



VIEWPOINTS

IN OUR OPINION

Bicycle use benefits USC

This past Thursday, bicyclists, along with other student organizations, took part in Columbia's first Critical Mass as part of Bike to School/Work Day. The movement to increase biker safety could encourage more bike use on campus and possibly around the city. The event's organizers hope to gain enough support to have a Critical Mass each month.

The program itself can be valuable for USC in a number of ways, especially concerning parking. If more on-campus students, or even students who live

Encouraging bike use among students who live on or close to campus could free up spaces for off-campus students.

fairly close to campus, chose to ride bikes, parking spaces could be freed up for many off-campus students.

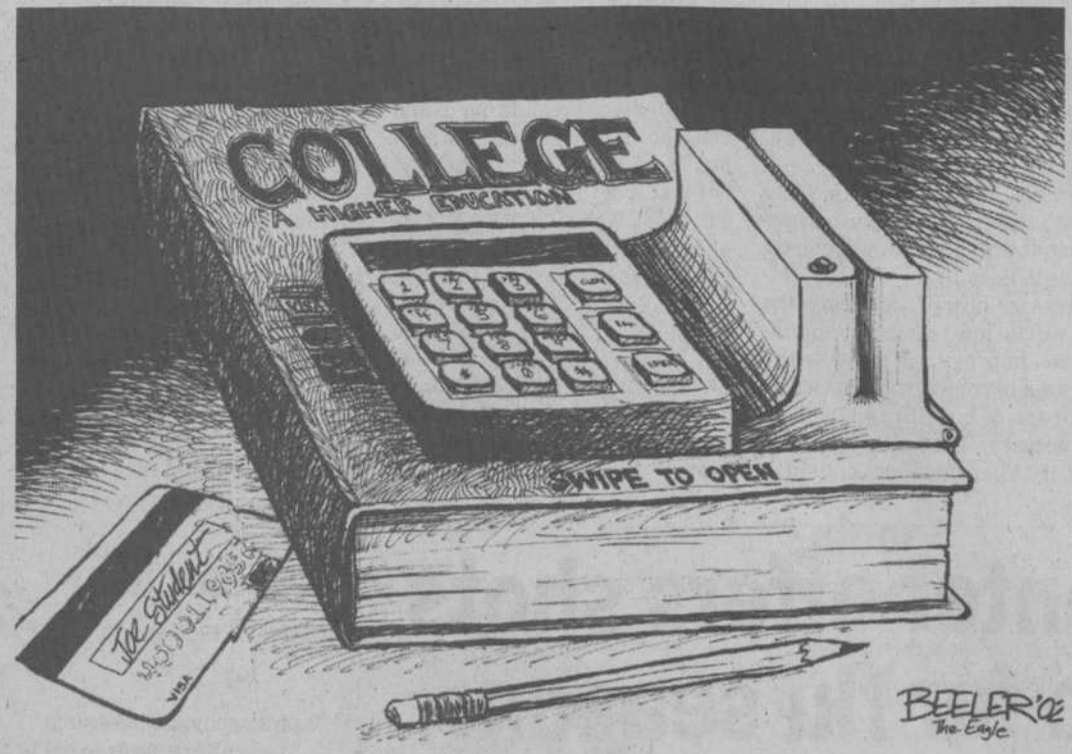
The environmental benefits are also a good reason for more students to ride bikes.

Because bicycles don't create the pollution that cars do, short-distance bike trips could contribute to cleaner air.

But regardless of the benefits, if more bicyclists are on campus, then all motorists must be cautious. Each year, 567,000 people go to the emergency room because of bicycle-related injuries. In 2000, 687 fatalities occurred from collisions between bikes and motor vehicles. If drivers paid more attention to the increase in cyclists, then crashes could be reduced significantly.

It's good to see groups such as Students Allied for a Greener Earth taking the initiative by using their agenda to offer new solutions to problems that have long plagued USC, as well as Columbia. So far, the city has embraced, not repressed, the bike movement, from which everyone can benefit.

But Critical Mass is just one step. President Sorensen, who is an avid bicyclist, has indicated he would support any proposals for more bike paths if enough students were behind them. If SAGE, as well as other organizations concerned with bicyclists, take the time to organize plans to build more bicycle paths, as well as ways to encourage greater bicycle use, then all of USC and Columbia will stand to benefit from their work.



CARTOON COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

Observing society's stupidity



JASON L. RAPP
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Dude, what happened to higher education?

In a weird sort of way, I look at life as my personal episode of "Seinfeld."

Like Jerry Seinfeld, I enjoy observation. I think it's apropos to be aware of my surroundings and form opinions about what's going on. I'd be bored to death if I weren't constantly analyzing and making comments about everyday life. Absent an issue on which to opine, here are some recent observations.

I'm disappointed that society has crept toward favoring the lowest common denominator. We don't like big words we should have learned long ago. We have "Dude, Where's My Car?" and "Dude, you're getting a Dell." We have "Jackass." Newspapers are written at an elementary-school reading level and, even then, people don't read them.

Dude, when did we decide to be dumb?

The advertising industry is a big culprit. If ever you've watched commercials on the televisions in the GMP, you know of what I speak. Everything is sex and more sex. I'd love to know who thought Marriott food was best served with the sounds of a woman reaching a shampoo-induced orgasm in the background. If she does that with a \$4 bottle, she'd waken even the economy, not to mention the neighbors, Jimmy Hoffa and USC's offense, with my \$11 bottle.

Another example is the political apathy so prevalent in our generation. At some point, we gave up or simply stopped caring. I guess "Fear Factor" or "The Bachelor" was coming on. Is this morass in which we find ourselves the nadir of society, or have we farther to fall? I'm not sure I want to know. This is college, people. Let's raise the bar a little so Plato, Socrates, et al can stop spinning around six feet under.

Staying on the slackness theme, I read last week about the virtues of alcohol. On that, I made this observation: Please drink, or smoke, to your heart's desire. Ditto for those of you who enjoy blazin' it up. After your liv-

er fails, you've breathed your last, or you've rendered yourself a complete junkie, there will be more jobs for those of us responsible enough to know better. I'll gladly take the job you had while you lie face down in the gutter with a bottle tucked inside a brown paper bag.

I think people need to be more real to each other. By "real," I mean honest, open and transparent. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Life isn't politics.

I just think it's right that people know where they stand with me, and even though I'm by no means an expert, I think that's a trait we would all do well to acquire. How we relate to people says a lot about us. You do people a disservice when you can't level with them.

Lastly, does anyone else doubt that putting up "Share the Road" signs will keep bikers from getting run over on campus? Personally, I'd kind of like to see some "Get Off the Sidewalk" signs; otherwise, a "critical mass" known as my fist might make contact with the hippie pedaling off to class or to the latest Preston protest.

Rapp is a fifth-year print journalism student.

Three days to English mastery



CATHERINE BABB
GAMECOCKVIEWPOINTS@HOTMAIL.COM

Verbalization takes on new meaning in society.

Beep. "Cat. It's your sister, Molly; remember me? I called you days ago, haven't heard back and it's pretty important. What are you doing with yourself? Call me."

Beep. "Hey, Cat and Cathleen, Bree here. Just wondering what you girls are up to. Haven't heard from either of you in a while, but there's a party at my place tonight, so call me."

Beep. "Ahem — this message is for Catherine Baab. This is Bob Dylan, just wanting to say that I read your columns every week and I'm a big fan. Would you want to get together sometime, maybe get a cup of coffee, or get married? Anyway, my number is..."

It had been three days since we answered the phone. It had been three days since we'd answered the door, eaten a solid meal or done our homework. My roommate Cathleen had developed an eyelid twitch. I was drifting in and out of consciousness, beginning to hallucinate. And yet the game showed no signs of ending.

"Genuine," I spelled out in the little wooden squares.

"For ingenuite, right?" She snorted, "And it took you two hours to come up with that."

That's the way it goes when you play nine-tile, trilingual, anagrammatic Scrabble. It's a kind of Candyland for neurotic word-smiths — I've also found it to be a good cure for chronic sobriety. Professors in the English Department ought to have tournaments for tenure. There's no better ring for intellectual wrangling.

What's most fascinating about Scrabble is that it recognizes language as a game; one wins by messing around with words. Thus, it's a pseudo-official forum for irony, because, in reality, we don't confine our experimentation to the board game. There's a whole minigenre of public speaking and writing devoted to manipulating language. We do it between ourselves, too.

Remember the last time you dumped someone or were dumped? You'll recall that "it's not you, it's me" really means "it's you." And that "I still want to be friends" should translate as "I never want to see you again."

Language is widely celebrated. Sometimes, in poetry, novels or song lyrics, it's so beautiful, we're absolutely hung up by it. Other times, its ineptitude is extraordinarily frustrating: We don't think we can communicate what we actually feel, and we can't.

Modern methods of communication only intensify the inadequacies of language. Faxes, cell-phone and answering-machine messages, and e-mails are all incredibly limited media. They were invented to simplify communication and expedite expression, and they provide a greater degree of convenience and brevity. Unfortunately, this does not really signify a true advancement because one doesn't have the time or space to express full thoughts.

Nietzsche wrote: "That for which we find words is already dead in our hearts. There is always a kind of contempt in the act of speaking." His point is relevant today: The ways we go about the act of speaking are contemptible. That's not to say I agree with him. He's failing to differentiate between act and effort. The effort made to communicate is itself noble. It is a testament to our human capacity to feel deeply, to desire to share.

Success is an arcane externality, rather like my attempts to beat Cathleen at Scrabble.

Babb is a third-year English and advertising student.

GAMECOCK CORRECTIONS

In the police report on Oct. 21, the correct dates should have read Oct. 15 and Oct. 17.
In a caption about "The Birdcage" in Wednesday's The Mix, photographer Annie Lee should have been credited.
Friday's "Quotables" should have said the sniper's quote came from the postscript of a letter, not a phone message.
The Gamecock regrets the errors.
If you see an error in today's paper, we want to know. E-mail us at gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com.

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IN YOUR OPINION

Attack messages, not messengers

Mr. Harritt (Oct. 16, "Freshman thinks he has it right"), I would like to say that I will be accepting hugs and cookies at any time from people who know me. Billy, I think your attacks were unjust, because you are unaware of my goals or aspirations and you are unaware of what it took me to get into this university.

Apparently, Billy, you don't know me because, if you did, you would know that giving up is the last thing I would do. Giving up is not a term in my dictionary; anyone who truly knows me realizes I am the last person to give up.

My message was that the system was corrupt because the selection committee chose only people of a particular color. The university showed a tremendous lack of integrity when it allowed this injustice to occur. I thought that, with four years in an institution of higher education, you would realize you should attack the argument and not the person.

I wonder how you could equate wisdom with classification. It doesn't matter whether you're a sophomore or a senior; everyone has different experiences in life. That is why I asked Jason Rapp to walk a mile in my shoes. When I ask someone to walk a mile in my shoes, I want him to remember that his way might not be the only way, or the right one.

In addition, I am not sure why you associated walking a mile in my shoes with committing suicide. Your life isn't over yet, son, but if you're having those thoughts, you should contact the Counseling and Human

Development Center. If you can't get help there, get help somewhere.

You said I should do something with my life. If you knew me, you would know that I'm very active in several student organizations: the Residence Hall Association, Campus Eagle Scouts and University Parking and Transportation Committee. Last year, as a freshman, I was a Snowden hall senator and was awarded the RHA Senator of the Year award, which was a hard award to win, because my competition was some of the best student leaders on campus.

Have you done anything to improve the quality of the university? I hope you have, because you've been here long enough. But any day you want to compare extracurricular achievements, give me a call.

So, Billy, I would like to close by saying that your comments were distasteful and, frankly, immature. I hope that when I become a senior, I will not have to resort to personal attacks to prove an argument.

EMANUEL R. THOMASON
SECOND-YEAR CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDENT

Sidewalk chalk, not war, "useless"

I was walking to the Russell House this past weekend when I noticed new chalk graffiti on the Pickens Street bridge. Normally, I ignore your pointless banter, but one phrase struck me and hit me hard in the heart.

"War is useless" was engraved in my mind, and I became livid. You cowards, how dare you live in the United States, taking advantage of the

freedoms given to you, then slander the means by which they arrived.

Without war, we would be under British rule. Without war, the United States would be two separate nations. Without war, Jews would still be persecuted by one tyrant. Without war, this world would not be a myriad of nationalities, but only a handful of empires.

Why don't you make your point to the faces of those men who fought for your life? Say to their faces that their battle was useless and that they fought and died in vain. Say that to my father, who spent three years in Vietnam, fighting fervently for the United States, a nation in which he prides himself. Tell him that his friends, who he witnessed dying, died for no purpose but to support a spoiled American like you.

Stand up and face those men now in the Middle East. Tell them that their jobs are insignificant and that everything they've worked for has been worthless. The freedom, liberty and pursuit of happiness you so freely take advantage of was born on the backs of our ancestors who died with honor in such wars.

Don't you dare defile the freedom I love, and the nation I take pride in. Either keep the chalk in the box, children, or walk the line with those soldiers, and then you can tell me wars are useless.

STEFANIE BOPP
SECOND-YEAR BIOLOGY STUDENT

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