

The Behrend Beacon

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

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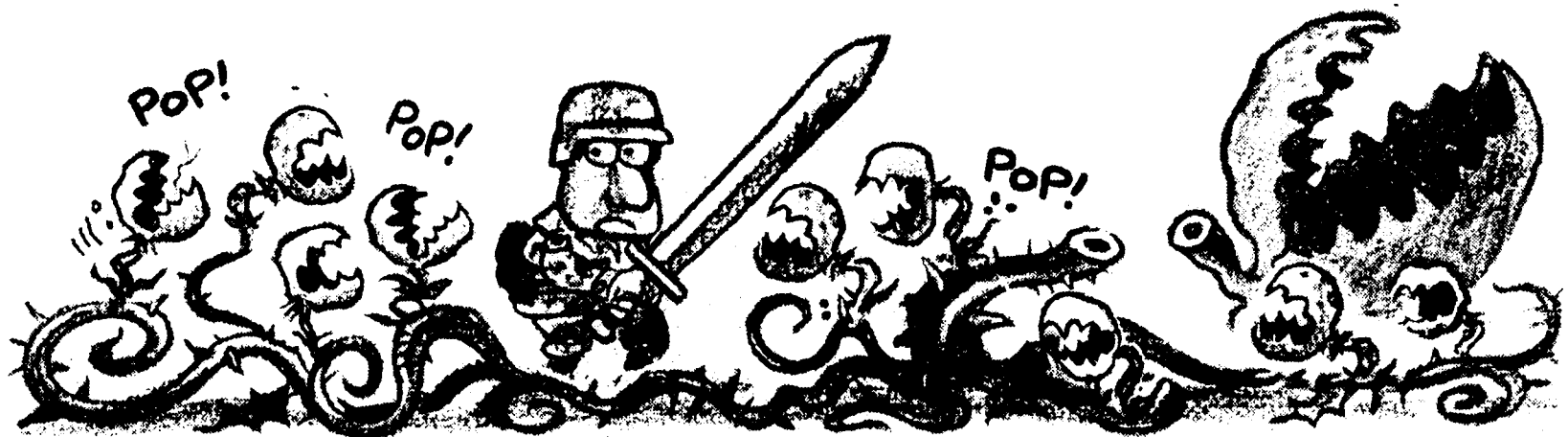
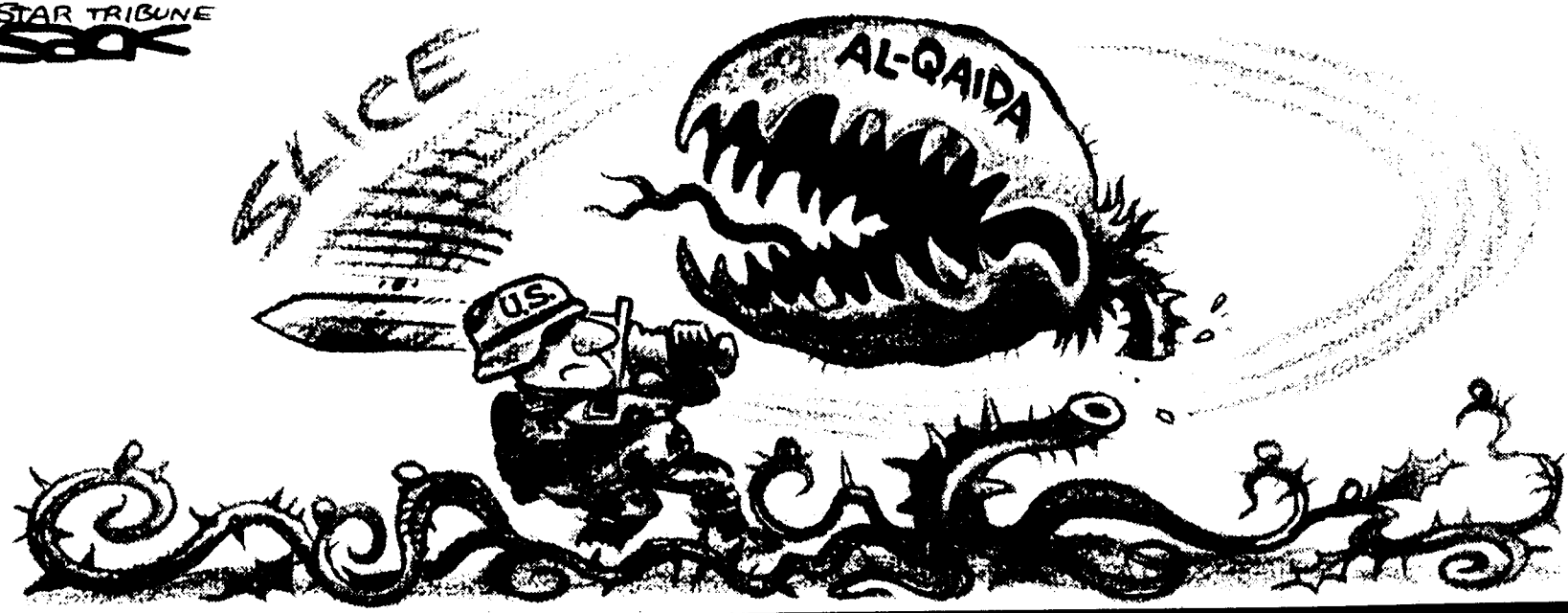
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"Professionalism
with a Personality"

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The View From the Lighthouse

Life in prison: a sentence deserving of her actions

The message was clear-cut after the verdict was delivered: She is not insane. She knew she was responsible. She will serve her sentence for as long as she lives.

Andrea Yates, found guilty of capital murder, received her sentence in less than 40 minutes and was given her place in jail for as long as she lives. In 40 years, she will be eligible for parole. The Beacon staff agrees that Yates received exactly what she deserved.

The country held their breath in the short 24-hour period between Yates' verdict and sentence, wondering if a woman who suffered severe postpartum depression and schizophrenia would be condemned to death, even though the court ruled that she was not legally insane and that she was consciously aware of right and wrong. Not to mention that the entire trial took place in Texas, notorious for its death-sentence record.

Several political issues surround this woman's fate. One New York Times editorialist sees a major flaw in the justice system because Yates, who was considered sane at the time of her children's murders, was given life in prison. Mario Marquez, this editorialist reports, had an IQ of about 65 and discussed animals and drawing with his lawyer. Marquez, mentally retarded and severely abused as a boy, was executed in 1995 for raping and killing a teenager.

This is not to say that the staff sees a double standard in the justice system and has decided that Ms. Yates, because she is white and middle class with a normal IQ, deserves her life. Putting aside race, income, and intelligence, Yates was sane enough to call the police after she killed her children and told police she was prepared to face the consequences she would most likely face.

Her admission to realizing her future prosecution was interpreted by the state of Texas to be an admission to guilt, a factor in recognizing right and/or wrong. Yates knew that she broke the law and was prepared to accept her sentence when she was convicted of first-degree murder.

In any case, her trial has brought out scathing criticisms of the Houston justice system. One person wrote to the New York Times editor that he was "ashamed to be a Houstonian...[where] only a clearly insane person could be convicted." Another wrote, "it is time for the Legislature...to redress the ill-advised and tragic legislative proscription that does not exist in 48 other states."

Perhaps some of these are true, in that Yates was already under a doctor's care for her multiple illnesses. Yet others insist that Yates deserves the pity and the forgiveness from using her own hands to drown her children, one at a time, in her own home.

Her admission of guilt and her ready acceptance of her sentence is enough reason to demonstrate that the judicial system is still working. She came already prepared for what was to happen. In light of this, Ms. Yates deserved the sentence she earned.



Our scummy mall



Oh, you didn't know?
Karl Benacci

Back in the day, there were two locations in the mall where people could go and sit. There were steps surrounding these places (for the most part) so one could take a few steps down to an area where there were built-in benches and telephones. This is where the "mall rats" hung out and talked; it was their home base for displaying their new Mohawks and trading Garbage Pail Kids. I don't know why they removed these spectacular craters (it was around 10 years ago) but it definitely sucked when they did.

Last weekend, I made time to visit the Millcreek Mall. I hadn't been there for a few months, so I was curious whether anything was different in the mall.

Unfortunately, nothing was different (except for the \$1 vending machines). Stupid Abercrombie & Fitch was still there. Waves and the old Gap location remained vacant (I know the Gap was moved). The nail place still reeked of chemicals and the pet store still had inbred animals that stared at me with their dull Alabama eyes.

The mall wasn't packed, but there were still a good number of people milling around, searching for deals.

That's when I looked into the past and unearthed my vintage Millcreek Mall memories. Perhaps I can muster a smile for those of you who have lived in Erie since childhood.

Moving on, remember when the mall was a cool location? Yep, in middle school the mall was the place to be. All my friends and I did was walk around and eat food from Picnic Pizza (it also moved). Combining that with watching fellow teenagers fight one another outside made a fun day at the mall. The only thing that sucked was the cigarette smoke. My parents would get pissed because they thought I was smoking with my friends. Crazy.

What has happened to the mall? Its appeal has died, or perhaps it has lost

favor with me, but it appears it isn't doing too well. Case in point: The Bazaar Court. What the hell is this place? It's spooky. In one of my classes I wrote a horror story that ended there because the place is...well, bizarre. It was once the land of C&J Sports Cards and now it has been slimmed down to a NASCAR store and a gift shop.

It doesn't end there. The idea of throwing booths in the middle of the mall (I think it started with the airbrush shirt place) has multiplied to include corny gift shops and handwriting analyst booths. Instead of a mall, it resembles a flea market.

Throw that together with the pink neon lights and you get one word—tacky. Now, yes I know I write silly things on the humor page (when they actually get published) and I enjoy writing about odd things, but I can assure you, I know a mangy mall when I see one, and our mall is a tacky eyesore.

I didn't mind the mall's appearance when I was a little kid (maybe because I wore Velcro shoes and a Scooby-Doo shirt with warm-up pants) or a young teenager (a Big

Johnson tee-shirt with basketball shoes? What was I thinking?!) But the mall has brought a smirk to my face ever since high school, when the pink lights went up and that stupid "Take it home to the Millcreek Mall" song invaded my television and radio.

Let's face it, our mall is embarrassing and it needs major renovation, especially now, because the new plaza that surrounds the mall (Dick's, Old Navy, etc) is really nice and puts it to shame.

Part of the shopping experience is the appeal of the location one shops at. The mall is about as appealing as that dancing guy on the Rocket 101 commercial in spandex (an old school Erie commercial for all you non-Erie people) and something has to be done to make it a more enjoyable place.

Benacci's column appears every three weeks.

Watching TV through beer goggles



Don't believe everything you read

Kevin Fallon

itself after 225 years of being the most powerful nation in the world? That's right: Celebrity Boxing.

Today's television is like beer. It doesn't really entertain you; it just dumbs you down enough to give you the illusion of being entertained. And the television viewing public is drunk with stupidity.

Don't get me wrong, there are plenty of quality shows out there. But there are far too many programs that are too idiotic for television. However, television does not seem to be too idiotic for the American public. Shows such as "Jerry Springer," "Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire," and "Temptation Island" reflect the de-evolution of American television and the simple-mindedness of a nation.

Entertainment has stopped being entertainment and become a shock value contest between the networks. From pointless profanity to eating brains, TV has become a gratuitous freak show.

I am not promoting censorship. I am not against violence, profanity, or crudeness. I am against stupidity.

What does the U.S. have to show for

The Fox special, Celebrity Boxing, featured washed up "stars" putting up their dukes for an old fashioned slugfest.

The show is a prime example of the asinine programming presented by the American media. The most embarrassing part of the special was not its lack of taste, intelligence, or wit, but the fact that it drew 15.6 million viewers.

Well, if the American public wants to give up on democracy and civilization, I am all for it. In fact, I would like to see the Celebrity Boxing concept spread throughout all aspects of U.S. culture.

Behrend could adapt its own version of Celebrity Boxing to the campus. Imagine it.

Match one: Mike "Bad Ass" Butala vs. The "Really P.O. ed" entire Behrend campus.

Behrend writer Mike Butala managed to offend nearly everyone on campus with his controversial articles such as "Women Belong in the Kitchen." The campus, out for blood, challenges Butala

to a "fight to the death" in a steel cage.

Pre-fight odds heavily favor the entire campus of 3,500 people over the solo Butala. However, judges award the win to Butala because not one of the 3,500 apathetic students bother to show up to the fight. In his victory speech, Butala calls the campus as "a bunch of p.c. broods." The campus responds in anger, and rematch is scheduled. But no one shows up to that either.

One person manages to write a letter to the Beacon complaining of Butala's undefeated record.

Match two: Police and Safety vs. those kids who get in the Police and Safety report for smoking weed every week, but Police and Safety never actually catches.

Police and Safety Officers, increasingly aggravated by the elusive bud smokers, decide to take their fight into the ring.

The fight starts off excellent for the Police and Safety Officers, who apply a through beating to the burnouts. However, things go sour when the officers develop a second-hand buzz.

The opponents leave the ring together and go to Bruno's to fight another battle: the munchies.

All parties die of food poisoning and Bruno's is awarded the victory.

I must say, after seeing how the Celebrity Boxing mentality could benefit real-life America, I have changed my opinion from the beginning of the article. Not only can violence solve problems; it is wildly entertaining.

Fox said it is planning a sequel to Celebrity Boxing. I only hope it features Ted Koppel in a mud-wrestling match against Dan Rather. If the American media is going to make fools of itself; it might as well go all out.

It is hard to put the blame for the growing idiocy in television solely on the networks. They are just giving the people what they want. Let's enjoy the keg party of entertainment while it lasts, because soon TV viewers will be hungover and puking their guts out.

I guess that together the public and the networks will embark on the downward spiral of broadcasting until the only program on TV is the 24-hour Bevis and Butthead channel.

Until then, take care of yourself and each other.

Fallon's column appears every three weeks.