

# OPINION

## Stop that incessant ringing

By BRENT FOOTE  
Staff Writer

With their compact design, green lights, blue lights, beeps and whistles, cell phones have become like some gadget from Star Trek.

"Damn-it Jim, I'm out of the service area!"

In what could be the newest fad since Furbies some 80 million Americans have joined the communication revolution with their purchase of a cell phone.

Nearly 20 percent of American teens (24 percent of girls, 15 percent of boys) own a wireless phone, according to a study conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited. And that percentage is expected to double in the next year as another 18 percent of girls and 13 percent of boys go wireless. In the next month alone another one million Americans will sign up for a wireless phone account.

Almost nowhere on this campus is there a place to escape the distinctive ring of a cell phone. Not the classrooms, library, or cafeteria. Not even the bathrooms are safe. It seems they always manage to go off at the most inappropriate times too, like the middle of a Philosophy exam.

What is it that makes them so interesting? Is it the cute little accessories like the changeable cover plates and carrying cases? Or the fact that wherever you are, you're never out of reach from friends and family.

Frankly, I don't always want to be found. Have we all become so lonely and dependent that we need the security of knowing someone is always there to talk to?

An article in Scientific American features a study from the British Medical Journal, which implies cell phones may be taking the place of cigarettes among teens. The recent study shows that, "Between 1996 and 1999, smoking among 15-year-olds fell from 30 percent to 23 percent. In the meantime, cellular phone ownership among teens 15 to 17 years old rose from extremely low levels in 1996 to a whop-



Having detected the ringing, the theater's automatic cell phone suppression system kicked in.

ping 70 percent in August 2000."

It suggests that for teenagers smoking may ultimately be seen as "old technology" compared to text messaging a friend on your cell phone.

What about the safety of cell phones? Do they cause cancer? Will I blow up the gas station if I'm using a cell phone at the pump?

While there are no real definitive answers, risk still exists. Some people who used mobile phones

have been diagnosed with brain cancer.

Brain cancer occurs in the U.S. population at a rate of about 6 new cases per 100,000 people each year. Depending on how close the cell phone antenna is to the head, as much as 60 percent of the microwave radiation is absorbed by and actually penetrates the area around the head, up to an inch-and-a-half into the brain.

Then again, people who don't use wireless phones still develop brain tumors.

Aside from the annoyances in the classroom and unknown health risks, perhaps the biggest nuisance is cell phone use while driving. Before wireless phones, drivers only had radios and Big Mac's to distract them.

Now, you wrap your Honda around a tree trying to answer a call from your girlfriend.

In countries like Switzerland, Italy, and Hungary, drivers are required to use a hands-free device while on the road.

Portugal has banned all use of cell phones completely. (Nothing exciting ever happens in Portugal anyway.)

While it is highly unlikely the U.S. would shut down a \$200-billion-a-year industry, the possibility of wireless phone laws is ever increasing.

Americans simply love trends. Feeling accepted and connected to the world around us gives us a sense of meaning, self assurance that we belong.

In a society hungry for something new — something to pacify our boredom — it seems obvious that gadgets and gizmos are the way of the future.

Perhaps, in years to come cell phones like cigarettes, once seen as hip and trendy, will become just as addictive and hazardous to our lives.

Maybe Portugal has foreseen the future and sacrificed commerce for peace of mind.

*Brent Foote is a staff writer for The Lion's Eye. If you'd like to submit an opinion column, please put it in the Lion's Eye mailbox, on the first floor of the Main building. Be sure and include your name, phone number and e-mail for verification purposes.*

### An editorial

## Tolerance isn't equality

By CONNIE RINGGOLD  
Staff Writer

As a society, should we tolerate someone of a different race, religion, sexual orientation or who has a disability?

No. We should do more than that. We should respect and embrace the many differences in people.

The U.S. Constitution says all men are created equal. While, it should be updated to say all people — women and men — are created equal, there are no conditions placed on that equality.

For example, the constitution doesn't say people are created equal as long as they are male, white, Protestant, heterosexual and are happily married with six children.

That would severely limit the equality.

No, that's not what our forefathers had in mind when they wrote the constitution. Society today fails to understand the constitution and the thought that went into such an important document in American history.

The constitution is not simply about tolerance. It's about acceptance — acceptance for the differences among us. The color of your skin, who you're attracted to, whether you choose to be a mom, dad or none of the above. Those are just some of the pieces of individuals

who made this country great.

How can we cast judgment on someone without actually getting to know them?

This is why racism continues because we fail to embrace each other's differences.

We have many different affirmative action groups that have different opinions, but does that make the actions they take right?

The Black Panthers believe that all whites, even the government, are against blacks.

The Ku Klux Klan has a set mind that any race other than a "pure whites" is nothing but trash.

How can we excel as a society, with both sides being closed-minded?

Despite the negativity between these two groups, there are still some groups that are trying to make a difference for all.

The Rainbow Coalition, for one, is dedicated to improving the lives of all people by focusing on cures for social, economic, and political illnesses.

We live in the 21st Century. It's time for more than tolerance. It's time for respect.

*Connie Ringgold is a staff writer for the Lion's Eye. If you'd like to respond to an editorial, please write a Letter to the Editor and put it in the Lion's Eye mailbox on the first floor of Main. All opinions welcome.*

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