

Opinion

Campus parking: a bureaucratic adventure for all

Pa-r-k-i-n-g has become a dirty seven-letter word on this campus. The thought of finding a legal, or even do-it-yourself, parking space puts everyone in a frenzy.

It's no wonder. The hypocrisies of campus parking are endless.

Let's start with the new traffic office located in the parking lot of Morrison Dorm. Have you noticed that more than a dozen spaces line the front and side of the building? Have you also noticed that each spot is adorned with a pretty sign that says "State-owned Vehicles Only"?

There is not a single space allotted for guests, visitors or even patrons (those of you who have racked up a quite a few tickets already qualify). So where are you supposed to park?

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Check out this scenario. After receiving the late-fee notice, you decide it's time to go down to the traffic office and appeal your ticket. The clerk tells you that your appeal will pass when pigs fly, so you go ahead and pay the fine.

When you come out of the office, you find another ticket slapped on your windshield (keep in mind that parking in the Morrison lot requires a permit). So now you must go back in the building to appeal a ticket you received while appealing a ticket!

Is there no justice in this world?

Next . . . Student Health Services. Most people must be deathly ill or severely injured before they will venture down to Student Health. And most people with 103-degree fevers, hives, stomach cramps, concussions or sprained ankles are in no condition to walk. The logical solution would be to drive.

Well, there is an inadequate number of spaces to accommodate the patients. If you are lucky enough to get one of the coveted spots, you must get a permit from Student Health to park there.

Limping or crawling into the building, you wait to get the special permit and go back outside to put it on your car. By then, the parking

officials have had just enough time to give you a ticket. You immediately forget about your current ailment and run inside to be treated for a sudden burst of high blood pressure or nausea.

If you are lucky enough to have an on-campus permit, do you find yourself planning your entire life around parking your car? I know I do.

I calculate precisely the amount of time it will take me to go grocery shopping. Then, I wait to leave until the traffic has thinned out, increasing the chance that a space will be open when I return. But planning ahead rarely works. Time and time again, I drive around and around my lot searching for a space.

Suddenly, I am overcome with panic. I know my Stouffer's spaghetti will be mush, my blueberry Dannon yogurt will liquify and my frozen bagels will be sponge-like if I don't park soon. I finally find a spot and run to my dorm, praying that I can salvage my perishable goods.

Imagine the poor souls who live off-campus. Try returning library books or delivering a term paper. Isn't a late fee from Davis or one-letter-grade-lower on a paper punishment enough? Who needs the hassle of finding a parking space, or even worse, getting a ticket?

The University should designate some "10-minute limit" parking spaces for those people who only need to run quick errands on campus.

I am thankful for small miracles. I do have a parking permit on North Campus (for what it's worth) and have managed to escape with only one ticket this year — so far.

I could go on forever, but I won't. While pondering all of the trials and tribulations of parking on campus, I did come up with one thought that actually made sense. I'll share it with you.

Take the word P-A-R-K, spell it backwards, and you'll have what the entire system is full of . . . How fitting.

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The changing face of the homeless

If you asked a social worker 25 years ago what the state of the homeless was in the United States, he would have answered in terms of the number of children in foster homes, or how many runaways were on the road. But the meaning of the word has changed, and so have the people it describes.

Americans could ignore the problem in 1960, or even in 1970, because the homeless weren't considered people worth saving. The old woman talking to herself on a park bench, carrying her house in a shopping bag, wasn't thought of as a victim of the economy, but rather as a mentally deranged woman who needed psychiatric help.

Indeed, the casual observer had cause to feel this way. The period from 1960 and 1980 was one of "forced emancipation" of America's mentally ill. As mental institutions became overcrowded, patients were regularly dropped off on street corners with the direction, "Go and make a good life for yourself." But the rest of society did not greet them with open arms. Jobs don't come easy for people with grade school educations, and neither does sympathy.

Experts estimate the number of people sleeping in cardboard boxes and huddling over street vents to be as high as three million. But in 1988, those three million are not all psy-

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chotic. Instead, a growing number simply cannot afford to live decently.

Next to the confused old lady on the park bench now sits a bankrupt Indiana farmer who once helped to put meat and potatoes on thousands of American tables. Beside him is a 76-year-old retiree who spent his last dime keeping his wife alive on a heart-respirator machine. Next to him is a single mother with three children.

A 1986 article in Society Magazine entitled "The New Poor" claims that early in this century, the poor were largely uneducated immigrants with little job training. Today, the ethnic barrier has been broken. The article points out that "the new poor are a much less homogeneous group that includes structurally unemployed persons, young people whose upwardly mobile opportunities have been closed off, the mentally ill, and the 'voluntary poor.'"

The Society article also points to the reduction in affordable housing. Between 1971 and 1978, the number of single-room dwellings in New York City fell from 170,000 to 14,000 because of "tax abatements and condo conversion." The recent migra-

tion of yuppies from the suburbs to the city will exacerbate the problem, as the price of housing skyrockets.

Who are the "voluntary poor"? Society says they are "remnants of the '60s counterculture, who shun the traditional American life and are drawn to the simplicity of street life." Included are people like 40-year-old Joyce Brown, a former stenographer who is now involved in a heated legal suit against the city of New York for taking her off the streets against her will. Her case brings to light a major difference between the American homeless and their brethren in foreign countries.

The United States is the only country in the world where a citizen has a legal right to live on the street if he chooses. If an unemployed auto worker with no family and few skills decides to set up camp on a street next to a Chicago dry cleaner's, he can do so. If a college drop-out is interested in doing some soul-searching while living like a pauper outside a bus station, the Constitution is behind him.

The Latin American poor are poor only by our standards. Since we see pictures of them barefoot and carrying heavy baskets down dirt roads, we assume they are "poor." Actually, most don't realize they are poor until some American Peace Corps worker brings it to their attention. In this

sense, these people make up a majority. The American poor are a different breed — they are a minority.

Latin American poor have been sensitized to a life of poverty from birth. Ninety-nine percent of them will always be poor. But that's not the way it works in the United States. It is assumed that everyone has an opportunity to improve himself if he wills it.

For the materially poor Colombian who picks coffee for a living, poverty is a familiar bedfellow. For the American blue-collar worker who once brought home \$200 a week and is now unemployed, the thought of poverty hits hard. The coffee picker has few expectations placed on him by his society. If he was born into a coffee-picking family, he will pick coffee.

An American, on the other hand, has choices. He is expected to rise as high as his God-given talents can take him, and anything short of that is often considered a failure. The Colombian picker has nothing to lose and everything to gain. In this sense, the "new" American homeless are different than anyone in the world.

The term "homeless" no longer refers to neglected children, or to the mentally deranged. True, a majority of the estimated three million people walking our streets have a history of alcohol and drug abuse, as well as



mental disorders. But among their ranks is a growing number of economic misfits — single adults and entire families, who either by their own doing or by forces beyond their control, have fallen through the cracks. Their plight makes headlines,

and exposes a gaping wound in American society that demands more than a mere Band-Aid.

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It doesn't matter how you shred it, patriotism is no shield from the law

Last summer, Lt. Col. Oliver North bounded into living rooms across the country, generating the most exciting daytime television drama since Luke and Laura's wedding.

Housewives didn't mind that the Congressional hearings preempted their soaps. They wanted to hear Ollie tell his story in a real-life daytime drama. For the better part of a week, he stood proud against the Congressional panel, made no excuses for his actions and spewed forth a novel of patriotic rhetoric in his defense.

Americans ate it up. Ollie T-shirts and posters became the latest get-rich-quick schemes. And G.I. hair cuts were the fashion rage of the summer. Some people went so far as to proclaim, "Ollie for president!"

But others weren't impressed. A little more than a week ago, special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh and a federal grand jury indicted North, former National Security Adviser John Poindexter, retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard Secord and businessman Albert Hakim on 16 criminal counts, including conspiring to defraud the U.S. government of \$17 million.

A few days later, North announced he would retire from

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the Marine Corps May 1, after 20 years of service. He said he was leaving because he didn't want his military position to interfere with possible subpoenas of "the highest-ranking officials." Some folks on Capitol Hill have speculated that the officials North referred to include President Reagan. Many think North is using the threat of subpoena to persuade Reagan to pardon him.

Maybe North has started to realize that you can't use patriotism to dodge the law. Ollie was a hero. But Lt. Col. North broke the law. At least that's what the charges say. And vague affirmations of patriotism aren't enough to defend North against those charges.

These events open up a whole new chapter in the Iran-contra story. Ollie is still looking for a way out, and hopes he can find one before the whole thing ever goes to trial. He just might. Special prosecutor Walsh has to prove in preliminary hearings that the evidence he used to attain the

indictments wasn't taken from last year's Congressional hearings. Since all of the defendants except Secord testified under a grant of limited immunity, their Congressional testimony can't be used against them in court.

But if Walsh survives the preliminary hearings and a court date is set, North will either have to look to the president for a pardon or take his chances before a jury. Some people wonder if Reagan would pardon North. One aide said any pardon most likely would come after the 1988 presidential election on November 8.

If North ends up in court, he probably will wear a conservative suit similar to the one he wore last Thursday, when he pleaded innocent to all charges. Gone will be the dress uniform and the medals. And gone will be the rhetoric that so many people fell for last summer.

Ollie has said, "I will never give up. I will win." But if he doesn't start coming up with more than red, white and blue answers, he could end up wearing a different uniform.

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Jackson is a serious contender

Dave Hall
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As Jesse himself might eloquently state, "the Rainbow Coalition continues to grow and continues to flourish." Who would have thought it possible a month ago, even a week ago? The Rev. Jackson solidified his position as a frontrunner with an impressive first-place showing in Saturday's important Michigan caucuses.

Jackson garnered an impressive 42 percent of the vote, much of it coming from the vast urban masses in Detroit — seven points ahead of Michael Dukakis. The most welcome news is that Missouri congressman Richard Gephardt, desperate to recapture the momentum that he lost in Iowa, finished in third place with a paltry 16 percent of the vote.

Many feel that Gephardt, who had been campaigning on a ludicrous though well-received platform of international trade retaliation, will, mercifully, exit the race as a result of his poor showing. Said a Gephardt spokesman, "The congressman will face his decision with dispatch. We will not drag this thing out like (Senator Robert) Dole."

The reasons for the Dukakis slump — he has yet to capture a major state since peaking on "Super Tuesday" — are varied. In Michigan, his message was the same tactically-narrow argument that he is the most electable Democrat. In addition, after opposing any sort of trade restrictions for the past 10 months, Dukakis suddenly changed his mind. This flip-flop was a blunt attempt to cash in on the blue-collar vote, a move for which he was severely criticized in editorials

throughout the state.

However, the day clearly belonged to Jackson, as he continues to surprise the experts with his astounding success. Many contend that Jackson is "unelectable," a euphemism for the belief that a black man cannot become president. Yet the facts steadily refute that homily. Ann Lewis, a Democratic strategist and Jackson campaign aide, recently stated: "People have for five years been speaking of Jesse as a short-lived political phenomenon and meanwhile he has become a well-grounded national presence."

The Jackson campaign fills a void that the other candidates refuse to enter. Jackson is a neo-populist whose message appeals to the poor — be they black or white — and to those who feel helpless against the tyrannical whip of multi-national corporations and the hypocritical and insensitive acts of the Reagan administration. Texas Agricultural Commissioner Jim Hightower has said: "The fact that Jesse Jackson is getting the vote is a very strong testament to his message. People have had to overcome their racism, their fear that Jackson is a radical, or their doubts that Jackson cannot win the nomination in order to cast that vote."

Jackson also is the only candidate to touch on the drug issue effectively — which is surprising, given the

amount of popular hysteria focused on the crack epidemic. This issue was particularly poignant for the inner-city residents of Detroit, who have suffered the consequences of escalating drug-related violence.

For months, the media, at a loss to explain Jackson's success, have relentlessly pondered the question, "What does Jesse want?" The view is that he cannot win the nomination and thus must concentrate on winning a voice in the Democratic party for minorities.

Such talk detracts from the view that Jackson is serious about winning the nomination. Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton said: "All of this focus on what he wants is too narrow a focus. He speaks for a lot of people who don't have a voice. And he does it in a way that doesn't drive people from the party."

That last statement is key, as it demonstrates the evolution of the Jackson political strategy. The 1984 effort was an ad hoc coalition of disgruntled party outsiders, who sought to make the party more liberal. This year, Jackson's platform is much less divisive, turning fewer people away from the party. According to a recent Washington Post poll, Jackson's negative rating has declined from 45 percent in January to 30 percent just last week. It is likely that it will decline even further as Jackson's momentum builds.

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Religious beliefs exist to be questioned

Charles Balan
Guest Writer

Mother Theresa, Jim Bakker, the Ayatollah Khomeini, Billy Graham, Jimmy Swaggart, Pope John Paul II, Pat Robertson and Bishop Desmond Tutu. What do you think about when you read these names? Most likely you are thinking of them in some way associated with God. How does the issue of God play a part in our lives, our thinking, our education? Is God an issue on our campus?

I asked several students this question, and the response was very interesting. Many of those who consider themselves religious felt that God is not an issue on campus. But those who claim no religious interest said God often came up in their conversations. Some said people got too emotional or felt threatened when they spoke about God.

Why should the issue of God be

relevant to us? When we discuss God, we broaden our minds, learn to understand different viewpoints, and redefine and focus our own beliefs and value systems. This is what education is all about. Much of the classic liberal arts education focuses around belief systems. We should not be afraid to broach a topic just because someone feels strongly about it. People feel strongly about sex and politics, but they are common topics.

I hold strong beliefs about God, yet I am not afraid to be asked or questioned about them. An open discussion can help people to understand and respect each other, as long

as they do not try to force their beliefs upon others. We can learn so much from each other when we discuss our different beliefs. What motivates us, what is important in our lives, what we believe what we do and what part our ethnic and family heritage plays in our belief system.

A few years ago, a movie came out entitled "Oh, God." In it, a little girl launched an advertising campaign that asked people to "Think God."

I would also like to propose that we not be afraid to discuss God with our friends and classmates. We share our opinions about food, clothing, music and the opposite sex, so why not God?

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