

One Flew Over the Albatross' Nest

ANNE RAJOTTE

Background checks a necessary part of gun control

With the start of this year's buck season, a new law was enacted requiring background checks on prospective buyers of rifles and shotguns. Those selling guns are now required to call the state police, who will run a background check on anyone who wishes to purchase a rifle. There are similar laws in effect dealing with other types of firearms.

Not unexpectedly, the new law angers many people. Many who oppose this type of background check are once again claiming their rights are being violated. The National Rifle Association (NRA), who claim to be "freedom fighters" and protectors of second amendment rights, are long-time opponents of measures such as these.

There is no logical reason for

people to be opposed to background checks, whether you are purchasing a handgun or a rifle. With past incidents of children getting ahold of their parents' guns and bringing them to school and killing students and teachers, something has to be done to control the sale of guns. Doing background checks on gun buyers is just one measure that should be used to control firearms.

If it takes several days for a gun for a background check, then people should be made to wait. Anyone who claims to need a gun immediately probably needs to have a background check, anyway. Gun advocate groups have turned the right to bear arms into such a frenzy that any reasonable measure to ensure the safety of American citizens is turned into a

direct attack on constitutional rights.

Wednesday's Erie Morning News reported that gun shops are losing business because the computers that the state police are using to make background checks are having problems and taking an excessive amount of time to run the check. The owner of one local gun store stated that he lost a \$1,000 gun sale while waited on a background check for another customer. A person who intends to buy \$1,000 worth of guns and doesn't have the patience to wait for a background check is precisely the reason why these checks are so important.

Gun control is a tough issue in America. The right to bear arms is guaranteed in the constitution, but the consequences of the availability of firearms can be devastating. How

different would the outcome had been in Jonesboro, Arkansas if the two boys had not had access to guns? Edinboro had a similar tragedy last spring. If that boy had not had access to a gun, it is possible that his teacher might not have been killed.

Background checks can by no means prevent all gun tragedies. However, something must be done to curb gun violence in the United States. Background checks are just part of a whole system that must be enacted if we are going to prevent at least some of the horrific crimes committed with guns.

Rajotte is editor in chief of the Beacon. Her column appeared every three weeks.

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

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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.

A view from the lighthouse

Klan exercised first amendment rights

Last week, the Ku Klux Klan held a rally on the steps of the Erie County Courthouse. There have been varying opinions on how the citizens of Erie and the press should handle this event. Some people have also said that a group like the KKK should not be allowed to have a public rally.

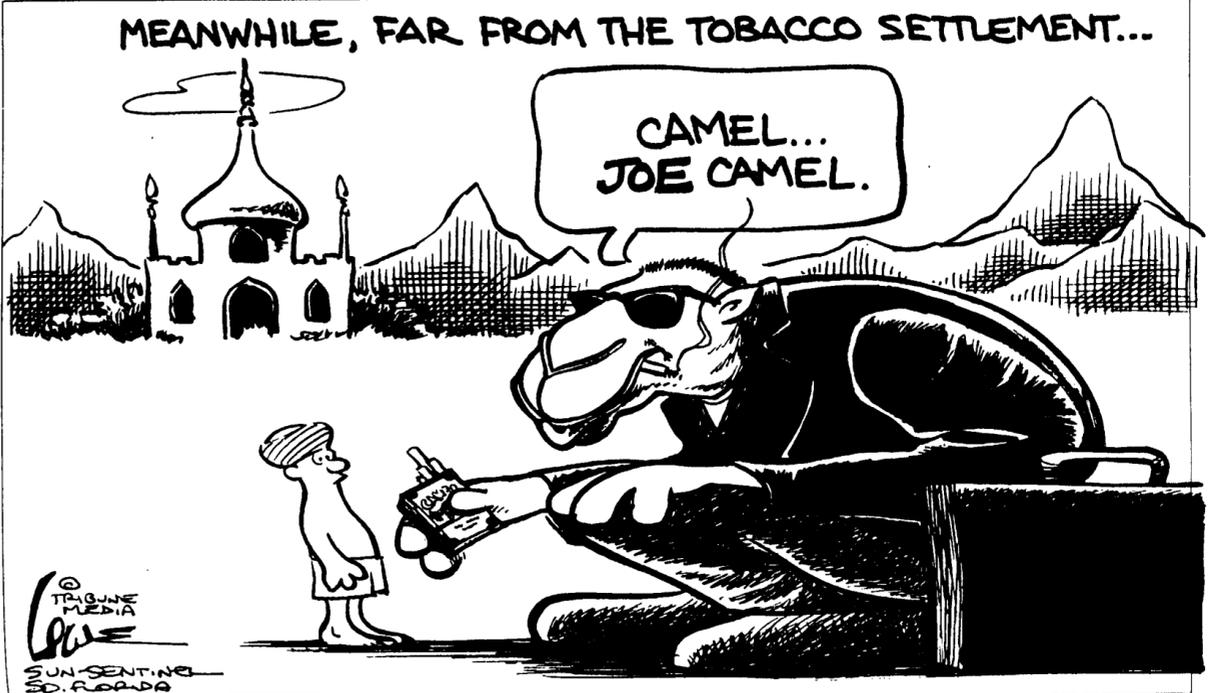
The KKK is protected by the first amendment the same way any other citizen is protected. Their message may be abhorrent to most people, but their opinions deserve the same protection as any other opinion.

Erie's mayor encouraged both citizens and the press to ignore the rally and instead participate in other activities happening in the county. The press should not be asked to ignore a news event such as this rally. Covering an event does not necessarily mean that a newspaper supports the group. It is news happening in the



Erie area and the Erie newspapers have a right and a responsibility the cover it.

It is hoped that the KKK did not find enough support in the Erie area to hold another rally in this city. It was not supported nor appreciated by the majority of the citizens. However, no matter what popular opinion says, the Ku Klux Klan should be allowed to exercise their first amendment rights.



Homage to athletic success cheapens college experience

By Ian Lang And James Griffith
Trinity College
The Trinity Tripod

In colleges around the country, sports hold such a primary role in school that athletes are no longer student-athletes. Instead, they are recruited players in a well-funded, over-exposed minor league system disguised as higher education.

In essence, this means that institutions, whose missions are supposed to focus on education, accept and label as a student-athlete folks who have no interest in anything academic, just to promote the athletic program.

The infiltration of sports over aca-

demics seeps all the way down to the lowest rung of collegiate athletics.

Take a small school like Trinity for example. Athletes here have little chance of being good enough or getting enough exposure to play professionally, but sports here still get emphasized to the point of admitting less-than-qualified students and then allowing them to slide academically.

What, then, is the point of having varsity athletics? Proponents of Division III athletics tend to emphasize the bonding that sports bring to the college community. A given team's success also influences the amount of alumni donations and in so doing, helps pay for less profitable, academic endeavors, they say.

Though each of these arguments has a minuscule amount of validity, neither justifies the copious amounts of money funneled into varsity athletic programs. If funding for varsity sports were cut to the level that is spent on club sports, the bonding aspect would not be diminished, but simply defocused. Athletic teams are supposed to be extensions of our community, and should be made up of students who enter college based on academic merit, not on their ability to kick a soccer ball.

By eliminating such things as athletic recruitment, the college administrators could turn their attention to recruiting the best and brightest students; students who would contribute

to the intellectual environment that the halls of higher education supposedly hold paramount.

Studies have shown that donation rates rise in correspondence with the success of sports teams, especially football. However, one would hope alumni are not so caught up in the worth of the football team that they give solely based on its success or failure.

Joe Paterno, coach of the Penn State Nittany Lions football team for decades, recently gave more than one million dollars to the school, not to the Penn State athletic program, but to the university's library. If someone whose life has been and still is devoted to the sport of football rec-

ognizes the importance of education, shouldn't people whose careers have nothing to do with sports give up reliving their glory days through people young enough to be their children or grandchildren?

Critics of policies de-emphasizing athletics will point to the fact that such moves would inevitably alienate students and decrease enrollment.

Though this may be the case if only one school was to approve such measures, a more allied effort to eliminate varsity athletics would set those schools apart from their counterparts.

No longer could one describe a Williams or a Trinity as a jock school where athletes happen to take classes. Instead we would be viewed as aca-

demie institutions that provide an athletic outlet for those students who are interested in academics.

We are not saying that sports are useless or even unimportant. Rather, that sports at American colleges are generally given preeminence that is drastically out of proportion with their importance.

After all, sports are supposed to be an extracurricular activity, not the primary focus of one's daily life. The football team gets new uniforms with regularity, and yet a university's art center can be a joke and its English classes can be left to almost beg, borrow and steal to make sure all of its students get copies of important handouts.

A freshman looks at college sex

By Alex Ross
Tulane University
The Tulane Hullabaloo

When asked to write an editorial regarding sex, I balked, believing that it occurred nightly and anyway, "who wants to read a freshman write about college sex? What does he know?"

Perhaps that mentality holds true, but I figured I'd give this assignment a shot anyway.

Hear me out. This editorial is how I, an 18-year-old college-going Joe, see college nightlife and how we - college students, that is - regard sex. Granted this is a biased view from a white suburbia-bred boy from the Rockies; I play golf, and my Mom sports a minivan. But at least my writing is open and honest.

So here goes.

Generally speaking, college students regard sex as play; nothing more, nothing less. We've adopted a permissive attitude and loose behavior that's running rampant throughout society.

Years back the media hounded several gangs in California when they

discovered gang members kept track of the numbers the girls with whom they'd had sex. Frightening yes, but I'll bet there's hardly a frat house in this nation that doesn't do the same thing - either officially or unofficially.

I hear frat boys at my school, Tulane University, keep track of such stats amid laughter and slaps on the back. It's a game, I tell you. Their exploits have garnered them a reputation for proclivity in the sack, and the blatant stories told of and by them are campus legends. They have to keep the myth - and the games - alive.

Don't think fraternity boys are the only ones guilty of this offense. They're actually no better or worse than non-Greek guys and - horror of horrors - women. We're all equals, in fact. I've seen the X's (a smiley face for the guy down the hall) on doors signaling, "Don't come in, I'm busy." Those doors open up to rooms inhabited by fraternity and sorority members, non-Greek men and women - even resident assistants.

We're growing up, but in a different world than our parents did. We expect our college classmates to have one-night stands. One girl I know gets pissed because her roommate is really loud when she's having sex on

Friday nights - not because it's with a different guy each week.

Our parents would consider our concept of sex socially repugnant. After all, we've turned sex into little more than a recreational activity.

Laugh if you want, but this behavior has more impact than hurt feelings and regrets: Safe sex on college campuses hovers only around 50%. One in four college students has a sexually transmitted disease. HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is predicted to be the greatest killer of our generation.

And it's not only men who are making hushed trips to the doctor.

I was on a bus several weeks ago with a Tulane sorority that was inventing little sing-song rhymes about each of its rival sororities. In essence, those women belittled their rivals for not putting out, for having virgins in their ranks and for not pleasing boys. A guy sitting across the aisle from me couldn't help but smile when the girls praised themselves for "swallowing."

I smiled, too, but I felt hollow inside.

Many girls once held the belief that virginity was sacred and honored, but the percentage of those under 18 who have engaged in intercourse or other

forms of sex has risen unabashedly since the '60s. Nowadays, the numbers approximate as such: Non-virgin girls - 70%. Non-virgin males - 80%. And those numbers are still on the rise.

Former college "stud" turned Christian author, John Gray, caught hold of a wave of loose girls during his school years and laments in his article "Romances with Wolves" that he slept with so many women. He's not upset because of religion or health issues as one might expect. No, Gray says he's upset because those women are now "married to other men."

"When I put myself in the shoes of those men, I wish that I hadn't done what I've done," he wrote. "In fact, I might even like to punch myself in the nose for it."

Chances are good that when Gray does marry, his wife will have the same regrets. Lots of women have been around the block - several times.

I've seen the male eyes track girls across the cafeteria - another little

game with which we're all familiar. A friend once remarked when a blonde in a mini-skirt strode past that he "wouldn't mind getting a piece of that." "She's a bitch," another friend countered. The first guy shot back, "It's not like I'd have to talk to her." Heads nodded; no explanation needed.

Even sexual assault, once a hideous crime both socially and legally, doesn't hold the weight it previously did. One survey of male college students reported that in 1984 almost 35 percent of respondents said they would rape a woman if they knew they wouldn't be caught. That num-

ber shot up to 50 percent this year.

A college counselor at another school told me a story about a girl who was raped on that campus several months ago. She went to a bar with friends, had maybe two beers and woke up naked next to a strange man. She was drugged no doubt, and left the office assuring the wide-eyed counselor that "she wouldn't drink for at least two or three weeks." The counselor told me no charges were pressed in the rape.

The young woman went out on a date the next Friday.

