

The Behrend College Beacon

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The Critic

The kids are alright

JON STUBBS

The story of 16-year-old Jessica Holtmeyer of Clearfield, PA, being tried for the bludgeoning death of an eighth-grader seems tragically reminiscent of the wake of deadly school shootings and parricides that the national media was happy to bring to our attention over the past year. Last Mother's Day, 15-year-old Kimberly Dotts' face was beaten beyond all recognition with a shoebox-sized rock after two unsuccessful lynching attempts by Holtmeyer. Leaving the scene, Holtmeyer remarked to her accomplices that she wouldn't mind doing it again.

Such explicit scenes horrify society and make us ask ourselves, "What is happening to our kids?" And when the media has a good thing, it tends to roll with it for a year or two. So sensational was the story of the two Jonesboro, Arkansas, students who opened fire on their own classmates, killing four students and one teacher that it was immediately followed up by news stories on similar happenings in Pearl, Mississippi; Springfield, Oregon; and Edinboro, PA. This sensa-

tionalism made it all the way to the White House. "This recent series of killings in our schools has seared the heart of America about as much as anything I can remember in a long, long time," remarked President Clinton in response to this recent "rash" of teenage predators. Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe was dumbfounded by these events: "If you had told me 10 years ago that an 11 or 12-year-old could do what happened in Jonesboro, I'd probably thought you were crazy."

The gods must be crazy, Beebe. There has been almost no increase whatsoever in violent crimes committed by juveniles since 1980. But if one watched the news at all last year, she would think that our nation's children were in a state of complete moral collapse. Kids aren't killing each other. 90% of all children under age twelve were killed by adults last year. With the all of the highly publicized shootings in Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, Pennsylvania and Oregon combined, 11 children were killed. Every two days,

eleven children become the fatal victims of child abuse or neglect.

However, because the mothers and fathers of our country were now convinced that the amorality of this radical new age was beginning to turn their children into brutal killers, a bill written by Republicans but supported by President Clinton was entered into Congress. The first part of the bill (which has already passed) allowed for the adult prosecution of children as young as 13 and could hold the parents of juveniles criminally responsible for their son or daughter's crimes. The Supreme Court has already okayed the bill in that it does not violate the 18th Amendment (it is not cruel or unusual punishment).

This bill is justified, of course. The United States of America, the country with the best damn morale in the world, cannot just sit back and let juveniles make our country look like a Third World nation. The truth is, the U.S. has the highest child imprisonment record in the world and had been indicted by Amnesty International for

just that. Also, the U.S. is in violation of international human rights codes for its use of solitary confinement on children.

Whether or not stiffer laws are the solution to juvenile violence is not the issue here. The fact remains that these types of crimes are not increasing. The introduction of stiffer laws is not changing the status quo to battle a new problem. It is, instead, changing the artillery to battle the status quo. The media reports what it wants to report. Nobody's going to care about an infant beaten to death by a white, middle-class father if gun-toting teens are all the rave at the moment. Networks and newspapers have a show to run. Somehow the violence must make sense, so news agencies turn it into a trend. Don't fear your kids, fear the media.

Jon Stubbs is the features editor for the Beacon. His column appears every three weeks.

A view from the lighthouse

Disorganization leads to disaster

The manner in which Housing and Food services conducted the line of students turning in their housing contracts for fall 1999 semester on Sunday night was disorganized. First of all, housing knew that students would come early to wait in line based on the way they dealt with it in past years.

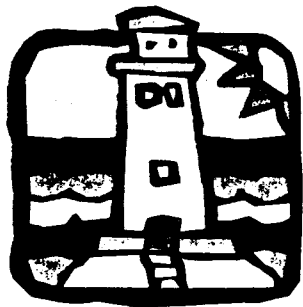
They were also aware of the fact that students are willing to do almost anything to obtain the housing that they prefer. Housing did nothing to address these issues, and they were definitely harassed for this through responsible students who had arrived earlier in the day and did not cut in line. Understandably, these people who had been waiting in line for hours became angered, and a riot almost ensued. They began to chant, "Asshole," and they began to verbally and physically fight with the students who cut in line.

Unfortunately, just when students who were waiting in line needed Police and Safety to regulate and protect their welfare, they were nowhere to be seen. When Police and Safety did arrive, they only made the problem worse. They threatened the students by telling them they would send them (the students) all home if they didn't abide by the rules and regulations. What rules and regula-

tions were they talking about? Housing never provided any rules. And, by the way, threatening almost never works.

When Housing finally arrived at 9:30 p.m. to transfer the students to the Reed Commons, students voiced their grievances to Housing about the line cutters. Housing did listen but offered no solutions at that time.

Instead of choosing to take responsibility for what might occur, housing ignored the problem. What resulted was a near riot, with absolutely no Police and Safety officers present, disgruntled and angry students who were cheated out of housing by line cutters, and physical and verbal altercations.



Letter to the editor

Clinton as a leader

Our very own president of the greatest, most influential nation of the world is a unique, once in a lifetime president. His presidency has even arrived at the point where people say even though he is not a good person, he is a fantastic leader. These two conflicting ideas simply cannot coexist.

There is an unwritten prerequisite required that in order for a person to become a true leader, he (or she) has to be a person of strong character, integrity, and principles. This is a simple concept known as principle-centered leadership, and this is not what President Clinton has in mind.

True leadership starts from an inside-out approach. A person must be an honest, principle-centered person on the inside before he can reap the benefits and become a leader on the outside to other people. This is how he becomes a leader in the first place.

People turn to him for direction and important issues that need to be resolved. If that leader is driven by self-interest instead of values and truths, then he will lead his people

astray. He will lead them through a web of deceit, away from all truth, and away from a God-fearing society.

This is exactly what has happened to the American people. Instead of leading us towards a value-based society, President Clinton has continued us towards a "feel good", hedonistic society, where he even has the nerve to challenge the definition of "is". This fact, though, cannot be questioned: William Jefferson Clinton has utterly disgraced himself, his family, the American people, the presidency, but most importantly, the law. The presidency is bigger than one person, and it is a prestigious position that cannot be mocked.

This is exactly what President Clinton has done; how much longer will it last? If any nation is led with a leader who has no sense of any deep, fundamental truths, then society will devalue itself. Chaos will result.

Nicholas J. Carter
Freshman

A Flower in the Garden of Life

SHANNON WEBER

There really is no place like home

You may be one of those kids, like me, that grew up in the *Leave it to Beaver* family. You know what I mean—the happy home where the philosophy is, "the family that plays together, stays together." I was a product of that type of family.

I have a mother, father, and a little brother that are very dedicated to our family. When I was a little kid, my family and I would go on various trips and have fun activities together. Sometimes my parents would do things for my brother and me just because. Sometimes on Friday's my father would buy me a happy meal from McDonald's. My mother wouldn't think anything of taking time off of work to take me on college tours. We kept going to movies and out to dinner as a family, and my parents still did things even in my teen years.

I thought I had an abnormal family life compared to that of my friends.

Most of my friends came from families that had experienced divorce and remarriage. Some of them never had that constant togetherness with mom and dad.

I had told my family when I came to college that I wouldn't come home on the weekends and not to expect too many phone calls from me. I don't live very far from home, but I wanted to be the "independent student". I came up here to Behrend, and, in my first semester, I spent a total of three weekends on campus, while spending the rest doing the family thing at home.

My family is very important to me, and it always will be. I guess I never realized how lucky I am. It didn't occur to me until I came to college that there are parents out there that could care less about their kids. If I need something, I can call home, and my parents are more than willing to

help me.

I realize college kids need to branch off, become individuals, and even learn to rely on themselves. These things are important to becoming an adult with a degree. Becoming independent of your family is important, because you can learn more about who you are as an individual. Students need to learn to rely on themselves, because sometimes it seems there is nobody else to rely on. I didn't think I was going to need my parents when I came to college. I thought I could rely only on myself with no help from parental units.

During my first semester, I started to miss the little things I took for granted. I missed my dad buying me a Happy Meal on Friday's or having my mother there to make me tea when I was sick. I couldn't believe I was admitting to missing my brother's constant teasing.

During the week, you are learning to rely on yourself and becoming very independent. You are learning to balance classes and activities, not to mention a stress level. I am still learning how to balance my college life, and by the end of the week I need a break.

Another thing I learned is that families can be like mine or they can be vastly different. Families are all normal in their own way.

I love my family, and I think I might even go home this weekend. There really is no place like home.

Shannon Weber is the news editor for the Beacon. Her column appears every three weeks.

Men's image is changing in today's society

By Ashley Bach
Oregon Daily Emerald
University of Oregon

The image of an ideal '90s man ranges from feminine to fiendish, but most men lie somewhere hopelessly in-between.

A friend of mine likes to talk about all the women he's slept with, about all the hearts he's broken and about how he really doesn't care about those things very much at all. He's a poster boy for men behaving badly, and that's the way he likes it—no smiling in photos, no commitments, no confessions. He's a brick wall of masculine energy.

But like so many men, he's really a big sissy. Fashion is a priority, bottles of cologne fill the bathroom, and it takes him 30 minutes to "sculpt" his hair on a quick day. For a guy who cares about so little, he seems to put a lot of stock in what people, especially women, think of him.

Sadly, he is a model to live by for

most of his species. We men like to play up our independence and love for sports and hanging with the guys, but deep down we're more emotional, conscientious and insecure than we care to admit.

Don't agree? Then witness the rise of the men's magazine. Not so much Playboy or Penthouse, but new kids on the block such as Details, Maxim and Gear. Hidden behind those photos of beautiful, buxom women are articles containing tips on everything from "how to make her scream your name in bed" to "picking the perfect suit for that big interview." The mags reinforce men's perception that they're all young, hip, and handsome, while at the same time calming their fears that they're not attractive, not masters of the bedroom, and not chiefs of the "war-drobe." The magazines present a paradox because they know that's how men are.

Many men - my friend for starters - would dispute all of this, of course. They'd say that a lot of guys are secure in themselves and that they

certainly have no need for petty reassurances at the newsstand. I won't try to pin down the demons of a 40 year old married father, but in the realm of 20- and 30-somethings, it's a sure bet that insecurity reigns supreme.

To make matters worse, many men don't understand what they feel, or why they do the things they do. Ask any of the former sports heroes pumping iron in your local gym why they do that every day, and most won't be able to give an answer any more solid than "To get huge?"

In the end, they may be there to impress women or fulfill some diluted image of what a man needs to look like, but articulating that fact, probably because it's so baffling, usually proves difficult.

The mass media spew images which affect men just as profoundly as women. Guys' collective fears and obsessions also come as much from external sources as they do from within. American males are torn between a society that values symbols of harsh masculinity, such as the Rat

Pack, but also pushes them to constantly redefine their role in a post-feminism world.

Fortunately for men, they aren't the only ones who can't figure out exactly what constitutes "a real man." Even the most die-hard feminists shudder at the thought of a bunch of spineless, ultra-sensitive she-men walking around.

All of this puts men, especially us young guys, in a bit of a quandary. We'd no doubt help ourselves a lot by just being ourselves, and responding to concerns from the fairer sex as they come up. But I'm not going to pretend that doing so is easy.

For all the women out there at a loss for words about our many deficiencies, I urge a bit of understanding. Sure, we're guilty of creating a lot of our own problems, often comically so. But we also have the hardy task of living among confusion, where masculinity is a valued commodity, but often measured only in doses.

Letters to the editor:



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