companies have pretty much succeeded in establishing, r becoming increasingly dominated by musical “products” 2 the detriment of real music,” he said in his digital music manifesto, titled “4 The Love Of Music.”

File sharing programs already seem to be loosening the industry’s hold on music. In a bold move early this September, Billy Corgan, lead singer of the Smashing Pumpkins, took 25 of the band’s unreleased songs, pressed a handful of vinyl copies, and then distributed the albums to close friends and fans, instructing them to release them to Napster. A note was included with the vinyl copies, describing the move as a “final f--k you to a record label that didn’t give [The Pumpkins] the support they deserved,” MTV News reported.

While many artists are unhappy with record contracts, consumers and retailers are not happy with the high cost of compact discs. Bob Lee, owner of Face the Music on 13th and Kincaid, is frustrated by the prices that distributors charge his store for the compact discs they sell.

“If consumers think CDs are priced too high, you’d be surprised what retailers think. We’re in the same boat. We think it’s absurd what they’re charging us for CDs.” Lee says the average cost of a new album release is usually between $10-13 per CD — for retailers.

But Lee does not think that Napster is the answer to the high cost of purchasing music, and feels the majority of today’s file sharing is theft. Lee, who is also a web developer and builds e-commerce sites for music retailers, stresses that he has no problem with an artist choosing to give their music away for free.

“But there is a fundamental difference between that and what is happening on Napster,” Lee says. “Napster is not asking copyright holders, musicians, or bands permission to distribute their copyrighted materials across the internet.” He points out that songs are often the only piece of intellectual property an artist has.

Regardless of a musician’s frustration with recording contracts or a retailer and consumer’s frustration with CD prices, Napster’s chances of surviving its court case are looking bleak.

When U.S. District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel initially ordered an injunction against Napster in late July

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Random Stick Thoughts

By Amanda Nottke
By attempting to ban Internet pornography, the government limits the channels through which pornographers can conduct business, impinging upon the rights of the pornography business: the right to exist.

Amber Plaunty, a sophomore majoring in Journalism, is a staff writer for the Oregon Commentator.
In form, this is an election year; in substance it is more a question of which type of substance Bush or Gore needs to maintain enough composure to fill in for their fathers. All the same, it is still worth asking others about their torturous opinions on this matter before arriving at one’s own conclusion. That’s what I did.*

“It’s Pat Buchanan all the way here in the United Socialist States of America. His arrival will convince the oppressed proletariat to overthrow their lackey bourgeois masters. Cities will riot, women will rise, blood will choke the streets and run down the gutters into the reservoir. Then the ultimate revenge will have taken place and we will drink the blood of the oppressor. Did we mention, this will be a peaceful revolution undertaken by non-authoritarian communists?”

Peaceful revolution is a great example of the relativism of the leftist mind so well noted by British historian Paul Johnson. Besides, peaceful as compared to what? Evicting Satan from Hell? As for non-authoritarian communists, well, try to imagine non-genocidal Nazis. No picture coming through on your receiver? Good, there was none to begin with.

“We’re for Pat Buchanan too. He doesn’t have blond hair, but at least he has blue eyes like the Fuhrer. Best of all, he is from Washington DC, which is close enough to the South for us. His election will allow us to branch out into interstate lynchings, bombings, and cross-burnings. Just remember, we’re not trying to act like racists, we just are racists.”

“I saw that last part on TV during May. According to the report, the KKK will try to be more positive and inclusive in the future. They even give personality tests to determine who will be a real leader within the organization. The cream of the crop: an unemployed white male who can repeat “Long live white Anglo-Saxon power” without forgetting the words.

“I’m voting for Pat Buchanan. If I can do well in New York, then I believe that he will make me his running mate. Then, I can have him impeached and become President or just sit back (it almost worked the first time) and watch my dearest make the first X-rated movie about the White House. Hell, the traffic barriers were put up on Pennsylvania Avenue to keep all the jealous husbands out.

Actually, I’ve come to the conclusion that sleeping around is the best way to build a political constituency. Adultery will get the Republicans back into the Presidency! Kennedy did it, Clinton did it, and Giuliani was a rising star. I swear I will beat them; my “fast” approach will redeem my insult to the voters of New York, I will have shicksa appeal.
“Personally, I’m for Franco. “For Whom the Bell Tolls” convinced me that the fascists had it all figured out. They had planes and tanks while we were all listening to some sketchy Gypsy foretelling the death of that pinko Jordan. Besides, who would be dumb enough to depend on Russian military advice? They were hardly able to embalm Lenin properly. That’s why they always spoke about stench of decay during the days of communism.”

Of course, Pat Buchanan probably supports Pat Buchanan. I’ll just say right here that I don’t believe he is a fascist. Rather, he stands for other things I can’t stand about this country. That is why I wrote this article the way I did: Buchanan’s vices are shared with others.

Buchanan stands for victimization, scapegoating, and a closed society. We see this in his protectionism, his isolationist stance. Buchanan is so far to the right, that it is hard to tell him apart from the far left. Consider: Buchanan and Nader both oppose free trade and the Sierra Club — just like the far right, opposes further immigration. Of course, that is oversimplified because Buchanan undeniably stresses the nationalism, tradition, authority, and human inequality that the left finds alien.

I consider it a problem when a people like Nader and Buchanan get even the little attention they do now. It indicates a dangerous lethargy in the real candidates that make the utopia of left and right more legitimate. Eventually, this lethargy will lead to a situation where the claims of the commonweal are elevated above all. Individualism, so to speak, does not exist for the far left and right.

Moreover, though the right may espouse these ideas, the left can hardly escape them; considering that every Marxist movement of the 20th century has become nationalist in one way or another. Economic socialism does make strange bedfellows.

“First off, I’m coming to America because it has such a low interest in “football.” Thus, they have no reason to stop me at the border. Second, I’m for Buchanan cause he is an Irish bloke and I likes to beat the hell out of the Irish and let them beat the hell out of me.”

“We also are for Pat Buchanan. Pat is against the WTO, so that must make him a real compassionate type of guy. Anyone who is against the WTO must be in favor of our type of socialistic economic justice. He must travel around the country living outside bourgeois standards and protesting against bourgeois injustice. We ought to extend a welcome to him the next time OSPIRG is in trouble.”
concerned about the safety of the students. Within two weeks time she had been knocked to the ground twice as she broke up classroom fights. This same principal told her that this high school was in desperate need of mature teachers rather than those just out of college. Inexperience of young teachers, she told my wife, was a key reason for low state scores and lack of appropriate student behavior. After three weeks time, teachers throughout the high school came to her to thank her for getting the situation under control. And, end of the year evaluations from students she received comments such as “this was the safest classroom in the whole school, but we still had lots of fun and learned a lot.” My wife has all of these student evaluations in her possession. At the end of the school year, teachers were astonished that she was not hired full-time. However, the most telling of all, was the statement made by her principal “the reason we didn’t hire you had nothing to do with you. This is very uncomfortable for us.” They gave her no reason why she had been denied employment. One of the people hired for next year just completed his student teaching. My wife is 56 years old with 14 years of experience. She is concerned that she and I have been “black listed” by the education community in Oregon. It makes no sense! You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to see what’s going on here! It’s a classic case of abuse of power and a violation of civil rights. And, it is simply evil what these two superintendents have done!

Unless something is done by, these two superintendents will get away with this outrageous behavior. I have written other news organizations and contacted other investigative reporters without any luck.

My wife and I will be happy to cooperate with you in any way. We have nothing to hide. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Randy Cox, Ph.D.

Well, Dr. Cox, there you go. It's the least we could do without ignoring your letter altogether. Seriously though, your story sounds tragic, and we wish you the best of luck — but why you sent this letter to the OREGON COMMENTATOR is entirely beyond us.

If there are any COMMENTATOR readers out there who have some time to investigate what sounds like a fascinating exposé of the Reedsport school district, know anything about the Reedsport school district, or can locate the Reedsport school district on a map, we will be more than happy to forward Dr. Cox's e-mail to you.

—Ed.
rational intelligence is one thing, and here I have no doubt of your competence. But emotional and spiritual intelligence shape the world in profound ways, too. I imagine it is in your best interest not discard this fact, for you seem to have conveniently placed yourself above both these realms.

Sincerely,
David A. Caruso

Mr. Caruso, while everyone at the Oregon Commentator knows only too well what it is like to have been one of the hottest up-and-coming Hollywood heartthrobs, only to have a series of bad career moves (and even worse movies — come on, “Jade”? What were you thinking?) knock you back down to the level of made-for-TV movies and “Hollywood Squares,” we see no reason for you to direct your bitterness at us.

On the off-chance that this is some Mr. Caruso other than the Irish former star of “NYPD Blue,” then grow some thicker skin, idiot. Maybe you should be the one to “lighten up a bit” and learn to recognize satire when you see it. Meanwhile, you should definitely remove your stupid website from http://www.dreamwell.org. Save yourself the humiliation.

—Ed.
— effectively closing the service — claiming that “’Piracy be damned’ was pretty much the sense one gets from reading some of the early [Napster arguments].” She also stated that “they created a monster... That’s the consequence they face.” A day later, Napster was granted a temporary reprieve which allowed for the reopening of its service, but it will last only until the full hearing is underway, at which point an injunction could still be put into place.

On September 8th, the Justice Department and the U.S. Copyright Office filed a “friend of the court” brief siding with the RIAA. The brief states that the two government agencies believe Napster has “no possible defense” against the recording industry’s accusation of copyright infringement.

However poor the case looks for Napster, the chances of all Napster-based search engines being such down is slim. Since the court case began, Napster has allowed users to set up their own servers. Even if Napster loses the case and is officially shut down, it will be difficult to prevent users from maintaining their own personal servers.

It is unlikely that MP3 file sharing programs will disappear in the near future. Outside of Napster there are now many other programs out there that allow users to share files, such as Scour.com and My.mp3.com as well as Gnutella and Freenet, both of which have no central network for their file sharing applications – as a result, there is no way to such down the entire system.

If nothing else, one thing is certain: file sharing is here to stay. Music lovers have developed a taste for downloading music online, and it is unlikely that will change. Chuck D may well have said it best when he said, “the genie’s out of the bottle and the bottle is crushed to a thousand pieces. “

Ben Nahorney, a senior majoring in Journalism, is News Editor for the Oregon Commentator

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I want to start with a story about rock bands and record companies, and do some recording-contract math:

This story is about a bidding-war band that gets a huge deal with a 20 percent royalty rate and a million-dollar advance. (No bidding-war band ever got a 20 percent royalty, but whatever.) This is my “funny” math based on some reality and I just want to qualify it by saying I’m positive it’s better math than what Edgar Bronfman Jr. [the president and CEO of Seagram, which owns Polygram] would provide.

What happens to that million dollars?
They spend half a million to record their album. That leaves the band with $500,000. They pay $100,000 to their manager for 20 percent commission. They pay $25,000 each to their lawyer and business manager.
That leaves $350,000 for the four band members to split. After $170,000 in taxes, there's $180,000 left. That comes out to $45,000 per person. That's $45,000 to live on for a year until the record gets released.

The record is a big hit and sells a million copies. (How a bidding-war band sells a million copies of its debut record is another rant entirely, but it's based on any basic civics-class knowledge that any of us have about cartels. Put simply, the antitrust laws in this country are basically a joke, protecting us just enough to not have to re-name our park service the Phillip Morris National Park Service.)

So, this band releases two singles and makes two videos. The two videos cost a million dollars to make and 50 percent of the video production costs are recouped out of the band's royalties.

The band gets $200,000 in tour support, which is 100 percent recoupable.

The record company spends $300,000 on independent radio promotion. You have to pay independent promotion to get your song on the radio; independent promotion is a system where the record companies use middlemen so they can pretend not to know that radio stations -- the unified broadcast system -- are getting paid to play their records.

All of those independent promotion costs are charged to the band.

Since the original million-dollar advance is also recoupable, the band owes $2 million to the record company.

If all of the million records are sold at full price with no discounts or record clubs, the band earns $2 million in royalties, since their 20 percent royalty works out to $2 a record.

Two million dollars in royalties minus $2 million in recoupable expenses equals ... zero!

How much does the record company make? They grossed $11 million.

It costs $500,000 to manufacture the CDs and they advanced the band $1 million. Plus there were $1 million in video costs, $300,000 in radio promotion and $200,000 in tour support.

The company also paid $750,000 in music publishing royalties.

They spent $2.2 million on marketing. That's mostly retail advertising, but marketing also pays for those huge posters of Marilyn Manson in Times Square and the street scouts who drive around in vans handing out black Korn T-shirts and backwards baseball caps. Not to mention trips to Scores and cash for tips for all and sundry.

Add it up and the record company has spent about $4.4 million.

So their profit is $6.6 million; the band may as well be working at a 7-Eleven.
First of all, what you need to know:

I have recently relocated from Eugene, Oregon, which is, as you know, a countercultural something-or-other as well as the kind of town that frequents those “Top Ten Best Places to Live in the United States” lists; to Fayetteville, North Carolina, which is a military something-or-other as well as the kind of town that frequents those “Top Ten Highest Crime Rates Per Capita in the United States” lists. The reasons for, and the effects of, this move may or may not become apparent during the course of this column.
Second of all, the reason I first told you what you first of all need to know, and continue to express myself in an insipid format punctuated by colons: I was instructed upon arrival in this new place that among men who mean business, one always first tells the person to whom one is speaking exactly what one means to say in terms of factual data. “Men who mean business” and “people who are mentally tough enough for the military” are taken to be synonymous around here, and men who don’t fit into this category are taken to be degenerates.

Such is not to say that the regional flavor of this area requires every paragraph to hinge upon a colon, however — to say that would be to go too far, to be altogether incorrect. But there is a writer of a certain renown, who is local to neither Fayetteville nor Eugene, by the name of David Foster Wallace, and he once wrote an essay about David Lynch in which he said next to nothing about Lynch’s movies or directorial style, but in which he did use a precocious abundance of colons and outrageously lengthy sentences, and managed to fixate on the fact that he had seen Lynch pissing, publicly, on the set — effectively communicating a certain lack of faith in the relevance of that school of film without really saying anything like that at all. It is my intention to out-precocious that punk Wallace.

Reasons why I have just written that I want to out-precocious that punk Wallace:

1) I have taken on the affectation of telling you what you need to know right at the outset of things.

2) Wallace uses many big words, some would say unnecessarily — a precocious habit that has its heart set on becoming a theme of this piece.

Random Fayetteville conversation #1 (poolside in my brother’s apartment village, midday sun, 89 degrees, Monday, August 14):

ME: [arriving at poolside, approaching brother’s reclining lawn chair and sitting down] Hey, that’s an incredible book you have on your coffee table.

OLDER BROTHER: [eyes unwavering from two girls on the other side of the pool] Which one?

ME: Grey Area.

OB: [turning head my direction, squinting into sunlight, strained voice] What?

ME: The book of short stories by Will Self?

OB: [incredulous] You like that?

ME: It’s hysterical! Isn’t “Will Self” the wittiest pen name in the history of English literature? All his stories revolve around free will and identity and the relationship between consciousness and reality.

OB (with distaste, forcefully): It’s pedantic. He uses big words just to show off, and it doesn’t mean anything. I don’t like that fancy, meaningless crap.

ME: I look at it as a joke on the English language. First of all, he’s satirizing Englishness; you can find that even in the distinctly British spelling of “gray” in the title. All his titles have double meanings; everything is a pun on something else.

OB: Well, I read one of those stories, and he started going on about homosexuals. I don’t like that, when they try to bring that in.

ME: What culture is more homosexual than the British? Anyway, he’s only acknowledging the subject’s presence in literature as a humorous touchstone — are you sure you weren’t reading one of the stories he wrote from the perspective of a female?

OB (in true disgust): What? How — That’s terrible. Look, I know you’re young and idealistic, but I learned in school that when a writer uses big words unnecessarily, and tries to talk around you, pulling stuff like writing as if he’s a woman, he’s being pedantic.

ME: I thought “pedantic” had a connotation of being dogmatic.

OB: Connotation?! Look, the meaning of a word is the meaning of a word. Don’t start talking like a liberal, making broad generalizations all over the place — don’t pull that crap on me. You’re reading too much of that stuff. It’s pedantic.

A dictionary definition of the word “pedant”:

n. a person who parades his learning or who insists unimaginatively on strict observance of formal rules in the presence of knowledge. ped-ant-ry n. pe-dan-tic adj. pe-dan-ti-cal-ly adv.

What I took away from it:

“Pedantic” is one of those big words a pedant might use if he were to use an undefined term as a trump card in ordinary conversation.

Random Eugene conversation #1 (at my house on Mill St., midwinter ’98, weekday evening):

MOON UNIT: [shouting nasally into the room at large rather than addressing anyone in particular] Yo, let’s get some food, muh-fuckaaz! You guys wanna order pizza?

SEAMUS: Oh, yeah. Papa Murphy’s. Chicken.

ME: I’m not going in on any chicken pizza. You guys wanna make burritos instead?

MOON UNIT: Well I don’t wanna have to do anything. I just want to eat right away. So let’s just get a pizza and not deal with it... [the three of us walk into the kitchen] OK, as long as it’s ready by... [walks down hallway and into his room]

ME: I’ll heat the beans and tortillas. [as SEAMUS pulls tomatoes, lettuce, etc. from refrigerator]

ME: [a few minutes later, as SEAMUS finishes cutting vegetables] Where the hell is the can-opener? I can’t heat the beans if I can’t open them.

SEAMUS: Let me know when they’re ready. [goes to his room]

[Half an hour later, I’ve washed the dishes that were piled in the sink and located the can-opener under an inch of silverware and three inches of water at the sink bottom.]
ME: [walking to SEAMUS’ doorway] You know, a thing like a can-opener could rust if it were left under dirty water for a day or two.

SEAMUS: [looking up from stringing his guitar, and into space ahead of him for couple seconds] Yeah. I suppose it could. [continues stringing his guitar]

ME: [annoyed] You think you could put the can-opener back into the drawer, where it belongs, after using it, instead of in the sink?

SEAMUS: [equally annoyed] Tell MOON UNIT.

ME: [walking to MOON UNIT’S doorway] MOON UNIT, you think you could make a practice of putting the can-opener back into the drawer after using it, and most especially never leave it in the sink like a piece of silverware, where it can get lost or rust out?

MOON UNIT: [looking up from his hemp string, upset] Why are you telling me?!

ME: I’m telling everyone. If everyone understands the reasonableness of it, I won’t spend half an hour looking for the can-opener when we’re trying to be ready to eat.

MOON UNIT: [standing up] You’re always blaming me for everything. You think you can single me out, and funnel your anger toward me? Well, come on, motherfucker! [runs toward me in a dive-like posture, chases me into living room]

ME: [turning around, raising can opener to eye level] Stop! Or feel the wrath of the opener. Now answer me: why are you saying that I’m being mean to you?

MOON UNIT: Because! There are flames leaping off of your aura!

What I took away from it:

1) Every man for his own can-opener, every acid casualty for his own aura.

2) It’s true that all the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players — and we’re typecast from the get-go.

Random Fayetteville conversation #2 (in a whitish, aging Honda overfilled with drunken near-strangers, en route from an after-work gathering at a chain-restaurant bar on a main street, to my brother’s apartment, Friday, August 25, 1:30 am):

DRUNKEN FEMALE CO-WORKER, in driver’s seat: Where do you live again?

ME, in back seat: Off Ramsey Road, north of Methodist College.

DRUNKEN FC-W: Where is that again?

RELATIVELY SMC-WORE: Hey, I told you I know where it is — here, take 210 South to 401.

HYPER-DRUNK P-F-WMFOFD: Holy shits, yo’s, I know that gas station, I know it! I was walkin’ there one time when these two niggers tried to jack me, dude, I swear! [RELATIVELY SMC-WORE looks back slowly, bemused.]

ME: So what did you do?

BLEARY-EYED P-F-WMFOFD: Throw th’ money one way, run the goddamn... [looks out window at nothing whatsoever] ...other, hnnh, hnnh, hnnh.

HYPER-DRUNK P-F-WMFOFD: Fuck no, bitch! Ain’t givin’ none o’ them trailer park livin’, welfare subsistin’ homeboys any malt licka money. This here’s my own cash flow, Negro, f’ my own malt licka, till some motherfucker shows his gun — which neither uh them was gonna do. So it was me who showed them what was up.

ME: Trailer park?! Where are there trailer parks? Is that military housing for enlisted men?

BLEARY-EYED P-F-WMFOFD: ‘ere’s a trailer park hidden ‘hind every patcha trees ‘long side this road, yes’n, hnnh, hnnh.

RELATIVELY SMC-WORE: No, the G1’s and G2’s, you
know, the General Enlisted men, they live in the barracks, that’s over in Fort Bragg, on the base. These trailer parks lining the roads are just people who don’t do nothin’, except for the drug dealers. There’s a lot of drug dealers, dude, trust me. And prostitutes.

[I fix an incredulous glare upon him, half visible in the dark car.]

RELATIVELY SMC-WORE: You’re right; Fayetteville’s military — so it’s straight and proper, law and order. But there’s all these Privates here, and they don’t know what the hell they’re doin’, they don’t even give a damn if they get kicked out of the Army or not. They just don’t have anything better to do, so they’re here. Look at me: I failed a piss test and got an honorable discharge. Now I’m making more money selling vacations over the telephone. Sucks, though — I wanted that GI Bill money for college. So that’s what the trailer parks are for: drug dealers to hook up the General Enlisteds; the people who get kicked out of the Army and don’t have enough sense to leave; and prostitutes for the lot of ‘em. So Fayetteville becomes, like, a link in the drug trade between Miami and New York.

ME: How ‘bout that.

DRUNKEN FC-W: Where do you live again?

ME: Off Ramsey Road, north of Methodist College.

DRUNKEN FC-W: Where is that again?

RELATIVELY SMC-WORE: Yo, take this, take this, 401 right here — left — and this becomes Ramsey Road.

DRUNKEN FC-W: Oh, Ramsey Road!

HYPER-DRUNK F-P-WMFOFD: I can’t believe we’re here — do you know what happened at that gas station?! These —

RELATIVELY SMC-WORE: The prostitute in the bushes, right? [2 seconds of silence] The police — this was a couple years ago — found a prostitute just lyin’ over there in those bushes, dude, with her arms and her legs and her head cut off, just lyin’ around within ten feet of her body. [5 seconds of silence] They tested her, man, and found out she was HIV positive. The police figured it was just some soldier gettin’ what he needed, and when he found out what else he’d gotten however long later, he just went berserk and went after her — she probably never knew she had it. But the police, they didn’t even check to see which soldiers had recently tested positive, they just let it lay.

BLEARY-EYED P-F-WMFOFD: [face now taking on some cloudier color] Why you wanna go on and tell us somethin’ like that, man, it’s... [looks out the window, this time as if searching the bushes] ...sick, is what it is, hnnh, hnnh.

DRUNKEN FC-W: [now decidedly less drunk, as if converted to sobriety by proximity to our destination] I am so going to knock the shit out of you when I’ve unlocked my fingers from this steering wheel.

RELATIVELY SMC-WORE: That’s not even what’s sick, yo. They figured out based on how much blood was around her arms that she was still alive when he was sawin’ ‘em off. Imagine that: just lyin’ there, with this dude on top of her that she probably don’t even remember, sawin’ away at her arms. They could tell because your blood flows faster when you’re alive, and there was so much of it.

HYPER-DRUNK P-F-WMFOFD: Yeah! Sweet! I tell you one thing, you spread that shit to the boys ‘round here, you deserve what’s comin’.

RELATIVELY SMC-WORE: [turning around to face HYPER-DRUNK P-F-WMFOFD, mock puzzlement on his face] But you know what? [much emphasis] She was white.

ME: Take a right here, then pull in on the left. [We pull in to a parking space at the apartment village.] How ‘bout that. Right next to a sheriff’s cruiser. Nice choice. [I emerge from vehicle and do not look back.]
What I took away from it:

1) Everyone in that car would be considered a degenerate, according to the standards presented to me upon arrival in Fayetteville.

2) The world is composed, in no small part, of people who are considered by almost everyone else to be in some way inferior.

3) Regardless of how well certain conflicts are settled in your own mind, they will find ways to live on and plague the world in interesting new ways despite you.

Random Eugene conversation #2 (at my apartment on High St., Wednesday, July 26, 1:00 pm):
[The phone rings.]
ME: Hello?
OLDER BROTHER: Hey.
ME: Shit! How are you?!
OB: Fine, how are you?
ME: Fantastic, couldn’t be better.

Feeling great.
OB: Do you need anything?
ME: Not at all. I’m dandy.
OB: Did you finish your school?
ME: No, not exactly.
OB: What do you have left?
ME: I uh, um... it depends... depends on when I get my incompletes done. I got some, uh, term papers I haven’t finished, it’s um...
OB: Why not?
ME: Well there’s, just stuff that I haven’t been able to...
OB: Is it drugs?
ME: No, no... I drink a lot... but that’s because...
OB: Do you have money?
ME: Well, I — I haven’t gotten my financial aid because of my undone term papers... but I have a job interview tomorrow.
OB: So you don’t have a job?
ME: Well, I’ve been looking... I want to get a position as a waiter. I’ve got a pretty good resume.
OB: How’s your living situation?
ME: My lease is up next month.
OB: So? Are you going to continue living with your roommate?
ME: Well, he’s moving into a bigger house.
OB: And what are you doing?
ME: I want to get a place by myself.
OB: Why? Is there something wrong with him?
ME: No, no. I just... don’t want to put up with anyone’s shit.
OB: So he’s giving you shit?
ME: No, not at all, I just... well I’ve applied for a great job with the local newspaper, and I think I might get it... and I’ll be able to do my own thing, and not deal with other people’s, you know, I just...
What I took away from it:
A plane ticket down, down, down, to the home of the Airborne.

Random Fayetteville conversation #3 (in my brother’s blue/gray Dodge Ram, en route from our apartment to Manhattan Bagel, Monday, September 4, 11:00 am):

ME: Do you wanna listen to my Facelift CD?
OB: No.
ME: Just the radio, then?
OB: You don’t have to have music just to be somewhere.
ME: OK.
OB: So why do you think that you have to turn on the radio every time you’re in the truck?
ME: I don’t.
OB: Then why did you try to turn it on?
ME: I didn’t try to turn it on. I asked; you said no; I didn’t turn it on.
OB: Well, you don’t have to have music all the time.
ME: I know that. But I like music. I know you like it too, which is why I asked if you wanted to listen to it. I felt like listening to Facelift, so I asked if you did, but you don’t, so we aren’t.
OB: So if it feels good, do it, huh? That’s what you believe?
ME: I wouldn’t say I believe it. But some have theorized that the pleasure principle is the basis of all movement. I would say that it’s positive to do something you have an impulse to do unless there’s an overriding reason not to do it.
OB: So there has to be a reason not to do something, or else you do it?
ME: Assuming there’s a reason to do it in the first place — and pleasure, according to the pleasure principle theory, is the best reason of all.
OB: So you believe that if it feels good, do it.
ME: I didn’t say that.
OB: Don’t get defensive. You’ll kill yourself, doing whatever feels good.

[5 minutes of silence.]
OB: [loudly with theatric enthusiasm, like a sportscaster] Hey!! Say something! We’re in a car; we’re supposed to have a conversation. Talk about something.
ME: What.
OB: What are you thinking about?
ME: Have you seen the TV trailers for “The Art of War”?
OB: What?
ME: The new Wesley Snipes movie, “The Art of War,” about a political assassination, or something?
OB: I might have. Sounds stupid. They don’t know anything about that stuff.
ME: Maybe so. Do you think it might have anything to do with that book on your bookshelf?
OB: What?
ME: Sun Tzu, “The Art of War,” on your bookshelf? Can the plot of the movie be traced to the book?
OB: No, no, no. That book is a classic text on warfare. It doesn’t have any plot. It’s just a series of situations.
ME: OK. Kind of like “The Prince”?

OB: [irked] What?! How can you compare the two? They’re not the same! Do you even know what you’re talking about?
ME: I didn’t say they were the same, I —
OB: Don’t get defensive! Look: “The Art of War” is an ancient Chinese text on warfare; “The Prince” is an Italian treatise on politics.
ME: I know that.
OB: How can you say you know that?! You’re trying to say that two different texts from two different centuries and two different civilizations, on completely different subjects, are the same thing. What the hell is the connection?
ME: Exactly that: They’re both texts. They’ve both survived many centuries to become translated into our language and revered by scholars as distilled wisdom, keys to power. Specifically, I was wondering whether they shared the distinction of being, rather than mere plot-driven stories like most of the movies in the theaters, invaluable classics whose writers exposit their strategic theories through the relation of historical events, strategic theories which have proven to have a lot of applicability to their fields of inquiry even to this day — and I think you’ve told me as much.
[5 seconds of silence]
OB: [audibly angry] I can’t believe you. You’re making all these broad generalizations, trying to compare apples to oranges, talking like a liberal. Have you even read “The Prince”?
ME: [audibly exasperated] Hell fucking yes, about three times.
OB: [punches me in the arm] Hey!! Don’t be a smart-ass. I only asked you a question. Have you ever read “The Art of War”?
ME: No, I haven’t.
OB: Now, there you go. So how can you go around talking about it?
ME: Well, you see, that’s why I asked the question.

What I took away from it:
1) Some people become downright unpleasant when called upon to engage in an in-depth conversation about anything other than football.
2) That new Wesley Snipes flick may or may not take inspiration from an ancient Chinese treatise on warfare — if it does, it probably isn’t any fun.
3) I do indeed have a communication problem, and I am indeed a smart-ass. Nonetheless I maintain that the world would be a better place if it learned to communicate like I do.

What you take away from this:
Whatever you know or believe yourself to have learned, fine. Just be wary of any cop-out you can’t sell to anyone other than yourself.

Bryan Roberts, a senior occasionally majoring in English, was a featured columnist for the Oregon Commentator.
ON CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

The thing is, I’ll buy stuff just knowing I don’t have any place to put it.
—EPD Officer Randy Ellis, the guy who patrols 13th avenue near campus, in a KEZI “News at 11” segment about his hobby of collecting worthless crap. Stop in at the EPD station at 13th and Patterson to see some of the worthless crap he has on display. [Ellis] doesn’t know how much he’s spent on all that stuff. All he knows is that the stuff makes him happy.
—KEZI news anchor Kelly “Chicken Lady” Metz, closing out the Ellis segment. We don’t know how these idiots got on television, we just know that it makes us feel that much better about our own intellect.

ON THAT’S INCREDIBLE!

What was billed as a rally to support marijuana legislation Saturday turned into a drug festival on Boston Common with 40,000 people, many of them minors illegally smoking marijuana.
—Associated Press, Sept. 17. If this is accurate, that means people who support marijuana legalization *gasp* smoke it themselves? That’s positively scandalous. And those underage smokers should know better, and wait until they’re 21 when they can smoke legally like the rest of us.

ON MACHO MEN

The Navy says it was trying to crack down on ecstasy dealing. So why did its investigators concentrate their efforts on gay dance clubs?
—Subhead to a July 18 story on Salon.com. Where would have been a better place to start? At a Boy Scout meeting? The operative phrase here is “dance club.” Carry on, sailor.

ON TYPYOSMAGRAPPICAL ERRORS

‘Schoolhouse’ performance makes fun of learning. Headline from the Oregon Daily Emerald, Thursday, July 20, on a UO theatrical production of a “Schoolhouse Rock” show. We get the message: TV good, learning bad. But at least with “Schoolhouse Rock,” University Theatre continues its generations-long tradition of sharing classic works by master playwrights.
ON MORE PROGRESSIVE — THAN PROGRESSIVE

When are we going to have a policy that taxes the rich people?
—Ralph Nader’s running mate Winona LaDuke, on America’s current tax code. Wait a minute, aren’t the top ten percent of America’s wage earners paying the vast majority of income taxes, while the bottom ten don’t pay anything? With that kind of logic, we can’t believe she wasn’t elected to Washington years ago.

ON GOLDEN YEARS

I hurt my back. My son-in-law got me that... you know that booze drink? It’s loaded with calcium. I drink it every day, and most days I have to lie down. But now I’m okay.
—Howard, the old guy with the tall hat who rides his bike around on Sundays, collecting empty bottles from houses along Hilyard street. What “booze drinks” have calcium—white Russians? When Bob Dole said milk was dangerous and addictive, he may have been right.

I’ll be 85 on Oct 24th. Never thought I’d live this long. But look at me, I ride a bike every day. I tell the girls I was born on two wheels. They like that.
—Howard, revealing himself to be a bona fide dirty old man. Well, at least now we know where he got that Kappa Delta sweatshirt from...

ON APROPOS

Concorde Bodies Found, Eyes on Black Box
—Headline for a Yahoo! News Reuters story on the crash of the Air France Concorde. Plane crashes may not be getting safer, but they sure are getting a lot more accurate.

ON WHO’S THE NAZI?

We’re not the Nazis, the homosexuals are, OCA legal director Scott Lively argues.
—Eugene Weekly, September 14. If we’ve said it once, we’ve said it a million times: learn to share. You can all be Nazis. If only we could set aside our differences and hate everyone equally, what a wonderful world it would be.
What are you doing with your next four years? You could always find your own group of friends, but why be original when you can find acceptance by assimilating into a fraternity? This year Greek Life at the University of Oregon marks a century of hazing, boozing and excluding the less popular! Fraternities and sororities offer more than you think: we may live in mansions, but we’ll also force you to feed the homeless every other Saturday! Our focus lies in lifelong acquaintance- ships, misogyny, homophobia, infighting, elitism, xenophobia and saying “Dude, brah, beer me.”

Did you know?
85% of emergency room cases
64% of date rape convictions
23% of Carl’s Jr. employees since 1995
99% of the ASUO Student Senate
38% of People’s Court defendants
All but two victims of the Stanford Prison Experiment ARE ALL GREEK!

Did you also know?
Greeks represent 82% of Abercrombie & Fitch pullover sweaters on campus. Of 129 student groups, 109 conned unsuspecting Greeks into joining. Half of you won’t even graduate!

Did you also also know?
It begins with you. Wander into one of our parties this weekend, and find out if you make the cut. Remember: we promise there’s more beer upstairs in Brett and Chad’s room! (http://greeklife.uoregon.edu)