

The Behrend Beacon

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

Editor-in-Chief
Jason Snyder

Managing Editor
Michael Frawley

News Editor
Shannon Weber

Features Editor
Deanna Smoski

Wire Services Editor
Angela Rush

Advertising Managers
Erin Edinger
Curey Smith

Photo Editors
Jeffrey Miller
Kevin Bruner (assistant)

Office Manager
Brad Wiertel

Editorial Page Editor
Katie Gallee

Sports Editors
Matt Wiertel
Craig Hazelwood (assistant)

Calendar Page Editor
Kim Zuck

Business Manager
Kristine Harakal

Associate Editor
Liz Hayes

Distribution Manager
Jeff Miller

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.

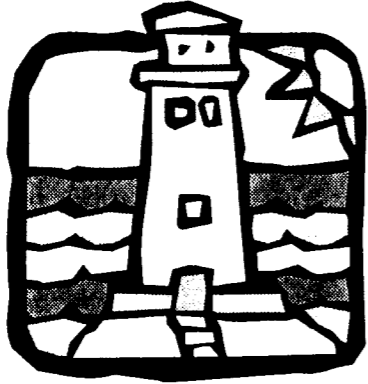
Letter Policy: The *Beacon* encourages letters to the editor. Letters should include the address, phone number, semester standing and major of the writer. Writers can mail letters to behrcoll2@aol.com. Letters must be received no later than 5 p.m. Tuesday for inclusion in that week's issue.

A view from the lighthouse

Much ado about nothing, Y2K is a crock!

Okay, it is pretty evident that everyone is thinking about Y2K as the year winds down. We really don't feel that there is anything to be worried about, though. Don't fear the changing of centuries, because it is, afterall, just numbers. And while some people say that is the numbers that will destroy us, it looks doubtful at this point.

Also, contrary to popular belief, Behrend is not going to be hit with a nuclear missile from Russia. Nor is the computer center going to explode when the numbers change over. And there will be no hostile takeover by militia groups in Dobbins, although maybe we should wish for one. We have nothing to



fear.

So enjoy your New Year and be sure to ring it in with Dick Clark's Rockin' New Year's Eve celebration. He never ages, after all!

Have something to say?!

Send all letters to the editor to:

behrcoll2@aol.com

Letter to the Editor:

Silencing the gavel at SGA

Dear editor:

In response to Matt Wiertel's editorial "The Hypocrisy of SGA": I would like to apologize to Matt Wiertel for a misunderstanding concerning the purpose of a committee meeting. For the record, at the Student Government meetings, committee reports are designed to give the council a brief overview of what went on at the last committee meeting, and to inform them of what progress has been made. If someone has a brief question it can be answered at that time, but it is not the time to question the validity of the committee or its goal.

On Wednesday, November third, during the radio station committee report, Mr. Wiertel raised his hand and was recognized by the chair. He started to ask questions about the radio station. Comments went back and forth between Mr. Wiertel and members of the Senate. Then during the conversation, the gavel was sounded and further discussion concerning the radio station was ended. At that point everyone at the meeting was informed that further discussion would be held at the committee meeting, and that anyone was welcome to attend.

The reason Mr. Wiertel was "gavelled" is because the President, Andrea DiPlacido, felt the report had changed from a report to a discussion. So, to make my point, Mr.

Wiertel was not gavelled because SGA didn't want to hear his opinion, he was gavelled because he presented his opinion at the wrong time. As far as his opinion is concerned it is always welcome in SGA, though there are certain times when it should be presented. At the beginning of each meeting there is a space allotted for the student forum. This is the time at which any student may address the senate. Also, when a topic is brought to a vote, after the motion has been seconded, anyone present at the meeting may discuss it. Finally, if any student wants to participate in the various committees that SGA has, they are welcome to attend those as well.

Once again I would like to apologize to Mr. Wiertel for the misunderstanding, and in the future we will try to make the different functions of our meeting more clear. Please don't be discouraged about SGA. We are here to provide a voice for the student body at Penn State Behrend, and we would love to have more student involvement in our meetings. I implore you, if you have something to say to SGA please come. Even if you are just curious about what goes on, come to the meetings on Wednesdays at 5:20 pm in Reed 114.

Keenan Hansen
PR Committee Chair

Rush to Rocky Road Y2K Ready?

All right, we have all heard of the million things that are supposed to happen when January 1, 2000 hits, but do you really think some of it is going to happen?

Personally, I don't believe it will all happen, if any of it, but that is just my opinion, and maybe I feel confident that the government has prepared for this day.

If you think about it, it is not even the millennium anyway, there was never a year zero, so that makes 2001 the millennium. The only difference between this and any other year is that the year ends in double zeros.

One of the major concerns is electricity and if we are going to have any after the New Year. It is believed that everything will shut down after the New Year for a period of time, but will be up and running within a few weeks or months. There is a big difference between weeks and months, but hopefully the problem will be resolved before the New Year even hits. That is if we get lucky!

If this were the case, why would so many big cities be throwing celebrations to bring in the New Year? This is going to be the turn of the century party, a once and a lifetime event for many of us.

Take for example, First Night Erie. For one, I don't think that this celebration, which has become a tradition for Erie, would be held if they believed

Angela Rush



Rush is the Wire Service Editor for the Beacon. Her column appeared every three weeks.

that thousands of people would be left in the dark after a power failure. It would be stupid on their part because of the possible problems that could result because of such a disaster. Imagine the chaos! I can't see it happening, but I guess we will have to wait and find out.

Electric companies have been aware of the possible problems that may occur, and they have invested a lot of time and money into working out the glitches.

Another concern is how people will receive heat to for their homes. This is so they can keep warm during the cold winter months that will be remaining. People who have fireplaces and wood stoves are set in this case.

Stocking up on wood is only one way of preparing. Another is to get a generator. Many are also concerned about resources such as food and water. It is predicted that as the New Year approaches, stores that were once stocked will be empty. People will be

in a panic to stock up, which is a safe bet in case this disaster does occur. But the supply will not be as great as the demand will be. So will people really be without the items that they need? I don't feel that it is likely to happen, for thing everyone is aware that this panic rush could potentially occur.

Another prediction that everyone is aware of or has heard about is the computer problems that may result. I feel this is completely ridiculous. Why did people spend so much money on a computer to find out that it may not be 2000 safe, just because the computer can't read the four-digit number? Why did experts just avoid the problem by building over it, if they knew that eventually they were going to have to fix it? These are the questions that I have running in my head. Was it so they could charge us for more software, because many people have to buy software to protect their computer from the Y2K problem?

Also, it is believed that bank computers will read that people will owe money to the bank - once again, as a result of a computer program. It is believed by some that this could cause a depression because people may start taking their money out of banks, if they don't have complete faith in them or the system.

I would advise that you don't plan on flying in a plane on New Year's. I don't know if what they are predict-

ing is really true, but it is said that a plane could crash because of technical problems that have not been fixed. Airplanes that have been tested over and over and the airports feel that their equipment is safe. There are over 473 flights scheduled for December 31, and airports have planned to fly past midnight, assuring that they are ready and safe, but others believe that they should test their systems out until at least the 4th of January. This is to make sure that there are no hidden flaws in the computer programs that run the planes that could trigger a disaster. Some airports are talking about shutting down, but others are confident that they are ready for the year change.

According to the report "The Economics of Y2K and the Impact on the United States, from 1995 to 2001" companies have spent about \$100 billion on the Year 2000 problem. That's the equivalent of about \$365 per American. I only mentioned a few problems that may possibly happen as a result of Y2K. No one is really sure what is going to happen when the clock changes to 12:01 a.m. on January 1; all we can do is wait and see what happens. Everyone have a good and safe New Year!

The Voice of Reason Y2K hell?

Well the semester is winding down. One more issue of the *Beacon* for the year, one more SGA meeting, and one more hour of sleep between now and the end of finals week. Come to think of it, the year is coming to an end now too, and whoa, wait a sec, the millennium is ending too. Unless you are one of those people who continues to insist that the new millennium doesn't start until 2001, but as far as I'm concerned it starts on January 1. I wonder what it is going to be like when we all wake up on New Year's Day.

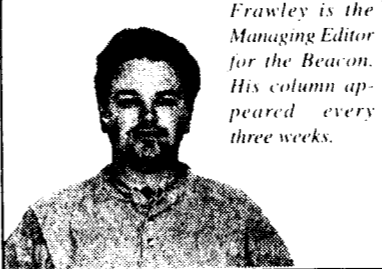
Try and imagine with me for a minute. You wake up and the sun is shining through your bedroom window, it is a nice bright happy day. But you had to be at work at 7 a.m. Why didn't your alarm clock go off? And why is it so damn cold in your house? You glance over at the clock and don't see anything on the display. Oh, shit, this is going to be a long day.

You quickly jump out of bed and throw on whatever clothes that you have handy, and run down the hall to your front door. The first thing you see upon looking out is the burning wreckage of a police cruiser blocking the road in front of your house.

Damn, what in the hell happened last night? Did I really have that much to drink? You run out your front door thinking to yourself that you have to know what is going on.

Teenagers are running around the streets in packs, looting and vandalizing everything that they see. Na-

Mike Frawley



Frawley is the Managing Editor for the Beacon. His column appeared every three weeks.

tional Guard troops and riot police are slowly attempting to restore order to the town, but the panic is so sweeping that some of them are starting to break ranks and join the looters. Hospitals are running on backup generators and are being overrun with accident victims, but the backup generators will only last for so long. Stores are being looted for anything that people can use to survive the panic.

And those who are not looting are fleeing out of town, trying to escape the violence that is now sweeping most major cities.

With no communication between cities, no help is going to be forthcoming. With no power to fix the computer systems, it is nearly impossible to bring the water and electrical grids back online, not to mention the damage that has been done to the lines in the ensuing chaos. Suddenly an explosion rocks the area around you. The fight between two people over what little gas is left at the station escalated to the point when one pulled out a gun, the spark from the bullet ignited the gas, blowing the station and part of the surrounding area into next week.

The only people who are prepared for this chaos are those gun nut militias in the deep woods of Montana. With their 100,000 cans of Spam and bottled water, they'll come marching out of the woods with enough heavy artillery to make a third world dictator jealous and start battling the military for control of the countryside.

Religious fanatics will take all of these things as the sign of the coming

apocalypse and will start committing suicide in creative ways, taking as many innocent bystanders with them as possible. From lighting themselves on fire to strapping bombs to their chests and walking into one of the few still functioning shelters these nuts will only add to the chaos. People run screaming around in the streets with spleens, pancreases, and bile raining down on their heads. Religious leaders are in their places of worship preaching to the overflowing crowds that the end is near and it is time to repent.

And we thought that it was going to be a nuclear war that was going to be the end of humanity. Who would have thought that it was going to be two little digits on a computer that was going to bring an end to everything we have worked to achieve? And people were trying to say that the new millennium doesn't really start until 2001, try telling that to the people looting the house across the street.

But in reality, on New Year's Day, I'll be waking up with a hangover and going on with life as usual.

Letter to the Editor:

Offering an alternative to the Lottery system

Dear editor:

Recently I have been informed of the new system for determining housing for the Fall Semester 2000 and let me say that I am dumbfounded. Now I understand that Housing is trying to develop a system in which everyone has an equal shot at the housing of their choice and I respect that, but there's just one thing that I do not agree with.

You see I believe that people should have to earn what they want and a housing lottery does not accomplish that. I look at it like this: if you REALLY want to get into the apartments, suites or wherever then you'll be willing to wait in line for as long as it takes! Even though Housing will disagree, their lack of foresight and organization contributed to the mayhem of last year's housing contract submission.

I don't like the fact that someone who is unwilling to sacrifice some time and just picks up their lottery

number has the same chance that I do at the limited on campus housing. Like I said before, if you really want a specific housing assignment then you'll do whatever it takes.

So here is my proposal for a truly fair housing contract submission process. Starting at midnight of Saturday January 15 (which is technically the start of Sunday January 16) students will be allowed to begin lining up inside the gym. (Lining up outside the main doors of Erie Hall before midnight will be allowed.) As they enter the door they will be given a number which equals their place in line. Upon receiving that number they will proceed into the gym and line up in lines marked off with ropes.

Once you are lined up, with your number and contract in hand, the rules are as follows: 1) You cannot leave Erie Hall until you have submitted your contract starting Mon-

day morning 6:00am, January 17. If you leave the building you forfeit your number and upon contract submission that forfeited number will be skipped over. Sounds simple and fair to me! There are bathrooms downstairs, including the ones in the locker rooms, and you bring your own food (garbage cans provided of course).

There is also another aspect of this new lottery system that is gravely unfair. Students who are currently on campus (except those in the apartments) are not at least guaranteed their old room like in past years. Under the new system a student who had on campus housing could be kicked off campus. That in itself is unfair but there is another fact that is getting overlooked. Some students cannot afford to live off campus!

Take for example a student that lives in either Perry, Niagara, or Lawrence and does not have the luxury of owning a car. If that stu-

dent is forced off campus he/she will easily pay more for an off campus apartment, spend more money on food, have to acquire a car and pay all the expenses that go with that ownership. Confronted with those circumstances the student may be unable to continue enrollment at Behrend. That's not very fair!

It's really pretty simple to see what has happened. Enough people complained about last year's contract submission process and instead of admitting that mistakes were made, Housing blamed the system and the students. Therefore they proceeded to replace a system that only needed to tighten some screws, with a system that will cause a lot of frustration for a lot of students.

Michael Rigoni
03, BUS