

Editorial Opinion

Alarming news

False fire alarms benefit no one, but can create tragic consequences

More people should heed the tale of the boy who cried wolf.

Whether done for amusement or out of malice, the consequences of false fire alarms are anything but humorous.

Students, jaded by scores of false alarms, may neglect to leave their rooms in the event of actual fires, resulting in injuries and possibly even deaths. There is no reason to endanger people needlessly by pulling alarms.

But students should also be aware of the penalties for such an action. Fines and even expulsion are possible. Students who pull alarms falsely may face criminal charges or University sanctions.

False alarms could cost students money as well, depending on the building in which the alarm was activated and the circumstances surrounding the pull.

Statistics show 310 false fire alarms occurred from July 1, 1989, to June 30, 1990. Of these, 278 were in dorms. These actions represent a dangerous and ignorant misuse of safety equipment.

To curb this epidemic, the Uni-

versity has organized a safety committee, made up of the departments of residence life, housing, police services, the Environmental Health and Safety Committee and the Association of Residence Hall Students. This is a vital first step in spreading the word of the danger of false-alarm pulling. Hopefully, the safety committee will find a quick, effective solution to this problem.

The committee is working on a four-part plan to curtail false alarms. Moderate solutions include posted and written warnings designed to make dorm residents aware of the problem. Among the more radical solutions are installing plastic covers over alarms, which when opened yield a piercing sound, deterring pranksters. The only drawback to this solution is that the boxes cost \$100.

However, in the event of such repetitive signaling, such steps are warranted.

The committee is only a start. The real problem is convincing students how harmful their jokes can be.

Halls of misery

Congress hurts U.S. with budget debacle

The indecisiveness of congressional leaders fumbling around with the federal budget may be the highest form of power politics in Washington, D.C., but outside the beltway, it is inflicting cruel economic pain and mental anguish on the federal workers who keep the government running.

The victims of this shabby treatment include thousands of government employees.

If they were working for a private employer who treated them that way even one time, let alone year after year for a decade or more, those same congressional leaders would be calling televised hearings and passing laws to punish the offending companies.

But because it is Congress itself that is causing the misery, there'll be no hearings, no laws, no alphabet agency given the task of assuring no repetitions of the employee mistreatment.

But Congress has been working

on the task since last January, when President Bush released his budget proposal. After eight months, Congress doesn't seem much closer to agreement than when it started.

Little time remains before the Oct. 1 deadline for the Gramm-Rudman automatic cuts to kick in. Negotiators must reach a deal and Congress must ratify it or Gramm-Rudman will mandate cuts of up to 40 percent in domestic and military programs.

The silver lining in this dark fiscal cloud is the high probability that Congress will not allow the Gramm-Rudman cuts to happen. The members can't stand the political heat. At the last minute, they will find some way . . . to keep government operating and avoid the wrath of mistreated employees.

The preceding is excerpted from a Sept. 23 editorial by The Sun Herald, Gulfport, Miss. The opinion expressed is not necessarily that of The Daily Collegian.

the Collegian

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Reader Opinion

Off target

I am writing in response to the letter recommending that Greek pole sitters climb down and get their hands dirty. As one of those pole sitters, I have a few words of advice for Jennifer L. Watson. Try seeing past stereotypical views of fraternities and stop looking for reasons not to help.

The money collected by soliciting passers-by is only a fraction of the total amount raised. Brothers also devote hours to raising pledges around campus and sacrifice entire weekends to collecting money. When was the last time you gave up an entire weekend for someone other than yourself?

Our involvement with our charity, the Second Mile, goes far beyond monetary support. Every other weekend throughout the year, brothers spend time with local underprivileged children. Not only do we get our hands dirty, but we make a difference for young people who sorely need support. Hopefully, our efforts will have a more lasting effect than your suggested lawn rakings.

So, before you cast your misguided stones, get a better view. You may find that your aim is way off target.

J.B. Morris
senior-English

Where to write

State College and University Park residents may submit letters in person at 123 S. Burrowes St. with photo identification.

Others may write to:

The Daily Collegian
Letters to the Editor
123 S. Burrowes St.
University Park, Pa. 16801-3882

All writers must provide phone number and address for verification. Letters may be no longer than two typewritten, double-spaced pages. Letters of up to three pages may be submitted as forums. Collegian reserves the right to condense or reject submissions. Submissions become the property of Collegian Inc.

educated. Many courses, clubs and extra-curricular activities are at your disposal.

Those of us in agriculture will continue to strive for excellence in animal care and to improve the efficiency and quality of foos production. We will back our convictions with actions, not merely words.

Lisa A. Holden
graduate-animal science
Dean Ross
graduate-animal science

Infinite forgiveness

Recently, a letter and an article commenting on Christianity have appeared on the Opinion Page of the Collegian. These pieces said things that were inaccurate and I think that it is very important to clear them up.

On Friday, Samuel Anderson said that Christians "blindly follow a diety who isn't bright enough to realize tht he doesn't have to kill his own 'son' to forgive man's sins. (He who make the rules can break rules, right?)"

Wrong. Mr. Anderson does not understand the basic concept of forgiveness. God is more than forgiving; He is also just. Some people fail to realize this because they concentrate on one aspect of God but ignore others. God is completely pure and perfect, and because of this He cannot allow anything impure to enter his presence. Therefore, our sins prevent us from experiencing His unconditional love for us. This is where forgiveness comes in.

When I was younger, I had a wreck and scratched my dad's car. This made him rather angry and difficult to talk to, but eventually he forgave me. That left the problem of who was going to have the car repainted. Eventually my dad paid because I was unable to. The point is that forgiveness always has a price to be paid by someone, and that price can be material or non-material.

It is the same way with God. We have all done something wrong at one time or another and the price for that is a separation from God otherwise known as hell. Since God only wants what is best for us, He decided to pay that price for us by His Son who came and lived a sinless life.

In Tuesday's Collegian Kurt Seidel said, "If there is a God, then there are two possibilities: He's lenient toward indecisiveness about exact expression of faith, or He's a stickler for detail and behavior, and would therefore make heaven kind of like an Ivy school with a bunch of straight-edge 'select' running around." Both cases are extremes and neither is true.

God is not vague about His forgiveness for us and we cannot be vague about our acceptance. Either we accept it or we don't. At the same time, God does not expect us to be perfect and He has gone to great lengths to show us that we can never be perfect. Even Christians screw up, but God's infinite forgiveness and the payment of His Son are enough to forgive anything anyone could ever do to sin against Him.

Christianity does not mean abandoning your sense of logic to be chained to a list of silly rules for the rest of your life, it means turning away from our ego and accepting the fact that you can not possibly do enough good to right your wrongs. You must accept Christ's gift of payment for your sins and then you are free to experience a love greater than you can ever imagine.

Jim Eisenman
senior-architectural engineering

Broadening horizons

We are responding to a letter in *The Daily Collegian* Sept. 25. The author berates "student members . . . involved in the farming business" for making "massive generalizations." In many cases, these so-called student members have been born into the farming business, some live and work on family farms that have been passed down for generations, and others seek to further their education through summer jobs and internships in various agricultural experiences and education, not from secondhand information.

Also, most people involved in animal agriculture feel an obligation to gain more insight into animal behavior and production through education so that both animals and people may benefit. We would like to challenge those students not currently involved with agriculture to become involved and broaden your educational experience.

Students of agriculture enroll in courses at Penn State in the arts, the humanities and the social sciences to become better-educated and well-rounded individuals. Perhaps if students throughout Penn State would enroll in agricultural courses, they too could benefit from this diversity and learn about the production, processing and marketing of their food. We are all fortunate to be attending a university with an exceptional group of personnel and facilities with the College of Agriculture.

Before criticizing agriculture and the handling of animals, please take the time to become truly

The narrow view

I find Mr. Baumrucker's opinion in the Sept. 27 issue of *The Daily Collegian* distressing. The title of the column itself indicates that his is a very narrow, personal opinion. The situation in the Middle East has become a very personal matter to many of us who have friends and relatives who are members of the active duty or reserve military establishment.

I sympathize with Mr. Baumrucker as he confronts the prospect of his personal welfare. I would submit that he is quite far removed at this time from the military situation in the Middle East. It is there, however, that my sympathy for his opinion ends. There are practical realities of the world today and America's role in it that are ignored. The implications of Saddam Hussein's direct control of 20 percent of the world's known oil reserves cannot be tolerated.

The overwhelming international condemnation of Iraq's aggression legitimizes the actions of those nations with the moral courage to confront the issue. We, as a nation and as individuals, cannot bury our heads in the sand. With the rights provided in the Constitution comes responsibility. The actions of the United States and the international community toward Iraq are proper. They are morally legitimate and strategically imperative.

We would all do well to acknowledge our individual roles in the support of those actions, whichever direction they may take.

Eric Loop
University employee

Preachers can teach us — not just about religion

I am not a Bible thumper. I do not now, nor have I ever approved of the religious fanatics who preach the gospel of money disguised as the Word of the Lord by day and sleep under the covers of self-appointed sainthood by night. (Usually with their secretaries, as we have well learned.)

However, while I don't agree with their methods of practicing whatever religion it is they believe in, I will not deny their right to practice nonetheless. Especially when my own religious beliefs, as well as yours, probably appear a bit out of the ordinary by their standards.

These pocket-Bible ministers have taken on college campuses for years, offering anyone within earshot a crash course in salvation. Our campus has been no exception.

Penn State has involuntarily adopted a small but vociferous brigade of the bumper sticker preachers who call the steps outside of Willard home.

Everyone has seen or at least heard of them by word-of-mouth, myself included. The comments I have overheard have been less than favorable and

My Opinion

Katherine Hilgert



usually peppered with words I care not to repeat. Still, having never seen these preachers, I was eager to witness firsthand just what all the controversy and uproar was about.

So, early one Monday morning, I waited for them.

Perhaps it's just that I'm not a morning person, but there are few things I can handle at 8 a.m. And on Mondays, I can usually tolerate even fewer things, especially if the weekend was particularly festive. One of those intolerable things that ranks right up there with having to wear the same underwear

from the day before is someone waving a Bible in my face and supplying me with a detailed description of how my soul will burn in the bowels of hell if I don't repent, and soon.

That's what I was expecting from the man who stood silently in front of us, engulfed in his Bible.

Instead, the preacher began to quietly address the audience, taking calculated pauses to stress certain points. He was a college-age kid, not the Moses reincarnated I had been told to expect. As he carried on with his religious salespitch, a couple of people became restless.

Finally, the inevitable happened. A young man clad in sweats stood up and began to yell at our host. He wasn't just yelling, he was degrading the poor guy. The preacher paused, waited for him to finish and calmly carried on. He didn't suddenly begin to speak in tongues or any of the wild things I had heard people complaining about. Okay, he DID raise his voice . . . there was quite a crowd and the people in the back couldn't hear.

The young man in sweats flew off the handle and accused the preacher of forcing everyone present to listen to his load of something or other. It was on the tip of my tongue to point out to this young man that I hadn't seen the chains that connected him to the preacher, but who was I to say?

One of those intolerable things that ranks right up there with having to wear the same underwear from the day before is someone waving a Bible in my face and supplying me with a detailed description of how my soul will burn in the bowels of hell if I don't repent, and soon.

Eventually, the sermon was over and everyone went their separate ways. The young man left too, but not before slamming a shoulder into the preacher as he walked by. The preacher blessed him in return.

I was disappointed. I hadn't seen the show I was promised. The minister didn't rip into a tirade or condemn all non-believers. He simply told us why he believed and why we should too. The young man had stolen the show, but I

was less than impressed with his performance.

As I walked away, I wondered why everyone objects to these people? Can you imagine if 2 Live Crew had been on those steps? I bet that same young man would have been in the front row hootin' and hollerin' his support. If anyone had dared to object, he would've thrown the Constitution in their face.

I personally wanted to thank the preacher for making me believe. Not necessarily in his religion, but in my own. The preacher reinforced my own beliefs by making me realize that I didn't approve of his methods. I learned more from him in 10 minutes than I have since I've been at college.

And to the young man, I only hope he took away something more than an inflated ego from his friends. I hope he took with him the desire to believe in something as much as that preacher did to want to share it with the rest of the world. I hope the same for myself.

So, when you see these sidewalk preachers, give them a break. We all have our place in society and good and bad walk hand-in-hand. One can't exist without the other.

Unless one of them comes up and physically forces religious philosophies down your throat, don't be so quick to jump down theirs. Is it so hard to just keep walking?

I'm still not a Bible thumper and you'll probably never find me parked on the corner praising the Lord. But after that Monday, I am hoping to thump something of heartfelt concern someday.

Katherine Hilgert is a freshman in the division of undergraduate studies and a columnist for The Daily Collegian. Her column appears every other Friday.