

Letters to the Editor

Smoke-free shows draw more people

Recently, our band had the honor of participating in a benefit for Chris Conner, a local musician diagnosed with lung cancer. It was held at the Corner Pocket.

Obviously due to his condition, and I'm sure at his family's request, the event was held in a smoke-free environment, which, to its credit, the Corner Pocket provided. No one, to my knowledge, complained. Everyone who smoked stepped outside and respected this request.

As a wonderful continuing legacy, in tribute to Mr. Conner's work and gifts, we suggest to venue owners that all future shows be smoke-free. I know more people would attend, not fewer, translating into a healthier space and a more profitable evening for the business proprietor. Perhaps other entertainers will follow suit.

Thanks again, Chris, for sharing with us both your courage and your talents.

DENIS O'NEILL
Columbia

Arming students may not make them safer

In response to the tragedy at Virginia Tech, gun proponents argue that if only a student were carrying a concealed weapon, the death toll would have been lower ("Gun-free zones embolden criminals," Saturday).

I understand the visceral satisfaction of plugging a Seung-Hui Cho from the back of the classroom while he took aim at an unarmed and defenseless, terrified student. That is an appealing justification for more guns on cam-

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pus, not fewer.

But maybe the concealed-carry argument leads to more slaughter. In the same day's newspaper, there was an article about Pat Tillman, who was killed by friendly fire emanating from his highly trained Army Ranger comrades. Might a classroom shoot-out result also in friendly-fire deaths of innocents? Would an increase in concealed-carry weapons lead to an escalation of weaponry, with perpetrators packing greater firepower?

After the Columbine massacre, it was time for a real debate in this country by people of good faith to deal with the carnage of gun violence. It did not happen.

After Virginia Tech, we have another chance to have that national debate. Would Sen. Lindsey Graham, mayors Joe Riley and Bob Coble and others please step forward?

JOHN D. KASSEL
Columbia

TV news is turning tragedy into circus

We are sick about the tragedy in Virginia, and my prayers are with the families of all involved.

The news media, mostly the television folks, have made this into one of their media circuses. They have made that madman a martyr for all the other psychos

out there who would do harm to our loved ones.

NBC was completely irresponsible in its choice to air Seung-Hui Cho's pictures and video. I can only imagine the excitement in the NBC mailroom when the package from Cho arrived.

I would like to call for a boycott of all the TV news shows for at least a week to show them that we don't need their brand of sensationalistic journalism. There are other ways to spend our valuable time.

BILL COGGINS
Columbia

'Alive at 25' makes great graduation gift

Your article about graduation gifts April 17 was interesting and informative. May I offer a suggestion for another excellent gift to a high school graduate? Give your son, daughter, niece, nephew or friend the \$35 tuition to take the National Safety Council's excellent program, "Alive@25."

This program has been proven to save many lives. There is no more worthy gift for a young person.

JOEL W. COLLINS JR.
Columbia

Fallen soldiers deserve memorial

Once again Brad Warthen has insulted the people of South Carolina and the Confederate veterans who died defending this state.

The Confederate flag that flies in front of the capitol is a soldiers' memorial. If Warthen is not satisfied with that, then please place it back on top of the State House.

The capitol is a battleground;

Sherman's troops ransacked Columbia and fired numerous cannon shots at the State House in 1865. Thousands of South Carolinians died defending this state, and they deserve their memorial.

Some of us are actually proud of our history and this state. We also benefit from millions of dollars in tourism, and this state receives visitors from around the world who come to see our battlefields, memorials, museums and history.

ALLEN DAVIS
Greer

McConnell's memory selective about flag

After reading Sen. Glenn McConnell's column Saturday, "No need for another battle over the flag," I note that he included only two sides of the flag controversy — those who wished for the flag to move to a place of historical context and those who wanted it to stay on the State House dome.

Unfortunately, McConnell suffers from a selective memory. Many South Carolinians wished for the flag to be appropriately displayed in a museum.

If McConnell wishes to write a commentary instructing readers to remember the arguments made in 2001, he should include all arguments given at that time.

In a democracy, citizens do not always agree with the decisions of the government. It is apparent to me that it is Mr. McConnell's belief that in order to be considered "fair-minded," one must either agree with the decisions made or disagree in silence.

ANNIE LAURIE RUMFELT
Columbia