

CONDOM-NATION

History, scope of condoms span from Rome to testing line

BY STEPHEN WELLS
The Battalion

Life would be better if the real world played like a commercial. A lazy Sunday pool party could turn into a carnival with the addition of a certain brew of beer; airlines would actually care if the luggage ended up in the same country as the passenger, and the Trojan Man would arrive on his horse with plenty of time to spare before the clothes came off.

For those who do not have a condom cowboy and his trusty ride to remind them to practice safer sex, this week has been set aside as National Condom Week.

National Condom Week began in 1978 at the University of California by David Mayer and several students. The object was to use humor to get across the message of safer sex through condom use. It has since blossomed into a national awareness week and health symposium.

Margaret Griffith, the health education coordinator at A.P. Beutel Health Center, said condoms are a viable option for students who are looking to have sex without exposing themselves to all of the risk involved in a sexual relationship.

"People seem to want a way to have sex with no risk at all involved," Griffith said. "There's not one. Even inside of marriage, there's a risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease if one of the partners steps outside the bounds of marriage. Condoms do provide a good protection against pregnancy, against bacterial infections like gonorrhea and syphilis and against the HIV virus."

Although it was not until 1978 that a coordinated effort to spread the word about condoms was begun, evidence suggests condoms have been around since prehistory. In his book *Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things*, Charles Panati explains the history of the condom.

Evidence suggests even the Romans and Egyptians used condoms made out of oiled animal urinary bladders and lengths of intestine. While these may not be the most romantic things to slip into on a cold night, they beat the older stretched leather sheaths in comfort and reliability.

Just as scientists now honor Michael Faraday and Issac Newton by naming laws after them, randy young adults pay homage to the Earl of Condom every time they enter a convenience store with a gleam in their eye.

Dr. Condom was the personal physician to the adulterous King Charles II, who commissioned him to invent a device to protect all the king's lit-

tle men from venereal diseases.

Likewise, the word "rubber" was coined after the introduction of the thick, vulcanized rubber condoms of the 1870s, something men should consider when they complain about the comfort issue.

These older generation condoms pale in comparison to the latex condom of today. Often, the failure rate of a condom is not due to poor engineering or industrial processes, but the age-old guy tradition of refusing to follow directions.

"There's a lot of user failure when people use condoms because, and I'm not saying this to be condescending, guys are not exactly noted for reading or following directions," Griffith said. "Condoms come with directions that people should read. There's a trick to using a condom properly."

Barring mistakes on the part of the do-it-yourself male population, today's condom is a lean, mean organ-protecting machine. Guidelines for testing condoms vary from state to state, but some tests are performed for every batch in every area.

Just as an artist cannot possibly paint a masterpiece with inferior brushes, condoms cannot protect well if they are made from inferior latex. Before the first condom is poured into the mold, the entire batch of latex is tested.

"The FDA runs entire batches of condoms through a prescribed regimen with prescribed tests to determine whether or not they are safe," Griffith said. "Last year a batch of Lifestyles failed a test and the entire shipment was recalled. A warning was issued immediately."

Finished condoms must endure grueling torture tests on par with Navy SEAL training to prove their worth. One test, called the bursting test, pumps the condom full of air until it pops like a balloon. The tensile test stretches the condom until it snaps. Holes are discovered by either filling the condom with water and looking for leaks or by passing electricity through the condom.

For the majority of college students, electricity passing through a condom is not a common hazard no matter how good their partner is. A condom's kryptonite is heat, and some misinformation has surfaced about the effects of heat on a condom.

"The first thing you should look at in a condom is the date," Griffith said. "And you want to store it in a place that is not too hot or too cold. I tell guys to keep theirs in a wallet. They've heard all along not to do that, but they can for a short period of time without damaging the condom. If they don't keep condoms in a wallet, where will they keep them? A wal-

let is cooler than a pants pocket."

Females who want to protect their bodies should not harbor any doubts about carrying condoms with them.

Amy Barkley, a freshman general studies major, said carrying a condom is a protective measure against unsafe sex.

"I think a lot of girls consider it the man's job to keep a condom with him for protection," Barkley said. "A lot of girls may think their job is to take the pill and count on the man to have a condom ready when he needs one. Pills won't keep you from getting a disease."

Sexually transmitted diseases are a great threat to college students. As many as 33,000 Americans, most of them under 30, are infected daily with a sexually transmitted disease because of a lack of protection daily. Those who only use protection during genital-genital contact are reducing their risk of many STDs, but oral-genital contact can spread some forms of Hepatitis, which may ultimately lead to cancer.

Luckily, Americans are becoming more responsible. nine-hundred-million condoms were sold last year, 40 percent of them to women.

"I don't think it is a bad thing for a girl to buy a condom," Barkley said. "Maybe it meant you were a 'bad girl' a long time ago. Today buying a condom means you are trying to protect yourself and your partner when you have sex. It's not as criticized as it must have been for older people."

There is also more good news for cash-strapped Aggies. Condoms are cheap. Anybody knows to buy cheap they must buy in bulk, but going to a warehouse store for a gross of condoms can be quite embarrassing.

One attractive option is to buy from the various non-profit organizations interested in keeping disease and unexpected pregnancy at bay. With \$5, any Aggie can walk into Planned Parenthood and buy a dozen condoms with enough money leftover to buy half a pack of post-coital cigarettes.

Beutel Health Center has another option available for students who would rather not have their parents asking questions about a check written out to Planned Parenthood. A box of ten Trojan brand condoms costs only \$2 and can be placed on a fee statement under the heading "pharmacy."

Like last week's Sexual Responsibility Week, National Condom Week is stressing education over field study. Those students who would like more information about condom use or other sexual matters without resorting to trial and error can visit the health education center in room 016 at the Beutel Health Center.

Sewell Automotive Companies

(representing Cadillac, Chevrolet, GMC, Infiniti, Lexus, Oldsmobile, Pontiac)

invites you to visit our booth to discuss your opportunities in automobile retailing

at the

Business Career Fair

Tues. & Wed., February 16th & 17th

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Wegner Building

Majors of specific interest:

Marketing, Management, Accounting, Industrial Distribution, Finance

Dallas • San Antonio • New Orleans • Fort Worth



The SABRE Group is the world leader in electronic travel distribution and information technology solutions for the travel and transportation industry.

A World of Opportunities

We have the following career opportunities:

- Database Administrators
- Technical Analysts
- Client Server Developers
- Business Systems Analysts
- Operations Research Analysts
- Technical Support Analysts
- Programmer Analysts
- Industrial Engineers
- Design Engineers
- Customer Support Analysts
- Project Managers

Come learn more about The SABRE Group

If you cannot attend our Information Session, please send your resume to The SABRE Group, P.O. Box 619615, MD 4128, Dept. STS-99, D/FW Airport, TX 75261-9615; Fax: (817) 931-5697; E-mail: sabre_group_recruitment@sabre.com We are an Equal Opportunity Employer, M/F/D/V.

Join our World!

..... www.sabre.com

INFORMATION SESSION
Memorial Student Center
Room 231
Wednesday, February 17th
6:00pm-8:00pm

Full-time Job Opportunity

Billion-Dollar
Fort Worth Hedge Fund

seeking
full-time

Trading Assistant
Research Analysts

email resumes to tamad@acmewidget.com

Camp Day 1999

Tuesday, February 16, 1999
9:30 AM to 3:30 PM
MSC Hallway & Flag Room



Interview for summer positions as camp counselors and staff.

Wanted: People with an interest in kids and skills in

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|----------------|
| archery | dance | music |
| arts | drama | nature/outdoor |
| baseball | equestrian | education |
| basketball | activities | riflery |
| boating | fishing | tennis |
| camping | football | soccer, |
| canoeing | hiking | swimming |
| crafts | lifeguarding | theater |

Sponsored by the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, the RPTS Majors Club, and the TAMU Career Center