

Opposition to the sobriety pledge

by Laura Borawski
News Editor

Voicing personal convictions is not always acceptable in the eyes of the public. But this world would get nowhere without them.

I was in the Health and Wellness Center Tuesday to speak with Coordinator Patty McMahon regarding the carnival held Monday for Alcohol Awareness Week. As you may have read, I reported the event for the news section of this week's paper.

As I was waiting for Patty to begin speaking to me, I noticed the poster requesting the sign-in sheet for the day's speakers. I also noticed the sign-in sheet placed to the right of the poster.

Reading the content of the pledge which requested the participants to abstain from drinking even a drop of alcohol Monday through Friday, it declared the participant's opposition to the use and abuse of alcohol throughout this week in

particular. I thought about it, picked up a black ink Bic pen, removed the cap and stared for about two minutes at the typed print, then failed to bring myself to sign the dotted line.

I do have my reasons. First of all, I am not completely opposed to the sobriety pledge. I feel that its intent is positive and that it will provide many students to think about their drinking habits and about the habits of others.

Second, I know that the Health and Wellness Center is doing a great job raising awareness of alcohol and its negative effects. The center has on campus and within the surrounding community.

Third and most significant of all, I believe that the abuse of alcohol is rampant and potentially fatal. Personal responsibility has been lost. It kills lives every day, the opportunity to prevent a possible explosion and, potentially, ourselves and other people around us. (And besides, drink people stink.)

Here's my point: The sobriety

pledge needs to be amended. If it was amended, I feel that more students would make a promise for the entire week. A promise



my and others' drinking habits. The pledge would be more realistic and not as rigid. I know when this Friday rolls around and I have finished working at around 11 p.m. after a seven-hour shift, I will be on my way to Andy's Pub with my co-workers to kick my feet back and enjoy a tall, cool Coors Light. It would have been wrong for me to sign that dotted line knowing that I would have broken that promise to myself and others within a few days. I am 21-years-old. I feel relaxed while partaking in this weekly form of socialization with my friends. I am not harming myself nor am I harming anyone else and I deserve a beer. As long as I drink sensibly and know my limit that evening, being as how levels of tolerance depend on food intake, how much sleep you have had and what time of the month it is, then I see no problem with drinking an alcoholic beverage. (My studies in Speech Communication 455, a gender studies class, has taught me that men may experience that "time of

the month" as well as women.)

It's difficult for me to present this in a way that justifies my opinion. Those of you who signed the pledge are to be commended. I wish I had it in me. But I can't deny that I like to sit and chat while drinking a beer after work.

Those of us who didn't sign the pledge need to reconsider our priorities and goals when consuming alcohol. There is nothing wrong with a tall, cool Pepsi. You don't have to drink alcohol to have fun. However, if I happen to sensibly choose a beer over a pop (soda, soft drink, cola, whatever), then

to be it, I'll do it.

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The hidden lives of Dave's dogs

by Dave Barry
Syndicated Columnist

I want to talk about the hidden lives of my dogs.

Until recently, I wasn't aware that my dogs had hidden lives. There were many times, such as when they'd take turns repeatedly eating a deceased lizard and throwing it back up, when I wasn't even sure they had BRAINS.

Then I got "The Hidden Life of Dogs," the best-selling book by Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, who has some astounding insights into dog behavior. For example, in an effort to find out what dogs do when they're on their own, she spent months following a husky named Misha as he roamed all over Cambridge, Mass.

What Thomas discovered was that Misha, who at first appeared to be simply trotting around aimlessly, was in fact earning a degree from Harvard Business School.

No, I am joshing. Harvard does not accept huskies unless their parents are extremely wealthy. What Thomas discovered, after much observation, was that Misha spent his time -- and here I will attempt to summarize two full chapters of "The Hidden Life of Dogs" -- sniffing other dogs and

peeing a lot.

This might not strike you dog owners as all that deep of an insight. But trust me, it seems like one when you're reading the book. Because where you might see just a plain old dog engaging in non-rocket-scientist behavior, Thomas sees a highly sophisticated organism responding to elaborate socio-biological stimuli and performing complex problem-solving tasks. It's not her fault that the solution to the problem is usually to pee on it.

Anyway, reading this book got me to thinking about my own dogs. Did they have a hidden life? If so, could I discover it, and more important -- write a best-selling book?

To find out, I removed my dogs from the confined, controlled environment of our house and put them outside, where they were free to reveal their hidden lives.

I observed them closely for the better part of a day, and thus I am able to reveal here, for the first time anywhere, that what dogs do, when they are able to make their own decisions in accordance with their unfettered natural instincts, is: try to get back inside the house.

They spent most of the day pressing sad, moony faces up against the glass patio door,

taking only occasional breaks to see if it was a good idea to eat worms. (Answer: no).

Of course, the dogs have important and complex socio-biological reasons for wanting to get back into the house. For one thing, the house contains the most wondrous thing in the world: the kitchen counter. One time a piece of turkey fell off of it. The dogs still



regularly visit the spot where it landed, in case it shows up again. There's an invisible dog historic marker there.

Another reason is that the house provides a better echo for barking. Dogs employ barking as a vital means of communicating important messages, such as: "bark."

Barking also serves a vital biological purpose: If a dog does not release a certain number of barks per day, they will back up, and the dog will explode. (Whenever you hear an unexplained loud noise in the distance, it's probably a dog exploding.)

Our large main dog, Earnest, spends her day sleeping directly under my desk, and three or four times a day she'll have a pressure buildup, causing her to wake up, lift her head, release a bark and immediately go back to sleep. Her bark, traveling at the speed of bark, quickly reaches our small emergency backup dog, Zippy, who is sleeping elsewhere in the house.

He wakes up and rushes up to the outside of my office door and starts barking at it, because there is clearly something wrong inside. (Why else would Earnest have barked?)

This in turn awakens Earnest, who leaps up, bonks her head against the bottom of my desk, then rushes over and starts barking at her side of the door. Each dog is firmly convinced that there is Big Trouble on the other side, possibly involving their arch-enemy, the U.S. Postal Service truck.

It comes around every day, and usually Earnest and Zippy are able to drive it off by

barking at it and getting spit all over the windows by our front door, but now apparently the truck somehow has GOTTEN INTO THE HOUSE and is ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS DOOR BARK BARK BARK BARK BARK BARK BARK BARK BARK!!!

This is what my dogs are thinking (if "thinking" is the word I want here) as I get up, walk past Earnest, who is now insane with rage, and open the door. Instantly Earnest charges BARKBARKBARK into the hall, narrowly missing Zippy, who is charging BARKBARKBARK into my office. Each one goes about five feet, then -- WAIT a minute!! -- skids to a stop, whirls around, and charges back the other way, still barking. Sometimes they'll pass each other three or four times before they run out of momentum and lie down again, confident that, thanks to their alertness, the house is once again safe.

This is the hidden dog world that goes on EVERY DAY in our house. I admit that, socio-biologically, it is not as interesting as the things that Elizabeth Marshall Thomas' dogs do. But Earnest and Zippy are the only dogs I have. Make me an offer.