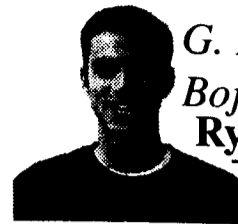


Pardon my French



G. Love and
Bojangles
Ryan Anthony

editorial columnist

This summer I set foot in Paris, London, and Rome in a 24-hour period. I traveled from London to France, Italy, and the Netherlands almost at my leisure. From London, all of Europe is a hop, skip, jump, and a few dollars away. By way of trains and planes you can get just about anywhere in Europe in a few hours. Where can you get from Erie with only a hundred-dollar budget? For that matter, where can you get from Pittsburgh, Buffalo, or Cleveland with such little money? If you make last-minute plans, you might be able to pick up an E-saver from USAirways, but \$100 can get you just about anywhere in Europe. If any of you readers assume that the United States is the greatest country on Earth in every aspect, you are totally wrong. Yes, we may be a worldwide heavyweight despite our relatively young 225ish years, but we don't hold a candle to Europe in terms of excitement.

With only a few hundred years under our belt, what do we have to show for it? Maybe a few crumbling historical landmarks or big ol' plantation houses in the south, but not too much else. Walk down any street in Amsterdam and it's doubtful you will find a building younger than 300 years. It's not unusual in small Italian towns to find 500-year-old churches. Westminster Abbey, open to tourists every day, has been around since 1065. I'm not sure, but maybe the States has cave paintings from the same era.

Anyway, back to whatever point I had, how does one travel to all of these places? I always wanted to study abroad and I chose to do so this past summer in Northampton, England. Northampton is a town similar in size to Erie, located about an hour northwest of London. An hour by train, that is. Who goes anywhere by train here in the States? In London and the rest of Europe that I saw, train travel is an everyday occurrence. Train tracks crisscross the continent across the pond, connecting every major city. The point is that you can get anywhere by train in Europe, while here in the States, nobody has any idea about where a train will take you.

Back to studying abroad. First off, the plane ride from Pittsburgh to London was awesome. Not only did they "give" us cool USAirways silverware and blankets, but there was also a TV screen built into the headrest of the seat in front of yours.

I took one class in Europe and I'm not too sure that I learned all that much from it. However, I learned so much more traveling than I have ever learned in any classroom.

Cultural differences are almost impossible to miss. England is the most similar country to the United States. The only major differences are the accent, everything costs more, and every pub serves ice-cold, frothy, deliciously dark Guinness, God's gift to beer drinkers. Amsterdam and Paris—well, all the stereotypes you hear of them are true. Paris is full of rude grape-stompers who know only enough English to take your money and not give you what you paid for. Amsterdam's red-light district is full of um, well, red lights and yes, "coffee shops" are plentiful too. And how many of you can say you've been to a sex museum—now that's culture! No wonder the city has some of the friendliest people I have ever met.

For the most part, Italians were remarkably friendly. The first thing we saw after stepping off the plane in Rome was a group of Italian soldiers armed with fully automatic weapons. That was kind of scary, but other than that, I had the best time of my life in Italy. I gorged myself with the best food ever and explored some of the most beautiful buildings and works of art in the world. I could have spent weeks in Rome and Florence and still not seen it all.

This is my concluding paragraph, so maybe I should make up some sort of point to this rambling. My point is, you should go see Ruth Pfluger in the Learning Resource Center in the library. She will hook you up with an amazing trip somewhere, and you can get some credits out of it, too, no matter what your major is. Study abroad early in your college years. That way you'll be able to go back again before you graduate and have to get a real job.

Anthony's column appears every three weeks.



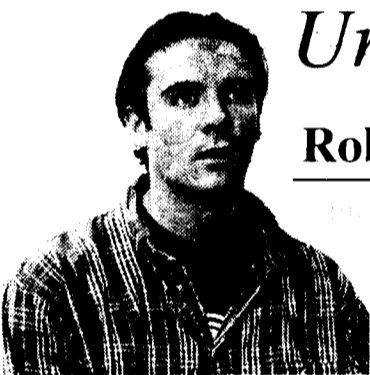
SAKS
STAR TALKS

Are you sick of drinking alone?



THEN ENTER THE BEACON'S WIN A DATE RAFFLE!

COMING NEXT WEEK!



Untitled
Rob Walsh

There has never really been a more unsettling time. Not in my relatively short existence and most likely not in the lives of those who have lived through prior wars, Vietnam, Pearl Harbor, and other taxing yet non-war related horror. It's an emotional famine. There aren't many people more under-qualified than myself when it comes to forming some type of cogent analysis. I know nothing. When I first heard the news, it was 11 a.m. and I was distressed over the prospect of not having waffles in the freezer.

It's weeks now after the incident. We've

all been branded, scarred, every aspect of our collective nation tattooed. When a musical artist releases a record there is talk of delayed tours and donation to relief efforts. Sporting events are attended hesitantly, with fans looking over their shoulders wondering if the "crack" of a home run is really a gunshot or some type of veiled threat from the suddenly suspicious looking man in the upper row. Teachers resume classes amidst remembrance prayers and national pride days, and inherit students who somehow have to find motivation for sedimentary rock formations. But it all comes wrapped in our universal disclaimer: "It really doesn't matter anyway."

And it doesn't. We've all resumed our versions of normal functioning daily routine with this enormous cloud of uncertainty hanging above. "What's going on now?" "What have I missed since lunch?" "Have we sent the ground troops in?" "Will I be drafted?" "Will they pull my cousin out of the rubble today?" "Is my government tell-

ing the whole truth?" Our normalcy has been massacred. We listen to dozens of media and entertainment personalities describe the experience "surreal," yet sit there feeling this distinct and stagnant pain. The crumbling airline business now deals with customers who inquire about armed guards as casually as they would in-flight peanuts. Flight tickets are purchased with one eye on prices and the other on the possibility of a related clandestine prophecy of Nostradamus. Someone's dear sweet grandmother calls talk radio shows and offers her solutions for dealing with Bin Laden: "We catch him. Then, we tie him in a cell and drench him with pig blood, and let the dogs eat him alive before chopping off his head—cause then he won't get his precious paradise." Idiots covertly suggest to their friends that an Arab they know is very critical, very anti-American, and friends reply things like, "Well, he should get the hell out," and then the Islamic Temple in Erie gets a bomb threat. We're a circus.

But it really doesn't matter anyway. People have started exercising again and

laughing and I could probably throw out a joke right now and you may chuckle (very likely). That's not bad. It's not bad to have fun and stay in shape and continue to live, to enjoy life. It's just different. For some reason, Bush's spoken miscues ceased being annoying and now are vaguely endearing. Everyone seemingly put their car horn on mute. Odd strangers say things like "hello" and "God bless" and wait six hours to give blood. Newscasters cry on television and have trouble speaking clearly on the prospect of biological and nuclear warfare. The classic hippie is resurging.

I don't know. Nothing is important and everything is sacred. Everything is sacred and nothing is important. A few days ago, I cut an American flag out of the newspaper and tacked it on my wall.

Walsh's column appears every three weeks.

Home, loud and noisy and miserable, home



Attitude problem
Paige Miles

assistant managing editor

I thought it would never come. I thought I was out. I thought I had escaped. And now I have been sucked back in.

On June 1, 2000, I moved out of my ridiculously small hometown and joined the not-so-thriving metropolis of Erie...well, Wesleyville. I lived in my own apartment. If I wanted to stay up until three in the morning playing old school Tetris, I would. If I wanted to live on Taco Bell and Banquet dinners, I did. I was blessed with freedom. I didn't have to call if I wasn't coming home by 2 a.m. or if I wasn't coming home for a few days. No one cared if the computer or television was left on all night. Life was good.

Yeah, ok, it was hard, seeing that living in my own apartment got to be a bit pricey, even when the bills were split with roommates. My habitual shopping addiction and determination to decorate the apartment with the finest and coolest goods didn't help

either. But who cared? I was out.

Leaving home was an accomplishment for me. Many people never actually get out of my town. Their grandparents have lived there, their parents met in high school, fell in love, and then had them. They won't leave because it's all they've ever known. I have been blessed to be able to travel; to see that there is a lot more outside of our little corner of Pennsylvania. And now, that I have been forced to move home, I feel like I have failed. I am determined to get out again.

And now, I have moved into a realm of chaos. I do love my actual house—it's absolutely gorgeous. But it's what goes on inside the house that drives me nuts.

First, we just got a collie-shepherd mix puppy. Wrangler, only about four months old, has to be more difficult to deal with than a 6-year-old on Prozac and Mountain Dew. Sure, he's adorable. All puppies are...until they bite. And he bites. And jumps. And smells like dead fish. We have attempted to give him numerous stuffed animals to chew on, hoping he would stop eating extension cords and the cat's food. The poor stuffed chihuahua we gave him to befriend is missing its head and sombrero. And not only does he harass the

stuffed animals, he harasses the real ones. Our elderly cocker spaniel has to put up a fight every day just to eat and sleep; I don't expect the cat to stick around much longer either.

I can deal with the animals, though. It's actually the phone that's about to end up in the lake. Since my father's office is in our living room, his phone is constantly ringing. The typical phone call occurs at 6:30 a.m. and usually has some old guy asking about money market accounts or wanting the quote on some obscure stock. Hey, guess what—the stock market isn't open until 9ish. So go away.

My 15-year-old sister is worse. She's claimed our common phone line as her own, leaving me to communicate with only my cell phone. Last night, I was trying to study accounting and take in my weekly share of television, when the phone rang three times within five minutes. All three calls, like most of the calls, consist of: "Claire? Hey, where's Claire? Do you know if she'll be home soon? Did she do the bio homework? Do you know what she's wearing tomorrow? Is she going to Kaile's house on Friday?" Yeah, I know about as much about my sister's whereabouts, wardrobe, and social life as I do about 6:30 a.m. money market accounts.

In most houses, one could escape to her room to escape the noise. My totalitarian sister has not only taken over the phone, the TV, and the fridge, but also my old room. Hence, I had to move into her room. I literally have no floor. Imagine moving a whole apartment's worth of clothing and crap into a room half the size of a dorm room. My mattress is on the floor, which touches the computer desk, which touches the dresser, which block off access to my pseudo-closet. My door, lacking a knob, doesn't even fully close due to the bed being in the way.

And last, there are the stupid things. My father only buys junk food, I'm only allowed to do one load of laundry a day, and heat is non-existent. I have to wake up at 5:30 a.m. to make sure I catch a shower before the hot water is gone. The bickering is constant. Yeah, I'm daddy's girl, but we only love each other when we are at least 20 miles apart.

Give it a few more months, and I'm sure my father will be sick of me and about ready to pay me to move out. Oh, home, sweet home.

Miles' column appears every three weeks.

'The Hot Debate of The Week' Here ist mein papers.

Should the United States issue a national identification card in the interest of national security?

Issuing national identity cards is an idea our government is considering right now. Many people in our nation are against this due to the potential infringement on our civil liberties. The benefits of clear, quick, accurate identification far outweigh the civil liberties lost.

With our current state of heightened national security, many Arab-Americans as well as Americans whose ethnicities have features which resemble Arabs have been subject to suspicion and even unnecessary detention. A national identity card would be counterfeit-proof, and would definitively show that a person was an American. National identity cards would be much more difficult to obtain for terrorists than fake passports and drivers licenses are.

The loss of privacy that comes with national identity cards is the first concern of most Americans. If you have a social security number, a driver's license, and a credit card, your life is already pretty much public. Every major purchase you've made, house you've lived in, and bank you've had accounts with are on a computer, somewhere. A profile of your entire life could be made and exploited by someone with an Internet connection and the knowledge of where to look. A national identity card would make lives no more public than they currently are.

Identity theft is a common occurrence in the U.S., due to the ease at which addresses, social security numbers, and bank account numbers can be obtained. A national identity card would be counterfeit-proof, and would reduce the occurrence of identity theft. In many cases thieves can obtain bank account numbers by simply providing a social security number at a bank.

Although issuing national identity cards would be a politically unpopular move, it is necessary in this time of conflict.

B. Kundman

Is this Nazi Germany? Is this the Soviet Union? Is this Red China? No. Then why establish a National Identification Card system?

This is the United States of America, the land of the free, the nation of rights and individual freedoms. Our government does not need to issue any papers or cards so that our citizens can freely travel. We need not a monitoring system.

The National Identification Card is an idea being considered by President Bush in light of the recent terrorist attack. The idea's supporters are claiming that the cards will help catch terrorists. They feel that the card will hinder their entrance into the United States and their travel between the states. Their intentions are good, they have our safety in mind, and the idea may stop some attacks. But with this protection we will be giving up rights. We will be compromising our values. I shudder at the mental picture of being stopped at state borders and being asked for my National Identification Card as if I were living in a military dictatorship.

As a free nation we will always be vulnerable. But that is who we are. We are a free people. The way to combat this problem is not to wage a war against our rights, but on the source of what is threatening those rights. We must take action on the external forces, not on our internal principles.

Those responsible for the attack on the United States feel that our nation is evil. They feel that we pay too much attention to the individual. They hate the freedoms and rights we bestow to all men and women. To them and their twisted logic, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of trade, freedom of travel are totally ridiculous notions. They hate us for our stance on individual liberty. To take away these rights would be to give into the terrorists. We would be changing to suit these despicable enemies of freedom.

Although the National Identification Card idea might protect us, it would be a compromise of our principles. We are our principles and we should not alter those principles at any cost. Our freedoms must be kept and secured even in these times of vulnerability. If we take away our rights, then we will be defeated as a nation.

G. Reschenthaler

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