

Interview with Norris adds to star's legend

I am now a Chuck Norris believer. Sure, I wrote a ridiculously long story about him in the April 6 issue of the Index, and although I had no previous appreciation for "Walker, Texas Ranger," I quickly realized what an ideal butt of jokes he was.

But then I spoke with the man. I had the pleasure of speaking with Mr. Norris two weeks ago as part of a telephone press conference. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that Chuck Norris the man is even cooler than Chuck Norris the action-star-turned-Internet-phenomenon.

He presses for the Bible in schools, speaks in a Southern accent accompanied by "wunnert" instead of "wondered" and the phrase "by hook or by crook" and classily responded to all the wackos who wasted time with questions like, "Are you in a secret club with David Hasselhoff?"

Chuck Norris is a good man who now knows my first name, didn't mind if I tape-recorded and patiently explained to me what an entire day of being an action star entails. He is polite, interesting and interested in those he speaks to. Now, this could be the result of my (finally) falling under the Chuck Norris spell, but the man was genuine, and I think we all learned something new on the telephone line that day.

Chuck Norris is a giver, giving to thousands of kids each year with his KickStart program. The program aims to help build children with strong moral fiber through the martial arts. Norris clearly is passionate about the program and donates all the proceeds from his World Combat League events straight to KickStart.

He isn't selfish with his karate skills, either – he's a well-rounded giver. He helps those in martial arts need, such as "The Price is Right" host Bob Barker, who later



Alison Bowen

showed off skills in a cameo in "Happy Gilmore."

"When he did that, the first thing he did was call me to find out if I'd seen the movie," Norris said. "And I said, 'Of course I've seen the movie. I had to see you do your karate, you know.'"

Chuck Norris is a gentleman. If I were him, I would be offended by the journalist who asked, after shameless schmoozing, for the publication date of Norris' already-published book "Justice Riders." I would have roundhouse kicked that guy straight through the phone. That would teach him to do his research. Norris kept his cool, politely gave the man the correct information, and later really did demonstrate a roundhouse kick through the phone.

Chuck Norris is funny. He even has a good sense of humor about being the butt of online jokes that poke fun at his supposed invincibility. He takes them with a grain of salt and even as compliments.

"I tell you they're fun," he said. "Some of them are funny as heck though. I mean, you know, the Boogeyman wakes up at night to make sure Chuck Norris isn't in the closet."

I'd check the closet too, because Chuck Norris really is a martial arts master. He has all kinds of important-colored belts,

“He has made mistakes, learned from them and accomplished a lot in a lifetime recently devoted to helping others live better. After a conversation with Chuck, I'm a believer.”

and doesn't fake those roundhouse kicks. He decided to learn martial arts on a knoll in Korea.

"I look down, and I see these Korean guys jumping up in the air and doing these incredible kicks in the air," Norris said. "And I says, holy mackerel. You know ... I didn't think the human body could do something like that."

Norris is sufficiently humble about his achievements, but he is aware of his impressive skills, questioning who beat him in an "Ultimate Showdown" episode.

"I'd like to know who it was," he said. "I don't think they can really do it. They may do it on a cartoon, but they're not going to do it real life."

Chuck Norris the man was a pleasant surprise, and a guy I'm proud to say I spoke with personally for four and a half minutes. He has made mistakes, learned from them and accomplished a lot in a lifetime recently devoted to helping others live better. After a conversation with Chuck, I'm a believer.

Or maybe it's just because he called me "hun."

Alison Bowen is a senior communication major from Smithville, Mo.

Around the Quad

This week's question: "Are you afraid of the mumps?"



Dan Fister freshman

"No. I have no fear of the mumps whatsoever. I enjoy living a life free of fear."



Andi Harpring sophomore

"No. I think that a lot of people get them, so I think that I could survive them, too. It would suck if it was on finals week."



Amber Knez freshman

"No. I'm not afraid. I've been sick a lot, but I'm not afraid. If I get 'em, I get 'em, but then I'm screwed."



Janice Yip senior

"I think I'm scared. Right now, I got allergies."

Video series exploits the poor decisions of spring-breakers

We've all seen the tawdry commercials, and some of us probably even have purchased the videos. Yet how many of us stop to question what is really going on behind the scenes of America's most recognized soft-core porn chain, Girls Gone Wild?

Year after year, producers and film crews representing this organization go on location to popular spring break destinations to catch young girls behaving indecently on videotape. But there happens to be much more to the story than a group of entrepreneurs simply making a fast buck off being in the right place at the right time.

Recently on the Oprah Winfrey Show, one guest shared her experiences as a "recruiter" for the Girls Gone Wild video series. The female recruiter admitted to saying they did whatever it took to convince the girls to get crazy on film. In fact, her pay was not only based on how many girls she persuaded into going on camera, but also on how scandalous their performances were – the more outrageously they behaved, the more money she made. What's more is that she denounced having any feelings of remorse for what she did, although she believes many of the girls she recruited regretted doing it afterwards.

So here's the scenario. A small group of profiteers venture down to Daytona, Fla. every April. While there, they rent a couple of hotel rooms and set up some



Kelly Reed

video cameras and props around the bedroom. At night, they head down to the bars and beaches looking for the drunkest girls they can find. After locating their targets, they approach them with waivers in hand and coax them into going back to their hotel room to have some innocent fun.

After getting these naïve and heavily intoxicated young women to perform for the camera, they send them packing without providing so much compensation as a few bucks for cab fare. All the while, Girls Gone Wild is making obscene amounts of money selling the humiliation of young girls everywhere to eager viewers across the globe. And if the girls ever decide they did truly make a mistake, it's too bad because they signed a release waiver, fair and square.

So in reality, is it the girls in the videos or the people who profit off their stupidity who really ought to be ashamed

“[T]here happens to be much more to the story than a group of entrepreneurs simply making a fast buck off being in the right place at the right time.”

of themselves?

Cynics would argue that these girls have to know what they're doing when they sign over their dignity, regardless of how drunk they are, and should therefore not be pitied. But when you mentally recreate the above scene, do you get the impression that it's all just harmless fun or something slightly more sinister? It's a given that people will make mistakes, especially when intoxicated.

However, what is not a given is that there always will be predators disguised as filmmakers lurking in the corners waiting to pounce on the perfect opportunity to coerce people into making – and then exploiting – those mistakes.

Kelly Reed is a senior psychology major from Kansas City, Mo.

Cult adherents don't deserve to be mocked

It seems every few months there's a round of "cult" bashing. I've sat through a few months of it now – Tom Cruise's Scientology-bent seems to be the latest favorite – and I feel compelled to speak out.

Some of my closest, best friends double as the most religious people I know.

These are people that will proclaim an absolute love for Jesus and strict adherence to his laws and then, without pausing for breath, do things largely condemned by Christianity – usually something along the lines of excessive alcohol intake or premarital sex.

I do not fault them. I wouldn't wish abstinence on my worst enemy. But I do criticize them. I criticize them and a whole lot of other people on their complete disrespect for "cults."

Scientology, Mormonism and Raelians seem to be the big three. Alongside smokers, these seem to be the only minorities it is socially OK to publicly berate. A certain amount of skepticism is warranted, yes. Perhaps even healthy. Yet the media (and the public beside it) has a nasty habit of going far, far beyond cautious skepticism.

I'll be the first to admit that the Scientologists, Mormons and Raelians believe some unusual things. Mormons, for example, believe that Jesus journeyed to the New World and shared the gift of God's salvation with all people, not just those that lived within traveling distance of Bethlehem.

This is part of the reason they take such interest in missionary work and, of course, not a belief shared with most other denominations of Christianity.

Yet, however kooky the thinking of less-popular religions, it remains immoral (and just plain stupid) to mock them to the extent that we do. Honestly, consider popular mainstream religious beliefs: a human being walking on the surface of a sea, a virgin giving birth, etc.

And consider less popular beliefs – in aliens, UFOs and, just for kicks, Tom Cruise's assertion that using Paxil to recover from postpartum depression generally is a bad idea.

Why are the formers considered so much more acceptable than the latter?

There is a large body of evidence proving the existence of UFOs, for example. Some very convincing people have very com-



Josh Fenton

“A certain amount of skepticism is warranted, yes. Perhaps even healthy. Yet the media (and the public beside it) has a nasty habit of going far, far beyond cautious skepticism.”

elling testimony.

People – police officers, military personal, air traffic controllers, etc. – who are trained to observe and report, who are selected in part for their superior vision and mental stability, and who have years of experience.

There are people who have a lot to lose by speaking out but do so anyway because they are convinced that they saw something that couldn't be scientifically explained and needs to be shared.

Now I'm not saying I believe or don't believe either one. To be sure, there are a large number of UFO believers who are just plain nuts. But can you honestly tell me that there aren't large numbers of Catholics, Jews, Baptists and members of all other "major" religions that are just as plainly nuts?

To mock anyone who believes that Jesus did things that aren't in the King James Version (or that there might be life on some other planet and that that life might be a bit smarter than us and that life might do a bit more traveling than us) while admiring anyone who believes in an unprovable God constitutes one of the clearest and truly stupidest prejudices in modern America.

It is an easy thing to condemn and ridicule one man in the dark. But it is an honorable thing to defend and support his right to believe whatever he wants to.

Josh Fenton is a senior communication major from Portland, Ore.

New movie ignores various conspiracy theories about 9/11

"United 93" opens tomorrow. Who cares?

The movie will show viewers what happened to one of the hijacked planes on Sept. 11 – a story many of us already are tired of hearing. The movie probably still will cause millions of people to wipe away tears and thank God to be an American, but I will not be one of them.

I once swore I'd never write about Sept. 11 like everyone else on the planet, but that was before I heard this movie was coming out and realized in horror that some people I know probably would really enjoy it.

So I thought I'd try to ruin it for them. First, based on a few hours of Internet research, I came to the conclusion that the Sept. 11 story was fabricated. Conspiracy theorists have bundles of evidence not only that our government knew something bad was going to happen, but that it also planned and carried out that bad thing all by itself. So there's strike one against this movie: It might be fake.

Read more, and you might be convinced that Sept. 11 was not a foreign terrorist attack, but a self-inflicted wound planned by our own head honchos. By the time you finish the online documentary "9/11: Loose Change," you might not trust anyone who doesn't have a conspiracy theory of their own.

Of course, I poke fun, but in some cases you will find reputable theorists with very compelling evidence. They point out it wouldn't be the first time a government



Andrew Gant

hurt its own people. Even the wackiest skeptics have asked some questions that officials refuse to answer, and that is at least a little worrisome.

By the time I finished my Internet research and prepared to write my own conclusions, I had adopted a very skeptical attitude. Most of the theories are very stimulating in that they make you want to launch your own federal investigation. Eventually I was marching around the apartment shouting, "We want answers!" at my roommates, who are used to these phases by now.

Eventually I calmed down and realized that despite the lack of answers to these conspiracy questions, most of us would rather believe the official version of the way things happened. True or not, I guess the conspiracy alternative is just way too unsettling. It's a lot easier to sleep at night when you aren't wondering whether the government is going to kill you.

“True or not, I guess the conspiracy alternative is just way too unsettling. It's a lot easier to sleep at night when you aren't wondering whether the government is going to kill you.”

But what we need – instead of an over-dramatic hero's tale such as "United 93" – is a good conspiracy film in disguise.

The previews would suggest a heroic story, but once viewers were inside the theater, they'd end up watching a shocking conspiracy unfold. It would be controversial, violent and scary, and it might offend the kinds of victims' families who are so supportive of the crappy movie that opens tomorrow, but it still would sell a ton of tickets. And it ultimately would bring skepticism and disbelief back into the mainstream where it belongs.

In the long run, the movie I'm suggesting would remind us that while some conspiracies might exist, we shouldn't ever let them happen outside of the theater.

Andrew Gant is a senior communication major from Montgomery County, Mo.