

Have a great summer!
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OPINION

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Looking backward and forward

Finally, the semester is drawing to a close – although not without the end of the year rush our professors and instructors have so graciously bestowed upon us within the last couple of weeks. Despite the vast amount of work still needed to be finished before we bask in the glory of summer relaxation (at least in a relative sense), we have a feeling of satisfaction when we reflect upon the work we've done this year – both in and out of the *Traveler* office in the basement of Kimpel Hall.

It's always interesting to recall some of the most interesting news highlights of the year and the implications they have had – or will have – on the university experience.

For instance, we've had an almost complete changing of the guard with respect to university administration. Many people have suggested it is time for a change, while others continue to remember the past administration, headed by Chancellor John A. White, as one of success. We don't want to make any specific predictions of the university's future, only that with Chancellor-elect David Gearhart at the helm, it looks bright.

Of course, we don't want to leave out the retirement of Athletic Director Frank Broyles. He's been a massive presence at the UA for years, and now that Jeff Long is in charge, things will most certainly change.

Who would have thought the smoking ban would become more concrete as the year wore on? We remember reading – incredulously – of the plans to make the UA a tobacco-free campus. It appears proponents of the tobacco ban have developed it into a full-fledged and well-formulated campaign at this point. However, we find it interesting that the university has opted against an enforcement policy. We suppose it doesn't matter at this point, at least to many members of our staff, because we're about to undergo our own changing of the guard in about a week.

While we're on the subject of regulation of recreational substances on campus, let's talk about the alcohol policy change. While the initial policy seemed outrageous and incredibly strict, the fires of debate seem only to be smoldering at this point. There have been many students reprimanded for illegal possession of alcohol on campus – particularly in the crime logs from UAPD at the beginning of the year.

However, it doesn't appear that alcohol seems to be as much of a problem as it was in the fall at this point (if alcohol was ever a problem, that viewpoint we dispute vehemently).

Perhaps it's because of the policy. Perhaps it's because of the change in mindset of new students on campus, who are no longer enamored with the idea that college students drink too much all of the time. Still, another idea is that the students have found more ingenious ways to avoid being caught by their resident assistants or campus police officers. All three of these could be possible.

Finally, we were ecstatic to investigate the Fulbright College funding disparity this semester. Many of us are students within the college, and to learn that our division of the university has been so ungraciously compensated for its efficiency and quality of work proved to be a very worthwhile story – for our readers (including those officials who were unaware of the situation) and us.

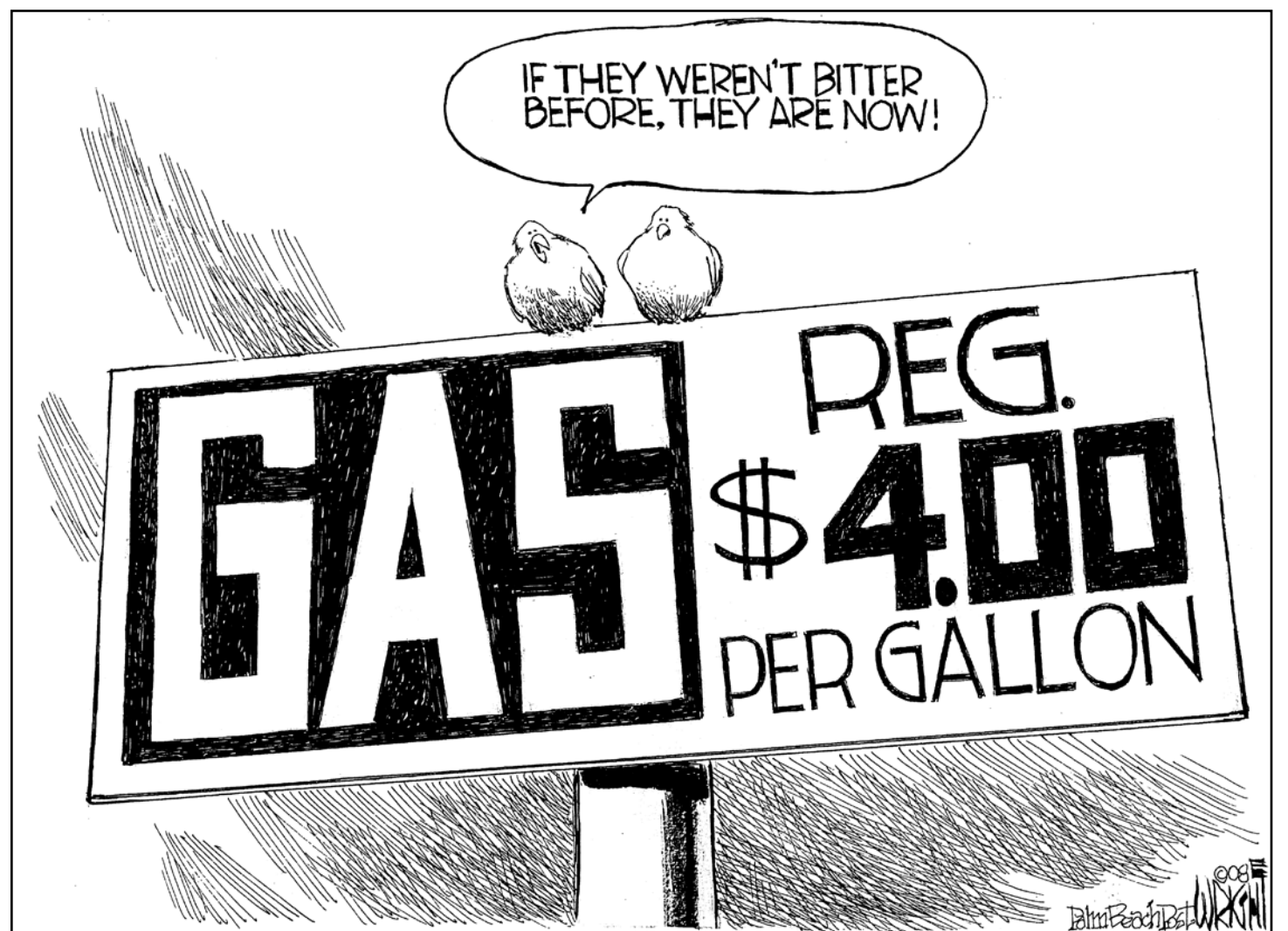
While we hate to admit it, when we learned of many of these events, we developed some preconceived notions upon reading the press releases and newly published policies issued by the university. In some cases, our close watch on the situation confirmed our ideas of how they would play out.

However, in many others, our preconceptions turned out to be far from the truth. What we've learned is that there is no way to properly predict how an exogenous factor will manipulate a situation. Our time working with the *Traveler* has been a wonderfully enriching experience.

While reflecting on the past is always an enjoyable exercise, it's also exciting to look toward the future. Many of us, and you, will be graduating next week – a long awaited day for all of us. We're excited to be moving on to bigger and, in some cases better things. But despite some of the disagreements we've had throughout campus this year, we believe we will come to long for our time as undergraduates.

We'd like to thank all those readers who contributed to the dialogue necessary to promote democracy, for all those members of the university who cooperated with our fact-gathering initiatives and even those who decided not to cooperate – those of us in our positions are here because we enjoy a challenge, and you provided that for us.

We hope everyone has a relaxing, safe and productive summer, and some of us will see some of you in the fall.



Same-sex marriages face religious obstacle

HAROLD JACKSON
Philadelphia Inquirer

GUEST COMMENTARY

It seems like a more recent event, but it was 12 years ago that I received the phone call.

I was at work in Baltimore. Suddenly, on the line was a voice I didn't know telling me something I didn't want to hear. He explained that he was a friend of my brother's who lived in San Francisco. He said Calvin was dying of AIDS and didn't want his family to know.

It had been an easy secret to keep. Calvin had moved to the other side of the continent after graduating from a Midwestern university. We typically saw him once a year, at Christmas.

By the time I received the phone call, Calvin was bedridden, in the last stages of the disease. Of course, I kicked myself for not picking up any signs. But sometimes you see only what you want to see. I never questioned it whenever Calvin would shake off not feeling well as the onset of the flu or a cold.

That last Christmas, I did notice his somberness (we usually kidded each other unmercifully), but attributed it to the emphasis on faith he said he had added to his life. I remember his trying to teach my children a Gospel song he said he had made up himself.

When the phone caller told me Calvin was sick, I immediately made plans to go see him. There, I met the "roommate" who I then knew was Calvin's partner – the man who made sure he received the best home hospice care available. Only months later, Calvin died. I was glad he had someone

who loved him with him during the ordeal. No one should be alone knowing death is so near.

I think of Calvin often. But he's come to mind a lot more in recent weeks, amid news that a bill to ban gay marriage in Pennsylvania is advancing in the legislature.

It would take a change in the state constitution to make same-sex marriage illegal, an arduous process that may not be achieved. The bill's sponsors don't seem to care. They want to discourage any counter attempt to legalize gay marriage in Pennsylvania.

Only Massachusetts has legalized gay marriage, but several states, including New Jersey a year ago, have granted same-sex couples civil-union rights.

Civil union, though, often is no substitute for marriage. That was the finding in February of a New Jersey commission that conducted three public hearings to find out how the more than 2,000 couples that had received civil-union licenses have fared.

Their anecdotes revealed common problems. For example, same-sex couples are often denied health benefits because of a provision in the federal Defense of Marriage Act. In numerous situations, hospital or social-services personnel either don't know that they should – or simply refuse to – provide important information or assistance to a spouse in a civil union.

Perhaps, over time and with enough public education, some of these problems would go away.

But homosexual couples that don't want to wait say the real answer is marriage.

And they want it now.

Based on the way I read the Bible – which may not be the way other Christians read it – I could not accept a same-sex couple as being married in the eyes of God. But the Bible also tells me not to mix religion and government.

Matthew 22:21 says: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

For government, marriage represents a contract between two adults who have agreed to share a household and attendant responsibilities. There's nothing particularly holy about having a justice of the peace in a courthouse tie the knot. It's a legal proceeding that's called marriage.

A religious ceremony conducted by a member of the clergy under the authority of God is more than a legal proceeding. But it's called a marriage, too.

My church would not marry same-sex couples, and should not be forced to by government edict. But, to me, that doesn't mean gay couples should be denied a nonreligious marriage.

Neither my church nor I would recognize them as married under God, but they don't care about us. They care about getting the taxation, insurance and government-services benefits of being a legal pair.

Some would argue that to

condone same-sex marriage in any form is to condone sin. I am no theologian, no preacher, but I do believe that we all sin and that all who don't repent and put their faith in Christ for salvation will face the same fate. That's gospel.

That our government gives us the freedom to sin does not absolve us from responsibility for our actions.

Even in those countries we look down on for mixing government and religion, there are sinners. Governments try, but they really can't legislate what they believe to be moral behavior. Each person will decide what is right, what is wrong, and which path he or she prefers.

No government edict will make homosexuality go away. Neither will it be discouraged by ineffective "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" rules.

I didn't think of Calvin and his partner as married, but I never questioned that his partner should be bequeathed whatever Calvin wanted him to have. They had an understanding that was clear to me.

I would never use marriage to describe their relationship, but if that's the word needed for government to recognize a same-sex couple as a legal pair, then let it be. But leave the churches that don't recognize those "marriages" alone.

Harold Jackson is editorial page editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. His column appears courtesy of McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tibet needs autonomy

In the past month, Students for a Free Tibet encountered pro-Chinese Government protestors at our ASG funded Tibetan Awareness Day. With a clear opposition to a Free Tibet, we feel it is important to clear up a few facts about Tibet. Putting aside the argument of whether or not Tibet was an independent country before the Chinese invasion, the world now needs to focus on the future of Tibet.

More than 1.25 million Tibetans have been killed or have died of starvation since the People's Republic of China invaded Tibet in 1949. The Chinese Government has methodically tried to erase the Tibetan Buddhist culture and language. Currently, Tibetan monasteries are blockaded by the Chinese military and monks are starving to death.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, asks only for autonomy for Tibet. He no longer requests Tibetan independence, and so with this

compromise, now is the time to invite China into the world community as a responsible country.

The global community must bring to attention the Chinese oppression in Tibet as well as Chinese involvement in Darfur, Zimbabwe and other countries. Let's also remember that because we are pro-Tibet, we are also pro-China, because in the long run, we will all benefit each other through economics and philosophies.

When Tibetans are vocal about wanting religious freedom, they are met with imprisonment or death. Thousands of Americans have died for religious freedom, and it is a freedom that many Americans hold dear.

With all focus on the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, it is time for everyone to stand up and hold the Chinese Government responsible for their actions and work for a non-violent resolution for autonomy in Tibet.

Students for a Free Tibet

Oil is a problem

I must admit I was in awe of Mr. Carrell's wit in Wednesday's letter. It is not often one can come up with a nickname that includes a field of study. Although I was a bit shocked at the charged nature of your letter, I am not surprised that current events should generate such sparks.

As for your letter, most of your points of contention are merely echoes of what Dr. Cleaveland and I previously said. Neither of us denied that oil is a finite resource and neither of us called for complete government control of gas prices; in fact, I said outright that I didn't want this.

Your argument that the selling of gasoline to consumers is fair because the price is stated up front is simply confusing. By this logic, I could sell a sandwich to a lower-income family for a hundred dollars, but the transaction is fair because the consumer knew the price beforehand, even if I am

the only vendor available and am clearly exploiting this dependency upon a necessity.

I don't argue that the weakened dollar has an effect on gasoline prices. However, I do argue that it should be criminal for oil companies to make continually record-setting profits while taking advantage of the American people in the process.

I also don't see how the private sector is the best solution for this problem. As of now, the private sector has no interest in resolving our energy problems because their profits rely upon sustaining the current system.

Finally, we will experience much more than a lifestyle change in our lifetime because of the current energy situation. If we do not change, and quickly, we shall see results far more drastic than a simple change in how we commute.

Jonathan Langley
Senior
English and French



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