February 13, 1997

The Banner -

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## Perspectives

## Little-known addictions equally destructive

Koeller entered West Virginia University in 1990 with high hopes and expectations. "I was planning on getting my

degree in secondary education," Koeller, of Morgantown, W.V., said. "I wanted to teach high school history."

Seven years later, Koeller is about to fulfill that dream. It's just happening later than he expected.

'I lost about three years of my life," Koeller said. "I almost threw it all away because I couldn't stop betting on games.'

Koeller's addiction to gambling led him down a path of poverty and depression. Once a student full of potential, Koeller said he quickly became a slave to the scoreboard. Like many college students, his penchant for gambling cost him much more than a portion of his weekly paycheck.

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"Schools have programs for drug and alcohol abusers, but what about those juniors and seniors who've lost all their money by betting on football games?" said Art Mambra, a former guidance counselor at the University of Northern Iowa. "It wasn't a huge number, but when these students would come in to talk to me, they would be at the end of their rope." Koeller said it took less than 20

(CPS)-After graduating near the tom. By April of his sophomore going to pay off your \$500 debt, top of his high school class, Derek year, he had bet on his final game. so they stay away."

"I dropped all my classes, lost my job, and didn't have a goddamn dime," Koeller said. "There were people calling my dorm room at all hours of the night, my roommate was always pissed at me, and my friends pretty much left me to die.'

being a bit dramatic, he said his self. "These kids get into some-

For Koeller, that debt reached \$11,000, a high price for a fulltime student and part-time telemarketer. For others, the price tag is much higher.

I've talked to students who owe \$40,000," said Robert Shaw, a counselor for Gamblers Anony-Although Koeller admits he's mous and a former gambler him-



him once they saw what was happening, despite the fact than many

still bet on games themselves. "Gambling isn't a friend-in-need addiction," Koeller said. "It's not like pot or alcohol where you do what you can to get your friend to a treatment center. People avoid you because they think it's going months before he hit rock bot- to cost them money. No one's

friends distanced themselves from thing they can't handle. They have no idea how big this is.

Although no certain estimates are available, betting tabs in Las Vegas are said to easily top a billion dollars each year. Factor in the numerous office pools and bets between relatives and friends, and that number skyrockets.

"It's part of the American culture," Shaw said.

## In college, it's part of the land-

"There's always some guy coming around with an NCAA pool or squares or something," said Jim Leski, a sophomore at Eastern Illinois University. "I don't think it's a huge problem, though. You got a few bucks, you get in. If you don't, you take a pass.

Koeller said he used to believe that. But when he became bored with the action in his dorm, he called a local bookie-one recommended to him by a classmate.

"That step is a big deal to me," Koeller said. "I'm not one of those guys who's going to preach about the evils of betting on a Redskins game with your roommate. I just think you need to keep it in check. When you call a bookie, you're taking it to the next level. Then it's not about fun, it's about money."

Although most campus newspapers don't publish betting lines, Koeller said he would get his numbers from his bookie, his local paper, or the Internet.

The NCAA has threatened to ban reporters affiliated with newspapers that print betting lines from the men's basketball tournament. Any action, though, would create an empty press box. "It's not something we're tack-

ling right now, but it is definitely on our agenda," said Deanna Smith, spokesperson for the NCAA. "Considering what happened this past football season (the gambling scandal involving Boston College football players), we need to keep the outside influences away from the athletes."

Several BC players admitted they bet on college games throughout the season—in itself a violation of NCAA rules. The real trouble began when Boston newspapers reported that BC players were betting on their own games, and getting pressure from local bookies to cover the spread.

BC athletic director Chet Gladchuk said he is not taking the situation lightly.

We'll be setting up programs for our players," Gladchuk said. "And hopefully, the rest of the student body will participate, t00.

BC junior James Hennigan said the football team scandal was a wake-up call for him. "I was spending about \$100 a week on football bets," he said. "I saw what was happening there, and it made me think. You never know where something like this is going to lead. I figured I'd get out while I still could.

Henry Lesieur, an Illinois State University criminal justice professor with a specialization in gam-

bling, says schools need to treat betting like any other addiction.

'When parents send their kids off to school, they can't imagine their son or daughter betting away their checkbook on some basketball game, but it happens," Lesieur said.

Lesieur did a study on gambling in schools in five states. He found that 85 percent of college students gambled at least once in their lives, while 25 percent said they bet on a regular basis.

While Lesieur said schools need to set up programs to help students with all addictions, he also said parents need to be aware of their child's lifestyle by getting involved with their academic and social careers.

Or, as in Koeller's case, get left behind.

I can't say I'm out of the woods vet." Koeller said. "I don't bet anymore, but I can't look at the paper without checking out the betting lines. I see something like Houston favored over New York by 12 points, and I'm like, 'No way that's going to happen. Make a phone call—time to make some money.

But Koeller said he resists the urge. "I don't ever want to be in such a vulnerable position again,' he said. "I'm not going to make the climb a second time. The first time took too much work.'

Mr. Whipple: The most hated

Dave Barry columnist

Last week I promised that in ing quantities of fluids. People today's column I would announce also cannot fathom why this fluid which commercial, according to is always blue. my survey, you readers hate the most. So if you have an ounce of it: "If anyone around here starts sense or good taste, you'll stop secreting anything blue, the last

As Carla and Bill Chandler put thing we're going to worry about

tired of the endlessly escalating, extremely confusing war of the pain relievers. At one time, years ago, there was just aspirin, which was basically for headaches. Now, there are dozens of products, every single one of which seems to be telling you that not only is it more effective than the other ones, but also the other ones could cause a variety of harmful side effects such as death. It seems safer to just live with the headache.

Many survey respondents were especially scornful of the commercials suggesting that you can undergo an actual surgical procedure, such as a Cesarean section, and the only pain medication

woman in the Special K commercials got to be thin and shapely by eating Special K. Patricia Gualdoni wrote: "I have eaten enough Special K cereal to sink a battleship, and I look a lot more like a battleship than the woman in the ad did.

People are also skeptical of the Denorex shampoo commercials. "How do we know that the tingling sensation isn't battery acid eating through your scalp?" asked Alyssa Church.

Here are just a few of the other views expressed by the thousands of readers who responded to the survey:

Andy Elliott wrote: "I hate ra-

**THE Crossword** ACROSS 1 Ride a wave 5 Scrub 10 McEntire of music 14 Edible spread 15 Old Greek thinker 16 Arab VIP 17 Nullify 18 — free delivery 19 Conifer 20 Bakery items 22 Gives way 24 Crude dwelling 25 Pomes 26 Be against 29 Traverse 30 Haggard or Oberon 31 Actress Thomas 32 Evil 35 Like a desert 35 Like a deseri 36 Tropical eel 37 loe cream — 38 Opp. of pos. 39 Like many animals 40 List of candidates

candidates 41 Domineering ANSWERS and fat ONBL CONDS SLIS

reading this column right now. Really, I mean it...

This is your last chance ...

You're making a huge mistake... OK, you pathetic fool. The most hated commercial of all time, according to the survey, was the one for Charmin featuring "Mr. Whipple" and various idiot housewives who lived in a psycho pervert community where everybody was obsessed with squeezing toilet paper-or, as they say in Commercial Land, "bathroom tissue." Americans still, after all these years, feel more hostility toward that ad campaign than they ever did toward international communism.

Of course, some people will say: "But those ads sold a lot of Charmin!"

Yes, and the Unabomber produced high-quality, hand-crafted letter bombs. But that doesn't make it right.

The Mr. Whipple ads are related to a whole category of commercials that, according to the survey, people really detestnamely, commercials that discuss extremely intimate bodily functions and problems, often at dinnertime.

People do not wish to hear total strangers blurting out statements about their constipation and their diarrhea and their hemorrhoids and their "male itch." People do not wish to see scientific demonstrations of pads absorbing amaz-

is how absorbent their pad is."

People do not wish to hear any more about incontinence. Rich Klinzman wrote: "I have often fantasized about sneaking up behind June Allyson, blowing up a

you'd need afterward is Tylenol. As Gwen Marshall put it: "If my doctor had given me Tylenol and expected me to be pain-free and happy, I'd have jumped off that lovely table that holds your legs

"If my doctor had given me Tylenol and expected me to be pain-free and happy, I'd have grabbed the 12-inch scalpel out of his hand and held it to his throat until I got morphine, lots of it." --consumer Gwen Marshall

into it, just to see how absorbent those adult diapers really are." People also do not wish to see morphine, lots of it." actors pretending to be mothers and daughters talking about very personal feminine matters as though they were discussing the weather.

Richard J. O'Neil, expressing a common sentiment, wrote: "If I was a woman, I would walk on my lips through a sewage plant before I would share this kind of information with any living soul. Let alone my mother."

People do wish to see extreme close-ups of other people chewing

paper bag, and slamming my fist ten feet apart, grabbed the 12inch scalpel out of his hand and held it to his throat until I got

Another type of advertising that people detest is the Mystery Commercial, in which there is no earthly way to tell what product is being advertised.

These commercials usually consist of many apparently random images flashing rapidly past on the screen, and then, at the end, you see a Nike swoosh, or the IBM logo, or Mr. Whipple.

People are sick and tired of seeing actors pretend to be deeply emotionally attached to their breakfast cereals. People also People are also getting mighty frankly do not believe that the

dio ads that say, 'Our prices are so low, we can't say them on the radio!' Why? Will people start bleeding from the ears if they hear these prices?"

Michael Howard wrote: "I live near Seattle and there is one channel that runs commercials approximately every five minutes advertising the fact that they have a helicopter. Can you believe it? A helicopter!"

A.J. VanHorn theorized that "the increase in suicides among young people is due to the beer commercial showing a bunch of rednecks in a beat-up pickup swigging beer from cans and telling everyone 'It don't git no better 'n this'.

Kathy Walden objected to "Wal-Mart commercials that shamelessly try to portray all Wal-Mart customers as poor, uneducated, rural, and concerned primarily with reproducing themselves. Of course, this is true, but still...'

There were many, many more strong comments, but I'm out of space.

So I'm going to close with a statement penned by a reader identifying himself as "Flat Foot Sam," who I believe spoke for millions of consumers when he wrote these words:

"I'd like to buy the world a Coke,"

"And spray it out my nose."

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