

Time to Complain The Voting Concept

NATALIE GAGLIANO

I am writing this editorial column in response to all the comments I have been receiving concerning how the newspaper "sucks". My purpose is to justify why the newspaper is the way it is.

The *Beacon's* main problem is that it is too understaffed. There are only about twenty students on the editorial board. These editors are responsible for writing articles, editing other writers' articles, laying out their page, and pasting their page together. A lot of time and effort is placed into this process. Editors spend countless hours in the newspaper office in order to produce their page. These editors have only one assistant, whose name is Mike Frawley, to help the process run more smoothly and efficiently. Mike spends a lot of his time to help the editors as much as he possibly can, and I commend him for making the editors' jobs a lot less painless.

Another problem the *Beacon* staff suffers from is the lack of stories to

write about. Face it. Rarely does anything interesting happen at Behrend. Well, except maybe in the Police and Safety reports. Students want to read about something that catches their interest; something that they care about. Rarely does this occur.

And when finally the newspaper does write interesting, controversial stories, such as the one concerning drinking among Greeks last year, a lot of criticisms are dished onto the plates of the newspaper staff for printing such an article. This is a major reason why the newspaper rarely produces articles of such a nature.

There is almost never any input from anyone on campus. Once in a blue moon, a letter to the editor is received. The newspaper staff welcomes everybody's ideas but never receives any. We want to know how we can improve the newspaper, how we can benefit others. It's really difficult to change the newspaper when

we don't know how people want the newspaper to be.

People don't have a right to bitch and complain if they are not going to get off their lazy butts and offer some suggestions to the newspaper staff concerning improving the newspaper. It's kind of like the voting concept. You have no right to bitch if you are not doing anything to find a solution to the problem.

The college newspaper is an integral component of any college campus life. It makes people aware of what is happening on campus. Sometimes, the newspaper is the only way that people find out about upcoming events.

I feel that people on campus, with the exception of the newspaper staff, don't realize how much time and effort is put into the newspaper. We don't just wave our little wand and make a newspaper appear. There is a plethora of late nights for the editors, especially the editor-in-chief, Will

Jordan. We work endlessly until the newspaper is done. Our objective is to produce a sound newspaper with few errors. Sometimes, our objective is not completely met due to the fact that we don't receive any extra help.

I am not saying that the newspaper sucks, because it doesn't. I think that the articles are all well-written. The newspaper staff is very dedicated also. Some of the articles are interesting. I think the newspaper's image needs to be changed. I feel that more controversial articles should be written; they should be about something that people want to read about and want to respond to. They should make people question things on campus and why they are the way they are. What people want to read about is my question. That is why the newspaper needs input from the general student body.

Natalie Gagliano is the editorial page editor of the Beacon. Her column appears every three weeks.

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

Editor in Chief
Will Jordan

Managing Editor
Ayodele Jones

News Editor
Shannon Weber

Editorial Page Editor
Natalie Gagliano

Business Manager
Jaime Davis

Photography Editors
Jason Blake
Andrea Zaffino

Layout Editors
Mike Perkins
Elizabeth Guelcher

Wire Services Editor
Katie Galley

Features Editor
Jon Stubbs

Sports Editor
Jason Snyder

Advertising Managers
Erin Edinger
Carey Smith

Copy Editor
Rose Forrest

Associate Editors
Angela Rush
Jessica Tucci

Assistant Editor
Mike Frawley

Distribution Manager
Mark Greenbank

Advisors
Robert Speel
Jim O'Loughlin

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 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 Where was the sense of logic?

Sometimes students wonder where people's heads are located, especially at the Computer Access Center (CAC). If you haven't already figured it out, the Computer Center has decided to charge money for papers printed out at the library's computer center. This is due to the fact that the printers in the library changed from dot matrix to laser printers. In order to buy a card for this new cost, one must go to Hammermill or the RUB Desk. The cost of 20 laser copies is one dollar.

Several complaints can be made about this new charge. First of all, full-time students are charged ninety dollars a semester for the computer fee. Why can't the CAC use part of this fee for the new costs of a laser printer instead of charging more money? Also, why can't the card be

bought at the library's computer center? Why does it need to be bought at Hammermill or the RUB Desk? Why do students need to trek across campus to pay for something that they don't want to pay for in the first place? Thirdly, on campus students are already paying almost \$11,000 a year. Why should they have to pay even more?

This is ridiculous. CAC failed to utilize any logic when considering the needs of students.



letters to the editor: behrcoll2@aol.com



Miscellaney, the Old Jalopy Spiders in the dollhouse

KERRY HINKSON

Someone once told me that people eat an average of six spiders per year in their sleep. This is because spiders supposedly like warm, damp places, and I suppose a sleepy open mouth is damp and dark and warm enough. After I first heard this I had a hard time falling asleep for a few nights.

Sometime toward the end of high school, my boyfriend, at the time, and I were sitting on a log in the woods. "Look," he said, pointing to a leaf to the right of us. I looked. Resting on it was one of the hugest spiders I had ever

seen, one much too large, I thought, to be native to Erie, Pennsylvania. It looked like a tarantula; big, brown, and fuzzy. I remained on the log, but my boyfriend stood up and walked over to the spider. Instead of stooping down to get a better look at it (as I thought he would), he stomped on it. I heard a distinct popping sound as the spider was flattened under his shoe. I had never before heard a spider pop like that.

I told all this to a friend of mine last year while we relaxed at her

cabin in New York state. "Was it light brown?" she asked. "It was brown." I answered. "Was it fuzzy?" "Yes." "It was probably a tarantula." I wasn't too sure about that. "A tarantula? In Erie?" "Yes. They come in on banana boats." This conversation took place after we had a confrontation with a three-inch spider. I was dusting picture frames on the wall when I spotted it in the woodpile. I tried to urge the spider onto a piece of paper so I could take it outside, but it ran away. "I hate to do this,"

said my friend, "but maybe we should just kill it. A spider that big is gonna come after someone."

We eventually exterminated the spider, but not until the next day. Sometime during those paranoid hours my fear had talked my rationale into taking a small hike, and I forgot about the days when spiders were considered sacred, and killing one was like killing your mother.

Kerry Hinkson is a fourth semester English major. Her column appears every three weeks.

Finding out the hard way why fish make the best college pets

KAREN HEALY

"For reasons of sanitation and safety, pet animals, with the exception of tropical fish and goldfish, are not permitted in residence halls, apartments, dining halls, or other University buildings."

So reads the official regulation on pets for Penn State's Erie campus, where I attend school. Fish in this context refers to any aquatic animal, such as frogs, turtles, and so on. The catch, according to rumor, is the animal has to be able to survive underwater for at least five minutes.

As anyone can guess, students have often joked about training Fido to breathe underwater for five minutes or of watching the room inspectors standing over a frog tank holding a stopwatch.

Jokes aside, this rule on pets was a difficult one for an animal lover (especially of cats) to swallow. At one

point last year one of my three roommates and I discussed breaking it.

After visiting a pet store, we were sold on the idea of getting a kitten. The only problem would be to persuade another one of our roommates—one usually less warm to our ideas—to go along with the idea.

She beat us to the punch: She was going to adopt a stray pet one of her friends had found and take it to her parents' home. She asked us if the cat could stay the night before she went home for the weekend. Of course we said yes. This was a dream come true.

The prospect of a cuddly and playful companion overwhelmed us. As a result, we encountered a few problems. We never really had time to enjoy the cat's presence because the trouble started right away. We failed to find a suitable location for the smelly litter box, constantly fought

to keep the feline out of sight and thus out of the windows, and struggled to figure out where the cat could sleep without getting disturbed.

By the time the next afternoon rolled around, we were glad to see the fur ball move on to its permanent home. We did not love animals any less, we simply realized the limitations of a five-room on-campus apartment.

We also realized the university had made its policy on pets for some very good reasons—and we certainly learned our lesson. Not only is a cat or dog too much to handle in a small apartment frequented by many students, but the situation is not very humane for the animal, either.

We were not the first students at Penn State Erie to challenge the official word on pets. I know of other people who have kept gerbils, frogs,

or lizards. One guy even had a puppy that he often took with him to his friends' apartments.

Although I can't say for sure, I bet he had many of the same difficulties that my roommates and I had.

Our adventure with the cat last year has not stopped us from wanting to keep frogs or turtles as pets this year—and I don't mean the tiny aquatic ones that live in two-gallon fish tanks. No we want the big ones—the ones that require five- or 10-gallon tanks...the ones that will have no problem meeting the five-minute rule.

Karen Healy is a senior majoring in communication and media studies with a minor in English. This column appeared in the Tuesday, November 24, 1998, issue of the Christian Science Monitor.

Letter to the editor: Faculty member defends fraternities

The end of the school year approaches, and it appears that once again it is time to talk about social decadence by focusing on fraternities. Last year at this time there were complaints about the number of members of SGA who were fraternity/sorority members. This year the last couple of issues of the *Beacon* have examined the theme—with good reason. With the question of coed fraternities and binge drinking on the minds of many college administrators, there is a certain justification to examining the roles fraternities play on campuses. But these concerns do not justify the myths or misconceptions that are spread about fraternities.

To clarify: (1) People do not join fraternities simply to party. They can do that for free or at a minimal cost on their own. (2) People do not join fraternities to "buy their friends". That's perhaps the dumbest myth I've heard so far. There is no brother on campus who you can't be friends with (assuming they want to be your friend) just by saying hello and taking it from there. Membership, rushing, and social responsibilities can be ignored. Many of the brothers will tell you that their best friends are not even members of their fraternity. While fraternities are a social organization where you can make life-long friends, it seems that the people who tend to join are already socially outgoing and therefore decided to join—not that the fraternity turns them into social creatures.

Why join a fraternity? For many college students it may be the best investment outside of the education that they make. I cannot tell you the number of times I've walked into the office of a senator, lawyer, doctor, or businessman to find a fraternity paddle on the wall. Or how many of them have gone out of their way to help a fellow brother find a job or get a promotion. The name of the success game is who you know, and those people who are sociable enough to make long-term contacts and succeed. Let's face it, no one is going to hire you because you are a member of the chess club, but many people have been known to get their foot in the door because of a brother within the organization.

Joining a fraternity connects you with something bigger than yourself. Most of the things we do in life are simply of direct benefit of us—marriage, jobs, etc. But members of a fraternity make a commitment to represent their school, help their communities, and stand by each other for life. I do not understand why there is such a stigma to joining for some people; no one complains or sneers at my membership to Nautilus and that only helps me. No one complains about joining the Economics Club or Engineering Society, and when was the last time one of those organizations announced any type of community service program? Why criticize an organization which says we, as a

group, will work together to help each other in our classes and for the rest of our lives whenever we can? We also pledge ourselves to community involvement and college improvement. What is wrong with an organization that helps young adults see themselves operating in a community that is larger than their immediate family or homes? These commitments which make fraternities unique are not idle ones. Taking on the responsibility of helping your brothers through classes is one thing, but to further commit yourself to helping through public service like Special Olympics and Easter Egg Hunts for young children requires sacrifices that are not always fun or easy. We all say we want to make the world a better place, but few of us will ever be in a position to change the entire world through our individual actions. What we can do is make a commitment to the communities around us. If each of us does that, the world will take care of itself.

I am not claiming that fraternities are idyllic societies—neither is America, but in both cases we work to correct those things that are wrong. I strongly believe that those who refuse to be an active part of finding a solution inevitably become a part of the problem. That is why when Kappa Delta Rho asked me to be their advisor I agreed, despite the raised eyebrows and open mouths of

some of my colleagues and friends. I am committed to working through some of the problems the fraternity has. I believe that especially on a campus like Behrend, the social opportunities such an organization makes available should be taken advantage of by as many students as possible and encouraged by the administration and faculty. Such a commitment on my part is more than simply a willingness to sign forms—it is a promise to any brother that at any hour they can come to me or call with any problem and I will do what I can to help them. I made this promise to them a month ago. They made it to each other when they decided to join.

Fraternities are not for everyone, just like the military or law school is not. If you choose not to join, however, do not disparage those who do. Instead find your own way to become involved in your community, to interact with those outside your immediate circle of friends, to grow from seeing the world through a different set of eyes. If the only person who benefits from your college experience is you, then you have already lost an aspect of your life that can never be reclaimed. If you are interested, come check us out.

Professor Gregory W. Fowler
Lecturer of English
Advisor of Kappa Delta Rho