

Where is your pride?

by Laura Borawski
Collegian Staff

There lurks on this campus a great lack of school spirit. We are all at fault in some way or another for this sad fact. I include myself in the "who is to blame," and am not proud of my failing to support my school more.

So many clubs, organizations, teams, and other activity groups are putting forth a great amount of effort to achieve a goal, and they receive little to no recognition whatsoever. I find that to be rather sad.

For example, women's softball and men's baseball are two of the events that receive such little support. (Although, maybe if the softball field had bleachers then more people would show up....) Tennis, soccer, volleyball; do they feel acknowledged? I've attended several basketball games in the past, and some of the games brought in a nice size group of spectators. However, I think that Eric Hall would have been

filled had more school pride been instilled in students, faculty, and others affiliated with Penn State. I commend those who have supported these sporting events, as I've missed many. I also commend those participating in such events. You deserve a lot more recognition.

You know what else is bad? Students complain about the way our Student Government and other student-directed groups are run and about decisions made by our student body. I'm willing to bet that these students don't take the time to do a little research or even to find out who the candidates for SGA, SOC, SPC, LOC, or other groups are when election time comes around. It's safe to assume then that these students either vote for people who they know very little about politically, or they simply don't vote at all. I don't think it's fair, nor does it make any sense for people to complain about issues they could have some control over, but were too damn lazy to do anything about it.

Voting is definitely one of these issues.

Students and faculty involved in theater productions here on campus should also be recognized by a larger audience. They all work very hard in order



to entertain. It's kind of difficult for them to entertain us when no one shows up to support their efforts.

Guest speakers in our Lecture Series, performers in Reed exhibiting varieties of talent, entertainment at Bruno's, and anything else that's happening-

do we take the time to attend such events? These aren't advertised in our mailboxes or all over the walls in every building on campus for our health. (Unless a Ph.D. is speaking some night in Reed.)...

I don't play sports now, in fact, it's been quite a while since I've played--and it shows. Anyway, I can remember all the way back to grade school when I played basketball. I started at center, and I absolutely loved to play. I also loved it when I could look out into the crowd and see familiar faces watching me on the court. I felt special, and I knew that the people who showed up really cared. The cheerleaders shouted and jumped around, and our bulldog mascot ran up and down the sidelines. The nervousness I felt was welcomed, as it was more of a feeling of excitement or anticipation. I also remember how it felt inside when hardly anyone showed up. I felt that my performance mattered very little, since no one gave a flying hoot any way. I knew I wanted

to do my best and try to win, but it just wasn't the same when spectators were scattered and I could play connect-the-dots with their heads.

I think we all need to remember that even if we aren't the primary participants in any given event, our attendance plays an important role. If we aren't involved and aren't satisfied with the way things are done, we should quit our complaining and get involved. Our care and support could be a determining factor in the success of an event or activity. As members of Behrend, we must remember that we have to work as a team. We all have a part to play in order to keep this team a successfully functioning unit.

If I have learned anything thus far in my life that has really meant something to me, it would have to be that we were put on this earth to achieve, not to sit back and watch the world go by. Try this on for size and then maybe complaints will be minimized; don't just float through life, make some waves....

Mutant constipated worms

by Dave Barry
Syndicated Columnist

Mutant constipated worms. It's a topic we all THINK about a lot; but what do we really KNOW about it?

The answer, I am pleased to report, is: more every day, thanks to the efforts of a professor named Jim Thomas in the Genetics Department of the University of Washington in Seattle. Thomas has an entire laboratory devoted to studying irregularity in worms. He is the world's leading authority on this topic. I say this with no small amount of pride, because he graduated from my alma mater, Haverford College (motto: "Small, But Weird").

I learned of Thomas' work through one of his alert graduate students, Creg Darby, who sent me a lengthy scientific paper that Thomas had written. In an accompanying letter, Creg wrote: "Notice that Jim was not merely content to describe how worms poop. Oh no. We geneticists are a twisted lot, because we LOVE mutants, so Jim went and zapped worms with nasty chemicals to make MUTANT WORMS THAT ARE CONSTIPATED. Really, it's all there in the paper. I know you can't

understand most of it, so I have highlighted the word 'constipated'."

Creg who is not afraid to use capitalization for desired emphasis added that "JIM'S RESEARCH IS FUNDED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT! HE IS SPENDING TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS OF TAXPAYERS' MONEY TO MAKE CONSTIPATED WORMS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Let me state that, as a taxpayer, I would much rather see my tax money spent on mutant constipated worms than on the senate Judiciary Committee. Not that there is such a huge difference.

But as a journalist, I feel a fundamental responsibility to you, the public, to check out stories that involve the use of your tax money for scientific projects in cities that have good microbrewery beer. So I went to Seattle.

Thomas' office is located in the university's Health Sciences Building, which is very scientific. I say this because of the bulletin boards. Back in the '60s, when I was in college, our bulletin boards were covered with announcements of festive social events such as dances, concerts and the violent overthrow of the U.S. government. Whereas the first bulletin board I saw in the

Health Sciences Building had the following announcement posted on it: "A KERATIN 14 MUTATIONAL HOT SPOT FOR EPIDERMOLYSIS BULLOSA SIMPLEX-DOWLING-MEARA."

I wasn't sure that it was medically safe for a layperson to even LOOK at these words, so I scurried on up to Jim



Thomas' laboratory. It was cluttered with scientific items such as petri dishes, beakers, test tubes, radioactivity warnings, deadly chemicals and graduate students eating their lunch. I did not immediately see any worms; Professor Thomas explained that the ones he studies, called *Caenorhabditis elegans*, are only one millimeter long. (To give yourself an idea how long

that is, hold your thumb and forefinger one millimeter apart.)

A LOT of scientists study these worms. They (the scientists) even have their own magazine, and they regularly gather at events such as the West Coast Worm Meeting. One news report begins: "Almost all worm people in Japan assembled in Sendai on 29th November ..."

Jim Thomas loves his worms.

"We think they are the coolest organisms in the world," he told me, and his corps of graduate students nodded in proud agreement.

What makes these worms especially cool for constipation studies is (1) You can see right through them, and (2) They poop every 45 seconds. I know this because I saw them myself. First Thomas showed me a videotape of one of them in action.

"OK, watch this," he said, as the worm contracted itself. "He's getting ready ..."

The worm made a sudden motion.

"POOP!" said Thomas, thrusting his fist forward in a football-fan-like gesture of triumph.

Next Thomas led me to a microscope, where I saw some live worm action. Basically

what these worms do all the time is crawl around in dishes full of food, eating, pooping and having sex. It is guy heaven. All they need is tiny TVs with remote controls.

The male worms, by the way, are total sex fiends. They try to do it with everything they bump into, including other males. Sometimes they try to mate with their OWN HEADS (a graduate student told me this is called "wanking").

I also looked at some mutant constipated worms, who were bloated and definitely not as lively. They reminded me of people in laxative commercials.

PHARMACIST WORM: You said it, Mr. Feemley! I haven't pooped in over 90 seconds!

I asked Jim Thomas if there was any possibility that his research would ever, in a zillion years, have any practical benefits for humans. He couldn't think of any offhand, but he allowed that it might conceivably be possible.

That is good enough for me. I'm glad that we're funding this research. In fact, I would strongly support spending more money in this area, as well as any scientific endeavor that has the potential to benefit mankind. And here I am thinking of the microbreweries.