FEATURES

CAMPUS ODDITY

The Origins of the UR Pig-Painted Gas Tank

BY VICTORIA SEREMETIS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Occasionally, a member of the UR community will notice strange artifacts and landmarks around campus and wonder: "How did this come to be?"

This is precisely how I began investigating the pig-painted nitrogen gas tank near Wilmot Hall, home of the Institute of Opticst. An amusing souvenir of the Institute, the gas tank has sat behind the Wilmot Annex for many years, yet few know its story.

An amusing souvenir of the Institute of Optics, the gas tank has been there for many years, yet few know its story.

So, I put on my detective's hat and began searching for clues.

My first contact was River Campus Facilities—people who were most likely to be familiar with the nooks and crannies of campus.

Unfortunately, Assistant Director Kevin Gibson explained that he and his coworkers had inquired about the pig before, and even after years of working at the University, no one seemed to know much about it.

At first it felt like failure, but years of watching "Supernatural" and reading Sherlock Holmes had prepared me for this moment. I turned back around and pointed my magnifying glass in another direction.

Editors on the Campus Times suggested I present my inquiry to the Director of Optics, Xi-Cheng Zhang.

From here, I began riding a cascading tidal wave of emails.

Zhang redirected me to his administrative assistant Gina Kern. Through Kern, I became acquainted with Professor Carlos Stroud.

Stroud, who has worked as a professor at the UR for 40+ years, had written a book in 2004 on the history of the Institute of Optics. His book, "A Jewel in the Crown: Essays in Honor of the 75th Anniversary of the Institute of Optics," includes a detailed history of the Institute, along with an archive of related anecdotes.

I believed the book would be my answer; yet to my dismay, upon exploring its chapters, I saw it contained no information about the pig-painted nitrogen tank. But this was no time to give up.

I emailed Stroud, who replied almost immediately. He instructed me to contact Professor Lukas Novotny, a previous professor of the Optics department, who now teaches at the Technical University of Zurich, in Switzerland. Stroud explained that the pig was supposedly owned by Novotny's group of research students.

There was no way a professor in Switzerland would reply to my ridiculous question.

However, at this point I was far too invested in the story to back out. I emailed Novotny.

LEAH NASON / PHOTO EDITOR

This pig-painted gas tank stands outside of the Institute of Optics, behind the Wilmot Annex.

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To my astonishment, Novotny also replied within the hour. (These are some really friendly and efficient professors.)

After a two-week-long email journey, I finally found what I was looking for—the pig had been painted by research students of Professor Erdogen, who has since left UR and became CEO of Semrock Company. Erdogen's group at UR was called the "Periodic Index Grating (PIG)" group, and the pig gas tank was their mascot.

The story of the Wilmot Pig may seem small and insignificant, but knowing its irrelevant history could only bring a student closer to the UR community. After all, a person's idiosyncrasies are the most beautiful thing about them, so why shouldn't this maxim apply to an educational institution as well?

The pig is yet another badge of pride to pin on our backpacks and more fuel for our school spirit.

Or, perhaps, I've become just a little too emotionally invested in this campus mystery.

Seremetis is a member of the Class of 2019.

The Science of Orgasm

BY SIMRANJIT K. GREWAL
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The feeling of an orgasm is understood by many. There are sparks and explosions throughout the body, and a warm sensation follows.

But, probably less-known is the science behind what exactly is going down in the body.

As it prepares for climax, vital signs are at their peak, and muscles in the pelvis, face, and toes are tense. Then follows the sudden, forceful release of that sexual tension in the form of muscular contractions.

The brain releases dopamine and oxytocin, leading to the euphoric feelings.

The orgasm doesn't exist in a vacuum—it's just one part of the sexual response system.

To understand the science of the orgasm, we must break down the sexual response cycle into the following: excitement, plateau, orgasm, and resolution.

In the excitement stage, muscle tension and heart rate increase, skin may become flushed, the nipples erect, women's breasts become fuller, and blood flows to the clitoris or penis, causing swelling.

The plateau stage, despite its lackluster name, is an intensified version of the excitation stage.

Blood flow and subsequent swelling occurs, the vaginal wall turns dark purple, the clitoris becomes very sensitive (with some people, it becomes even painful to touch and retracts under the hood to avoid excess stimulation).

Following the plateau stage is the orgasm itself. In comparison to the other stages, it doesn't last very long. And you know what happens.

Finally, the orgasm enters the resolution stage. The body returns to its normal levels, and body parts that were swollen or changed color return to normal as well.

There are some differences in the way people with female reproductive systems and male reproductive systems, from here on referred to females and males, orgasm. (Transgendered individuals and intersex people may have unique reactions that differ from the male/female dichotomy.)

Sex & the CT

In females, the vaginal walls, uterus, pelvic muscles, and anus contract. Females' orgasms average 20 seconds, but can last up to a minute. Females also don't require a refractory period, giving them the ability to orgasm multiple times.

In males, orgasms last three to 10 seconds. The contractions come from the anal sphincter, penis muscles, and prostate gland. The force of these contractions release semen.

However, men can also experience dry orgasms in which no fluid is released. Males require a refractory period before they can orgasm again.

Females can also ejaculate (colloquially referred to as "squirting"). Activation of the g-spot, a sensitive area two inches into the vagina on the front wall, can cause females to ejaculate fluids from the bladder and the female prostate. In both men and women, muscles in other part of the body, including the legs and feet, are affected.

The brain experiences many changes during an orgasm, too. The lateral orbitofrontal cortex, a part right behind the left eye that controls behavior and acts as the "voice of reason," is shut down during an orgasm. The periaqueductal gray, which interprets fight or flight, is activated in women only. Women also experience a decrease in amygdala and hippocampus activity, which decreases fear and anxiety during sex. The brain releases dopamine and oxytocin, leading to the euphoric feelings—ultimately, what makes the experience enjoyable.

To understand the science of the orgasm, we must break down the sexual response cycle.

Grewal is a member of the Class of 2017.