

[ FERPA ]

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[ \* ]  
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Last month I was walking home from school in the evening, it was getting dark. I heard a gunshot ring out, and I turned to look. I saw a man with a rifle step into a tan University truck. I asked the Campus Police if they knew anything...they said it wasn't their jurisdiction. November 1, 1994 I had the misfortune to be on campus walking past Main Hall on the east side at about 5:30 pm. Suddenly I heard gunshots all around me! They went off at random from various directions. I can't see anyone, where are they shooting from? I felt my body reacting with a surge of adrenaline, even though I knew it was just the Physical Plant personnel shooting blanks to "scare away the birds". The campus police had assured me that the Physical Plant was authorized to shoot blanks to scare the birds. And it was true that there was a solid silence after the volley of gunshots. A great black blanket of birds rose into the air, circled and settled down again onto the trees around campus.

I called the Grounds Maint. office today, November 9, at 9:55 am and talked to John. Is this the department that is authorized to shoot blanks to scare the birds? Yes. How often do you shoot? Every two to three weeks. When do you shoot? Just before dark. Did you just shoot? Yes, but that was for a reporter. Does it work? Yes! We've tried everything else from planting bird's-eyes, aviary sounds of birds in distress, and tacky foot. Have you tried poison? Poison!!!!!! That would kill the squirrels and other animals. Who authorizes you to shoot? The Vice President, originally about five years ago, we decide when to shoot. It has made a big difference over the five years... you are welcome to go to the Vice President if this bothers you.

My concerns are as follows:

- 1) I think the noise should be produced, if it must be produced by some means other than by guns all over campus.
- 2) I think that alternatives should once again be considered. Violence has increased in the last five years and I do not like living in a hostile sounding environment.
- 3) What if a real bullet gets loaded by mistake?
- 4) What if a person who has not learned that the Physical Plant workers are authorized to shoot, feels they are being threatened and shoot a Physical Plant worker in self defense?
- 5) What if the shooting at dusk provides cover for a murder? People are so used to blocking out the sound of bullets at that time, simply accepting the sound as usual, that they do not pay attention to it.

You may be thinking that I've been watching too much television. This is not true, I don't like television and I don't own a T.V. set. Indeed, if I watched more television, perhaps this wouldn't bother me. Please look into this and let me know if there is any possibility of either discontinuing the practice, or altering the practice so that a sound is produced from one spot; a cannon, for example, would make a lot of noise but not be mistaken for a gunshot, and everyone would know what is going on.

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| Vice President for Business Affairs The University of Texas at Austin  |   |
| Refer to: <u>Joe Ward</u>  | Pending <u>11-16</u>  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Handle   | <input type="checkbox"/> FYI & File/Discard <input type="checkbox"/> Comment & Return |
| Received: <u>NOV 11 1994</u>   |   |
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Sincerely,

[ \* ]

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PHYSICAL PLANT DEPARTMENT

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Σ FERBA ]

Grounds Maintenance

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## Memorandum

November 18, 1994

To: Mr. Joe Ward

From: Jerry D. Harrison

Subject: Reply to [ \* ] and Grackle control

In response to [ \* ] letter concerning our method of controlling the Grackles on campus. She must not have been on campus when the problem was not controlled otherwise she would be more receptive to any method of controlling the Grackles. We have had only a very few negative comments concerning the use of shotguns and cracker shells, most are very positive because they remember how bad it was. They were damaging cars, the stench was terrible, and it was a potential health hazard.

In response to her specific concerns:

- 1 & 2) Alternatives were considered & many were tried with minimal or no results.
- 3) We do not even have any real shells. Even if we did, we fire well into the air and the only probable damage would be some dead Grackles.
- 4) All individuals who shoot wear orange reflective vest and we have publicized this through the Daily Texan, TV, and radio. We could possibly attempt to publicize what we are doing more intensely and we might be able to do more as far as identification.
- 5) It would have to be well planned and coordinated with us since we don't shoot at exactly the same time, places or even the same days of the week.