Lonely Lament of a Jogophobe

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Every sunny Sunday since I have been at MIT, hundreds of strange characters - pedestrians, drivers, cyclists - donning their running shoes, easily recognizable by their dress and the strange, painless expression they wear. Three years ago, however, I didn't know anyone who was into it, or at least anyone who would admit it. Now I feel that I am the only one missing out on the fun.

Running has come out of the closet. I noticed several years ago that the national pastime had switched from baseball to marathon. While hitting little balls with big sticks may be boring, running is downright painful. Despite the rigor, however, numerous magazine articles and the New York Times bestseller Left Behind left me the realization that more and more Americans were jogging their way into Nirvana or, more likely, the orthopedist.

I had thought my friends immune from the seemingly contagious spectacle. I knew almost no one who ran regularly. Some last spring I realized that almost everyone with whom I punted, worked, or had classes had sprouted expensive running shoes and was showing it more frequently. People wore not only running regularly - they were bragging about it.

Running has come out of the closet. I bumped into the unfortunate fellow about in a similar fit of conformity. Running shoes are incredibly expensive. I was feeling left out because I was the only person I knew who wasn't into it. I started equally slowly, but found it fairly easy to run about three miles daily in two shifts. I commuted by foot, convinced that if I ran with nowhere to go I would simply stop. One of the most effective ways to get going is to have a short-distance goal with minimal amount of time to get to it - in the morning - and schedule it for a few of one o'clock meetings. After two or three weeks of running, the daily session began to fade. I thought I couldn't tell if I was enjoying myself, because my entire mind was occupied by varying degrees of fatigue, soreness, and pain. I ran regular the first two or three weeks, but the joy of running could only be understood by others found running too enjoyable. Then the real pain began.

I ignored the cramps and strange twitches, telling myself that I had not yet adapted to the discipline of running and was merely grazing for fitness. I started to run one mile a day, then two. By then, the swelling and shooting pains had set in, and I couldn't have run too much more than my intentions.

I feel the problem we water on the knee, gave me a newfound and told me to stop running. I wonder if he sensed my disbelief. Possibly MIT students find it fascinating to subject their bodies to more stresses than the joints were designed to withstand, but not I. Next semester I plan to do experiments with stresses and strains, I'll take a lab course. Next time I feel the need to conform, I'll try scotch.

Throughout the years I've spent at MIT, I have found the people in the Dean's Office to be very friendly and understanding. They are, as we say in Yiddish, menschen. To be a menschen is to be human, a regular guy, the kind of person who you'd want to join you for pizza and beer.

At various times during my undergraduate career, however, I have noticed strange disease affecting parts of the Dean's Office and Administration. This malady, as yet unnamed (suggestions are invited), has two symptoms:
1) If someone sneezes, there is necessarily, an epidemic.
2) If someone causes someone else grief, directly or indirectly, it is necessarily the first person's fault.

This ailment tends to hit only those who claim to be particularly sensitive to students' possible problems. From my viewpoint, they have gone too far in the other direction, becoming sensitive to the points, instead of ridiculous.

In September of my freshman year, the Freshman Picture Book carried a photo of the Technique musucian and Freshman Committee "Harvey, Grogo, Kampala, Uganda." Dave Soule labelled it this way because gorillas are indigenous to Africa and because Kampala was one of the few African cities he could think of - how many can you name?

An incredible stink was raised about possible racial questions, and some discussed placing Soule before the Committee on Discipline. What for? It was clear that no offense was intended; he would never have used Grogo's picture or name, in that case. Many in the student body seemed to agree that it was the accusers, not the accused, who were at fault.

Two years later, Grogo turned up again in the caption "any Grogo, Technology, MIT." Perhaps so one would take offense. Wrong. The Technology Community Association, which publishes the Freshman Picture Book, first covered up the pictures with stickers, and finally ended up cutting out all pictures of Grogo, and of Maurice Hendos '83, who was on the other side of the page.

I had the dubious honor of sitting in on a meeting between TCA, Dean Robert Sherwood, and Vice President Constantine Simonides. No, the picture itself was insensitive, they said, but because the first Grogo incident had occurred only two years before, this was much too early for his return. The same people had complained and, once more, the side of sanity lost. My latest scrape with this disease happened just recently. I am, currently, the chairman of the Freshman Rules Committee (FRC), a clandestine group of upperclassmen who conspire to devise the Freshman Quiz. The Quiz, which has been given almost every year since 1973, is designed to scare the frosh a little (what, a test already?), to amuse (see the Quiz and you'll know why), and to be informative.

Unfortunately, it seems that Peggy Richardson, the Executive Officer of the Undergraduate Academic Support Office (please turn to page 5),