

The Behrend College Collegian

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Former UA fraternity member remembers rush hazing

By Dustin Rowles
Arkansas Traveler

A few weeks ago, some guy in a fraternity at LSU drank himself to death. I mean, he actually drank so much alcohol that he fell over and died. I don't know the circumstances that actually led to this drinking binge, but I can't figure there's any reason in the world to drink as much as this guy did.

Unless, of course, you're in a fraternity.

I was in a fraternity my freshman year here at the UA. I'm not going to say which fraternity it was, mostly because I don't want anyone associating me with it, and I'm quite sure the relationship is mutual. But it was the greatest lesson in humility I have ever experienced.

It's a lesson no one should ever have to endure.

I don't want to group all these fraternities together. There were some good ones, I'm sure, and there were many of them that didn't haze their pledges. But I spoke with a lot of the

pledges from other fraternities that year, and from what I could gather, they went through the same things I did.

It wasn't that we were beat or that we had the senior members enslave us or anything. The hazing that we endured was strictly mental, but to be quite honest, I would've preferred mowing the lawn at 4 a.m. every morning than what I went through.

Mostly it was the peer pressure. I mean, I was a freshman from a modest-sized town. I had drunk alcohol maybe once or twice in my life, and I know I wasn't alone among the pledge group of my fraternity or any other.

These guys would round up beer, vodka, whiskey, and whatever they could find and just force it on us. It was like we supplied the entertainment for these fellas. They'd get kicks out of watching us stumble and retch, and most of the time, they would take advantage of our inebriation (I was once coerced into buying a round of tacos for an entire restaurant).

And for those who didn't drink, they were more or less shunned. I

mean, sure, the older guys would say, "Hey man, that's cool. You don't have to drink or anything. We're not going to force it on you, and we're not going to think any less of you or anything."

But, the younger guys could tell that they lost a few points of respect by turning down a shot of Crown Royal. After the second or third week, most everyone would just break down and chug the stuff. And the guys around us would just cheer and rave like we'd won the World Series single-handedly.

This became positive reinforcement for heavy drinking.

There is one incident that I remember quite well. It was one of those big steps in initiation that would supposedly "make or break" my membership. The risk-management guy would talk to all of us pledges and tell us not to be scared because hazing wasn't allowed in our fraternity. That was always what he'd say right before we got hazed. I mean, it gave us the impression that everything was dandy and nothing was going to happen. It eased our minds for the suffering we were about to endure.

So after the risk-management guy gave us this speech, we'd all get blindfolded and shoved into a car. All the guys would be carrying on about the horrible episode that we were about to endure. This particular instance, we were led to believe that we were about to be taken to some petting zoo and be forced to make it with billy goats. True story.

We finally arrived at our destination, after what seemed like hours. We got hauled up on top of some cave, I think it was at Devil's Den. And they'd single us out and make us recite the Greek alphabet and some crazy creeds about brotherhood. If we screwed it up, they'd scream in our faces like we were in boot camp. And keep in mind, we were still blindfolded at the top of a cliff.

After the older guys had saturated the opportunities to humiliate us in

that situation, we'd get hauled back into the car and driven, blindfolded still, back to some bar where we were forced to drink to the point of absolute sickness.

I remember, too, after the actual initiation, we were hauled over to Hooters to celebrate. In one of the most embarrassing incidents of my life, I was coerced up on top of a table and sang to my Hooters girls. It was one of many times as a fraternity member that I was ashamed to be a man. After 10 or 12 too many hangovers and near-death experiences, I quit the fraternity. I didn't last two full semesters, and I really didn't care to continue. It wasn't worth the hell I was going through, and to boot, I had to pay for my suffering.

To some people, these fraternities are like religions. It's something they need to rely on, something to have faith in, and they will go to any lengths to defend it.

This "brotherhood" means more to them than some of their families. More importantly, and the reason I joined, it's the perfect opportunity to meet the ladies. I'll admit, though, I failed miserably.

Trying to get out of a fraternity is an entirely different column, one I choose not to go into. I'll just say, it's almost like quitting a gang. You either have to be murdered or get married. I, myself, faked an engagement. And even after that, I had several guys call me and try to coax me out of it. They swore, even after I quit, that I'd always be a brother to them.

Four years later, I've spoken to one of my former "brothers" since.

I want to reiterate, again, my fraternity may have been an exception. I don't want to lump the rest of the fraternities on campus together.

Besides, I did gain a couple of very valuable abilities from my fraternity. 1) I can drink half of a bottle of vodka without puking and, 2) more importantly, I know not to drink a half bottle of vodka.

Editorial
A PC monopoly?

Looking at the computers labs at Behrend, one would think that PCs are the only computers that students would need to use. This, however, is not the case. Numerous companies and organizations use Macintosh compatible computers everyday.

This includes the Collegian, as well as a great number of newspapers and magazines around the country. Experience with Macintoshes are a great asset to a person seeking a job in today's market. Though they make up three percent of the computer market, they are used a majority of the time for all graphic design applications, including desktop publishing.

The virtual monopoly of the Windows NT operating system on the Behrend campus denies students the opportunity to become familiar with other platforms such as Unix, OS/2, or even Windows 3.X or 95. All of these are still in use in the workplace.

The importance of being familiar with PC's is not disputed, but by excluding Macintoshes, a significant portion of computer users are being ignored. A Mac using prospective student touring

the computer lab is discouraged, when he chooses the PC lab. Despite some previous statements that Macintoshes are predominantly engineering and business majors, there are who are not in these majors. Just because they may be in the minority, does not mean that let's better just to exclude them.

The only students who have access to a Mac on this campus are those who own one. If something should go wrong with their computer, turning to the computer lab for help; as PC owners can do, will only lead to frustration. A Mac user at this campus, when calling the lab for assistance, will most often receive nothing but a brush off, and the occasional rude comment.

Despite the computer lab's attitude, Macs are not obsolete. The only way to change this is to contact administrators here and at University Park, though the use of Macs is declining at University Park as well. Judging from the attitudes of the computer lab consultants and administrators, Macintosh users may become an even rarer breed at Behrend.

Eye on Erie
Vote in local elections

by Anne Rajotte
managing editor

Next Tuesday, local citizens will be heading to the polls. The number of Behrend students voting with year round residents will be extremely low. Many students aren't from Erie, and many students just aren't registered to vote, and this accounts for the low numbers. The fact that this is just a local election, and not presidential or gubernatorial, results in low turnout among all residents of Erie County and Harborcreek Township.

This year there are races for Erie City Council, Superior Court, Township Supervisors, Erie Mayor, and Erie County Sheriff. These positions affect residents, including students, immensely. For example, Donna Mindek, a Republican running for Harborcreek township supervisor, is working to extend the public water system past Behrend to the interstate. If this happens in the near future, businesses like fast food restaurants will be able to move in near Behrend, drastically changing student life.

Other local politicians affect Behrend students. Local laws and ordinances sometimes have as much or more effect on individuals than state or federal laws. Local government is

closer and more responsive to the people. Traffic laws, school board decisions and budget and tax decisions impact the day to day life of residents.

There are four universities in Erie County and students make up a significant portion of the population. They are not, however, a substantial part of the voter population. In a small local election, students can make a tremendous impact. If students don't vote, this impact is diminished.

Many Behrend students and college students in general, seem to be fairly apathetic when it comes to politics, especially local elections. It could be lack of knowledge about the candidates, or it may be that students aren't even aware that there are elections. Whatever the reason, these elections are far more important than many people imagine. Merely reading the paper can give voters the insight they need to make an informed decision.

These local elections affect everyone in Erie County. Most students care about their surroundings and local issues, but may not be aware that they can vote here. Local elections are an opportunity to let Erie know what its college students are dealing with.

Global Warming: U.S. Immobilized by Propaganda

By Donella H. Meadows—Special to the Los Angeles Times

Listening to climate-change talk in the United States and in Europe, I have to wonder whether we're all living on the same planet.

Several European governments have detailed plans for cutting their economies' 1990 fossil fuel use (hence emissions of the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide) by 15 percent or 20 percent by 2005.

Meanwhile, President Clinton has generously offered to get U.S. emissions back down to their 1990 level — twice as high per capita as the European level — by 2008 or 2010 or maybe 2012.

The European media don't ask commentators like me whether global warming is real. They take seriously the consensus of the 2,400 scientists who participate in the ongoing global forum called the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

They ask "What can be done?" and "Why is the United States such a laggard on this issue?"

Meanwhile, American media seem to be mesmerized by a handful of scientific doubters, most of them funded by coal or oil companies, utilities or right-wing think tanks. The doubters point to every uncertainty in climate science, while ignoring the certainties.

Not a scientist in the world doubts that carbon dioxide traps heat or that burning oil, coal or gas releases carbon dioxide. No one questions the measurements that show carbon dioxide increasing in the atmosphere. Starting at about 270 parts per million 100 years ago, its concentration is now above 360 parts per million. The global climate conference in Kyoto, Japan, this December will decide whether we should try to level off at 450, 750 or 1,000 parts per million, all of which would require sig-

nificant reductions of current greenhouse gas emissions and all of which are almost sure to cause major changes in the climate.

But Americans still are told there might not be a problem.

American industry just beamed into Washington \$200,000 worth of radio spots in which a "Harry and Louise" couple complain that protecting the climate could raise gasoline price by 50 cents a gallon.

Europeans pay four times as much for gas as we do without whining about their sacred right to drive minivans. They compete on the global market while driving high-mileage cars and riding attractive, convenient, efficient mass transit systems. Europe subsidizes trains and trams; America subsidizes highways and parking lots.

Last month at a business conference in Salzburg, Austria, European executives were waving around a

best-selling German book, "Faktor Vier" (Factor Four), by Ernst von Weizsacker of the Wuppertal Institute in Germany and Amory and Hunter Lovins of Rocky Mountain Institute in the United States. The book shows how industrial society could get four times as much productivity out of energy and materials with known technologies at costs that are not only affordable, but probably negative.

That is to say, we could run our economy while reducing our assault on the atmosphere by 75 percent. Or double economic output while cutting emissions in half. "Faktor Vier" is crammed with case studies of companies, buildings, towns, banks, cars and farms that have reduced energy or resource consumption, typically by that factor of four. In almost every case, not only have energy and material costs gone down, but labor productivity, comfort and convenience have gone up.

The European executives were asking: How do we all do this? They talked of innovative technologies that could get Europe to "Factor 10" - a 90 percent reduction, which is what it would actually take, worldwide, to stabilize the climate.

In America, the Global Climate Information Project, a coalition of business associations, has budgeted \$13 million for a public relations blitz to convince Americans that reducing fossil fuel consumption would cause economic collapse.

Europeans, who are exposed to more education and less PR than Americans, question that claim. It assumes, they point out, that the only way to cut energy use is through massive taxes. It doesn't count the savings not only from buying less energy, but also from having less air pollution, fewer oil spills, better health, less dependency on foreign supplies — not to mention a more stable climate. It assumes that technology will freeze, rather than shift to greater efficiencies and new energy sources. It is, in short, a piece of propaganda.

The proposed Kyoto treaty will be unfair, U.S. industry says, because it will require us to sacrifice, but not

Mexico, China, India or other low-income countries. The Europeans I talk to believe that those countries, whose fossil fuel use per person is a fraction of ours but rising fast, should be helped not to follow our wasteful technological path. The way to do that, they think, is to demonstrate the new path ourselves.

Before he boldly promised the status quo, Bill Clinton made another speech in which he said the United States could reduce greenhouse gas emissions "by 20 percent tomorrow with technology that is already available at no cost." He's probably too optimistic about the "tomorrow" part - it would take a few years - but not nearly optimistic enough about the 20 percent. In Europe, they're talking about wasting 20 percent or 50 percent or 90 percent less energy and helping the environment and moving away from the dirty technologies of the past century into the clean ones of the next century.

Why on Earth don't we try to beat the Europeans to it?

Meadows is an adjunct professor of environmental studies at Dartmouth College.

