

Bigotry at its worst



Attitude Problem
Paige Miles
copy editor

The Sunday edition of the *Erie Times-News* reported a story that, in best terms, fired me up. On the front, Patricia Graham stood in front of the South Shore Inn, a restaurant in North East that has seen many owners over the past few decades. Graham has been featured in the newspaper before when she opened two businesses in the farm town. However, this editorial is related to local controversy.

North East is a small town of about 11,000 people. There are only two police cars, an overabundance of churches, and gas stations, but little to do for fun. Many of the kids old enough to stay out after 7 p.m. either skateboard, drink, do something semi-school related, or hang out at church. Many youth groups reign in North East, practically ruling some students' lives. Many students find church and religion to be more important than academics; some go as far as to completely sacrifice academics for their church. (I am not saying this is wrong or right—let's get that clear first.)

The point is, though, that many of these teens will listen to anything the church tells them. They have no independent thought. If the pastor of their church says something, be it different from what they were told before or not, many will listen without hesitation. (This is not everyone attending these churches; simply a select group of teenagers.)

When the South Shore Inn opened, in an attempt to do something good for North East, Graham allowed local punk bands, many of them Christian, to play on Friday nights. She started a dance-club type atmosphere, a positive one at that. Teens under a certain age have to be signed in and out of the restaurant by their parents. Obviously, this assures that the kids have a safe place to go on a Friday night instead of sitting in Gibson Park harassing old ladies and smoking pot. Yet, what originally started as a popular hangout, with 50 kids on a Friday night as quoted in the *Times*, now has an average of five kids a nights.

Why? First, the bowling alley started a teen night on Friday nights. A friend of mine still in high school said many people went to the alley instead of the Inn because a) the publicity was greater and b) there was little adult supervision. However, teen night at the alley was very recently shut down due to a few drug busts and something to do with a bunch of kids who wore white bandanas and pretended they were a gang. So, now, this leaves some teens in North East with the options of smoking pot, having sex, skateboarding, or going to the South Shore Inn. Some local teens are choosing the first three.

The First Baptist Church of North East has condemned the Inn, leaving many teens to choose the first three options. The Baptist Church has a large influence on the small grape town. Many teens attend it and participate actively in the youth group. I find it wonderful that these teens are attempting to do something constructive with their time—the last thing the town needs is more teenage pregnancies. It's great that this church provides such service to the teens, but this relates back to kids listening to every single word the church says. The Pastor of the church has condemned the South Shore Inn because word spread that Graham is a lesbian.

Graham does admit she is a lesbian, and has been for years. She recently moved to the United States with her six children, attempting to start a new life. Her business, which had potential to be a complete success, is now suffering. Some townspeople are worried that she will try to recruit the teens that attend on Friday nights into her homosexual lifestyle. Do they see the fact that she is gay and owns a restaurant as devil worship? Teens are no longer allowed to attend the dances because parents are afraid that their children will turn out the same way.

This is absolute bigotry. Graham is not a terrible person because she chooses an alternate lifestyle, nor is it even slightly reasonable to say that she would attempt to recruit teens into the homosexual lifestyle. Is this a matter of the gay community versus the straight? Hardly. I am straight, and, like many of my friends with whom I've raised this issue, find this to be absolutely ridiculous. I am ashamed to say I am from North East. I can't believe that my small town would fall into such belief. Graham has managed to start two businesses in North East, prove herself as a wonderful mother, and as someone who cares for the community. What does my community do? They turn it around and throw it into her face.

Those who forbid their children to go to the club based on Graham's sexual orientation are essentially the people who are creating problems in our nation. They are fueling prejudice. The Bible says that all should be treated fairly without judgment, but they practice hypocrisy by making the public statements criticizing the Inn.

I am disgusted with those who have made prejudiced statements against the Inn and Graham. I do not know the woman personally, but also have never heard anything negative about her. Just as I am ashamed of North East right now, North East should be ashamed to be known for this.



Tell us what you think!

Send a letter to the Editor!

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'The Hot Debate of The Week'

Persecuting the panty raiders?

Are Greeks on this campus being targeted by law enforcement simply because they are Greek?

According to a memo sent to student organization presidents, "hazing is, but not limited to, ...any forced physical activity... any activity subjects the individual to extreme mental stress...or any other forced activity," this defines anything as hazing.

Why is it that we only hear of Greek organizations getting in trouble? Lion Ambassadors are required to wear their organization's shirts on meeting days, this is forced activity by the university's definition of hazing, the RA class must assist with organizing the ARC Blowout, this too would be hazing. However, if Alpha Sigma Alpha would require a pledge class to organize a community service event, they risk hazing accusations. The best advice is to "strongly encourage" instead of require.

Many organizations have requirements that must be met to earn membership, and to keep one's membership. The Greek organizations just seem to be criticized for it all the time. Meanwhile, it is these organizations that tend to do the most outstanding work. Wednesday night at "Take Back the Night" Alpha Sigma Alpha, Alpha Sigma Tau, Theta Phi Alpha and the Resident Assistant class were all participants. Sigma Kappa Nu sponsors one of the most popular and successful events on campus, Cider Rock, and several Greeks participate in the Adopt a Highway program.

It is so easy to cry wolf at Greek organizations. The policy on hazing applies to all campus organizations; therefore, why aren't all organizations reviewed as carefully?

Being a big name group on campus automatically leaves you open to criticism and pot shots, and it also leaves you open to the public eye. So, if the Greeks think that they are being targeted simply because they are Greek, then they are probably right.

However, there is no reason to think that the police or other law enforcement are out to get them, just like a celebrity is noticed by the paparazzi, the Greeks are going to be noticed by the people in charge.

The Greeks should stop whining and realize that if they are going to carry the title "Greek organization" then they have to face the fact that all eyes are on them. That goes for the good things that they do, along with the bad.

Being part of the Greek community shouldn't make people exempt from rules and basic laws. If you beat someone up in your front yard, then expect them to press charges. If you serve underage students and you get caught, expect some hefty fines. Don't expect people to turn a blind eye because you wear letters.

Although it is fair to state that all groups should be treated equally when it comes to hazing policies, it is also realistic to know that more low profile groups with no reputation for hazing are going to be overlooked.

In a perfect world, everyone would be treated the same. But just like athletes in college receive special treatment, so do Greeks. So a little heat on them now and then shouldn't get their panties in a bunch!

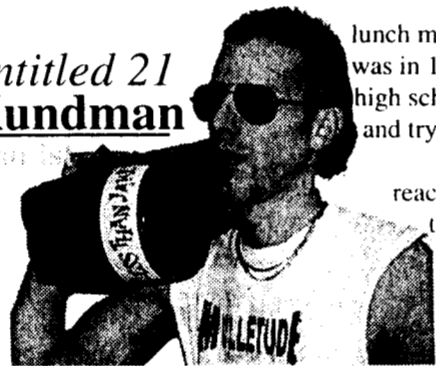
K.Galley

A.M. Havey

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

The Beacon's: Behind the Mullet

Untitled 21
Ben Kundman
editorial copy editor



Ben Kundman was born Freugen Greagen Haagen-Dazs on November 27, 1978 in a small farm town named Groberdummerbetrunkenerelefant in Luxembourg. He was the youngest of 18 children, born to two farmers named Freida and Hurst.

The Haagen-Dazs family emigrated to a sleepy town in south western Pennsylvania named New Eagle in the fall of 1992. No one knew what was in store for young Freugen Greagen. An excellent student in Luxembourg, Freugen Greagen soon fell in with the "burn outs" at school. He changed his name to "Ben Kundman" to better fit in with his newfound friends. High school was a troubling time for Ben, as he attempted to avoid the daily beat downs administered to him by the football team and resist the never-ending temptation to join the ranks of the local gang, the New Eagle Mulletts.

Ben had a Kurt Cobain style "butt cut" hairdo, but could never fully make the transition into Mullettude. Jared Matola, a local meathead who attended high school with Ben, had this to say about him: "Ben never really fit in with anyone. He always wanted to be a Mullet, but he was such a wimp the sixth graders used to steal his

lunch money off him even when he was in 11th grade." Ben spent his high school years dodging bullies and trying to find an identity.

By the time Ben had reached Penn State Behrend in the fall of 1997, he had a clear plan in mind how to turn his life around. "I was sick of being a nobody. I knew that the time was near. I was ready. I wanted to be a Mullet." The transition from being a normal college student into being a Mullet was not an easy one for Ben. It took three and a half years of eager anticipation before the time was right.

"Ben had been acting strange. He started going out all night and listening to nothing but eighties rock. I knew something was up when he bought hair clippers," said Nick Capozzoli, Ben's roommate.

The ascension into Mullettude began in the wee hours of Monday, April 2. Kundman was in the computer lab when a friend of his, Jason Derian, remarked that he liked giving fades but never had a chance to give someone a full blown Mullet. "I knew it was time. Spring was in the air, the girls were all wearing short shirts and mini skirts, and I wanted in on the action." Kundman was finally ready.

With a few deft strokes of hair-clippers, Ben Kundman was transformed from a mild-mannered college student into a "portaparty": a Mullet-sporting non-stop party machine.

"The day I saw Ben walk into class, I knew he was in trouble. I had rocked a

Mullet for several years, but the pressures of being a Mullet eventually became overwhelming. I retired from the life of a Mullet and became a math teacher," said Gregor Olsavsky, a math professor at Behrend.

Ben soon immersed himself in the Mullet lifestyle. After less than 12 hours of becoming a Mullet, Ben decided to join the ranks of the "Mullet Elite" by purchasing a '77 Special Edition Trans Am with T-tops and the bird insignia on the hood. "I can lay rubber for five minutes. Plus I found a Quiet Riot 8-track under the seat!"

The fun only lasted for a few hours. After a late night at local rock club "The Drunk Monkey," binging on Pez and Yoo-Hoo, Ben's blood sugar level was alarmingly high. The bouncer at the club had this to say: "I tried to get him to take a cab home, but he just wouldn't listen. I think the mullet was starting to go to his head!"

Ben crashed head-on into the world's largest freestanding fiberglass cow in Kearsy, Pa., at speeds in excess of 30 mph. "I totaled my Trans-Am, broke my jaw, lost eight teeth, got 15 stitches in my forehead, but, thank God, my mullet was OK."

Everyone around him realized he was beginning to fall to the wayside. "I knew he was in trouble when I found him passed out on his keyboard in the middle of a Counterstrike game with Twisted Sister blasting and a Yoo-Hoo mustache," said Capozzoli.

Ben's parents had this to say about his sudden change: "Dieser Verlierer hat uns nicht an drei Tagen angerufen, um um Geld

zu bitten. Etwas mub falsch sein."

Ben's life was spiraling out of control. "I had hit rock bottom, but I didn't realize it. Everyone told me to lose the Mullet, but it was so much a part of me I physically couldn't. Every time I saw a pair of scissors I would get all antsy, and the sound of hair clippers nearly gave me an anxiety attack." Derian, the hair-cutting Hessian from hell, the one who brought Ben into the world of the Mullet, had this to say: "I had known Mulletts before. Lots of them. But none of them ever took it as far as Ben did. He was just dumb."

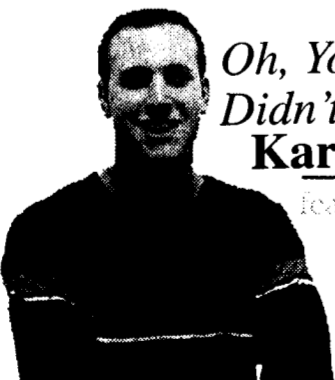
After about 48 hours with the Mullet, the lifestyle started to catch up with Ben. "I didn't know whether people liked me because of my mullet, or if they actually liked me for me." Depressed, Ben played a record 22 straight hours of Counterstrike, utilizing Depends undergarments so he never had to get up from his computer.

"When my computer finally crashed halfway into my 22nd hour of Counterstrike, I finally realized enough was enough. I was better off with the old me. But you know what? The time I had as a Mullet, man, that was the best 50 hours of my life. I wouldn't give it up for the world."

Congratulations and good luck to all the Senior Part Ones, Senior Part Twos, and even Senior Part Threes who are graduating this spring. This article is dedicated to each and every one of my friends who are graduating. Thank you all for making these past four years the best years of my life.

Kundman's column appeared every three weeks.

Free at last!



Oh, You Didn't Know?
Karl Benacci
features page co-editor

Ahhhh...the spring semester will soon be over. I think that it's a safe bet to say that this year was tough for many of us, but we have battled through the exams and papers for that one common goal--summertime. Yes, my nose can almost smell the sweet scent of summer, for it is waiting for me just around the corner. For me, summertime means gorgeous weather, long days, fun weekends, and the nearly impossible search for an Erie girl who looks good in a bikini.

This brings me to my point. I have always yearned for summer, much like how Billy Madison yearns for chocolate Snack Packs and Miss Veronica Vaughn. I am ecstatic that my favorite season is

coming up. I not only love summer because it's warm and beautiful (like the lovely Miss Vaughn), and because my birthday is in July, but I also love the summer months for another reason. I am away from Behrend and instead of studying I can make money working and there is still time to have plenty of fun!

Now, don't get me wrong. Behrend is a nice place and all, but I love getting away from such things as Bruno's food (I swear they use Yeti meat in their cheeseburgers!), early classes, boring lectures, and the stupid kid who lives next door to me and keeps turning the thermostat to freezing cold so that he doesn't have a heart attack when he sweats from brushing his teeth.

But getting back to what I like about summer; I like working. Oh yes, that four letter word. W-O-R-K. Many people despise it, but I welcome it. Why? After eight months of frying my brain and turning it into mush (much like the pudding that is in Billy's Snack Packs) I need a break because my brain (yes... I

have a brain) gets quite famished at this point in the semester. So what kind of summer job is good for a college students brain? Easy. A job that requires little to no responsibility.

Take me for instance. In the summertime, I landscape for a company. It's a great job since mowing lawns and trimming bushes can be done with very little brainpower. This is why I find it shocking when some of my friends get jobs that stress them out.

Last summer, my best friend worked for a company named West. His job basically consisted of answering phones and taking orders for "high quality" infomercial items such as the Torso Track, the Igia Clear Blemish System, and Singing Big Mouth Billy Bass (what kind of stuff was the dude smoking when he invented this stupid thing).

My friend hated his job for he didn't like to be stuck in an office all day. But why be miserable during summer vacation? I believe that a summer job should be somewhat enjoyable. After all, a student who works his butt off for two-thirds of a year should be able to have a

little break and take it easy.

So what does the average college student do in the summertime when not working? Well, I don't know about you all, but I like hanging out with my friends. It doesn't matter where we go or what we do, whether it's watching a movie, going to Canada, or just hanging out at one of our homes. For summertime is all about relaxing and having fun, and making some money at the same time.

I urge all of you to have a good summer and take full advantage of it. Remember, Erie's winters last for nearly six months, so every nice day is a special day. Before we know it, we returning students will be coming back for another fun-filled semester of mayhem, so enjoy summer while you can. If you ever have the audacity to say, "It's too hot outside," just imagine the snowy sub-zero temperature of Erie in the wintertime. On that note, have a great summer!

Benacci's column appeared every three weeks.