

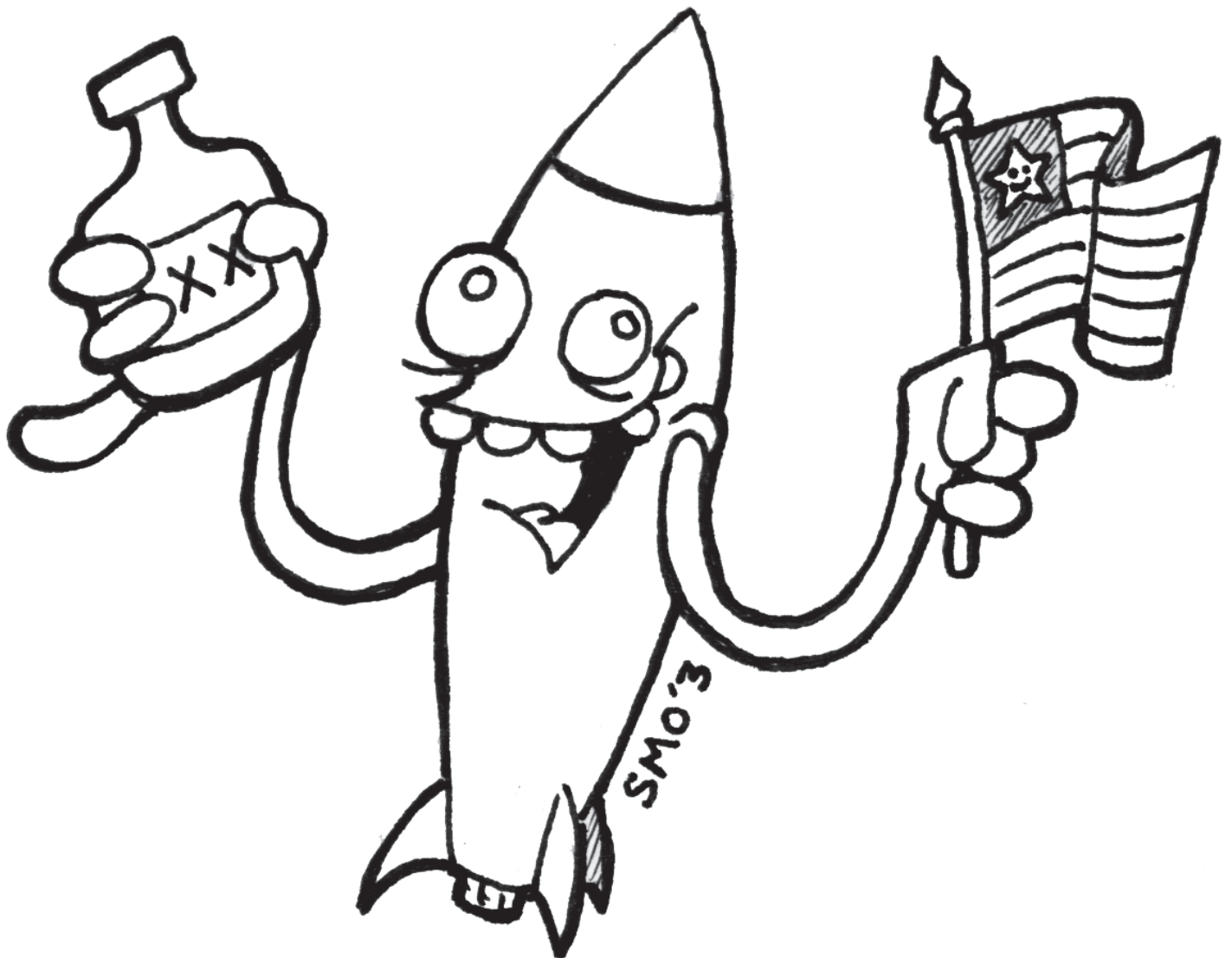


Gracies Dinnertime Theatre

Volume 25, Issue 4, RootBeer
www.hellskitchen.org/gdt



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Hell's Kitchen
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As Americans everywhere get drunk off the thrill of impending victory, we at *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre* are planning to get drunk the old fashioned way. So sit back, grab the remote, and fill up your brandy snifter. Operation: We're the Good Guys is sure to get you nicely plastered for the next few months while our soldiers pay with their lives for your viewing entertainment.

Take one drink if:

- You hear Fox News is unbiased.
- An analyst says a flux in the economy is because of the war.
- An American complains that Iraqis aren't following the Geneva Convention.
- The war is referred to as a "liberation."
- We fire a cruise missile.
- It misses (take two drinks if it lands in another country).
- U.S. troops find no evidence of chemical weapons.
- Bush mentions hidden chemical weapons.
- We lose five soldiers due to friendly fire.
- CNN airs a visual aid that makes no sense.
- A General says, "I can't answer that."
- CNN airs an Armchair General.
- You hear civilian Iraqis have surrendered for food.
- Someone mentions "freedom fries."
- A Frenchman surrenders even though they aren't in the war.
- Dick Cheney makes another million dollars because of the war.
- You hear another trench full of oil has been set on fire.
- They play a Toby Keith song.
- A CNN anchor refers to something as, "historic footage."
- A CNN anchor refers to "Gulf War One."
- A faceless monster is referred to as terrorism.

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- A news organization comes up with a new catchy slogan for the war.
- Take two drinks if:**
- U.S. troops find chemical weapons.
 - We lose one soldier due to enemy fire.
 - A pro-Iraqi is interviewed.
 - Someone condemns al-Jazeera for being biased.
 - CNN interrupts a British interview for an American one.
 - CNN shows footage of a war protest in a foreign country.
 - Someone compares Operation: Iraqi Freedom to another war (Vietnam, WW II, etc.).
 - U.S. military technology is proven to be useless against windblown grains of sand.
 - You hear American civil liberties need to be curtailed for the “war.”
 - Someone talks about using nuclear strategy (feel free to finish your drink, also; I know I will).
 - You see footage of Bush playing with his dogs.
 - You see footage of Saddam playing with his dogs.
 - You see footage of Saddam playing with Bush’s dogs.
 - The Iraqi and U.S. estimates of civilian casualties differ by more than two orders of magnitude.
 - A newscaster cries.
 - A new missile is tested.
- A new missile is tested on a newscaster.
 - They make up a new color for the National Security level (take an additional drink if it’s puce).
 - The Bush daughters drunkenly meander across the No Fly Zone.
- Finish your drink if:**
- Saddam says Bush “...needs to be beaten with a shoe.”
 - They think a cruise missile has hit Saddam.
 - Bush admits, “Gee, I guess the terrorists *have* won.”
 - Saddam takes off his mask, revealing he’s been Jerry Lewis the whole time (explaining why the French like him so much).
 - You see footage of Bush buying duct tape.
 - Every time one of our allies turns into a double crossing bastard.
 - The under-defended United States is invaded by Canada.
 - You hear about “bunker busters” armed with nuclear warheads.
 - Bush has to be forcibly removed from “the Button.”
 - You hear a reference to “a post 9/11 world.”
 - They cover news that isn’t about the war (finish your drink and turn off ESPN).
 - The Messiah returns, only to be killed by friendly fire.
-

Gracies Dinnertime Theatre

Redefining the line between literature and trash.

SUBMIT

gdt@hellskitchen.org

**SPECIAL COVERAGE:
WAR IN IRAQ**

**SPECIAL REPORT!
SADDAM HAS PUNCHED BUSH IN THE FACE!**

**THE PRESIDENT SAYS HE IS SADDENED
BY THIS TURN OF EVENTS**

HUSSEIN WAS NOT AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT AT THIS TIME

...E WHEN ARE WE ARE AT WAR?', SAYS A BEGUILED RIT STUDEN.

Historically, war and sporting events have been closely associated with one another. Many sports seem to have been developed primarily as a means for warriors to continue training during peacetime. The original Olympics, for example, were contests of skills useful in combat: running, charioteering, archery, wrestling, spear-throwing, etc. Thanks to *Braveheart*, we all know many of the Scottish Highland games began as ways to train for combat without the use of actual weapons, which were often outlawed by the English (although the caber toss most likely began with a few drunken Scots tossing trees around). Judo, boxing, and fencing all began as methods of beating the snot out of one's opponent or poking them with sharp metal objects, and in medieval times jousting tournaments gave knights something to do when they weren't busy

killing each other, getting drunk, or getting drunk and killing each other.

It shouldn't be surprising, then, to see *Gulf War II: Iraqi Freedom* treated like the spectacular sporting event we all know it really is. CNN has replaced ESPN in sports bars everywhere, and former sports commentators have wisely made the switch to become war correspondents. The other day at MacGregor's I saw a group of guys quoting statistics as they watched TV – which tank weighs the most, what missile has the longest range, and who is leading in rushing yards. Armchair generals have taken the place of armchair coaches. “Obviously, in order to win this, Coach Franks needs to focus on his special teams... er, special forces.”

You can tell which sport the war correspondents came from. Golf announcers are quiet and subdued in their coverage, almost whispering. “Here we see Davis lining up for the shot. He’s taking his time, checking wind speed. He has to make this shot to complete his mission, so you can imagine the pressure is on him.” “That’s right, Ted, but you wouldn’t know it from looking at him. It looks like he’s about ready... and it’s good. That’s another bogey for Davis.” Just behind the announcers, a small crowd will begin clapping lightly.

Meanwhile, John Madden has teamed up with Ted Koppel, drawing on the screen to poorly illustrate his incoherent thoughts. “Now watch the way Johnson rushes around the defensive line. They almost had him here, but he kept moving. Then Florenberg went with the long bomb. Boom!”

Iraq is involuntarily hosting the summer Olympics this year as contestants from all over the world converge in Baghdad.

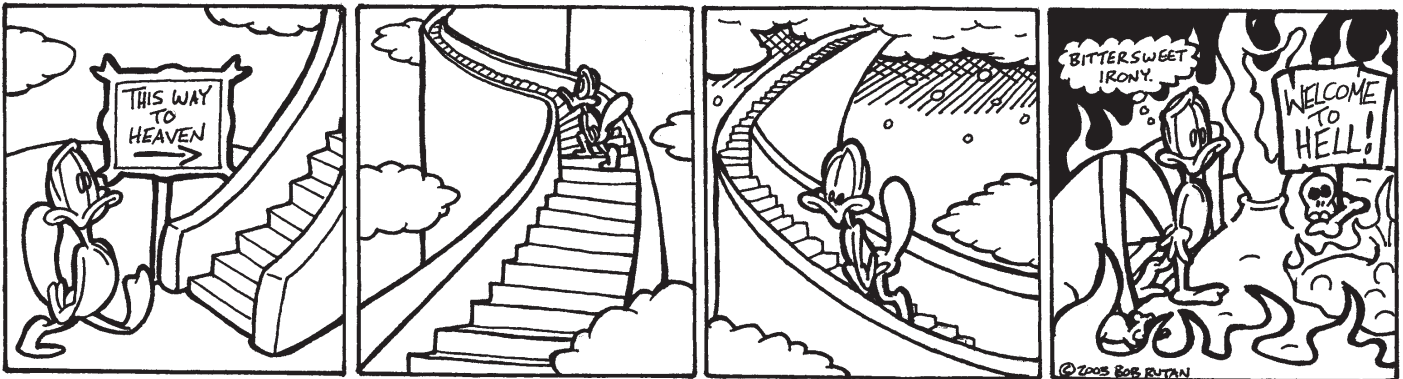
I suppose this is what we should expect from a society whose entertainment industry is so based on sensationalism. Granted, entertainment has almost always been based on sensationalism. We can look back to the gladiatorial events of Rome, where larger

and larger numbers of competitors facing death began to fail to draw crowds, and more creative forms of combat had to be invented. It’s the same idea here, really. With all the violence on television and in movies, special effects stop becoming special. Fake explosions no longer elicit the awe they once did. With reality television being so ubiquitous, I’m surprised it took as long as it did for someone to make the logical leap between reality shows and action movies.

True to Hollywood form, the sequel is even more expensive than the original. Ten times the budget, ten times the firepower, this summer’s explosive blockbuster hit is sure to take the desert by storm! The same old characters are back, this time with more guns, bigger missiles, and Mel Gibson as the reluctant American president who doesn’t want to go to war and does everything in his power to prevent it, but when Saddam went after his family, he’d simply gone too far.

Action heroes, sports stars, and soldiers have merged in the public consciousness. Sean Connery is Michael Jordan is Lt. John Stevenson, only Lt. John has a very real chance of having this be his last performance. And he doesn’t even get to sleep with the cheerleaders after the game.

The Traveling Platypus Bob Rutan, Guild of Sequential Illustrators



You die...--More--

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gdt@hellskitchen.org

I have noticed, as anyone with at least 20-400 sight can notice, the Camping for Peace demonstration on the quarter mile. I have also noticed something conspicuously missing: American flags.

I know that there are those in the pro-war community (an unsightly title, but functional nonetheless) would think this madness. "We're supporting our troops," they'd declare. "Those peace-addled hippies don't deserve the dignity of Old Glory!"

On the contrary, I contend. Just as the warhawks should have our nation's flag to rally behind, so should the peaceniks. The ability – no, the inalienable *right* – to dissent freely is the heart of our country's greatest freedoms. The entire first amendment comes from it. The right to assemble, publish and worship as we wish are all parts of this doctrine that I like to call "Free Thought."

In fact, if one looks at most of the rest of the Bill of Rights with an eye to free thought, one can see that the first amendment's teeth are provided by most of the other nine. The third and fourth amendments keep agents of the government (a sinister term, I apologize) out of private residences. The fifth's and sixth's protections are obvious. And finally, the ninth and tenth act as catch-all phrases guaranteeing that the people's rights are not limited to only those enumerated in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

But I didn't need to explain that to you all here, right? I mean, most of you who are here graduated from the Great American School System, known worldwide for creating a mass of mediocre students with some of the lowest funding per student in the world. And those of you from other nations who are visiting here, I'm sure, have a firmer grasp of the Constitution and its ilk than the majority of us natives (like that *Simpsons* episode

where Apu takes the citizenship test, and if we can't trust the Simpsons, who can we trust?).

Regardless as to how much fun the previous tangent was, the point of this article is not a review of American Government class, but rather a tip on protesting techniques. Specifically, anti-war protesters should use the American Flag in their protests, waving it, displaying it proudly as a symbol of their country.

The question then becomes, what's in it for me? Very simply, I don't like the way the protest efforts are going (on either side). It has transformed from war vs. anti-war to America vs. anti-America. I know, and so do most who think about it, that disagreeing with the President and his war (for Peace or for Oil, does it matter?), is the essence of being

an American. Such a kangaroo court as a mob that attacks a person for wearing the other camp's regalia is inherently barbaric, let alone un-American. There are those who believe that our President is incorrect. That doesn't make them any less American than those who agree. There are those who believe that Mr. Bush is correct, and they are just as American as the dissenters. Deal with it.

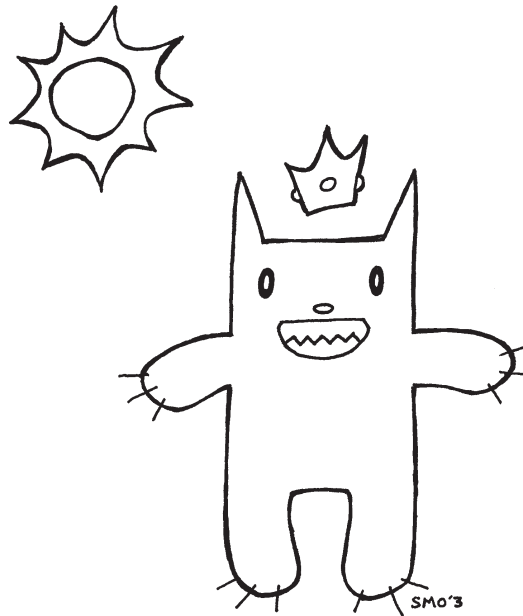
But, as I often try to point out, anyone who agrees or disagrees without thinking the matter through is not only un-American, but a downright fool.

So, what did we learn here today kids? Think!

Sources:

http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/charters_of_freedom/bill_of_rights/amendments_1-10.html

The Bill of Rights



%%I MOURN FOR HUMANITY%%

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My name is James Booker: Jimmy. I've never told this story to anybody, but it's been quite a few years and I just have to get it off my chest.

We were kids, it must have been 15 or 20 years ago now; I was about 9. And it was a birthday party for a 6 year old cousin of mine. All the parties were at our house because we were the only people in the family with a swimming pool.

My father had just put the hamburgers on the barbeque. My little brother and I were playing out back when my Uncle Jerry came by and said he had something to show us behind the shed. I wasn't terribly interested, and on top of that, my mother had said never to play with Uncle Jerry. My brother was never very good at listening to mom, so off he went. I decided I should go watch.

Every family has one of those uncles, the one the kids can't play with alone. In some families it's because he would leave guns around the house and others, drugs. Some uncles wouldn't baby sit you very well, or they would just yell at you too much. Well, Uncle Jerry wasn't any of those; he was one of a very special group of uncles. He loved playing with kids. I thought he was the greatest uncle in the world. Either way, mom said not to play with him, so I didn't, even though I always wanted to play.

Once I hid in a bush in the back of the yard, I sat and waited to see what was going on. It looked like Uncle Jerry had convinced a couple other kids to play. They looked like friends of my cousin's, but I couldn't tell. They looked like they were playing doctor. I thought it would be so much fun to join them, but I couldn't get over what my mother said.

After a little while, I heard Uncle Jerry coaxing my brother Kevin into being the next patient. He didn't seem to want to be a patient, which was funny, because my brother loved his uncle very much.

"Do it for us Kevin, you look so cute. Besides, we need a patient and it's your turn."

"But Uncle Jerry, isn't that a little weird, I mean, do real patients do that?"

"No, it's not weird at all, to examine you right, you need to take all of your clothes off."

"Well I guess, but only for you Uncle Jerry."

I thought it was a little strange, but really, if they are going to examine you, I suppose it would be better without clothes. From where I was sitting, it looked like Uncle Jerry was doing a very thorough examination. He must be a Doctor in real life I supposed.

Just then, my older sister Anne jumped out of the bush from about 10 feet away. She must have been there the whole time but I never saw her. I was never very observant.

"DADDY! DADDY! Uncle Jerry is doing weird things with Kevin and Kevin's not wearing any clothes at all!"

I could hear a huge cry go up from the adults who were milling about the pool. It seems many of the parents had forgotten Uncle Jerry had even come to the party, the adults usually watch him very closely. All of a sudden I saw my father come bounding around the shed with his barbeque fork.

The next minute was a blur. My father put the barbeque fork through Uncle Jerry more times than I could count. My brother just lay there terrified, naked and covered in blood. The other kids had long since run away screaming, and the adults were slowly making their way onto the scene. My father yelled to my mother to bring shovels and as almost a group instinct, the entire party started digging under the shed. They shoved Uncle Jerry's now limp body under there and then covered it with the dirt.

For a long time my brother and I thought he was living under there. After a while, we learned that my father had killed him. No one speaks about it in the family. It is a little black spot that each of them will carry to the grave. I never said anything to anyone before now, but it feels a lot better to have shared my story. I think I can finally forgive Uncle Jerry; besides, he only loved children, just like Michael Jackson. If he can just sleep next to kids, my Uncle Jerry can love them. When I'm an uncle, I hope I can care about kids as much as Jerry did.

Ants**By Jai Ramachandran**

We scatter like ants in rain
 From the moment we wake
 All we hear is thunder
 From unseen clouds
 Over hidden mountains

Through crimson skies
 And violet exhaust
 We persevere through tidal waves
 And catastrophic warnings
 On tattered bathroom walls

--

Everyday we wake in fear
 We wake to machine gun breath
 And bare sacred earth in flames
 Tree sap blood oozing from cracks
 Of cracks with steady viscosity

We are the indispensable ammunition
 Of the walking talking GI Joe men
 We eat the words
 Of backyard brawls
 And alcohol induced rages of insight

With slit tongues and slick skin
 We wash our blood from mother Mary
 Begging for forgiveness
 We unsheathe our bayonets
 And lunge forward hoping for rain

National Poetry Against the War Day**By Jai Ramachandran**

You are a poet,
 People ask you to speak
 Not about the world
 Or what you think of
 The current actions of das kapital
 You are there to speak
 To make people forget
 To take them on a vacation
 And forget about the destination
 This isn't about you and me
 And what we believe
 This isn't about dictators,
 Oil or who is who's daddy
 This isn't about war and peace
 This is about someone asking you to speak
 In a manner of speaking
 This is about poetry being spoken at The White House
 And about poetry getting the respect it deserves

We rise to the war of titans and behemoths
 We have no choice but to support
 The war of millions
 The cry of babies in mother's arms
 The breath of hate

We fight for the piece of ground
 Between here and there
 For the bodies that lay dying
 Over yesterday's bread
 Forgetting tomorrow's wealth

We never hear the voices
 Growing loud over dark halls
 Screams on bended knees bleeding
 Roars from rapid fire bullet breathed
 Drowning out drums of peace prosperity

--

Night creeps upon us with a bitter grasp
 Mother Mary will return soon
 And the sky will extinguish
 The earth will cry out for mercy
 And we will scatter like ants in rain

Poetry!

And you being simply too short sighted
 This is about coffee shops all over the nation
 Being a cause of celebration
 This is about words on paper
 Floating through smoke filled air
 This is about you claiming you are "helping the people"
 When what this is really about
 Is wanting your name in lights
 And about ruining poetry for another generation
 This ends up being about all those clichés
 About the poet and the politician
 We were supposed to speak about the American Voice
 And we did, a bunch of whiney,
 Self-righteous,
 Egotistical know-it-alls
 Who can't see our friends
 Or believe our enemies

Like any good woeful traveler story, I've been down this road before. In fact, I've taken to coming out this way quite often of late. It's a lonely highway this time of day; eighty-eight is the only road on which I ever feel compelled to use my high-beams. So far from anything remotely like civilization, there is no light pollution, and yet there are just enough other drivers that your eyes never fully adjust. You can never properly see, and every set of headlights pierces you like the blinding eyes of God.

It has just snowed. I squint every so often, and wonder if it's the darkness, the salt, or sleep that is clouding the windshield. Running the wipers does nothing but add to my confusion as the view becomes a blur of dirty water and steam. It's this kind of moment where you can't help but reflect, because, quite honestly, you're certain you could spontaneously die at every coming moment. Maybe you don't think about a whole lot, some bad sex you had in high school or why you can never get to sleep, but you think none the less. You can't see, so there's little else to do.

Earlier in the day, while the sun was still high, I found myself talking to a shivering gas station attendant about people who smoke while pumping gas, speed over freshly fallen ice and snow, and policeman who peel out of parking lots in the middle of the night. It seems as though only that activity never dwindles in popularity. Talking about "stupid people," and distancing one's self from them, might never lose its appeal, despite the efforts of primary school guidance counselors. Most of us spend our first quarter century distancing ourselves from stupid people. We plod through college trying to find something that signifies our uniqueness and our superiority. We're encouraged to create left justified, titled, and categorized line-item lists of our unique and superior traits. Yet, everyday becomes more aimless, more disenchanting. Like walking drunk around an airport, everyone is asking you where you are going and in your desperation you can only wonder how the hell you are going to get there. And the places we end up headed toward don't seem like the best of all destinations. We hallucinate Honolulu on our way to Trenton.

We spend our parents' money to sit in over-bright classrooms with thirty or forty other twenty-some-things, all wondering and worrying about what real life is going to be like. More of the same – sitting, staring blankly, and grooming a pet feeling that we're accomplishing nothing? Like the TeeVee – cubicles, shiny hair, and forty-eight minute conflict resolution? Or movies – two-tone ethicality, mild comic relief, and a nice soundtrack? Or, as seems more likely, the evening news: children wielding guns, thieving politicians that we fund, and a war that's never won.

And forever how we'll get there.

Perhaps we'll encounter some conglomerate behemoth after our twenty-five year fake life ends. Cubicles, black and white decisions, a congress always just kidding, three and a half million people who showed up and never got counted, bombs, guns, and a war for peace. Bush claims anyone who wants peace should back a war in Iraq, which seems an oxymoron. It would seem intuitively obvious that war is the polar opposite of peace. When I think of peace I think of growth, children's smiles, and bunnies. War implies death, destruction, social and economic trauma. A further loss of innocence. But maybe there's some zen-like calmness that comes with flying a fighter jet or firing a gun. Now, I've been in planes and, while I've found the experience to be interesting and even novel, I wouldn't categorize it as peaceful and calming. But then, I've never piloted any kind of vehicle at Mach three. I have fired a gun. Some friends and I went to a gun club a couple of summers ago that one of us had found. Standing next to my friends with pistol in hand, I could only think back to what my brother in law felt about a similar experience. "Here is the gun, and here are the bullets. And they all trust me." That concept kept running through my head, causing my hands to shake, my body to grow cold, and my brow to moisten. Really, they didn't all trust me (the range attendants wore pistols strapped to their hips, policeman-style), but the point of it changes little.

I dodged a coyote in this light once. Never a bullet. Or a bomb. Or a gun.

The car could use gas, but all I can think about is how sore my ass is and how pleasant a bathroom would

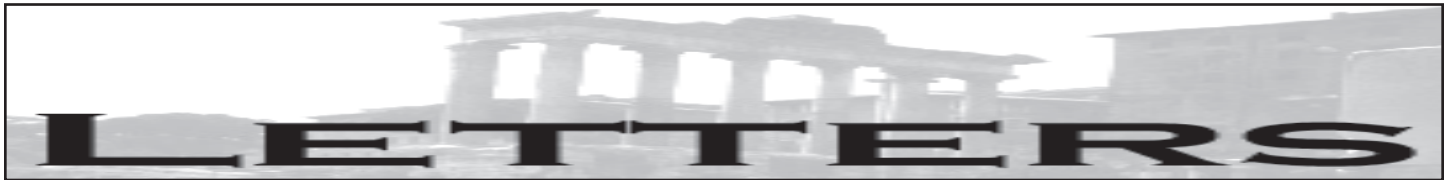
be. I pull off the highway and seek out the only light in the nearest town: a convenience store that is open late enough this time. After using their restroom and being sure to prop the door back open with the bottle of Tide on the floor, I wandered about their store trying not to look too droopy. For a long time I've felt it polite to pay for otherwise free services. Some people find it odd – companies aren't people, damn the man, fight the system, and all – but I figure it's a little like voting. "Hey, I used your store at a quarter past midnight. See, I bought an egg salad sandwich." Maybe the lady behind the counter won't get a raise because I bought a pre-rapped sandwich, but at least all three of us (the cashier, the convenience store, and me) know that I'm not a dick. Or I guess the situation could be more like something I heard a Navy tour guide say years ago; "And remember, ladies and gentlemen, if it weren't for people like you, I wouldn't have a job like this." We all laughed, but I've always wondered exactly how he meant the statement.

The last leg of the drive is anxious. I forget that I must follow this road until the end. At each exit I jump awake, shaking my grip on the wheel, and shaking my head. But there is a light glow to the horizon now. The

knowledge that the city is approaching opens my eyes just a bit, just enough. As I pull off the highway and take in civilization's glow, my body grows relaxed and my windshield clears. The streets are nearly clear, and it helps my calm.

I ring the doorbell and imagine every step – putting on shoes, each stair, finally unlocking the door. Her smiling face bouncing through the doorway relieves me of the evening and of the year. For a few days we forget our pandemic aimlessness and live a love that makes me want only for some kind of casual self-destruction to bring me back to equilibrium. Naked skin becomes the answer to disconnection; a warm bed to war; and a smile to helplessness. Sunday comes and the world still seems dark, but I feel warmed and ready to face the day and the journey it holds. As we fold ourselves into a good-bye-I-love-you embrace, her body shakes from tears, and I know that I am home.

Population of Oregon taken from 2002 Oregon Census of Population and Housing



Editor's Note: Typically, we do not edit letters to the editor for spelling or anything like that. The following letter, however, has been edited for spelling, grammar, etc. It has not been edited for length or content.

Date: Thu, 27 Mar 2003 15:12:20 -0500 (EST)
From: @aol.com
Subject: Chris Rist

Dear GDT,

It seems that the general theme of my response to your article has been lost in a sea of sarcasm. I can only blame myself I suppose, because I allowed my anger at what you wrote bleed into my response. I was angry because what you wrote is not what I am, and it certainly isn't what my friends are like. The reason I responded to you is that I wanted to show people that regardless of that fact that I am in a fraternity, I'm still just a regular guy. Being in a fraternity doesn't

automatically turn me into a jerk.

I joined a fraternity because I like to party, I like being part of a group of like-minded people, and (to some extent) I like being involved with what goes on campus. I'll admit, if you saw me at a party, you'd probably see me drinking beer from a funnel or throwing stuff out a window (all things you've seen in the movies) because I dearly love to cut loose and act in a ridiculous manner. I don't force others to behave that way, so why should it be held against me?

RIT is a tragic place. I think of stories that my father told me about being Greek in his day, and my God, man! They had so much fun. It's sad because he not only was able to party with his brothers, but he partied with his entire college. The Greeks would organize some fun, silly event and everyone would show up and rock the casbah.

We don't get that at RIT. This campus generates a feeling of every man for himself, with engineers vs. art students, minority groups against the majority, and yes, Greeks against GDI's (Goddamned Independents; it's a joke so don't get mad). We Greeks are as much to blame as you are for the lack of campus community. The feeling exists that it's us against the world, and that is wrong.

The thing I think makes me the angriest of all is that you think I and the other Greeks are stupid. Just because I enjoy drinking, partying, and playing silly pranks doesn't make me dumb. I wouldn't be at RIT if I were stupid. All I want is to be able to look back on my college career and know without a doubt that I had the most fun I possibly could.

Getting good grades is easy; being happy at RIT is the real challenge. College is supposed to be the time where you do silly things and get all it out of your system before the weight of the world crushes your spirit. I guess in the end all I'm asking for is a little tolerance.

Instead of using your intelligence and sarcasm to bring people down, come join in the fun. If you don't like to drink, that's okay, you don't have to drink to party. I

just keep thinking that if we could get past the sorta stuff that you and I both wrote in our articles, then this campus would be a much better place.

Oh, and by the by, didn't I specifically ask you not to rank on my spelling? So I don't know how to spell "chivalrous." Cut me some freaking slack, man.

Sincerely yours,
Chris Rist

Dear Chris,

"...it's a joke so don't get mad." Wise words. The world would likely be a better place if more people kept them in mind.

As always, thanks for writing in.

-Ed.



**Gracies
Dinnertime
Theatre™**
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

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The beating of that insidious heart

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