

# Costa's illness shows a need to appreciate time

I thought I had lost a friend. Two weeks ago Monday, when I found out Sal Costa was hospitalized, the initial reports indicated there was a good chance he might not live. Everything stopped. I went through my classes in a daze, left him a falsely optimistic voicemail on his cell phone and cried.

It wasn't until later last week that the reports became better, and I learned he was going to make a full recovery and be back by the end of the semester. Coming back to Truman two weeks after emergency brain surgery – that's the Sal I know.

I have known Sal for about a year and half now. I have taken every course he teaches, except the Hypnosis Interim, in which I was a presenter and a hypnosis demonstrator. Sal and I have worked together with hypnosis both in private and for public demonstrations since spring 2004.

However, I really got to know Sal by working in his office for more than a year. He would usually walk into that below-ground, fluorescently lit building whistling some ridiculous tune he had stuck in his head and make me feel glad I woke up early to be there.

When he bought both of us coffee in the mornings, I would smirk over



Chris Matthews

my black brew as he dumped packet after packet of Equal into his. And I'll forever be grateful for the days he said, "Go home" when I was obviously more stressed out or tired than usual.

I was overwhelmed with relief when I learned he was going to be OK, but that initial feeling of loss stayed with me. When I called him in the hospital last weekend, I felt a little uneasy talking to him for what seemed like the first time. But, putting my uneasiness at rest, I was greeted by the same man I had known all along. When I joked that I hoped he would come back bald, he replied with a sarcastic "nice." With that, I could move on.

This column is not just cathartic, it is advisory. I know it has been said

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countless times, and I can't remember how many times I have heard it, but it couldn't hurt to say it once more. Don't take the time you have with the people you care about for granted. All that went through my mind on that Monday were the day-to-day events that seemed so unimportant at the time. Every moment counts.

I know in just a few weeks everything will be back to normal when I move on to my next exam and my next political issue.

But I hope I do not forget this lesson, and I hope you learn something from it as well.

*Chris Matthews is a junior communication major from St. Joseph, Mo.*

# Americans will be well-served when they think for themselves

It's been almost half a decade since the tragedies of Sept. 11. Sometimes I feel like in that time I'm the only one who realizes that our government has yet to show us any honest accountability. For an organization with a \$2.178 trillion budget, you think there'd be just a shred of evidence of someone's wrongdoing. We have none.

What we have is a videotape in which Osama bin Laden claims responsibility for the WTC catastrophe. Kind of an infamous figure these days, Osama's personal history is pretty interesting. Among other things, he believes he's fighting a holy war. It's common knowledge that Osama believes God told him to attack the Land of Opportunity. I for one am willing to question that belief.

I'll be honest: I don't believe the Pope talks to God. And Osama has a lot less popular support. Ergo, the chances of my taking Osama seriously aren't good.

The way I see it, there are two possibilities: The government has evidence of his involvement in Sept. 11, or the government doesn't have evidence of his involvement. If the government does have proof and isn't releasing it to the public, I'm not happy. A big, big part of participant democracy is transparent administration.

On the other hand, the government really doesn't have much of an excuse for not having at least some sort of evidence (evidence here meaning "just about anything with the notable exception of the word of a man well-known for manipulating facts to suit his own purposes"). U.S. taxpayers pay roughly \$2.178 trillion annually for the NSA, the CIA, the FBA and



Josh Fenton

the rest of the alphabet to come up with a videotape of a madman making outrageous claims. That's not the kind of attitude that got us through Guadalcanal, you know?

Let's break it down. In this multi-million dollar video, Osama claims that – when he wasn't dialoguing with God – he trained more than a dozen men to enter the country, hijack a handful of planes, disable the required electronics, evade the world's best air force for nearly two hours and successfully locate the correct World Trade Center towers in a city of a thousand similar buildings at speeds in excess of 500 mph for no other reason than he "hates our freedoms." That's a big claim.

Don't mistake me for a conspiracy theorist – I'm not, but I've never tried to lift water with a knife, either. I don't really know if a cross-country jetliner hitting a building completely vaporizes.

I do know that there was scant physical wreckage of any plane at Ground Zero. I do know that very, very little of Sept. 11 compares to other incidents of planes hitting buildings, and that worries me. In all this, the only thing I'm certain

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of is that I have zero confidence in Osama's ability to tell the truth.

Even if you don't believe a word I write, there are a few things that don't add up. Does that mean I disagree with the Afghan war? No. Do I disagree with specific elements of America's current foreign policy? Yes. Everyone does.

Whether or not Osama is the mastermind behind Sept. 11, I still consider what we've done in the Middle East a good thing.

But people calmly accepting the gospel of CNN? I don't consider that a good thing. I consider that a very bad thing. All I'm asking is that people think for themselves. Always remember that our government is the same government that gave the world CIA assassin squads, arms sales to Iraq, and napalm. Look, if you want to trust Osama and take the word of a deranged, crazy and fanatical madman at face value, that's your business. But don't do it because someone tells you to.

*Josh Fenton is a junior communication major from Troutdale, Ore.*

# Smoke breaks seem to make cigarette habit more desirable

Listen up, smokers. I have something to tell you. Don't snarl yet – I promise not to mention cancer or even cough in your face.

Smokers, sometimes I wish I were one of you.

I constantly catch you around campus doing the things I wish I were doing – leaning against the railing of the Baldwin-McClain bridge watching the sunset, taking a break outside the library in the midst of a paper-writing marathon, huddling together outside the dorms, sharing warmth and good conversation. Always your purpose is clearly defined, wedged between your index and middle finger.

Each of these situations facilitated by cigarettes does not stand well on its own sans the stick. Remove the cig from the scene, and you've got either an action with no motivation behind it (peel yourself away from homework to stand outside simply to shiver? Uh, no thanks), or it becomes one of those scenarios your parents warned you about. (Is that person just standing on the bridge staring down at us? Walk faster! Cover your head!) Seeing as few people feel comfortable playing the role of the creep, most opt to keep moving so as to not stand out from the herd.

At any given time, we're mindlessly appraising the roles and tasks of the people who make up our scene, making sure they're legit. Evaluations of people surrounding us seem



Katie Gilbert

to go something like this: "Sitting on a bench eating a sandwich – normal. Sitting on a bench reading today's paper – normal. Sitting on a bench smoking a cigarette – normal. Sitting on a bench – walk the other way."

Why must we always be doing something? Sometimes a person just wants to sit on a bench to sit on a bench.

Smokers, if you don't mind, we nonsmokers would like to follow your example and institute our own smoke-slash-life breaks. All we ask for is an excuse to step out of it all – work, the library, a rushed commute from point A to point B – to pause.

A pack-a-day smoker stops to smell the nicotine 20 times per day – about the same frequency with which the average person checks out his or her own reflection in a mirror, according to the wisdom of the Internet. Why not designate this glimpse of ourselves as a catalyst to drop everything and rush outside, where

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for the next five minutes, you're off the clock? Your sole purposes are to listen, study, consider and observe.

Smokers have cravings – the rest of us have our reflections to propel us outside. In capturing the right mindset, we would become, for a limited time only, a reflection of everything around us. Not a circuit floating free but plugged into the overall hum. The goal isn't to escape ourselves or our lives but to wipe away the drudgery so that our faces can more capably glean the life we typically just wade through in an effort to get to the next bank.

No need to wonder whether passers-by are leery. The only reason they're looking at you like that is because they're waiting for an excuse to punch out and join you.

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# Around the Quad

This week's question: "How often do you shop at Wal-Mart? Why do you go there?"



Chris Seals  
freshman

"Probably once every two weeks. They have everything there all in one spot."



Katie Cagle  
freshman

"Probably once a week. It seems like the only place to get some stuff. I always forget that we have a Dollar General and other stuff, but I always go to Wal-Mart."



Kylie Abbott  
freshman

"Usually once a week, and if I do go to Wal-Mart, it's because the prices are lower and they have a better selection than Hy-Vee, I think."



Daniel Campbell  
sophomore

"I only go about once every other week. I guess I go because they have everything in one spot, and it's funny to go there because it's so big and has so much meaningless stuff."

# Baseball's lessons can apply to life

Maybe there are life lessons to be learned in baseball. Maybe it is more than a game. Maybe it is more than a game of millionaire men running around like little boys.

Sports have provided a distraction in the toughest of times. After Sept. 11, who could forget the patriotism and love of the game when baseball players took the field to begin play after it had been suspended for a period of national mourning? Recently, after the New Orleans Saints of the National Football League were displaced by Hurricane Katrina, the team played to distract citizens of its city and give them a break from their problems for a few hours. Sports have broken my heart and helped me through heartaches. It is just a game, and yet to put it in such a way takes away its emotional power.

The Chicago White Sox clinched the American League pennant Sunday night. They have not been to the World Series since 1959 and have not won one since 1917. The White Sox at one point in the season enjoyed the best record in baseball and seemed untouchable to the rest of the teams in their division.

By the end of September, they found themselves back in a race, fighting for their division title and playoff lives with the Cleveland Indians. It says something that they came back not only to win the division but also swept the defending champion Boston Red Sox in the first round of the playoffs. It says something about heart and perseverance.

It also says something about being unglamorous. It's not a team full of big-name superstars or spotlight grubbers but a team that goes to work and then wins.

The team got caught up in some officiating scandals. ESPN and sports radio spent hours analyzing the ball in the dirt and swinging strike that resulted in what amounted to the White Sox catcher taking first base.

Were the officials right in letting the call stand? Probably not.

The White Sox had something go their way, but instead of letting the media circus get to them, their starting pitchers all pitched complete games in response.

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Katie Stuart

**"Human error changes lives every day. It is a part of baseball and a part of life. You can take that as an invitation to work harder and use luck to your advantage, or you can feel sorry for yourself."**

tion to work harder and use luck to your advantage, or you can feel sorry for yourself.

The Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim could have felt sorry for themselves after that questionable call in Game 2.

Instead, their manager, Mike Scioscia, acknowledged he did not agree with the call but would not make excuses for his team. He told the press that if they would have played better, they would not be in the position where one call would determine their fate.

Instead, they should have had the upper hand in how the story ended.

By the time you read this, the fate of my beloved Cardinals will be determined. At this point you know whether they will live to see the World Series or if my heart has been broken by sports once again.

But in the White Sox-Angels series, where my emotions do not run so high, baseball yet again has provided more than just entertainment. In a world of reality television, this is the real deal: players competing for their ultimate dream and managers pushing their respective teams to keep trying. Ultimately, they are just people, and for just a while we get let in on their reality. Baseball is one great emotional roller coaster with a life lesson tossed in for good measure.

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