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IN OUR OPINION

Keep rhetoric simple, Dean

Virginia Gov. and presidential candidate Howard Dean is getting a lot of flak these days for a controversial comment that gave some easily impressionable parties the idea that Dean is a racist and whose tone might have insulted those who do have "Confederate flags in their pickup trucks."

We live in a world of nanosecond sound bytes. Sure, it is unfair CNN hesitated all of a heartbeat before pulling out the old footage of pro-Rebel Flag rallies in South Carolina.

Part of being a successful president is knowing when to hold one's tongue.

And it's to be expected the other eight democratic candidates will most likely make this an issue, using it as an

opportunity to safely speak their minds on the flag, with Dean receiving the brunt of the criticism.

Welcome to politics, Gov. Dean. Like it or not, a candidate won't get anywhere without playing by at least some of the basic rules of the game.

Part of being a successful president is knowing when to hold one's tongue. Akin to George Carlin's "Seven Words you can't say on television," there are buzzwords that only an idiot would say on national news, even if the true meaning were clever.

Ex-Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott found out the hard way, and former Vice President Al Gore is still struggling to explain his misunderstood claim on the creation of the Internet.

Dean needs to keep his rhetoric simple and should clarify what he meant by his statement and learn from his political blunder.

Winners and Sinners



DADDY LETTERMAN 57-year old late-night kingpin is officially a father.

AL SHARPTON Says John Kerry's wife is who he most likes to party with on the campaign trail. Can we get an amen, preacher man?

"THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS" First trilogy to finally come to an end this holiday season.

NAPSTER Thanks for helping me tap into my youthful rebellious side, you corporate punk sellout.

HOWARD DEAN Makes controversial Confederate Flag reference. Repeat after us: "Ignore it, and it will go away."

REAGAN MINISERIES CBS pulls raunchy "The Reagans" over conservative furor. Showtime awaits.

GAMECOCK CORRECTIONS

If you see an error in today's paper, we want to know. E-mail us at gamecockpinions@hotmail.com.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Offices on third floor of the Russell House.
Editor in Chief: gamecockeditor@hotmail.com
News: gamecockdesk@hotmail.com
Viewpoints: gamecockpinions@hotmail.com
The Mix: gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com
Sports: gamecocksports@hotmail.com
Public Affairs: gckpublicaffairs@hotmail.com
Online: www.dailygamecock.com
Newsroom: 777-7726
Editor's Office: 777-3914

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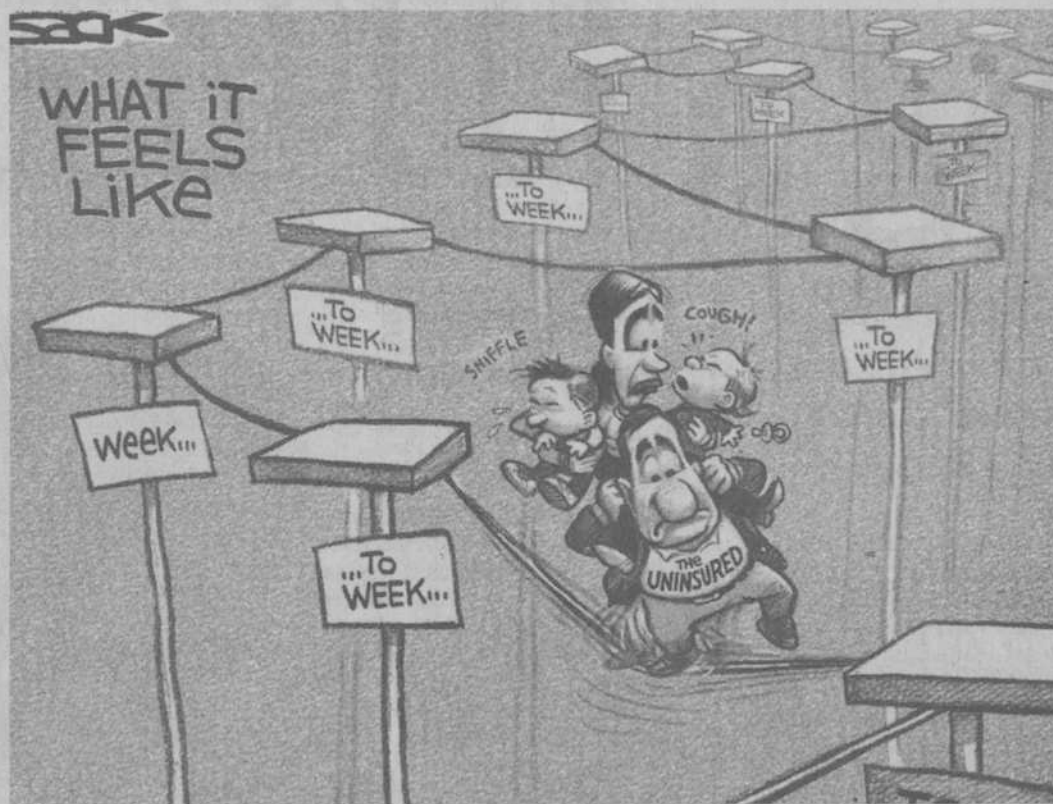
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I want my instant messenger



JULIE COOK

GAMECOCKPINIONS@HOTMAIL.COM

Meet the cause and solution to all social ills.

If checking away messages were an Olympic sport, I'd be contending for the gold medal. I know where everyone is at all moments of the day. Some I haven't seen face to face in four years, yet I know they're stressing over their biochem test or excited about a trip to Cancun for Spring Break.

Have you seen so-and-so? No, you couldn't even place him if you ever saw him, but you know he's at the library until 8 p.m. and then headed to the gym.

Deliberate misinformation can lead you awry. While a certain friend of mine might claim to be "studying," she is most likely watching a "Trading Spaces" marathon instead.

I, myself, have been known to put up an away message simply to avoid talking to certain people (especially on those odd week-

ends when my Clemson friends are celebrating their football victory and we have lost).

The buddy list is the chief form of both social and antisocial behavior. I have 141 buddies on my list, and most days I'd rather they all go away so I can check their messages.

And then there's the emoticon, the classic component of instant messenger. All it lacks is the "sarcastic face" emoticon, complete with rolled eyes, allowing me to compliment the wisdom of my favorite Republican friend's ceaseless droning on the Axis of Evil without being mistaken as actually supporting his idiocy.

Somehow, the sarcastic smiley has never been introduced, yet the most incorrectly used emoticon, the smiley with the foot in its mouth, continues to make its presence known. Yes, I know you think it looks drunk, but it means you said something stupid, people — though, you probably did say something stupid if you're plastered enough to think a shoe in your mouth accurately describes your condition at the time.

The only smileys I can deal with are the 10-point smile and frown. Everything else is too over the top for whatever I'm feeling. And let's just be honest with

ourselves and admit that the smiley with all of his teeth showing is only used to mean you're getting laid.

Whenever schoolwork is mounting up on my desk and college seems to be getting in the way of my education, I can turn to my buddies' profiles and learn more about myself and my friends than any psychology class could ever teach me.

Instant messenger has revealed to me that I am 95 percent Southern, 140 proof, 52 percent pure, am valued at \$2,094,622, a pina colada, the Funshine Care Bear, the Led Zeppelin song "Whole Lotta Love," ranked 102,555th most popular on BuddyZoo and 86 percent addicted to IM.

If only there were a quizzie people could put on their profile about possible professions.

Let's take a moment to celebrate the technological advancement of our college careers. Instant Messenger fuels personal expression, quickly disseminates information and, of course, provides insight into the lives of your friends and a select few of those random people who you rarely speak to but stalk anyway.

Cook is a third-year political science and art history student.

IN YOUR OPINION

Holt needs to verify sources of quotes

In Monday's editorial, Ryan Holt attributes an extended passage on religion in America to Alexis de Tocqueville, including the line, "Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power."

However, Mr. Holt has helped perpetuate a long-running error: There is no evidence from Tocqueville's writings that he is the author of this passage. I suggest that next time Mr. Holt should double check his sources.

AUSTIN MATZKO
GRADUATE STUDENT IN PHILOSOPHY

Guns make the world go 'round

Today was a momentous day in the life of this Gamecock fan — I attended my first gun show! I must tell all of you who fear that the "liberal left" is trying to take your guns: "Worries are to be cast aside."

There are many different ways you too can circumvent federal law by attending a gun show — or at least its policy implications. For instance, under the Brady Bill, a mandatory waiting period and a background check were established as law in order to buy a gun from a dealer.

Thanks to the muscle power of the National Rifle Association, the law failed to specify any policy targets with regard to private transactions. This means that any Joe with any gun can sell it to you, and

you can carry it home the same day.

Not only is this possible, but I also found a kit that can turn an everyday assault rifle into a 600-rounds-per-minute fun bag. On top of that, if you need to say "back away," there is perhaps nothing like a laser-sighted 357 magnum. Nothing screams holiday cheer like a bag full of guns, so let's all cast aside our fears of murder, militias and domestic terrorists and reinvest in the American gun show as a family pastime.

I must say that I did, however, learn many valuable things while attending this cultural phenomenon: 1) I am now well versed in how to pack my own buckshot; 2) no matter what anyone tells you, you cannot have too many guns; and 3) 9-year-old boys not only know how to check the action of but also how to load and fire a 9-millimeter handgun.

This has led me, and I hope all of you, to the obvious conclusion that we need to march to Washington and demand that the government relax its gun laws. I suggest we don't stop until every single person in the country has one in his or her hand.

ADAM JENKINS
FOURTH-YEAR POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENT

USC library takes safety to extremes

I can't imagine that I'm the only person who finds the bag check — or shakedown — procedure when exiting the library insulting.

What's wrong with the detection equipment? Is it broken?

Why hasn't it been fixed?

I mentioned this to someone in the university's administration — someone "high-ranking" but not affiliated with the library — who said half-jokingly that the equipment probably works but that not using it provides student jobs.

Maybe he's right. Perhaps the library administration wants to provide jobs for students. But if you think about it, that makes absolutely no sense at all. None.

I'm a graduate student who has checked out lots of books — I don't want a library carrel — and has stood in the checkout line more times than I care to recall while the student-worker checked every single book for my "Dec. 15, 2003" stamp.

The other night was a doozy: I'd checked out several books from the School of Music Library — where I don't have to be accosted by bag checkers because there's working detection equipment — and headed over to the main library to check out more. As the bag checker lifted from my handy plastic bag (not my book bag) every single book, a long line began to form behind me. When the bag checker was done, he asked me to hold my plastic bag open while he returned the books. I was very frustrated with him.

That's why I'm writing this letter. My frustration should be directed elsewhere.

KEVIN SIMMONDS
GRADUATE STUDENT IN MUSIC

Submission Policy

Letters to the editor should be less than 300 words and include name, phone number, professional title or year and major, if a student. E-mail letters to gamecockpinions@hotmail.com. Letters will be edited. Anonymous letters will not be published. Call the newsroom at 777-7726 for more information.

Homeless would be perfect mascots



GABRIELLE SINCLAIR
GAMECOCKPINIONS@HOTMAIL.COM

The film 'Radio' might just be on to something.

I did not like "Radio." In fact, I hated it. I mean, you might like this sweet tale of town using a mentally challenged man as its team mascot, but you might also like gouging your eyes, ripping off your skin, rolling around in salt and listening to Creed, so you're pretty weird.

I personally made it about halfway to my car while wiping stinging tears from my eyes when I stopped, alone in the parking lot, shook my clenched fist at the abstract evil that is a Hollywood film and screamed.

"DAMN YOU, RADIO!"
Yeah, I screamed it. Stupid, evil movie. Toying with my emotions. And yet! And yet I believe we can all learn a valuable and, dare I say it, advantageous life lesson from this travesty.

The homeless must be used as high school team mascots.

In this extended time of academic budgetary woes, we are left with few options. We must tap into all available resources. The great state of South Carolina must learn to make sacrifices, adjust and cut those pesky corners into neat, easily digestible bits.

In a few months, when the budget has been completely diminished, the state legislature will surely not spare the mentally ill, challenged or handicapped and will eventually shred what little funding remains in offering any semblance of care for these people.

They will be given a syringe of lithium, a day's worth of horse tranquilizers and official state government key chains and sent on their way.

So here we are, in the future, in a state once referred to by some dead Yankee as "too small for a nation and too big for a lunatic asylum." We are destined to, with some initial moral reluctance, turn to the surplus of insane, mentally challenged and all-around homeless.

News flash: The guilt won't last. These people will indeed serve a purpose. Enter "Radio," whose ultimate moral is: the lower your IQ, the more school spirit you can withstand without combusting.

Homeless people make fantastic team mascots. I think we can all agree on this. Friendly, endearing and cost effective. It's almost too perfect. I'm not even positive it's necessary to put them in a furry, possibly feathery costume.

Traditionally speaking, the homeless are hungry, maybe even ravenous, and that translates into drive. Drive, with a weakening will to live pair with a slight touch of cannibalism and maybe a drinking problem. The other teams won't know what's coming, I'm telling you. These are the makings of a great mascot. We can even fight them against each other for pep rallies.

Yes, cockfighting is still outlawed, but I've done some extensive research on the Internet, and there's nothing against homeless people going at it for spare change and a big group hug.

"Radio" has shown me an out-cast human being, misunderstood and ultimately stripped of his personal dignity and his will to live, will at his most basic level thirst to be manipulated and taken advantage of in the name of school spirit.

I just wish we could all be a little more like that, don't you? Group hug, people. Come on. Don't make me go over there.

Sinclair is a third-year print journalism student.