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Adventures Abroad a summer in NEPAL

By CHRIS PETERSEN
Senior Staff Writer

I went to high school with a fellow named Joel who kept a gun under the driver's seat of his Geo Metro and who lost an extraordinary amount of weight over one summer. Joel was very strange: during our senior year he took a month off from school to go drinking in Mexico. The last I ever saw of him was in front of a coffee shop, where he sat, pensively smoking one Camel after another, talking to me as if there were no tomorrow. By then he had traded in the Metro for a huge white Cadillac and had explored most of Europe and Latin America. Aside from the cigarettes and the Cadillac, I have only one clear memory from that final conversation: Joel told me that traveling is like a drug.

As a member of the student leisure class, I was able to save enough money to spend my summer in Nepal and India. What I discovered was a bit of a surprise: for many tourists, travel in Nepal is all about drugs.

By my estimation at least 95% of the non-Indian tourists who visit Nepal smoke mari-

juana. Glassy-eyed neo-hippie white people and hyperactive long-haired Japanese crazies can be seen continually wondering around downtown Kathmandu, looking for a quick bite to eat. Budding Nepalese capitalists have been quick to take advantage of their captive market — marijuana grows naturally virtually everywhere in Nepal and is thusly dirt cheap to harvest and sell to naive foreigners. As a result a person such as myself, with garish hair, a generally unkempt appearance and unmistakably white skin (I would later be dubbed "Major Whitey" upon receiving my first sunburn) could be offered drugs 50 or 60 times during an afternoon stroll through the city. Kathmandu is many miles away from Miskogee, Oklahoma.

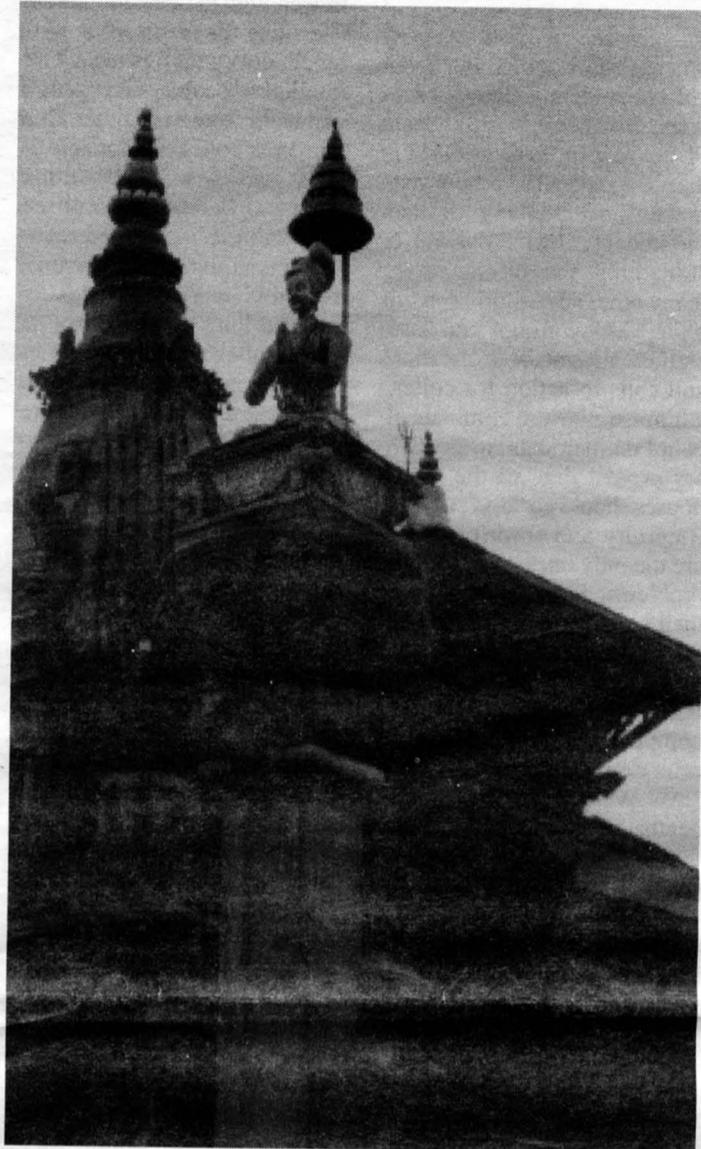
A lot of Nepalis smoke weed too, though most of them do so for religious purposes. One sadhu holy man that I met had devoted his life to the god Shiva, and as part of this had been smoking ganja all day and all night for more than 40 years. Every six months he hikes for four days to replenish his stash. Once a year he makes a pilgrimage to a quiet Himalayan valley overrun with nothing but white marijuana. The trek takes 14 days, one way. He found the

place while randomly following a flock of birds for no particular reason.

Drugs aside, Nepal is a strange country. For one everybody thinks that Ronald Reagan has the heart of a monkey. The story is that after John Hinkley ventilated the president in 1981, the only means that American surgeons could muster up to save the Gipper was the sacrifice of an unlucky but very patriotic simian. My thinking is that the entire country has confused reality with Reagan's 1950's Hollywood bonanza "Bedtime for Bonzo," a triumphant piece of cinema in which the future president co-starred with a chimpanzee.

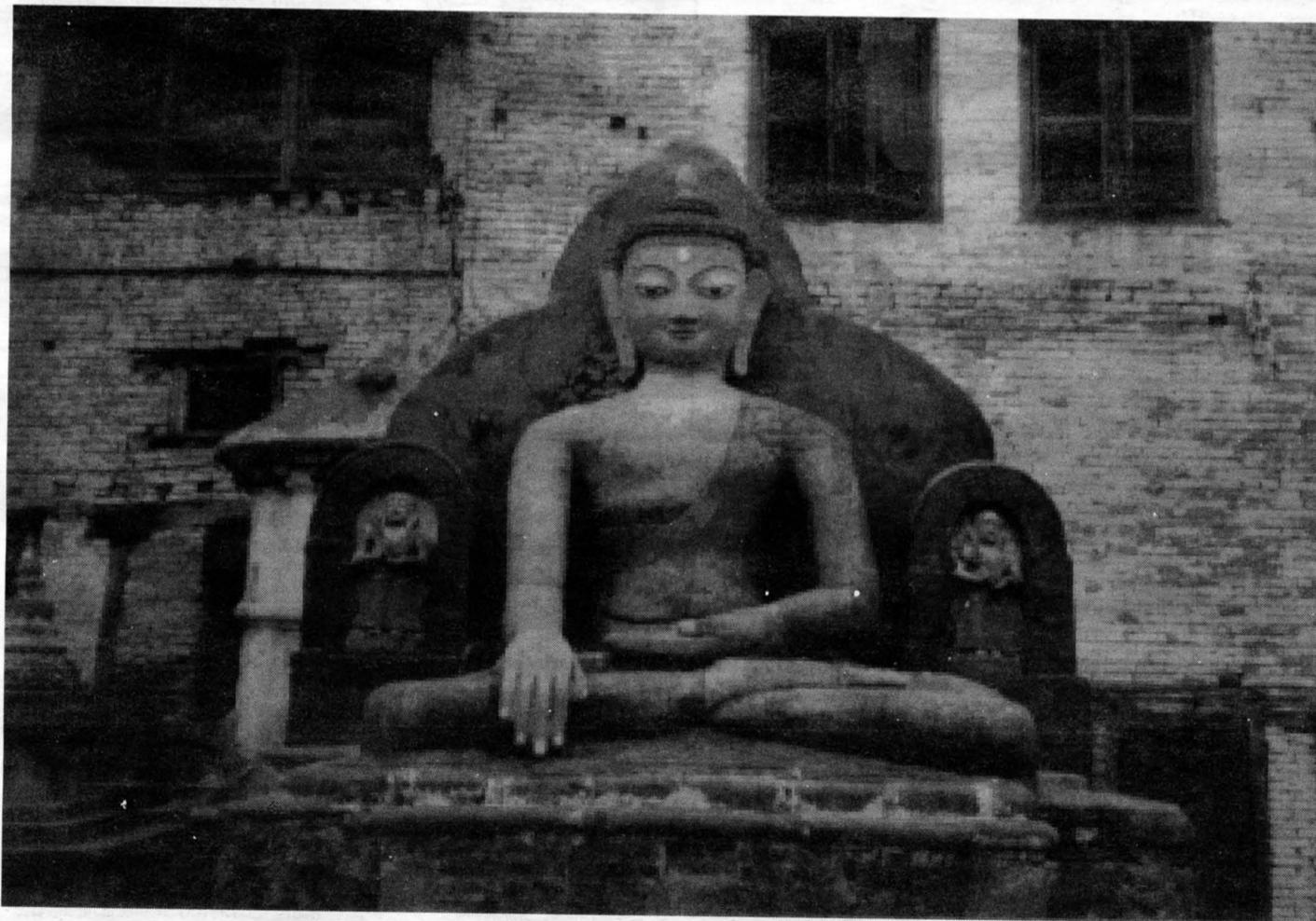
Not least among Nepal's wonders is its figurehead monarch, King Birendra. Birendra is a portly fellow who looks a bit like the South Asian love child of Jay Leno and Chef Boyardee. Like most kings he and his family don't have a whole lot to do these days, so it wasn't altogether surprising when two of my friends saw him and the wife out for a drive, running a few royal errands. It is a sight that I lament having missed.

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Photos courtesy of Chris Peterson

To the left, a large Buddha statue stands near the Swoyambu stupa. The Indo-Nepalese buddha icon is quite dissimilar to the more rotund, and in the U.S. more popular, Chinese conception. Above, a dutiful king worships for eternity in Baktapur's Darbar Square.



On Campus & Abroad

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ALCOHOL Focus on responsibility, not restrictions

By DAN BREMEN
Staff Writer

In recent months every one has heard something about college student's alcohol problems, whether it was the death of the student here at OSU in the car accident last school year, or the "binge drinking" death of the student at M.I.T. this fall, or something else in one of the many other news stories on this topic. Many groups and associations have made declarations and calls to action for college administrations to eliminate alcohol on their campuses. Others protest that all the Greek houses should go "dry", as if the fraternity and sorority people are the only ones with drinking problems. Still others get up on their soap boxes and preach that this is a sign of how "today's youth are going to Hell in a hand basket", simply offering the complaint without the vision to offer any solution.

We all agree these recent deaths are tragic, but it seems to me that the blame is being pointed in the wrong direction, and thus we are looking to solutions that won't solve the problem. What people seem to

be missing is the crucial issue that once a person reaches college he or she should be mature enough to make intelligent decisions for themselves. After all, college is a place where intelligent people get together and learn from each other. If a person in college is not able to resist the urge to literally drink them self to death, I don't see how an institutionalized regulation is going to remedy this. The problematic tendencies developed long before any of us got to college, and new restrictions at this level will not eliminate these tendencies. I am sure that no one has forgotten, so soon, just how well Prohibition worked. Nor can we over look how well the current laws are working to keep minors from drinking. Both of these are examples of how looking to the laws does not always lead to the solution.

What developing new restrictions against alcohol on campus's would do is turn more students into criminals, and make them less likely to seek help if they have a problem. However, there are some real benefits to this approach. It may get the protesters off the administration's back and let

them sleep a bit better at night knowing they can claim they have done everything possible to stop the problem. My biggest fear is that ten years down the road when the solutions haven't worked and the problems are still persisting, the law makers will still be clinging to their security blanket named "But-we-told-them-not-to" and resign to confusion rather than looking in a new direction.

In this new direction we must stop allowing people to depend on the system to tell them what they should and shouldn't do. In this great, free country of the United States of America, we are all responsible for our own actions. That is what freedom requires. I say it is time for each and every person to start being accountable for his or her own actions, and being proud of them. So, rather than indirectly asking less freedom, look inside yourself next time you go to grab your keys after having a few drinks; is that really a smart thing to do? Could you handle it if you killed someone on the way home? Because, in the end, it is you that will have to live and die with your decisions. Why not make them good ones?

OSU attempts to connect

By CHRISSY GIULIANO
Staff Writer

Come September in Corvallis there are thousands of incoming Oregon State University first year students who are nervous about how the next four years of their life will turn out. In order to ease this transition, OSU launched its "Connect" program. Many students and faculty worked hard to bring OSU Connect together for the first time ever. The program is meant to introduce new students to the campus and campus life in the summer and the week before classes. Many activities were offered from helping students choose their classes to showing midnight movies in the quad. A lot of effort was put forth to make the week before classes began one where all students were given the opportunity to explore campus and become familiar with the school. However, the new Connect programs have met with mixed reviews from students and faculty.

As a first year student, I feel the idea of OSU Connect was a good one, but some aspects of it didn't work out as well as many people had hoped. While there was some negative feedback about the program, most students agreed that it was helpful and could be improved to assist students better in years to come. One of the suggestions students had were to plan activities later on in the day, because many began early in the morning which didn't attract a lot of students. Several students chose to sleep in instead of participating in the activities. A lot of students only attended the early morning programs at which they were required to be.

Another OSU Connect activity that seemed to be unsuccessful was the orientation groups. I went to the first orientation group, but discovered that most of the information given were things I already

knew. Many other students realized this fact and consequently didn't go to any of the following orientation groups.

OSU Connect seemed to anger many sororities and fraternities because it took time away from their activities, and not as many people got involved with Rush Week. Rush Week is usually the biggest activity before the beginning of school, but this year OSU Connect appeared to take away from Rush Week. A lot of people didn't participate in Connect because of Rush Week. People are now trying to figure out how to make both OSU Connect and Rush Week work, without having either one suffer from the other.

OSU Connect did have many successful activities. I enjoyed the President's Barbecue that was held on the day most students moved into the dorms. It was a good way for people to meet others and to make them more comfortable with the new environment. I also felt that the midnight movies were very successful. One thing that I discovered about the week before classes began was that many kids were feeling bored and eager to meet new people. Midnight movies definitely helped students to relax and begin the school year with some excitement.

Some things that may help improve OSU Connect would be to make all of the activities more exciting and appealing to the students. Some students were angry because they thought OSU Connect was a waste of time and wished they wouldn't have moved into the dorms as early as they did. If all of the activities had been condensed into only a few days, people would have liked it a lot more.

Overall, OSU Connect was an optional program of which many students took ad-

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THE MODERN EXCESSIVE DRINKER...

SENSITIVE...



RELAXED...



EXPRESSIVE...



CAREFREE...



... A MODEL PERSON FOR THE 90'S

Christianity on Campus: Diversity With a Common Thread

By KELLI CUMMINGS
Staff Writer

With the subject of religion on the rise, the diversity among Christians has become the topic of intense scrutiny. Why is this so? Nearly all of the interest groups on campus proclaim that diversity is the answer, so why do so many people condemn Christians? Is it because people don't understand the message? Is it because Christians have made a bad name for themselves? I believe that because of the increasing conflicts regarding religion this topic has simply become another arena with which to argue against the effectiveness of Christianity. Nonetheless, from my experience, I have reached

the conclusion that Christians are the most unified diversity group on campus.

When encountered with the reasoning for my faith one of the most frequently asked questions is: "Why do you guys (Christians) have so many different beliefs? It seems like you can't even get along with yourselves." I acknowledge this argument because I too have seen different Christian groups almost "competing for lost souls" around campus. However, this is actually a misconception. Although it is true that most all groups fervently evangelize, if you would talk to any of them you would find that they welcome and appreciate all of the others who are doing the same job. The fact is that we Christians do agree on the major is-

sue: that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that the only way to get to heaven is through a personal relationship with Him. Despite this obvious connection, we do not all fit neatly in to a box. We are people too and have different likes and dislikes when it comes to evangelism, social activities, etc..

Because the Christian population is growing, various needs are emerging within the

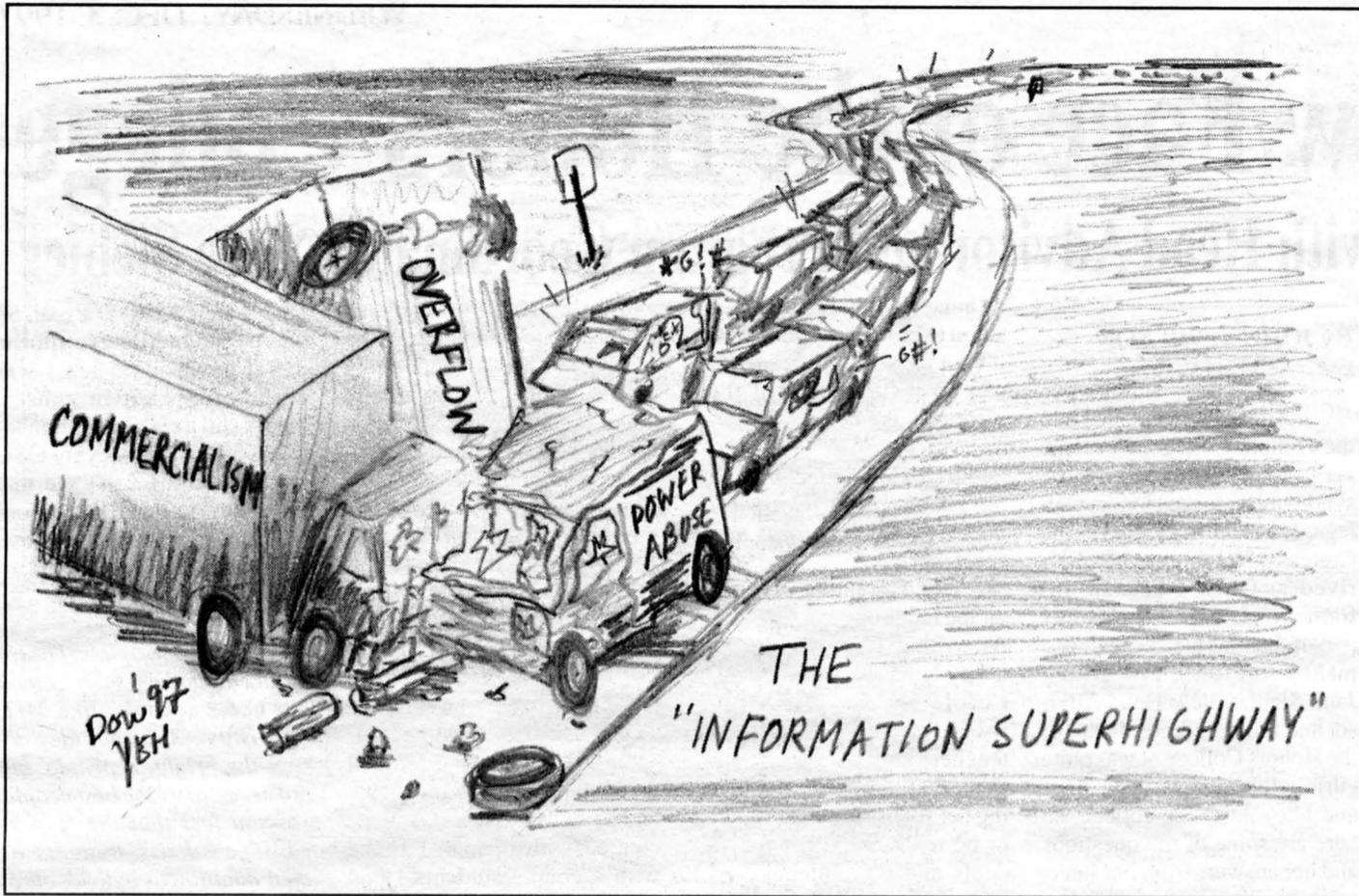
Christian community; hence the need for several groups to accommodate that.

When I grew up, I had a stereotypical view of Christians. I thought they were the preppy types who never got in to trouble, had good grades and were pretty plain—exactly what I didn't want to be. "I was different!" I cried. I didn't fit the mold of these people with whom I went

to youth group; I wanted something else. Despite this desire for more, I didn't lose my fervor for God and when I came to OSU I was thrilled to see the amount of Christian groups on campus. Not only were there so many, but all of the people were different. Along with the diversity, there was something about their spirit to which I was genuinely attracted — it was the love and hope that filled them. They weren't here because of any external motivation. They had an honest desire, and I loved it. The strong presence of God throughout all of the groups on campus is what finally destroyed my stereotype.

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"The fact is that we Christians do agree on the major issue: that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that the only way to get to heaven is through a personal relationship with Him."



INFORMATION: Box it and ship it

by JASON WELLE
Guest Writer

Why would one want to box and ship information? Does it seem like that can't actually be done? Probably yes. But in today's information-driven society, that appears to be the intent used by our industrial and educational leaders. In the 20th century, information (and knowledge in general) is treated as a commodity, a "thing" to be acquired, bought, and sold. To gain and access more "knowledge," one must pledge several years of his or her life to higher education or to buy a computer and get online, to name a few. By taking time to think about this phenomenon and some examples of its presence, one can come to the realization that relevant information in the modern world is becoming trivialized and devalued. In other words, wisdom—considered the best form of knowledge in ages past—is becoming displaced by a "need" to have knowledge by the quantity, not by quality. First, I would like to go over the different ways information can be viewed and the way I believe it ought to be viewed. Then I will go over two examples of the devaluation of information in the 20th century.

A common saying today is that knowledge is power. Based on my experiences, I have come to reflect on this statement, and I have redefined it. Knowledge is not power; power depends on *how* one uses it. Knowledge is not even the basic element here. It is information. "Information" dwells in all parts of the environment you can imagine. "Knowledge" is that we acknowledge that information. Then one experi-

ences that knowledge- they evaluate it, see how it is significant to them, how they can use it. Then the division between "power" and "not power" occurs. If one uses the knowledge for the benefit of others and themselves, they gain "wisdom." If they use it irresponsibly or with bad intent, this is plainly dangerous.

My first example points to one way information can be used negatively- if we treat it as a thing to be acquired. The knowledge that people had before approximately the 18th century was valuable. Few had a good education, and sages, philosophers, and inventors enthralled people with the useful knowledge they could offer. This knowledge was well-isolated and hard to come by. It, therefore, had great value to people.

The invention of the telegraph and print press, my first example, changed all of this. The press had already allowed a larger number of ideas to be printed for the public, but the telegraph eliminated the geographical spaces which kept valuable knowledge isolated. Two important things happened after these two inventions: first, an inflow of greater quantities of information came to the people (thus making it something which eventually would be taken for granted) and second, it allowed the content to not necessarily eliminate the older, more serious nature of news, but to push it into

a corner with interesting and entertaining "news" which often had no real relevance to individual groups of people. Who cared if the Queen of England had a toothache, for instance.

So the past century has ended us here in the 1990s with the Internet, the crowning achievement of giving us boundless quantities of information which allows us to look at only the information we personally want to look at (obviously you learn from what you don't agree with). In the words of Neil Postman in his book *Technopoly*, "...we are driven to fill our lives with the quest to access information. For what purpose or with what limitations, it is not for us to ask; and we are not accustomed to asking since the problem is unprecedented."

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--Neil Postman,
from *Technopoly*

The problem is the devaluation of relevant information.

Now I turn to my second example, the transition from a news story on television to a string of commercials. The boundless amounts of information described in my first example (also important to the second), is called information glut by some. So much comes that it starts to "jam" its potential coherent uses. Today's news does this. Think of when you see this transition. Daily, without doing this test, do you honestly remember all the commercials you saw once they are over? What was the

last news story about- before the commercials? Did the commercials have any relevance to one another or the story? Today's news, and media in general, keep us in the present- disregarding the past and fantasizing about the future. Basically, "...the tie between information and human purpose has been severed, i.e., information appears indiscriminately, directed at no one in particular, in enormous volume, and at high speeds, and disconnected from theory, meaning, or purpose," as explained by Postman. How can one evaluate relevant information when it can't be remembered, is replaced by the next well-anticipated sitcom, and it is presented as entertainment when it is shown? Information has been devaluated.

So what does this mean? It ought to mean a lot because these two examples are only two of many which I could have been made. The way in which information is presented today causes everyday people to ignore fundamental human and social problems. It is all entertainment to us (think of the show *COPS*- very serious subject of crime is shown as a spectator event). People need to understand how today's information delivery can effect things if we don't properly control it. We must bring the potential relevance of any piece of information back on a societal level. Remember that it is how we use information, and therefore knowledge, which really matters. I am inviting feedback from any of those who wish to make comments on this matter. Email me at wellej@ucs.orst.edu, write your comments, and I will also get back to you and tell you my future website (not made yet) which will provide more information.

Giuliano: Connect

vantage and learned. The students that didn't participate in week long schedule of activities because they were either disappointed with it or involved with Rush Week didn't miss out on that much. I do believe it is a good program with good intentions, though, and hopefully by next year, it will be new and improved and much more successful.

Cummings: Christianity

The exciting part about the emergence of so many Christian groups on campus is the recognition that Christians no longer have an image like that of the past. We are surfers, we are Pac-10 athletes, and we are members of some of the most prestigious academic groups on campus. So when the question arises, "What's up with all these different groups on campus? Can't they all get along and share the same beliefs?" The answer is that we do share the same core belief, but we are all different people and these groups accommodate our diversity.

I encourage anyone who has a desire to know more about religion or Christianity in particular to take advantage of the opportunities that exist here. Jesus Christ is the best thing to have ever happened in my life, and I wish everyone the opportunity of a relationship with Him. I guarantee there is no other thing on earth that can be as important as knowing Him. Christian groups at OSU have a lot to offer—the common thread that holds us all together is worth it.

The Chronicle

University Honors College
229 Strand Hall
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR 97331

Staff

Dan Braman
Kelli Cummings
Elissa Easley
Chrissy Giuliano
Chris Peterson
Nick Warner
John Wilson
Dow Yeh

Advisor

Winston Cornwall

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The New Face of the Honors College

An Interview with Head Advisor and Program Coordinator, Jane Siebler

By JOHN T. WILSON
Staff Writer

After my acceptance into the Honors College, I became very familiar with two names, synonymous to the Honors College, Joe Hendricks and Carole Crateau. However, when I arrived at OSU, I became informed of a third being; another person behind the scenes, who makes sure the show go on: Jane Siebler, new Head Advisor and Program Coordinator of the Honors College. I was quite curious about this newcomer and her role in the college, so here are some of my questions and her answers from our interview:

Q: How did you come across this new role in the Honors College?

A: The job title is Head Advisor and Program Coordinator. There are really two components to the job; there's the academic advising component, and then there's the programming of activities. And actually, there was a position announcement that came out in the newspaper; that's how I found out about it.

Q: Had you been at Oregon State before this?

A: Actually, I had been here at OSU several years ago. I had gone to school here, and then I had stayed and was a faculty and an administrator in the College of Business. I then left the university to work in management. So I was at the university and then I came back.

Q: With this new position, you replace Carole Crateau, is that right?

A: Well in a way. What Joe Hendricks, the UHC Director did was split the job up. Carole's job was a huge job. She taught the writing course, handled the advising, and managed the programming. So, she had this huge job, and apparently at the end of the spring, she said to Joe that they should really look at restructuring the functions that were being done. Carole was really interested in staying with the writing, because she's an outstanding teacher and that's her love and she was thinking, "Why don't we see about restructuring the program so that I can just teach and someone else can do some of the other tasks?" So they came out with a new position that would just do the advising and programming.

Q: When you got this position do you feel that there were a lot of loose ends and unfinished business, kinda hanging, or was it pretty well sealed up?

A: Oh, Carole had done

an amazing job. I found the position to be in pretty good shape, it's not the same when someone can do it full time, but there were no huge holes.

Q: Do you feel that with this position being added, it will make the college that much stronger?

A: Absolutely, in particular the focus on the writing. It's a key course. Carole is a wonderful teacher, and I think that having her focused on that is going to be really good for the students and the college. And I come from a background of advising, I did years of advising when I was in the College of Business. And the advising will be natural and relatively easy to do, so I can focus on the programming, and use Winston Cornwall, Judy Ringle, and Lisa Rivas, the graduate teaching assistants that help with the programming. They have a lot to offer.

Q: How would you rate the growth of the Honors College over these past couple years?

A: Well, you know, it's absolutely phenomenal. I didn't realize how big the college had become or how fast it had grown. We're real close to our enrollment goal. It's been amazing. Just the fact that in two years there's a SLUG (Student Learning Center) downstairs, and the UHC's office (both in Strand Ag. Hall), the opening of McNary Residence Hall, the class room in McNary - in my knowledge of how universities work and how new programs come into being, I would say this effort has been amazing. And I think the rapid growth has to do with strong leadership and strong ability. It's very impressive looking as an outsider.

Q: Have you heard anything from students or faculty or just from other sources that bring up areas that you would like to focus on?

A: I think we need to work on a range of offerings and be careful when we offer classes. I think that is an area where student input is key. I would also like to see an emphasis on fundraising, some sort of development of support from outside sources, for both the college and for the student activities within the college.

Q: Do you think that companies would be willing to contribute money to the program?

A: I don't know; it's hard to say with that kind of innovation. Usually there are companies that like to give in kind. For

example, Hewlett-Packard might donate computers for the SLUG. A lot of fundraising goes out from people who care about the program, and when you are dealing with a new program, you don't have a lot of graduates to go out and ask them for money. But there are people who are interested in the University Honors College

who are OSU graduates. When I went to the Homecoming football game, we

had a booth and a tent, and we chatted with people. I spoke with a couple students I had known in my role as a business professor. We spend some time talking, and they were really both very excited about the Honors College. They were very interested in participating, sending money, and coming back to talk about their careers. They were both lawyers. It was exciting for me.

Q: These next questions are more personal opinion questions. Many students in the college work really hard to get good grades and succeed and they put a lot of pressure on themselves. Do you feel that this high stress environment puts a damper on spiritual, social, and moral growth? Is the college doing anything to produce well-rounded students?

A: I see no evidence that the students in the Honors College lack morals or are not well-rounded, frankly, compared to the other students who are completely morally adrift. I think by virtue of their more challenging abilities, if you will, their ability to think more, to do more, to go deeper, that they are naturally more spiritually and morally advanced. Oregon State attracts a certain kind of student in general; we are a science, engineering, land grant oriented place. We don't get a lot of people who are very different, but we can't help that. But the students in the Honors College, whom I have come across, seem to compare favorably in so many cases, and are more advanced as moral human beings. Surely, you have to recognize that I came out of the College of Business in the 1980's, when greed was good, and the only thing every single student wanted was a job that

paid at least \$50,000 a year. So maybe students were on the moral downside when I was here before, but in general there's still a real orientation towards jobs and money for OSU students, and I don't see that orientation so much in the Honors College. There's a real love of learning and a love of mankind here.

Q: One complaint I heard during my college search about big name schools, like MIT, CIT, Harvard, is that they accept the brightest people, but not necessarily the best people. Do you feel that the Honors College admits students on their qualities as individuals as well as academics, or solely on academic merit?

A: The evidence I have is that the Honors College has a broad and flexible admittance policy. I haven't been involved in it, but the University Honors College says that we want to read your essays, we want to get a sense for you as an individual and then we'll deal with SAT scores and grade points. I think there's an opportunity here for us to have more diverse students than just students focused solely on academics.

Q: Do you personally have anything new and exciting planned for this upcoming year?

A: No, not really personally. I do have an agenda which involves a slight change in the way advising is done and advising is approached. I like to look at students' whole sort of spirit and whole being, as they talk about what they're taking and their classes. I don't just jot down a few things about what they're taking and send them on their way. I always like to talk to students in what I call an advising totality.

So I'm looking at changing some of the ways that we do the advising, and the students who have come through advising with me will see that little difference. I have a strong interest in programming where students are partnering with other OSU organizations and activities, and I believe there is strength in partnering rather than trying to go out and do everything on your own. I want it to be so that Honors College students are out there everywhere. Those are personal interests; if they don't fly with the students that's OK too. My agenda has to be driven by student needs and motives.

"My agenda has to be driven by student needs and motives."

"I believe there is strength in partnering rather than trying to go out and do everything on your own. I want it to be so that Honors College students are out there everywhere."

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Forestry experience increases awareness

Highlights from SAF Convention in Memphis, TN

By ELISSA EASLEY
Senior Staff Writer

When you come away from an experience, besides what you might have learned, you are assured a new awareness of life. At the beginning of October, I left the classes I had just started and flew to Memphis, Tennessee for five days. I was not trying to fit in one last summer vacation, but rather attending the annual national Society of American Foresters Convention. While I expected to learn about forestry issues and maybe meet some new people, I actually came away from the trip with much more than that. I thought I might find answers for some of my forestry questions at the Convention, but I came away with even more questions. This annoyed me until I realized that going to Memphis had broadened my perspective on forestry and life in general.

There were four of us who represented the College of Forestry at the SAF convention: Alan DeJong, Callen Richert, John Watermann, and me. Each fall the Convention is held in a different part of the United States. This year, while in Memphis, we got an inside look at state and private forestry of Tennessee, which is based largely on hardwoods and pines. Both the state and the private forest we toured were depleted farm lands that were replanted with trees in the 1930's. The hardwoods are being managed for an eighty-year harvest cycle and the pines for a sixty-year cycle. Both tours provided such a contrast to the Douglas-fir / Hemlock forests of western Oregon, and even

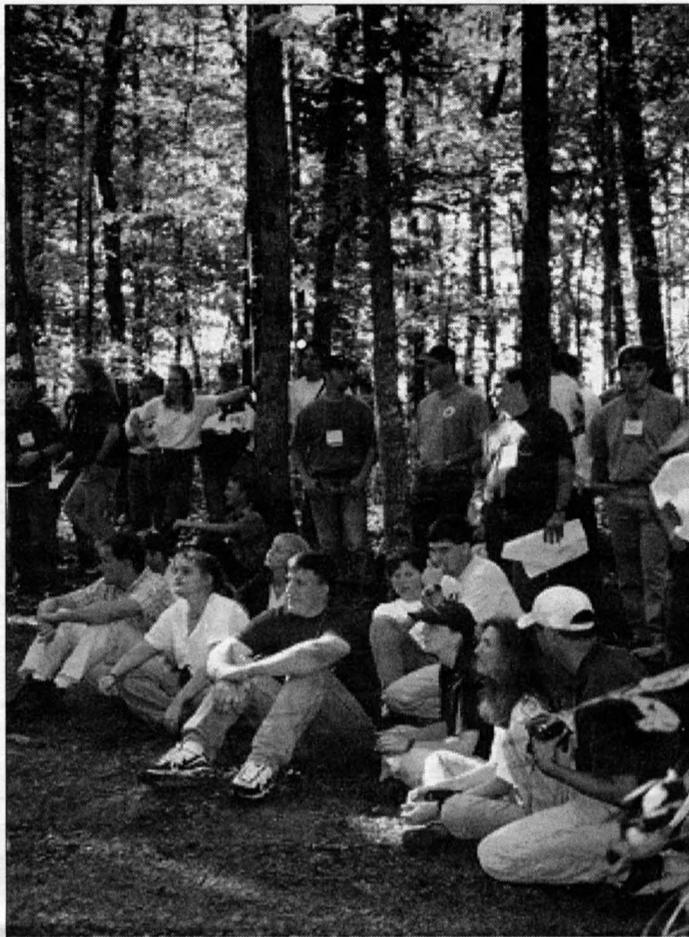


Photo by Elissa Easley
Forestry students from across the US learn about current hardwood research projects at Ames Research Forest in Memphis, TN

the Ponderosa pines found in eastern Oregon. I was surprised that we discussed the Pacific Northwest as much as we did the South while at the Convention, due to the interconnectedness of the timber and wood products markets, and because of the sharing of forestry research across the country.

Besides the tours, there were Convention sessions focused on current issues in forestry. I was encouraged by the fact that even though it seems like there are a lot of big questions right now as to how forests should be managed, and there are no easy resolutions to some of the conflicts, it seems like solutions might be more possible than I figured, based on the people that I met at the Convention. Everyone seemed to be in-tune to the issues and aware of the

need for working together to solve some of the problems, and figure out where forestry should be headed.

Attending the Convention also helped me figure out how organizations such as SAF come into the professional field. As a collection of foresters from

across the United States, the society carries a lot of power for instigating dialogue about forestry issues. Foresters in SAF can bring local dilemmas or findings to a national level of awareness, and provide information to federal and state natural resource policy makers, to help them make better-informed policy decisions. SAF members also have the opportunity to share information about forestry with the public through educational programs within the organization. I now realize that all of these roles add up to create a big responsibility for SAF members.

While at the Convention and seeing the sights of Memphis—especially Beale Street full of Blues Clubs—I met forestry students from just about every other state. How often does a person get that kind of a chance? Our Oregon group spent a lot of time with the students from Washington and Idaho, which was a nice opportunity since we will definitely see these people at other regional forestry

events, as well as eventually work with them when we are out of school. I also got to know the other students from OSU better too. We had a lot of fun at this convention in Memphis, and the experience will stand out in my mind for years.

Looking back on this trip, I would have to say that it increased my awareness of how greatly people's backgrounds and personalities influence their approaches to forestry issues. While I was initially frustrated when I did not come away from Memphis with insights to solutions for some of the big forestry conflicts, I now have a much more clear perspective on how all of the pieces of the forestry puzzle fit together. I think this might be why organizations such as the Society of American Foresters have annual national Conventions—the process of bringing all of these people together to spend some time with one another is as important, if not more important, than the content of the Convention sessions.



Photo by Elissa Easley
Forestry students tour the poplar research plots at Ames Research Forest in Memphis, TN

Petersen: Nepal

One thing is for sure: the king was not driving a tempu. Tempus are overblown three wheelers used by brave people for public transportation. They cost less than taxis, but the rider quickly learns that he or she must pay in other ways. Author Pico Iyer, in his otherwise worthless **Video Night in Kathmandu**, aptly described tempus as "Nepal's contribution to the kamikaze art." Indeed it's hard to quantify the steely cold feeling of impending death bristling up your spine as this motorized tricycle — which starts like a lawn mower and has canvas for a roof -- fearlessly dodges in and out of a sprawling mainstream of gigantic buses and Japanese metal. I guess it's worth experiencing once, though I wouldn't recommend a steady diet.

Nor would I recommend that you take in more than a few Hindi movies, with which Nepalis are preternaturally obsessed. If you happen to be attending a premier showing you will have to be ready for full-scale combat in order to get a ticket. Any semblance of a queue quickly dissipates compelling the impassioned movie fan to resort to all manners of pushing, scratching and throwing of elbows to reach the counter. Fortunately the "lines" are gender segregated so the combatants are at least fairly well matched in terms of weight. All Hindi movies are musicals and feature a lot of dancing. They can be corny and repetitious, but then again so can Hollywood films. The most important thing about Hollywood's fare is its provision of a cheap and healthy avenue of escape for a people whose lives are very hard.

One hasn't fully experienced Nepal until they travel to its rural areas, especially the Terai. The Terai is a sprawling, untamed agricultural region where earlier this year 35 people were killed by a single tiger and 18 were iced by a lone elephant. There are also lots of cobras and other nasties, but the people seem to get by. It is a simpler place: one morning I was awakened by a fight between two women whose verbal sparring managed to overpower the rooster outside my window. It seems that woman #1's cow had eaten woman #2's vegetables and compensation was deemed necessary. The fight lasted at least an hour and attracted the attentions of the whole village, but eventually it was resolved and everyone went about their business. This is a region whose economy is still governed by feudalism. There are many naked little kids and much public urination, both of which I think the U.S. needs more of. The people work hard and live spare existences. But there is something reassuring about a society that rises with the sun and lives close to the land. The villagers are healthier and better looking



Above, one of the locals stands in front of an enormous "Angry Shiva" statue in Kathmandu's downtown Darbar Square. Shiva, who is arguably Nepal's most popular god, is known as "the destroyer," and this is the form that he takes on when he grows angry. To the right is an image of Lord Shiva located at the apex of the magnificent main entrance to Pashupatinath, the largest Shiva temple in Nepal and also one of the oldest, dating back to 100 B.C.

Photos courtesy of Chris Peterson



than their urban counterparts, and on my down days I can remember them as a people with genuine integrity.

On the whole most Nepalis struck me as very humble, gracious and honest. I stayed in a house that was haunted on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and even the ghost seemed like a nice one. On the other hand, most of the rich people I met were pompous, but I suppose most countries are like that.

India is a very chaotic, fractious, crime-ridden state (an Indian sadhu tried to pick my pocket) that also happens to be blowtorch hot. But at its present rate of growth, it is all set to lock arms with China and a few "little dragons" to overthrow the American global empire. So it's a place that we should keep an eye on. Maybe we'll be sending our kids there for college. If so, remind them to bring a fan and to keep an eye out for tigers.

First Day

by Ravi Puri

I see people huff and puff all the way up the stairs
 Three stories high, running with messy hair
 In the wrong building-lost on the first day
 Not a great way to start, but that's okay
 The first day of college, what can you do?
 Searching for a classroom without a clue.
 New faces and places everywhere you look around
 Nothing is concrete, then you hear your teachers sound.
 In the wrong class again, your map is upside down
 About to go insane, already sick of this town.
 Taking a full load: a whole 18 credits.
 Trying to get by the day without treatment from a medic.

Then all of a sudden, a familiar noise.
 Not anything annoying, but calming and with poise
 You turn around and what do you see?
 Your best friend transferred from another university.
 From sad to happy-what a great day!
 You're not the only one who is dismayed.
 You help each other to find a class
 Walk in late with the rest of the mass.
 You receive the syllabus and general intro
 Understand their expectations and then it's time to go

Now what's this? You have an hour break,
 Why not go to lunch? It's twelve o'clock, not too late.
 You enter the main building, called the MU
 Somewhere around here is food to chew.
 You look to the right, as you walk inside,
 There are a lot of people: no one attempts to hide
 As you turn to the left, there is no surprise
 Millions of people after food, just like flies.
 You walk towards that line, since it is near
 By the time you reach it, ten more people appear

All the way at the end, 55 minutes left till class
 Standing in line, watching all the people with food pass.
 20 minutes obliterated, thirty people inch by
 54 tiles in the floor, only 42 in the sky (ceiling)
 Five more people to go, almost there
 "Can I take your order today?" he stares..
 Any additional toppings added to the bread?
 Would you like fries with that? Sure, you said.
 You ask for it to go; they give you a tray,
 A couple more steps and you will be on your way.
 The cashier asks what you ordered and states the price
 You go for your money and-isn't this nice-
 You forgot your cash. With a sorry sir, you are sent on your way
 Mumbling and grumbling, class is only five minutes away
 As you walk across the quad, to yourself you say
 "The first day of college, what a great day!"

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