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University of South Florida St. Petersburg.
USF poised for growth with 35-acre donation

The University of South Florida's St. Petersburg campus received the final allotment of 35 acres of land recently from the city of St. Petersburg, allowing the campus to move ahead on its plans for expansion.

The City Council voted unanimously to convey the tracts to the Board of Regents, fulfilling an 18-year-old agreement to provide land for the campus. Some parcels have been individually conveyed since 1975, but the agreement will transfer the balance of the land in one fell swoop.

"This gives us the opportunity to develop campus plans and place buildings where we could not before," said campus Dean H. William "Bill" Heller.

Those plans include preparing to serve a projected student enrollment of 9,000 by the year 2003, a figure triple the current number of students. Additional classroom buildings and parking spaces will be needed to handle the increase. The U.S. Geological Survey, marine science department and student activities center also will expand, and a professional ethics institute is planned. University administrators are in the process of outlining a long-term, master plan that will address the development of the campus for the 21st century.

The land officially stretches campus boundaries west to 4th Street South, north to Fifth Avenue South, east to First Street South, and south to Eighth Avenue South, forming a large square and bringing the total number of campus acres to 46. Eleven of those acres also were a gift from the city to the BOR in 1965 to establish the first branch campus of a state university. USF will plant trees and shrubs on the new parcels not immediately earmarked for development.

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The historic Snell house will be used as an alumni and faculty center at USF St. Petersburg. It also will be available for community use.

Snell home will move to USF

The Perry Snell house will be relocated to the University of South Florida's St. Petersburg campus this spring, where it will be used as an alumni and faculty center. Bay Plaza Cos. is donating the two-story house to the campus and is covering part of the cost of moving it, a value of more than $100,000.

The house, currently located at 106 Second Ave. N. in St. Petersburg, is slated to move to Fourth Street South on university land. It will face All Children's Hospital Education and Conference Center between Seventh and Eighth avenues. USF

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The new marine science building is scheduled to be finished by spring 1994. It will house USF and DNR researchers.

The campus currently is renovating the Piano Man Building into five classrooms. The building, on one of the single tracts of land the city gave USF in recent years, will be finished this summer. A $22-million marine science facility also is under construction. The facility, to be shared with Department of Natural Resources scientists, will contain the latest equipment for processing optical data from U.S. satellites surveying the ocean. The technology will allow USF marine scientists to expand their research on Florida's vital coastal waters and the Gulf of Mexico, as well as other oceans around the world. The building will be finished by spring 1994.

Ground breaking for a new, $15 million library occurred April 16. The library, to be completed in 1994, will be one of the most technically advanced libraries in the southeast and feature fiber optic technology, a long-distance learning center and a teleconference center. The library will hold 350,000 books.

The city also pledged to work with USF St. Petersburg in getting more directional signs to the campus. The campus wants to obtain an interstate sign for I-275 as well as city signs. In addition, the city agreed to dredge shoal areas in Bayboro Harbor that interfere with the campus's watercraft program.

"There was an awful lot of support shown to the campus by Mayor Fischer and City Council members, city staff and other friends of the campus," said Heller. "It's wonderful that people recognize the value of having a major university right in their own backyards."

"Feminism is not about having a piece of the pie as it is currently baked. We are (talking) about changing the pie altogether — whether the issue is sexuality or power."


"Our (Black Panthers) effectiveness was limited by our lack of discipline and mature dedication."

— Salim Muwakkil, former member of the Black Panthers who now writes about black issues for In These Times magazine. Graduate journalism seminar, Jan. 29, 1993.

"Collect bits and pieces that could be useful later on. I have. Think of yourself as the bag lady collecting stuff, pushing it along with your mental grocery cart. You never know when you're going to use it. It never seems to be totally wasted."

Cecil Odom has tried many times to leave the game he loves, but the kids keep bringing him back.

Odom was close to leaving his position as a coach in the Pinellas Youth Football Conference a few years ago. But one morning he was driving along 34th Street in south St. Petersburg and a little boy steered him back toward coaching.

Odom noticed the boy screaming, jumping and waving his arms along the sidewalk. Suddenly, the boy leaped in front of his truck. Odom hit the brakes and the boy yelled: "I'm going to play for you someday, Mr. Odom. I'm going to play for you."

"That boy was about 6 or 7 years old," said Odom, an HRS employee. "I remembered him when he came up. He did play for me and was proud of it."

Many others have played for his two teams in the St. Petersburg Lil’ Devils organization, each with the same burning desire and enthusiasm to play for "Mr. Odom."

"I can still remember my Little League coach. He had a great impact on me," Odom said. "We can have such an impact on these kids. Many come from one-parent homes and to a certain extent need father figures. We can't leave them just standing with no direction."

And of the times when he has come close to retiring, his coaching partner and wife Daisy quietly talked him out of it.

"Daisy says you can't walk away. These kids need you," said Odom, who has two sons and one daughter. "And she's right. Many of these kids do need not only me but all of our coaches."

Since 1982, brothers Dobbie and Maurice Moore, Kenneth Parker, Mike Howard and the Odoms have formed a class coaching combination. Joining them this year is Andre Gwinn.

"I was lucky with the Moore brothers when I was first approached to coach a team," Odom said. "We've had the same feelings, ideas and thoughts about kids. Aside from winning, we've been role models for kids and parents. I've seen these kids come to us hungry. We take them fishing. That's what a team and devotion is all about. We all provide them with whatever is needed. It's through that love that kids give more and show more."

Odom's staff has created an elite and highly successful program. In 10 years, their teams have won five titles.

This year Odom's team is 2-0, which means he and his staff have won 40 straight games dating to 1989. Since 1986, Odom and his staff are 52-1.

More than 90 youngsters came to the try-outs this year — all with the hope of joining Odom's Pee Wee team. He kept 30 (the limit for rosters in the conference) and was able to form two junior varsity teams of 30 players.

"It's great for the kids. It keeps them active and striving to reach a goal," Odom said. "We all need someone. Some of these kids need me, but what they don't know is I need them as much. It's hard to get old when you're around them and having fun. I guess the more you're needed, the more you stay."

— By Wayne McKnight

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The violent confrontation in Texas between federal agents and Branch Davidians is tragic, deplorable and punishable by law. Calamity might have been avoided by an understanding of religious sects. The “cults” stereotype perpetuates an irrational fear of religious groups that usually are merely different. America’s religious minorities — Catholics, Jews, Quakers, Amish, Latter-day Saints, Christian Scientists, Jehovah’s Witnesses and many others — frequently have been subjected to public hatred, mob violence and government persecution. Future tragedies will not be prevented by a public crusade against or legal repression of those defined and labeled as “religious cults.” The likely damage to individual and religious freedom is a much more serious threat than dangerous cults.

The popular term “cult” is used to describe a spurious or illegitimate religion. It provokes stereotypical imagery of bizarre dogmas and deranged, authoritarian leaders who through “brainwashing” extract absolute obedience from mindless, sheep-like followers. Groups so labeled are deemed responsible for psychological and physical abuses, the destruction of families, and a host of crimes. The perception that cults are exceptionally dangerous supports the cry for organized opposition, political action and legal prosecution.

Thousands of small groups in the United States subscribe to supernatural beliefs different from those of conventional religion. Yet, most are “religious,” even by the most conservative scholarly definition. Judgments to the contrary typically advance narrow meanings dependent on a particular form of religion: Christianity but not Buddhism; Protestantism but not Catholicism; us but not them. Otherwise, non-conventional religions rarely fit a cult stereotype. They are non-dogmatic, lack strong leadership and demand little of loosely organized, completely voluntary participants. Members are not abused, families continue, and group activities are not anti-social. Their only offense is unorthodox religious belief. Fewer non-standard religions are “sects.” They are characterized by uncompromising doctrines, and a tight-knit community commonly directed by charismatic leadership. The “brainwashing” contention is nonsense, but a high degree of commitment and conformity is expected from members. Sects oppose the secular society, sometimes militantly, though rarely violently. In these ways sects resemble the popular idea of cults.

Most sect negatives are not distinctive to religion. Moral absolutism, rigid behavioral norms and close relationships often result in authoritarian organizations and their leaders. Sect members learn and obey rules, value group goals over most else; and their activities may be anti-social whether the ideology is religious, political, economic or something else. Children everywhere get involuntary moral instruction from authoritarian parents and school teachers, and failure to conform is sanctioned seriously. Authoritarian organizations, religious or otherwise, do not inevitably produce ruinous outcomes, but they do create situations readily subject to aberration and abuse. Fortunately, very few sects yield intolerable consequences. People are much more likely to be psychologically or physically abused by a family member or an employer than by a religious sect.

Many sect affronts are matters of perspective. From the Romans’ viewpoint, Jesus was a deranged leader of a zealous cult. His disciples envisioned themselves as sheep and him as shepherd, lord and master. Jesus attracted social outcasts, disrupted families and was defined as a criminal. Most sects (such as early Christianity) eventually accommodate the surrounding culture, become secular and produce new sects (the Protestant ones, for example). The cult stereotype vaguely describes most religions at some period in their history, and many of the abuses attributed to cults also periodically apply to traditional, established religions, political groups and other institutions. The enormous challenge of our age is learning to live with and respect one another for all the wonderful differences, such as ethnicity and religion, whereby we define ourselves and the meaning of our lives.

Danny Jorgensen is a professor of religious studies at USF.
Rethinking the war on drugs

As the Clinton administration formulates the drug-control policies that will characterize it, one thing is clear: the war metaphor of the previous decade is due for elimination. Let's call a truce and rethink what we are doing.

There is relatively wide acknowledgement, from both conservatives and liberals, that the war on drugs has been a failure in most respects. Almost every objective study has shown that an insignificant amount of contraband is interdicted by police actions. Serious abuses have emerged from the focus on exclusive reliance of criminal law to effect drug control. These include serious and alarming levels of police corruption and dangerous, poorly thought-out legislation allowing for gross violations of due process, especially in terms of seizure and forfeiture.

Criminalization has resulted in the overloading of our prison system by drug offenders. The result is as predictable as it is pernicious. It's not only made us the most prison-dependent society in the world, it also has forced prison administrators into the terrible situation of the too-often early release of dangerous, violent offenders to accommodate the ever-increasing number of drug offenders.

Imprisonment has no measurable effect on decreasing drug use, either individually or as an aggregate phenomenon. Research has continuously shown this to be the case. In fact, imprisonment may increase the chance of continued drug involvement after release.

Improving life opportunities through education and training for the most vulnerable to drug abuse and the provision of reasonable work and neighborhood security have not been pursued as serious policies. Indeed, it is reasonable to ask to what degree has the failure to provide decent work at decent wages further contributed to drug use and abuse in society? Every dollar in prisons is a dollar taken from a school, a youth center, an athletic program, or an apprenticeship training opportunity.

The “zero use/zero drugs” policy is unworkable, unrealistic and self-defeating. Drug policy needs to be directed to minimizing and, if possible, eliminating the harm associated with drug abuse and improving the quality of life for those who are damaged by drug abuse. Every physician takes a pledge to “first do no harm.” Every politician ought to take the same pledge. Good intentions and moralistic fervor do not excuse the damage done by flawed policy.

“Just say no” is a slogan, not a policy. Indeed, our society already tolerates and even encourages (via advertising) the use of the two most socially costly drugs: alcohol and tobacco. For such a society to then raise a prohibitionist standard for other drugs is simply impossible, hypocritical and a formula for sure-fire policy failure.

Extremist policies typically aggravate problems associated with drug abuse rather than ameliorating them. Zero tolerance activities — such as house, car and property seizures — represent the very worst nightmare for citizens in a free society. They violate the very basis of due process, rob citizens of the presumption of innocence and enhance the probability the law enforcement system will become ever more riddled with corruption. (Few Americans are aware of the sweeping powers granted to the criminal justice system under the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations— or RICO— statutes.)

Fascination with the technology of drug testing and drug-trace analysis to establish the drug use of an individual is a dangerous approach that, while having some useful and reasonable applications, must be viewed with extreme caution and implemented only under the most careful conditions. The most troubling aspect of the massive drug screening of individuals at their work place is that it is done without the establishment of any probable cause. Its justification, based on the seeming presumption that an employer is free to obtain any information about an employee without qualification or restriction, is frighteningly reminiscent of an earlier era of “loyalty oaths” and “belief in a Christian God” as necessary prerequisites for being hired for a job.

What end is accomplished by drug testing? As various studies have shown, only a tiny fragment of individuals in the work force likely will test positive — and

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administrators expect the house to be restored in about a year.

"Mr. Snell and his homes are definitely a part of the history of St. Petersburg, just as I feel this campus is part of the city's history and its future," said campus Dean H. William "Bill" Heller. "I'm thrilled to have a way to save this piece of history and make it useful to the community, and we especially appreciate the support Bay Plaza Cos. have shown in ensuring this history will not be lost."

The Snell house sits in a section of downtown Bay Plaza plans to redevelop.

"We're very pleased to have found such an appropriate use for the house, and that it will stay downtown," said Robert L. Jackson, president of Bay Plaza Cos. "The alumni and faculty center is an important addition to the USF campus and will be available to the community."

The campus employs more than 250 employees, including about 70 resident faculty members and 30 visiting faculty, while serving 3,100 students. Current records show about 15,000 alumni live in Pinellas County. The house will hold an informal study and gathering place for the faculty and alumni, and community groups also will have access.

The Dutch-Colonial style house was built in 1904 by Perry Snell, an early developer of the city, for his bride, Lillian Allen. Cherry wood and curly pine lumber were shipped from Tennessee for the floors, staircases and paneling, said A.B. "Babe" Fogarty, who lived in the house from 1909 to 1924. The house includes five fireplaces, a cellar and a stained glass window. It is eligible for the National Registry of Historic Places, and USF will apply to place it on the registry after restoration.

USF will seek the help of various people and businesses to restore the house, including several local architects and students from the Pinellas Technical Education Centers who will donate their services.

Fogarty, now 90, lived in the house after his grandmother bought it from Snell.

A.B. "Babe" Fogarty and his sister Margaret F. Harris (both seated) grew up in the Perry Snell house. Behind them are USF St. Petersburg Dean Bill Heller and local architect Anet Willingham. Willingham has donated her services toward renovating the historic home.

"I loved growing up there, and watching the tourists visit the shell fence across the street," said Fogarty, who still lives in St. Petersburg. "The fence was a famous landmark in the city that later was destroyed.

Fogarty's sister, 95-year-old Margaret F. Harris, also has fond memories of the house. "After school, we'd go into the cellar to change into our bathing suits, walk down to the water and go swimming in the bay," she said. "I'm proud of USF for restoring the house."

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most often for cannabis, the least problematic of drugs — and they likely will test positive for drugs that are not psychoactive at the time of testing. Test results almost always reflect use from some earlier time period. Indeed, proof to indicate current activity requires blood testing. Are employers planning on this approach? It is an illusion that drug testing represents some "quick fix." In fact, it represents a very complex foray into forensic analysis, which costs plenty but produces little useful information.

By what rationale does an employer have the right to inquire into the non-work related activity of an employee? How many employers currently test for nicotine and alcohol use, and refuse to hire individuals who use the substances at home and on their own time? Yet, virtually every defense for drug screening is based on increased health costs and perceived risks of hiring drug abusers. These risks are equally true of alcohol and tobacco users, and in some cases even more so.

The indiscriminate use of testing thus creates an atmosphere such that reasonable testing and drug control policies have become increasingly difficult to articulate and implement. These zero tolerance approaches galvanize and polarize thinking. This leads us back into the trap of not making distinctions between periodic, recreational or casual use of substances and problematic, pathological use of a substance. The outcome of zero tolerance is the absurd argument that there is no such thing as casual drug use, and that any drug use is abuse. This is about as sensible as arguing that there is no such thing as casual or social alcohol use, that any alcohol use — even a beer after you mow the lawn — is abuse tantamount to alcoholism. That is the position in which current drug policies have placed us.

The desire to force abstinence — via criminalization, imprisonment, job denial, property seizure and forfeiture — from all illicit drugs denigrates and trivializes what are the most hopeful methods for reducing drug use and health damage in the American population: education about drugs and encouragement of people to make rational choices to live healthy lives. It can be done, as smoking and alcohol-use statistics show. But persuasion always seems too difficult when compared to the billy club or prison cell.

Tom Mieczkowski is a professor of criminology at USF St. Petersburg.
Looking back at USF with pride

As the 45th student ever accepted at USF and the founding president of its National Alumni Association, it is with a lot of pride that I look at the wonders that have occurred at USF in the past 33 years.

That incoming class of 1960 consisting of some 1,900 students could hardly have believed what was in store for the then newest and most modern university in the western hemisphere: a multiple campus complex extending from Polk to Collier counties, an enrollment in the tens of thousands and an alumni population exceeding 100,000!

With a new school came exciting challenges. There was no structure for any of the bastions of an academic institution. There was no student government, no clubs, no fraternity or sorority, no networking affiliation at any level. All USF tradition began only a few short years ago. That tradition is being shaped, improved upon and added to by today's students. What a unique opportunity — forging tradition in a relatively new institution that will be here forever!

One of those opportunities is the Alumni Association. It is the vital link between the USF campus and the outside. It, when it works well, can provide not only money the state can't, but other resources such as job opportunities for alumni, and assistance in locating and recruiting talented students and staff. Perhaps most importantly, alumni supply the pride that comes to a school when its graduates do well in business, education, politics, science, the arts and other fields.

As a grateful alumnus, my Pinellas law firm, Piper & Ludin, has established a scholarship for a deserving, south Pinellas student attending the St. Petersburg campus. We have funded this scholarship by the savings generated in no longer buying Christmas/Hanukkah or New Year's greeting cards.

If you like this idea, which many of our clients and friends have, you're welcome to try it, too.
Education partnership will strengthen community

USF and other institutions join forces to prepare Pinellas students and teachers for future

Although I have been a member of the Campus Advisory Board for three years, I am particularly pleased and proud to be appointed interim chair of the newly established Pinellas Education Resource Consortium. This official joining of forces of our community’s major educational institutions holds great promise and potential for expanding our combined resources. The individual partnerships shared by USF, St. Petersburg Junior College, Eckerd College, Stetson University’s College of Law, the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and Pinellas County schools will be strengthened as we expand our horizons together.

I am excited about our new coalition because it will increase our collaboration and give us a united front in our mutual endeavors. Already we are working on a better delivery system for education by providing greater access for junior and senior high school students to graduate level courses. Our more highly skilled and educated students will bring a new level of academic achievement to higher education institutions and become strong contenders in the work force.

Because of our growing numbers of highly qualified high school students, we will be expanding our International Baccalaureate program to a new high school in North Pinellas. That school is scheduled to open in fall 1996 and includes a medical services magnet program in cooperation with USF.

As we explore this new partnership, we also are looking at a designated site for teacher education at one of our schools. Student teachers will work and study in this real life “laboratory,” giving both students and prospective teachers a head start on cutting-edge changes in teaching techniques.

These are but a few of the potential projects that are in the planning stages for our dynamic group. I eagerly look forward to what we will contribute to all of our students and to the future of education in our community.

J. Howard Hinesley is superintendent of Pinellas County Schools and a member of USF St. Petersburg’s Campus Advisory Board.