

OPINION

This column represents the views of the Old Gold and Black Editorial Board.

A misguided effort by 'Cops in Shops'

The North Carolina Alcohol Law Enforcement "Cops in Shops" operation conducted Aug. 21 through 26 resulted in 29 citations issued to Wake Forest students. The undercover operation has sparked criticism and angered students, with good reason.

According to some of those cited, many of the citations were issued under questionable circumstances, and opened the door to harassment of innocent people. Targeting the age group of 18-22 year olds because they fit a particular profile unethically assumes guilt by age and appearance and punishes adults for their assumed intentions.

Students cited claim they had no intention to break the law, but contesting the citations will cost more than paying the fine. Considering court costs and legal fees, these students are thus faced with a moral dilemma: should they pay the fine for something they didn't do, or should they take on the extra cost in pursuit of the truth?

Wake Forest students also face the additional sanction of having to appear before a judicial hearing and

potentially receive an alcohol violation.

In the fight against underage drinking police must choose between either determent or punishment. Two uniformed police officers at the register would serve the same purpose of preventing minors from purchasing alcohol and would also help avoid harassing those who have a legal right to buy alcohol.

Instead of deterring minors from attempting to purchase alcohol, unmarked cars in the parking lot or plainclothes ALE officers in a grocery store aisle cause anger and cynicism. The purpose of law enforcement is to encourage respect for the law, not to create a spirit of fear.

To prevent students from feeling intimidated and harassed when approached by the officers, students can only know their rights and attempt to learn the law.

If we do not know what the officers can and cannot do, or if we do not know the true meaning of the drinking laws, then we as an age group are powerless.

Knowing your rights could prevent a guilty record.

Fear and loathing in the capital

For many conservatives in Washington, 'liberal' is equal to a four-letter word.

Earlier this summer, a family friend attended a yard sale held by Kimberly Wamp, the wife of U.S. Rep. Zach Wamp (R-TN), where she purchased a pink Vera Bradley bag for an amazing \$2. When questioned as to why she was selling an expensive

Jamie Kidd
GUEST COLUMNIST

designer bag cheaply at a yard sale, Wamp explained that the bag was given to her as a favor at a party hosted by Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-NY, for Congressional wives and that she "just couldn't stand having something *that liberal woman* had given her in the house." My friend accepted the story and paid the \$2. She later auctioned it off on eBay for \$52 without mention of the bag's origins.

This story disturbs me on several levels. Though I could write an entire column on the sheer tackiness of Wamp's actions, I will abstain from further mention of the 50 written and unwritten rules of etiquette and good taste that she broke. The thing that really upsets me about this story is

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the disrespect and hatred that the wife of a Congressman showed for the former first lady and current senator. I suppose I always thought that the virulent rhetoric that the right-wing spews is mostly political show. I am apparently dreadfully wrong in that assumption. It turns out that conservatives do really hate liberals that much. The most obvious question is why? The classic reason for the existence of large-scale prejudices is a combination of fear and ignorance that is normally mitigated by personal contact. But this explanation does not really explain the top-down conservative loathing for liberals. Living and working in such close quarters as Washington, D.C., seems to only feed their irrational hatred. It has been suggested – though not, of course, by me – that conservatives are demons born without a soul that hate anything good or right. However, that answer just seems too easy to be true.

Regardless of the explanation, the consequences of this hatred are bad

for America. It blinds conservatives to the common good and leads them to policies and actions born of personal vindictiveness. The frantic years of the Clinton investigations stand out as the most memorable of their hate-driven pursuits. Beyond this dramatic example, conservatives' hatred stymies the day-to-day workings of Congress. It also tilts the playing field against liberals, many of whom naively believe as I did that conservatives don't *really* mean all of the stupid and hate-filled things they say, only to find out too late that they will do anything to push their agenda – regardless of the truth or the common good.

I have deliberately avoided the word "Republican." The destructive attitudes and actions that I have described are applicable only to a small but vocal minority. There are many Republicans who believe and vote as they do for legitimate reasons. The extreme conservative views that I describe belong to the right wing of the party, as well as some people outside the GOP like Pat Buchanan. While I don't often agree with many mainstream Republican views, I do respect them. However, I cannot respect the irrational and damaging hatred and disdain shown by Wamp and her kind.

Jamie Kidd is a senior political science major.

Theme year project requires rethinking

The elusive theme year is once again upon us, hidden in a cloud of mystery and confusion. Questioning administrators about the status of the theme year has only resulted in confusion and miscommunication. Even those in charge seem to be unsure sure about it.

If the university decides not to have a theme year or to discontinue the project altogether, it has every right to do so. But it must not hem and haw about the decision. If the theme year is indeed going to continue, then student interest is imperative for its success.

The themes need to be clear cut and relevant to university life, and students should participate in the planning.

One problem facing theme years of the past has been student participation. If campus groups and departments were to consolidate their efforts and offer fewer, more poignant lectures, then students would be more likely to attend. By combining their resources, departments could focus their energy on more prominent speakers, which would draw larger groups of students.

Another viable alternative to the floundering theme year is weeklong symposiums scattered across both semesters, creating a condensed theme

year, if you will. The advantages to symposiums are many and varied. They would allot time to react to important events that happen throughout the year and give more flexibility in planning. They are also easier to market to students since the topics are specific and the time commitment limited. Moreover, a symposium encourages a crossing of academic interests and forces students to weave together various threads of classroom knowledge while applying them to a real-world topic.

One of the best examples of this was the Cuba Symposium last year. The weeklong event brought together students, faculty and community members from all academic areas. Students were able to meet author Cristina Garcia and learn about the sociology, economics and politics of a country so often shrouded in myth and contradiction. Another success was the student-organized March 17th visit by Jonathan Kozol, a renowned author, scholar, activist and teacher.

Opportunities like this are equally important as regular class attendance, and the university must continue to encourage academic debate. But first, it must agree on the best course of action.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(Editor's note: These letters are in response to an animal abandonment charges against Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity at Tanglewood Park April 20th.)

Sig Eps forgot the founding principles of their fraternity

I was horrified, saddened, and sickened to learn on the *USA Today* newspaper Web site that members of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity are accused of abandoning a drunken, sunburned, dehydrated and mutilated pig at Tanglewood Park.

The behavior of these young men, representatives of my alma mater, should dismay their fellow students, the administration and all alumni. The university's motto is *Pro Humanitate*, "for humanity." The treatment of this poor animal at the hands of conscious, free-willed and, one would think being students at one of the finest universities in the South, intelligent young men is absolutely appalling and nothing but inhumane.

Today, I am ashamed to be associated with an institution whose students show such poor judgment and have such little compassion for their fellow animals upon this earth. I encourage the administration and the student body to condemn this behavior and discipline all members of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, whether they actively participated in this abuse or whether they simply stood by and, by not objecting, gave their silent approval. Fines, suspension and 90 days in jail seem too mild a punishment for the horrid behavior of young men who have so blatantly violated their fraternal principles of virtue, diligence and brotherly love.

Cameron Wilson
Class of 2000

Make the punishment fit the crime for the Sig Eps

In an era in which Greeks are battling to maintain the very thick line between contributing positives to college culture and the communities those colleges are a part of and the well-earned stigma of immature and lewd behavior, anything Greeks do will be examined with a social microscope. One has to wonder, then, where the last ounces of common sense went with the stupidity and criminal behavior exhibited by the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity and their "outing" at Tanglewood.

Most likely nothing will come of this except some minor community service, a few slaps on the wrist and plea of ignorance from the fraternity's leadership. Fortunately, we know the reality is that the punishment should be much worse and that a plea of ignorance by the fraternity's leaders, however appropriately ironic, is simply a lie. Sig Ep, you have disgraced the university. I close with the words of Harry

Fletcher of the National Association of Police Officers: "There is a clear link between the torture and abuse of animals and violence against the person. It is critical that police and social services should take this link seriously and train staff. It could be the difference between life and death." I hope the Forsyth County authorities and university administration take those cold words as guidance in this matter.

Jason Grimes
Class of 1994

Wait for all the facts before passing judgment on frat

As a graduate of this university, I have been closely following the recent news about Sig Ep and their party pig. Obviously the media has picked up on this story, mainly because this story is a headliner's dream. "Frat Boys Abuse Drunken Party Pig" is an amazing gimmick to gather readership.

As a result of this media hype, the *Old Gold and Black* began posting angry, reactionary letters on their Web site last evening. These letters were written by recent alumni, and were filled with words like "contempt," "disgust" and "shame."

Question: How can alumni of this university, who have been taught to question and understand before reacting, immediately condemn the actions of fellow Wake Foresters when the facts of this incident have not been made public?

Other than some sensational "headlining," this story is all hearsay and confusion. The investigation has just begun, students involved aren't speaking to the media, the facts are not yet uncovered.

Yes they had a pig, so what? It was a party, that kind of random entertainment (i.e. having a pig at a party) is one of the greatest things about the college experience. Fun doesn't have to make sense. Does anyone who has attended this university really think that someone from our community is capable of cutting the tail off of a live animal while burning said animal with hot glass light bulbs? Come on folks, this is a *big* stretch.

I am willing to bet that the tail was removed by the farmer before the pig was purchased, the "burn marks" on the pig were the result of some other farm-related operation like branding, roping, etc., and that the "reeking alcohol" was a result of the pig running around a party where 200 students chugged and spilled warm keg beer on everything. Is having a pig at a party weird? By normal rationale, yes. Are these students sadistic animal haters? I'm guessing no.

Should we all wait until the investigation is over before condemning what we don't understand? Most assuredly.

Chris Johnston
Class of 2000

Sig Eps' response shows selfishness, immaturity

Last spring I overheard one of the alleged "pig abusers" discussing his part in the Tanglewood Park incident to a sympathetic student ear. What amazed me at first was this person's viewpoint and the listener's reaction. To the Sig Ep participant, he could not believe what a "big deal" this news event had evolved into.

He seemed quite amused by the ordeal and his listener wagged her tail, agreeing and supporting his every word.

His ramblings were completely selfish. He went on and on about how the event was effecting *his* life.

He just doesn't get it, and apparently neither does the little "yes" girl hanging on his every word. This incident goes far beyond personal ramifications for these 20-odd students.

Their actions have blackened the name of the university in numerous ways. In business, and make no mistake, a university is a business, this type of incident is a public relations nightmare.

Look at the repercussions of a handful of Arthur Andersen accountants. The illegal dealings of perhaps less than a dozen has dropped what many consider to be the most prestigious of accounting firms to the edge of destruction. It has bloodied all of its employee's noses.

For the rest of time, Arthur Andersen will be synonymous with Enron and scandal.

Many of the staff I have been in touch with are furious at the lack of humanity and the abuse which seems to have been apparently given to the Sig Ep pig.

I have read letters from alumni, ashamed to be associated with a university whose students conduct themselves with a total lack of respect for a living being. This type of act can affect admissions, recruitment and fundraising.

Of course everyone knows the entire student body and its administrators can not be held accountable for the act, but the association of animal abuse has now been tagged to the university, and it will take some time before that "honor" has run its course. I truly hope this lesson is not lost on those who have dragged the campus name into the mud.

Bill Burger
Library Multimedia Specialist

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