

SIGNS OF LIFE

An Anthology of Original Essays

By Adam Zurn

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Dedication

— To Robert H. Benson, my Grandfather, for all the signs of life he's shown me. —

Acknowledgments

“The journey is the reward.”

- *Taoist Saying*

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“You want to be a writer,
But you don’t know how or when.
Find a quiet place,
Use a humble pen.”

- Paul Simon, “Hurricane Eye”

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Forward

“What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.”

- T. S. Eliot, *"Four Quartets"*

It has often been the goal of my writing to raise consciousness without having to raise my voice. While compiling this collection, I realized several things. First and foremost, I've come a long way since my first column. In case you were wondering, my first column is not contained within the following pages. It wasn't very good and is better left not celebrated.

I write when the muses move me. The concept for many columns have been spawned while in the car as I counted off the endless miles, in that limbo land between sleep and wake, and sitting through pointless lecture. I write simply to express. I write because I have inner thoughts, hopes, and desires I wish to share.

I am amazed at how naive I was especially with some of my earliest columns. However, do not construe that last comment to mean I know everything now—far from it. There is an ancient Chinese Proverb that says, “Before you can learn anything, you must admit you know nothing.” Nothing could be more true during my years at college.

Second, the copy editors who originally proof read my material (especially September 1997 – May 1998) were terrible. What you are reading isn't exactly as it appeared when it was originally published, but it's really close. I shouldn't criticize those early copy editors too strongly. For starters, they were fun, cute, and enjoyed displaying their belly-button rings. A more serious and less chauvinistic reason is that my proofreading and editing ability is far from perfect. You might even—no rephrase that—will probably find a few errors on your journey through the following pages. Hey, it happens to the best of us. Right!?!

Third and somewhat related to the first point, I find now that I didn't always fully understand the topics I was writing on. I thought I did at the time, but years later see that I didn't. As I reread my material now, I find my opinion has changed on some matters. But there's nothing wrong with changing your mind. That's a sign of life and the beauty of living in a free country. Many of the following essays were originally published in *The Snapper*, the Millersville University student newspaper. I hope you enjoy reading the following articles as much as I enjoyed writing them.

One last thing, perhaps I should take a moment to discuss the Wildman. The Wildman is my alter ego. He is a man through and through not in the least concerned with political correctness. He is not always “sensitive” to gender issues or political correctness. The Wildman, however, is extremely aware of the political, environmental, and social world around as he strives to do what is right. He calls the world as he sees it and does things the way he wants to unaffected by what other people might think or say.

College Life

“I never let schooling interfere with my education.”

- Mark Twain

Saturday Night Fever Strikes Dorms

Originally published November 21, 1997

Friday was a full moon and judging from the behavior Saturday night, it was obvious the “howling effect” was not over.

It began as a typical Saturday night in Gilbert Hall complete with the usual assortment of noises filtering in from the hallway—a cross between full contact football, an episode of *Soul Train*, and a game of *Red Rover, Red Rover*.

Loud noises and weird rumbles are quite normal in the dorms. So normal in fact, I didn’t even notice the 3.0 earthquake last Thursday night. I was sitting in my room watching “ER,” when at 10:45 I felt a slight rumbling. I remember the moment not because I thought it was an earthquake and the world might end, but by my amazement at how powerful the bass on someone’s stereo was. I rolled my eyes and thought, “Turn it down!”

All the while, I was attempting to block out the rap music from next door, the heavy metal from down the hall, and the country-western from upstairs. The weird and outlandish is commonplace in the dorms.

Anyway, it was Saturday night, and I was preparing for bed by brushing my teeth. That’s when I heard something that wasn’t normally heard in the men’s room—a high-pitched giggle. I, of course, ignored the noise positive it was my imagination. However, I soon heard it again. I decided to investigate by taking a peek under the stalls in the direction of the high-pitched voice. I found two sets of legs in one of the bathroom stalls.

I completely understand how the men’s room provides that unique romantic backdrop that can only be created on the college campus

(perhaps with the help of some Guinness). This would be my first choice of a location to “hookup.” Those beautiful green and black tiles, that sweaty man smell, the location’s privacy, the ample room to move around, and the impeccably clean and sterile environment that a bathroom has to offer. How could any young couple resist? Upon hearing the words, “You’re turning me on.” I decided that was my cue to leave.

But lo and behold, my bizarre evening was just starting. As I worked my way back to my dorm room, dodging the final few plays of this evening’s hall games. I arrived at my room. I put on my pajamas and hopped into bed (alone).

I was just about to fall asleep when I heard the fire alarm go off. At first I considered ignoring the alarm and pretending not to be home when the RA knocked at my door.

The building was built in 1949. I figured it had to be filled with asbestos. How fast could it possibly burn down? I decided I should head outside anyway.

I was in no hurry though. I found some pants and a shirt to put-on, grabbed my jacket and slid into my flip-flops. As I headed out the door, I grabbed my umbrella in case it was still raining, which I hoped it wasn’t.

Outside there were two groups of people. One group was the people who had already gone to bed and were in their pajamas. They were all huddled round each other in a desperate attempt to keep hypothermia from setting in. The other group was everyone who was still dressed. This group was much warmer. Among the group of the dressed and warm, I noticed a variety of different sobriety

levels. But again, all of this was commonplace when living in the dorms.

After about ten or 15 minutes, the alarm stopped. We all went back inside regardless of whether it was safe or not. I headed back to bed (alone) again and soon fall asleep.

If anything more happened, I slept through it. I can only imagine what will happen next time when the full moon falls on a Saturday night.

Campus Littered with 'Signs' of the Times

Originally published October 16, 1998

*"Sign, sign, everywhere a sign.
F***ing up the scenery, breaking my
mind.
Do this, don't do that—can't you read
the sign?"*

As much as I enjoy all the great things that Millersville has to offer, there is one thing that I find detrimental to the attitudes the University tries to instill. Those things are the signs and posters covering the campus.

If you haven't noticed any signs or posters, especially during freshman elections, then you must be blind.

Not only is the University covered in signs, it is plastered with a special kind of sign. Think about your answer now, when was the last time you saw a positive sign on campus?

It seems to me that these signs all start the same—with the word "no." no parking anytime, no parking between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., no smoking, no bare feet, no skateboards, no pets, no key chains on ID cards, no email on this computer, no chart rooms on this computer, no drinking, no

personal checks accepted, no, no, no, no, no, etc...

I didn't notice the negative feeling that these signs created on campus until I did my student teaching. The school I visited was filled with positive posters that encouraged students to do their best and try harder.

I instantly felt the difference in attitude between here and Millersville. This school did not dwell on boundaries that students should be bound by. These signs and posters still told me the rules, but instead of telling me what I should not do, it told me what I could do.

The posters read: "Before fighting, try talking;" "Don't want your apple, see if your neighbor wants it;" "Did you remember your binder?;" "Have you hugged someone today?" "Winners don't always win, they play by the rules;" "Appreciate differences;" "Go the distance;" "Help others;" "Be yourself; Play fair;" and "Teachers are your friends." Yes, the sayings on the posters might be corny, but I didn't read anything that said "Don't do this" and "Don't do that." This made all the difference in the attitude of the school.

The posters at this school speak to the optimistic side of life. Perhaps this is something Millersville should try. Instead of constantly reminding people of rules and the limitation of life, the University should try to encourage growth and try to stress the infinite possibilities laying before them. That's part of the job of a university...to encourage growth.

Imagine a university that proclaimed positive growth and less limitation. You can park here—all the time; This parking area is not for Deans; Enjoy your cigarette here; Feel free to remove your shoes; We welcome your pets here; Check your email here; and Chat you little heart out. See the difference this can make in how you feel.

Just think where a positive attitude could lead this campus. No constant reminders of limitations placed upon us. Just how far could we go? Besides, why must the

University get so caught up in who's parking where. Aren't there more important things to worry about than parking infractions such as drug dealers and child molesters?

What if Christopher Columbus was bound by the rules of the world being flat? We would still be in Europe. A lack of limitation allows growth both personally and for society.

Let's put these limiting and negative signs away and replace them with the ones that say, "Love your neighbor" and "Try tolerance." Life could be much better if we try focusing on the positive.

*"Sign, sign, everywhere a sign.
F***ing up the scenery, breaking my
mind,
Do this, don't do that—can't you read
the sign."*

Millersville Earns a Failing Grade for Four-Year Graduation Program

Originally published March 9, 2000

If you received the highest score in a class on an exam but still failed it, would you be proud of yourself? Millersville sure is.

Millersville recently beat out the rest of the state system to have the highest four-year graduation rate—a whopping 36 percent. Last time we checked, 36 percent was still failing—and miserably. Not exactly something you brag about.

We realize that these numbers are never going to be 100 percent because students transfer, switch majors, and/or drop out. But shouldn't Millersville be striving for at least a

passing score of traditional students graduating in four years.

On top of that, Millersville has the nerve to ask Harrisburg to look at five-year graduation rates instead? Since when did this become a five-year school? Millersville missed the state cut-off of 40 percent by four lousy percentage points. We imagine that asking for the money would be like asking your professor for a D— just because you were really close to passing. The question remains, did you earn the passing grade? Did Millersville earn the money?

A large number of private schools have graduation rates above 40 percent. How hard can it be? Is there a conspiracy theory against the state system? Doubtful, the state capital probably wants more students graduating in four years (just like all our parents do). Is that such a bad thing?

President Joseph Caputo believes that to graduate in four years, one needs to take at least 16 credits, borrow more money, not take a double major, and/or a drop your minor.

Take more than 15 credits or drop your minor!?! Those aren't solutions to graduating in four years. The University is trying to use a Band-Aid to solve a major problem by shifting the blame and encouraging students to get less of an education.

President Caputo said that the intention of general education classes was to help students in the future when everyone is frequently changing careers. Isn't that suppose to be the purpose of a minor—something you have an interest in, a secondary strength, and/or a fall back career. How much can you really learn in a general education class anyway?

Taking more than 15 credits a semester is a difficult task. In some majors, a person would have to be insane to take more than 15 credits a semester. Take Tech Ed for example, when a three-credit class meets for six hours a week. That means 15 credits is more like 30.

Secondly, a fair number of students are actively involved in campus extra-circular activities. Isn't that an almost required part of college anymore? In order to give yourself an edge over the rest of the competition you have

to be involved. This provides you with experience you can't get in a general education class?

The solution to graduating in four years has three parts. The first thing is to remove some of the general education requirements. Ask yourself, do you really need that second perspective? The answer is no!

That's not how faculty senate sees it though. Less general education requirements mean less faculty needed to teach those classes. A scary thought for even the most seasoned and tenured professor.

The second part of the solution is that more classes in your minor count toward your general education requirements. Imagine that, killing two birds with one stone. It's almost unheard of here at the Ville.

The third part is that all majors only require 120 credits for graduation, not 129 or more. Simple math says you can't get out of here in four years when you need that many credits.

I demand the University address this problem with the goal of graduating 60 percent of the students in four years not five. Methods of addressing this problem do not include useless handouts entitled "Four-Year Graduation Guide" or suggesting students not have a minor.

The solution includes removing general education requirements, having more classes in your minor counting toward your general education requirements, and all majors requiring 120 credits for graduation.

Ha, Ha You Can't Complain Next Year

Originally published April 24, 1998

Amere 13 votes. That's what separated Kevin Van Horn and Shelby Linton in the Student Senate Presidential election on Thursday, April 16. Just imagine, if you and 13 of your friends had voted, the outcome of the election could have been completely changed.

I'm fairly sure that you and your 13 friends didn't vote. Statistically, no one did. At Lyle Dining hall, the polls were open all during lunch. I eat there as does probably an additional 300 or 400 people do during the lunch hours. Yet, as few as 100 people voted at Lyle.

Meanwhile, things weren't much better in the SMC. While I took the 34 seconds it takes to vote, I watched as hordes of apathetic students walked by. The whole voting process isn't real tough. You put a check mark next to the names of the people you want to elect, and the Senator working the booth marks your name off a list. It's that simple.

As I voted, Ed Kovacs was trying to convince another student to vote. Many students did not listen, not even when he called them communists.

Why should I expect more from a campus when we live in a country where fewer than 50 percent of the registered voters voted in the last presidential election? All I can do is shake my head in shame and give out a sad sigh of exasperation. One student after talking about Senate elections told me, "What for? It's just a clique."

Whether it is a clique or not, doesn't really matter. These people have control of your \$1 million student activities fee. You remember

that fee, don't you? It's the fee that Student Senate voted to raise next semester by \$5. Anyone who is part of an organization remembers the pathetic allocation they got last year. If I remember correctly from the complaining earlier in the year a bunch of you only got \$42. It's sure hard to run any organization on \$42. But hey, I guess not many of you care all that much now, judging from the lack of voter turnout.

These Student Senate officers—president, vice-president, treasurer, recording secretary, and corresponding secretary—help implement student policy. These people have a lot of power with what your college career will be like.

I sat through every single Student Senate meeting except one last year. I've seen firsthand what Senate can do. It can raise your activities fee, give emergency allocations to groups completely out of money, discuss and change academic policy, and even vote itself money (much like the federal government).

I'm not saying that the things the Senate does are wrong. They try to do what they feel is in the best interests of the students. But if they don't know what your interests are because you're too busy hiding in your dorm room and refusing to vote, then they'll vote policy any which way they like. They need your input. That goes for you nontraditional students living off-campus too. You'll be paying more \$5 next semester too. It's my guess that not many of you voted either.

The thing is when you don't vote and don't participate, you lose your complaining rights. You didn't care enough to vote, so

don't whine later that you don't like what they are doing. This goes for anything from the federal level right on down to our own Student Senate.

If you don't care enough to stay informed and vote in a simple election, then don't sit there on your high horse and bad mouth the winners because you think that the other person could have done a better job. And if you think that you can do a better job, then join. There are empty seats every week at Senate waiting for you to fill them.

To the couple odd thousand of you who didn't vote this year, remember you can't complain about Senate till after the next election—next year! Sorry, that's just the way it is.

To the 500 or so of you who did vote, it's good to see that some of you do care, are involved, and want your voice heard! I'll be looking forward to hearing your complaints next year because you cared enough now to participate.

Voting in Senate Election: Your Duty and Right

Originally published April 13, 2000

Some of you might remember last year's elections where it really didn't matter if you voted or not because there wasn't any serious competition. That is not the case this year. The positions of president, vice-president, treasurer, and corresponding secretary are all facing stiff competition.

The Snapper attempted to choose candidates to support for office. After some research, we discovered something unusual. The candidates are all qualified. They are all dedicated members of student senate who have the concerns of the student body at heart.

These candidates are proposing real change should they be elected. It's important that you understand their positions and platforms so that you can vote for the one that best represents you.

The Snapper has only one recommendation concerning the upcoming Student Senate elections. That you vote. The right to vote is one of the hallmarks of democracy and of this country. That is the ability to elect new

leaders and have the transition of power occur peacefully. Understand that this doesn't happen everywhere.

We don't care who you vote for, we just want you to vote for someone. In years past, Student Senate election turnout has bordered on pathetic. That should come as no surprise being national election levels aren't much better, and that Millersville University is the banner town for student apathy.

We urge you to take an active role in the life of your campus by voting in the Student Senate elections. Don't think that your vote won't matter. Two years ago, Student Senate president Shelby Linton won by a mere 13 votes. Just imagine, you and 13 of your friends could have changed the results of a student senate election. That's the power of one (or in this case 13), and the power to rock the vote.

We here at *The Snapper* urge you to buck the trend and vote. We know what you're saying, "Why should I care? What reason do I

have to vote in Student Senate elections?” We’ll give you a million reasons to vote. Student Senate is the organization that controls the nearly \$1 million allocation fund here on campus. That alone is a good reason to vote. You want people who share your point-of-view running senate don’t you?

You say that you’re too busy to vote. We’ve got news for you. Student Senate election voting is a quick and painless process unlike most things here at the Ville. Even if it wasn’t, should it matter? No one said freedom

and democracy comes easy. You’ve got to want it bad.

By voting in this year’s Student Senate election, you will have taken the first step in becoming a responsible citizen who cares what is happening around him/her. By voting in this election, you will have started to form the habit of voting in national and local elections, which are many more times important.

So as the saying goes, “Vote early and vote often.” Well, at least vote once.

The Power Lies in your Hands

Originally published September 28, 2000

Incredible power can be wielded by the smallest stroke of the pen. Believe it or not, this power is given to all citizen in this country.

This is the power to change the course of human history, the power to determine the path of progress, the power to stand up and be counted. The power we speak of is the power of one, the power of the vote—your vote. So the question is, are you man or woman enough to use it and use it wisely?

Voting is not just a right or a privilege, it is your duty as an American citizen to participate in the active workings of our government. Don’t fool yourself for a second that by not voting you are somehow helping the country.

In fact, it is quite the opposite. Your vote couldn’t matter more. One vote gave Adolph Hitler leadership of the Nazi party. One vote saved President Johnson from impeachment. One vote brought Texas into the Union. One vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England. One vote authorized the execution of King

Charles I. As you can see, one vote does matter.

Everyone who can vote, should. It’s that simple, right!?! Unfortunately, it’s not. People seem to have all manner of excuses for not voting.

Voting is hard.

No one said advance citizenship was going to be easy. Sometimes it takes a little effort on your part. In reality, voting isn’t that difficult when compared to writing your Honors Thesis. All you have to do to vote in the November 7 election is the following.

First, you must be registered by October 10. That’s still eleven days away at press time. If you are a Millersville resident, you can register to vote in the borough. If you live in an off-campus apartment or anywhere in Millersville, you can pick up a pamphlet near the SMC information desk, fill it out and you will be registered to vote. Much simpler than what most of you went through during registration.

Second, you have to show-up at your home polling location. They’re open from 8

a.m. to 8 p.m. The hours of the SMC aren't much better than that.

Granted, some of you can't make the commute home to vote because it's just too far. Don't worry, because an absentee ballot is your answer. You can pick-up a form from Student Senate, fill it in, and mail it. Within a week's time, you can do your voting in the comfort of your own dorm room. Talk about easy.

It's a two party system, so my vote doesn't matter.

Maybe you're not a big Bush fan and maybe you're not a big Gore fan. Then don't vote for either of them. We promise you that your vote will not be wasted. If a third party receives 25 percent of the vote, they will

receive equal funding in the next election. You know what that means, we'll have a three party system. Keep in mind, we only have one more party than Communist Russia.

Your idle excuses for not voting will be meaningless if our freedoms are taken away. We here at *The Snapper* are not just urging you to vote, we are commanding you that it is your duty as an intelligent human being, as a citizen, as an American to vote.

So when you enter your voting booth on November 7 and close that curtain behind you, you are doing more than merely making a simple mark on a piece of paper. You are exercising your power of one, your power to change the world, your power to vote.

Stuff Happens; We Must Report It

Originally published October 2, 1998

After working at *The Snapper* for a short amount of time, one of the first things you come to realize is that the phone never stops ringing.

We get a variety of calls: prospective advertisers, administrators returning messages, student reporters and editors playing phone tag, wrong numbers, requests, death threats, ideal promises, and charitable offers of help. Of all these different phone calls we receive, we have our favorites.

The call usually starts in one of two ways. Well, it tends to almost always be a voice message when it's this type of call. "I can't believe you [*The Snapper*] would run a story like that on Parents' Weekend (Homecoming, or any other big Public Relations event)."

The second type is very similar to the first, but it usually takes place before the story is run.

"I was hoping that you [*The Snapper*] could not run this story because it will put Millersville in a bad light."

We received complaints from the public when *The Snapper* ran a rape story on Parents' Weekend last year. The complaints were not because the story was done poorly. Rather the timing of the story's publishing date was questioned.

The caller suggested that we should have waited a week or not run the story at all. Two options that is unacceptable for a newspaper.

As recent as last week, *The Snapper* again received phone calls asking us not to run a certain sports story. The sincerity of the callers was never in question, but the fact remains: it was and continues to be news.

While these things might be construed as "shameful" or "hurtful" for the school's image and the persons involved, the reading public

needs to remember that the only reason the paper exists—the only reason we students pour hours into this operation—is to report the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the Millersville University community. Period.

As with the rape story—or any other story for that matter—it is the job of the student paper to inform its reading public to the best of the paper's ability as to what is happening all over the campus. People not only want to know what's happening, but also some need to know.

So far this year we, as a staff, have endeavored to make the paper more reader friendly by shifting our focus entirely onto the shoulders of Millersville University.

True, some things may slip by our ever-watchful eyes, but we don't intentionally ignore any story, event or person. However, as we all know, we are imperfect creatures striving for a perfect, unbiased reflection of our little slice of the world.

Remember, too, that *The Snapper* is not a public relations vehicle for the University. We are your newspaper. We are your voice. We try to represent a collective personality of the community.

Sometimes we will run stories and uncover details of events that some people would rather not hear or know. When negative stories run, students and administrators often forget the positive stories that *The Snapper* also prints.

In the first issue of *The Snapper* this year, the news was reported as it always is. However, it happened to all be positive that week. The next weekend had some negative news such as the Amish Comic story and it happened to be Parents' Weekend. *The Snapper* prints the news as soon as possible.

The Snapper believes in reporting the news as it happens on campus. Even if our advisor

or editor-in-chief was caught supplying alcohol to minors or something even worse, *The Snapper* would still run the story or at least publish it in the Police Briefs.

The Snapper attempts to supply the University with unbiased and uncensored news every week regardless of coinciding circumstances. That is how it needs to be.

The First Amendment to the Constitution is the freedom of speech and of the press. If you want *The Snapper* to only print good news (or propaganda as it's really known), or to censor negative news, then you might as well write your congressional representative.

The beauty of this newspaper and its freedom lies in the fact that we are a public university. In theory this means we are liberated from the tyranny of an administration sponsored media advisory board or, heaven forbid, the threat of censors dictating what we can and cannot print.

Understand, too, that stories that we print are never considered lightly. We check our facts as far possible, but there will be times when the information we have been given is, in fact, erroneous.

As students first and journalists second, we realize that pain, embarrassment, and even scorn can evolve from one simple utterance found in our pages.

Knowing also the possibility of our own misfortune landing in the headlines of this paper, we emphasize compassion and dignity when pursuing a story.

We will continue to publish Millersville's news, both good and bad. All we can ask from the public is to provide feedback.

Your suggestions, questions, and comments allow us to step back and detach ourselves from the pursuit of news and analyze our processes.

University Should Concentrate on Students' Needs, not Biemesderfer

Originally published February 18, 1999

It would appear that Millersville has its priorities backwards. The powers that be seem solely concerned with outward appearances while internal conditions have been left to deteriorate.

Unless you walk around campus with your eyes closed, you've probably noticed the new copper eaves troughs on Biemesderfer. Nice aren't they (expensive too, I bet)? What was wrong with the old ones? They oxidized and didn't look pretty anymore. Can't have things not looking pretty because what would those Millersville hopefuls think when they come for a tour?

Elsewhere on campus in the warm month of February the maintenance staff is busy planting new shrubbery because we all know that February is prime planting season. Don't want any leaves laying on the ground during the fall months either because that's an eye sore for sure. While they're at it, they might as well put down some sod in the places where the grass is worn. Again, that would be an eye sore and what would those admission students think about the Ville?

First impressions are important. Millersville wants this place's appearance to be top-notch. The thinking is that if we distract the students with the beauty of the pond, they'll never notice the rotting shower over in Landes. I have a feeling that those showers never make the guided tour.

In the grand scheme of things, new copper rain pipes and freshly planted shrubbery pales in comparison to necessities like showers. The shower problem isn't new to the residences of Landes. In fact, it's been that way for 18

months and still counting. That's more than enough time to fix it.

But who cares? By the time the students learn of the problem, the University has their money. The University says that they're addressing the problem and have no intention of letting it go until the planned renovation of the building into the new education center, but we all know that actions speak louder than words. And these actions are screaming!

They're screaming that the University is more concerned with outward appearances, looking good for the public and alumni while the poor students trapped here are forced to suffer. You could beat even money that if President Caputo had a similar problem in his home or Biemesderfer that it would be fixed almost immediately.

Yet the school speaks of red tape and getting the lowest bid. Maybe that's the problem, low bid can equal low quality. Can't go wrong with Nobody & Son plumbing and dead animal removal. Real problems call for high quality professionals to fix them!

The University has broken its housing agreement with the students of Landes by providing them with substandard housing. The University owes these students repaired showers, an apology for their tardiness and laziness on the matter, and maybe-just maybe a partial housing refund for the unacceptable state of affairs.

It's time to be concerned with the internal as well as the external at Millersville. When it comes to new grass and shrubbery, I'm sure Mother Nature will take care of things. However, when it comes to plumbing, we need

the administration to seriously get on task. These problems don't call for subcommittees; they demand someone making a call to someone who can fix the problem.

To all of the residences of Landes, if you find your showers not up to par, perhaps President Caputo would be willing to share his with you. He doesn't live far away, and, maybe then, he'll see how much of an inconvenience this has been for everyone!

-- Afterward --

This commentary helped to prove the power of the pen and the press. Two weeks after this column was published the University fired the old plumbing company and hired a new one. The showers were repaired shortly after. In addition, the University donated an \$1,000 to the dorm for throwing a party with the University's apologies for the massive inconvenience.

Limited Access to Ville Buildings Equals 'Silent Discrimination'

Originally published October 21, 1999

Unacceptable is the only word to describe the silent form of discrimination going on here at Millersville for longer than most can remember. This type of discrimination has nothing to do with skin color, religious beliefs, or even your ethnic background. It does however have everything to do with your physical ability. Think of the buildings here on campus that you've been in and try to picture where the elevator is in each. It might take a few minutes, but you'll probably figure it out—for most.

Now think about the dorms for a moment. What's wrong with the dorms you ask? They all have ramps to enter the building don't they. Yes they do but that's about it. In many dorms the first floor is as far as you can get. In some you can't even make it past the lobby. In Gilbert, there are four steps to the first floor rooms and this is the "wellness dorm." Doesn't sound very "well" to us. So, if you are in a wheelchair that is as far as you go.

The ramps on the outside of the buildings are there are a very good reason, so that the moms and dads who come during orientation think all the dorms are handicapped accessible. Only Diehm, Harbold, Hull, and Tanger have first floor non-stair access, while only Burrowes, Gaige, Lenhardt, and Tanger have elevators. That borders on embarrassing.

Okay, so there are places for handicapped students to live—four out of the nine dorms on campus. But what happens if a student living in a non-handicapped accessible dorm was to injure himself and have to be in a wheelchair. Would that student be forced to relocated to another dorm? But where? In our current state of overcrowding, we doubt there's room anywhere for an extra student.

What if a friend who is in wheelchair wants to visit or work on a group project in your dorm room one night but can't because you don't have an elevator. Doesn't sound fair!

Even beyond the dorms, what about the library? The elevator doesn't go to any of the

balconies. So how does one get a book on those floors? We would hope they would not be forced to ride the freight elevator. Shouldn't all students have access to all the public buildings and each every one of their floors?

Millersville seems to be practicing separate but equal, but last time we checked, that was unconstitutional, sort of. The University doesn't have to make the changes until they renovate the dorms. But how long should

handicapped students be forced to wait? Shouldn't all students have the option to live in any dorm they choose and not be limited because of the number of ramps in a dorm?

Until you or a loved one has to spend some time in a wheelchair, you don't normally notice this silent form of discrimination. But it's time for the University to wake up and provide equal treatment for all students, regardless of their physical ability.

People Come First

Originally published April 26, 2001

People should always come first. However, we often lose sight of this idea and allow ourselves to be dictated by policy, procedure and precedent.

This happens to big companies and institutions all the time. They permit inanimate objects such as budgets and policies to take on a life of their own. In addition, when these things come alive they are used as an excuse for people when they make stupid or bad decisions. This is an unacceptable practice. It's bad business, and it allows people to lose touch with reality.

The most recent example of procedure taking precedent over people occurred Sunday, April 8 in Ganser Library. For nearly three hours, Zarifa Roberson, a Millersville student with a disability, was stranded on the fourth floor of the library when the only elevator available to her in the building malfunctioned.

No one can be faulted for this. Inconveniences like these occur especially with a piece of equipment that gets as much usage as the library elevator does.

The complaint comes with the University's slow response to the entire situation. What should have taken 20 minutes to solve turned into a epic saga involving maintenance, campus police, and library personnel. Instead of focusing on the student trapped on the fourth floor and how to get her on her way, the other parties involved became fixated with the repair of the elevator.

Roberson even requested that a few people help move her wheelchair to the first floor. She had other things to do elsewhere on campus. Besides, why did the broken elevator have to become her problem? Her request for help was denied on the grounds that the University would be opening itself up to a lawsuit should someone fall during the move.

This is a prime example of people not being put first. Officials connected with this event were more concerned with policy and litigation than the aid and rescue of this poor woman. Sometimes you have to do the wrong thing because it's the right thing to do. This means you assist someone who needs your help not because you have received a memo

instructing you do so but because it's the right and honorable thing to do.

We are appalled at what happened to Roberson. No one, regardless of his or her sex, race, or sexual orientation, should have to tolerate something like this. We hope that if anything like this ever occurs again the people dealing with the situation will handle it better and remember that people should always come first.

While we are on the topic of the library and disabled students, why doesn't the elevator go to any of the balconies in the library? How does a disabled student get a book on those floors? We would hope they would not be forced to ride the freight elevator. Shouldn't all students have access to all the public buildings on campus and every one of their floors?

Let's Get Our Priorities Straight

Originally published September 9, 2000

Our culture has a nasty habit of getting its priorities backwards. This summer in Central Park during a Puerto Rican Day celebration, scores of women were attacked, doused with water, stripped, and molested. Police did nothing when notified. Adding insult to injury, local news stations ran an amateur video of the event. The film was unedited and the attackers', as well as the victims', faces were visible.

Outrage over the event centered on local news stations airing the unedited video rather than the attack itself. National Public Radio spent five minutes discussing the attack and another 15 on the ethics of showing the unedited video. This is a clear misappropriation of priorities on the part of the public.

A similar misappropriation took place here on campus last semester. A graduating columnist wrote about her dislike for special education majors. Granted, the column was tasteless and should not have run but occasional oversights in judgment do occur. However, located in the same issue, front page above the fold, was a story about the Taking

Back the Night march where female marchers were confronted by verbal insults telling them to "Shut up," "Bend over," and other unmentionable comments.

We would imagine that things such as rape and domestic violence are considered inherently wrong in our culture and that there would be no toleration of such behavior. When these marchers were so strongly insulted by residents of Bard Hall, we would imagine an instant uproar would occur. Instead the uproar centered on a pointless column that people should have ignored. Again, a misappropriation of priorities on the part of the campus.

It wasn't entirely the fault of the campus. A few professors made it mandatory that students in their classes write letters to the editor. This created a lot of artificial fuss that would not have occurred if students had been allowed to make their own decisions on the issues.

Why wasn't the paper flooded with letters and irate phone calls over the jeers and vulgar insults received by the female marchers instead of a few hurt feelings over a foolish and ill-researched column? We may never know.

We tend to forget about the First Amendment when we don't like what we hear. Many people think that the First Amendment protects us from hearing something that may be offensive. It's quite the opposite, it protects a person giving them the right to say something that may be offensive.

The public has a right to speak its mind and so does the press. However, the press does have ethical obligations to uphold, and lapses in judgment do occasionally occur. All publications, including this one, will take immediate action to correct those lapses. But realize that the paper has a greater principle to uphold, the First Amendment, than the individual feelings of a few people. This may sound callous but that's democracy: majority rules and minority rights are protected.

So next time you scream censorship remember that there are greater forces at work than your own personal feelings. But at the

same time, those feelings, if vocalized properly, will not fall upon deaf ears.

In closing, I leave you with this quote from *The American President*:

"America isn't easy. America is advance citizenship. You've got to want it bad because it's going to put up a fight. It's going to say, 'You want free speech? Let's see you acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil standing center stage advocating at the top of his lung's that which you would spend a lifetime opposing at the top of yours. You want to claim this land as the land of the free.'

Then the symbol of your country cannot just be a flag, it also has to be one of its citizen's exercising his right to burn that flag in protest. Show me that, defend that, celebrate that in your classrooms. Then you can stand up and sing about the land of the free."

RAs Deserve Their R.E.M.

Originally published May 4, 2000

Millersville University and Resident Life rely on the hard work and effort of Resident Assistants to keep the dorms safe and running smoothly. This last year, more than any other, RAs became an unappreciated and over-worked resource.

When the University overbooked last semester, it was the RAs who picked up the slack by taking on a roommate. One of the few perks for an RA is not having a roommate. Don't forget, the University promised to remove the roommates as soon as possible. For most, this never happened. While some complained, most RAs seemed to deal with it for one of two reasons. One, because they are good-natured people or two, they were afraid

if they made too much fuss they would lose their jobs.

Resident Life has again taken advantage of the RAs for most of this semester. RAs in Gaige, Burrowes, and Landes often have to pull double shifts when security guards don't show up. These dorms seem to have a problem keeping security guards, and RAs are forced to fill in when the guards don't show.

First and foremost, RAs are students. However, this is not the opinion of the Resident Life office. They enjoy getting their every dollar's worth and then some out of the RAs. Just because they took on the job of an RA doesn't mean that they signed their souls to the devil.

Why should they have to pick up all the leftover work that needs to be done in the dorms? Resident Life maintains that RAs working as security guards is not a problem since there is someone always guarding the dorm.

Why aren't people willing to be a security guard? The answer is simple—the University doesn't pay nearly enough for such a lousy job. Security guards only make a few pennies above minimum wage while most third shift workers in the “real world” make more than the first or second shifts.

Shouldn't someone who has the responsibility of guarding an entire dorm from the evils of the night make a little bit more than the average worker flipping burgers? We are talking about the safety of several hundred students here, aren't we?

In addition to not being paid enough, it's the end of the semester and many people have

found themselves burned out. Few want to do much of anything, especially stay up all night for a couple of measly bucks watching the drunks stagger in.

The solution to the current security guard crisis is simply to raise the pay. Anyone who took ECON 101 learned about the law of supply and demand. Another possible solution is to install card swipes at all the dorms (it seems to be working where it's already installed) thus removing the need for security guards all together. Let's respect our precious campus resource—the Resident Assistants—by allowing them to have a life or at least get some sleep, especially with finals coming up. So Resident Life, dig around in the bottom of your pocket and pay those security guards their due. Because if you abuse the RAs once too often, you might find another housing problem on your hands next semester. It won't be overcrowding.

Crosswalks—Not a One-Sided Problem

Originally published October 12, 2000

We've all seen those signs in the streets that run along campus saying, “Stop for pedestrians in crosswalk.” Anyone who has ever driven around campus also knows what kind of a pain it can be when every car has to stop at a crosswalk for a single walker. It already takes long enough to get from the Getty to the light at the corner of George and Frederick.

The added delay of having traffic stop so often makes drivers less likely to stop in the future. When drivers aren't stopping for walkers, the walkers get impatient and go whenever they feel like it. This creates a dangerous situation; drivers not stopping and

walkers darting out when and where ever they choose.

Millersville may be a small town, but it has big city traffic problems, especially at those key times in the day of 8 a.m., 10 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. In order to solve this problem, Millersville may need to use big city solutions to better service both drivers and walkers.

Instead of having the campus police on the corner next to Hash merely watching traffic drive by, they should be in the street doing something. These police officers could help the current driving situation by directing traffic, holding walkers back until a group

forms and then stopping traffic, allowing the walkers to go.

Both drivers and walkers are in a huge hurry and the best way to equally serve them is to use the above solution. Darting out in front of cars irritates drivers—making them less likely to stop for a walker in the crosswalk the next time. With less drivers willing to stop for people in the crosswalk, walkers are more likely to dart out as soon as they reach the curb. This scenario feeds upon itself until drivers are irritated with walkers and visa versa.

The university police are our best hope in making sure that things are fair, insuring that both drivers and walkers get to class as quickly and with as little hassle as possible. So, instead of busily ticketing illegally parked vehicles, help keep the walkers and drivers moving. We promise you, those illegally parked cars will still be there later in the day.

We urge drivers to be patience and stop for walkers in the crosswalks. We all know how

bad traffic is throughout the county. Millersville isn't much better; nevertheless, you need to stop for walkers.

We urge walkers to be patient and to use the crosswalks and wait for a vehicle to stop. We all appreciate your desire to be in class on time. The drivers are trying to do the same.

We urge the university police to help keep traffic flowing smoothly while keeping walkers safely moving on their way to class.

=====

EXERCISE: How can both drivers and walkers best be satisfied?

- A. Restrict walkers from crossing the street.**
 - B. Distribute free copies of Frogger.**
 - C. Restrict traffic from entering the vicinity of the campus.**
 - D. Have the university police help move traffic and walkers safely and responsibly.**
 - E. Build an overpass for walkers.**
- =====

Equal Credit for Equal Hours of Work

Originally published February 22, 2000

I've been holding my tongue since the semester I first declared my major. I didn't want to step on any toes or get caught in the middle of inter-department politics. However, being fairly close to graduation, I figure now is a good time to speak my mind.

Like most other full time students here at the Ville, I'm taking 15 credits. What separates my 15 credits from most others is that for those 15 credits I put in 30 contact hours. I am not alone either. All TECH majors put in six contact hours for three credits in the department.

I'm sure that the Art students sympathize because the same holds true for them. Technically, by 10 a.m. on Wednesday I've put in a full week of class. At this rate, I should be done with the semester, hour wise, by spring break.

Due to poor planning, I'll take part of the blame for my current situation. I was undecided my first year. During that time, I only took Gen. Ed. classes.

In my last semester before student teaching, I was left with no choice but take five classes in my major. I should mention that

my situation isn't unique. Every semester several students face this same difficulty.

Thirty hours a week of class, double what most students have, does have its benefits. I'm getting a lot more bang for my tuition buck. I also receive more instruction time and gain in-depth, hands-on experience. Not to mention, I'm too busy to get into any trouble.

Thirty hours a week of class also has its downfalls. Usually, I'm so exhausted from my class load, time spent in open lab, assignment work, and my other extracurricular activities that I don't make it through the first episode of "The Simpsons" Friday evening without falling asleep.

More importantly, I'm left with less free time. Less free time means less time for a job to pay for college. Less time for assigned readings and out-of-class work. Less time for social activities. Less time to preserve my sanity.

If the reasons above aren't good enough, the dollar and cents one should be more convincing. Professors are paid by the credit, not by the hour. Under this model, they are in fact working for two thirds the pay as other professors. If I were a TECH professor, I'd find that a little hard to swallow.

In addition, the University also gets cheated out of some dollars. The University receives reimbursement from the state for the credits a student is taking, not the hours. In short, the University loses money on TECH students, but I guess they pass that cost on to the TECH professors.

The word on the street for next semester is that instead of six hours a week, we will only be spending five hours a week in class. That's an improvement but still two hours too many.

I understand how hard it is to change things, especially if this is the way it's always been done. But sometimes you have to bite the bullet and do what needs to be done.

I simply want the credit I deserve for the time I spend in class. At the very least, one more credit if not an additional three. Students in the science department receive three credits for their three-hour lecture class plus one credit for a two-hour lab. Why not the same thing in the TECH department?

In short, I want one of three things to happen:

1. *Three credits for three contact hours.*
2. *Six credits for six contact hours.*
3. *More hours in the day.*

There's More Parking Than You Think

Originally published November 2, 2000

Student irritations regarding on campus parking are old ones. It's been an issue since my freshmen year and probably dates back much further.

I often try and serve as a consumer advocate for students here at Millersville. Several times, I have stressed the need for the University to "focus on its end customer"

whether it be addressing dorm overcrowding or solving crosswalk concerns.

Many students are sure that the University has sold more parking passes than there are parking spaces in the effort to make a quick dollar. They are also sure that there is simply not enough parking available on this campus. Students are sure that the University is somehow cheating them.

Letters to the Editor have appeared in the local papers from irate commuters saying that there isn't enough parking. That they have spent "x" number of their hard earned dollars to attend Millersville and should be guaranteed a parking spot.

Believe it or not, the University has not cheated anyone who parks his or her car on campus. They have not purposely oversold parking passes and do not have to guarantee you parking next to your class. They can't even do that for the faculty. There just isn't room to put 500 parking spaces next to McComsey.

Since the McComsey parking lot always appears full with vehicles haphazardly parked on the concrete dividers and teetering on the lot's sides, the casual observer would imagine that Millersville must have a parking problem. I'm here to tell you that it does not.

I'm going to let you in on a small secret, empty parking spaces often exist in the lot behind the SMC and in the one to it's right, behind Harbold Hall. I realize that isn't next to your class in McComsey, Osburn, Byerly, or Hash. But I'm sure the walk won't kill you.

Commuters have this idea in their head that they should be guaranteed a parking spot next to the front door of the building they have class in. It doesn't work that way.

I recently saw one woman circling the McComsey parking lot searching for a place to park. I had just come from the parking lot behind the SMC. I informed her that there was plenty of room there for her. She told me that she had class in McComsey. With that said, she promptly parked illegally and went to class. Personally, I'd rather walk an extra 300 feet than have to pay a \$15 parking ticket.

Perhaps this was a form of silent protest for her or she wanted to give the cops something to do while in class. Whatever the reason, I did not understand it.

I often hear people making the demand for new parking lots. I, personally, like the grass so I ask, "Do we really want Millersville to look like a mall parking lot?"

Pretending that there was a place to put a parking lot, let's examine the pure cost of the endeavor. Last year to pave one parking space the cost was approximately \$3,000. In the last year, asphalt prices have doubled. Now, we've talking about \$6,000 a spot. For a 100 spaces, that's \$600,000.

We aren't even considering the extra cost of the traffic lanes into the lot, drainage, lighting, yearly maintenance, and other hidden costs. The cost can easily spiral upwards of \$1 million. Now we're talking about some serious cash.

Where exactly does one get these funds? We all know what kind of friend Governor Ridge has been to public education. But that's another story.

Of course, if you want a parking spot that bad you could always pay for it. If you want to write a check for \$6,000, I imagine the University would be more than happy to give you one. They might even put your name on it.

Bottom line, parking isn't as big a problem as many think. There's parking usually available somewhere on campus. You're just not going to find it next to the place you have class. We just need to get use to the idea that we're going to have to walk. The weather has been rather nice so why not enjoy yourself with a leisurely stroll to class.

We Want More Programming

Originally published October 19, 2000

It is now eight weeks into the school year and *MU Cable* is struggling to run anything on consecutive days. So far this year, we have seen *Campus News*, *Ichthus*, a soccer game, and a few projects from a TV-1 class.

Why hasn't anything else been put on the air? Last year and even in the old days when shows were filmed in Gaige, there was a multitude of different shows broadcasted every day on a wide range of topics from *The Goth Show* to *Incredible Amounts of Sports*. Granted, these shows weren't always of the highest quality. They were raw, unrehearsed and often unedited. Don't get us wrong, these are good things, all hallmarks of college television.

College media isn't always supposed to be polished or mainstream. This is what makes it so popular among college students. We're tired of the same old formula plots and television gimmicks.

This season, the only show of any quality is *Ichthus*. This religious program has a professional look and has run smoothly. Not to mention, they have had more than one episode which is more than most shows can boast.

Unfortunately for *MU Cable* different departments on campus have different ideas of what they want *WCMU* to be. Too many chiefs, not enough warriors. The other media groups on campus such as *WIXQ*, *Touchstone*, and *The Snapper* are lucky enough to be relatively independent. This can be good and bad. Good in the sense that we have the latitude to push the envelope to try different things. Bad in the sense that we have the latitude to push the envelope to try different things. Sometimes when you push too hard

you make a mistake. But making a mistake can be good because odds are you won't make that same mistake again later when it counts.

Of course, all of the campus media do have one important thing in common. Each medium, despite having faculty advisors, is run by the students. We take pride in that. We should relish the opportunities we have to work with good equipment and hone our craft.

Supposedly, before a program goes on *MU Cable*, it has to be reviewed by a member of the faculty in the Communication and Theatre department. The powers that be have decided they only want a limited number of shows on *WCMU* this season. Their hope is to "bring the quality up." We're left wondering, what sacrifices are being made to bring up the quality? A limited number of shows mean a limited number of students are allowed to participate. A limited number of students mean that if some student has a killer idea for a show, it may never see the light of day.

Other schools in the state system have had their campus media up and running for quite some time. In fact, at a recent MU football game, Shippensburg University had their campus TV station covering the game while *WCMU* was noticeably absent.

There is no reason why *WCMU* should be as far behind schedule as it is. We understand that there have been recent changes regarding leadership of the station. Transition is often difficult. However, after eight weeks there should be some consistent programming. This is not meant as an attack upon *WCMU* but a prod for the faculty in charge to give the control back to the students.

MU Cable has the potential to be an influential medium on this campus. We hope

the current state of affairs in the organization passes, and that *WCMU* can reach their

potential as a viable member of campus media.

Napster: Free Speech or Copyright Violation?

Originally published November 9, 2000

Steal (verb)

1: to take the property of another. 2: to take or appropriate without right or leave and with intent to keep or make use of wrongfully. 3: to take secretly or without permission. 4: to appropriate entirely to oneself or beyond one's proper share. 5: to seize, gain, or win by trickery, skill, or daring. 6: to take away from another without right or with detection.

- Webster's Dictionary

For years, the music industry has been taking advantage of us, the consumer. Instead of album prices going down with the introduction of the compact disc, they nearly doubled. It's not like CDs are expensive to produce. They average around 20 cents apiece. Even after labor, transportation, packaging, mark-up, and various other costs, a CD should only really cost the consumer a few dollars.

However, greed is a strong motivating factor, and the music industry has endeavored to make as much money as possible. God bless capitalism. As the Internet became mainstream, we witnessed a new media format take the center stage—MP3's. The popularity of MP3's have grown by leaps and bounds spearheaded by the MP3 "sharing" program—Napster.

In theory, Napster represents all that the Internet can be. A free and uncensored exchange of information between people from

across the globe. A forum where anyone can express and publish his work without having to submit to the media and publishing giants. It was suppose to be an information communication utopia.

Technology experts predicted that no-name bands would become superstars as people found them on the internet and listened to them through their MP3's. This has yet to happen, in fact, nothing has happened. No-name bands are no closer to being big names or superstars then they were before MP3's or Napster.

We have perverted this utopia into a black-market underground bazaar. Napster isn't about the free exchange of information and music. It's about gobbling up as much music as you can before some judge pulls the plug. It's about getting something for nothing.

Ask someone about Napster and they won't comment on the obscure, difficult to find music titles it's helped them locate. They won't comment on the underground bands they enjoy listening to that top 40 radio stations ignore. Instead, they comment on the number of songs they have downloaded. "I have 300 MP3's." "I've downloaded 500 songs." "I have over 1,000 MP3's."

We'll be the first to admit it that regardless how illegal Napster is we still think it's cool. Besides, we feel the music industry owes us for overcharging on all those CD's we've been buying for the last ten years. But reasoning

like this does not hold up in the courtroom and two wrongs do not make a right.

While Napster is nothing new to this campus, it is starting to have a profound effect. Network traffic has been considerably slower the past several weeks due to people busily stealing—er...sharing—songs from Napster. Some people have suggested that Napster traffic has even disrupted their ability to do legitimate work and research on the web.

If this is the case, does the University need to do something about it? Should they filter out Napster from the campus network? Numerous universities from across the country have already taken this action.

We feel that what Napster does is dishonest. However, filtering it out of the campus network is also a form of censorship. We don't support that because we feel that one of our primary duties as a newspaper is protecting the First Amendment. However, we are torn because there is also the issue of artists and record companies and their ownership of the music.

We would like to offer these possible solutions to the current Napster situation on campus. Limit access to Napster to after business hours so that students who are trying to use the internet during the day can. Or just limit the number of students that can access Napster to the point that it doesn't interfere with normal network traffic.

This limiting of Napster, whether done as a systematic blocking or as a way to wean the

number of people on it at a time, would be an excellent middle ground. It would allow for normal and necessary usage of the Internet during times that it is necessary. This would allow students the opportunity to communicate with their professors as well as to do research on the Internet. It would also allow those people who wish to use Napster the opportunity to do so during times when the network is not so slow and heavily trafficked.

So for right or wrong, we believe that for the time being, Napster is a form of speech and is protected by the First Amendment. That's the strength and beauty of the First Amendment, that it can protect something as ugly as Napster. We're going to wait for a ruling from the judge before we make our final decision. However, it is necessary for the University administration to take some action to ensure the regular workings of our campus can take place until the time that the courts figure out where they stand.

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

- U.S. Bill of Rights

Apathy not a Symptom of MU Students

Writer finds honest, concerned citizens sacrifice for charities

Originally published October 30, 1998

Millersville students complain of it all the time. I, myself, have even been guilty of saying it. That is believing that MU students don't care—that they are apathetic fools!

I was wrong! This is not that amazing of a thing, it happens all the time.

Everyone who ever said that Millersville students were apathetic could not have been more wrong if they tried.

Case in point, last weekend at Homecoming for Charity King and Queen, Millersville organizations raised close to (braced yourself) \$1,000. Sound like a lot?

Well, that's not the right amount. Guess again and a little higher this time—\$5,000. Now, that's a lot of money but still not the right amount. Try again—\$10,000. Now that is a lot of money for a bunch of poor college students to raise.

It sure is, but that still isn't close to the correct figure. How does (drum roll please) \$27,000 sit with you (Feel free to insert your own gasps of amazement here)?

Can you believe it? A bunch of poor college students reached deep into their often lint filled pockets to raise money, not to buy beer and pizza, but for a worthy cause. After the initial shock wears off, one is left wondering why.

Why would college students give up their hard earned money to give to a silly charity? It must have been part of a class assignment, right!?! The answers is no to that one as well.

Millersville students did it for simple, yet heart warming reasons such as they are good, caring, concerned, and honest people.

Look at the different organizations that raised money. Student Senate raised a little over \$500 to give to the American Cancer Society with their tuck-in auction. That might not be a lot of money when compared to some of the other groups that raised money. But what you don't know is that their tuck-in auction only had about 30 people in attendance.

The big charity raisers were Christopher H. King for Lambda Chi Alpha who raised around \$2,000, and Tanya P. Henne for Alpha Xi Delta who helped raise over \$6,000. In total, 14 charity candidates helped Millersville shell out \$27,000.

For a little state school filled with a bunch of poor students, that's not a bad day's work. In a contest like this where the money goes to charity, everyone is a winner.

To all the people who helped raise this money, contributed to the different charities, and/or gave their time to make this wonderful event a complete and total success, I say congratulations. Your efforts show that Millersville is truly a great place. It's filled with people who really do give a damn. Not to mention these charity kings and queens have helped to redeem the tarnished beer drinking, selfish, and destructive reputation that college students have everywhere. Way to go!

You have every right to be proud, and no one, I mean no one, has the right to say that you are apathetic.

Focus On Your End Customer

Originally published September 9, 2000

Every CEO, company president, and business owner should have to use his own automated voice mail system. If he finds it difficult, confusing, and/or irritating then why should he expect you, the customer, to want to do business on it. This is called “focusing on the end customer.”

A similar situation exists here on campus. A large number of freshmen and transfer students have been crammed into the dorms again this year. Many freshmen in double rooms find themselves with two roommates instead of only one. Some found they had four or five roommates when they were placed into rec rooms with no telephone, internet, or television service.

I would imagine this would be a very difficult, confusing, and/or irritating experience for anyone, even more for a freshman. My question is, did the person who made this decision for the students try it first, them self? Did this person try living a few days in a small dorm room with a roommate made even smaller with the addition of an extra roommate? I doubt it.

I'll bet my campus parking spot that this person wouldn't tolerate a similar situation for more than a few hours let alone several days or even weeks. Therefore, if the person in charge wouldn't accept the situation why would you expect the students to. That's not focusing on the end customer.

People involved in making this decision are saying right now as they read this, “These are students, not customers!” Wrong, these students are the University's customers. Every student here paid good money. It might not be a lot of money when compared to the

price of a new BMW, but it's still honest money especially if the student is paying one's own way. That makes a student a customer.

These students have a powerful voice too. They're online every evening sending thousands of instant messages to their friends at home and at other colleges. Don't fool yourself for a second that they aren't talking about the overcrowding situation. They're spreading the word to everyone they know, including high school seniors, that Millersville isn't such a great place. This keeps up, the University might find the opposite problem in a few years.

Now when an airline overbooks a flight, the overbooked people are usually compensated in some way—first class upgrade or something. Airlines realize that if you irritate a customer, they will never do business with you again. They also understand that losing just one customer is one customer too many. Should the University offer a compensation package? If so, is a reduced housing bill of 20 percent enough?

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EXERCISE: What type of compensation package should the University offer for overcrowded students?

- A. An administrative deaf ear.**
 - B. A quarter so you can call someone who cares.**
 - C. Free bunk beds.**
 - D. Reduced housing rates—20 percent.**
 - E. A stay at the Millersville Inn.**
- =====

Millersville should have taken immediate action to solve overcrowding the moment they knew it was going to be a problem. An adequate solution is not providing bunk beds. A real solution would have been renting the Millersville Inn for the overflow students to stay. Then when rooms did become available to provide staff to help these students move

in. That's an acceptable compensation package.

Never ask students, your customers, to do anything you wouldn't be willing to do. So naturally, Millersville, that begs the question. What are you going to ask the students to do next and would you, yourself, be willing to do it as well?

Closed Doors not Best Way to Attract Students

Originally published September 14, 2000

Residents that spent that first weekend on campus this semester learned two things.

1. *What is meant by a "suitcase campus."*
2. *That most doors were closed to them.*

Suitcase Campus

Granted, it was a holiday weekend so even more people went home than usual. Millersville didn't help much though by sending a subtle message telling residents to go home. How did they send that message, you ask? Easy, they simply closed the doors.

Closed Doors

Students who were brave enough to buck the trend and spend the weekend on campus discovered an appalling pattern—closed doors across campus.

Library—doors closed

Computer Labs—doors closed

Pucillo Gym—doors closed

Fitness Center—doors closed

SMC—doors closed

In fact, most of the campus' buildings' doors were closed. The only doors residents found open to them were those of Brookwood

and E-courts. That was if freshmen were able to find them.

The University talks of confronting binge drinking and battling suitcase campus syndrome but lo and behold, the first weekend of the semester the University closes everything except the dining halls.

This sends a clear message to freshmen, seniors, and everyone in between. If you don't give students even the slightest choices of things to do on the weekend—especially the first weekend—they are going to go home.

One student commented that she hadn't planned on going home that first weekend, not wanting to make it a habit. However after discovering just about everything was going to be closed, she didn't see much of a reason to "stick around."

Leaving every weekend can easily develop into a habit or students are going to wander over to Brookwood with increased regularity. We realize that most weekends after the first one will be different; however, first impressions are important. You never get to make them again.

The University has a responsibility to the students. If there is even one resident still on campus then all facilities should be open to him. Millersville has made some efforts to combat the lack of things to do on a Saturday night. Library hours have been extended from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. That's a start—but only a start.

Solution

Next year, don't close the entire University down. Encourage students to stay on campus with plenty of engaging activities to participate in. The best way to replace a bad habit is with a good one.

If you want students to stay on campus during the weekends and participate in campus events then facilities and events need to be available starting the first weekend, not the second.

Create more Local Activities

Originally published April 5, 2000

For as long as anyone at Millersville can remember the University has been confronting three different issues.

- *Curbing Binge Drinking*
- *Combating Suitcase Campus Syndrome*
- *Confronting the complaint that there is nothing to do here on the weekends*

The University has gone to great lengths to address and remedy these situations with mixed results. For curbing binge drinking, the Wellness Center has flooded the campus with posters stating that the average Millersville student drinks zero to four beers when "partying." That may be as affective as posting the speed limit on the Turnpike.

Last year Student Senate and Student Programs instituted the "Late Night Weekend Activities" program. The purpose here was to provide late night non-alcoholic activities every Friday and Saturday. The hope was to kill two birds with one stone—provide something for students to do on the weekends and give them a non-alcoholic alternative.

Attendance has been sparse most evenings except for several notable standouts. Most times those standouts were concerts that were

local big-name band favorites. The problem with these late night activities is that students are either unaware or uninterested in the sponsored event.

If you want to stop binge drinking, the solution may be to encourage drinking rather than trying to push it further into the shadows. If you want students to stay on campus for the weekend and to stop complaining that there isn't anything to do, then give them choices that they will find fun and stimulating.

The solution might involve thinking "outside the box" and trying something radically different. There are some noticeable differences between "different" and "radically different."

Different: Having the Fitness Center open past 7 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Radically Different: Buying a liquor license and opening a "Chameleon-type" nightclub here in Millersville.

If Student Services, Inc. was to purchase a liquor license, the benefits to both students and the University would be many, not to

mention another excellent money making opportunity for Student Services.

We envision a Chameleon-type nightclub. A facility open to all students and community members above the age of 18. For those of you not familiar with the Chameleon, it would work as follows. On the first floor, there is the dance floor and the stage for anyone not drinking or under 21. In order to drink, you go upstairs to the bar. From this location, there is some room to dance, enjoy your drink and watch the band.

In this situation, students would have to swipe their ID to buy a drink. After a pre-determined number of drinks, that person would be prohibited from buying more. This may sound somewhat uncool; however, this provides for an environment that realistically attempts to curb binge drinking.

This facility would also be able to book high-quality entertainment that would encourage students to spend the weekend and

attend campus events. It would also provide an excellent internship possibilities for several different majors such as Public Relations, Marketing, Communications, Accounting, and many others.

Benefits:

- ◆ *Teaching responsible drinking*
- ◆ *Keeping students on campus during the weekend*
- ◆ *Providing better weekend activity opportunities*
- ◆ *Reducing drunk driving as students come back from local bars in town*
- ◆ *Expanding student internship possibilities*

Of course, this may not be a popular idea from the local community's standpoint. Nevertheless, the benefits for such a facility are practically endless and if anyone can do it and do it right, it would be Student Services. Besides, we've never heard of a nightclub not making money.

Rewarding Student Leaders

Originally published April 12, 2001

“**T**his is how they do it at other universities.” This is not always a good reason to do something. Why? Because some universities do things wrong, case in point, Bob Jones University where interracial dating is prohibited. Why anyone would consider this a good idea is beyond us. This is the new millennium. A university should choose to do something because it's right and in the best interest of their students.

Currently, six campus organization leaders receive a stipend of \$200 a year. Those groups are Black Student Union (BSU), *The Snapper*, Student Senate, “The Touchstone,”

University Activity Board (UAB), and WIXQ.

For many of these clubs, presidents fill their position as if it were a full time job, earning a wage of approximately four cents an hour. Student Senate has recently discussed the possibility of either increasing the stipend to more student groups or increasing the amount these club presidents receive.

We suggest—no we urge—that the aforementioned six organizations receive a larger stipend, which hasn't been increased since the mid-1980s. Talk about losing pace with inflation. We would like to see the new stipend to be a tuition waiver.

Again, why? Let us answer that question with a question.

- ◆ *Do you want improved campus activities?*
- ◆ *Do you want a more dynamic, influential Student Senate?*
- ◆ *Do you want a hard-hitting, more in-depth student newspaper?*
- ◆ *Do you want a higher quality yearbook?*
- ◆ *Do you want a more superior radio station?*

If you answered yes to these questions, then the reason for an increased stipend becomes obvious. When leaders of these influential organizations have to have a part time job to help pay for school and rent then they can't focus 100 percent on their club and making it the best it can be. We want our Student Senate president focusing entirely on Senate business and not his or her job at the QuickieMart.

Some people boast concern that students might take these positions solely for the tuition wavier. This is doubtful. Even after \$2,000 these are still difficult, time-consuming and thankless jobs.

Not one day goes by that these people aren't hassled, hounded, and have their names burned in effigy. In addition to these being difficult jobs, people can't just walk in off the street and get this money. In all these organizations, there lies an election process that will weed out unsuitable and unqualified people from these offices.

The reason for providing a stipend isn't so much because these people put a lot of hours in. Most club presidents do that. The ruler should be how much these groups provide selflessly for the rest of campus.

We aren't urging this change because we're greedy. In fact, a majority of the people who would be eligible for this money now will not be in those eligible positions next semester. We are urging this change because we strongly believe that a tuition waiver would lead directly to stronger, higher quality campus clubs.

Not to mention, this would be a just reward for all the tireless effort these six-club president contribute to this campus.

Wait, I Haven't Eaten Yet!

Originally published March 8, 2001

One of the first lessons taught at college involves learning how to wait in line. Many of us haven't gotten the hang of it yet—not that we haven't tried.

Because of this many students avoid the dining halls during their busy times. Eating during the first half hour isn't all that bad. The food is as fresh as University Dining can provide and all the good stuff is still available. However, how many people really want to eat at 4 p.m.?

The problem lies with trying to find something to eat during the last half hour. Students on countless occasions have complained that when they eat dinner during that last half hour of business they find a large majority of the food gone.

It's not that University Dining ran out of food, far from it in fact. They simply put it away long before closing time. In that last half hour, the deli is often closed, much of the salad bar is gone and one, maybe two, food bays remain open.

Shouldn't students who ate in that last half hour have every choice the students dining during the first did? From time to time, the dining hall gets extra busy with an unexpected number of students showing up to eat during that last half hour.

When this happens, students often wait in an ever-growing chow line while simultaneously their choices for dinner dwindle as trays of food are put away. It doesn't take an efficiency expert to tell you that this isn't the fastest way to serve a large number of people dinner and keep them happy.

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EXERCISE: What is the fastest way to serve students in the dining halls.

- A. Three food lines.**
 - B. Two food lines.**
 - C. One food line.**
 - D. No food lines.**
 - E. Let Student Services, Inc. handle it.**
- =====

We realize that dining hall workers want to go home at the end of the evening and who can

blame them. It's been a long day for all of us. That's why the people coming in ten minutes before the doors are closed deserve the same choices for dinner as everybody else.

Any business will tell you it's bad policy to clean up before closing especially with customers still around. University Dining might what to try using a business model called "under-promising and over-delivering."

The Symposium uses this same model. They advertise that they close at 1 a.m.; however, it's not a problem should you stroll in 1:05 a.m. and order a drink. Basically, they stay open until people stop ordering or last call comes (whatever comes first). They under-promise by saying they close at 1 a.m. and over-deliver by serving until last call.

We're not suggesting University Dining take things to that extreme, as nice as that might be. We are suggesting that the food that was available during the first half hour still be available for the half hour before close. We all want to eat dinner so why not leave the food out for those of us coming in those last five minutes.

A County Built on Dishonesty

Originally published February 1, 2001

"Students of the University are expected to be honest and forthright in their academic endeavors. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an examination, or to allow another person to commit, or assist another in committing an act of academic dishonesty, corrupts the essential process by which knowledge is advanced."

- Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Policy at Millersville University

If you missed your professor commenting on the "Academic Honesty and Dishonesty Policy at Millersville University" you must have been asleep. I'm taking 15 credits, and I only heard about it six times during my first week of classes.

I've always been told that cheaters never win. For those of you with high moral standards, I've got news for you. The United

States was founded by fabrication, prospered at the hands of intellectual thieves, and has been defended with misinformation and some more theft.

To many of you this sounds ludicrous because this is the home of the free, of the brave and of the just, not a place for liars and cheats. You might want to recheck the history books. It's there you just have to read between the lines.

In fact, the best cheats and liars in this nation have been rewarded and honored for their contributions to the country.

Even at the risk of having my past and future term papers scrutinized line-by-line, I have to confess that we live in a country of cheaters and liars. Rule benders and rule breakers. Con artists and swindlers. Hoodwinkers and deceivers. Artful dodgers and the fraudulent. It is practically a part of American life.

We expect our politicians to lie to us. We admire our accountant for bending the tax code to cheat the government out of some money. Even former President Clinton had an approval rating close to 70 percent while he lied to us about his "sexual relations" and insulted us by asking the word "is" to be defined. People are even employed by the country's most prestigious companies to steal the secrets of its competition. In fact, we've been cheating and lying since we stepped off the Mayflower when we forced the Indians off of their land.

A lot of it comes down to laziness. Why bother doing something when someone else has already done it?

Unlike the rest of the country, the world of academia does not celebrate such dishonesty. It regards fabrication, cheating, stealing, buying or bribing to obtain information (i.e. tests) all as forms of "academic dishonesty." They take it so seriously that they will ruin your life should you try it.

I'm not saying that cheating or other similar behavior is acceptable especially in the world of academia. My point is that it's hard for students not to be tempted when the rest of our society practices and rewards such behavior on a regular basis.

Take the last presidential administration. What is an impressionable youth to think about cheating and lying when the nation's president participated in such behavior? Cheat and lie, and maybe someday you too can become president.

It's human nature to copy the work of someone else and attempt to pass it off as our own. The whole idea for the computer mouse was stolen by Microsoft from Apple who stole it first from Xerox.

Bottom line: Cheating in college; bad. Cheating elsewhere; not so bad.

"Good artists copy. Great artists steal."

- Pablo Picasso

"To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism, to steal ideas from many is research."

- Anonymous.

** The Academic Honesty and Dishonesty at Millersville University Handout was used as source material.*

Caucasian Learns about Discrimination

Originally published September 21, 2000

I have decided to add to the dialogue on colorblindness and discrimination with my own personal story. In order to protect the guilty, dates and places have been changed and names removed.

I remember many of the firsts in my life. I remember the first bubble I blew with chewing gum; I remember my first ride on a bike without training wheels; and I remember the first time I fell in love.

However, not all firsts are positive. For example, I remember the first time I was discriminated against. Like many other firsts, the moment has a way of engraving itself on the memory. This is something I will never forget.

Being a white male living in a white patriarchal society the odds were better that someone in my position would be doing the discrimination instead of receiving it. That is why something like this didn't happen until recently, and why it made such an impact on me.

I was attempting to add a class and since it was a popular one, it filled up long before I was able to dial into the system to register. I decided to go plead my case to the professor by appealing to his goodwill and pity. I was quickly informed that there was nothing he could do. He only had "x" number of seats and they were filled. He suggested that I put my name on the waiting list. I already had. I thanked him for his time and left.

On my way out of his office, I ran across a woman I knew who was hoping to add the same class. I was rather irritated so I said nothing but "hi" to her. Our paths crossed again a few days later and being in a better

mood I asked her what she was doing about the class. She said that he had signed her in.

I was furious! I needed the class to fill a requirement to graduate, she didn't. Not to mention, it was closed to her major. This professor had signed her into a class moments after I had finished asking and been denied on the grounds that there was no room for me.

Why was this? In thirty seconds had an extra seat spontaneously appeared? I doubt it. It boils down to me being a guy and ugly and her being a woman and beautiful. It appears that there's always room for an attractive female.

You're probably asking why I haven't made a huge issue out of this. Excellent question. I chose not to for a very good reason, I'll probably still have to take this professor at some point. Why irritate him and make life miserable for myself when I do take his class? Discrimination or not, I still want an A. Keeping my mouth shut seems like the best way to do it. This might perpetuate the behavior, but my GPA is on the line.

We have a long way to go as a culture before we can entirely erase these common occurrences of discrimination whether they occur on sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious grounds. In the grand scheme of things, my individual case isn't a big deal, but it's enough for me to sit up and take notice of how the world really works. At least I now know how other people feel when things like this happen to them on a daily basis.

I don't bear this professor any ill will. He might have taught me one of the most important lessons I'll ever learn in college. For what it's worth, I just hope this first of mine is also a last.

Day to Day

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately,
to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could
not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die,
discover that I had not lived.”

- *Henry David Thoreau, “Walden”*

Recent Trim Reminds Columnist of Past Barbers

Originally published March 6, 1998

Now there's one major problem being away from home for more than a month. Well, yes your money runs out but that normally happens after two weeks. What I'm talking about is your hair length!

I've gone through several barbers in my life. My first was my paternal grandmother. As a matter of fact, she was the first barber for many grandchildren on that side of the family. She gave one type of cut—the bowl.

From time to time, having two parents who were desperately attempting to get ends to meet, we missed haircutting night. No problem, we'd just waited another month. Unfortunately by that point it was either a haircut or a dog tag.

When I was in second or third grade, my grandmother decided that it was time to put the scissors away.

Then began the search for a new barber. This was no easy feat. We tried barber after barber in vain. Several of the failures stick out in my memory like the one Italian barber who did a lot of talking with his hands. It's just my humble opinion, but I thought that talking with your hands while cutting hair was not such a good idea especially if it involved my head of hair.

We finally did find a nice old man who ran a barber shop that looked like a Norman Rockwell painting come to life. By far, the best part with this barber was he gave my brother and I a dime after each hair cut if we held still. When you're ten, a dime is a lot of money.

As hairstyles changed so did barbers, each time was always as difficult as the last. The last place I visited went out of business shortly before I went to college. Oh well!

It had been about a month since Winter Break, and it was getting to be a hair cut or dog tag time again. As a student trapped on campus, one's choice in barbers is limited. I gritted my teeth knowing I couldn't wait until Spring Break, I ventured out with money in my pocket and hope in my heart.

I found a barber not that far from my dorm. There were several men inside waiting their turns. I entered and he welcomed me, "Hey buddy!" I hung my jacket up and sat down. Shuffled through the magazine pile half expecting to find only *Popular Mechanics* and *Sports Illustrated*. He had all kinds of stuff including comic books. Being pleased with what I found, I sat down and waited my turn.

After a short wait it was my turn. I took my place in his big chair. I began to tell him what I wanted. Trim it, taper it in the back, thin it out, and a number two around the sides. He mumbled something, turned the chair so I couldn't see the mirror and began.

Next thing I knew scissors and buzzers were waving all around my head like an angry fleet of killer bees. I watched as inch after inch of hair fell into my lap. I started to get worried when he finished four minutes later. Talk about fast.

He announced that he was finished, but never wheeled me around to look in the mirror. I pulled the money from pocket and paid him. I hadn't started to panic yet but on my walk I

did as I wondered why he hadn't shown me my haircut.

Back at my dorm, I washed up to get rid of the excess hair, still not looking at the cut. Finally, I gazed into the mirror. It was a little on the short side but the wonderful thing about hair is it grows back. I combed what was left, styled it, and was on my way.

I'm not so concerned with the cut personally. What concerns me is how will friends react to it. Of course they'll say, nice hair cut and such, but I've said that hundreds of times and not meant it just to make the person feel good.

The response I check for is in the eyes. The eyes never lie. That sudden enlargement as they first gaze upon you is a good indicator for something bad.

The results were a little mixed. Overall they were on the positive side, I think.

Especially when a girl I barely know, as in I had a class with her, stopped me on my way to class to say, "Nice hair cut."

This new barber has my vote of confidence, especially for \$6 a cut.

-- Afterward --

Years later, while having my hair cut by "Hey, Buddy," he informed that he and his wife really enjoyed this particular column. His wife even included the column in the family's clip file.

I also learned that most of the men on campus have their hair cut at "Hey, Buddy." No one seemed to know his name but everyone knew who I was talking about when I said that I had my hair cut at "Hey, Buddy."

I Miss My Sugarcoated Marshmallow Cereals

Remember when cereals were filled with grand prizes,
not nutritionally balanced natural elements and fibers

Originally published February 20, 1998

As a college student stuck with a 19 meal plan, I don't have much reason to visit a grocery store. Even if I wanted to, it would be a little difficult since I'm not allowed to have a car on campus.

However not too long ago, I was in a grocery store. I was instantly transported to my days of the weekly visit to the Acme with my mother.

During the visit, I had one mission and one mission only. That mission was to pick out my box of cereal for the following week.

This was no easy job. It required my full thought and concentration. My choice would affect what I had for breakfast for the next seven days. I'm sure that as a child, you all remember just how long a week can be. It might as well have been an eternity.

Often this cumbersome process would take me most of the time it took my mother to do the rest of the grocery shopping. There were several criteria the cereal had to fulfill in order for me to bestow my choice upon it. I studied those boxes the same way a Wall

Street stockbroker might evaluate and study the market.

I looked many of the boxes over, shook them, felt the grain of the box, read the labels, pondered, searched for spiritual guidance, and even used a little gut feeling.

Let me reassure you that my choice was never affected by nutritional value or sale price. I was looking for three things in a box of cereal and three things only. First, the cereal needed to have a flashy box with lots to read on the cover and a cool logo or movie tie-in character on the front.

The second criteria was it had to have lots of marshmallows in multi-colors, crunchy sugarcoated funky shaped non-marshmallow things, and when finished, the milk needed to have changed color.

The third and most important condition was that there needed to be prize inside the box. Not just anything like a sticker or fake tattoo, but something original. Something I couldn't find anywhere else. This third point was so important that it could easily override all other choices regardless of whether the cereal met the first two criteria.

On those visits, I never had any trouble finding the perfect box of cereal for the coming week. I often found that the same several boxes were semifinalists week after week.

The choices often included Count Chocula, Franken Berry, Lucky Charms, Captain Crunch, Apple Jacks, Cookie Crisp, Fruit Loops, Rice Krispies, and Cheerios (even though the last two were plain). Yes, they were loaded with sugar and fake fruity color. But I loved them for it.

But by far, the best reason for eating these cereals were the prizes inside. Unlike today, you actually got one. I remember when I used to get matchbox-racing cars, gooey things that stuck to the wall, treasure maps that I could color, and bouncy balls.

What happened? Do those manufacturers expect people to eat that crap without a real cool prize inside? No, way!! There's not an ice cube's chance in Hell for me to eat four boxes of cereal to get the proofs of purchase, then round up \$4.95 plus shipping and handling and wait four to six weeks so they can send me a mini foam soccer ball.

I think children of America should boycott the cereals of today until manufacturers put some worthy prizes inside. This isn't Cuba, it's not even Russia. It's the greatest country in the world. It's full of opportunity to anyone who is willing to eat a box of sugarcoated, marshmallow mixed, techno-colored, low nutrition cereal.

Pour yourself a big bowl and eat up. It's time for the breakfast of champions.

Just another Fun-Filled Day in the Woods

Originally published December 4, 1998

Monday was the first day of deer season and that sure brought back memories.

I'm not quite sure what the mentality toward deer hunting is here, but back home it borders on a national holiday. In fact, the first

day of buck season is so popular that nearly every school in the area has the day off.

Why, you ask? Because when the schools did have class on that day no one went. They were all hunting including the teachers. So in the long run, it was easier to just not have school.

You have to understand the area in order to know why things work the way they do. Susquehanna County is very different from this part of Pennsylvania. For example, it is just as expensive to call Susquehanna County on a cell phone as it is to call California from here.

Not to mention, it is guaranteed to be at least ten degrees colder there than anywhere else in the state (except for Edinboro).

Some people are so poor in Susquehanna that they attach railroad ties to the front of their vehicle and hit deer for food in the winter. They then hang the deer carcass from a nearby tree in their yard and cut off the meat as they need it.

You can see why so many people hunt in the area. It's more for the food than the sport of it. Then again some people hunt because they've hit a deer with their car totaling it in the process and are looking for some kind of revenge. Revenge is a dish that is best served cold. You had better believe that it's cold out there when you're hunting.

I remember my first time hunting—the memory is not a fond one. As I was explaining earlier, hunting is not really a choice. It's just something you are expected to do—a rite of passage.

I had to be up at 5 a.m. in order to be in the woods before sunrise.

There's more than just getting up really early. The whole process starts weeks in advance. You don't shower for a week because the deer can smell soap and shampoo. You need to have that natural smell. The clothes

that you are going to wear stay outside in the barn for weeks so that they lose the human scent. Then comes the best part. You smear fresh doe urine all over yourself so that you will attract the biggest buck. Only after all of this are you ready to enter the forest to hunt.

So there I was, 30 minutes till sunrise, a mile from anything, and I was sitting on a stump in six inches of snow.

I was told to stay at my post all day because there would be drives to move the deer past me, and I wouldn't want to miss them. So there I stayed all day.

I forgot to mention, it was bitter cold. The kind of cold that passes directly through a bright orange hunting jacket, three sweatshirts, and two shirts. It was almost as if Mother Nature was personally trying to make me go home.

Things only got worse. By 9:30, I had eaten most of my lunch and had yet to see a deer. Squirrels were in no shortage, though.

You would think that a 100-pound deer moving through the forest would be easy to hear. I was wrong. However, you can hear a one-pound squirrel 300 yards away. Go figure.

As I was trying to remember what the first stage of hypothermia was, I was faced with a real dilemma. I could go to sleep which would numb the cold and help the time to pass. The only problem was that I might never wake up.

The second choice was that I could stay awake, shoot a deer, and get the heck out of there. The problem with that idea was that I was assuming I would see a deer at some point.

I finally decided to go with the napping option and took my chances with not waking up. At worst, it would be my big chance to get away from it all.

At around 4 p.m. my stepfather came and got me. I never did see a deer that first time

out, probably because I spent most of the day sleeping.

I didn't mind too much. I was glad to still be alive, and I was looking forward to a hot shower when I got home. Do you know what the real kicker was? After all the fun I had that first year, I went again the next year. I must have suffered some brain damage out there at the hands of the cold.

Ever since then, I have hated the cold and how it immediately chills me to the bone. Now I'm the type of guy that likes global warming. It's hard to complain about the weather when it's in the low 60s in late November, isn't it?

Hunting calls for a special breed, and it's not me.

Philosophy of Contentment

Originally published September 30, 1999

This summer I had one of those brief moments of clarity. It's that moment when the light clicks on and everything makes sense. It's that split second when you're able to cut through the fog of everyday distractions and for the briefest of moments all the pieces fall into place. Then of course, it's gone almost like it never happened. Sometimes with a little luck, you can take some of the clarity with you.

I did.

We're all familiar with those nagging questions—What's the answer to life? More specifically, how do I ensure a life of happiness? Through the ages, there have been many different ideas on the answers to these very questions.

There is the existential idea of what is good for me isn't necessarily good for you. Translation—The things that make me happy, might not make you happy.

Then there's the Melville idea of duality that there isn't just one answer to life. Translation—Being a finite creature, we can never hope to understand the meaning of life when it was created by a infinite God for infinite reasons.

That's the problem with philosophers, they never really answer the question. Usually, they're too busy arguing whether the chair in the corner really exists or not.

Then came Douglas Addams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* which gives the answer to life, the universe, and everything—it's 42. I know exactly what you're thinking at this very moment, "Forty-two what?" Addams suggests that the answer isn't as important as the question itself. In order to understand the answer, one first has to understand the question. The question in the book turns out to be, "What's seven times eight?" I know it doesn't add up, just read it.

Back to my moment of clarity. I was taking a class here over the summer while living on campus. I hadn't taken summer classes before so I wasn't sure what to expect. First off, there's nobody here. I think I knew three people on campus during the summer session I was here. I assumed I was going to have a roommate so I didn't take a TV, and I didn't feel like dragging a computer to the tenth floor of Burrows so I planned to use the labs.

Things are much different here in the summer so meeting people is difficult. There

might have been five people on my whole floor while I was here.

And without television to numb the boredom, I had a lot of time to read and think. The first thing that I realized is that television is a terrible waste of time. When you're not subjected to it for a while, you come to realize that it is nothing more than a mind numbing device meant to pass the time when you're bored and to take the place of real socializing.

I enjoy my private time probably more than most do, but I think most need something more. There's one thing we all crave and fear we might not have. That thing is companionship.

That's right, something as simple as companionship. Why do we join fraternities and sororities? Why do we worry so much about fitting in and being accepted? Why do

we chat with strangers on-line? We're all looking for companionship?

I'm going to stick my neck out here on the line, but I think the answer to life is companionship. Sure, but what about money you're saying? You might think that it's the answer, but it really just dulls the pain like television, chat rooms, and alcohol.

Companionship can involve several different things—it can be a significant other, a good friend, or maybe even a loyal pet. It all comes down to companionship and the many forms it takes when we strip away all the other pointless distractions of our lives.

You might not believe me especially if you've had some form of companionship your whole life. But if you ever lose it, you'll quickly learn it's true value.

Be sure to Count your Blessings

Originally published November 16, 2000

The holidays are fast approaching and that means this is the time to give thanks and count our blessings. This is the season to take a moment and remember the things that should really matter in our lives.

I'm not talking about your PlayStation 2, designer jeans, or washboard abs. The type of blessings one should be thankful for are not always completely tangible.

Companionship

Strip from your life your television, your entertainment system, and the internet, and you will find them to be devices meant to pass the time when you're bored and to take the place of things that really matter.

We all fear being alone. Ask yourself, why do we join fraternities and sororities? Why do we worry so much about fitting in and being

accepted? Why do we chat with strangers on-line? Why do we stay with those we no longer love?

I'm going to stick my neck out on the line and say that the road to happiness is paved with a companion who you can share the journey with. "What about money?" you ask. You might think money is the key to happiness, but it really just dulls the pain of being alone like television, chat rooms, and alcohol do.

Companionship exists on several different levels—it can be a significant other, a good friend, or maybe even a loyal pet. However, the companionship I'm talking about isn't necessarily the kind you find with the person who walks you to class on Tuesdays. I'm

talking about the companionship shared with that inner-sphere of friends.

Proverbially speaking, this is the person you can come home to after a long day. The person you can talk to when something incredibly profound happens and you're dying to share it. The person you can tell your dark secrets. It's the person you can be honest with.

Time

We are finite creatures given a finite amount of time on this planet. An object's worth, whether tangible or not, is often measured by its scarcity and its demand. That's why things like gold and petroleum are so expensive. There's a limited amount available and a great number of people who want some.

Arguably, time is a person's most valuable possession. It's a perishable commodity that each of us is only allotted a certain amount.

In part what makes our time so valuable is that we don't know when it is going to run out. At the risk of appearing pessimistic, it could run out as you cross George Street on your way to class tomorrow, it could run out on your commute home for Thanksgiving, or it could run out 50 years from now surrounded by your children and grandchildren.

The catch is we don't know when it will run out. That's why it's important to be thankful for the time we've had. But more importantly, to make the most of the time we have left. I've known people who waited until retirement to do the things they've always wanted to do but died the day after.

Today is the first day of the rest of our lives, and it's important to do the things we really want to do. That might involve skipping class because waiting just isn't an option*. It might be as simple as not putting something off we know we have to do that scares us. It's about seizing the day, making the most of it,

and doing the things that really make us happy.

This Thanksgiving, I'm thankful for companionship and time among other things. So take a moment and think of what matters most to you. Then decide if you are giving these important things their due.

** Skipping class to participate in a PlayStation football tournament does not count.*

-- Afterward--

I wrote this particular column with a purpose in mind other than what the obvious meaning appears to be. I wished to subtly tell a young woman who I had grown to care for that there was more to life than its daily drudgery. For me, she was something to be thankful for—a breath of fresh air.

In fact, she turned everything upside down. She had blind-sided my life one idle Thursday night and nothing has been the same since. I lost my appetite. In class, I couldn't focus, and the blackboard would glaze over. Lectures might as well have been in Greek because the few parts I did hear made no sense.

When I sat down to do work in my room, I ended up staring at the computer monitor with my thoughts wondering. What was once up was now down, and down was now up. Falling asleep became almost futile without the aid of Nyquil.

I was an emotional walking disaster area. All organization, efficiency, and regiment in what was once my life was gone. Do you know what? I enjoyed every minute of it. The life, I once knew, was a mess, and it was all because I was infatuated. I couldn't have been happier.

This was something I had wanted for a long time. The thing I had wanted most. That which I knew would complete me. I had

searched long and hard for it, and it turned out to be front of me all along. I had never bothered to look there because it was too obvious. The subtle goal of my column was to

tell her than it was her companionship that I longed for, and time that I wanted to spend with her.

Lost Walking in a Spider Web

Originally published September 14, 2000

Stop the ringing, please. If I did anything this summer with any regularity, it was answer the telephone. It seemed like it was always ringing. It rang every meal and several times in between.

That phone wouldn't stop ringing until late in the evening. It got to the point where I just stopped answering it.

It wasn't friends calling to invite me to barbecues, and it wasn't girls asking me to swim at their pool. The unceasing ringing was caused by telemarketers.

They called wanting to sell credit cards, life insurance, magazine subscriptions, educational video series, long distance telephone rates, low interest loans, 500 pounds of beef and NRA memberships. Now, I'm not even safe here in my dorm room because they occasionally even call me there.

It felt as if I was trapped in a swamp of quicksand and couldn't escape. I was under siege by an army of telemarketers, and I was losing the war.

I finally stopped answering the phone because I got tired of telling them I wasn't interested. But that's no way to live—in fear. I had forgotten that the telephone is not for the callers' convenience but mine.

I have some sympathy for the people working as telemarketers. I would imagine that a large number of them are high school or

college students just trying to make ends meet. We all know how hard that is.

My sympathy probably runs deeper than most. I, too have telemarketing experience. I was misled into the job. I applied for an advertising position with a magazine that I understood was going to consist of design work and some sales.

Instead, the job turned out to be me making cold call after cold call to local business people who didn't want to talk to me. After nine solid hours of this, I was counting the days to the end of summer when I realized this was no way to spend it. I quietly resigned the next day.

I was there long enough though to understand just how much people hated talking to you when you're a telemarketer.

I received such rudeness and all I could do was bite my tongue and thank them for their time. So trust me when I say that as a telemarketer, I disliked making the call to you as much as you hated receiving it.

So now instead of not answering the phone, I pick it up saying, "I'm not interested." But if that person wants to chat some that would be fine because I realize many are paid by the hour so why not waste some time. They often agree.

I ask where they are, what the weather is like, and other first date type questions. Eventually, the telemarketer whispers that his/her manager is coming, and it's time to go.

Think about it, there's no need to get mean and rude, these are people who are trying to make a living just like you and me. Besides, no one is forcing you to answer the phone during dinner anyway. I'm sure the machine can handle it. If it's really that bad why not just get Caller ID.

So next time a telemarketer calls, try chatting instead of yelling. Everyone should try it. I see this as a new type of pen pal program, and who knows who you'll meet. It might just turn a negative experience into a positive one.

Olympic Vision of Perfect Future

Originally published October 5, 2000

The games have ended, the athletes have gone and the torch has been extinguished. But has the Olympic flame really been extinguished? Is it something that only burns for 16 days?

Like any sporting event, the first question we ask is "Who won?" So, who did win? Svetlana Khorkina of Russia, David Douillet of France, Anthony Ervin of America or America as a nation? We did receive the most gold medals but that isn't always the best way to measure victory.

Olympic competition is intended to test the skill of individuals and teams, not nations. No one country "wins" the Olympics. People don't always think that way though. During the Cold War, the Olympics was the battleground for the United States and Russia. Jesse Owens in the 1936 Olympic games proved that ideas of Aryan supremacy were bogus by defeating the German champion and winning four gold medals.

There is no question, the Olympic Games are the most important athletic competition in the world with 195 nations and territories represented. It brings together thousands of the world's finest athletes and an additional one billion people who watch the games on television.

Ancient Greece was the location of the first games held in 776 BC. It was a competition where warring city-states could set aside their differences and compete. It was in this spirit that organizers revived the games in 1896 to encourage world peace and friendship and to promote healthy competition for the world's youth.

The Olympic symbol consists of five interlocking rings, representing the continents of the world. The colors of the rings contain at least one color from every nation's flag competing in the games. Under these rings is found the Olympic motto, the Latin words "Citius, Altius, Fortius" or "Swifter, Higher, Stronger."

But this is merely historical information, it doesn't answer the question of "What are the Olympics?" How is it different from the Superbowl?

The Olympics represent some of those unprecedented moments in history when the world comes together not to kill one another but to compete and celebrate. We share in one another's fellowship and realize that we aren't that different from one another. We all laugh and cry. We all have similar hopes and desires. We have the same dream of a better future for our children and our children's children.

The Olympics are about overcoming our differences and uniting not as a country, a people, or a race but as a planet. This is the Olympic spirit—one of hope, of friendship, of admirable competition. The Olympics is about human perfection like scoring the first perfect 10 as was done by 14-year-old gymnast Nadia Comaneci.

The Olympics have their share of disappointments, too. Such as the terrorism that took place in the 1972 Munich Summer Games in West Germany where 11 Israeli hostages were killed, along with five terrorists and one policeman.

Other low points include the boycotts of the 1976 Montreal Summer Games by 20 African nations; the 1980 Moscow Summer

Games by 55 nations led by the United States; and finally the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Games by 13 nations led by the Soviet Union. These were moments where politics got in the way of the enduring human spirit.

So who won you ask? We all won because for those 16 days as a planet we demonstrated that it is indeed possible to live together without having to kill each other. For that brief time, the world gathered and celebrated our pursuit of perfection.

The flame has not been extinguished. It lives on in each one of us as friendship, fair play, and knowledge. This flame, this spirit of competition, represents our best qualities and what we strive for as the human race. The greatest race any of us will ever compete in.

Is the Internet a Substitute for the Real World?

Originally published October 12, 2000

Every August, we spend the month camping in the Adirondack mountains. Perhaps I should specify what I mean by “we.” We is the entire clan—grandparents, uncles, aunts, great uncles, great aunts, cousins, second cousins, family so distant that I’m not sure what their relation is and friends now considered family.

During our stay, there is no easily accessible running water or electricity, no television, no internet, no cell phones, poor pager coverage and few radio stations. There are two to be precise, one is public radio and the other doesn’t come in very well.

We’re often under the impression that the world will stop turning if we aren’t keeping our watchful eye on it. Surprisingly when we don’t, it doesn’t stop. We have to accept the

fact that the world can indeed go on without us—to our disappointment of course.

In the situation I just described, you are undoubtedly wondering what does one do without current technological novelties? You do other things. You read books. You hike. You play cards. You swim. You sit by the campfire. You get to know your family and friends.

There’s something beautiful about not answering the phone, carrying your pager around, wondering if so and so has sent you that important e-mail yet, or being home in time to watch the latest episode of “Ethnic Couple Mismatch.”

Yes, technology has increased productivity and kept inflation low, but it has also increased the pace of life. We’re always in a

rush; never taking the time to smell the roses or to enjoy the beauty that is life. That's why I like time spent camping because I can do those things.

I know people who are too connected. They have that infernal cell phone strapped constantly to their side. They are constantly checking their e-mail and voicemail seeing if they've received any messages yet. If this is what works for them, so be it. Nevertheless, I do not want to be that available to anyone. I take great pleasure in letting the phone ring and letting the answering machine get it. I don't like the idea of a cell phone where I can be reached anytime, anywhere. When I'm out having a good time, I don't want people calling me.

It seems that the moment a person gets a cell phone, they have license to be incredibly rude in public. At restaurants, people chat away loudly trying to drown out the background noise. In the movies, someone's cell phone rings and rings and then when that person does answer has to explain to the caller what movie is playing and what has happened thus far. This is not for me. I'll be the first to admit that are times when it would be nice to have a cell phone like getting a flat tire on a dark rainy night. But that's the risk I take.

When I do finally come home after camping I eventually have to check my e-mail. I like e-mail for the simple reason that it's free and that I can check it when I please, unlike answering the phone.

After one week, my e-mail account had accumulated 103 emails. I realize that isn't many compared to some of you internet junkies; nevertheless, one hundred takes a while to sift through. What disappointed me about all these messages was that of the 103 only two were personal. There were more than that but only two of them had any bearing on my life. The other 101 were stock market updates, daily news bytes, coupons for online purchases, and of course, those terrible forwards. The anti-Hallmark—"when you care to send the very worst."

My personal favorite is the Microsoft tracking email and for every person you send it to, you get one dollar or something foolish like that. The funny thing is many of the people who send it to me actually believe it's for real.

So after a week of no television, no computers, no technological interruptions of any kind, I find myself more connected with the world than ever before. So you have to ask yourself: is meeting people an ocean away that important when you haven't taken the time to get to know those around you?

I'll bet you that the sight from the top of a mountain is more breathtaking than any site on the internet regardless of what QuickTime, Flash or Shockwave plug-in the page may take advantage of. Simple is often better, and it's taken me a long time to learn that.

Stories of Love & Family

“Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle, love is a war; love is a growing up.”

- James Baldwin

Where My Red Fern Grows

Originally published February 11, 1999

With the upcoming Valentine's Day holiday, I'm reminded of a very special love in my life.

She was one of a kind in every way. This wonder woman wasn't a woman at all but in fact the family dog. The two of us have been the best of friends since I was ten when we got her as a puppy. She was a golden retriever with the best temperament, and she was super with children. Her name was Cedar because the house that we were building at the time she was born was sided with that wood.

She was my best friend, and that first Christmas I spent more money on her than both parents combined. However, disaster struck the week after Thanksgiving this last year. Cedar had a stroke one day and died shortly thereafter. She was only ten-years-old, which is not all that old for a dog. The only positive that I can salvage from this is that she went quickly and didn't suffer much.

My parents informed me here at school of what had happened. It didn't bother me much at first because, hey, it's only a dog—right? Wrong!! The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. It wasn't just a dog. This was my best friend (go ahead and laugh). But she would sit for hours and listen to my darkest secrets and deepest fears, and I never had to worry that she might ridicule me for them (of course, it helped that she couldn't talk).

Nevertheless, she never betrayed me, never laughed at me, never cursed at me; in short, she never did any negative thing to me. Best of all, Cedar had the perfect remedy for curing the blues after a hard day—a big sloppy wet kiss!

I'm not afraid to say it either—I loved that dog. I know that, if need be, she would have given her life to save mine. Wherever the

family went, she went. It was nothing for her to hop in the car and just go along as she was a part of the action. It didn't matter if it was our trip to Yellowstone, the annual trek to the Adirondack mountains, or just a short drive to the store. She just wanted to go and to be with us.

This dog and I shared a bond that I didn't realize was there until she was gone. The two of us would go for a walk in the forest, but she never walked by my side.

Cedar was always out in front blazing the trail for me. We'd go a different way every time, but she still knew where we were going. It was the connection we had.

I think what made the relationship so great was that the two of us grew up together. That's also what makes her death so painful. It's as if I lost a part of my childhood. In a sense, part of me died with her. When the two of us got together, I was a kid again—and I think she got to be young as well.

I guess the reason this bothers me so much is the lack of closure in it all. I never got to say my good-byes. Before I could return home, Cedar's body was cremated. There's nothing left, nothing tangible for me to say good-bye to and that's what's killing me. People need to say good-bye; people need that sense of closure to help them move on.

While I'll never have that face-to-face opportunity to do it, I need to say it nevertheless. "Good-bye, girl! You're the best friend any boy could have ever asked for!"

The point is that we all need to say good-bye. And as a reminder for us all, some things in life are still free, especially the unconditional love of a dog given to a boy.

-- Afterward--

I received my first Silver Pen Award for this commentary during the 1998/1999 academic school year. The Silver Pen Award is chosen and given by the staff for the most outstanding story, editorial, or photograph for each section of the paper—News, Commentary, Entertainment, Sports, and Photography. Only five Silver Pens are awarded each year and receiving a Silver Pen is the equivalent to winning a Pulitzer Prize at Millersville University.



Love Story Gives Hope

Originally published February 3, 2000

According to *A Bronx Tale*, everyone has three true loves during their lives. I can't decide if that's a lot or not. Most people talk about your one true love, not three. Three sort of reminds me of a video game. If something happens to your first life, you still have two more to beat the level. Maybe it's the same thing when you have three loves.

If something happens to the first, like it doesn't work out, then you still have two more chances to get it right. On the other hand, three might be too few. I can't remember the last time I got anything right in that many tries.

Not having much experience with the "emotional" aspects of love, I had always thought love to be a gradual buildup. For example, you meet someone, become friends, and gradually fall in love. Simple, but not terribly romantic.

I've discovered, however, that this is not the way it always happens. One day I glanced

upon a beautiful auburn diva and that's all it took before I knew. I had never really believed in love at first sight, but here it was staring me in the face.

Undoubtedly, many of you have had the experience of meeting someone so very attractive that you were instantly transported to your wedding day only to have the fantasy shattered the moment s/he spoke. Not the case here, in fact she was funny and intelligent. As for me, I was in love.

But what is love? *Webster's* defines love as "affection based on admiration or benevolence; warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion; and unselfish concern that freely accepts another in loyalty and seeks her/his good." If any of you have ever been in love, you know that all these definitions sort of describe it but still do not tell us what love really is. Even before *Webster's* help, most have an idea of what love is but are still hard pressed to describe it adequately.

That's because love is an emotion not an element listed on the periodic table. You can't count the protons and electrons in love; it withstands cataloging and resists logical behavior. That's why poets describe it, not scientists. And for these very reasons, I can't tell you why I fell in love. I like to think she had that magic spark I've been looking for.

Anyway, I've finally met one of my three true loves, but here's my problem—I'm having some difficulty getting her to notice me. Perhaps it's better that way—to love from afar is better than having the reality shattered up close. How so, you ask? Like discovering she's in a deeply loving relationship with someone else.

Nevertheless here I am, I've met the woman of my dreams and...well you can see the problem. That's why I brought up *A Bronx's Tale*. According to the story, I still have two true loves left. I still have two more tries to get it right.

-- Afterward --

I received my second consecutive Silver Pen Award for this commentary, *Love Story Gives Hope*, the following academic school year, 1999/2000. Interestingly enough I received this Silver Pen Award for writing on a topic similar to the one that I won for the year before.

She was the one who got away. I often wondered if I had made a better first impression, had had a second chance, or had even been a little more suave if things might have turned out differently. But alas, hindsight is often 20/20.

Friends keep telling me, "Her loss." I agree with them verbally but can't help wondering what I might have missed out on. But writing that commentary served several purposes.

First, it was something I needed to do. I needed to get it off my chest and into the open. Second, by writing that commentary, I was able to take a step back. It made it possible to move on to bigger and better things. Third, this was an unforeseen side effect, it scored me several dates with girls on campus who read it and were moved by it. None of them turned out to be an "auburn diva" equivalent though.

Deep down, part of me hoped that somehow that essay might work its way into her hands. For what purpose, I was unsure. Perhaps it was that better first (or in this case second) impression, second chance, or the more suave approach I spoke of earlier? If I've learned anything, it's that life is nothing like the movies and there's a thin line between stalking and being aggressive.

Regardless, she was the one who got away. However, it's a small world, and I have a feeling that our paths will cross again. We'll see what happens.

The Curse of the Monkey's Paw

Originally published October 19, 2000

We've all heard the tale of the Monkey's Paw while sitting around the snaps and pops of the smoky campfire. A person with well meaning

but greedy tendencies comes in possession of a magical monkey's paw, which grants the owner three wishes. However, each wish comes at a price far greater than the worth of

the wish itself. In the end, the final wish brings about the owner's downfall.

I have such a paw, and let me tell you about my second wish.

I don't do a lot of dating. I do so little, in fact, that I dread seeing relatives on holidays because they ask the same question: "Are you seeing anyone?". The answer is always the same.

I had grown tired of spending my Saturday nights alone. What I wanted was a woman. A woman with personality who I could talk to for hours and those hours would pass as if they were minutes.

While an attractive appearance would be nice, it was hardly a requirement. I wished for simple female companionship.

I had made the wish so long ago that I had completely forgotten about it until this summer. I ran into this wonderfully attractive girl I knew from high school. We had gone out once before and now here she was, a teller at my local bank. I ran into her again a few days later, and it occurred to me that it might be nice to take her out to dinner.

We had so much to talk about: common interests, adventure stories, and deep thoughts on life. It wasn't long before I asked for a second date...a third...a fourth...

The paw had fulfilled my wish just as I had asked and in greater detail than I could have possibly hoped for. It had provided a woman who liked spending time with me and with whom I enjoyed talking.

It wasn't long until I became completely infatuated with her. I had trouble eating and sleeping. She had grabbed my attention, and I found it difficult to focus on anything else.

Not only was she extremely attractive and talented but possessed the most enchanting personality. She was the type of woman who

made me willing to try and be a better man. And for the first time in a long time, I was content.

I thought the feelings might be mutual—to a certain extent at least. But this is where that cursed paw added its evil twist.

One evening, after a midnight boat ride, her face silhouetted softly by the moonlight, I learned that she thought we should "just be friends."

I was devastated. The shortsightedness of my own wish had prevented the very thing I wanted most—someone to love. I wanted to run back and with that demonic paw use my remaining wish to change her feelings towards me.

But I didn't.

What evil would come from that final wish? Who would it destroy in the process: me, her, both of us? I realized that the real evil in the wish might be that I would be making someone love me who didn't. If so, would I be able to live with myself for having "bought" love? I cared for her too much to do that. On the other hand, the evil may be that I never used my third wish to make things right.

That's the nightmare, that's my downfall, wondering day to day what may have been but never was. So can I interest anyone in the sale of a monkey's paw?

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EXERCISE: How would you use your third wish?

- A. Wish for more wishes.**
- B. Wish for wild crazy monkey sex.**
- C. Don't use your third wish.**
- D. Wish for her love.**
- E. Wish none of this ever happened.**

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No Flowers this Valentine's Day

Originally published February 15, 2001

"Outside my window, just one week each year, lilacs are the bottom line."

- William Warriner

I won't be giving roses this Valentine's Day. In fact, I won't be giving flowers of any kind nor will there be chocolates or champagne; limousine rides or jewelry; candlelight dinners or even all-expense paid tickets to Mexico.

I will be spending Valentine's Day as I have most every year—alone. I thought this year might be different.

It's always hard to know where to begin with a story like this. So I'll start by saying, it was your classic tale of romance. Boy meets girl. Boy falls for girl. Girl leaves.

Understand, I've been blind-sided twice in my life. The first was the day I fell for her and the other was the day she left. Both changed my life in ways I couldn't imagine at the time.

Meeting her taught me what things in life have real value. I can tell you this, it has nothing to do with material possession or the acquisition of wealth. It has everything to do with finding a companion, having someone to talk with, and filling that void in our life.

Her leaving taught me humility, the danger of exposing your inner-self, and that a soul can bleed.

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EXERCISE: Which fate is worse?

- A. Not knowing what you want.**
- B. Knowing what you want but being unable to get it.**

C. Getting what you want and then losing it.

D. Acquiring what you want dishonestly.

E. Not caring.

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I know what many of you are saying, "So what? It's only a woman." I wish it was that simple. She was something I marveled at and adored like a national park. In fact, she had much in common with a national park. She was breath taking, awe inspiring, and naturally beautiful. She had a grace about her that was indescribable and a hope in her eyes that was pure. And just like a national park, I could never own her just hope to spend time within her borders.

My friends told me, "Her loss." That was easy for them to say. They didn't know her. You see for sixty days, I was nothing but happy. Imagine that, completely content. It was a time when I wanted nothing. I had no other desires or wants. My life was, dare I say, complete.

Can you remember the last time you were happy for sixty consecutive days? Neither can I. She gave me the things in life I wanted most: companionship and contentment. She even restored my faith in life's magic.

So to answer the age-old maxim, "Is it better to have loved and lost then to have never loved at all"? I would have to say, yes. Without regret, yes it is.

"She was my bottom line."

- Adam Zurn

Romance not Found in Sports Bars

Originally published September 28, 2000

If I had to categorize women, I'd be pressed to place them in the enigma column. They're a total mystery to me; however, I do have a few insights to offer.

The other night a few friends and I were in a local sports bar. I'm not a big sports' fan, but it was the nearest bar so there we were. As I sat there, I counted no fewer than ten different sporting events being televised on a multitude of varying sized screens. The bar was filled with several couples scattered about and groups of men living vicariously through the action of the game. I watched as one couple entered, took their seats and gave their orders to the waitress. I could tell it was a date; they were giving off those dating vibes.

There the two of them sat. It was obvious she liked this guy. She was doing her best to grab the guy's attention—flicking her hair, leaning in close, touching her neck and whispering softly. Her advances went mostly unnoticed because he was too busy watching the game on the television behind her. Granted, he did pay her some attention when a commercial came on but only if it wasn't a good one.

Gentlemen, what are we thinking? This is no way to be romantic; no way to win the heart of a woman. Is this how you show a girl you're interested by being too busy watching a bunch of sweaty guys in tight pants chasing a pig skin around a grassy field? I'm afraid the answer is a resounding no!

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EXERCISE: Rank the following in order from least to most romantic.

- A. Dinner at the Symposium.**
- B. Beers in your dorm room.**

- C. Hot chocolate under the stars.**
 - D. Drinks at a smoky sports bar.**
 - E. Picnic in the park.**
- =====



Let's put the shoe on the other foot for a moment. What if a woman took you to a Soap Opera bar and spent more time staring over your shoulder at the television? Occasionally asking you if Jon still had amnesia or was Bambi cheating on both her husbands. Sounds stupid doesn't it? How do you think it sounds to her when you occasionally clap your hands or suddenly curse out loud as if you had Terrets every time something happens in the game? I'm left wondering why so many men don't get it.

Don't tell me that a sporting event is more important than getting to know the beautiful young woman sitting across from you. From what I've seen, it definitely appears that way. Guys, I want you to repeat after me: *"I will not confuse a smoky, poorly lit sports bar with an enchanted grotto."* Next time you take a woman out do yourselves both a favor and go somewhere romantic.

It's completely different if she actually likes sports. But just because she does like sports and agrees to go to a sports bar does not give you license to pay more attention to that silly game than to her.

On a side note: I am a single guy and promise never to take anyone I date to a sports bar. For a résumé, five year anticipated salary level chart, and personal reference letter email me.

Bringing the Romance Back to Life

Originally published February 8, 2001

Is romance dead? I struggle to remember the last time I saw any on campus. I've watch as we've replaced bouquets of flowers with six packs of beer, evenings at the theater with rented videos, and walks in the moonlight with short trots to the bedroom. We go to parties with the express purpose of "hooking-up," not to meet someone of substance. Instead of mental intimacy, we seek quick physical gratification.

Is romance that terrible? It's not a vocation for the masses. It's the type of lifestyle where a powerful desire exists to be with a special someone. An endeavor that succeeds in getting in the way of life's serious activities. What a wonderful price to pay.

Several factors have helped to bring on the downfall of romance. Hollywood is one. You can't always win the girl's heart by sheer willpower alone. If she feels nothing, often that's all there is to it.

The Hollywood love story lie: Boy meets girl. Boy falls for girl. Girl has no interest in boy. Boy wins girl over with irresistible charm and humor. In real life: Boy meets girl. Boy falls for girl. Girl has no interest in boy. Boy

attempts to win girl over with irresistible charm and humor. Girl files restraining order.

Moreover, as a gender, men aren't dating geniuses, myself included on that long list. At the risk of appearing chauvinistic, women's lib may have helped end romance⁸. What used to be understood as males modes of romance (i.e., courtship rituals) are now seen as modes of male intimidation playing on the weakness and anxieties of women. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Hallmarks of being a gentleman and showing a woman that you like her—opening doors, paying bills, and walking her home—are fast fading. What is a man to do? He can't exactly go up to a woman and simply say, "I like girls, a lot!" Does political correctness and romance have room for one another in the new millennium?

Seinfeld says that a date is like a job interview that lasts all night long. However, instead of concluding with a handshake, it sometimes finishes with the two of you together in bed. I disagree with this. Dating and romance isn't about impressing the other person with the car you drive, your long list of recommendation letters from past lovers, or

even your anticipated five-year compensation package.

It's about honesty, personal feelings, and that electric spark that shoots up from the base of your spine to the back of your head the moment your hands brush one another.

A wise man, someone who dates more than I, pointed out that the type of person you really want to date is one you can take to the park instead of the movies. If the two of you can sit there for two hours getting to know each other, you'll find the entertainment was better, and you've met someone of substance.

This same wise man also maintains that this same person of "substance" will not

become physically intimate with you that first night either. Besides, what's the hurry? Do we have to know we are sexually compatible so soon? Romance should not be similar to test driving a car. Aren't the best things in life worth the wait?

Valentine's Day is next week. Why not bring a little romance back into this politically correct world? If you don't have anyone in your life right now, all the better reason to try it on someone you would like to be.

§ As a disclaimer, I want to point out that the rights of women are just as important as men's, that the removal of glass ceilings and "good old boy" clubs is an overdue and important part of equality in our society.

Father Time Stalks the Innocence of Youth

Originally published February 6, 1998

My grandfather was once a proud and strong man.

He is a World War II veteran having served with the Marines in the South Pacific. He stormed the beaches of Iwo Jima but made it no further. Receiving a massive head wound, he returned home was a glass eye, a metal plate, and a purple heart with compliments from Uncle Sam.

He did however fare better than the rest of his platoon. Only one other man, his sergeant, survived the invasion. This all in the name of freedom. No doubt, a heavy price to pay.

He came home to a loving wife, not before spending several months in the hospital. He continued on to become a high school guidance counselor and coached football and volleyball while fathering three sons. In volleyball, he

was unbeatable—over 15 years, he received 256 league wins and zero losses.

Years later, his injury would cause him to develop a severe case of Parkinson's disease. When caring for him became too much of a burden for my grandmother, the family decided to place him in a nursing home.

It's the topic of nursing homes that I wish to comment upon. I doubt if Stephen King could envision anything more frightening or horrifying as a nursing home. I'm not saying they are bad places. In fact, the place my grandfather stays at is in no way similar to those places seen on *20/20*. You know, the ones where they do a special report to alert the public to substandard quality and care. All the things one would hope not to find in a nursing home.

What I hate about nursing homes is it serves as a reminder. A reminder that one-day, I too will be old. So old that I will be unable to function well, to lose control of my bodily functions, too weak to walk, too frail to hold myself up proud and tall. The worst part of growing old is not so much the deterioration of my physical half but of the mental half. To lose my mind, my memory, my ability for deep and rational thought would be a fate far worse than death.

If you have never been to a nursing home, you're not missing much. When we go to visit my grandfather, there is a long hall to walk down, and it is one of the hardest things that I have to do. Old women sit by the walls in wheelchairs, so crumpled and broken it looks as if God has reached down and crushed their bodies with his own hand. Old men with the life sucked out of them hobble slowly about with their walkers.

The worst though are the bed bound; the ones who can no longer move. Those so weak and destroyed by age and hardship that all they can do is stare at the ceiling, or worse, yet the television. We all know what kind of crap there is on television at 2:15 in the afternoon.

As I walk by, they cry out to me for help—for company - for long dead family and friends—but most of all they cry for their lost

youth. I feel as if they look upon me with both scorn and wishful longing because I have the one thing that they no longer possess—youth.

What frightens me is the fact that one day I may join them. Unlike a computer, I am unable to upgrade. As hard as I might try to avoid it by exercising, eating a proper diet, and taking care of myself; time, that predator who stalks us all our life will finally catch me and steal my precious gift of youth.

I am so frightened that one day I'll wet my pants as I did when I was a child. I can only hope that I die before I have to be placed in a nursing home. I doubt I'm strong enough to handle it.

My grandfather was a strong man in every sense of the word, only to be chipped away by a harsh disease. I pity him and all those like him, his situation and life act as a reminder to me that I should live every moment to its fullest because youth is fleeting. I say to all of you reading this, "Get up off your butts and do something. Enjoy life while it's still worth living because it won't be long till it's all gone!"

It's hard to see any loved one in a nursing home. My grandfather was once a proud and strong man. I can only hope I face old age with as much grace and dignity as he.

Thanksgiving Chat Bridges Generation Gap

Originally published December 5, 1997

There we all were, Thanksgiving Day, 16 family members and three dogs representing close to a thousand years of experiences and memories (not counting the

dog years) and a half ton of body of weight waiting to indulge itself.

What a sight! Everyone wearing their Sunday best, each person using his or her best

Emily Post manners, and a special treat for me this year. I finally was promoted to the grown-up table. What caused me to earn this unique honor? Nothing less than the starting of college.

However, the funny thing is, I think the conversation might have been better at the children's table. They talked about "cool" things like the new Batman and Robin cartoon series, their neat computer games, and sibling's love interests. While the discussion at the adult's table included the action-packed topics of how teachers are underpaid (most everyone at the table was or is a teacher), the weather (yawn), and how juicy or dry (depending on the person) the turkey was.

There are currently two family members attending college. Throughout the entire day a blitzkrieg of questions were fired at the two of us from different relatives in turn. They wanted to know who's doing what, who's learned more, who's more involved, who has better grades, who has tougher classes, who has a love interest, etc. As the relatives took turns asking questions, they took each response to heart as a mental score was tallied. Perhaps the most frustrating part of it all is the fact that we never know who wins.

The most memorable part of Thanksgiving that year happened immediately following dinner. No, not dessert! In fact, everyone was so full that a common consensus was reached that all would wait until later for dessert.

Everyone cleared out from the table: a more precise description would be the men headed to the living room to watch the never-ending spectacle of football, as the children headed outdoors to take advantage of the unseasonably warm weather, and the women cleared the table.

I remained at the table with my Great Uncle Jud. The two of us had never really spoken, there never was much of a reason as

to why we hadn't either. That's probably the sad part of it.

Why the two of us just sat there with everyone going about their business, I'll never know. But for some unknown reason, I was inclined to make traditional small talk with him. I simply asked him how he was. Amazingly, he didn't give me the generic response of "Oh, fine." Instead, he told me the truth.

He explained to me how he missed his wife who had been dead for three years now. And it was because of that, he continued, as to why he now had a girlfriend. He proceeded to pull a photo for his wallet. She wasn't all that bad looking, especially for someone of her age.

We sat there for a while discussing lost loves and being alone. The biggest reason for his girlfriend, he confided in me was that it's hell growing old alone! One subject lead to another and somewhere along the line, he mentioned "the war."

I knew he had been in World War II—he and all of his five brothers had been in some war. They all have medals some of which are purple hearts, and one even received two silver stars. My grandfather received his purple heart as he stormed the beach at Iwo Jima. Only he and his sergeant made it out alive. In the name of freedom, my grandfather has a glass eye and Parkinson's disease today. They, including my great Uncle Jud, rarely talk of the war.

I decided to take the chance and ask him about it all. "What branch?" "The Navy." "Atlantic or Pacific Ocean?" "Pacific." "What ship?"

A whole bunch, but his pride and joy was on the Aircraft Carrier *Ticonderoga*. He told me stories for three hours, never once boring me. Some of the stories brought a smile to his face and others made his eyes moist.

He told about his shifts at the helm steering the mighty aircraft carrier. He had even helped to sink the Japanese flagship. He reminisced about his days on another ship when he fired 44 mm guns at kamikazes, and the time two kamikazes had struck the ship. The boat was cut in half and yet didn't sink thanks, in part, to the water tight doors and that die hard American spirit. He told me how the ship was towed back to Pearl Harbor and welded back together.

These were all things I could only dream about doing and yet, he had done them all! After a time, the conversation died out. He left to go smoke a cigarette.

I hadn't noticed it, but much of my family had gathered to listen at the dining room door. None of them had ever heard these stories

before. Never once had he spoken of it to any of them.

They wanted to know why he had decided to tell me, someone he really didn't know all that well. How had I gotten him to open up? The only thing I could think of that I had done was I had simply asked him about it. I wondered if they had ever asked him about it.

The unfortunate response was, no. They figured that he would tell them when he was ready. Sometimes it takes a man a long time before he is ready to speak of the war. Maybe he was finally ready. Or maybe, he decided to talk about the war because I had taken the time and interest to ask him about it.

I feel honored that he told me. The two of us bonded that day. There is something to be said for small talk and the power of a few honest answers.

Man for all Seasons Shows Kindness

Originally published November 9, 2000

Different people show they care in different ways. Some people express it verbally, while others show it through physical expression. Then there are those that do it in their own special way unique unto themselves.

Whatever way it's expressed, the only true measure of that expression is when a person does it because they want to not because they feel the need to.

As I've mentioned in previous columns, every August my entire extended family goes camping deep in the heart of the Adirondack mountains. It's a sort of family reunion stretched out over the entire month.

In keeping with all families, certain members have a special quality or trait that makes that person particularly memorable.

My family is no exception, and in this case, it would have been my Uncle Ray.

Thinking back now years later, I'm not sure what the relationship really was, especially being a step child, but I still called him Uncle Ray, mainly because everyone else did. Uncle Ray was a happy funny man, and he loved his coffee. He had the ability of making those around him feel at ease and content. He was a good man.

Uncle Ray and Aunt Dot, his wife, when in the Adirondacks camped in this cozy little motor home called the "Honey." Everyone in the family (and sometimes even the neighboring camp sites) would visit for that fresh cup of coffee he brewed each and every morning. They all loved going not just for the coffee but for the great fellowship he offered.

Being rather young, my parents didn't like the idea of me in their motor home. It was a small trailer, and I was young and often dirty from playing on the ground. They simply didn't want me to wreck anything.

Uncle Ray never settled for that. If he saw me sitting outside the camper or anywhere in the campsite, he immediately motioned me in and did not stop insisting until I agreed to enter. There's a lot to be said for Southern hospitality.

Well, it was another day in the Adirondacks, early afternoon and the sun was shining brightly. The campsite appeared empty with everyone off doing whatever it is they do on a nice day.

My stepfather had sent me to my grandmother's site that she was sharing with Uncle Ray to get a rather large bag of dog food. The bag had already been opened and partially used for my grandmother's dog.

Nevertheless, the bag was large and still heavy, and I wasn't all that big. I didn't make it very far before I dropped the bag and spilled its contents all over the ground. I was really upset, and I was sure my stepfather would be furious! I attempted to scoop up as much of

the spilled dog food as I could and put it back in the bag. However, there was so much of it, and it was so small that the task was impossible to clean up by hand.

I had gotten a large portion back into the bag but the ground was still littered. I could only imagine the trouble I'd be in. Then like the deus ex machine from a Greek play, my Uncle Ray appeared with rake in hand. He picked the bag up, put it in my arms and said, "Don't worry about it, son." He called everyone "son." I left not sure at the moment what he was going to do.

As I looked back, it all became clear. He was raking the dog food into a pile next to a semi-large stone. Once he had it all cleaned up, he somehow muscled that stone over the dog food covering up any existence of the accident. He then went the extra mile to rake the entire site so no one would ever know what happened and no one ever did—until now.

My Uncle Ray never spoke of it or hung it over my head as some people do when they do you a big favor. That was just the type of man he was. The kind you want to be friends with and glad to call "Uncle."

Grandparent's Insight for the Future

Originally published February 17, 2000

A few years ago, I discovered a resource that when properly utilized has gone on to make me a wealthy man.

This resource has nothing to do with the insider trading tips I've received, the geothermal vent located on my property, or the plundered Nazi gold I discovered in South America. Many of you might even have access to a similar resource.

The resource I'm speaking of is my maternal grandfather, but in general our grandparents. You're probably asking, "Was your grandfather a rich old miser?" No, not that I'm aware of. The kind of wealth I'm talking about has nothing to do with monetary gain. It's more about personal growth and knowledge of self.

I didn't understand that my grandfather had something special to offer until recently.

Before that, I thought of him as just another person who was family. But as I matured, learning to listen rather than talk, I realized he's done and experienced things I never will.

For me, my grandfather offers a guided tour into the past and inspiration for the future. He has insights on historic events, ideologies, and life experiences that by far dwarf anything the History Channel has to offer.

In an age of urbanization and telecommunications my grandfather is becoming—well, he's sort of like the last of the Mohicans. The world, as he once knew it, has changed. But don't feel sorry for him. It has made him strong and left him wise.

When I visit with him, it's sort of like going back in time, things slow down, and true-life lessons are taught. Amazingly there's no lectures, just stories and living life by example. These things alone say what needs to be said.

My great, great-grandfather worked outdoors, as did my great-grandfather, and finally my grandfather. He knows all the trees of the forest and attempts to teach them to me. When we are together, we often head outdoors to the forest. His place, as is mine, is outdoors. The sap in the tree bringing it life, which my grandfather taps to make maple syrup, is the same sap that courses through his blood and mine. It is the heritage that we share. So when I think of him, it is there in the forest that I picture him.

My father died when I was six, and it was my grandfather who filled the void. My grandfather is a Mason, as was his father, and

I assume, his father before him. It seemed only right for me to join when I came of age.

The night I joined, I learned my grandfather had joined 50 years ago that same week. This is just part of the strong fraternal bond we share, that has connected us, and that can never be broken. I now wonder, where will I be in 50 years. Will I ever be half the man my grandfather is? My grandfather has come to embody everything I want to be. Through my grandfather, I have come to know who I am.

If you haven't already, and still have that opportunity to do so, go out and spend time with your grandparents. Don't just stop by to say hi, get to know who they are; try and learn the things they know. If they offer insight into their own lives listen because you might just find the insight you've been missing in your own.

Grandparents are a great resource and should be treated like a national treasure. I hate to be morbid but tragically the wealth grandparents have to offer is a fleeting one. They aren't getting any younger.

If you don't have the time, then make the time to be with them. What could possibility be more important—a beer at Jack's on Friday night? I doubt it. Then again, your grandfather might like one. Why not pick-up a six-pack to go and head over to his place. You might leave his place a very wealthy person.

-- Afterward--

Both this column and book are dedicated to my Grandfather, Robert Benson. It is my sincere hope to be at least half the man he is when I'm his age.

The Wildman Collection



“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where
there is no path and leave a trail.”

- *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The Answer to Why No One Graduates in Four Years

Originally published April 17, 1998

We've all heard those questions from the administration that don't seem to have answers.

Why are students so apathetic about campus events? Why are students leaving on the weekends and making this a "suitcase college?" Why aren't students graduating in four years?

The answer is rather simple. It doesn't involve two-year studies that chart the migration of teens to Florida or questions concerning sexual preference. The answer is the number of credits a student has to complete in order to graduate.

I'm not asking that the number of credits required for graduation be decreased. I'm all for people being overqualified. I think it's great the University requires so many credits. What we want is for administrators to stop asking these questions. Don't act like you don't have the slightest idea of the problem's cause.

Frankly, we're tired of hearing that we're lazy, indifferent, uninvolved, etc... *(Hold on there. I almost started to whine. Caught myself just in time.)*

I've already thought of what the administration will say to this. That this is not the cause of the problem because a student can take 18 or 21 credits if they want. They could even take winter or summer classes in order to graduate in four years.

Yes, that would solve the problem; however, many students change their major two or three times during their college careers. There is no room in the course of studies to change your major without losing credits.

Sometimes students don't change their major, but they would like to try something different to see what it's like. However, that class might not fill a general education requirement. If so, tough luck, don't take it or fall behind in your quest for credits.

Let's assume, that students do take 18 credits a semester and/or winter/summer sessions. Then comes the why aren't students involved on campus, and why are they so apathetic questions?

When you're taking 18 or 21 credits, you don't have lots of time to attend campus events, especially if you work. Now, I realize there are probably a few supermen and superwomen that can do it all—balance 18 credits, a part-time job, and campus events while still maintaining a 3.50 G.P.A. To you I say, "Way to go!" For the rest of us mere mortals, it's not that easy.

The students with the 18 credits or higher simply don't have time when a job becomes involved in the equation. Go to work to pay for college or go to campus events and not be able to pay for college. It's a tough choice.

This is probably a reason why a lot of students don't take winter or summer sessions. We have to work then in order to pay for college. Remember, a lot of us are going here because we can't afford much more.

Then they ask why are students not staying on campus over the weekend? It goes back to work and/or all the extra credits one has to take during the semester. By the weekend, many students just want to get out of here. They want to forget their troubles and go...*to where everybody knows your*

name...and they're always glad you came...you want to go where everybody knows your name. Sorry, I just got a “Cheers” flashback. What I was saying is that students want to leave, forget about Monday’s term paper, and party some.

It didn’t take me long to figure out why college students party so hard. After a tough week of classes, we need to cut loose and really live it up even if it is for only a day or two. Listen to some of these credits requirements needed for different majors. Technology Education–129 credits; Music Major–129 credits; Biology Majors with Respiratory Therapy Option–(get ready for this one) 151 credits; Chemistry Major Secondary Education–138 credits; English Major Secondary Education–124 credits; Nursing Major–125 credits; Geology Major with Geophysics Option–126 credits; Physics Major Secondary Education–130 credits; and Special Education Major–126 credits.

Does anyone notice a pattern? These poor secondary education majors. Ask me, but I think a 151 credits is a little much. That sounds more like a six-year program than a four-year.

To sum things up, there is nothing wrong with being overqualified. In fact, that might give you an edge in the real world.

Administration, please don’t play dumb not knowing why people aren’t graduating in

four years. The answer is fairly obvious. The reason students don’t care and don’t stick around is because they are too busy with class work, working to pay for that extra year or two of college, and/or partying to cut loose after a tough week.

— *Afterward* —

The administration seemed to take notice of this commentary. Several weeks after this column was printed, the University published its “Guide to Graduating in Four Years.” The points outlined in the pamphlet were very similar to the ones made in this commentary. It is very satisfying to see the University sitting up and paying attention to what is written from time to time even if they don’t admit to it.

However, at one of *The Snapper* lunch-ins with President Joseph Caputo and Dr. Robert Thomas, Dr. Caputo informed me that on occasion, he will clip a story or commentary from the paper and send it to an administration member asking, “Why did *The Snapper* pick up on this problem before we did? Please address this immediately.” Just another fine example of the power of the pen and of the press. Not to mention, the obvious fact Dr. Caputo is really a man of the students.

Have Your Beer; Drink It Too

Originally published February 4, 1999

The holiday decorations are all down, the malls have stopped playing Christmas music, and the tree has been tossed into

the garbage. It would appear that Christmas is over. Over in every aspect but one—those holiday bills are *still* coming in.

Holiday bills are a lot like hangovers. They really hurt the next day, and we promise ourselves we'll never do anything that foolish again. That promise lasts about as long as a New Year's resolution. Of course, the kicker was that 14 carat gold tennis bracelet you got your significant other only to catch her under the mistletoe with someone else a week later.

If you're like me, you've just done some quick math on your fingers and realized that with these bills you can't afford textbooks and beer. For heaven's sake, how can we survive without beer; it's the staple of any growing college student.

Lay your worries aside because here comes, free of charge, *The Wildman Financial College Survival Guide* to help you get the money you need to buy your beer.

◆ The first thing you need to do is buy yourself some more time. Pay the MasterCard bill with the Discover Card and the Discover Card with the MasterCard. This will give you some time to come up with the money you need and preserve what you have for Friday night.

◆ The next place where you can cut corners is with your laundry. A load of laundry is 75 cents and to dry it can cost another 50 to 75 cents. That starts to add up real quick. You could just give up doing your laundry but for some unexplained reason finding a date becomes really difficult.

◆ Here is the next best thing. Since Bob Slabinski has yet to charge for using the showers, simply take your laundry in the shower with you. A whole load would take forever but if you do a little each day it becomes manageable. Trust me it works.

◆ Another way to save on your laundry is to find a roommate that's about your size and just wear his/her clothing. You could try sneaking your dirty clothes in his laundry bag

too. By doing any one of these easy steps, you've saved yourself around \$30 a semester.

That's enough to pay the interest on your credit card or an evening out with your buds.

◆ Try skipping out on getting a meal plan. That alone will save you anywhere from \$1,010 to \$750 a semester. I know what you're saying, "Where am I going eat?" No problem.

Just take a look around, this campus is filled with free food. There is a pond full of big fat fish just waiting to be caught. Not to mention, fish are low in cholesterol.

Like red meat you say, again no problem. There must be hundreds of squirrels hopping about. I doubt anyone will miss a few. Feel like treating yourself, just get yourself juicy duck.

I'm sure that after a while eating duck and fish will become a little old. Try reading the posters on campus. People here are always giving away free food.

◆ When it comes to dating merely find a woman who is very liberated, and she'll pay for the date. Hey, it's the '90s.

◆ Save gas by walking. The traffic is so heavy here that you can make better time by not driving.

◆ If walking isn't your thing, work those legs and thumb a ride. People who hitchhike tend to make better time than people who drive because people who pick up hitchhikers also tend to speed.

◆ Call home and ask for money. Have a vivid sad story with lots of good reasons for needing the money and be sure to talk to mom. Mom always understands. The gold tennis bracelet you have to pay for is *not* a good reason to mention to mom.

By this point, you should be able to save enough money to cover those bills. It's sure tough being a college student and making ends meet. I can't wait to graduate and become a

teacher so I can rake in the big bucks and drive a BMW.

Wait, what's that you say, "Teachers don't make a lot of money!" How come, aren't they teaching the youth of America?

Looks like I should hang on to this survival guide, I might just need it again after graduate.

Be Your Own Man, Make Your Rules

Columnist questions university poll;
challenges students to be individuals

Originally published February 18, 1999

Fight becoming domesticated, avoid being average or within the norms, and for God's sake, don't do the right thing. Aren't you tired of being told what's cool and what's not? Aren't you sick of trying to please everyone? Haven't you had enough of being a conformist? This Wildman sure has!

The 1990s were suppose to be a decade of originality and individualism—not so. It has in fact been a decade of conformity and bandwagon jumping. If you try to be cool all the time, if you try to please everyone, if you're a conformist to avoid scrutiny then you're just an average person. Average is out right boring—*defy it!*

A Wildman isn't concerned with what other people think the right thing is or how to behave to best be accepted by ones peers. What it really comes down to is that existential idea of what's good for me isn't necessarily good for anyone else. Anyone else includes your parents, friends, the advertising industry, or Millersville University.

Look at the current Millersville propaganda campaign "Believe This!" The poster reads, "*Believe This! Most MU students do the right thing.*"

- ◆ *Most MU men have 5 or fewer drinks when they party.*
- ◆ *Most MU women have 3 or fewer drinks when they party.*
- ◆ *Most MU students exercise 2 or more times a week.*
- ◆ *Most MU students do not smoke cigarettes or use marijuana.*
- ◆ *Most MU students had one or fewer sexual partners in the last year."*

Real Wildmen are rebels, so that doesn't include following a bunch of preset rules made by a boring group of domesticated people. Don't let anyone tell you what is or isn't right. "Unto thine own self be true." If you want five or more drinks at a party, then do it.

If you need a long drag on a cigarette at the end of a hard day, then do it. If you've had less then one sexual partner in the last year, do something about it. Don't let Millersville take the fire out of you.

You're in college, and college is about having a good time. Be crazy and barbaric, there's nothing wrong with a little walk on the wild side. Besides, by becoming a Wildman now and questioning societies preset norms you just might find some real flaws in it.

Look at some of America's past Wildmen who questioned what the right thing was. At

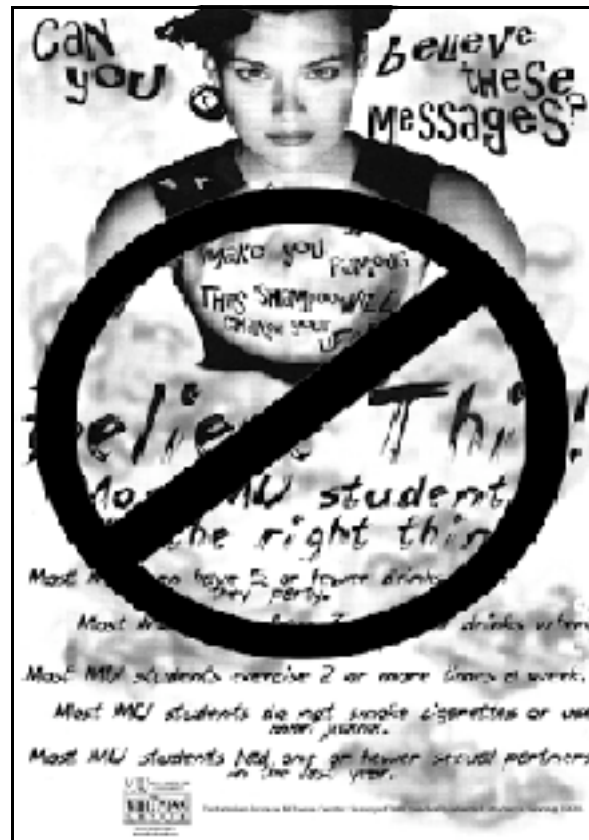
the time, they were branded rebels and troublemakers, but now we celebrate and honor them.

Wildmen do what they think is the right thing! Remember a little over 30 years ago when segregation laws were the “right thing.” It took real Wildmen to say, “No, I don’t think so, and I don’t care if no one else does.” What about 150 years ago when slavery was the “right thing” to do. Again, it took real Wildmen to say, “No, I don’t think so!” Go even further back some 223 years ago when taxation without representation was the “right thing.” It took real Wildmen to fill a harbor with tea to make the point that they didn’t think it was the right thing.

Were these Wildmen rebels? Yes. Troublemakers? Definitely. Heroes? Without a doubt! So don’t let anyone including Millersville tell you what’s right because the second you stop questioning is the moment they try and pull a fast one.

Remember, Wildmen aren’t concerned with what average people think is right. Wildmen

do what they know is right, and that’s what makes all the difference!



Consider This Your First and only Warning

Originally published February 25, 1999

It takes a real tough guy to throw rocks at a defenseless animal. People never cease to amaze me. As I move about campus, I see the most ignorant things take place. I’ve witnessed from a distance a bunch of macho men waste a half dozen ripe oranges trying to hit a squirrel as it ran around in confusion with on-lookers laughing.

I’ve seen people open a new pack of gum and toss the wrapper to the ground. We’ve all seen the beer cans that litter the grounds every Monday morning after the weekend parties. I was dumb-founded when I saw some guy try

and rip the handicap sign off the wall to the Lyle dining hall men’s bathroom.

Just last weekend on my way to the dining hall, I saw three punk kids throwing rocks at the ducks in the pond. This Wildman suddenly remembered his roots and stopped watching and starting doing something. No, he didn’t help and throw rocks at these defenseless ducks! That’s not the way of the Wildman. A Wildman believes in killing animals for food and survival just as the Indians did, never for fun. The Indians had the highest amount of respect for the animals, and understood the

relationship between themselves and the animals.

I decided that things were going to change. I approached and asked them what they were doing. I received the typical response of Americas' youth, "Nothing." I explained my concern regarding the situation, asked them if they would like to stand there as I gathered some stones to throw at them, and if I ever found them doing it again there would be some serious trouble.

What's wrong with people—such laziness, ignorance, and disrespect. It's unbelievable. However, I guess I shouldn't be surprised. Man's been doing these same things and much worse since probably the dawn of time. We've hunted animals to extinction just for the "sport" of it; we've poisoned the environment trying to make a quick buck from it; and the whole time the rest of us have sat on our lazy asses doing nothing about it.

This Wildman is making a stand! I'm drawing the line right here. I would hope that the rest of you will too. Next time you see some jerk littering, pick it up, and ask that person what their problem is. When those big

tough guys are throwing things at the helpless, make a stand, and do something about it.

Some of you are saying, "I never do those things." That's good, but if you see it happen and still do nothing, you're just as bad! Those on-lookers who laughed as our macho men were throwing oranges at the squirrels, might as well have been doing it too due to the level of encouragement they were giving.

For all of you who have done these things, you should be ashamed of yourself. You're an embarrassment to the human race. It's people like you who killed the buffalo. It's people like you who polluted the rivers till they caught fire. It's people like you who put mercury in the fish that cause birth defects. You might not have personally done those things, but you're on the road to it. I suggest considering a detour—it might just make you a better person.

I invite you all to join with me to keep a lookout for these ignorant fools. As for those of you who do these things, consider this your first and only warning. This Wildman doesn't forget a face, and he remembers what you look like. He's watching and waiting, so go ahead punk, make my day!

Fascist Regime Takes over MU Campus

Originally published April 29, 1999

For the last 223 years, Americans have held the Bill of Rights as an uncompromising, nonnegotiable, and untouchable set of basic truths inalienable to all men. During that time, millions of Americans have sacrificed life and limb to protect these basic rights.

Of all these truths, we hold no other more dear than the First Amendment—the freedom of speech. This is the very freedom that guarantees each and every one of us the right to speak our mind, when we want, how we want, and where we want without the fear of reprisal in any form.

You have to realize, of course, that freedom doesn't come easy, you've got to want it bad. The freedom of speech is no exception, it tests us each and every day. It gives everyone the right to say something that someone else would spend a lifetime shouting opposition to, but that's the beauty of it. That is why we call it freedom.

Remember, not everyone everywhere has the right to speak their minds. There are places under socialist control or repressive dictators, and these people can't speak their mind without certain punishment in the form of prison sentences, physical harm, or even death.

However, it would appear that some here at Millersville prefer that type of living and forget those that have died to protect this right. Over the last several weeks now, reports have been trickling in that *Snapper* columnists are being harassed for expressing their honest feelings and opinions. This harassment has come in many forms: hate email, threatening phone messages from unknown callers, and even personal confrontations where physical harm was threatened. Columnists have had things thrown at them in dining halls and have been ostracized by their neighbors.

Why stop there? Why don't we organize a book burning here on campus, we can burn *The Snapper*, The Bible, textbooks, the Constitution, and anything else we disagree with or which hurts our feelings. Then maybe we can invite a few Neo-Nazi party members to come and give a small lecture about persecuting those that we don't like, agree with, or are afraid of. If anyone doesn't like this idea, we'll just shoot them.

Sounds extreme doesn't it? But how far from it are we? You have to understand that

the behavior being demonstrated moves us backwards, not forward. The unfortunate thing is that some columnists are afraid to say what they want; they feel the need to sugarcoat their columns now in order to please the lowest common denominator—the general mob.

Congratulations to those of you who prefer censorship over free speech. It looks like you might be succeeding.

Don't get me wrong, there's nothing bad about having an opposing opinion, in fact I welcome it. In addition, there's nothing wrong with debating your opinion logically. It is; however, inherently wrong to harass and threaten those that disagree with you. There's a right way and a wrong way to express your opinion. The right way—a letter to the editor. The wrong way—threaten physical violence.

The Snapper has avenues setup so that people holding opposing views can speak their minds in the form of letters to the editor or commentaries. This is how the system works now and has worked for many years, very successfully too. *The Snapper* welcomes all opinions from any member of the University community, and it looks forward to publishing them.

So to all of you who threaten and try to censor those having different opinions today, remember you might be threatened and censored tomorrow. If you have a complaint, submit it formally through the proper channels. Don't take matters into your own hands and try and teach that person a lesson. It will only make matters worse and probably prove your opinion on the matter as correct.

The Triviality of American Students

Originally published April 20, 2000

Living in the wealthiest, most luxurious country in the world we often find trivial inconveniences earth shattering. Being so far removed by having no exposure to any “real tragedies,” we forget just how bad it really is for some people. The times we are reminded, on the news for example, we try to quickly forget.

This Wildman has heard many complaints detailing just how terrible some people’s lives are here on campus. For example:

- ◆ *“I have **two** tests tomorrow.”*
- ◆ *“That girl wore the **same** outfit to this party as I did, the nerve!”*
- ◆ *“I had to buy this shirt at Old Navy, I couldn’t **afford** Structure.”*
- ◆ *“The 1 o’clock class was full so I **had** to take the 8 a.m. one. I **hate** getting up in the morning!”*
- ◆ *“My parents won’t **buy** me a new car, they’re giving me the **used** mini-van. What will that do to my image?”*
- ◆ *“My breasts are too **small**, no one will ever like me.”*
- ◆ *“My abs aren’t **hard** enough, no one will ever like me.”*

After disastrous and horrific events such as these, I’m sure these must be the most miserable people in the world. For them, it’s probably hard to imagine life getting any worse than your parents offering you their used mini-van. In reality, if this is as bad as it gets, we should consider ourselves pretty lucky.

We are so lucky in fact, I would be willing to bet that people reading this book have a roof over their heads, two to three meals a day, and clothes to put on their back. You

probably even have someone who loves you. Do you really need anything else?

Let’s compare the pampered American life style to some of our world neighbors. During the Bosnian Conflict in addition to the typical hallmarks of war: death, daily violence, shelling—approximately 20,000 women (including minors) were raped. That would be every single Millersville student (that would include you too guys) raped nearly three times.

What about Ethiopia where carcasses of dead animals litter the plains and thousands of men, women, and children desperately search for food to ward off starvation due to massive droughts throughout the region?

These are examples of real hardships. So next time you stub your toe and call out asking God why your life is so terrible, think about the people who really have it rough. While you’re at it, why don’t you give the Man upstairs a break because I’m sure he’s got bigger things to worry about than your stubbed toe and listening to your depressing hymns.

In closing, when I hear people talk of how unlucky and terrible things are for them, I’m reminded of a Native American tale.

“There was a warrior who had a fine stallion. Everyone said how lucky he was to have such a horse.

‘Maybe,’ he said.

One day the stallion ran off. The people said the warrior was unlucky.

‘Maybe,’ he said.

The next day, the stallion returned, leading a string of fine ponies. The people said it was very lucky.

'Maybe,' the warrior said.

Later, the warrior's son was thrown from one of the ponies and broke his leg. The people said it was unlucky.

'Maybe,' the warrior said.

The next week, the chief led a war party against another tribe. Many young men were killed. But, because of his broken leg, the warrior's son was left behind, and so was spared."

Shut Up and Stop your Whining

Originally published February 10, 2000

It's the spring semester, and that can only mean one thing—well, yes the girls will soon be sunbathing topless in front of Burrows—but I'm talking about the return of the Wildman.

There are many things a Wildman does not tolerate—communism, hatchback cars, the Back Street Boys—but in this case I'm specifically talking about whining. Since the start of the semester, I've heard a constant stream of it. (*Insert your whinny reading voice here.*)

"I don't like the snow!"

"They didn't print my story

"I don't like the dinning hall!" (Stop reading aloud in your whinny voice before someone hits you. Remember, no one likes a whiner.)

To all you whiners, all I can say is boo-who; go run home to mamma!

First, realize that there is a difference between having a legitimate complaint and just plain whining. Let me explain the difference. Whining is just that—whining; going on day after day, week after week telling how stupid or pointless something is without ever giving a reason why it is or (here's the important part) suggesting how to fix the problem.

Granted, problems don't get solved unless someone makes some noise about it. However,

in order to separate yourself from the spineless whiners, do more than just whine about the problem, suggest how to solve the problem. That's the Wildman difference.

The Wildman will now attempt to solve some of the whiner's problems. Don't like the snow, move south. Didn't get your story printed, improve it and/or make a case why it is important to print it.

As for the dinning hall, I pose this challenge to all of you who so strongly despise the food there. First, realize that I understand there is a measurable difference between mom's cooking and the University's. But keep this in mind, next time you start complaining about the food in the dinning hall. A 19-meal plan works out to roughly \$5 a meal. Do you think that for \$5, you could eat the meals you do, eat as much as you want, with as much variety as there is anywhere else? No! Think of how much you spend when you go out to eat and don't count McDonald's?

Even if you don't like the main courses at the dinning hall there's always soup, salad, and cereal to eat. Worse case scenario, there's always the universal fall back—peanut butter and jelly.

Here are some Wildman solutions for those of you who positively can't stand the dining hall. Try foraging for your food. I know what

you're saying, "What am I going to eat?" Just take a look around. This campus is filled with free food. There is a pond full of big fat fish just waiting to be caught, and they are all cholesterol free.

Like red meat you say, again no problem. There must be hundreds of squirrels hopping about. Catching them would be a snap too. Many of the squirrels will walk right up to you if you have some food. I doubt anyone would miss a few. When you feel like treating yourself, just get yourself a plump duck. Better yet, for those special occasions when the whole family is coming over, go for the swan. Don't those wings look juicy?

A little thirsty, just wander about the campus right after the weekend, there are usually numerous half filled beer cans laying all over the place. I'm sure you'll find something to drink.

I'm sure that after a while eating duck and fish will become a little much. Too much of a good thing. Try reading the posters on campus. People on campus are always giving away free food. Realize the best part of all these suggestions are that they are *free*.

Seriously now, if you have a problem with something on campus by all means share it with the rest of us because that is the only way changes get made. At the same time, if you can't change or stop it (i.e., the snow) or don't have any possible solutions to offer then spare us all your pointless ranting.

If you don't like dining hall food, suggest how we can solve the problem. Realize though that the solutions might be more undesirable than the current problem. If you want better food, you're going to have to pay for it and no one wants that.

The Wildman's College Survival Guide

Originally published April 6, 2000

College is designed to teach you two things. First and for most, your Social Security number. Second, self-reliance. Learning something in class, that's purely a fringe benefit.

Social Security Number

You simply can't live without your social security number anymore. Without it, you disappear into obscurity. You need it for everything here at the Ville (and the rest of the United States for that matter) from obtaining registration material to swimming at Brooks pool to taking a scantron test.

Why do you need it? Computers, that's why. The world runs on them.

However, take this fellow Wildman who proves that you don't need a social security number or a computer to grade a test—especially a scantron. All this Wildman needed was a hammer and a nail. He stacked the tests up on top of one another and proceeded to drive a nail through each of the correct answers.

The entire class had their tests back in about five minutes as opposed to the three-day waiting period, proving that you don't need a computer for everything. Short and simple, no state-of-the-art technology required. Sometimes the simplest method is the best method.

Self-reliance

The second part of college life is learning self-reliance. Trust me, you need lots of it. Take for example this all too common occurrence where you wait for what seems like an eternity in a line only to get to the front and have some person tell you that you should be in the other line. Someone mislabeled the lines and no one has had the opportunity to fix it yet. Their mistake, your problem.

Another Wildman and former Apple employee, Guy Kawasaki says, “The higher you go in an organization, the less oxygen there is, so supporting intelligent life becomes difficult. Thus, you may have to ignore the people high within the hierarchy who only have the brain power to comprehend the status quo.” Self-reliance means the only person who is going to figure it out is you. You would think that someone here on campus might be willing to do you a favor and help you out. That’s not the case.

If I ever met a group of people so unwilling to do someone else a favor, it’s here at Millersville. Granted, there are always exceptions to the rule. Doc Roc and Technical Operations are both perfect examples of people willing to help.

My favorite is always the administration/staff. Remember, these are the people whose jobs are to help students. This Wildman has been sent from department to department trying to get signatures and/or forms only to eventually be sent back to the department I started at.

One time a pamphlet published by a department on campus was said never to have existed by a secretary working in that very department. The pamphlet was later

discovered in a rack down the hall 40 feet from her desk. If you want it done, do it yourself.

You’re probably asking yourself, what’s the Wildman position on doing someone a favor? Does he* spit in the eye of the person asking and then laugh like most people? No, not at all. In fact, a Wildman often seeks out the person having trouble. It’s easy to tell who it is, they have that frustrated look on their face.

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EXERCISE: Ask an administrator/staff member to do you a favor. What will the response be? What should the response be?

A. Did the President send you?

B. A blank stare with the occasional blink.

C. Do you qualify as a minority student?

D. Hysterical laughter.

E. Sure! What can I do for you?

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A Wildman helps a person because it’s the right thing to do, and it doesn’t matter if that person is friend or a stranger. What matters is that you’ve done what’s right, helping your fellow man[§] and preserving your humanity.

Remember, the key to surviving college—your social security number and self-reliance. Don’t expect help from anyone else, unless of course there happens to be a Wildman nearby.

** If “he†” isn’t “politically correct” enough for you, then email thewildman@getlost.com asking for a digital copy of this column. With it, you can replace all the “he’s” to “she’s.”*

† In case you hadn’t noticed, the Wildman doesn’t do “politically correct.”

*§ See * and †.*

Chill Out—the Semester is Nearly Over

Originally published April 24, 1998

On Wednesday, I was standing in line at the Sweet Shop. While I waited, I listened to this girl whine and complain about how bad registration had been for her in the past.

As a freshman, she had to go last. Then the system changed and she had to go last the next year again. As a junior she once again went last. She explained to her friends and to anyone in earshot that she wasn't taking it anymore. If she didn't get the classes she wanted this year, she was going to do this and she was going to do that. So world, you had better look out.

I'm not going to go off about the registration system. I know that there are problems. I know that there are problems as does every single student, faculty, staff, and administration member. It has problems now; it had problems twenty years ago, and it will still have problems twenty years from now. With that said, I have the perfect cure for registration and upcoming finals week—*Chill Out!*

Spring is here! Go outside and enjoy the sun, the cool breeze, and the girls sunbathing topless in front of Gilbert Hall. Everyone is wound up so tight they couldn't get a greased BB up you-know-where.

The Wildman has a few suggestions on how to chill out before finals:

- ◆ Hunt a small furry animal using only your Riverside version of Shakespeare book (*See Diagram 1.1 for an explanation*)
- ◆ See event listings in *The Snapper* section.
- ◆ Take long treks across the rolling hills of Southeastern Pennsylvania

- ◆ Lay around in your tighty-whities on the couch eating potato chips
- ◆ Peel labels off Bud bottles
- ◆ Don't go to class
- ◆ Download porn off the web
- ◆ Get sunburned
- ◆ Watch *The Three Stooges*
- ◆ Toss playing cards into a hat
- ◆ Watch people on Friday and laugh as they try to register
- ◆ Tip cows
- ◆ Fold *The Snapper* into a huge paper airplane

I think you get the idea. The countdown for the end of the semester has started and everybody needs to be in their best disposition for the summer months so that they can do some serious partying.

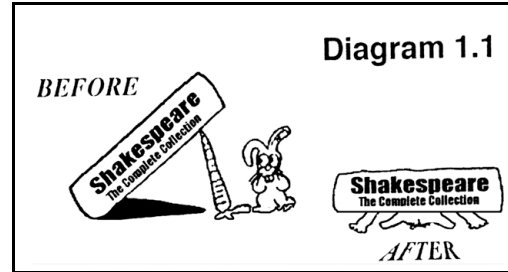
So from one Wildman to another—*Chill Out*. Remember, you can probably get the class you couldn't get now during drop/add at the start of next semester. Lots of the people who thought they needed the class this semester will probably drop it then. As for finals, who cares? Take this Wildman's word of advice: find classes that don't given finals. It's working for me.

Besides, finals don't matter that much. You can always take the class over next semester.

Registration is not the end of the world; it's not the seventh seal of the apocalypse; and it's not even that big of a deal. So *Chill Out*, enjoy the remaining few weeks you have left, and don't get all bent out of shape because you didn't get the class you need, that you have a bulletin board to make, or four finals on the same day. Life will still go on.

The soul is a hard thing to kill—even with a chain saw.

As for that girl who was complaining about registration, I wish you the best of luck, honey. But *Chill Out*, it's not that big of a deal.



There's always Someone else to Blame

Originally published March 4, 1999

Open your Manual of Manliness to Chapter 8—entitled, "Responsibility."

What's that you say? You don't have your manual yet. That's okay because it's still available at the bookstore for only \$59.95. Look for "The Wildman—A Manual of Manliness, second edition." The first edition was a cave painting. (Just between you and me, you could probably get the book at Borders for \$19.95.) For now, just follow along with the person next to you but be sure to have it next week.

Pointing a finger and blaming someone else has nearly become as American as homemade apple pie.

Not since the days of Truman have people been willing to take responsibility for their shortcomings and goof-ups. Truman summed it up best with the short message that sat on his desk, "The buck stops here!" and indeed it did. Not the case today, someone else is always to blame. We make weak excuses for everything. It's not our fault the car ran out of gas. It's not our fault that we failed that class. It's not our fault that we spilled hot coffee into our lap while trying to drive the car. It definitely has to be McDonald's fault that you got burned by the coffee you spilled.

McDonald's should know better than to make the coffee hot. I would even bet that the pimply kid behind the cash register went to bed every night hoping that someone would spill their coffee. Not very likely, right?

A jury thought it was and awarded the woman a nice settlement for her pain and suffering. There should be a clause in the legal system protecting us from idiots like that.

The trend continues, in the last few years, numerous class action lawsuits have been filed against the tobacco companies. Yes, they did target children in some of their advertising campaigns, but they never held a gun to anybody's head. Nor has it been a big secret that smoking was bad for you. Everyone has known for years!

It is unfortunate that states have to pay the medical care for these stupid smokers. However, instead of the person dying from lung cancer blaming themselves for being so stupid, they blame the cigarette makers for selling it to them. Try pointing the finger of blame at yourself for being a moron.

You do realize what's next, the alcohol industry. I can see it now, in a few years people who drank through their livers will file lawsuits against the beer companies. Never mind the label that says that drinking too

much can be bad for you—these companies forced that person to drink. You never had the choice not to because you don't have any free will. Students in college don't have the choice, they have to drink to be cool.

Even better will be the following years after that when all the fat people decide that it's not their fault for being fat. Being lazy, sitting on the couch and eating hamburgers and pizza every night had nothing to do with.

McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, and the like are to blame, they made them fat. How could you not resist stopping and eating there? You never had the choice, right?

The fast food industry tricked you into eating at their restaurants. It would only be fair if these people received a couple hundred thousand dollars in settlement.

We need to take the blame for the dumb things we did. Yes, this is the land of opportunity. It's not the land of guaranteed wealth and ease. You have got to work for it,

suing someone for your fortune should not be how it's done.

If you spill hot coffee on yourself while trying to drive, talking on the phone, and reading a map, then it is your fault alone.

Those of you that smoke, you know that it's bad for you, and you will probably die someday of cancer. In no shape or form is the tobacco industry at fault. Realize, that if you are fat, your laziness made you that way not that red-haired clown.

Remember, the buck stops with you. You're a big boy or big girl now and responsible for your actions. Temporary insanity is not an excuse for going to a party instead of completing your term paper or going to your 8 a.m. the next day.

Be a man—better yet, be a Wildman and stop making excuses for your own shortcomings. This concludes today's lesson—next week, Chapter 12 "Trash."

The Habits of a Wildman

Originally published March 2, 2000

You can always tell a real Wildman, they don't believe in the status quo or fall victim to doing something just because everyone else does it. In fact, they usually have a unique way of doing things. Take for example how a Wildman handles the following situations:

The Wildman on Shaving

A typical Gillette razor just doesn't cut it for a Wildman. They need something with a little more bang behind it. This is how a Wildman shaves: they lather their face, set the wood jointer to $\frac{1}{64}$ of an inch, and gently slide

their face over the whirring blades—against the grain for an extra smooth shave. Not only will this remove those pesky whiskers for the smoothest of shaves but also any unwanted zits or moles you might have.

The Wildman on First-Aid

Have a deep cut that won't stop bleeding or tired of that Band-Aid always falling off then try a little cement dust. Cement dust isn't just for building anymore, its moisture sucking power will stop any bleeding, almost instantly.

Of course, now that you have the bleeding stopped you need to do something about that

cut. Since real Wildman don't sew, merely pinch the wound together and add some crazy-glue. Your friends might call you crazy but by the time the glue wears off the wound should be healed. The best part of super glue is that it's waterproof unlike those girly stitches you get at the hospital.

The Wildman on Trash

Unlike many people on campus, a real Wildman doesn't drop his trash wherever he wants while walking across campus. It goes in a waste can.

This is probably why so many people love the sight of newly fallen snow. That white clean blanket of snow gives the impression of what the world must have been like when it was young—new, clean, and alive with possibilities.

Too bad winter is over. Many people on this campus are terribly guilty of this littering sin. Dining hall take-out containers, Turkey Hill bottles, beer cans, and anything else someone was too lazy to carry to a trash can cover the campus.

I understand how people are forced to drop their trash wherever they want. It isn't like there is a trashcan on every single corner of the campus. Not to mention, those Turkey Hill bottles can be so very heavy when they're empty. It's amazing anyone can muscle them out of the Cove when they're filled.

It's tough to know how to behave when the rest of the country isn't setting much of an

example. We live in a country that has a merely seven percent of the world's population yet it still manages to produce 25 percent of the planet's waste. Basically, it boils down to short-term thinking and pure laziness. Both of which are fast becoming an American tradition—Home of the brave! Land of the spoiled?

It's hard to think long-term when you're just trying to get through a rough day but next time you have an empty ice-tea bottle or food wrapper see if you hold on to for an extra two minutes and drop it off in a trash can.

You might not feel any better for doing it but your children will thank you as will the duck with the six-pack ribbon wrapped around his head.



Y2K Bug Proves Manufacturer's Scam

Originally published April 20, 2000

The end of the world is coming! Science fiction warned of alien invasions. The media talked of nuclear holocausts. The church preached of Christ's second coming. But now, it appears they were all wrong.

As you all should be aware by now, the end of the world will not come by God's hand but by the click of a mouse. That's right, the omnipotent Y2K bug will be the end of civilization as we know it.

It looks as if even the church is worried now about the coming Y2K (perhaps they're afraid the pledges will be lost on the church computer), at least mine is. Recently in the bulletin, they handed out a Y2K survival guide from the American Red Cross.

As a Wildman, there's nothing wrong with being prepared. But this whole thing seems a little on the shady side. The Red Cross is warning that garage doors might not open, microwaves may not cook, smoke detectors might not sound. My question is, how could the Y2K bug affect my garage door opener? Doesn't make a lot of sense.

The computer companies have admitted to knowing about the problem for years now, but they did nothing to fix it until recently. So another question comes to mind, how can companies like Microsoft that are on the cutting edge of innovation get caught with their pants down like this? Answer: They wanted to.

These problems should have been solved in the regular upgrades computers receive periodically. However, the way the computer industry sees it, why fix a problem for free when you can start a panic and get paid for the service?

These Y2K fix-it companies have turned into multi-million dollar companies over night as a result of the current panic. Computer manufacturers knew that this would happen too—in fact, they were banking on it. The best way to keep people buying your product is to convince them that they can't live without it. And it appears for the first time ever in advertising history that might just be the case.

Most people are accepting the computer industry's shortsightedness at face value. Instead of just accepting this, small businesses on up to the federal government should be busy filing a class-action lawsuit.

The computer industry has been joined by the retail sector in confronting the Y2K bug. Mail-order catalogs have entire sections devoted to being Y2K prepared. Those supplies include generators, canned goods, bottled water, candles, batteries, extra cash, guns, etc... In fact, buying a generator is nearly impossible now. They're on back order all the way into the fall.

But if you think it's bad now, just wait until this Christmas when people turn into total maniacs buying whatever they can to be ready for when the world shuts-down at midnight on December 31, 1999. Perhaps there will be some problems with the computers, but I doubt it will be any worse than the usually technology difficulties that we are all used to here on campus.

The problems won't be from the Y2K bug, they'll be from the panic it causes. People only need the smallest excuse to riot—a bad court verdict or team wins the Superbowl. That's exactly what will happen if people don't calm down. If not and your ATM card doesn't work on January 1, 2000, you'll

probably drive your car through the bank's front doors to try and get your money.

People need to realize that life will go on with or without computers. Perhaps that's the hidden message in the Y2K bug, life doesn't really require a computer. Yes, it's frustrating when your email or ATM card doesn't work, but it's not the end of the world.

The thing is life will go on. Grain grew for thousands of years without computers. Great and powerful nations were built without

computers. People can definitely go on without computers. And with any luck, the problem will really be fixed by New Year's; however, if it isn't, they'll get it fixed soon after. So if my garage door doesn't work New Year's Day, that's okay because it still has a manual release.

Then again perhaps the hidden message is there wouldn't be a problem if everyone used an Apple computer. They're good up to the year 20,000 A.D.

'Reds' Help Make Political World Go Round

Originally published April 15, 1999

No, I wasn't a communist, but life seemed more adventurous and fun when communism was around. James Bond movies were better. We had a good reason to give the Defense Department billions of dollars for Star Trek type weapons. And best of all, we Americans had someone to hate.

Granted, communism was a bad thing, and it would appear today that the entire communist ideology was failure. However with communism, you didn't have wars breaking out all over the globe because communism helped to keep those things under-control.

Life seemed a lot simpler then too. The United States had purpose during the Cold War. We were the defenders of the free world, and they were the enemies—the Russians (and maybe the Chinese). The United States has since then lost that purpose. We still try in places like Bosnia and Kosovo, but it's just not the same—in fact, it only makes us feel worse.

With communism, we knew exactly who had the nuclear weapons, who were our friends, and where the lines were drawn. But today, who knows. Everywhere you look, little Third World nations are developing nuclear weapons while their people starve. Even though the world lived on the brink of nuclear war for 40 years, there was still some stability and order. All of this is greatly absent today.

During the Cold War, we didn't have to pay Russian salaries. Today, we do because we're afraid Russian scientists will sell their skills to more little power hungry countries that would love to park a nuke in front of the White House.

Communism helped to create a lot of jobs here in the states. We were always busy finding new ways to do things and create new products and materials just so we could stay ahead of the Reds.

People make the argument, and probably rightfully so, that with communism gone the world can take a great step forward toward

peace. Can we, and did we? Little wars are breaking out all over the place. It's absolutely amazing, give people their freedom from a repressive regime, and the first thing they do is start killing each other. It doesn't make any sense. What's happening in Kosovo would be similar if the people in Lancaster started killing the people in York. Insane and shallow, isn't it?

So, believe it or not communism had it's ups. You're probably saying, "What about the Chinese, they're communist won't they do?"

Yes, the Chinese are communist, but it's just not the same. A Russian was big and scary looking, while the Chinese are cute and cuddly. Look at the Olympics, how can you hate a foot-foot-tall Chinese gymnast? It just doesn't feel right

In the end, it probably boils down to one simple reason as to why we miss communism. How can you have light without darkness, yin but no yan? The harmony and balance is lost. The United States is left wondering, "What now?"

Maybe we could look into bringing back communism for small limited amounts of time. I can see it now, "This week only, Communism—bigger and badder than ever. Act fast because this is a limited time offer!!"

People would have someone to hate for a week, get it out of their systems, and then be able to go on with their lives. The United States could make some mean accusations about human rights, the Russians could talk about Western decadence.

People would go to bed scared and then at the end of the week everyone would kiss and makeup. Government leaders would be called heroes for diffusing the situation.

We'd have purpose again—even if for a limited time. But that just might just do it. It looks like a win-win situation.

At the very least, we should consider the possibility of bringing real hard-core Communism back for the Olympics—it might be more exciting and worth watching.

Banks Play Money Game; Customers Lose

Originally published April 22, 1999

When I was young, I remember my mother telling me the value of putting my birthday money in the bank.

I'm sure most of you are familiar with those same reasons (your mother probably gave you the speech too). However, just in case you've forgotten because it's been so long since any of us had any money, I'll remind you.

Basically, there were two simple reasons for keeping money at the bank and not buying Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The first was that the money was safe from any robber or from being misplaced, and two, the bank would pay me interest for the privilege of holding my money. As a child who always lost things and since the only thing I loved more than money was more money this seemed like a win-win situation.

For years that was the case, the bank and I maintained this simple but honest relationship built on those two basic principles—security and interest. Somewhere along the line; however, the rules changed. I realize the economy is strong but that is no reason why the bank should be taking advantage of me. Let me explain.

I now find myself paying more money to the bank in service fees than I make in interest. Just last month, I paid \$20 in service fees because I had an ATM card with my savings account. They never mentioned the fee when I signed-up for the ATM card. It gets even better, because of the \$20 they removed, my account dropped below this “new” minimum balance mark, and they took another \$5. So in one month, the bank charged me \$25 in fees. Year to date, I have only been credited \$8.73 in interest. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that I’m getting the short end of the stick.

With no other choice than to visit the bank for some answers, I find myself talking to someone of some importance that sits behind a desk and not a counter. I explain the situation, and this woman makes the service fee sound like the bank is using it to do me some huge favor. I guess they’re using that money to advertise at pointless sporting events or something else which doesn’t effect my holdings at the bank. I do get a little something

out of the trip (no, not her phone number) a “free” calendar*. Like that makes the whole trip worthwhile, come on, it doesn’t even have nude women on it.

Oh well, it’s only money, and I realize that I don’t currently have a lot of it so if the bank would rather spit in my face than give me a fair deal that’s okay because some day I’m going to be rich and when that happens I’m closing my account there and going elsewhere. To tell the truth, I’m looking forward to seeing the look on the tellers face when I do that!

Who am I kidding? I’m not waiting. I switch banks all the time. That’s what you should do too. If the bank doesn’t do it the way they originally told you they were going to do it, drop them. If they add new service fees to help buy sport’s arenas then drop them because it should be obvious that they aren’t interested in you at all. We shouldn’t have to put up with stuff like that. There’s plenty of banks out there to do business with.

I’m looking for a bank to do business with for the long haul. Treat me good now while I’m poor, and I’ll treat you good later when I make my fortune. In short, I want the respect that I deserve as a customer regardless of the amount in my account.

** Notice, there will be a charge of \$2.50 on my next bank statement for the so-called “free” calendar.*

Collar Color Doesn’t Measure Up

Originally published March 1, 2001

What makes white collar jobs better than blue collar ones or even no collar jobs for that matter? It has to be the money, right!?! I guess in a capitalist society the more money you make the better

you and your job is. Following that line of reasoning, Bill Gates must be the most important man in the world. Hmm...I wonder.

American schools and our society for that matter push the idea that we should all strive

to attain white collar jobs by running our own Fortune 500 companies; starting our own law practices; or educating the youth of America. Okay, I realize I might be stretching it on the last one. Nevertheless, my point remains the same. Our society encourages us to achieve white-collar jobs.

A year from now this Wildman will be entering the job force as a teacher. That's a respectable job, and the pay is fair. Lately, I've been questioning why my teachers in high school or even guidance counselor never encouraged students to pursue slightly more "hands-on" jobs.

By "hands-on," I mean jobs like mechanics, plumbers, electricians, construction workers or any job that sends you home dirty and a little sweaty at the end of the day.

The more I examine them, the more they sound like fine jobs to me—if we use salary as a ruler. The last time I went to have my car repaired, the labor bill for one hour was half of what I can expect to make in one day of substitute teaching. When was the last time that any mechanic only put one hour of labor into your car? This was something my teachers neglected to tell me.

If everyone decided to be a CEO, who would fix our cars, build our homes or pick-up our trash? Is there something wrong with getting your hands dirty? With the use of computers and the expanding changes in technology, these people have to be intelligent.

Best of all for the people that choose careers such as these is the feeling of accomplishment at the end of the day. My grandfather worked construction for several years. Whenever we drive through the nearby city, he always points out the buildings he helped to construct. These are testaments to time. Symbols of hard work, dedication and craftsmanship that he and the rest of his crew put into these projects.

What can a lawyer say, "I sued McDonald's for damages when some lady poured hot coffee into your lap." Those are testaments to human stupidity and the cheap idea of getting rich quick.

I salute the men and women of this nation that overcame the pressure and the stigma of the careers to become the backbone of growth for our nation.

Re-Balancing your Bottom Line

Originally published March 8, 2001

It's tax season with April 15 as the benchmark. That time of year when we balance the fiscal books measuring our gains as well as our losses. The point we use to measure the previous year against.

Every year we ask the same questions. Did I make more money this year? Do I owe less in taxes? Do I drive a better car? Do I have more designer clothes? Did my portfolio post a better return? These are the measurements

and the standards used by the American Capitalist.

Simply put, we check to see if we have "more" than the year before? Answer yes, and we consider it a good year. We believe ourselves ahead of the game and living the American Dream. We measure our self-worth, for some unknown reason, by the strength of our financial bottom line. I assure you, money doesn't buy everything. That's why it's too

bad there isn't a place on our tax returns to record life's intangible treasures.

Here are some friendly words of advice from the Wildman. First, doing your own tax return isn't worth the headache unless you're using the short form. Have a professional do it but be sure it is a CPA. A CPA can represent you in court if there's a problem.

Second, fill out "The 2000 Wildman Social Tax Return Form." It only takes a minute and won't cost you a thing. That should be a relief for us cash starved college students.

Get a pencil and a calculator and then fill out the form below (*See Exercise*). I'll wait while you finish.

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Exercise: The 2000 Wildman Social Tax Return Form

Record only those things that took place this past fiscal year. (Jan. 1, 2000 – Dec. 21, 2000)

1. Hours spend weekly with your children or loved ones: _____
 2. Weekly phone calls home (*exclude those asking for cash*): _____
 3. Life lessons learned from grandparents: _____
 4. Times you did something no one else was willing to do: _____
 5. Books read by the fire or outside in the sun: _____
 6. Number of road trips taken (*exclude those for beer or pizza*): _____
 7. Dates that occurred at sports bars (*record this number as a negative*): _____
 8. Minutes spent daily thinking about a significant other: _____
 9. Sundays you squandered lying in bed with someone: _____
 10. Handwritten love letters (*exclude e-mails*): _____
 11. Did you fall in love? (*1,000 for yes/zero for no/negative 1,000 for losing it*): _____
- Add lines one through 11, record total on line 12.*
12. **Grand Total:** _____
- =====

Good, you're back. How did you do? The figure you placed on line 12 naturally begs the questions, "Are happy with this number?" Would you consider yourself finishing the year in the black or red? Could you have done better? If so, what distracted you from those things that should have been important?

The next time you are trying to decide what is important use this Wildman ruler: Will this matter six months from now? Better yet, will it matter ten years from now? Do I want memories of pursued material gain or moments of contentment? This year let's give re-balancing the fiscal book of our life a try.

Slow Down You're Moving Too Fast

Originally published April 5, 2001

"The race is long and in the end it's only with yourself."

- Everybody's Free (to Wear Sunscreen)
Baz Luhrman

Like many of you, I was once a time orientated fellow. I was always five minutes early for appointments. I couldn't stand when people were late. I sped

wherever I went trying to make better time than the time before.

Perhaps this rush is ingrained in our society or maybe it's just the competitive male spirit. Whatever the reason, many of us, including myself, have always been in a hurry to get where we're going.

This rush has always been about finishing the next project, getting through the day, surviving the semester or completing the journey. Due to advances in technology, the rush has gotten worse. We're spiraling toward a life ruled not by the clock but the clock's second hand.

Aaaaaahhhggggg!

A perfect example of living life in a rush is how I used to hike. Hiking was always about getting to the top of the mountain in less time than the book says it should. Why, I'm not sure. I saw the same thing at the top as the last person in our group did.

On one hike, we invited some friends of the family to join us. My brother and I had our normal pace—fast and furious. We got to the top in no time, sat down and enjoyed our lunch at 10:30 in the morning. It took something like an extra 30 to 45 minutes for the last person, the wife of the friend's family, to get to the top. While we waited, we joked at how slow she was.

When she finally reached the top, she asked if we had seen the four-leaf clover on the path, the bald eagle soaring overhead or the rare mountain flower hidden behind a tree. The answer was "no." I had been in too much of a hurry to get to the top of the mountain to take

the time to notice life's little beauties. That's when I realized that the "finish line" isn't always the point of the race. It's what you see, feel and experience along the way.

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EXERCISE: Take your watch off for the day. Eat when you are hungry and sleep when you tired.

See what happens?

A. I developed a nervous twitch.

B. I lived by the sun.

C. I was late for all my classes.

D. I stopped being in a rush.

E. Other.

=====

Don't confuse this with the story of the tortoise and the hare. It's not slow and steady wins the race. It's that there may be no race at all. There's something about taking your time and enjoying the sights. When you realize that completing the journey isn't what's important, you'll discover what is: falling in love, having someone to talk with, waking up next to a beautiful woman, etc... In short, it's about enjoying life's simple joys.

Try this, and you'll find that time which once ruled your life is now inconsequential. That instead of time being a competitor pushing you faster; it's a companion sharing your journey. Don't concern yourself with completing the race. Concern yourself with what's along the way.

Personal Safety not Worth Our Liberties

Originally published April 12, 2001

Allow me to welcome you to the post-Columbine world. Two years have now passed and we can look back and assess the damage this event has caused to our society. I assure you that the tear in the fabric of our society runs deep.

I'm not going to tell you who's to blame. I could, but you probably wouldn't like the answer. I will tell you this much, the blame doesn't belong to any one thing or group. It is undoubtedly a culmination of different factors, many of which are unrelated.

I also know this—solving these problems does not involve students wearing IDs on shoestrings around their neck. That is a Band-Aid for a major social problem.

The damage extends far beyond the Columbine High School and beyond the state lines of Colorado. It reaches deep into each of our lives. It's amazing that something so far away can affect us all so greatly. Like many of you here at the Ville, I'm an education major. I remember watching the horrors of Columbine live on CNN two years ago and for the first time in my life I no longer felt safe. I seriously reconsidered my decision to become a teacher.

The repercussions from this event are evident in our everyday lives. Visit your old high school; you probably won't recognize it anymore. Even the most laid back districts now have security guards, metal detectors and mandatory clear or mesh backpacks. We have done all of this in the name of student safety.

When this crisis first occurred, I was horrified. It's one thing when unspeakable violence occurs in the inner city. This violence we can write off. Children of the inner city we believe to be raised by crack mothers and absent fathers. These are places where drug

deals go down on every street corner and no hope exists for those wishing to leave the ghetto. Violence in these places is understandable because we think they have no alternative. What makes the violence so hard to swallow is when it occurs in the backyard of our pretty suburbs—communities containing loving parents and foster safe environments.

The real danger in our post-Columbine world isn't the chances of this atrocity occurring again. It's what is now taking place in schools around the country where these things will probably never occur.

Wonderful after-school student programs are being scaled back. Excellent opportunities that teach valuable leadership skills are being canceled. Good students are losing out because of isolated incidents throughout this country. Opportunities once available to me just a few years ago in my old high school are now memories. Administrators are so frighten and worried that their school district might become another victim that they treat every student as a criminal. This is unfortunate and unnecessary.

We are raising a generation of students that without protest give up their freedoms. Students are being trained to not just give up any freedoms but their Constitutional rights and freedoms. Students are submitting to unjustified searches and seizures as they enter school. Students and parents seem to accept this because they feel it makes them safer. We are raising a new generation to be drones to do as they are told regardless of what it means for their personal liberties.

This is bad. This is unacceptable. There is more danger in the relinquishing of our

freedoms for personal safety than in the lead

of a bullet.

Ideas of Tolerance Found in our Genes

Originally published April 19, 2001

The mapping of the human genome has been said to be “the outstanding achievement not only of our lifetime but perhaps in the history of mankind.”

In the next 50 years with the information gained from the Human Genome Project, we will possess the technology to design medicines atom-by-atom that will not only specifically target an illness but also have no side effects.

We shall overcome cancer. We shall eliminate birth defects. We shall conquer AIDS. In short, we will for the first time since our exile from Eden have the power to end physical suffering.

Scientists believe that in this century, the human race will enter a new golden age. I couldn't agree more. It will truly be an exciting time to be alive.

What I find more profound than the possibility of ending illness and enhancing the quality of the human race is the opportunity to end hate.

When the human genome findings were published, it revealed a previously unimagined wealth of genetic information. Scientists were surprised to learn how much genetic code we shared with other creatures of the planet.

For example, we share nearly 98 percent of our genetic DNA with chimpanzees.

Also, it was quite possibly the worse day in history for racists and xenophobes everywhere when we learned that all humans—male and female, black and white—are indecipherable the same.

Surface variances such as skin color, hair color, and eye color hinge upon such infinitesimal genetic differences that they are almost imperceptible. Simply put, we're all made from nearly identical building blocks.

The goal now is to get this scientific fact through the thick skulled Neanderthals that feel the need to drag a homosexual teenager behind their truck or insist on telling racial jokes of poor taste.

Explain to the populous that we are all the same and perhaps we can stop one group of people killing the neighboring group of people just because they are a slightly different shade of color.

Pointing out our differences is as pointless as seeing who has more hairs on the top of their head. To prove my point, I have 178,243 hairs on my head. See what I mean? No one cares?

We are all the same—male or female, black or white, gay or straight, Christian or gentile. I suggest that instead of embracing our differences, embrace our similarities. I assure you there will be more of them.

A project started in the mid-1980s to decipher the genetic code of man with the hopes of creating a better world has succeeded...or at least will. Perhaps not in the way originally thought either.

Yes, we will soon have the technology to end disease. But more importantly, we now have the scientific proof to foster the ideas of tolerance, and it is our job to extend this idea, this knowledge to the people inhabiting the four corners of the globe.

The Mighty Power of Only One

Originally published April 26, 2001

"The power of one.

Not so long ago, a little girl in Alabama wanted to go to the same school as everyone else. And a gentle man from India wanted to raise consciousness without raising his voice. In East Germany, a man wanted to break free. And a woman traveled the world, giving hope to those who had none.

This is the power of one: To protect your home in the Amazon, to prevent poaching of the African Mountain Gorilla, to rescue harp seals in Finland, or to care for the environment in our own backyard. The power of one is the power to do something—Anything."

– Earth Communications Office Commercial

We are under the impression that it takes great wealth or an massive army to change things especially in an age where we are surrounded by mercenary lobbyists, ruthless lawyers, and millionaire politicians. Yes, you can make an impact with those things but it's not necessary. It really only takes one person who believes completely in a cause to make history—or at least change something.

Some of the most profound impacts on the globe have been started by the actions of a single person. I'm talking about the real movers and shakers like Mother Teresa, Mohondas Gandhi, Jesus Christ, Steve Jobs, Henry Ford, Jane Goodall, Martin Luther King Jr., John D. Rockefeller, Adolph Hitler, and Karl Marx. For good or for bad, these people have changed the world in which we live.

Granted, many of these people had huge armies, massive companies, or dedicated

disciples but they all started alone with a single idea. If these people were connected by a common thread it would be the magnetic zeal they felt for their cause that had no choice but infect those around them. You are probably asking yourself, "What does the power of one have to do with me?" Plenty!

As Editor-in-Chief of *The Snapper*, I witnessed first hand the power one voice can have. I've read news stories and commentaries this year that have put the wheels of change in motion here on campus. Don't for a second think that just because you are one person and don't have access to a lobbyist that you can't make a difference.

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EXERCISE: How do you know you have magnetic zeal for a cause?

Answer the following questions with a yes or no.

- 1. Do you have a passionate desire to make a difference?**
 - 2. Do you fearlessly believe in a cause?**
 - 3. Do you work for a cause for the intrinsic satisfaction it brings?**
 - 4. Do you enjoy fighting the mediocre, the mundane and the status quo?**
 - 5. Does your significant other threaten to leave you?**
 - 6. Does an alarm or a calling get you out of bed every morning?**
 - 7. Do you even have a cause?**
- =====

In a world of mass communication via the Internet, it's practically free to call attention to your cause and see that change gets made. I cannot urge you all enough that if you feel some great injustice has been done or that something needs to be changed here at

Millersville don't complain about it to your frat brothers. Contact *The Snapper*. Write a letter-to-the-editor. Urge the news editor to cover the issue.

That's how change starts. But don't just stop there; you need to rally supporters and contact administrators. Always remember that just because change didn't happen the first, second, or even the third time that it can still

happen. Nothing worthwhile is easily done. One issue of *The Snapper* remains for the semester. I urge you write in, give voice to your cause and put the wheels of change in motion.

To learn more about the power of one visit

<http://www.oneearth.org>.

Or if you want to change the world, read

Guy Kawasaki's book Rules for Revolutionaries.

Contributors

“To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism,
to steal ideas from many is research.”

- *Anonymous.*

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Photograph on page 73 provided by Adam Zurn

The Wildman logo designed by Joe McKim and Adam Zurn

Ideas

Kawasaki, Guy^{*}. *The Macintosh Way*. United States of America: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990.

Kawasaki, Guy[§]. *Rules For Revolutionaries*. New York: HarperBusiness, 1999.

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[§] See above.

Meet the Author

“I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

- Robert Frost, “*The Road Not Taken*”



Adam Zurn is a Technology Education major at Millersville University. Zurn has been an active member of *The Snapper*, the Millersville University student newspaper. During his tenure, he has held the positions of Commentary Editor, Webmaster, Advertising Manager, and Editor-In-Chief

When not writing, Adam enjoys pitting his mental against the stock market. He spends his summers traveling the United States looking for “signs of life.” Of course, the highlight of every summer includes the annual stay in the Adirondack mountains of upper New York state during the month of August with his close and extended family.

Other works by Zurn include *A Written Collection* and *Clearance: The Final Discount Anthology*.

Coming Soon—A new entertainment magazine serving the greater Lancaster County from the creative minds at Zurnco.