

Unlikely lessons of fire

Looking out her window my roommate saw the white flakes and thought it was snowing. It sort of was. But instead of the first sign of winter the wind was blowing around some of what was left from the apartments across the street.

It was ash from a fire that had ripped through the houses across from my apartment on Duncan St. and left the roof beams exposed like popsicle sticks.

And I had slept through it all.

By the time I finally called the fire department I was all set to go outside, do my job and ask some pretty s t a n d a r d

questions about what had just happened.

How did it start? What will you do now? How do you feel?

Trouble was, I felt like a jerk for turning more than pen and paper. So I didn't. My hands stayed in my pockets and I made the kind of small talk fuelled more by sympathy than curiosity.

I watched a curtain be sucked in and blown out from a hole that used to be a kitchen window and I just stood there. I wasn't really succeeding as a reporter or a good neighbour. But what do you ask people who've just lost their homes?

I think the real problem wasn't the questions though, it was the neighbourhood. It was my neighbourhood.

I didn't want to ask the questions because I didn't want to have to imagine what I would say in their place.

I don't know any of my neighbours, but they seemed a lot like me and my roommates. They threw parties. They played Bob Marley too loud. And we all had the

the buying power to demand nice and safe places to live.

And more than that, we're vulnerable because we're frequently dumb enough to think that nothing bad is ever going to happen to us.

But here's the irony.

A lot of the things that make us vulnerable are the things that save us. Or at least that's what I'm finding out by finally talking to my neighbours. Not that they're my neighbours anymore.

If they were vulnerable because they didn't think anything bad was ever going to happen to them, then they were all smart enough to realize that something bad happening isn't the end of the world.

I never should have been worried about asking my questions. I only hope that my answers would be so affirming. The people who have to start looking for brand new places to live this week have taught me something about insurance.

But I'm still going to go home and check if my smoke alarm (if I have one) is working.

SHELLEY ROBINSON

Donations to support the people who lost their homes, and their possessions, in the Duncan St. fire can be directed to Chebucto Links at 422-3525.

Editorial

same type of cheap student furniture clogging the sidewalks on Sept. 1.

And now their cheap student furniture was charcoal. It so easily could have been mine — not because the fire could have leaped across the street — because we were susceptible in so many of the same ways.

None of them had any fire insurance, and neither do I.

What we had in common was our vulnerability, and students, in particular, are extremely vulnerable.

We're young, we don't have a lot of money, and as a result we don't always have insurance — or

Greasy old Rasputin!
How could the women go for that Reggie?

Gosh, I can't imagine Wilbur, but I heard that Playboys at least wash more often these days! And there's a magazine! Hoo-ahh!



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All submissions must be typed double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk, in a WP version not greater than Word 6.0 or equivalent. The deadline is Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

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Letters

Experience the ocean... conference

To the editor,
Need a break from cramming for exams?

Interesting in free attendance at a conference with speakers like the Governor General, two premiers, two cabinet ministers, a senator, and nationally-known journalists — plus several eminent academics and lawyers?

Want to do something worthwhile and get valuable volunteer experience for your CV?

The International Ocean Institute (IOI) is looking for volunteers to assist with its upcoming conference, *Pacem in Maribus XXVI*, to be held at the World Trade and Convention Centre from Nov. 29 to Dec. 3. Help is needed before and during the conference for various jobs, including: assisting with registration, providing office support on campus or at the conference venue, setting up displays, ushering, helping with microphones, and driving (minimum age 25). In return, volunteers get free entry to the conference and some social events — plus an experience guaranteed to be more interesting than revising for exams!

For more information, drop by the IOI office at 1226 LeMarchant Street, or get in contact by telephone (494-1737) or email: ioihfx@dal.ca.

Don't miss out on a unique opportunity...

Madeleine Coffen-Smout
Co-ordinator, IOI Canada

Sohrab Farid is God!

To the editor,

I love Sohrab Farid's contributions! They're basically the only reason I read the Gazette. I think he should have his own weekly column so I don't have to search futilely every time I can grab a copy to see if there's anything of his in it.

OK, so he was my brother's roommate, but that's not why I like his stuff, that's just how I know to look for it.

Basically, anything that he scribbles in crayon on used toilet paper during a drinkfest would probably be worth printing — actually, it might even be better than the stuff he writes sober.

Talent like this needs to be nurtured...

Becky Eisses

Leaving your wallet at home

To the editor,

Sure you all, especially as enlightened, free-thinking and intelligent university students (right?) know of activism and its many usages and targets.

Activism often goes against political, environmental, and social injustices, the most widely being the pepper-sprayed human rights protestors at the APEC meeting in Vancouver. Say the words "environmental activism" and one often thinks of "granolas" chaining themselves to trees, or lying down in front of logging trucks.

But what about economic and consumer activism? Yes, you guessed it, the answer lies in the seventh annual *Buy Nothing Day (BND)* on Nov. 27, a day when you are urged to leave your wallets at home, and actively protest consumer greed by not buying anything for 24 hours.

Started in 1992 by Vancouver artist/activist Ted Dave, the day has spread internationally and is backed by *Adbusters*, the "culture jammers" of BC, who believe in "subvertising" in order to dismantle the world of consumerism and consumer marketing. As quoted from the *Adbusters* website, "*International Buy Nothing Day* is a celebration of simplicity; it's about our shop 'til you drop lifestyle on a dying planet; it's about getting our runaway consumer culture back onto a sustainable path."

One of the most popular forms of *BND* activism, other than not buying anything, is "street" or "guerilla theatre," in which activists go into public realms, often shopping centres, to protest consumerism in creative and fun ways. In the past, "No-shopping zones" have been set up in which sofas and couches are arranged in the mall, and people are invited to put their feet up, lounge around, and relax rather than buying things that are often unnecessary. Often on *BND* day, activists dress up in bizarre costumes and stage informative skits for the public, or meddle with their shopping in mischievous ways, handing out pamphlets and spreading the *BND* word.

This year, the eco-activism club with NSPIRG will be holding a guerilla theatre protest on Friday, Nov. 27. Meet at 11:30am at the main entrance to the SUB building, wearing whatever you want, and think anti-consumerism! Think activism!

Daisy Kidston

