

THE BEHREND BEACON

published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

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•Letter Policy•

The *Beacon* encourages letters to the editor. Letters should include the address, phone number, semester standing and major of the writer. Writers can mail letters to behrcoll2@aol.com. Letters must be received no later than 5 p.m. Sunday for inclusion in that week's issue.

A VIEW FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE

Pass the gas mask

Things are tough right now. People we know are going off to fight enemies we don't know in countries we knew nothing about before Sept. 11. Manhattan is still a smoking mess. The stock market is all FUBAR. Anthrax is becoming more common than the common cold. And to top it all off, the Erie weather we know and love is getting up in our faces again.

What should we, John and Jane Q. American, be doing to alleviate the tension? Continue living.

Remember that Y2K phenomenon? People everywhere building bunkers, stockpiling canned soup, toilet paper, and gasoline, building mini-arsenals, withdrawing money from the bank and hiding it under the mattresses? And what happened when the clock struck midnight on Dec. 31, 1999?

The ball dropped and everyone sang that goofy song just like they did every other year. A few weirdos had to ring in the New Year 20 feet underground in three-foot thick cement-walled bomb shelters, drinking purified, distilled, stale water from big plastic jugs instead of bottled bubbly, but they still saw a new millennium come and go with only a small amount of confusion. Aside from having an abundance of canned soup, Ramen noodles, toilet paper, and Uzis, those people began the 21st century as they would begin any other year (except they had some extra storage space for packing away the holiday decor).

The same thing could very well happen in the current situation. People are rushing out to get gas masks for everyone in their family. Handgun sales have shot through the roof. Everyone's preparing for calamity, and quite possibly causing it in their hysteria.

Yes, anthrax is scary and unpredictable and becoming a more credible threat everyday. But what can we realistically do right now to counteract this threat? Are buying gas masks really the answer? We'd have to wear them every minute of the day for them to be effective. And unless we also purify every drop of water and morsel of food we take in, and scan every single item we come in contact with, those gas masks will only go so far.

If you see a big pile of white

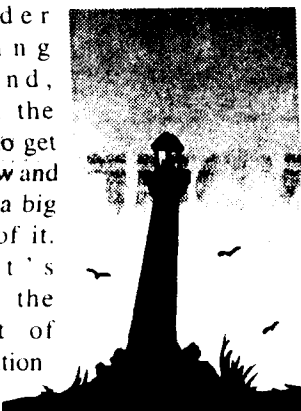
powder laying around, resist the urge to get a straw and snort a big load of it. That's about the extent of prevention you can realistically do right now. And while it's important to report questionable items, the various levels of authority are getting bombarded with reports of suspicious substances. So while you don't want to let something dangerous go unheeded, try not to jump on the paranoia bandwagon and call the FBI everyday when you check your mail.

And what good is a handgun gonna do you? Are you gonna shoot the letters containing anthrax? Or maybe carry that gun on a plane so you can be the hero on the next hijacked flight? Are the terrorists now going door to door, storming private homes? We don't even know who these people are, where they are, and where they are going to go - what possible good could a handgun do?

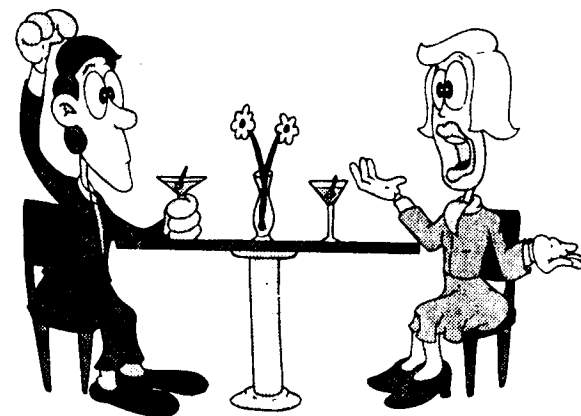
Our suggestion is to leave the gas mask at the army surplus store and to take the gun back to Kmart. Don't start refurbishing the bomb shelter - it's still stocked from two years ago. Just keep doing what you've always done. Ceasing normal operations is just what terrorists want Americans to do. If we instead stand firm and continue supporting our way of life, we have already taken a big step in defeating those who would see us fall.

So go out there and buy those Halloween decorations. Make those reservations for Spring Break. Run up those credit cards (the ones that aren't already maxed out). Just don't start buying commando gear unless you are planning on joining an anti-government organization in Montana. On second thought, don't buy the gear even if you are going out there.

Oh, and about that weather acting up...sorry, there really is nothing you can do except dig out the winter coat, snow shovel, and anti-freeze. Just like we've done every other October out here on the lake.



WHO WON A DATE WITH A BEACONIAN?



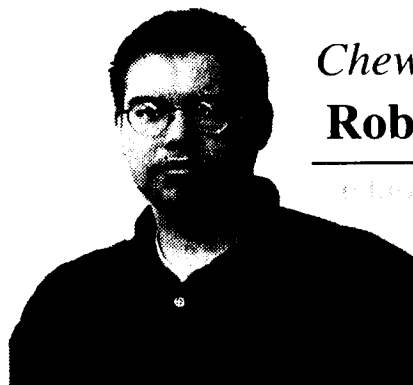
Was it Old Mr. Jenson, down at the mill? Was it that 40-year-old guy who shows up at every party who no one knows? Was it Jessica Rabbit? Do we know? Do you care? Find out in next week's heart-pounding edition of the Behrend Beacon.

The *Beacon* staff would like to thank all of those who participated.

All proceeds benefit the Twin Towers Orphan Fund

www.ttof.org/

Welcome to Behrend Technical School



Chew on this
Rob Wynne

Since last month, I am very happy to see people becoming more interested in global politics and the history of different cultures. I listen to people exchanging their viewpoints on foreign policy, President Bush, and terrorism. As tragic as the Sept. 11 attacks were, they have spawned a new interest in current affairs and opened the door of reality to many. My question is are we (as colleges and universities) going to take advantage of this recent spurt of interest to educate more people in the traditional college sense of inquiry? Or are we going to shift lanes to merely worrying about teaching students about business management and the model of communication?

I was very disappointed when the spring scheduling guide came out last week. Hoping to find a decent selection of upper-level history classes, I was given a whopping two selections to choose from. The same goes for political science, although there were a couple more options in that field. I gripe not because I do not like the subjects of the two history

classes, but because students and administrators do not see the value of studying the liberal arts degrees anymore.

Instead of learning about other cultures and historical events, people choose drone classes like marketing, management, or speech communications.

I am by no means criticizing the faculty and students involved with these programs, but I feel compelled to say that I would probably die of boredom sitting through four years of management principles or the model of communication. In my opinion, MIS, Management, Marketing, and Communications should be grouped together and listed as Common Sense Degrees (CSD) in the scheduling guide. Again I stress in my opinion that the purpose of attending a four-year institution has been defeated. But, of course, in the fast pace of the 21st century, a degree in communications or business will overshadow the other, more traditional liberal arts areas like English, philosophy, or history.

The reason I am facing off with some of these other programs on campus is because I have experience in their related fields. I worked in retail grocery for four years before moving to the restaurant business. The amount of information I gathered about business, profits, cost, management strategies and teamwork is far more valuable than my wilting away in a class vicariously sharing the

experiences of Bill Gates or Lee Iacocca. Why? It's experience. It's the real world, which is where ultimately all of us are going to end up someday (I hope).

Business, although quite a generic term, is a very large living entity of everyday life. If it's business that you want to learn about, then by all means start working for one. Take advantage of what's in front of you; work your way up in the business. I know that idea is a thing of the past, but the skills gained are invaluable. Or, for example, if it's a web-page designer that you want to be, spend a couple of hours each day tackling FrontPage and visiting Htmls. You are obviously spending the money, so why not spend the time inquiring in a subject area that will enlighten different parts of the mind or teach you something about humanity? To put it in business terms, time equals money. So why not spend both wisely. Build up an intellectual credit rating that will help you when you reach that point we college students refer to as the "real world."

Critical thinking, analytical skills, problem solving, and the interpretation of information are the fundamentals of any liberal arts education - they always have been. The key is to take these fundamentals and apply them to various facets of the workplace and home. It might just mean learning to get along with a family member or boss, or it might mean analyzing your own opinions and providing support for arguments that you pose. I find it very bothersome that Behrend does not even offer some kind of current issues class, a place to discuss with others

about the current state of the world we live in.

Again, we must ask ourselves what it really is that we're seeking by going through the turmoil and stress associated with college life. Are we just looking to find a job that provides those mediocre benefits and leaves you with enough cash each month to help pay that huge student loan? Sure, money is great. We Behrend students hope to have a decent savings account someday, but it isn't everything.

In his commencement address to Vassar College last year, author Stephen King offered the following thoughts: "You will continue to put on your pants one leg at a time no matter how many T-bills you have or how many shares of General Electric are in your portfolio. It's still going to be quarter-past getting late whether you tell the time on a Timex or Rolex. No matter how many credit cards you have, sooner or later things will begin to go wrong with the only three things you have which you can really call your own: your body, your spirit, and your mind."

With that in mind, ask yourself if there is anything you would like to know while you're here in college for a brief period of time. Don't be afraid to indulge in the humanities. When people ask me what it is that I study and I tell them history, their response is something like, "So what is it exactly that you're going to do with that major?" And although I do have a few ideas in mind, I proudly reply, "I don't know."

Wynne's column appears every three weeks.