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Taking it for granted: Universal right to drinking water is not something most people think about

by Juan Esteban Contreras

Relaxed and content I half-swam, half-floated, back and forth in the pool of my apartment complex. Even though I have the luxury to this every day, this was only the second time in nine months that I took the time to do so. Had someone come and told me that I had to leave, I would have probably said "Leave me alone, I DESERVE to be here." After discussing the situation I probably would have engaged in a fist-fight to show that it is MY RIGHT to use the pool whenever I want to. Or maybe I would have been cowardly and run away, but that's not the point.

Rights are sometimes conditional and therefore not granted to everyone. The pool at my apartment complex serves as an illustration. I have the right to use it only because I live there. Another example would be drinking from the water fountain at the university I attend (no matter how bad it tastes). Still, some rights, such as basic sanitation and drinking water, should be universal.

Access to drinking water is now recognized as a basic human right by the Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights. If you live in Dallas, TX, water is rightfully yours.

Yet, if you live in a small village in Africa, that right is sometimes taken away from you. Even though the world is 75% water, there is an epidemic going on. According to the World Health Organization, one-sixth of the world's population doesn't have access to safe drinking water. 2.4 billion people lack access to basic sanitation. Rights sometimes have to become available to you for them to do you any good.

The problem isn't just drinking water. Water is needed for everything. Imagine just one day without clean water. Your dishes and clothes would go unwashed. You would sit thirsty, somewhat dirty, and annoyed, or at least anxious. But because this problem would only last a day you would simply wait and try to forget about it.

Unlike the women of many undeveloped countries, you wouldn't have to walk four miles (both

ways) to bring water back to your family. Even worse, the water is sometimes not sufficient and/or clean enough to prevent disease, cook a meal, and wash yourself properly. Many of us don't even drink out of somebody else's cup. How about drinking parasite, virus and bacteria-filled water that you just walked eight miles for?

It is hard to imagine a world unlike our own. While Americans use 60 to 100 gallons of water daily, people in developing countries use fewer than 3. While I worry about things like the taste of the water at school or about Dasani being overpriced because it is "purified" tap water, millions of people are dying because they can't get to clean water. What wouldn't they do for a drink of our water fountains and our Pony-purchasable Dasani bottles?

The United States has always been a giving country. Whenever there is a need and the need is properly informed, Americans rush to send something, anything. One option is to support organizations that provide the needy with wells.

With a \$1 donation to Blood:Water Mission, one person can be supplied with enough drinking water for a whole year. You can visit www.bloodwater-mission.org for more information.

There are other things that we can do. Green Cross International and environmental activists, along with actors like Leonardo DiCaprio, are launching an international water campaign to petition the UN to accept a Framework Convention on the Right to Water, which would basically force world leaders to make drinking water more available to all people. Their slogan is "Water is not a privilege, it is a right!" and they want your help. Check out www.watertreaty.org to sign the petition and find out more.

My whole life I have taken water for granted. We must be grateful for what we have, and whenever we can, we should gladly give to those in need in hopes that it will make a difference.

Juan Esteban Contreras is a junior marketing major.



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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 8:00 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.

Looking for job experience? Select your internship carefully and make sure it fits your style

by Kasi DeLaPorte

Last week, *Hilltopics* offered some free-spirited alternatives to entering the traditional working world. Last time I checked, however, college loans don't pay back themselves, so this summer I will most likely be sitting in an office somewhere.

The best way to get a head start on the job search is through internships. Students should try out a variety of companies in their prospective fields so they can broaden their experience and explore all of their options. A company might sound great on paper, but the only way to really discover a company's culture is to immerse oneself in it.

For the past two summers, I worked in communications at an oil company in Houston, and this semester, I'm doing an account management internship at an advertising agency. Everyday, I wonder if the experiences could be much more different.

At Big Oil, the average employee is a white male manager-type in his 40s or 50s, decked out in Dockers and golf shirts. I felt out of place just by virtue of being a girl, and especially if I didn't wear panty hose.

My team at Ad Agency is mostly twentysomething women who look like they stepped out of a fashion magazine, even in jeans on Fridays, and one guy with great hair who wears flip-flops and Banana Republic. I may not be trendy enough.

Big Oil headquarters is a sprawling 3-story mass of beige walls, beige carpet and beige furniture. From my desk in the Ad Agency high-rise, I have a colorful view of artful ads and the Dallas skyline.

At Big Oil, employees were reprimanded for writing jokes about sports team rivalries on the white boards outside their offices; only sometimes is a Dilbert comic strip permissible.

In addition to posters and spreads, people at Ad Agency bedeck their cubicles with humorous memos, such as "Why Skinny People Irritate Me."

Meetings at Big Oil take place in unadorned (beige) conference rooms. At Ad Agency, if there aren't enough chairs at the table, we sit in orange bean bags.

Ad Agency brings out a ping-pong table during lunch. I can't contrast that to anything remotely cool at Big Oil.

Big Oil's executives hide out in a fancy, high-security suite one can enter only with special ID access and a private elevator. Ad Agency's principals are very visible, even the top dog himself, and have cubes just like everyone else.

When Ad Agency's head calls an impromptu meeting, all 600 employees leave their work to hear him talk. At one of Big Oil's town halls with the CEO, only about 150 of the 3,000 Houston employees care to attend.

And the list goes on. I'm quickly learning that I like working in the fast-paced, cutting-edge environment of advertising better than I enjoy doing communications in the conservative oil industry. Target markets, consumer behavior and creative strategies do it for me; hydrocarbons, barrels of oil equivalent and wildcat drilling don't. However, had I not gone after the internship this semester, I may have settled for a job that wasn't quite right for me.

October is not too early to start looking for that potentially perfect career. It's a lot easier to test-drive a job for 10 weeks than to sign on to a full-time job you grow to hate. For more information on internships, visit the Hegi Family Career Development Center in Hughes-Trigg.

Kasi DeLaPorte is a senior advertising and journalism major.

Thinking of inking? Make sure your tattoo is something you're still going to want in 30 years

by Douglas Hill

Not too long ago, an older friend of mine told me a story from his "good old days." It was the mid 1990s, and he and some of his then-college-aged buddies went out drinking. After a few rounds they went home, and on the way, they passed a tattoo parlor. His buddies all got various conventional tattoos—suns, moons, Asian symbols, and the like. Not wanting to be a walking stereotype, my friend decided to do something different. He just didn't know what he wanted. He thought and thought and thought, and by the time it was his turn to go under the needle, he still hadn't decided. Not wanting to chicken out in front of his buddies, he opted for the first half-way good idea he could think of. My friend now has a wife, two kids, a job at a medical clinic, and an "Air Jordan" logo pulled from his 1994 basketball shoes tattooed on his shoulder.

I heard this story a while back, and thought it easily won the prize for stupidest tattoo idea, until I noticed a trend that I, as a GDI, knew nothing about: tattooing Greek letters. On one's body. Permanently.

Alright, fine. You like your fraternity a lot, and you always want to remember it. Sure, your sorority sisters might be your friends for life. But when you're 45 years old, do you really think the Greek organization you were in is STILL going to be so important to you that you want it permanently painted under your skin?

My mother was a sorority girl in college. She dated frat guys, she went to the parties, she rushed girls, she was Greek to the bone. If my mother were the kind of girl who got tattoos, she might have gotten her letters in an inconspicuous place. Nowadays, I hear her mention her sorority by name a maximum of three or four times a month. Usually less. She's still not the kind of girl who gets tattoos, but if she were, I'm fairly certain her choice wouldn't include an alpha, an omega, or anything in between.

Do any of the people getting these tattoos really think that in 2035 they're going to look back on their time at SMU and say, "Well, it was a lot of fun, but I sure wish I would have gone with Skeebo and Chris to get those matching tattoos.?" So please, for the sake of yourself and your future, think twice, and don't go see any "artists" in that office above your favorite head shop until you've at least thought about what you'll want to see covering your body thirty years from now, because I'll lay three-to-one that, over the course of the rest of your life, you'll wear a business suit about a thousand times more often than you'll wear your frat jersey.

Douglas Hill is a junior international studies major.

A is for apple, Z is for internet: Generation-Zed being raised in a post-internet world

by Hershel Chapin

I'm worried about Generation Zed. People born in my generational cohort (Generation Y) know of a time in their youth when the Internet never existed. I can proudly say that I was the first kid on my block to join a chatroom. I actually used Usenet. I recall the point in time when 1337sp33k became a language. I can still picture the first "n00bs." I remember the first LAN parties, and then the first jokes that embarrassed the people who attended said parties. I experienced the early stages of our beloved internet, the awkward courtship the world had with it, the mishaps, the scandals, the e-commerce frauds, the progress, the viruses, and so on.

We Gen Y-ers know of an epoch when life didn't require constant updating, pop-up-blocking, spam-servering, when word of mouth was a literal term, when children played outside. I can fondly recount when having a "high hit-count" was a bad thing for a normal person to have. Inboxes were small, sometimes hand-crafted wooden receptacles for new business. A web was a device used to ensnare game. A pod was a small storage space hermetically protected from the elements. The large island in Indonesia southeast of Sumatra was the one and only Java. Hacking once signified the chopping of matter. A chat was an extended period of time during which two parties agreeably congregated in person; such a meeting would usually occur in the late morning or early afternoon (and not at 2 a.m.). A forum meant a place where people physically sat down to discuss ideas civilly. Trolls were beasts in mythology that lived underneath bridges. A friend was someone with whom you met and exchanged pleasantries. All of these things must sound obvious to a Generation Y-er, but the people who make up our legacy will hardly realize their absence.

"So what's the big deal?" you might ask, "Aren't those updated terms harmless?" The way I see it, a problem lies in the fact that the Generation Zed-ers never will have had a period of adjustment like we have. So then, why is it so critically important to have an appreciation of the transitional time from non-Internet to Internet?

Generation Zed-ers will never know, nor have any appreciation for the browser Mosaic. Many of them will probably think to "Dial-up" means to get all soapy: Internet always has been fast and available according to common current misconception. Some Zed-ers will see the Internet pornography industry as blight (while others, boon). Regardless of the morals involved, the porn industry is the very reason why modern websites can handle such massive amounts of data streaming at one time. Surfing the Internet is already expected so much that it has become a rite of passage for many children today. We are now hearing of toys such as "Baby's First Computer", and Internet primers for kids. Everything we own, down to our watches, planners, and sometimes even body parts, connects to broadcasts from other parts of the Earth. It will be nearly impossible for a post-Generation Y-er to conceive of a world that is not connected by a global network.

The Generation Zed-ers will laugh that some battles of the American Civil War took place weeks after the surrender at Appomattox was declared. Our children will think, "Those id-

A fable: Nobody wins the blame game

by Patricia Ash

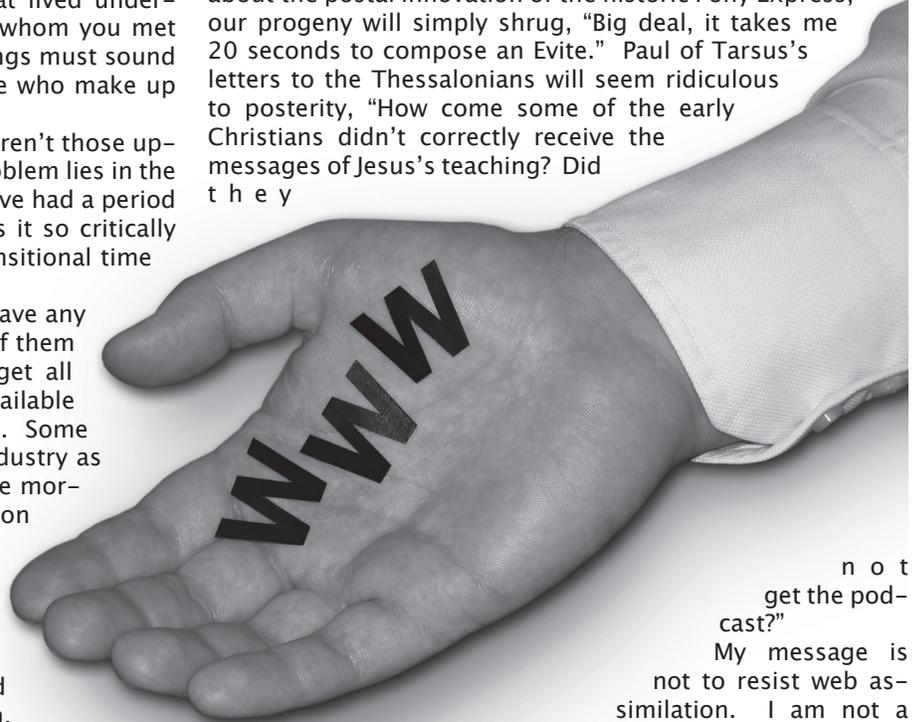
A mangy dog was walking along the street one day when he saw a trembling, frail old lady about to cross the street. He asked if she would like some help and offered her his arm. She said "thank you," and the dog started to help her across the busy street.

Now, when the dog was halfway across, a donkey grabbed his collar and shook him, saying that he wasn't helping the old lady across the street well enough. At the same time, an elephant, coming from the other side of the street, grabbed both the dog and the donkey, insisting that the donkey knew nothing and that the dog wasn't helping the old lady cross the street correctly. The donkey and the elephant stood in the middle of the busy street, gripping the helpless dog and dragging him back and forth, arguing about the right way to help the old lady cross the street and which one of them would be better at it.

The old lady, seeing that the dog could not help her anymore, tried to finish crossing the street on her own. She got hit by a truck.

Patricia Ash is a first-year theater and English major.

lots, why didn't General Lee just forward his farewell address to his listserv of Confederate officers?" When they read about the postal innovation of the historic Pony Express, our progeny will simply shrug, "Big deal, it takes me 20 seconds to compose an Evite." Paul of Tarsus's letters to the Thessalonians will seem ridiculous to posterity, "How come some of the early Christians didn't correctly receive the messages of Jesus's teaching? Did t h e y



n o t
get the pod-
cast?"

My message is not to resist web assimilation. I am not a Luddite, nor do I advocate techno-fear. My message is to remember to teach Generation Zed-ers about life without the Internet, lest their minds be trapped inside it forever.
Hershel Chapin is a junior finance and French major.

Communes not just for hippies! Intentional communities offer enduring alternative lifestyles

by Rebekah Hurt

In spring 2005, a movie by the name of "The Ballad of Jack and Rose" starred Daniel Day Lewis as a (rich) Scottish-born, eco-conscious, consumerism-hating, hippie has-been living with his pretty teenage daughter in an abandoned 70s island commune off the Carolina coast. Upon viewing the flick at Angelika, I started wondering whether the commune lifestyle is actually still present in the U.S. – and, if so, what kind of people are now living in these self-selecting communities, and for what reasons?

Now, I wouldn't recommend you rush out to rent "Ballad," because while provocative, it's really more about Lewis' hilariously bad Scottish accent and the incest taboo than any especially serious aspect of the commune question. But do take a gander at the following facts about the state of communes today. I was surprised, in the course of my net-research, to discover just how common these quirky modes of habitation still are and was challenged to sincerely consider what kinds of people I have chosen to surround myself with at SMU and those which I might choose to surround myself with in the increasingly open, globalized future.

So www.ic.com, the homepage of "Intentional Communities" database is a pretty cool website – and, plus, it provides something entertaining to play around with on those slow days of procrastination when you've already checked and re-checked your email, AIM, secondary email, myspace, and facebook profiles and found no new happy distractions! It turns out that the PC catch-all term "intentional communities" as it is employed presently is meant to include "ecovillages, cohousing, residential land trusts, communes, student co-ops, urban housing cooperatives and other related projects and dreams." Using the IC site's directory you can search for info on communities by any combination of criteria including: country, state, sexual preference and level of tolerance, spiritual affiliation, membership requirements and fees, number of shared community meals per week, dietary practices and restrictions, educational style, percentage of own food grown, and more. Previously unbeknownst to me, there are actually twenty-six such intentional communities in Texas that are IC-registered (although closer examination reveals that many of these are either in forming or transitional stages with often fewer than half a dozen adult members). Who are these people? Well ...

Most of Texas' intentional communities are religiously-

centered. Wikipedia tells us about some of the country's other most well-known (well-known to whom I confess I do not know) intentional communities: "The Farm is a famous spiritual Intentional Community in Summertown, Tennessee, based on principles of nonviolence and respect for the Earth. It was founded in 1971 by Stephen Gaskin and 320 San Francisco hippies. In the time since its founding, The Farm has fashioned itself as an Ecovillage. It has approximately 250 residents as of 2004. The Farm is home to the famous Farm midwives, led by Ina May Gaskin, the mother of modern midwifery."

"Twin Oaks is an intentional community in rural Virginia, [...] that has sustained itself since 1967. It was one of the first secular egalitarian communities in the US in the 20th century. It is a founding member of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. Twin Oaks uses a communal shared-labor system involving community work, organic gardens, hammock-making, and a tofu factory. Members work in community-owned businesses, with the community providing for all basic needs (housing, food, healthcare, etc.). All income from the businesses is shared, as are vehicles and houses. As of early 2005, just over 100 people live at Twin Oaks – 15 of them children under 18, the rest adult members. The longest-staying members have been there over 30 years, but more than half of the community members have been there 5 years or less."

It occurs to me that in the past eighty-some years since co-ed university attendance has become the norm for large portions of the middle and upper classes, American colleges have become their own sort of temporary "communes," "intentional communities," whatever. This is perhaps more strongly the case at colleges where either high academic standards and hopping campus life or outright administrative requirements keep students in university housing all four years, or close to it. In any case, it seems that a consideration of the histories behind these movements and their present-day activities has much to offer. It prompts a greater self-consciousness about the environments that we choose, alter, and create for ourselves over time and the relationship of such a process and such a self-consciousness to trends in national and international political demographics.

Rebekah Hurt is a senior English major.

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