

Editorial

First careful consumption, then cultural carelessness

The novelty of most things promote the early care of them — that new iPhone, that new technological advancement that seeks to “propel business ventures to new levels,” or those new safety measures enforced at airports. When objects are new, we want to take care of them. When good, succinct procedures are enforced, we follow them to the rule.

With time, though, the sparkle wears off. And when those items that were once hot commodities become commonplace, safety measures are forgotten and consciousness slips.

In a recent New York Times article entitled, “Long Live Lady Luck,” author Thomas L. Friedman touched on the short-lived luck Americans are enjoying on the security front. In the past year, we have thwarted five terrorist plots, all of which could have had disastrous results.

Last December, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, an Al Qaeda-inspired Nigerian attempted to detonate explosives in his underwear on a Delta flight to Detroit. The aircraft was carrying 278 passengers. Faisal Shahzad crafted a bomb that he placed in his 1993 Nissan Pathfinder, attempting to detonate it in Times Square on May 1.

After being arrested 53 hours after the attempt, Shahzad was taken into custody by U.S. customs at the JFK airport, and boarded a plane to Islamabad, Pakistan — a situation that exploited gaping holes in U.S. airport security. Placed on the no-fly list on May 3, investigators lost

track of him and didn't know that he was planning to leave the country. Fortunately, they escorted him off of the plane while it was still at the gate.

The month of February brought a guilty plea from Najibullah Zazi, an Afghan immigrant who set off a bomb in a New York City subway near the date of Sept. 11. He was searched by the Port Authority police who were acting on behalf of the FBI's request and still got through to the city, hoping to detonate a bomb in the middle of packed trains on the 1, 2, 3, and/or 6 lines to cause maximum casualties. He was caught only after making it all the way to Denver. Most recently, a cargo plane coming from the United Arab Emirates and Britain on its way to an LGBT-friendly synagogue in Chicago was found to contain bombs wired to cell phones and concealed in the cartridges of printers.

Our airline security measures are only becoming more innovative, and scanning procedures increasingly more invasive and controversial. So why are we still missing the big picture?

Major telephone companies have placed warnings (in the fine print, of course) about the recommended usage of their devices.

At first, cell phones were used sparingly, in case of emergency. Their functions served only a few purposes, dial and communicate — but now, with the addition of WiFi capabilities, QWERTY keyboards and touch screens, we have changed they way we live.

We walk with our heads

down, engrossed in the information available at our fingertips. We bump into each other, we are distracted when we cross the street, we hit pedestrians while we text behind the wheel. We can't tell time without our devices, more often than not, we rely on it to get us up in the morning. We sleep with our phones and can't imagine losing them.

Yet, with all of the importance we place in our mobile devices, we hold them close to our faces, with only a thin, permeable membrane separating them from our brains. The link between cell phones and cancer has been researched since cell phones were available for public use.

Nytimes.com's 'Digital Domain,' a piece written on Nov. 13 asked, “Should you be snuggling with your cell phone?” Radiation specialists are up-in-arms about Americans' lack of caution when interacting with their mobile devices.

“Legal departments of cell phone manufacturers slip a warning about holding the phone against your head or body into the fine print of the little slip that you toss

aside when unpacking your phone. Apple, for example, doesn't want iPhones to come closer than five-eighths of an inch. Research In Motion, the manufacturer of Blackberry, is still more cautious: Keep a distance of about an inch,” the article says.

Do we really know what we're doing?

Currently, a presidential commission is speaking out about the mindset behind the Gulf oil spill, one it said is indicative of a growing issue: big corporations with their eye on the bottom line.

In an editorial written by the New York Times on Nov. 14, “The April blowout on the Deepwater Horizon was not some unfortunate occurrence. It was the result of a series of bad decisions by companies less concerned about safety than about finishing a project that was over budget and 38 days behind schedule.”

The way we consume and use products has much to do with who we are, which values we hold aloft and who we want to be.

Be diligent, Elon students. Decisions loom at every corner and repercussions do, as well.

TO COMMENT ...

We appreciate original responses to Pendulum articles. Feedback of 500 words or less can be sent in several ways.

Letters to the editor and columns can be e-mailed to pendulum@elon.edu or sent to 7012 Campus Box, Elon, N.C. 27244

Content will be edited for clarity, length and accuracy. All submissions must include a name and phone number.

A message board also accompanies each article online at www.elon.edu/pendulum where commentary can be quickly posted.

ILLUSTRATING THE ISSUES:



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THE PENDULUM

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