

## The Behrend College Collegian

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

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**Letter Policy:** The Collegian encourages letters to the editor. Letters should include the address, phone number, semester standing and major of the writer. Writers can mail their letters to behrcoll2@aol.com. Letters must be received no later than 5pm Tuesday for inclusion in that week's issue.

## EDITORIAL

# Alternatives to housing campout

Last Monday evening, many of Behrend's on campus residents camped out on the stairs in Dobbins Dining Hall to ensure that they would have the first chance at housing. Some of the students arrived as early as 6:30 pm with sleeping bags and pillows in hand. Around fifty students stayed all night on the wet, slushy steps, waiting for the housing office to open at 8 am the next morning.

There is no reason to collect the housing contracts in Dobbins. The conditions the students endure are completely unnecessary. They aren't catered into the computer immediately and there is nothing done with the contracts that seems to necessitate the use of the housing office. It seems that a place like the Reed Commons or any place with adequate heat and space would be an option for collecting the contracts. Students would be a little more comfortable and might even get a few hours of sleep.

Another possible change in the system is the day of the week the contracts are collected. It is true that many students go home on the weekends, but these same students will stay a weekend and line up for popular concert tickets, such as Garth Brooks. In light of how important housing is to students, staying on campus for the weekend doesn't seem to be an unreasonable request. In addition, students with 8 am classes either have to miss class or miss out on the best housing if contracts are collected on weekday mornings.

Until the system of collecting housing contracts is reevaluated, the location of the event has to change. All of the students had to make it through the next day of classes with little or no sleep. It isn't fair to students to expect them to stay awake all night, sitting on dirty steps, merely to get housing.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

I'm writing this letter in response to an article in the last Collegian by Pat Morrison of the L.A. Times regarding abortion. Frankly, I'd rather not start any laborious debates over the rights or wrongs of abortion, but rather, I'd like to discuss why in fact this article was presented in the Collegian without an opposing viewpoint, or at the very least an article that was a bit less...well prejudiced? After all, isn't branding nearly 40% of those Americans who happen to be Pro-Life as "zealots", or "self righteous" a bit extreme? Let's imagine what the response would be had you published an article branding Pro-Choicers as "baby killers", or "liberal prigs"? Certainly neither viewpoint is very pleasant.

My point is that if the Collegian decides to print such rather distasteful articles in the future, that it would

at least publish an opposing viewpoint in attempting to maintain a semblance of fair journalism. Of course an even more desirable option would be to simply choose articles from both ends of the political spectrum that avoid such blatant prejudicial statements as the ones mentioned above. An increased effort on the part of the Collegian to be a bit more discriminating in the future would be greatly appreciated by those Pro-Lifers who don't wish to be branded as zealots, and those Pro-Choicers who don't wish to be seen as bigots. Hopefully the Collegian's future attempts at political "journalism" will be a bit more successful.

Sincerely,  
Micah Merrick  
02 Finance

The piece referred to above was a guest editorial by a writer for the LA Times.

# The stigma is always on trial

By Park Dietz. Special to Los Angeles Times

Schizophrenia is a terrible disease that can profoundly alter a person's perception of reality. In the paranoid form of the illness, the patient may experience frightening hallucinations or delusions. A family member, a neighbor or a passing stranger may be perceived as a malevolent impostor, a threatening robot or an attacking demon. Some patients believe that their thoughts are being broadcast to others, that transmitters have been placed in their bodies or that they are under electronic surveillance wherever they go. A burnt slice of toast, an unlucky number on the license plate of a passing car or a frown from the boss are not only taken as intentional harassment, but are cited as clues to

the identity of a persecutor and evidence of the conspirator's omnipotence.

For many patients, it is like living in a horror film. Although most manage to avoid lethal violence, as many as 10 percent ultimately kill themselves, often to escape an intolerable existence, and a smaller percentage kill others, often to protect themselves from a perceived attack.

A young security guard baby-sitting his 3-year-old nephew hallucinated that the boy had transformed into a red-eyed vampire. Terrified by what he saw and believing he was killing a vampire, he killed his sleeping nephew, then tried to protect himself from continued attack by cutting the heart from the body and burning

## A Day in the Life

# Improving the academic building

BRIAN ASHBAUGH

Behrend's most recent addition to higher learning, the Academic Building, is set to undergo renovations sometime in the near future. The project, approved only in principle, is on hold pending the availability of funds and no date is set for initiation or completion. As of now, the building, opened in the fall of 1994, has the look and feel of a federal corrections facility on the inside.

The current plan is to make the building more socially appealing to students, faculty, staff, and the like. Among the changes being considered are: formica counter tops opposite the vending machines, display cases containing campus news, and tables and chairs near the coffee machine. One of the problems being addressed is the inclusion of an on-campus phone. Currently, the only phones in the building are pay phones with the nearest on-campus phone is in the Reed Building. Also, the Academic Building is in dire need of color and decoration. Attempts will be made to display student artwork on the walls and hang banners from the rafters.

To socialize the students between classes, more benches will be placed throughout the interior and plans are being made to build a conservatory style enclosure outside the library with refreshments served. A new directory will also be drawn-up to include the names and office numbers

evident considering the pale blue, cinder block walls and the lack of social atmosphere. With an ever expanding student population, the changes will be welcome to current and future students. Hopefully, these renovations will lead to more improvements around campus such as better drain-

outside. This condition only adds to the banality of the learning process and decreased motivation can result.

When the money becomes available and the project commences, the students, faculty, and staff inside the building should be rather pleased with the results. A new and refurbished Academic Building and a sense of belonging will hopefully be evident. But maybe this is only one step in the restructuring of campus. Prospective students will see that they will be given a Penn State education while having the solace of their local hang-out.

Sometimes, students are forced to accept the conditions they are given and deal with it accordingly. That is why this project takes on a new meaning. With the inclusion of students in the decision making process, our collective voice is heard. "Make my education as comfortable as possible." Congratulations to those who recognize this problem and are trying to look out for our best interests.

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of the faculty.

The idea for these renovations were deliberated last summer by a joint group of students, faculty, and staff. Included were students Shannon Haslett; Roxzana Kelly; Jim Carroll, head of MISC; and Rick Hart, head of the library; and faculty Dr. Roberta Salper, Director of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences; and Dr. Dean Baldwin, Professor of English. The need for these renovations are

age, parking lot repairs, and a climate controlled environment in Turnbull.

Unfortunately, architectural changes cannot be made to the Academic Building. There are many flaws in the construction of the building. Not necessarily structural flaws, but the facility is not conducive to learning. Most of the rooms do not have any windows. Professors could hold students in there for two weeks without any clue of what is going on

# Scandalous coverage?

By Geneva Overholser (c) 1998, The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Restrain yourselves! We don't care! Those were the feelings pouring through the phone into this office last week — a tumultuous week during which I found my own judgment differing somewhat from that of readers.

We don't care about President Clinton's sex life, said the callers. We knew he played around. Presidents often have had unsavory private lives. We care that the nation is in good shape. We're tired of these constant investigations, these constant attempts to bring him down.

"I'm just totally appalled. Who cares? Presidents fool around. Men fool around. Who cares? Let's focus on health, taxes, war," said one woman.

"It's been taken too far. Too much money has been spent on all these investigations. The U.S. is the laughingstock of other countries," said another. "The Post needs to be more responsible. Everybody knew Clinton had these troubles before he came into office. Yet this got more coverage than the pope in Cuba, a much more historic event."

"I'm calling for a little bit of reason and rationalism to stop this hysteria. Would somebody grow up somewhere? We're desperate for adult leadership," said a third.

"I am upset with The Post disrespecting the president and the people of this country," said one woman. "Why do you keep worrying about his private life? Why are you trying to bring down the president?"

"The media... are destroying this country, destroying democracy and destroying the Constitution just to get at Clinton. And we're fed up with it. FED UP! FED UP!" said another.

"Enough is enough. I think he is doing a good job. This is ridiculous. Enough is enough. And the independent counsel should get off the man's

back. Enough is enough!" one man said.

"It is time the citizens spoke up: I believe what is going on is a witch hunt by the Republicans and also by Kenneth Starr, who has brought nothing forward in Whitewater, and he's simply wasting the taxpayers' money," said one woman. "And he had no business giving the lady a device for entrapment. This is ridiculous. It's just ridiculous!"

"President Kennedy had more problems sexually — Marilyn Monroe and all his other affairs that were never publicized until after he left office! Can't the media wait until after the president leaves office to bring out his dirty laundry? We want to hear about the real issues, not garbage like this. Monitor yourself, please."

"I'm calling from Canada, and I'm really shocked at the way the news or even your justice system is working with President Clinton. Kenneth Starr

— I think you can call him the "Star Chamber" — he's out to get the president, and I think it's pretty shocking."

And this is just a sampling. I have to say, I sometimes left these conversations feeling that people were driven overmuch by an unwillingness to confront this most unpleasant possibility: That the president may have conducted an affair with a 21-year-old intern in the White House and then somehow told her to lie about it. This is not only a shocking possibility — it is surely news. And the story was not insubstantial; there was much to go on. There were numerous anonymous sources, but they were testable — assertions of fact, not judgment or characterization.

Still, I share the sick feeling with which readers received the story. And giving ear to their reactions is critical. We should focus on the questions readers raise: What is this about besides sex? Is it right that Starr is han-

dling it? And we should heed the calls for restraint. When a story has about it the quality of a dam bursting, it's all the more essential to apply critical judgments continually. For example, it seems that additional women's names may continue to emerge; decisions about their use should be made with great care.

A final note of interest is the impact of electronic media on this story. Newsweek killed a story on this matter days before it broke — and then posted much of the information on its Web site, along with an explanation of its decisions. Access to information like this about the inner workings of the media can help readers make judgments about which newspapers, magazines and broadcast outlets have conducted themselves with the kind of restraint that many readers are pleading for.

Overholser is ombudsman for The Washington Post



cotapes of the mansion that allegedly showed movement of the building, placing barbed wire into the spaces in the walls and shooting into the trees. Although there was some debate as to his diagnosis, paranoid schizophrenia was the most popular finding among the experts at his trial.

DuPont never said why he shot and killed Olympic wrestler David Schultz, claiming he had not been there or done that, despite two witnesses. The defense contended that DuPont must have thought Schultz was a Russian terrorist who was about to kill him and was therefore not responsible because he thought he was doing the right thing in defending himself in an act of war.

The prosecution contended that the murder was motivated by DuPont's envy of the high esteem in which Schultz was held by the wrestling community and by anger toward Schultz for befriending another wrestler who was harming DuPont's reputation in the highest ranks of Olympic wrestling

by disclosing DuPont's instability. It testified that DuPont's actions in threatening the witnesses, fleeing the scene and telling his staff, "If the police come, don't let them in," all showed that he knew what he had done and knew that it was wrong. Thus, despite his illness, he was responsible for the crime.

Having schizophrenia does not eliminate responsibility for criminal actions unless, at the very moment of the crime, symptoms of the illness cause the person to meet the legal test of insanity. In most jurisdictions, only a killer who does not know what he is doing, who did not know it was wrong or who couldn't control his actions is insane under the law. Even people with untreated schizophrenia usually know what they are doing and whether it is wrong. And while the person with schizophrenia may have little control over his symptoms, he has considerable control over his actions. Thus, with rare exceptions, even people with

schizophrenia are responsible for their bad acts.

Each time a notorious criminal claims schizophrenia, a public debate erupts around the issues of responsibility and punishment. I admit these are fascinating issues, but these controversies have a tragic side effect: They associate the schizophrenia label with notorious criminals, which adds to the stigma of mental illness, making it even more difficult to get patients the help they need. Whether Ted Kaczynski was correctly diagnosed as suffering schizophrenia is now less important than the resolve not to punish sufferers for the crimes of one extremist.

Every time a notorious criminal claims to have schizophrenia, it hurts the law-abiding majority of sufferers. Dietz, a consultant in the Theodore Kaczynski case, is a forensic psychiatrist and professor of psychiatry at UCLA School of Medicine.