

Letters to the editor

Greek sponsorship of Brownie Mary

Dear Editors,
I am writing in response to the article featuring Brownie Mary in the November 13th issue of the Collegian. The Collegian wrote a thorough article about the concert, but failed to include a major component: how was this all possible?

Thanks to the hard work of Shanna Cotti and Tim Lasko, Presidents of Theta Phi Alpha and Tau Kappa Epsilon, respectively, this second annual event took place at Behrend on November 7th, 1997. Beginning last April, these organizations petitioned SGA for funds to support this event. When sufficient funds were not provided, the members of Theta Phi Alpha and Tau Kappa Epsilon fund-raised all summer and even dug into their own pockets to bring this show to Behrend again.

In all reality, we were very lucky to even have Brownie Mary come to our campus, especially now since they have signed with The Blackbird/Sire Productions. And it was obvious to anyone who attended the concert that it was sponsored by Theta Phi Alpha and Tau Kappa Epsilon.

It is hard enough for Greek organizations to keep a positive image on this campus and it is even more difficult when the things we do go unrecognized.

I regret to say that this is not the first time that Greek contributions have been overlooked, but hopefully it will be the last.

Sincerely,
Amanda Horner
Vice-President
Theta Phi Alpha

ASA's 10th anniversary

Dear Editor,
An article was recently submitted to the Collegian about my sorority's ten-year anniversary. This article, for some reason, was not printed. I feel that there is a lot of bad press about Greeks. This celebration could show that Greek life can be a very positive experience.

Alpha Sigma Alpha, Epsilon Theta Chapter is celebrating our ten-year anniversary this fall. My sorority is very active in the community. We are involved in Adopt-A-Highway, Special Olympics, and the MS Walk. We have grown over the past ten years in spirit and sisterhood. Involvement in the sorority teaches time management and leadership skills. It gives confidence to the women involved.

Greek life is what you make of it. There are many stereotypes of Greek life. I admit that I had many preconceived ideas of what Greek life was about. But I found out for myself that joining a sorority or fraternity does not mean you are "buying your friends." It means so much to those involved. I encourage those of you who "lump" Greeks into a party-animal, don't-care-about-life category to look a little deeper. You may be surprised at what you will find.

Perhaps not printing an article about a positive Greek event is a result of the ignorance of people. There have been articles printed in the past that offer a distorted, one-sided view of Greek life. Now the burden is put on the Greek population to clear this image. By not printing our article about our celebration, the Collegian is creating yet another obstacle that we must overpass, rather than providing an outlet for our voices to be heard.

Sincerely,
Sally Pfeufer, 05 Accounting
Alpha Sigma Alpha Sorority

Editors Note: The press release submitted by Alpha Sigma Alpha about their tenth anniversary was printed on the Calendar page of the October 30th issue of the Collegian.



New nanny verdict makes no sense

By Kathleen Parker

To the list of where we were when we heard the news of JFK's assassination, O.J.'s verdict and Diana's crash, we now may add the nanny's new verdict.

I was standing Monday in the magazine section of Books A Million, watching the television that runs continually for the sake of news junkies away from home. Around me swarmed others, men and women interrupted from their browsing by the breaking news. As anticipated, Superior Court Judge Hiller B. Zobel reduced Louise Woodward's conviction from second-degree murder to involuntary manslaughter. Zobel was going to let her walk.

Woodward, the 19-year-old British nanny, whom a jury 11 days earlier had convicted of murdering 8-month-old Matthew Eappens by shaking him and banging his head, was free. Zobel reduced her sentence from a mandatory life term to time served. In other words, the 279 days she spent behind bars awaiting trial was sufficient compensation for little Matthew's unfortunate demise.

"Unbelievable," came the chorus from bystanders in my immediate circle of strangers.

Unbelievable, too, has been the bizarre public response to Woodward's trial, conviction and sentencing. Brits and Americans have been as divided in their appraisal of the case as blacks and whites were in the O.J. Simpson trial. In the latter, a majority of whites felt the evidence convicted Simpson of murder, fair and square, while a majority of blacks saw a police conspiracy.

In this judicial round, Americans saw evidence that Woodward caused sufficient harm to her helpless charge to kill him. Yes, she has a cute, round

face and a British accent, for which Americans are incorrigible suckers. But the prosecution established, apparently adequately for a jury, that Woodward was responsible for the baby's death.

Brits, who hugged and kissed each other upon word of Zobel's ruling, saw only the sweet, neighbor-girl they all thought they knew. She couldn't have meant to hurt that baby, they said, and so she should be released.

Zobel's reasoning is as scary as the Brits' is baffling. In his 16-page ruling, the judge said he was compelled by the evidence to reduce the verdict:

"I believe that the circumstances in which Defendant acted were characterized by confusion, inexperience, frustration, immaturity and some anger, but not malice (in the legal sense)," Zobel wrote.

Well, no joke. She was all of those things, apparently, but that doesn't excuse her actions. Plenty of killers are confused, frustrated, angry, immature. Susan Smith, whose two sons drowned in a South Carolina lake when she allowed her car to slide down a boat ramp with them inside, was also confused, frustrated, angry and immature. She's spending the rest of her life behind bars. Bad accent? Not cute enough? A tad on the rural side, she was not quite nanny material.

Evidence in Smith's trial suggested she had no malice toward her children. She loved them, by all accounts, and continues to express remorse from her prison cell. Woodward, by contrast, has never shown any remorse nor even any interest in the baby she supposedly cared for.

In a recent interview with Larry King, the Eappens, both physicians,

said Woodward never called the hospital to ask how Matthew was doing. The baby lived five days after Woodward's emergency call to Matthew's mother to say the baby was unresponsive and that she thought Matthew might have choked on his vomit.

Matthew hadn't choked on his vomit, and Woodward knew it. She lied. So maybe she's not malicious, but hindsight tells us she's deceitful. Woodward also knew her actions, whatever they were, caused Matthew's condition and subsequent death.

An innocent person would have been at the hospital, praying for that child, begging forgiveness for not paying close enough attention when "the accident" occurred, hanging onto any word that the child might improve. Woodward never did any of those things. She never spoke to the Eappens again. Young and confused, or guilty and afraid?

I can understand the legal distinction between involuntary manslaughter and second-degree murder. The latter requires malice, which doesn't seem to apply to Woodward's case. Reducing her sentence is defensible. But to let this woman walk because she is young and confused effectively nullifies a precious life that ended painfully and inexcusably.

By his "merciful" ruling, Zobel sends a bizarre message to parents and caregivers. Hired sitters shouldn't kill babies entrusted to them, but if they must -- better they be cute, young and watch how they speak ye olde mother tongue.

Kathleen Parker, an Orlando Sentinel columnist, can be reached at

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Problems of choice

By Gary R. Galluzzo=Special to The Washington Post

The privilege for parents to choose their child's education is probably an inevitability in the not-too-distant future. As the advocates of vouchers and charter schools pile up more survey data, it is not too hard to conclude that choice is in the future of our education system. This is not just because of dissatisfaction with the performance of our nation's public schools, but also because education just might be society's last outpost of non-choice and that is anachronistic.

But just because choice is a feature of late-20th century American society, does that mean it is the right thing to do when it comes to educating our children?

I have a beautiful 14-year-old daughter who attends our neighborhood school. Every day she meets the other middle-schoolers in the neighborhood and takes the bus to the same school. The only choice my wife and I had in this came when we chose where to buy our house.

Like any parent, I want what is best for my daughter. I might even like to choose where she goes to school, but current conditions make it such that I cannot. Is that

one or two teachers, can they choose different ones in October? Teacher choice sounds a bit far-fetched, but why not?

What about parents who don't particularly like standardized testing for their children, another of the latest cures to our education system. Some parents won't want their children taking those state or national tests, but they like the school curriculum and the teachers. Can they choose not to have their children participate in the testing? Is this choice available to them? A good advocate of choice should say yes.

Can the school that receives state and federal funds choose not to give the state and national tests to attract more students? Can it choose that and still remain accredited?

If the answer to each question is yes, then we are approaching a system of education in which choice is the basic value. Before that, we all loosely subscribed to a curriculum as the basic value. But if choice is our future, then what is it that makes our nation or any state in the Union a commonwealth? What will bind us together other than the pursuit of choice?

In this new public marketplace of the commonwealth, our greatest strength will be the fact that nothing holds us together other than the

What happens when individual, ideological pursuit is the game, and our children are the pieces we move about?

bad?

Certainly, schools supported by vouchers or charter schools provide opportunities to explore alternative arrangements, which are sorely needed on the education landscape. The idea of choice also provides options beyond selecting the school, and they compel me to wonder where the choosing stops.

Most discussions of choice are focused on parents choosing the school. But if I can choose the school, I should be able to choose the curriculum. It is easy to imagine poor parents having the freedom to choose the school in the wealthier part of town. But what if they don't like the curriculum offered there? What if they don't like the more concept-driven approach to learning in that particular school? Or, what if they don't like the core curriculum at the local school? A choice advocate might tell them to keep looking -- the marketplace eventually will create the school they want.

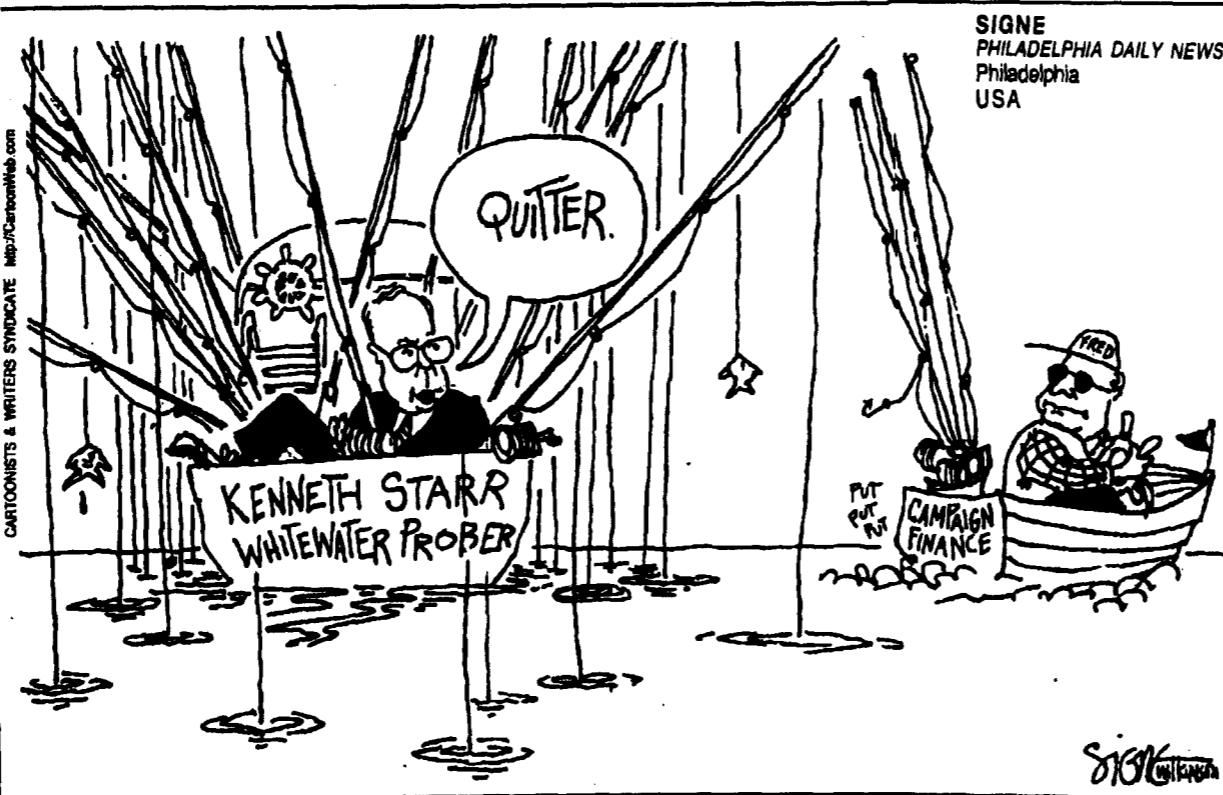
If parents can choose the school, can they choose the teachers with whom their children will study? And if they find that they don't like

freedom to choose to be together. What then happens to our definition of democracy or a democratic republic? What happens when individual, ideological pursuit is the game, and our children are the pieces we move about?

Nothing would make me happier than to see the resurrection of public education in America. But it was based on a kind of naive kinship of the '40s and '50s that told us we were one before it told me I was one. Those days are gone, and in our contemporary society and economy, school choice is one result.

I have little reason to believe choice will cure the ills of our education system in the way its true believers tell us it will. Choice will only create a new set of problems to solve in a new arena, and it too will be as tyrannical as the current monopoly on compulsory education without choice, just in different ways.

Galluzzo is dean of George Mason University's Graduate School of Education.



Got something to say? Submit a letter to the editor by emailing us at

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