

Attorney provokes video gamers' ire

Thompson protests violence by drawing up satirical game proposal

Jeremy Turnage
FOR THE GAMECOCK

Anti-video game attorney Jack Thompson might have gotten more than he bargained for this week after igniting a firestorm in the gaming community, according to gamer Web sites and forum posts.

Thompson pressed the gaming industry Oct. 10 to create a video game based on ideas he combined into an outline titled "A Modest Video Game Proposal."

The proposal outlines a concept for a video game that features the story of Osaki Kim, a father intent on revenge against the baseball bat-toting teenager who murdered his son. The murderer, a 14-year-old gamer, obsessively played a video game that features a bat as a weapon in the game's arsenal.

At the end of the trial, the murderer is sentenced to life in prison, and Kim seeks revenge against the gaming

companies he believes led to his son's death.

"Vengeance is mine. I will repay," Kim says leaving the courtroom.

The game culminates with Kim carrying out a massacre during the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo, according to Thompson's proposal.

Thompson also offered \$10,000 to a favorite charity of Paul Eibeler, CEO of Take-Two Interactive — the publishing company behind the "Grand Theft Auto" series.

While no video game company took Thompson up on his offer, a group of video game modifiers did, creating a mod of "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" featuring Thompson as the main character instead of Kim.

Thompson soon learned of the mod, and quipped that it did not meet his specifications, and that his proposal was merely "satire."

Meanwhile, when creators of the popular Web comic "Penny Arcade," Jerry Holkins

and Mike Krahulik, learned of Thompson's proposal, they shocked some by writing a check for \$10,000 for the Entertainment Software Association Foundation, a charity created by the ESA, in Thompson's name.

In a news post by Krahulik, the comic creators called the money the donation that Thompson "never would (make), and never meant to."

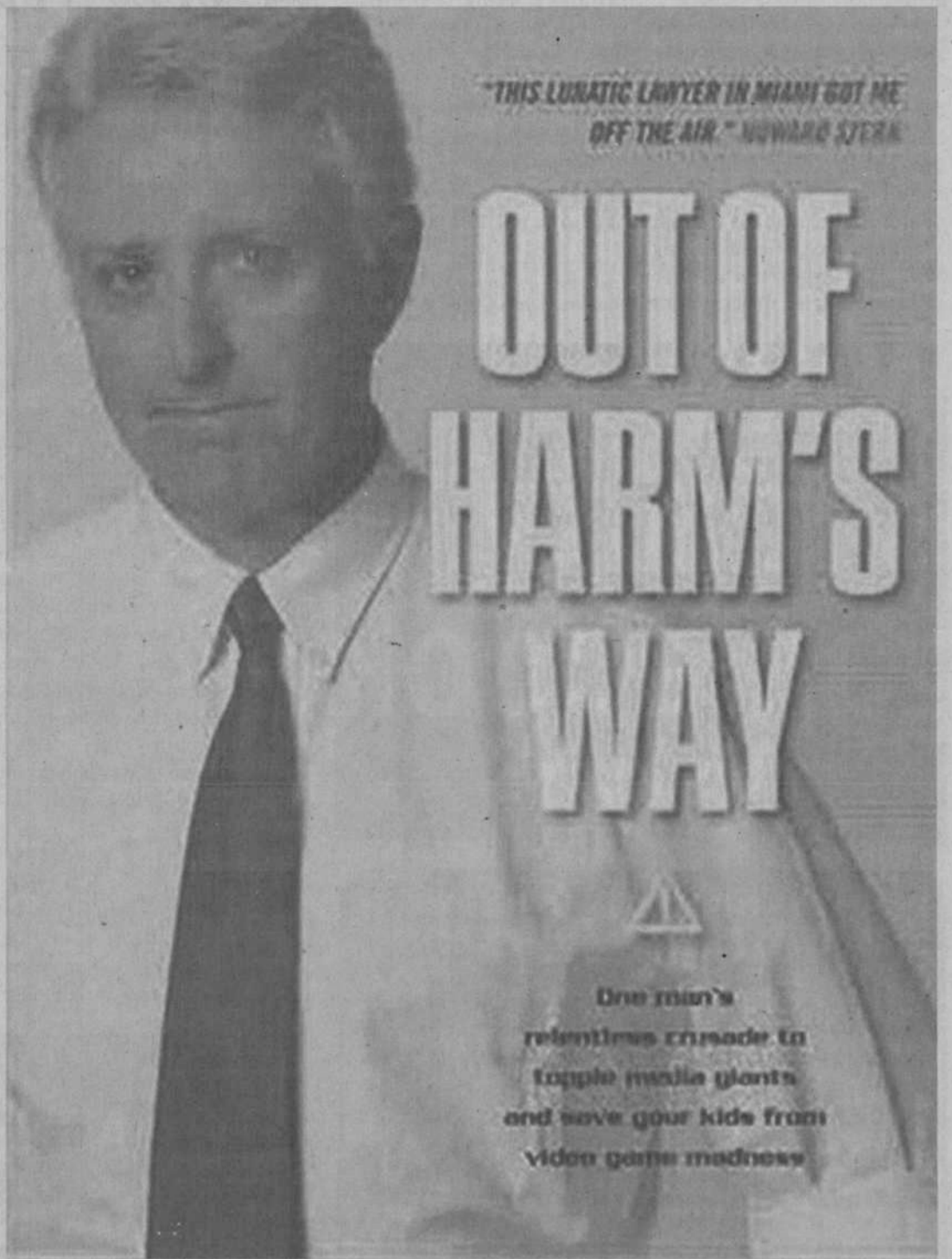
According to GameSpot magazine, Thompson soon learned of the donation and launched a campaign to have Holkins and Krahulik arrested for criminal harassment and extortion.

But no harassment or extortion took place, the comic creators contend.

Thompson wrote a letter to the Seattle police chief in hopes of getting the Washington-based Penny Arcade employees arrested, GameSpot reported.

This letter was soon faxed early in the day to every some

GAME ● 1



Special to THE GAMECOCK

Lawyer Jack Thompson's book, which will be published Nov. 30, chronicles his fight against violence and sexual themes in video games. The gaming community has asked the Florida Bar to censure him.

SEVEN TIPS FOR MORE REST

Don't let college lifestyle keep you from getting recommended eight to 10 hours of sleep every night



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Caroline DeSanctis
THE GAMECOCK

You've almost certainly heard it before: An individual needs an average of eight to 10 hours of sleep per night in order to function properly.

But, in the interest of being realistic, how on earth is that to be expected of a college student?

Hours at work start to get late. Homework rears its ever-looming, ugly head. Friends call in search of a club co-hopper. Even that unfinished jigsaw puzzle starts to look inviting.

However, despite the fame and glory of enduring an all-nighter before an exam, experts say sleep, and a decent amount of it, is vital for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

"It would be nice not to need Tylenol PM to go to sleep," said Shawn Moore, a second-year international business student. "With me, it's about habits I'm either out late or up late working on school work.

"On the rare occasion that I'm not (out late or studying), I am up just because I'm used to being up," he said.

Late-night habits such as eating, consuming alcohol, exercising and studying tend to result in difficulty in dozing off and can eventually lead to an unhealthy sleep schedule.

Don't fret, insomniac wannabes — there are ways to combat such snoozing suppressants and kick those bad habits.

The University of South Florida-Lakeland's Counseling Center offers a list of tips:

— As far as exercise goes, regular activity is best, but keep in mind that those extra 500 crunches before hitting the sack might in fact keep you awake longer than expected.

— Late-night dining should also be avoided, as well as the consumption of alcohol, caffeine and nicotine up to five hours before bedtime.

— Schedule a constant time for sleeping every night, even on weekends. This helps the body realize it's time to rest,

leading to a faster descent into dreamland. Try not to vary this bedtime more than an hour or so.

— Do not do homework, watch TV or engage in any other activity in the room in which you normally sleep. This policy aids the body in recognizing its resting environment.

— Try to rid the brain of stressful thoughts before bedtime to up the relaxation level. Listen to relaxing music or develop a stretching routine.

— Homework should be done in a timely manner so as not to cut in on valuable sleep time. Set up a weekly schedule of study time and consider spreading out an assignment over a couple days instead of doing all of it in one sitting.

— Eating a small amount of turkey or drinking a glass of milk before bedtime might help because both contain a chemical known as tryptophan, which causes drowsiness.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecockfeatures@gwm.sc.edu

Itch much? You're not alone

Common complaint still eludes complete medical understanding

Laura Beil
KRT CAMPUS

DALLAS — In the great pantry of medical complaints, pity the itch.

Itching lacks flair. It has no celebrity spokesman. It is often dismissed by non-itchers, up to the point of abject ridicule. (We mean you, Itchy and Scratchy fans.)

Still, rare is the soul who never itches, and some are afflicted so much that itching disrupts their lives. Dozens of triggers cause an itch, from a bite of the tiniest bug to malfunction of the body's largest internal organ, the liver.

We itch from the tops of our noggins to the soles of our feet, and impolite places in between. Along the way, the compulsion to scratch can be so strong that children, dogs or even adults who should know better will claw themselves until they bleed. And feel better for it.

Despite a complaint so common and so rudimentary that almost every two- and four-footed creature experiences it, medical science is still learning exactly how to cope with itching. Researchers who devote themselves to the study of the itch say that many of its basic mechanisms are not well understood. They are trying to look below the surface for solutions to itching.

"We don't have any medicine for itching as good as aspirin is for pain," says Dr. Jeffrey Bernhard of the University of Massachusetts Medical School and author of one of the first medical textbooks devoted to the topic. "There hasn't been enough basic research in this area." Even good laboratory experiments can be tricky: Try

asking a mouse whether a scratch is inspired by itch, pain or simple habit.

In September, scientists gathered in Germany at the Workshop on the Study of Itch formed the first research society dedicated solely to the study of itch. The idea, they said, was to focus attention on a problem desperately in need of better solutions.

"It's a field that has been neglected for so many years," says Dr. Gil Yosipovitch of Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C.

He and others are working to uncover the secrets of the itch. Itch and pain, researchers know, are cousins in misery. They represent the nexus of two opposite, yet related sensations — which is why, when that chigger bite is finally dug so raw it stings, the itching stops. Since pain and itch are thought to share chemical highways inside the nervous system, it can be hard to have too much itch and hurt at the same time. (Conversely, as many patients know, the opposite can also be true: Drugs that block pain can sometimes cause itching.) The reasons for this phenomenon are still under investigation.

The brain has specific areas for many other sensory functions, but imaging scans don't support the idea of an itch command center. Scientists do believe, however, that they have identified nerve cells — the cellular circuitry that wires the skin to the brain — that pick up itch on the skin.

What sets those nerve cells afire? Components of the body's immune system, which cause inflammation, are key co-conspirators. Scratching

inflamed skin, Yosipovitch says, may feel so good and yet be so bad: Scratching can lead to more inflammation, which intensifies the urge to scratch, which leads to more inflammation, more itching and more scratching.

For years, researchers thought the only direct culprit in triggering an itch was histamine. Histamines are molecules involved in the body's allergic response. They burst out like popcorn in response to mosquito bites, chiggers, poison ivy and a host of other assaults on the immune system.

Histamine, however, hasn't cornered the market on itching, the symptom doctors call "pruritus." In 2003, researchers writing for the journal Archives of Dermatology listed all known causes of pruritus at the cellular level. At the top of the list was histamine, but the tally contained 20 entries. For example, enzymes called proteases, which are produced naturally by cells, may cause the itching of eczema or dry skin. It isn't known whether all these different triggers cause itching the same way on a cellular level.

"Although renewed interest and research in pruritus has provided a deeper insight into its mechanisms in recent years, the basis of itching is not yet fully understood," the scientists wrote in the journal.

Scientists don't yet know, for example, whether itching that originates on the outside of the skin, such as the kind from a mosquito bite, works the same way as itching that comes from within, such as the itching from kidney or liver disease.

ITCHING ● 6