

A double standard followed the Sig Ep pig scandal

Why do few consider the welfare of animals outside the university "bubble"?

At a university the size of this one, three may keep a secret – if two of them are dead. It is not surprising, then, that news of members of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity being investigated for animal abuse after an incident with a pig at a party at

to the slaughterhouse. It is highly unlikely, however, that PETA is going to rush out and award the Sig Eps any honors just yet – I sincerely doubt the brothers were on a mission to *save* the pig. However, the irony that so many people were up in arms about the welfare of a slaughter pig that would have otherwise died an anonymous death and the ignorance that Forsyth County Animal Control Director Barbara Cassidy displayed when she told the *Winston-Salem Journal*, "That pig could have easily died. I don't understand how someone could think it would be fun to abuse an animal like that," cannot be ignored.

Most slaughter pigs are born and eventually die within the confines of a factory-style farm, farms that by their very design are cruel. Imagine if you kept your pet dog or cat inside an unbearably small cage for his or her entire life, crammed in with thousands of other animals in filthy conditions, cared for by workers whose concern is not with the animals' welfare but with efficiency. A place where the females are bred until their bodies break down, and animals' life spans are cut short to a fraction of what they should be. I'm sure none of us would allow that to happen to our pets, but with our silence and with our consumer dollars we condone this treatment for millions of other animals.

At the Web site for the animal rights organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), Peta.com, I found a video narrated by actor James Cromwell that described an undercover investigation of Belcross Farm, a pig-breeding farm in North

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Carolina, by a PETA investigator who worked incognito at the farm and secretly videotaped its daily activities for three months. In July 1999, a North Carolina grand jury handed down felony indictments for animal cruelty against farm workers after PETA filed a formal complaint, which included testimony from veterinary and livestock experts. The video narrated by Cromwell shows some of the worst animal abuse I have ever seen. The workers are shown dropping a cinder block on an injured sow's head (twice), bludgeoning a sow with a wrench, shoving a wooden pole up a sow's vagina and skinning a sow alive, among other things.

Overcrowding, poor ventilation and filth on pig farms make disease rampant. The farms employ slotted floors to allow excrement to fall into manure pits below, but piglets' smaller legs often get caught in the slots and break, and sows can have their teats sliced off by the sharp edges of metal slots. Studies funded by PETA have

shown that 60 percent of all pigs raised in confinement buildings will develop pneumonia, 50 percent will experience severe joint damage, 80 percent will have damaged cartilage and aggressive behavior will increase by 175 percent in this deplorable environment. Pigs confined to stalls may also develop conditions comparable to psychoses in humans.

The undercover investigator at Belcross Farm documented several scenes similar to this one from Jan. 7, 1999: "Elyse told me that Russ came to the boar stud facility a couple of days ago to kill two boars that were no longer useful. ... The young boar with the broken hip, Jekyll, was dragged outside by Russ, Kelly and Chris and loaded onto Russ' truck and then killed with a bolt gun. MJ was an old boar that had had a stroke and had been lying down on the concrete floor in his pen for so long that his skin was stuck to it and he was unable to stand to reach his food or water. Russ, Kelly, and Chris pulled MJ off the floor, all the skin from his side. Elyse said that he was screaming the entire time and that his pen was covered in blood. They then loaded him onto the truck and killed him."

That incident was by far one of the more benign ones.

Belcross farm may very well represent the extreme of pig-breeding industry, but we have to wonder what goes on at the 22 other facilities owned by Belcross Farms, and at Piedmont Livestock, where the Sig Eps bought their pig. In the United States, one pig is killed every three seconds, sometimes by being dropped into tanks

of scalding water or skinned alive. At that pace, and with the factory-style mentality where the animals are merely cogs in a machine, abuse is inevitable.

Yes, we all recognize that the Sig Eps made a foolish mistake, but how ironic is it that so many were concerned about the welfare of *one* pig but not for the hundreds of thousands that have come before and after him?

Why does a pig's death at the hands of farmers instead of frat boys not matter to the Forsyth County Animal Control? Who is regulating the activities of all of the pig farms in North Carolina to prevent cruelty at least before slaughter?

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So, "that pig could have easily died," Ms. Cassidy? That pig was going to die *anyway* – and perhaps have been the next pig to grace the back steps of Benson.

We can't cry abuse only when an animal has found its way into the university bubble and turn a blind eye to all of the other animals like him.

Let's not be stingy with our compassion – if we're going to care about one, we have to care about them all.

Editorials Editor Kathryn Spangler is a junior who plans to major in history.



Kathryn Spangler

EDITORIALS
EDITOR

Tanglewood Park in the spring spread like wildfire throughout the summer. I, like all other members of the university community, was outraged and saddened by the possibility that my fellow students could have committed animal abuse, or, at the very least, been so foolish to assume they could bring an animal to a party without any consequences (let's face it, did the brothers not have their hands full enough ensuring that all of the two-legged guests at the party would make it home safely?)

A few members of the university community came out in support of the Sig Eps, saying that the pig was certainly better off with them than being cooped up before being sent

Today's university is still a tight-knit community

The number of buildings may have changed, but the climate on campus remains the same.

It's always refreshing to get back to the university. No matter how jaded you are with the campus, with the other students, with the professors or with life in general, it's almost impossible to deny that we all look forward to returning to campus for some reason.



Chris Plumblee

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Perhaps it's a sorority or fraternity that provides the lure to bring us back. Perhaps it's a group of friends who live far away and that you haven't seen all summer. Perhaps it's a combination of all those things. Whatever the reason, it's always nice to get back to campus.

I was speaking to a university alumnus this summer at the golf course where I was employed, and he made a point to mention that he felt that the "campus community spirit" that he had enjoyed when he was an undergraduate in the '50s and '60s was missing when he returned to his "mother, so dear" for athletic events and meetings of his peers. He could point to no obvious signs of the decay other than the expansion of campus, but he maintained stubbornly that things were worse now than they were then.

By his interpretation, my university experience, while infinitely more valuable than any other college experience he could imagine, was nonetheless lacking in some fundamental regard. The expansion, particularly into the North Campus area of the Reynolda Campus was one of the factors that he pointed to as indicative of the schisms among students now. He also thought that the easy access to cable TV and the Internet in the dorm tended to isolate students. If a student did not have to depend on his or her friends for entertainment, then apparently this makes the student the victim of some sort of malpractice. The campus community that he spoke of was an indescribably important part of his university experience, and he felt that currently, the campus lacked this community spirit.

When he revealed his reservations to me, I felt that it was my duty to correct him. Everyone who has been connected with the university for any amount of time, be it four years or 40 years, can testify that the community is alive and well in Winston-Salem. I recognize that the expansion of campus could be seen as moving the upperclassmen, long seen as the most important students at the institution, away from the center of campus as delineated by Wait Chapel and Reynolda Hall. However, I also see that this as a chance

Can any of us forget the statistics spouted so glibly by the tour guides when we came to campus about how *Yahoo!* magazine had rated the campus as the fourth most wired campus in America, and how the technology program, with new computers for half the campus every year, makes this such a strong and modern campus? Where else do you have this opportunity?

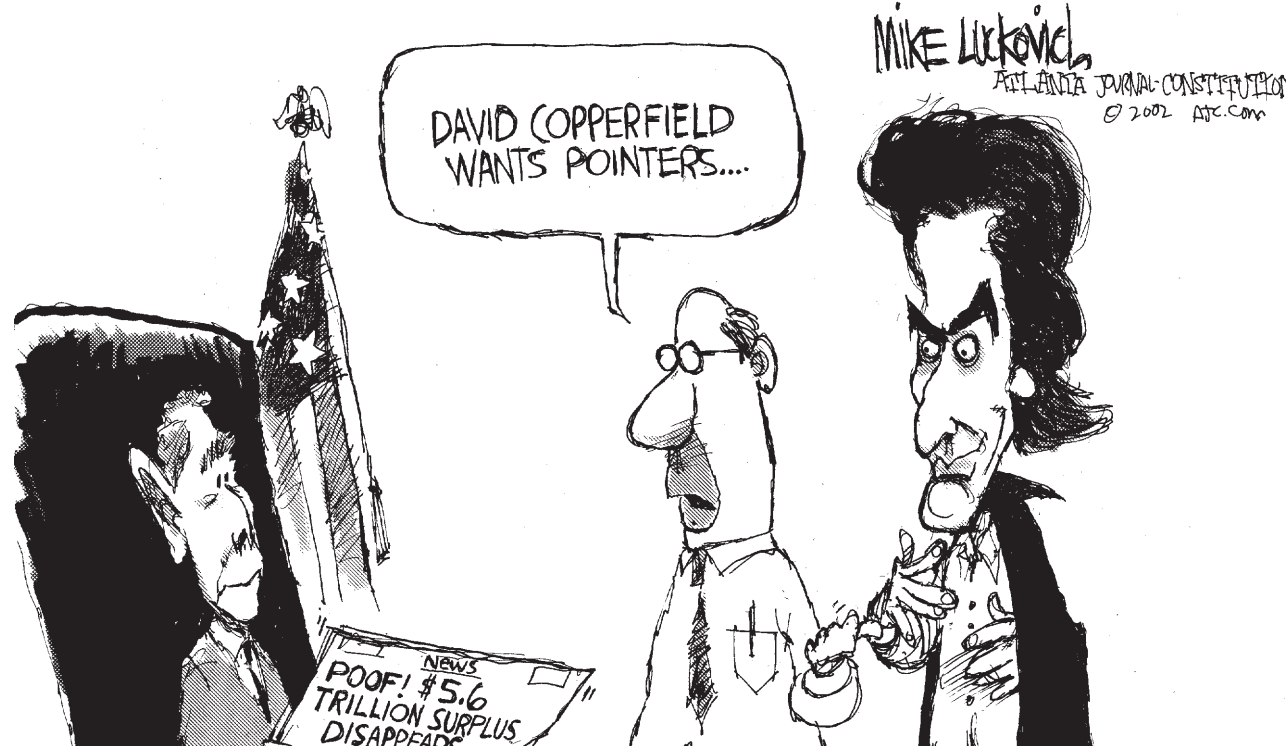
for the seniors, and to a lesser extent, the juniors, to bond with their peers. While I respect that this lessens the possibility that the upperclassmen will take an active role in shaping the lives of many underclassmen, I also see it as an excellent way to reward the upperclassmen for their dedication while keeping them as a part of the community.

As for technology driving people further apart and making current university students indistinguishable from students at other schools, I believe that the presence of technology on campus is as much a part of what makes today's university what it is as the Baptist Church made previous incarnations of the university what they were. Can any of us forget the statistics spouted so glibly by the tour guides when we came to campus about how the *Yahoo!* magazine had rated the campus as one of the most wired campuses in America, and how the technology program, with new computers for half the campus every year, makes this such a strong and modern campus? Where else do you have this opportunity? With the rising costs of education, that difference is as much a part of what makes the university different as the Baptist sponsorship and the private school reputation does.

However, even though I believe all those things to be true and important, I must remember that this alumnus is fairly unlikely to ever read this column, and even if he does, he is as entitled to his opinion as I am to mine. Why, then, did I write this column refuting everything that nice man had to say? I wrote this column merely to point out that this campus, with what diversity we have, is as united as any class in the history of the university, and that I feel so strongly that this is the case that I'm willing to share my beliefs with everyone. Make of them what you will, but I hold to the position that the campus is as vibrant as it ever was, and probably is more vibrant now than it has been in quite some time. I took exception to the idea that my experience at the university was somehow different because I did not suffer through a lack of air conditioning in the spring and summer and through the industrial food (believe me, it has gotten better).

If suffering is what makes a university experience, then I'll go without, but if the university experience is made by being with people who intrigue and impress you with their knowledge, while simultaneously stimulating you to greater heights yourself, then I've done that, in spades.

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Feeling the corporate love

Your freshman year has been brought to you by the following ...

If there's one thing that this university needs, it's more traditions. And if my wanderings around campus this past week or so is any indication, we have a new one that hopefully will last for the ages, to give the future generations (most likely our own posterity) something in which they too can take part,



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following in the footsteps of those that have graced these hallowed halls in the past. Much like formal dress for the football games and the incoherent shouts that can be heard on the day that fraternity bids are distributed, this is a tradition that, despite the fact that it may exist to some capacity at other schools, is strictly of a Wake Forest nature.

What is this tradition, you ask? The tradition, friends, is none other than the corporate greeting.

It's no mystery that corporations *love* you. And they want nothing more than to see that your experience as a university student (particularly for you first-year students) is the best possible experience you can have. Thus, on freshmen move-in day, while your parents are

What would orientation functions be without Papa John's and Pepsi there to hand out cups and Frisbees with their corporate logos splattered on them so that next time you're hungry for pizza or you want a beverage but you just can't seem to figure out what that elusive purveyor of said consumable products was called, *you will know*.

saying goodbye to you with such devoted affection, heavy hearts and conflicting emotions, and while your new peers welcome you to your new environment, one to which you're going to need some time and soul-searching to get acclimated, the Cingular Orange Splotch is there in front of the Benson Center, holding your hand, being giant and inflatable, ready to sell you the digital phone service that *you will absolutely need* to get through this incredibly important transition in your life. Of course, the Splotch doesn't have to do this for you. No, the Splotch *wants* to. He realizes that he's doing you the greatest credit he can possibly do by offering you that overpriced phone service. And he asks nothing in return (except for \$39.95 a month, plus \$1.50 for each additional minute).

Of course, the cellular companies aren't the only ones bringing this new tradition to life. What would orientation functions be without Papa John's and Pepsi there to hand out cups and Frisbees with their corporate logos splattered on them so that

next time you're hungry for pizza or you want a beverage but you just can't seem to figure out what that elusive purveyor of said consumable products was called, *you will know*. And would life seem right at all if you hadn't opened that Wachovia student account so you could get that free T-shirt? Of course it wouldn't.

Of course, the corporate love doesn't end after your first couple of weeks at the university. Quite the contrary, in fact. The philanthropy simply comes through in new and exciting ways – most prevalently on your phone and in your mailbox. For instance, certain credit cards require something known as "approval."

But not for you, university student. Your mailbox will soon be filled to the brim with letters telling you that you're pre-approved for that Visa with a 6.9 percent interest rate (first month, every following month 18.5 percent). No hassle!

And over the phone, you can be told that you've been given subscriptions to eight different magazines. Eight! And at the low, low cost of \$64 every two months! That's four percent off the cover price! On top of that, the cost is deducted straight from your credit or debit card, so the worry is out of your hands. You know that the money's being taken away legitimately.

God bless you, corporations. Without you, how would life at a university be at all fulfilling? Without your gouging, where would we be?

Here's hoping for tradition.

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