

The State of The Beacon Address

A professor once said, "The Beacon is a joke."

Nine students in that professor's class said, "Her class is a joke."

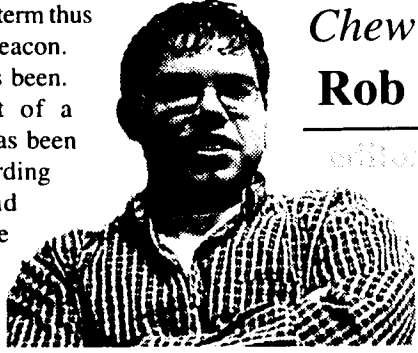
What goes around comes around; I don't know who said what first.

Two semesters have passed and so marks the end of my term thus far for the Behrend Beacon. And what a year it has been. Being the president of a student organization has been one of the most rewarding experiences I've had during my last three years at Behrend. I'll probably be coming back in the fall with the same title, but I need to stop first and reflect a bit on what has helped make the Beacon a better student newspaper, regardless of what any two-bit professors have to say about it.

Thirty hours a week in perhaps the smallest office space of any newspaper in Pennsylvania is enough to make anyone go crazy. I didn't go crazy, however. Not when I had the hardest working group of people who bent over backward each week to see that "professionalism with a personality" was the basis of each Beacon to hit the stands every Friday. Since the Beacon seemed to ignite

some flames of controversy on campus this past year, I would say my section editors and I have done a pretty good job of doing what a good newspaper is supposed to do - inform its audience, state the facts, express feelings and viewpoints about those facts, and lastly, to entertain!

Chew on this Rob Wynne



I would not, however, be lying if I said that the Beacon has the poorest paid staff in Northwestern Pa. A lot of other schools give tuition breaks to their editors, and it's school money. I was able to pay many members of my staff this semester for their time and dedication, but those funds come from advertising revenue, money the Beacon could and should be using towards buying better equipment, and offering incentives for writers to produce quality articles, instead of the 100-word press releases that make it out of some COMM class with an A- slapped on the top.

With that aside, I would like to make known some of the improvements to the Beacon that my staff and I have implemented over the past year.

1) Not only maintaining a budget, but a budget surplus. When I took over the Beacon, there were left-over bills and people to pay. With the help of a great new ad staff and business manager, I was able to pay off those bills and pay everyone on my current staff, as well as spend the SAF printing money wisely.

2) Going from just one Internet connection in the office to having five. Thanks to SAF and a little help from the Beacon's tech support crew (Doug Butterworth), the Beacon was able to utilize the computers to their fullest extent.

3) Deadlines! Having the paper ready to go Thursday night by midnight was a year-long goal. The past few weeks we have met that goal. That's an improvement from 2 or 3 a.m. Friday!

4) Successful adoption of supplement pages to the Beacon (e.g. Humor page, Health page, Tech page). According to the results of our recent campus-wide Beacon readership survey, everyone seemed to like the Humor page for the most part, despite a few people who had no sense of what the word "funny" meant. Come on, it's a college paper! We made sure that nothing in the paper was more vulgar than one would watch on prime-time

NBC or CBS. And if you didn't like something in the paper, I'm hoping you flipped the page as you would change a TV channel.

As it does every year, the Beacon did encounter controversy. What was different this semester, though, is that we received a more-than-usual number of letters from professors. Let me tell you a little something about professors. They specialize. And it's more than just studying an area in-depth, professors adopt the mentality that they are "special," and it is only their opinion that matters, hands down. Just because we published or help pass along a message that was not in one person's viewpoint, our paper was put down by many with the same mentality. But, the very simple fact of the matter is "that's business." The Beacon is not solely about writing articles. There are workings of a small business behind the paper. And that's a fact, hands down.

What has bothered me the most is that despite what I heard from numerous sources about what some instructors had to say about the Beacon (whether it was good or bad), not one professor stopped down to the office to say, "Hey, I have an idea to help the Beacon..."

I am disappointed with the communications department in the respect that it allows some of its faculty (whose

classes are mediocre at best) to chastise the best student newspaper in the Erie area, considering there no print journalism classes at Behrend. There are no courses where students can learn the fundamentals of PageMaker or Photoshop, two tools that are vastly utilized in the "communications" world. I've had to do your job there, folks.

But, despite the few bad apples we encountered over the year, I would like to thank the handful of professors like Mr. Kerwin and Dr. Troester for their continued support of the Beacon, realizing that belonging to such an organization is a learning experience in itself, and offering a little guidance when it was appropriate.

One of the things that I have learned is that regardless of how exceptional something can be, there is always room for improvement. To that extent, my staff and I are developing a list of goals for the fall - things that we want to see implemented most at the Beacon.

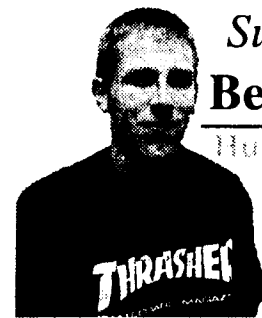
Hopefully, we can work out any nooks and crannies that the paper may have, while still having more fun than a barrel of monkeys at the same time. But, let me ask the rest of you, do you know what direction you want to go, where do you want to improve? Have a great summer, everyone, see you in the fall.

Do you want your voice to be heard?

Become a Beacon Editorialist next fall.

Send a 500 word sample editorial to:
behrcoll2@aol.com

Graduating college in 4 years is like leaving a party at 10:30 p.m.



Superfreak Ben Kundman

Humor/Editorial Page Editor

I started Penn State Behrend in the fall of 1997 a lanky, fresh-faced, snot nosed freshman who had a lot of growing up to do. Now, five years and 5,000 beers later, I am a lanky, not-so fresh faced, snot nosed super senior about to graduate.

Summing up five years of your life in 1,000 words is pretty much impossible unless it consists entirely of fragments such as "drank a lot" and "ate crappy food." In order to try and maximize the amount of content within this editorial, I am going to fall back on my old stand-by, the list, or more specifically, a list of people and things that have changed my life for the better in the past five years.

Professors: While in high school, only the "nerds" have any sort of rapport with the teachers. However, all of this changes once college is

reached. Professors treat students as equals and students treat professors as people, not baby sitters. This mutual respect helped me realize the great impact on life that my teachers and professors have had

on me. To name a few (this list is by no means complete) at Behrend who have been particularly noteworthy:

Robert Michael. Mr. Michael taught my first strength of materials class. This class is probably the most fundamental engineering class there is, and before I took it, I was unsure of why I had entered engineering. Mr. Michael made a seemingly dull class interesting to all students by relating it to real world problems, thereby making me realize what engineers really do. Thanks, Mr. Michael.

Richard Englund. Anyone who has had Mr. Englund before will definitely comment on his enthusiasm. 210W: Machine Design. Sounds like a class you'd sleep through ever single day, correct? Wrong. Mr. Englund's unbelievable enthusiasm and bottomless bag of topical stories made this class worth going to and staying awake for every day. In addition to 210W, Mr. E is currently the glue that holds the Super Mileage Vehicle team

together. Thanks, Mr. Englund.

Tom Briseldon a.k.a. Briz. I had Briz three straight semesters in a row: Thermodynamics, Heat Transfer, and Hydraulics.

Thermodynamics was the first class he ever taught in his life, and, admittedly, his teaching was a little rough. However, in the ensuing semesters, I have watched him mature into a great teacher who truly cares about his students and the subject matter. Briz's greatest attribute is his enthusiasm about teaching and his desire to constantly improve. Thanks, Briz.

Dave Johnson. ANSYS would quite possibly be my least favorite computer program on the planet if it weren't for Mr. Johnson. In fact, I now feel quite comfortable with it and look forward to using it in industry.

Mr. Johnson never hesitated to stop class for one student's question, would always take five, 10, or 30 minutes of his office time for a student's questions or problems no matter how busy he was, and was an amazing faculty advisor for our A.S.M.E. student section. Thanks, Mr. Johnson.

Of course, there are many more, but in the interest of brevity I would like to say thanks

to all of the faculty who have helped make my college career the best five years of my life.

Friends:

When I was in high school, my friends were pretty much limited to the "skaters" due to some intra-school hostilities that I will save for a psychiatrists' coach.

Once arriving at college, the notion of separatism was thrown out the window. In the past five years I have befriended people who I would have never had the opportunity to associate with in high school.

My friends have been there for me when I needed a ride, a few dollars, or someone to talk to at five in the morning. I honestly don't think I would have made it through certain periods of my life without the support of my friends. I have (and have had, as many are already alumni) such an amazing group of friends here at school I don't think I could possibly recreate it in any atmosphere ever again.

As much as I would like to thank each and every one of you, I don't think I could without forgetting a few, so thank you all, you know who you are. Keep in touch. (ecfu855@msn.com)

My family:

I am extremely fortunate to have a family that has supported me financially and mentally throughout college. Any time I needed someone to talk to I could pick up the phone and call any one of two some odd dozen family members ready to listen. The holidays and random weekends I would head home I could always expect a home cooked meal and a warm bed in a room that didn't smell like feet. All of the holidays featured great family get-togethers and many of my random weekends at home my parents, sister, brother-in-law, and both sets of grandparents would head out for some grub somewhere in "dahtahn" Pittsburgh.

Both of my parents are teachers, and therefore, they both know the value of education. Their motivation to see me through college has inspired me to work hard throughout my life and hopefully provide the same educational opportunities as I was provided to my children.

I don't think I would have graduated, let alone started, school without an amazing immediate and extended family who encouraged me to do my best every step of the way.

Thank you and I love you all...

The games we play at Mary Jo's Way



Attitude problem Paige Miles

Business Manager

I'd like to start with a small complaint. I think Mother Nature must have hit menopause this year. Snow on April 22? What a cruel joke. Take some damn hormones.

And now, for the real editorial. Back in December, I moved in with three former Beaconians. (One left in February, now it's down to me and two former Beaconians). Living in a townhouse can be quite fun; here's a small portion of how we entertain

ourselves:

Champ: Champ is our new puppy. We really aren't sure what kind of dog he is, but he's still pretty cool. Initially, Katie and I liked to play the "watch Champ run into things" game. We would throw one of Champ's many toys into the kitchen, towards the sliding glass doors. Mind you, our kitchen floor is surprisingly clean and slick. Champ would slide head first into the sliding glass door. After a week of this, he gained some traction control. Jay didn't like this game too much, and Katie and I started feeling bad for hurting the dog.

Champ is a pretty wound-up puppy. We often think he needs some sort of doggy valium, or maybe just fixed, but that would take all the fun away. Simply stomping and growling at him will make

him run in circles around the house. He often goes so fast that he loses all control and ends up bouncing off the futon. Again, we take guilty pleasure in his momentary pain. I believe it's called Schadenfreude.

Television: We have nights that we schedule everything around what's on TV. Our new favorite is "The Osbournes." My family was pretty dysfunctional, but these guys have to be the epitome of screwed-up. We tried putting the television on closed-captioning to understand what Ozzy was saying, but it didn't work. I guess even MTV doesn't get it. Who knew a family strung out on weed could be so funny?

Katie and I have both been avid "Real World" watchers for years. Lately, Katie has managed to get Jay into it too. It's

funny to watch Jay sit on the couch and yell, "Why is she dating him? What is his problem? Why is she so bitchy?"

And of course, we tape "Friends," Katie watches "X-Files" religiously, and we try to catch "South Park" and "The Simpsons" when time allows.

Water Guns: Over Christmas, we all exchanged gifts. I don't remember what roommate it was, but one gave us all water guns. Jay and I got into a monster water fight one afternoon. I just remember going to someone's house afterwards with soaking wet hair. Those water guns have since disappeared. What a shame.

Catch the Bird: This has become more of a chore, rather than a game. My parakeet Malibu has recently learned to open his cage door. Since his wings

aren't clipped, he'll fly in circles around my room while I duck and scream like a wuss. After about three laps around my room, Malibu will run into the wall and fall down. We all find this pretty funny (again, Schadenfreude) until we think he's actually hurt. Malibu is usually pretty good about flying back into his cage, but last week he was being defiant. I left Jay, the tallest of us, to bring him down from the curtain rod. Way to conquer the parakeet Jay; he's your bitch now.

Well, this is my last editorial ever (most likely). Word XP has rated it with a 5.8 readability level, and I'm pretty damn proud. Hope you all have a great summer!