

Space

Take some time to watch the space shuttle launch

By Rick.Hanton@iowastatedaily.com

While some of my good friends chuckle about my overwhelming interest in spaceflight activities, I haven't shared a huge amount of that passion with readers of the Iowa State Daily.

Well, I think now is the time to start. For those of you not very attuned to space-flight news, you should be aware the venerable space shuttles the United States has been flying for 30 years will likely finish their final flights this year, the first of which is Thursday.

While I will leave more details about the benefits of the shuttle to a future column, the space shuttle orbiter is an amazing engineering marvel, and I encourage you to take a little time to watch the STS-133 mission launch to the International Space Station at 3:50 p.m. (CST). If you get the chance, I'd also encourage you to trek to Florida to see one of the last launches — STS-134 or STS-135 if it is funded — later in the year, as they are even more magnificent in person.

If you want to watch the upcoming shuttle launch, you can check out NASA TV online at nasa.gov/ntv or you can watch the NASA TV feed with other hosts providing coverage at

Spaceflight Now or Spacevidcast, which offers HD and non-HD Ustream feeds.

I'd suggest tuning in around 3:30 or 3:45 p.m. so you don't miss the final countdown. Also, don't be surprised if they decide to push the launch back again — after delaying the launch 5 times in November — as launching people into space is a tricky business.

So why are we flying the shuttle to space at the mere cost of billions of dollars today?

Well, we are delivering a truckload of supplies to the International Space Station as well as their first robotic astronaut companion, Robonaut 2 or R2 for short. To bring this back home to us in Ames, I should mention that a friend of mine — who is a student at Iowa State — helped to develop R2 and his predecessors at NASA during the last few years while in internships with NASA.

That's right, the first humanoid robot in space has links right back to Iowa State.

So take 15 minutes from your day to watch one of the most advanced vehicles ever created launch 32 tons of supplies to orbit on a giant rocket that burns more than 1,000 gallons of fuel per second. It should be spectacular.



Courtesy photo: Thinkstock

Bieber

Commend celebrities for entertainment not instruction

By Sean.Flack@iowastatedaily.com

Recently, Justin Bieber was interviewed by Rolling Stone. In a surprisingly forward interview, the baby-faced pop star fielded questions regarding sex, drugs and America. While most of Bieber's answers were your dime-a-dozen pop star replies — "I don't think you should have sex with anyone unless you love them" — there was one comment of his that has sent people into an uproar.

When asked about his thoughts on abortion, Bieber said he "doesn't really believe in abortion." The interviewer then asked Bieber's views on abortion in cases of rape, to which Bieber said, "Uhm, well, I think that's really sad, but everything happens for a reason. I don't know how that would be a reason. I guess I

haven't been in that position, so I wouldn't be able to judge that."

The original quote that made its way onto the Internet had the line, "I don't know how that would be a reason," omitted, and made it seem as if Bieber thought rape happened for a reason. Pair that with his unsure definition of abortion — "It's like killing a baby?" — and you have a bunch of people starting to hate and sneer at the Bieberster.

But what people fail to realize is Bieber is a kid. While none of us liked to admit that when we were his age, the fact still remains he is 16.

So why are we putting so much stock in what he thinks about abortion? I can't even begin to tell you all the embarrassing things I said or sup-

ported when I was that age. He's just a kid. He'll learn. And if he doesn't, then so what? People are also forgetting Bieber is a practicing Christian. His views on topics like that center around his beliefs. It's his prerogative.

It's ridiculous that we care so much about the inner thoughts of celebrities. Pop stars should be pop stars, not talking heads about important issues. Why would you ask a 16-year-old male what he thinks about abortion? It's obvious he's not going to give you a well-thought-out answer, but rather what he believes in at the moment.

I know everyone should be educated about these topics and the political parties — something Bieber isn't certain about — but Bieber isn't like

other 16-year-olds. He's touring and making music and doing appearances and, frankly, I'm sure sometimes you don't have the time to acquaint yourself with hot-button issues. You just try to answer the questions as honestly as you can. And I don't think Bieber or anyone should be crucified for such an innocent answer.

Besides, it's not as if Bieber has his own talk show where he spits out cruel rhetoric about his Christian views. Look up any interview with him and you'll see that he's essentially a nice guy; an innocent kid who plays harmless pranks on his friends.

His answer isn't way out of left field or anything. I'm sure if you polled most 16-year-olds, they would give you a similar answer. Hell, if

you polled a good number of adults, I'm sure you would get the same answer.

Everyone acts as if his views are personally affecting them, and that is just ridiculous. While Bieber may be in the public spotlight, the fact he does or does not support abortion carries no weight in our daily lives.

I know in certain circles it's cool to hate on Bieber. His pro-love attitude and wind-swept bangs inspire groans and eye rolling from many people.

Get mad about the conflicts overseas. Get mad about biased news. Get mad about life. But a young pop star's views on abortion is the last thing any of us should be up in arms about.



Even though Justin Bieber has worked his way into international spotlight, he is still a 16-year-old and not qualified to lead public opinion. Courtesy photo: Wikimedia Commons

Marketing

Questioning the IQ of 'Smartwater'

By Lauren.Hayward@iowastatedaily.com

Walk past the drink fridges of any of the restaurants, cafeterias and cafés on campus and there are myriad of choices: sugary sweet, brightly colored, no sugar, no caffeine, high caffeine, guarana, acai berries, entire celery stalks and bunches of carrots squeezed into 8-ounce bottles.

If we were to believe everything listed on drink labels, the food industry would be in dire straits; we would need only a couple of Glacéau Vitaminwaters and a 5-hour Energy to survive for the rest of our lives.

The most astounding of this cornucopia of plastic bottles is the Glacéau Smartwater.

Smartwater is in the same line of drinks as Vitaminwater: the weak-Kool-Aid-tasting-but-has-more-sugar-than-a-can-of-coke drinks endorsed by rapper 50 Cent who was given a rumored 10 percent of the company for his efforts, earning himself a cool \$100 million in the process.

Let's get down to what we're really drinking when we drink smart, when we drink Smartwater.

Smartwater is, as it says on the labels, "vapor distilled water and added electrolytes for taste."

Yes, it has electrolytes added not for performance as in Gatorade, but instead added "for taste." The electrolytes are calcium chloride, magnesium chloride and potassium bicarbonate. Tasty.

But the thing that makes me question the IQ of this Smartwater is that the levels of electrolytes are so low that they could have only been added for taste, as they are inconsequential to your body's performance.

There is indeed a water quality report on the Glacéau website, but there is no mention of the amounts of added electrolytes, just the components that have been removed.

One liter — or four servings of Smartwater — has 10 milligrams of potassium, 10 milligrams of calcium and 15 milligrams of magnesium, according to one blogger who claims to have participated in correspondence with Glacéau regarding the electrolyte content of Smartwater.

Compare this to Evian bottled water that has 1 milligram of potassium, 80 milligrams of calcium and 26 milligrams of magnesium per liter.

In fact, water straight out of your kitchen tap in Ames has 2 milligrams of potassium, 152 milligrams of calcium and 11 milligrams of magnesium.

But despite the arguably inconsequential amounts of electrolytes, at least we know the water is vapor distilled. Going through vapor distillation must make it a superior bottled water, right?

This water hasn't been stimulated by trade winds or trickled down French Alps, it's all American water. And when I say all American, I mean it is municipal water flowing through the pipes of the Whitestone, N.Y. Smartwater factory that is boiled, purified, collected, funneled into bottles and sold at much higher prices than you'd pay to boil your own water at home.

Really, I don't think the smart of Smartwater refers to the water at all, I really think it refers to the brain behind the operation: J. Darius Bikoff.

Bikoff, current CEO of Energy Brands Inc., established the company in 1996. Although you may not have heard of this company, or Bikoff, it was purchased by Coca-Cola in 2007 for \$4.1 billion; an amount higher than the current GDP of the entire country of Barbados.

Energy Brands also trades as Glacéau, parent company of Vitaminwater and Smartwater. Bikoff has retained control of his multibillion-dollar company; established less than 15 years ago when he was feeling run down.

Bikoff explained the beginnings of Vitaminwater interview with The Times in 2008.

"I was feeling run down one day, standing in my kitchen in New York. I wanted to stave off a cold, and I took [a vitamin C tablet] ... and I opened some mineral water and drank, and I thought, yeah, this is nice, vitamins and water. It got me thinking."

And as Bikoff got to thinking, he knew he needed a catchy name to go with his clever product. Perhaps it was his time spent in London and Paris that inspired

him, but Bikoff gave his company a completely false French name.

Exotic and sophisticated-sounding Glacéau is not a real French word. To break it down it is the combination of Glacé meaning frozen, and eau meaning water. So, en anglais, its name is frozen-water. Not quite as impressive but perfect to go with his clever marketing scheme of selling enhanced water.

Enhanced water means not only that the water has any of the naturally occurring mineral stripped out of it through purification, but in the case of Vitaminwater, it has sugars, colors, minerals, nutrients and flavorings added; making it actually less healthy than it would have been were you to take the vitamin C tablet and a swig of mineral water that inspired this new category of beverages.

It is just this problem — the idea that these sugary beverages are healthy — that has brought a case of misleading the public against Coca-Cola and Vitaminwater: Coca-Cola's response?

"No consumer could reasonably be misled into thinking Vitaminwater was a healthy beverage."

So while we are marketed one message, we are expected to understand or know the complete opposite because, according to Coca-Cola, it would be unreasonable to believe the hype.

There is no doubt Bikoff is a fantastic business man, and his entrepreneurial feats are the epitome of American capitalist success: A man creating a company worth more than \$4 billion in fewer than 15 years, affecting the enormous beverage industry and popular culture in the process.

But in the end, he is a business man, not a physician, selling you a product, not health. Smartwater is a healthier choice than Vitaminwater as it doesn't have excess sugars, artificial color or flavorings, but it doesn't have much else to it to make it healthier than regular water.

So before you pay too much for that bottled water, think about what is inside.

Because once you open the lid, you may find that you're getting less than what you paid for.

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