

opinions

The Daily Collegian
Tuesday, April 30, 1985

editorial opinion

Serving a shot of responsibility

State College bar and restaurant owners give more than a dram about being held responsible for their intoxicated patrons. Lawmakers, however, believe the owners should be accountable when an intoxicated person leaves their establishment. In a sense, both groups are right.

Tavern owners are upset about "dramshop laws," an outgrowth of English common law developed to aid widows and children of men killed in alcohol-related accidents. Under the laws, if a person is served alcohol while intoxicated and later suffers or causes harm after leaving the establishment, both the person who served the alcohol and the establishment can be held liable.

Unfortunately, the dramshop laws have raised many questions in the private sector — questions about the gray area that exists between knowing when patrons have and haven't had too much to drink. Should it really be up to a bartender, who is often serving dozens of less-than-patient patrons, to make the distinction when another drink would mean one too many?

The intent, and the result, of liability laws for bars and restaurants has been commendable. The law forces bar owners and bartenders to practice a necessary precaution when serving alcohol. The bartender frequently has the most accurate knowledge about how much a patron has been drinking. In this sense, the bartender should have an idea, and act on the notion, when to refuse to serve that next drink.

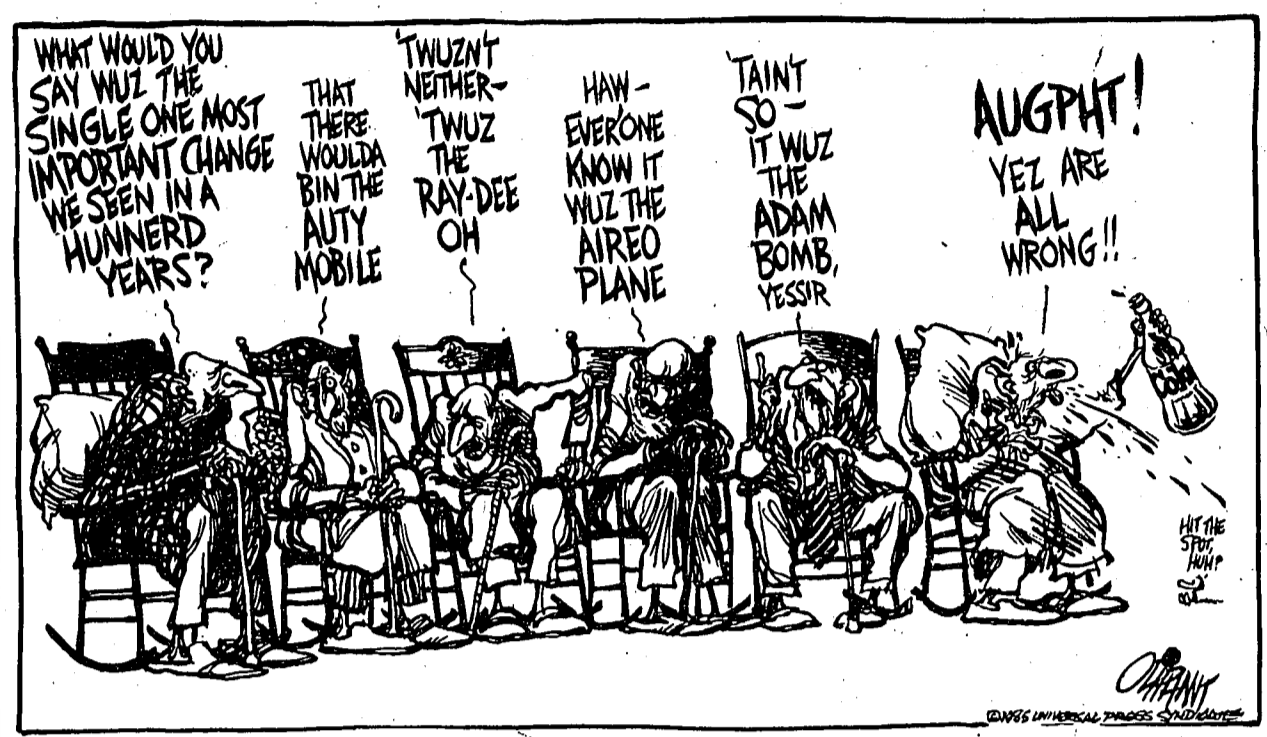
But for every bartender who has the time to talk with the patrons and who has a good idea of their patron's limits, there are bartenders who are too busy to assume when an individual customer should be shut

off. The problem is complicated by the fact that many people in social situations can effectively "act" sober enough to continue to be served. But these same people behind the wheel of a car could become dangerous. Special liability insurance for bar owners was one initial solution. But increasing losses in liability cases has driven premium rates to unattractive amounts and has forced many insurance companies to discontinue these policies.

One local bar owner, Christ Papadopoulos, put the debate in an interesting perspective by drawing an analogy: Should arms merchants be responsible for people who buy guns and then proceed to commit murder?

Bar owners are caught in an additional dilemma when they are faced with a problem customer. Bouncing an intoxicated patron can leave a negative impression on other customers. But while bar owners recognize the need for drastic actions at times, many situations are problematic long before the bouncer is summoned. Suppose a bartender doesn't recognize how intoxicated a patron really is until after a drink has been served. Should the bartender take that drink back?

Obviously, the liability question deserves much more discussion and observation. The laws, while rightly promoting more responsible serving of alcohol, have also placed an unreasonable burden on bar and tavern owners. Legislators should be seeking a compromise that recognizes the fine distinction between the responsibility of serving the alcohol and the responsibility of holding bar owners and bartenders liable for the consumption problems of their customers.



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reader opinion

The divestiture veto

On Tuesday, April 23, the Undergraduate Student Government Senate passed a resolution requesting the University to divest in all companies which do business in South Africa, as a public statement denouncing the policy of apartheid. Following the resolution, a resolution was passed to request the University to divest in all companies which do business in South Africa, as a public statement denouncing the policy of apartheid. Following the resolution, a resolution was passed to request the University to divest in all companies which do business in South Africa, as a public statement denouncing the policy of apartheid. Following the resolution, a resolution was passed to request the University to divest in all companies which do business in South Africa, as a public statement denouncing the policy of apartheid.

Importance of human value

In two editorial columns which appeared in the Collegian during the week of March 18, two racial issues were raised: these are the desire of black Americans to know their ethnic origins and the ongoing but subtle discrimination against black people in the United States. These two issues are interrelated, and understanding their relationship allows a greater understanding of social concepts. In addition, all of the other known family names seem to be traditional English, Scottish, or German names.

Tell 'em how you feel

Historically the United States has had more upward class mobility and less obvious class distinction than many other countries. This has been due, in some part, to an educational system that attempted to make a quality education available to a good student with limited financial resources.

What I would do if I won the lottery — besides change

Lotteries seem to be the big thing now and the amounts of money which are given away each week are incredible. At one time, a million dollars was a big deal; now people are winning upwards of ten million every week or so. The more people buying the tickets, the more prize money available and the more tickets sold to people hoping to win the larger amount. It's a vicious, if profitable circle — at least for the IRS. For those who buy tickets every week, hope springs eternal, but let's take a look at how the press reports who wins and who doesn't.

Second, I would plan a rather gala week in some tropical island for myself and several close friends. It would be a singularly ostentatious way to pay back some social obligations which have been plaguing me for some time. I think a charter flight, several cottages overlooking Montage Bay, fabulous meals, some island cruising, and the like would be a fitting way to initiate my life among the wealthy. Perhaps, depending upon the size of the jackpot, I could purchase a small Caribbean island-nation.

opinions

The Philippines: As the players set the stage, tragedy is sure to be a prop

Last week, this column investigated ominous political stirrings inside Mexico. Foresight, at the risk of alarmism, was the angle taken. What events or trends could transform Mexico into a global trouble-spot years down the road? Unfortunately, unlike hindsight, foresight is not 20/20.

On the political side, President Ferdinand Marcos' corrupt, repressive and ineffectual regime has disaffected a great number of Filipinos. At 67, President Marcos shows signs of ill-health. But as he enters his 21st year of rule, he is becoming more entrenched in the face of increasing discontent. Marcos' unpopularity is fueled by the widespread, and well-founded notion that he was involved in the murder of opposition leader Benigno Aquino the younger after Aquino returned from self-imposed exile in 1983.

On the economic side, the Philippines is in its worst nosedive since World War II; population growth soars while GNP limps along, and high inflation persists. Twenty-six billion dollars of external debt isn't helping matters. Economic disarray and political strife continue to feed on one another, and Filipinos are becoming more and more restless.

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Unrealistic limit

After doing some research regarding noise levels, I came to the conclusion that an upper limit of 55 or 62 decibels was unrealistic. There are too many commonplace occurrences that exceed that level and are not considered troublesome. By the same token, a higher decibel level a good ordinance does not make.

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