

Liberty means more than supporting war effort

Roughly 400 people gathered Sept. 25 on the National Mall in defense of the war in Iraq. Just 24 hours before, hundreds of thousands of people protested that same war.

One year after the re-election of the man who began the war on terror, not even a measurable percent of his supporters showed up to defend his war. In a nation where celebrities draw thousands of people to witness their musical or comical genius on a nightly basis, the current political agenda is unable to draw even half that many to support a war that daily affects entire countries.

Many of those gathered in defense of the war called protestors traitors to their nation.

Amid the signs calling for freedom and praising the soldiers currently caught in this terrible battle was a sign that read, "Arrest the traitors."

Now, correct me if I am wrong, but the soldiers are in Iraq fighting for freedom. They are enabling us to maintain our freedom and are allowing others to experience that same liberation.

The freedoms we possess allow us to gather in peaceful protest against virtually anything we choose. Thus, protestors of the war are not traitors to the nation but embracers of the very freedom that American soldiers fight for every second they spend outside our borders.

As one protestor so eloquently



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put it, "If [they were] in one of those countries [they] would not be able to do that."

That is precisely the point. We are American citizens. We have the right and the duty to oppose a government we think is acting outside the wishes of its constituents. Rather than mocking those who choose to follow that duty, we should praise them for their ability to demonstrate their reluctance to surrender to a commander in chief who needlessly threatens the lives of American soldiers.

These protestors are not against the families losing loved ones, the families praying for current fighters or the soldiers risking their lives for freedom. We are, however, against a president with an agenda that does not mirror the goals and values of his country.

In this time of devastation, when our nation battles the loss of soldiers as well as the loss of homes because of natural disasters, it is important to

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remain united. The creation of a unified nation was a strong point in the defense of the war. However, this does not mean unanimous agreement among citizens. It means that we are committed to similar goals regardless of our beliefs and background. All citizens desire happiness and fulfillment.

We commend the troops for serving and hope they will all make it safely through. Our hearts are with the suffering, and we help in as many ways as we are able.

Although I would have joined the protest of the war if I were able, I understand that my freedom coincides with the freedom of others to defend that war. It is unfortunate that those supporting the war do not feel that same way.

Shannan Anderson is a senior communication and English major from Sioux Falls, S.D.

Close encounter with nudists reveals even they have inhibitions

When he told me I'd have to be naked, the conversation came to a screeching halt.

I was on the phone with the proprietor of a nudist camp in mid-Missouri, attempting to negotiate an on-site visit for the travel column of a lifetime.

For as long as I could remember, nudism had intrigued me, probably in the same way a dog wonders what it's like to run around wearing clothes. I always had been sympathetic to the nudist cause, which asked for only a few acres of privacy and some sunscreen.

"I'm not a nudist," I told him, "but I'm not a prude either."

I had called him back despite the fact that my message from a week ago went unanswered.

Apparently when you're a nudist, common courtesy goes off with the clothes.

Nonetheless I was attempting to have a civil phone conversation with this man who was probably wearing nothing but bifocals and ribbed socks. He was skeptical of my intentions, to say the least.

In so many words, he didn't seem to think it was such a good idea for someone unfamiliar with the nudist philosophy to come in and write a story that might portray the camp as an oddity.

Now, if I agreed to spend a couple of nude weekends there before writing, he'd consider it.



Andrew Gant

I balked at that suggestion, however, and negotiations stalled. Then they stopped altogether.

There would be no trip to the ranch for this writer.

Not this semester and probably not ever.

Since then, as is always the case, I've had plenty of time to replay that awkward conversation in my mind and think of the sarcastic things I should have said.

Someone like me doesn't get a naked man on the phone very often, and although I'm very comfortable with that knowledge, it still bothers me that I didn't ask at least one snotty question.

I had lots of time to think about it.

And I discovered that although I might never find out exactly where nudists put their hands when it's cold, I did come away from this brush with nudism with at least one lesson learned: No one has thick skin when

"... I did come away from this brush with nudism with at least one lesson learned: No one has thick skin when you challenge their way of life."

you challenge their way of life.

I used to think of nudists as confident people who just didn't care about what others thought.

They liked being naked, I thought, and they didn't care who saw them that way. When this man told me he didn't think a clothes-wearer could write a fair story about nudists, I'll admit I thought he was just plain wrong.

But admittedly, I must have seemed like a college kid looking for a parody and nothing more. Judging from the way the naked man bristled when he'd figured this out, nudists might not be all that uninhibited after all.

They might even be a little vulnerable.

As far as I'm concerned, there's nothing odd about that.

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

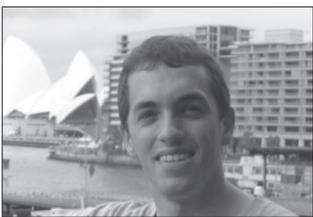
Back from abroad, columnist reminisces about Oregon life

I love being American as much as I hate the Queen. Now more than ever, too. I spent last semester in Australia soaking up the study abroad experience, and until then I'd always chalked up state pride to something for Texans and Virginians. No longer.

It might've been a result of living with a bunch of East Coasters for a half year. It's not that I'm anti-New England, but I was born in Oregon and I'll always call the Beaver State home.

Let's get serious – the far east of my great country has been about two years behind us Left Coasters for longer than I can remember – in the '50s, Kerouac left New York for the wild and untamed West. During the '60s, the bohos and hippies kept as far from there as the squares as they could. The Red Hot Chili Peppers, one of the greatest sounds to come out of America in the early nineties, aren't from Boston, if you catch my drift.

It goes on and on, but I (won't) rest my case. I'm American, but more than that I'm Oregonian. Sincere apologies to my Iowegian and Missourian chums, but I'll always find my home in the greenest state (politically speaking) in this land of Easy Millions. I'm from Oregon – newer, better and more romantic than any of the other 12 states that begin with vowels. Oregon is filled with Lumberjacks (I'm one of them) – strong and powerful men who simultaneously conquer and respect nature. Men who fell mighty Douglas Firs with a single swoop of their mighty ax but are wise enough to rebuff clear cutting. Even the infamous Maddox knows that Lumberjacks are



Josh Fenton

right up there with – if not outright surpassing – both pirates and ninjas. We wear flannel shirts on our barrel-chests and we eat beef jerky. How much more rugged can you get?

And Oregon women don't go for any of that Lefterly, Victorian-stemming Eurotrash-wannabe delicacy – Oregon women are women who will be liberal and proud of it, women who will tell it like they see it, women who will shave their legs if and only if they feel like it, thankyouverymuch. Women who will walk through torrential rain without crying for umbrellas, unlike a few Midwest men I know. NYC's got a pretty good rep for churning out uncouth individuals, but the Pacific Northwest has a monopoly on producing frank and candid folk. And Oregon's been taking a beating, but we can take all the Californication and a whole lot more.

My beautiful Oregon is a microcosm of perfection that all America should strive to duplicate, stressing the importance of simple living, conservation and limited growth. Political opinions run the

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full gauntlet, from liberal to moderately liberal to ultraliberal. We might not have been the first state to sign the Constitution (ah, that lucky Delaware ...), but we've got Tillamook By The Sea, which means we've got better cheese than Wisconsin or France (not that I've been to either). Lest you forget, let me remind you that the most awesome game of our elementary school days was The Oregon Trail. Even the U.S. Mint recognizes our greatness – how many other states get their very own quarter?

I consider myself every bit the true-blue American dude through and through. Just like everybody else, I love America. Love, love, love from the littered shores of New Jersey to the smog-filled air of Los Angeles, and from the frozen bitter tundra of the Midwest to the exceedingly devout Deep South. Which is why I continue to call the pristine, unspoiled, forested state of Oregon home.

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

Around the Quad

This week's question:
"Have you had any bug infestation problems in your place of residence?"



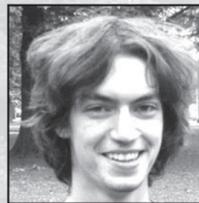
Jackie Unser senior

"We had a lot of infestations my freshman year. My suitemates had to vacuum bugs and use duct tape. This year we still have problems, but we just deal."



Matt Ratliff sophomore

"I really haven't had any problems and never really noticed it, but that was when I lived in the dorms."



Adam Vatterott freshman

"There aren't any bugs in our room, but one of the rooms on the fifth floor of Missouri Hall had to get sprayed or fumigated."



Stephanie Brightwell senior

"I lived in a house with four other people, and there were a lot of fleas. That was over the summer."

Danger: Humor can be found at auctions

Dating or the lack thereof is a very popular topic this time of year. I imagine it has something to do with the pleasant weather and the lack of figure-suppressing layers that people wear during the winter. Really, it's hard to fall in love with technicolored lumps of fabric as your nose falls off from frostbite.

Most everyone wants to find that special someone to "complete him or her," that one person who makes the universe sing in joyous harmonies. Well, I'm sorry to say this, but all the really good ones are either taken, dead or writing this column. However, if the thought of dying alone in your one-room apartment surrounded by mountains of single-serving soup and copies of Better Homes and Gardens doesn't appeal to you, you can always take your chances with one of the many date auctions on campus.

If you've never heard of a date auction before, you're in luck, my lonely-hearts club. A date auction is legalized prostitution, though rather than receiving sexual favors, you receive an awkward 1.5-hour "date." Regardless of which activity you engage in, I imagine you feel rather dirty afterwards, the type of dirty that a bar of Lava soap and three hours in the shower can't scrub off.

I had the misfortune of being dragged to a date auction last year, though thankfully not as a participant, and I couldn't understand how people were coerced into it. My two theories are temporary insanity or heavy-handed blackmail. The insanity would explain the foaming at the mouth, but I'm not certain that wasn't caused by the numerous tranquilizers given to the auctioned merchandise to stop them from bolting mid-bid.

Blackmail is another likely possibility, though I'm a little frightened at the types of skeletons lurking in people's closets if being auctioned off is a better alternative. No, thank you, I'd rather the world just know about my vast and minted collection of 1960's Barbie dolls. I mean, my friend's vast and minted collection of 1960's Barbie dolls.

While I understand that most date auctions are for fundraiser or charity purposes, it's still a lousy way of extracting money from your friends. Rather than call it a date auction, the official name should be pity auction because most people who are being auctioned off simply ask all their friends to come bid on them so they don't look like a loser of epic proportions.

If the bachelor or bachelorette doesn't set up a sleeper cell of friends



Joel Andersen

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in the crowd to bid covertly on him or her, there is also that awful chance that a stranger with serious thoughts of love and romance will buy them.

"Up next is Sarah, and boy does she look pathetic standing on this stage while no one bids on her. Do I hear a pity bid of two dollars? I have two dollars from the man in the long trenchcoat, fedora and sunglasses in the back. Going once, going twice, sold to the dapper gentlemen wearing the ankle bracelet."

A better alternative to the date auction would be panhandling. It's the same humiliating premise, but it cuts out the auctioneer and awkwardness of a date afterwards. Also, beggars are slightly more pitiable than people participating in date auctions, though only slightly.

Ten years from now, when your kids ask you how mommy and daddy met, I hope you have a better response than, "I paid two bucks for him/her at a date auction, and they didn't understand my sarcastic bid." I'm not saying you won't find love and romance at the auction house, but there's a better chance of Kanye West featuring the lyrical styling of George Bush in his next rap album.

I'd love to hear about any success or horror stories, though. Send them, as well as any questions you want really bad advice for, to jda858@truman.edu, and I might put them in an upcoming column. Or I might end up just making fun of you in print, but that's a risk I'm willing to take.

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