

## The Behrend Review

CHARLES TESTRAKE

### The Behrend College Beacon

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

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### A view from the lighthouse

#### Parking a major problem for students

Lately, the most commonly heard complaint at Behrend has concerned parking. The increased freshman enrollment has brought with it a severe parking shortage. Students used to only worry about getting a parking space close to their destination, but now there is the possibility of not getting a space at all.

A new parking lot was scheduled to be finished before the semester started. However, this lot was not completed in time, and is still under construction. The problem has been temporarily resolved by creating parking spaces on the grass in the lot behind the apartments and Almy Hall. This solution will only last for so long, however. When it starts snowing, parking on the grass will be impossible.

Parking for the commuters is no better of a situation. There are very few spaces at times in the day, and some students are forced to park in lots, such as Reed, where they will inevitably receive a ticket. The Traf-



fic Appeals Board Meeting was jammed last week due to so many students attempting to appeal their tickets. Many of the appeals dealt with the problem of students having to park where they weren't permitted, because there was no available spot in their designated lots.

Something has to be done about parking very soon. As soon as the winter weather begins, the temporary parking solution will become obsolete. Students pay well over one hundred dollars a year to park on campus, and deserve better facilities than are provided.

"It is a phony issue. To pretend the death penalty is going to end crime in the United States is to fool people, to promote public ignorance." New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

In 1972, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Furman v. Georgia that the death penalty was unconstitutional because there were few state and/or federal government guidelines on which types of crimes merited a death sentence. The decision of when and where to impose the death penalty was left solely up to judges and juries. However four years later in 1976, the Supreme Court reversed its previous decision by ruling in Gregg v. Georgia that since the state of Georgia had since set guidelines on which types of crimes merited a death sentence, the death penalty could once again be imposed. And since that ruling nearly 500 people have been put to death in the United States.

Is the death penalty really working? Has serious crime fallen in the United States as a result of the death penalty? Does the death penalty in fact really prevent crime? To determine this I made three comparisons. I compared Virginia, which does have the death penalty, to West Virginia, which doesn't; Illinois, which does have the death penalty, to Michigan, which doesn't; and Texas, which in recent years has executed a substantial number of people, to Oklahoma, which in recent years has executed very few people.

Virginia/West Virginia  
In 1996, Virginia had a violent crime rate of 341.3 per every 100,000 and murder rate of 7.5 per every 100,000 people. However West Virginia had a crime rate of 210.1 per every 100,000 people and a murder rate of only 3.8 per every 100,000 people. When you compare these numbers you can see that there is a difference of 131.2 in violent crime rates and a difference of 3.7 in the murder rates of both of these states. West Virginia, which does not have the death penalty, had a lower crime and murder rate than Virginia, which does have the death penalty.

Illinois/Michigan

In 1996, Illinois had a violent crime rate of 886.2 per every 100,000 people and a murder rate of 10.0 per every 100,000 people. However

and a murder rate of 7.7 per every 100,000 people. However Oklahoma had a violent crime rate of only 597.1 per every 100,000 people and a murder rate of only 6.8 per every 100,000

penalty, or in the case of Oklahoma which does not administer it that often, had lower crime and murder rates than their neighboring states with the death penalty. So now this brings the question: Does the death penalty actually increase violent crime instead of deterring it?

One recent study done in California found that the average increase in murders was twice as high in years in which the death penalty was enforced compared to years in which it wasn't. "The study compared the homicide rates during 1952-1967, when an execution occurred on an average of every two months, with the homicide rates between 1968-1991, a period during which no executions occurred." So if the death penalty does not deter crime, but increases it, why then does it exist at all in the United States?

Testrake is a junior majoring in political science. The Behrend Review appears every three weeks in The Beacon.

#### If the death penalty does not deter crime, but increases it, why then does it exist at all in the United States?

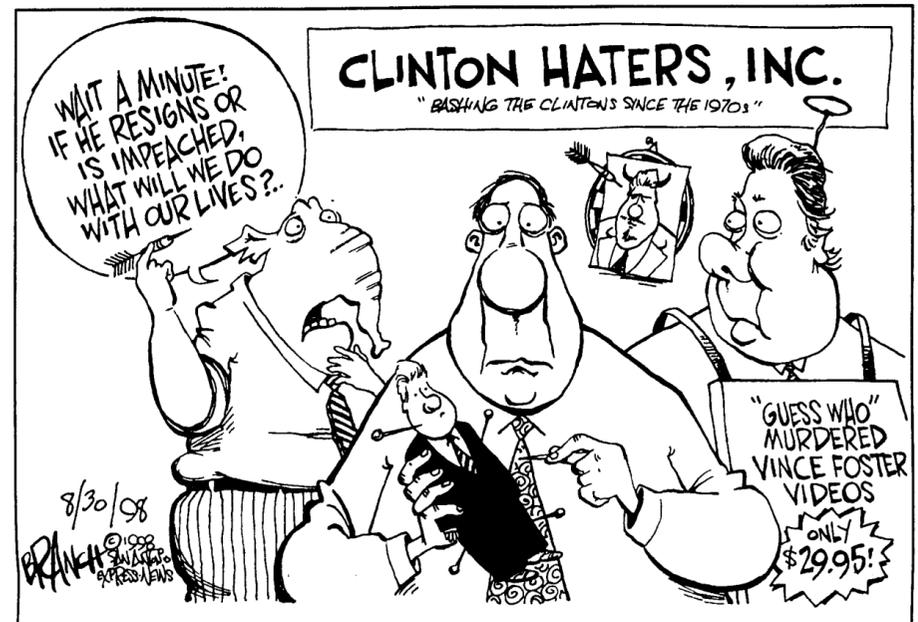
Michigan had a violent crime rate of only 635.3 per every 100,000 people and a murder rate of 7.5 per every 100,000 people. When you compare these numbers you can see that there is a difference of 250.9 in the violent crime rates and a difference of 2.5 in the murder rates of both of these states. Michigan, which does not have the death penalty, had a lower crime and murder rate than Illinois, which does have the death penalty.

Texas/Oklahoma

In 1996, Texas had a violent crime rate of 644.4 per every 100,000 people

people. When you compare these numbers you can see that there is a difference of 47.3 in the violent crime rates and a difference of 0.9 in the murder rates of both of these states. Oklahoma, which does not execute nearly as many people as Texas does, had a lower crime and murder rate than Texas, which executes a substantial number of people.

After making these three comparisons I concluded that the death penalty does not prevent crime. In every single one of my comparisons the states which did not have the death



### Are we a vulgar people?

By Richard Striner  
Special to The Baltimore Sun

Several years ago, Washington Post reporter Martha Sherrill reflected on America's current love affair with the disgusting; from the vulgarity of characters like Howard Stern and Don Imus to the prevalence of obscene violence to the avant-garde's lust for the grotesque.

"We're a little hungry," she enthused, "for violence and cruelty and horrifying destruction, for devourings, for crudity and unsweet sex. For snot and vomit and blown-up bits of skull. We want our world unsocialized." Good taste, she proclaimed, "is dead and was probably never alive to begin with."

The question is not whether Sherrill and her subject are reflective of an interlude in history. Of course they are: The real question is how much longer it will take for this interlude to end. How much longer will we have to wait for these transient moods to get flushed to the place where they belong?

Is it possible, for instance, that the dreary tawdriness of the sex scandal dominating public life at the moment will cause a wave of revulsion against tawdriness in general?

Such trends often flow in cycles. "What pleased us 10 years ago ... now seems to us extravagant and laughable," wrote Rene Descartes more than 350 years ago, and we continue to prove his point. Take an early 20th-century example: the widespread pose of disillusionment among the literary "Lost Generation" of the 1920s; the generation "grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken," as F. Scott Fitzgerald summed it up.

This fad of despair was largely swept away in the '30s by an earnest new mood of commit-

ment. In Britain, George Orwell compared the short-lived clichés of the '20s with the moods of the '30s. "If the keynote of the writer of the '20s is 'tragic sense of life,' " he wrote in the aftermath of the period, "the keynote of the new writers is 'serious purpose.'" The change was so extreme that it was funny: All of a sudden, Orwell observed in the mid-1930s, "we have got out of the twilight of the goods into a sort of Boy Scout atmosphere of bare knees and community singing."

So it is with the current scene: The end-of-the-century detritus of the '90s may yield to a counterreaction. How ephemeral the garbage of the '90s is: the manic hyperactivity of pushy electronic music, the in-your-face aggressiveness of TV computer graphics, the surreal TV advertisements that make no sense, the noxiously spiced food, the kitschy clothing fabrics with a harsh and metallic-looking weave, the lupine smirk of Jack Nicholson, the chuckle-headed strangeness of David Letterman, the postage stamps bearing likenesses of rock stars and cartoon characters.

And, not least of all, the gross-out fare that appeals to the brutlike side of human nature. All of this; so oppressive while it lasts; is merely symptomatic of an age that is profoundly unsure of itself. It is all just a fool's compensation for an emptiness in public life.

Look at any Astaire-and-Rogers number on video and then ask yourself what we have in our contemporary culture that compares with such elegance. And, with all due respect for the Andrew Lloyd Webber generation of composers; what do we have in our popular music that can stand the comparison with the age that produced Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, Jerome Kern and

### One Flew Over the Albatross' Nest

ANNE RAJOTTE

#### Despite complaints, Police and Safety does its job

Undoubtedly, the most popular part of *The Beacon* is the weekly police report. The incidents that are reported to Police and Safety are usually quite trivial and often funny. There is rarely a serious crime in the report.

Because of this, it may seem that Police and Safety doesn't do its job or isn't a very competent force. However, the fact that there are so very few serious crimes on campus proves that Police and Safety does a good job keeping our campus safe.

There are many complaints about Police and Safety, and many of them are warranted. They are zealous ticket writers, and there have been past accusations of officers overstepping their bounds confiscating items from dorm rooms. They do annoying things like bust parties in the dorms and apartments and on occasion can be

amazingly unhelpful if one is having car, safe.

Complaints about Police and Safety will always exist, and often for good reason. However, students should not forget who gives them their sense of security.

car troubles in the parking lot.

Despite this, they do their best to give students a secure feeling on this campus. Recently, my car was broken into off campus, and the driver side window was smashed. The car had to sit in the parking lot at Behrend for two days, basically unlocked and unsecured. During this time, my car was not bothered, nor was anything stolen from it. Police and Safety officers patrol the parking lots all night, and their vigilance kept, at least my

While Erie certainly isn't the crime capital of America, it isn't exactly the safest city either. Behrend is surrounded by woods, and is easily accessed from Station Road, Jordan Road and the Gorge. Still, students feel relatively safe walking from the library and computer labs to the dorms at midnight. Students often sit outside of their dorms until all hours of the night without the fear of being the victim of a crime.

The statistics show the crime rate

at Behrend to be virtually zero, with only a handful of serious crimes reported over the last three years. Many students even feel safe not locking their doors at night.

When a serious incident does occur, such as the hiker falling into the Wintergreen Gorge, Police and Safety was equipped to handle the situation until paramedics could arrive.

Complaints about Police and Safety will always exist, and often for good reason. However, students should not forget who gives them the sense of security when they are on campus late at night, or decide to leave their doors unlocked.

Rajotte is editor in chief of the Beacon. One Flew Over the Albatross' Nest appears every three weeks.

Richard Rodgers.

Please avoid the mistake of associating these sorts of observations with a single political agenda, such as cultural conservatism. Most people seem to feel a salutary longing for an element (if only an element) of inspiration at the center of their lives.

So is an age of elegance and uplift over our horizon? Maybe, but the pace of the transition might not be refreshingly swift. Consider the case of Jerry Hirshberg, automotive designer and creator of one of the most elegant cars of the '90s, the Infiniti J30. Crafted to recall the great age of classic cars, the J30 featured an exquisitely sculpted form.

Discussing the creation of this car in his new book, "The Creative Priority," Hirshberg affirmed that his intent had been to design a car that was "simple and graceful." But then, in recounting the brainstorming sessions that devel-

oped the J30 concept, Hirshberg could not resist adding this trendy confession: "At an early mind-map session for the Infiniti J30 luxury car, we were trying to enunciate the kind of identity we wanted the car to have, as well as imagine the people we wanted to attract. ... This particular pow-wow began with an off-color story I no longer recall, but I do remember the toilet bowl someone sketched to remind us of its punch line.

"Only later did we realize that it was the abstract form of the bowl itself, its voluminous, fully rounded, stable and organic shape that brought the joke to mind in the first place. ... For shorthand, we labeled the quintessential J30 buyer "the perfect —hole."

Thanks, Jerry, for encapsulating the dysfunctional '90s: elegance apologizing for itself at the shrine of vulgarity.

## Letters to the Editor

Send to:

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