

# BANNER OPINION

## WATCH YOUR BUTTS

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They call me Smokey the Bear because only I can prevent forest fires.

As I walked to my Thursday cinema history class a few months ago, I couldn't help but take notice of a smoldering pile of wood chips around the edge of the rotunda, near the entrance of 1P.

I remembered a valuable lesson I learned in kindergarten: Where there is smoke, there is fire. I always thought it was just a euphemism until I inspected the pile underneath the trees. By the time I reached the source of the smoke, it had grown into a small flame. I reacted with a second lesson that I had learned in kindergarten: stop, drop, and roll. Then I realized that I personally was not on fire, so that was futile.

What really happened was I shouted a mild profanity in shock, and then began to stamp on it with my Reebok classics. In my head, I thought "I should have let it go, this would make great front page news for The Banner." It was too late; my act was merely instinctual, not heroic in any way.

The fire was not easy to stamp out. Every time I smothered one ember,

another would catch on fire.

"This is like California," I yelled, "Why won't it go out?"

At this point, two young women on the nearby concrete bench began to scream in shock. One student finally joined in the fray, leaving his guitar case on the walkway.

"Put it out," he yelled.

"I'm trying," I responded.

It wasn't until we kicked every last red wooden chip away from the bottom of the tree that we finally extinguished the fire. I was pretty sure that Public Safety would come over soon to harass us for vandalizing school property. We learned that the source of the fire was a cigarette.



ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT WILDFIRES.

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"That was crazy," I said. "I was about to piss on it."

"Good job," the young ladies admired our sheer bravery.

The four of us waited for a couple of minutes to make sure it would not flare back up. Then, we walked to class. As it turned out, I had met the gentleman, with whom I had fought the fire, once before our daring feat. It's a small world at CSI.

When I entered class late, I couldn't help but using this cool excuse.

"I'm sorry I'm late," I told my professor, David Gerstner. "I just put out a fire."

Would he buy this excuse? Next week, could I show up late and say that I saved the president like Jack Bauer?

Once he smelled the pungent odor of

pine, I knew he believed my captivating tale.

This was a long and evasive way of reiterating my message in the headline: watch your butts. I don't smoke myself, but I have no problem with people that do. As a matter of fact, I'd have no problem with students and professors smoking in the classroom. In the same respect, I like CSI, and don't want to see it burst into flames.

It takes two second to just drop the cigarette on the floor and stamp it out. You wouldn't knock a bug off of a wall and not step on it to confirm that it died. Would you? Have the same respect for your cigarette that you would have for a bug. Make sure it's dead.