

The Behrend College Beacon

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

Editor in Chief
Anne Kapotte

Managing Editor
Audele Jones

News Editor
Will Jordan

Photography Editor
Andria Zittino

Associate Editor
Mark Greenbank

Business Manager
Laine Davis

Advisors
Robert Speil
Jim O'Loughlin

Features Editor
Jon Stubbs

Sports Editor
Jason Snyder

Layout Editors
Mike Perkins
Rose Forrest

Advertising Managers
Liam Edinger
Caryn Smith

Postal Information: The Beacon is published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College, First Floor, The J. Elmer Reed Union Building, Station Road, Erie, PA 16563. The Beacon can be reached by calling (814) 898-6488 or (814) 898-6019 (FAX). ISSN 1071-9288.

Letter Policy: The Beacon 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.

The Critic

JON STUBBS

Pro-life groups must preach non-violence

There are holy wars being waged today, and not all of them are spilling only Muslim and Arab blood. Right here in the United States, a country that was founded on the beliefs of religious freedom, snipers and bombers who believe they have God on their side are killing doctors who perform abortions. Last Friday, Dr. Barnett Slepian, a gynecologist and obstetrician in Amherst, New York, was shot to death in his own kitchen by a sniper as his wife and one of their four sons watched on.

Slepian was known to perform abortions and to speak out in support of a woman's right to choose. He was known by his friends to be quiet, but stubborn. Betsy Kozinn, a nurse who worked with Slepian, said of the doctor: "As long as abortion was legal, he would provide safe, legal abortions... He wasn't going to be bullied by somebody else to not do it. He didn't enjoy doing

them, but he felt that no one else would."

While no pro-life organization has taken credit for the doctor's slaying, one would guess that the sniper held the same beliefs as many right-to-life institutions do. "There are no words to describe the person who did this," says neighbor Sal Curcil. "If you're a right-to-lifer, that's all life, including the doctor." Mr. Curcil is exactly right. How pro-family could a person be that kills a father of four sons, ages 7 to 15?

My personal beliefs about abortion are far from the point at hand. For all purposes herein, I shall remain completely neutral on the subject. My guess is that the members of pro-life groups do not want this kind of publicity. However, they have done very little, or at least obviously not enough, to prevent such attacks. Violent events such as this and the bombing of a North Carolina abor-

tion clinic this summer are seriously hurting right-to-life groups' credibility and political power.

Earlier in the summer, during "Gay Day" at Disney World, extreme conservative groups brought their families down to Orlando, Florida, to shout slurs and obscenities to openly gay patrons of the amusement park. The distorted faces of mostly white protestors and their children damning the homosexuals to hell as they passively walked through the gates and into the park were reminiscent of the faces of young schoolboys and schoolgirls harrasing the first black students to be integrated into public schools.

The sexually insecure homophobic protestors claimed that they were preaching Christ's word as they ostracized the openly gay men and women. No matter how badly the protestors desecrated the Bible to turn it into a message of hate, many

religious leaders would agree that Christ did not scream and spit in the faces of Jews to get them to listen to him. Even conservative priests and pastors who concede that homosexuality is wrong would most likely agree that this kind of behavior is the wrong way of communicating their message.

Whenever I see the Pope visiting a country to speak, I don't want to think of him as a leader of a terrorist-hate group. Conservative alliances must speak out more frequently against such violent acts against humanity. The Religious Right must do so quickly and adamantly to keep the political power they have and to remain clean and credible. If they do not, "God" may soon become a devil term.

Stubbs is features editor for The Beacon. The Critic appears every three weeks

A view from the lighthouse

Vote for Fall Break the right decision

The University Faculty Senate met on Tuesday and voted to implement a Fall Break starting in 1999. This has been an issue that has been discussed for a long time in our own Student Government Association and also in the Campus of Commonwealth Student Governments. Penn State only has one holiday during the Fall semester, not including Thanksgiving. That one holiday is Labor Day, only a week after classes start.

Nearly every other college and university in the United States has some sort of break in the Fall. In fact, Penn State has one of the longest semesters of any university in the country. Although Graham Spanier, Penn State's president, commented that some of the faculty are proud of our long semester, many students aren't so happy at this fact. The long stretch between Labor Day and Thanksgiving gives students no opportunity to catch up on work they have fallen behind on, or simply take a break.

The University Faculty Senate made a good decision when they voted in



favor of the Fall Break. Having one of the longest semesters of any college is of no advantage to students. In fact, the long stretch between breaks is most likely detrimental to many students, as they have no rest during the semester.

Another benefit of a semester break is that students who don't live close to school can see their families before Thanksgiving. If a student live many hours away, just a weekend isn't enough time to go home for a visit. This can result in a student's going several months without seeing her or his family. This break would provide that opportunity.

The Lobster and the music to the dance of life

MIKE PERKINS

Space, The Final Frontier

With John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth, getting ready to return to space at the age of 77, many people are re-evaluating the space program. Some see this as only a beginning, and anxiously await the coming years. Others, however, feel that the space program is waste of time and that sending an old man into space is a waste of time and resources. These people are ignorant.

The history of mankind is filled with tales of exploration. It is a defining part of our collective culture. We have an innate need to learn more, to expand our horizons and explore the unknown. Why else would we have climbed to Mount Everest, reach the poles, dive under the seas or reach across the oceans?

Space is indeed the final frontier, an area so massive that it boggles the mind. With the world growing smaller and smaller through advances in technology, and a high birth rate, we must expand ourselves once again.

The quest for knowledge is the greatest endeavor someone can undertake. By acquiring new information we satiate our curiosity and improve the lives of everyone. That is what the space program does. It is a quest for knowledge about the larger world around us. Sure, some people prefer to focus on just understanding our planet, but it's time to wake up, to realize that we are a part of something much bigger than anyone can possibly imagine. And by under-

standing that larger universe that surrounds us we learn not only about distant objects, which we may never see, but also about our past, and our possible future.

It is a sad world that we live in if people are more concerned about the cost of scientific progress than in the progress itself. What would have happened if Columbus never got the financing for his trip? Don't worry about how much the Space Program costs, because the information that it generates will pay you back several fold.

Back to the story of John Glenn. There are already two companies offering flights into space, so customers can experience weightlessness. It is also estimated that within twenty years, private enterprise will be fi-

nancing most space missions. You could very well retire in a condo floating in space, where the low gravity will allow you to live for years longer. John Glenn is once again explorer. He is risking his life to gain more information about the universe around us, and its effects on people. His work over the next several days could very well impact your life in the future. So don't try to put a price tag on exploration, and don't be upset that an old man is using tax money to return to space. Think of it as an investment in your future.

Perkins is layout editor for The Beacon. His column appears every three weeks

Some good news about teens and safe sex

By David W. Kaplan
Special to The Washington Post

New figures from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) show that since 1991, the proportion of American high school students who have never had sexual intercourse has risen 11 percent. The percentage of young men who have never had sexual intercourse has risen from 43 to just over 51 percent, and of young women, from 49 to 52 percent. In a nation with high teenager rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, unintended pregnancy and births; this is excellent news.

At the same time, sexually active high school students now are more likely to use condoms and less likely to have multiple sexual partners than teenagers in 1991. Nearly 63 percent of the young men and 51 percent of the young women used a condom during their most recent sexual intercourse.

Both the abstinence-only crowd and the abstinence-plus-contraceptives crowd; the conservative and the liberal sides of the sexuality education controversy; are taking credit for these heartening data. I think both should take some credit. Messages to postpone sex and those to "Have Safe Sex or No Sex" are not mutually exclusive but compatible and complementary.

In fact, extensive research shows that sexuality education that emphasizes abstinence and includes contraceptive information and services helps youth in two ways. It helps abstinent youth delay the onset of sexual intercourse, and it supports young people in protecting themselves from unintended pregnancy and STDs once they become sexually active.

A recent fact-finding mission to the Netherlands, France and Germany, sponsored by Advocates for Youth and the University of North Carolina

at Charlotte, found striking differences between the United States and these European nations. The European approach to teenage sexuality is characterized by openness and readily available free or low-cost contraceptive services and information. Teen reproductive health is a public health, not a political or religious, issue. Research drives public health policies to reduce unintended pregnancies, abortion and STDs. Teenagers receive open, honest, consistent information about sexuality from parents, grandparents, media, schools and health care providers. The government funds massive, consistent, long-term public education campaigns using television, radio, discos, billboards, pharmacies and clinics to deliver clear, explicit portrayals of responsible sexual behavior. Mass media are partners with government and health officials in this campaign.

The result: Birth rates of 13 per 1,000 teenage women in Germany, nine per 1,000 in France and seven per 1,000 in the Netherlands compared with 55 per 1,000 in the United States. Rates of STDs, including HIV, are four to seven times lower in these European countries than in the United States.

By contrast, in the United States, teenagers are exhorted to "Just Say No" until marriage. The result: Teenagers in the United States frequently report that intercourse "just happened" or "was an accident." What this means is that many American teenagers are having unprotected sexual intercourse because they feel guilty when they protect themselves, since contraception is planned. To underline this point, the recent CDC survey found that 37 percent of the young men and 49 percent of the young women did not use condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse.

Current responses in the United

Old Laws Work Against Net Porn

1998, Los Angeles Times editorial

There are several widely held notions about Internet-related crime. One holds that law enforcement cannot deal with quick-hit criminals whose global computer transactions can be accomplished in seconds. Another is that the police forces of many nations will never close ranks to share information and coordinate investigations. Still another holds that Washington must have the means to decode computer encryption as law enforcement is to do its job. As Los Angeles Times staff writers Mark Fritz and Solomon Moore showed last Friday in an article about a child pornography investigation, none are necessarily true.

U.S. Customs Service computer experts worked closely with local law enforcement and several foreign police agencies to conduct, over the course of two days, 100 raids in California and 21 other states and in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Fin-

land, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Their target was the largest Internet child pornography ring discovered to date, known as Wonderland.

"I'm unaware of another police operation that has ever pulled together so many law enforcement agencies worldwide," Bob Packham, the deputy director general of Britain's National Crime Squad, told a reporter.

Wonderland was a tight-knit group that freely traded 100,000 images of child pornography. Its members had production studios for live child sex shows that they transmitted over the Net. The operation had a computer-security designer and programming and hardware specialists who built a daunting array of codes and powerful encryption to maintain secrecy.

Encryption employs complicated algorithms to scramble documents until they can be decoded by the intended receiver. Although encryption

surely will be a backbone of trust and security in the electronic communications and business transactions of the future, U.S. federal law enforcement agencies presently maintain that they need access and eavesdropping ability to prevent criminals from plying their trade in secrecy. But in the child pornography case, traditional law enforcement methods like wiretaps, search warrants and message tracing proved sufficient. In other words, traditional methods were applied to a new medium.

Some privacy advocates are entranced by what they see as entrapment in this case, but that's preposterous. Depravity has been brought to light. Some of the children depicted have been identified as relatives and neighbors of accused Wonderland members.

This case exposes vile secrets. But more important, it shows how an electronically well-defended crime ring can be broken without overarching laws and assaults on privacy.

