

A day late and a dollar short



Untitled 21
Ben Kundman
editorial columnist

This column began its life as a cynical look at American politics. Unfortunately, I ran out of metaphors and colorful anecdotes at the 400 hundred-word mark. It wasn't out of lack of material, (I think even a half-wit such as myself could write thousands of words on just ONE of the Presidential candidates) I just started to realize I was too stressed out about school to focus my anger at anything besides my professors (for giving homework like their class is the only one I have) and myself (for putting off all of this homework until the last possible second).

At work today I realized that I am not the only one stressed beyond belief. Everyone: Engineers, English majors, Business majors, Frisbee majors, all have tons of work to do. Finals are approaching, late drop will be over by the time this is printed, and I (hopefully) will know if I'm on the five year plan or not.

I think what we, overworked, underpaid, overcharged, students of Behrend need to do is stop for a moment and think about all the good things in life. In order to help all (both?) of my loyal readers get started on some of the better things in life, I decided to compile a list of a few things that make me happy, and maybe make other people happy too.

1. Puppies - Actually, I think puppies are really annoying, but most people seem to think that they are the cutest things on earth. Puppies make me smile for about two seconds until they start barking and peeing all over the place.

2. Movie Popcorn - Although consuming a large buttered popcorn at Tinseltown is the fat and caloric equivalent of munching on a ball of lard for two hours straight and washing it all down with pints of Guinness, there's something special about munching on some greasy movie popcorn while watching a flick. Plus, you can always pull "the popcorn trick" on unsuspecting dates.

3. Keggers - There's something to be said about paying \$3 for unlimited (albeit cheap) beer and hanging out with your friends till the wee hours of the morning.

4. Finding money - There's nothing quite like finding money. Almost as exciting as knowing that you're twenty dollars richer is knowing that someone else is twenty dollars poorer. A side note to "finding money" is being undercharged for something. Today at work, I put my fifty cents into the pop machine, pressed "Pepsi," and out popped my can of pop. After that, the coin return starting spitting nickels at me. I thought I was in Las Vegas!

5. Sunsets - Erie might have lousy weather nine months out of the year, a complete and utter lack of social activities, and a ban on full nudity strip joints within city limits, but man, oh, man, do we have some beautiful sunsets.

6. Sleeping Late - Not having to worry about your parents finding out you slept until 4 p.m. the fourth consecutive Saturday in a row makes going away to college worthwhile.

7. Having someone let you ahead of him or her in line at the bathroom at a party when you really have to pee. Self-explanatory

8. Pizza - Breakfast, lunch, or dinner, Pizza is the Swiss Army Knife of foods.

9. Watching any movie Kevin Smith directed - An ex-mallrat/agnostic such as myself with more relationship problems than a season's worth of *As the World Turns* can find solace in watching *Clerks*, *Mallrats*, *Dogma*, or *Chasing Amy* any day of the week.

10. A big, cleanly caught frontside flip - (If you have to ask, you couldn't possibly understand) Everyone has at least one thing they are truly passionate about, whether it's athletic, intellectual or other. What is important is to find that passion, embrace it, and keep the fire alive.

Kundman's column appears every three weeks.



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Send a letter to the Editor!
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'The Hot Debate of The Week'

Round 'em up, count 'em down...

Is the manual recount worth all the trouble it costs?

With four mainly Democratic counties in Florida in questionable situations, Vice President Al Gore is requesting a recount in those counties. So far, in Volusia County, Gore has received an additional 90 votes and 4 additional votes in Broward County. This brings Governor George W. Bush to a small lead of around 300 votes. In this election, it has been proved that every vote counts. Therefore, a manual recount is totally allowable. The only problem is the amount of computer scanner problems that may occur in the regular methods of tallying votes.

A Bush supporter, Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris, set a deadline for 5 p.m. on Tuesday, November 14, to bring manual recounts to a halt. This could prohibit many Democratic votes from being counted. Another judge said, "the Secretary of State may ignore such late filed returns but may not do so arbitrarily; rather only by the proper exercise of discretion after consideration of all appropriate facts and circumstances."

So, according to this judge, the only way these votes can be thrown out is for ample reasoning behind that decision. In conclusion, in this race that is "too close to call," votes should not be dismissed due to computer failures. Every vote counts to choose who the next president will be to represent this great country, and having the wrong man in office due to a lack of manual recount would be a travesty to what we call DEMOCRACY.

Every week, two editors from the staff will debate a topic that is hot. Students, faculty and staff are encouraged to email suggestions for the hot topic. Send ideas to behrcoll2@aol.com

This won't be a lecture on what's Constitutional in our country because everything in our Constitution could be argued one way or another. This is a brief point on fairness and the law. The word "law" in our country has slowly gone from being meaningful to being meaningless. The sad thing is that the people that are elected, or soon to be elected, to uphold the laws of this land are the ones breaking the laws of this land. Laws were made to encourage fairness in our country. The laws passed for elections were made for fairness in elections. Whether the laws were passed over 200 years ago or passed two days ago, they are still laws, which should be held in high regard. They are the rules of our nation. Without rules, there is chaos.

Case and point: our 2000 Election. Punch card ballots and butterfly ballots were approved by Republicans and Democrats before the election started. They were approved...therefore they should be followed. The plan was to count the votes through unbiased machines that don't lean one way or the other. The votes were counted, the results were final. Manual recounts are simply a count done by the hands of biased people. It's not by the rules and it's not fair. We might as well give the two candidates half of the ballots and have them determine who wins.

We need to follow the rules and select our president based on the rules set forth before this process began. No manual recount! It's not "fair or accurate" and will never be finalized.

Al Gore's presidency, on a silver platter

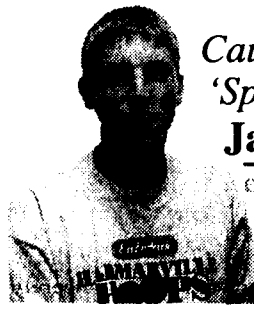
I felt rather strange sitting in my political science class this past week, talking about the voting procedures in Florida and all across this country of ours. It sort of felt as if I was in a classroom from the 18th century, the way we were discussing paper ballots and punch cards as a way to count votes.

We are in an age where technology is booming. Everything is electronic, from shopping carts to pet dogs. We can talk to friends through a computer, watch television clips through the Internet, and give people heart transplants from the organs of a dead man or woman. For God sakes, we can clone goats! Yet, we can't accurately tally votes.

I'm sure this past week has been a complete roller coaster ride of interest for everyone in the political scene; from not much interest before Election Day, to an election night of being "glued to the tube," to extreme anger with the Florida situation, to just plain embarrassment for living in a country with 18th century techniques of counting votes.

Let me give a quick briefing. We have had an Election Day vote. We have counted the votes, recounted the votes and then re-counted the votes in the four most Democratic counties in Florida. But before you even start to think that this is over...let me tell you what will happen next.

There will be a lawsuit from whichever party ends up losing the recount of the first recount of the original count of the original election. That losing party will request another count of the four most Republican or Democratic counties in Florida (pending the party) as well as a recount of the overseas



Caught in the 'Spyder' web
Jason Snyder
editor-in-chief

absentee ballots that were probably counted by

machines that only could officially count the ballots that were marked in #2 pencils.

The butterfly ballots that confused the old, incompetent voters of Palm Beach will then be recounted, giving the votes that went to Pat Buchanan to Al Gore because, apparently, everyone that accidentally marked their ballots wrong were Gore supporters. But all the ballots in the Republican areas of Florida were counted accurately because Bush supporters must know how to read and follow instructions better. That should tell you a little bit about the Florida voters that are currently deciding the fate of our country.

Well, when more lawsuits are filed, the decision will be made by the Republican Secretary of State Katherine Harris to have second graders from Georgia assist in the revote of all the counties in Florida that use the unreadable and unbelievably confusing butterfly ballot. Second graders?

Exactly...the 74 second grade experts on the butterfly ballot who all accurately punched in the hole for their favorite Disney character the way they wanted to. These genius students will supervise as our elderly voters from Palm Beach attempt to make out which hole is for which candidate.

Shut up and drive!

Last week I was almost hit by an idiot on the road. Now, many of you may have a theory on who this "idiot" is. Some men might say that it was a woman (and I'll admit it, women ARE dumber drivers than men are). And some of you might say that it was someone either a) trying to shave (face, legs or underarms) or b) trying to apply makeup in the car, in either case leaning precariously over the wheel in order to see themselves in the rearview mirror. No, that is not the answer, either.

It is the idiot who was talking on their cell phone that almost crashed into me on I-90 East last week. Yes, that annoying, desperate loser who sits and yaks away on their little compact cordless, oblivious to the cautious drivers that swerve desperately out of the way in order to avoid them. And it just might be you that's doing the talking.

Ok, so maybe you have an 'emergency' (note: an emergency does not constitute catching up on the day's gossip) and that 'emergency' just happens to be, for example, strange sounds coming from the hood of your car. Well, guess what, people? THIS IS WHY CONSTRUCTION WORKERS BUILD THAT SHOULDER ON THE ROAD SO YOU CAN FREAKING PULL OVER! Pull over for the two minutes that it takes to complete your call to whomever you wish, and then proceed to hang up and drive away. And the benefits also come in a special double feature: You have also saved an



Return to Reality
Becky Weindorf
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innocent life by taking into consideration that you are not able to drive while talking on the phone.

Simply put, the human race will never master talking on the phone and driving at the same time. We can't even evolve into a superspecies that can do two complex things at one time - why? Because humans are easily distracted. Our attention is constantly being diverted - ever try to listen intently to a speaker for more than ten minutes? It's hard, isn't it? And that same type of concentration is needed to drive a car safely and alertly. Talking on the phone is a diversion of that concentration.

Let's take something into consideration here. When you were sixteen years old, you learned how to drive a car. It was hard, wasn't it? (This does not include the idiots who had high school seniors for best buddies and hit the road at fourteen years of age - you do not count.) Anyway, you started out at the bottom of the pile - no license, no experience, no nothing. You were the freshman of drivers.

And the years passed by. You got your

license; you got to drive whenever you wanted, wherever you wanted. And you kept a clean record, didn't get into accidents, et cetera.

Until you found the newest invention of the cell phone. And you got one because it's only \$30 a month with all the fixings: email, internet access, free nights and weekends, four hundred free minutes per month, voice mail, everything. So now you can talk whenever you want - at home, at the grocery store, at the restaurant, at the movie theaters... oh the places you'll go with that thing!

But as soon as you enter your car, the one thing that took you years to master - driving - will virtually disappear. Because talking on the phone takes away just enough concentration for you to "forget" about that red light, and you run it. Sometimes it's a fluke - the alert driver sees you, and you don't get run over. But sometimes there is an accident.

And maybe you'll be the one who gets charged with manslaughter of the three-year-old child that was killed on impact. How about getting charged with just more than a misdemeanor? At least those are easier to get wiped off your record than a felony. Say goodbye to your license for thirty days... ninety days... hell, let's just say goodbye forever to the license you earned when you were sixteen. All because of a cell phone at your ear.

Don't think it can happen? I've known people on both sides of the story - those who were hit by careless, cell-phone-toting drivers and those who were the careless, cell-phone-toting drivers. It happens all the time, not just in New York or in the big cities. It happens in Erie, too. And people are killed, for pity's sake! Do you know that when you are talking on the phone, you are putting someone's life in danger? You're putting a lot of people's lives in danger - including your own.

Cell phones are yet another invention of humankind that has been hailed as the dawn of the Information Age we are living in right now. But like so many other inventions that have been churned out by us, it has also turned against us, because so many people use it abusively, without consideration of other people on the road. Operating a car takes all of one's concentration - even though we do it every day, you'd be surprised how fast you can run over a mailbox or hit a curb when you're doing something else. While that can be a humorous experience, remember this: running over a child or hitting another car is not.

So, if you were the idiot on the cell phone that almost ran into me last week on the interstate, shut up and drive. Your immediate gratification of talking to a friend is not worth my life - or yours.

Weindorf's column appears every three weeks.