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Hilltopics Staff

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War on sanity: America's drug policy fueled more by ONDCP self-interest than actual dangers

by Douglas Hill

In the roughly 5,000-year history of cannabis use, there have been a startlingly low number of overdoses. Somewhere in the neighborhood of zero.

Still, though, smoking marijuana is bad for you. Anyone who tells you otherwise is lying. Or high. It can harm your lungs, throat, heart, and brain. But it's also less dangerous than cigarettes, snuff, liquor, and possibly caffeine, not to mention cocaine, heroine, PCP, or any of the countless other drugs given lower priority than weed in our nation's war on drug-users. In fact, marijuana is considered by the federal government to be a schedule I drug, meaning it has no medical value and high potential for abuse. Cocaine, which can lead to chemical addiction and overdose (both medical impossibilities with marijuana) is a "less-dangerous" schedule II drug. Think that's confusing? That's not even half of the illogicalities in American drug policy.

The fact is that the Office of National Drug Control Policy has given marijuana enforcement its highest priority, despite the mountains of research, expert analysis, common sense, and economic reality

indicating that this policy makes less sense than a war on, say, backyard swimming pools, which kill thousands of Americans every year. Indeed, the most logical policy is a war on the war on drugs, which incarcerates nearly one million Americans every year (9 out of 10 of whom are users, not dealers) and creates a dangerous black market for a product roughly as harmful as a pack of cigarettes.

The reason the ONDCP insists on a harsh anti-pot policy has much more to do with its own

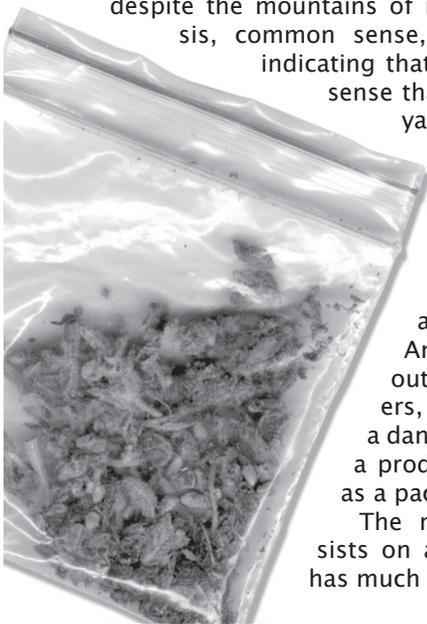
political security than actual fact, and even a pot head could conduct a study to conclusively prove it. In fact, this summer a Harvard economist concluded that marijuana prohibition costs the federal government \$5 billion dollars annually, and tax and regulation on the good would generate \$10-14 billion if the drug were legal. His research was so convincing that over 500 economists, including Nobel Prize-winner Milton Friedman, have called for its legalization on economic grounds.

Perhaps the only thing more foolish than the existence of the war on drugs is its implementation by the ONDCP. The office spent \$4.2 billion dollars on media advertising alone in the last 8 years, and a study of drug use among adolescents during the same time period revealed that marijuana use skyrocketed in direct proportion to advertising spending. All age groups experienced a jump in marijuana use, and 8th grade students used the drug with 90 percent greater frequency than before the advertising campaign. All the ads seem to have done is make kids aware that drugs are available outside of the inner-city.

The case for marijuana as a public health and safety risk is not much stronger. To die from smoking marijuana, one would have to smoke 100 pounds in about 15 minutes. Furthermore, the National Institute of Medicine concluded in 1999 that there was "no evidence" that marijuana acted as a "gateway" to more dangerous drugs.

And while it is unwise and unsafe to smoke and drive, marijuana does not affect non-conscious motor skills important to driving in the same way alcohol or even caffeine does, a fact that led a 2005 study to conclude that marijuana's effect on driving was "in no way unusual when compared to many medicinal drugs." While alcohol encourages risky decisions, the study found that marijuana caused drivers to be more cautious. That said, it is extremely foolish to get behind the wheel of a vehicle under the influence of any substance, legal or not. But does this danger truly justify the massive economic, social, and psychological costs of the war on drugs?

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INSIDE this issue

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Campus: What are we doing here? Why *Hilltopics* is important to SMU, page 4.

Life: Cell phone use on Hilltop has gotten out of control, page 2.

Be Heard: Got an opinion? *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions and interesting feedback. Email your thoughts to hilltopics@hotmail.com.

We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to hilltopics@hotmail.com by Wednesday at 7:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

Queen of the stone-age: At least one SMU student goes through life without a cell phone

by Kasi DeLaPorte

The cell phone, serving purposes from networking necessity to status symbol to security blanket, is a favorite accessory among SMU students. This phenomenon is most visible during the passing period, when, seconds after class is dismissed, masses of students emerge and immediately start making calls and checking voicemail. Is the call so urgent that it must be made at 10:51? Will the voicemail disappear at 11:01? Do they just want their phones to their ears so they don't look out of place or feel alone?

Would you believe that there are some students still living in the primitive Stone Age of Land Lines, who don't own a cell phone? Well, there's at least one - me.

No, I'm not scared of getting brain cancer, nor is it some moral stand against the pervasive advance of technology. It's just cheaper for me to use the local and long distance services on campus than pay for a cell phone each month. Plus, I will soon enter the business world, thus leashing myself to a cell phone, pager, Blackberry, laptop, GPS tracking system and/or any other electronic device that enables The Man to know when I'm working - so, for now, I'm pretty content living without one.

Of course, it's not like I completely avoid the technology, as I reap the benefits of my friends' cell phones nearly every day. When I'm out with friends at home, my parents know they can reach me on my friends' phones. If I call my friends long distance, they call me back so I don't have to pay unnecessarily. My boyfriend, now in California, still has his Dallas cell phone number, so the only occasional inconvenience there is waiting for unlimited night and weekend minutes to start.

I admit there have been times when it would have been nice to have a cell phone of my own. During a recent road trip, I unknowingly missed my exit, and instead of using a cell phone to conveniently call for more directions, I had to stop and use a pay phone. I realize this process sounds archaic, and the road trip is a perfect example of when the safety and security of having a cell phone outweigh even the convenience factor. However, it wasn't that long ago that we were driving without them, and we seemed to manage just fine.

In less than a decade, we've gone from trekking cross-country without any means of communication to not crossing the North Quad sans cell phone. Personally, I'd rather have a quality, uninterrupted phone conversation at home than several choppy, superficial chats just to fill the 10-minute voids between classes. There's something to be said for waiting your whole day to talk to someone. When you finally get to make the call, you're bursting with things to say. Plus, if students are consumed with walking and talking on the phone between classes, they're often missing out on any face-to-face socialization with people they may see on the way.

So, here's a little challenge for SMU's cell phone addicts - try to spend a couple passing periods a day without whipping out that cell phone. You never know who you might get to talk to in person - or, at the very least, what you might hear eavesdropping on the phone conversations of your passers-by.

Kasi DeLaPorte is a senior advertising and journalism major.

Business majors need some kind of liberal arts

by Courtney Hebb

There is a strange specimen that dwells on the SMU campus. Members wear suites to class, swivel in the comfy executive chairs, toss around financial lingo, read the *Wall Street Journal* and study (and sometimes lives) in a special pod known to the rest of the world as SMU Cox School of Business. Sometimes the world of Business and Academia collide, and some question the purpose of a business education in undergraduate studies. We are in college to be schooled, however what role should the B-School have in university?

Whilst in Oxford (that famous university on the other side of the pond) I was speaking to a University Fellow dapper in a plaid bow tie and the British aura of pretension. Answering an inquiry on my course of study, my mention of a Business degree was met with a "hoff", a raised eyebrow and an "Oh, I see". Now for you who don't see, Oxford considers itself a place of scholars. Even though it has a business school, the existence of that school is a consequence of the Thatcher era and is inconveniently and purposely placed on the edge of town. Realizing this, I tried to redeem myself by stating my other major, in the liberal arts realm. Those business advocates who are shrugging this incident off as an "English" thing may be surprised to learn that this is not isolated occurrence. In fact, similar conversations have happen right here on the SMU campus. Just swap the British pretension with the academic variety and get rid of the bow tie and accent. It seems as though Fridays off and the massive number of power point presentations emanating from Cox seems to some like a fluff major. For them, it is just a vocational school not motivated to teach students to think, just to do.

Now, I know all you B-Majors will rally behind me when I say that there is nothing fluffy about a 48 credit hour major that includes accounting and finance. However there might be some truth behind the accusation of a fancy vocational school that teaches a skill set. After all, what Cox teaches directly translates into employment. With the extra B-school career center, workshops and networking opportunities, it seems impossible not to find work post graduation. Finance majors do finance, accounting majors account, management majors manage, it is a world where major = job.

Now where is the value of a liberal arts degree in this equation? Do all philosophy majors philosophize for a living? The obvious answer is no. However the cognitive skills can transfer to other areas of employment, and analytical abilities are not often nurtured in the business school. Great thinkers that have challenged and shaped society, like Marx,

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What do you think?

We want to know.
Hilltopics is always looking for new submissions and ideas.

send yours to hilltopics@hotmail.com

Hilltopics editor learns first-hand that SMU police department has students' safety at heart

by Michael Hogenmiller

It was only a week ago that, as a college senior, I took my first breathalyzer test. The event wasn't marked by hostility, or the threat of going to jail, or even a DUI. In fact, it was the single most positive encounter I've had with SMUPD, and I want to thank the officers for what they do for our students.

We'd started our night around 10 p.m. We were all over 21, we'd all moved off campus in our old age, and we thought it'd be nostalgic to return to the fraternity house and have a beer. By 3 a.m., I'd caught up with some friends, watched a movie, grabbed late night food, and was ready to head home.

As I haphazardly plotted a course to my car, I fumbled for my keys and chatted on my cell phone. I'd plopped down into the driver's seat and put the key in the ignition when a flashlight in the rearview mirror caught my eye. I checked the side mirror, noted the badge, and quickly got off the phone.

I asked the officer how he was doing, and he said fine, and asked if I'd had anything to drink tonight. I said yes, about five or six beers, but over the course of five hours, and with the meal I'd had, I wasn't worried. I felt fine and wasn't particularly concerned about making the drive home. The officer pulled out a card that listed blood alcohol content ratios and asked how much I weighed. We decided that I could still be hovering around the legal limit. As such, he asked if I'd follow his pen with my eyes while he shined his flashlight. I said, "Sure, no problem," and did as he asked. He said, "Well, with that test right there I can tell you're probably right around the limit. Why don't you come over here and try something else for me."

So I did. I pulled the key out of the ignition and made my way toward his white Explorer, and he pulled out a breathalyzer kit. When he asked if I minded taking the test, I thought, "Cool! I've never taken a breathalyzer before." He explained how it worked and attached a disposable plastic tube to the

grey brick with a single red digital read out: "0.0" He held it up, I blew into it, and we watched the red numbers climb to "0.09" – beyond the legal limit to drive. I was mildly entertained to find out that I was legally drunk.

Now that we understood legal sobriety was out the window, he asked how old I was, and I told him 21. He asked if I was a senior, and I said yes. Next, instead of demanding a driver's license to prove my age, or lecturing me, or threatening me with some other legal charge, he did something unexpected.

He took the plastic tube from the breathalyzer and handed it to me. He said, "I want you to remember how you feel right now. I know that with the time that's passed and the food you ate, you may not feel like you're intoxicated, but legally you are, and you need to know what this feels like. Remember, if you ever feel even the slight buzz you may feel right now, you could be over the legal limit, and if you ever feel more than that, it's definitely not safe to drive." He asked if I had a place to stay on campus, and I said I had a friend with a couch that would work just fine. Then he left, asking only that I hang on to the breathalyzer tube and remember to stay safe.

I still have that plastic tube, and the lesson behind it is important. More significant to me, though, was the care and concern he showed for a student. It was 3 a.m., and he saw a student who appeared to have been drinking walking toward his car – a college senior with aspirations who could have gotten a DUI or worse while heading home. For all of the grins the police reports receive, and for all of the complaining that underage students do, it's important to realize that SMU's police officers care about students in a very real way. I'm grateful for them.

Michael Hogenmiller is a senior political science and music major

Liberal arts should be more emphasized in Cox

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Freud, Voltaire, Plato and Shakespeare, have no home in Cox. Such essential aspects of a well-rounded education are not cultivated with the teachings of debits and credits. Instead it is taught by delving deep into research and surfacing with a thesis that is well supported and argued.

Thinking outside of the business school box, dual majoring is a great way to experience the best of both worlds. Although the GEC makes students dabble briefly, without committing to a major or minor it is hard to gain the benefits of the liberal arts. After all, it is hard to go deep in an intro level course where papers rarely exceed five pages. It may not directly affect your first job, but at least you'll have something interesting to talk about at cocktail parties. And in a society where business touches every facet, understanding how business operates can be profitable. So even if you are not a business major, take an accounting course to will help you to learn the nuts and bolts. So no matter what you major is now or what your job is in the future, go and experience a range of coursework from business to Plato; for the only way avoid being stuck in a square box is to be well rounded.

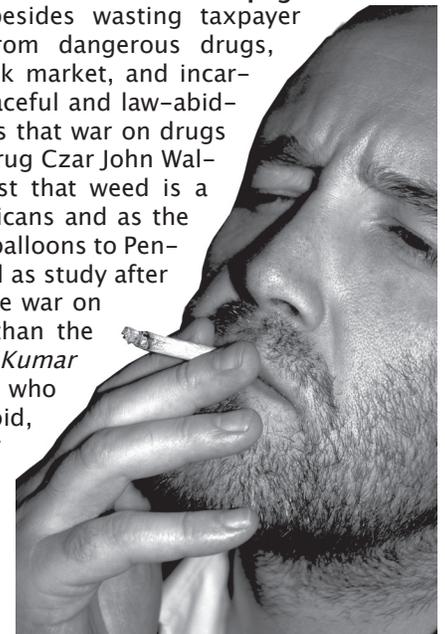
Courtney Hebb is a senior marketing and political science major.

Pot use less threatening than 'war on drugs'

continued from page 1

One asks, then, besides wasting taxpayer money, distracting from dangerous drugs, creating a deadly black market, and incarcerating otherwise peaceful and law-abiding citizens, what does that war on drugs do? Nothing. So as Drug Czar John Walters continues to insist that weed is a grave danger to Americans and as the budget of the ONDCP balloons to Pentagon-proportions and as study after study confirms that the war on drugs is less logical than the plot line of *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*, who seems more paranoid, the marijuana users or the politicians whose jobs rest on the need for a war on drugs?

Douglas Hill is a junior international studies major.



Letter to the Editors: When great minds don't always think alike, SMU needs *Hilltopics*

Hey,

My name is Ellen and I'm a junior at SMU. I have recently written an article, and I wanted to print it in both publications, but the DC has copyright rules. I eventually chose the DC because I figure it has a wider audience. I love *Hilltopics*, and I believe their articles are written better than the DC. Honestly, I rarely see anything of substance in the DC. I was wondering why *Hilltopics* is a separate publication from *Daily Campus*? I think *Hilltopics* could reach a larger audience if it maybe had a weekly featured section in the DC, and it would positively improve the content of the DC.

Just wondering,
Ellen

Dear Ellen,

Your question gets to the heart of an important discussion on campus: what exactly is *Hilltopics*? What is our mission on campus? And why would students want to write for or read *Hilltopics* when *The Daily Campus* clearly has a larger circulation?

What is *Hilltopics*? First off, it's important to recognize that as a student opinion publication distributed on Mondays, *Hilltopics* is not meant to compete with *The Daily Campus* in any way. For the most part, *The Daily Campus* keeps us all updated throughout the week with its superior coverage of breaking news on campus, in the nation at large, and even beyond our borders. While the topics and discussions presented in *Hilltopics* are – we hope – just as timely and related to important goings-on beyond the Hilltop, our primary concern is the dissemination of opinion pieces.

What is our mission on campus? While this year's editorial board has many of our own ideas about how to maintain and improve the content and readership of *Hilltopics*, we still hold true to the vision of our publication as laid out by student Jared Dovers in volume I, issue I. Jared wrote,

What you're holding in your hand is important! From *Common Sense* to *The Onion*, diversity in the media plays an indisputably positive role in our country, but not at our school. *Hilltopics* is here to change that. You've probably heard that before the muskets won the American Revolution, the printing press was delivering dissenting rhetoric to the public. While I am not Thomas Paine and *Hilltopics*

probably won't incite wars, it *is* the stuff of a revolution.

We feel that in order for a balance of opinion, information, and – yes – sometimes controversy, to exist on any campus it is necessary for more than one media source and more than one outlet for student writing to exist. *Hilltopics* was founded after a careful examination of the types of student media at SMU's "benchmark" universities demonstrated that at colleges both comparable and superior to our own, at least two – if not far more – types of student publications are deemed necessary and are, in fact, supported by the university's governing bodies and the community at large. So, while the articles that appear in *Hilltopics* may be of the same genre as those found on the editorial pages of *The Daily Campus*, we are resolute in our decision to remain a separate, independent publication in the interest of simply stirring things up. Because, really, not *all* great minds think alike.

Finally, why would students want to write for or read *Hilltopics*? *Hilltopics* is committed to publishing articles from all members of the SMU community – regardless of seniority or departmental interests – so your opinion is always welcome here and, when reading, you're always guaranteed to find a diverse mix of commentary on a wide range of subjects – from the serious to the silly to the worthiest of subtle satire. While *Hilltopics* does claim, at present, only a modest distribution on campus, we on the editorial staff are working hard to increase the visibility of our contributors and their causes. In the mean time, no potential writers should assume that their work in *Hilltopics* will go unnoticed. Every week without fail, *Hilltopics* staff personally hand-deliver issues to countless familiar faces. And every week without fail, *Hilltopics* receives both verbal and written praise from devoted faculty, staff, and student subscribers. Write something well-articulated or especially provocative for us and you can be sure to have professors and classmates take note – whether they directly make their patronage known to you or not. As the irreplaceable Jared Dovers put it, "We've broken our backs (and our GPAs) getting this thing into your hands—now it's up to you—so let's see it. From the SMU Students Against War to the Young Conservatives of Texas, we want to see what you've got to say. Viva la revolución!"

Responding on behalf of the Hilltopics editorial board, Rebekah Hurt is a senior English major.

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