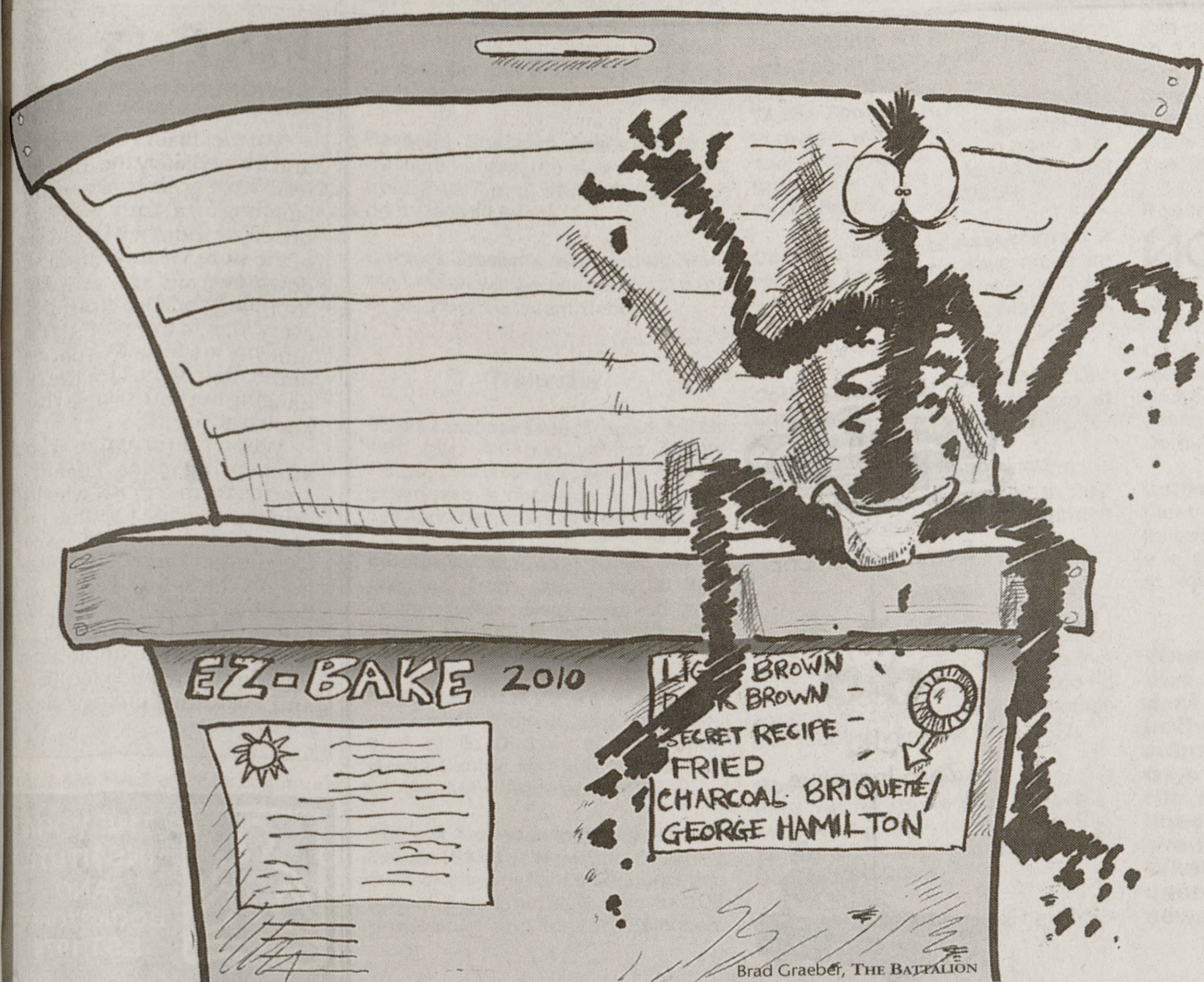


THE 'FAKE BAKE'



Students who tan at salons say artificial tanning saves time and is just as 'safe' as tanning under the sun. But dermatologists argue that the long-term effects of such tanning remains unknown, and that tanners may be setting themselves up for a health timebomb.

BY SHEA WIGGINS
THE BATTALION

gay or feminine." Knowles considers tanning a luxury. "It is not a necessity," Knowles said. "It is like working out. It is all obsessive and compulsive and it depends on how you look at it. People are more attuned to their appearance, and it has to do with self-confidence."

"You feel better about yourself. You always hear people saying, 'I am so white.'"

Jessica Holub
Bronze Body employee
Sophomore business major

Knowles said the tanning bed was developed by doctors for treatment of skin disorders, such as psoriasis. Created in Germany, the bed was brought to the United States in the '70s.

He said tanning has become popular in a society where "time is money." "Ten years ago you couldn't get anyone to wash your car, but it sure is nice to have someone do it for you now," Knowles said. "Do you have time to lay out all day when you can pop in for 15 minutes and get a tan?"

Josh Mills, tanner, employee of Perfect Tan and a junior journalism major,

said some tanners come in to relax their muscles, and others use indoor tanning to help clear acne.

"A lot of people go to school, go to work and then go to tan," Mills said. He said girls are more concerned about how they look, leading to the large number of female tanners.

"A few girls are very obsessed," he said. "They buy the best lotion, and constantly ask us if our bulbs are changed, trying to get the strongest bulbs. One girl drove back to Houston to buy a 'superb' tanning lotion that was \$70 and a bottle of tanning pills."

However, Knowles said a majority of "obsessive" tanners are older clients.

Miss Teen, Miss Texas and Miss Brazos Valley contestants have tanned in the salon for beauty pageants, Mills said. Brian Mazzola, tanner and a senior

biomedical science major, said he tans once a week to keep a base tan.

"A few girls are very obsessed. One girl drove back to Houston to buy a 'superb' tanning lotion that was \$70..."

Josh Mills
Perfect Tan employee
Junior journalism major

be worried about what they look like," she said.

Universal Tan worker and Blinn nursing student Kasey Roberts said salons try to prevent tanners from burning.

See TANNING, Page 4

Pen pals prove friendship's roots grow past letters

Columnist



Missy Price
senior journalism major

Most people do not believe me when I tell them I have 20 pen pals. After an initial state of shock, people usually bombard me with questions such as "How do you find the time?" and my personal favorite, "Are you on crack?"

No, I'm not on drugs, and I don't have an abundance of free time. After all, I am a college student. But since pen pal-ing is something I love to do, I make time for it. I have been writing to pen pals for eight years and love it today as much as I did when I started writing my first pen pal, Jodi, at age 14. Jodi and I still write 25-50 page letters to each other every few months.

Meeting a pen pal is something most pen pals only dream of, but luckily for me, this has become a reality — five times.

Over spring break, I met two more of my pen pals. While visiting my uncle in Seattle, I spent a day with my pen pals Lisa and Elaine. Even though meeting a pen pal was not a new experience for me, my heart pounded as my uncle dropped me off at Lisa's apartment complex near the University of Washington.

I couldn't help but wonder what she and Elaine would be like in person. Although we have written off and on for about five years, I didn't talk to them on the phone until a few days before we met. They seemed outgoing and friendly on the phone and in their letters, but people can disguise their true personalities.

Then I had a startled thought: "What if they don't like me?" Lisa and Elaine had gone to college together and were good friends. I felt like an outsider. But I kept reminding myself that we had gotten along through letters and on the phone, so I had nothing to worry about. Luckily, I was right.

While walking to Lisa's apartment, I passed a few people and greeted them with a resounding "Howdy." No one returned the greeting — all I got were weird looks. One guy said, "You must be from Texas." I thought to myself, "Well, golly gee, I sure am — where people are actually friendly." I hoped Lisa and Elaine had better manners than their neighbors.

As Lisa opened the door to her apartment, we stood there with smiles. Although we were both excited to meet each other, it was obvious from the minute I stepped inside that she was just as nervous as I was. I didn't know whether to hug her, but I did, and we both commented on how weird it was to finally meet in person.

We soon left for a local mall where we were meeting Elaine at noon. Because we arrived early, we killed some time by walking around and talking. Conversation came naturally and soon we were laughing and carrying on like old friends.

See PEN PALS, Page 4

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