

EDITORIAL

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The Behrend Beacon

The Behrend Beacon

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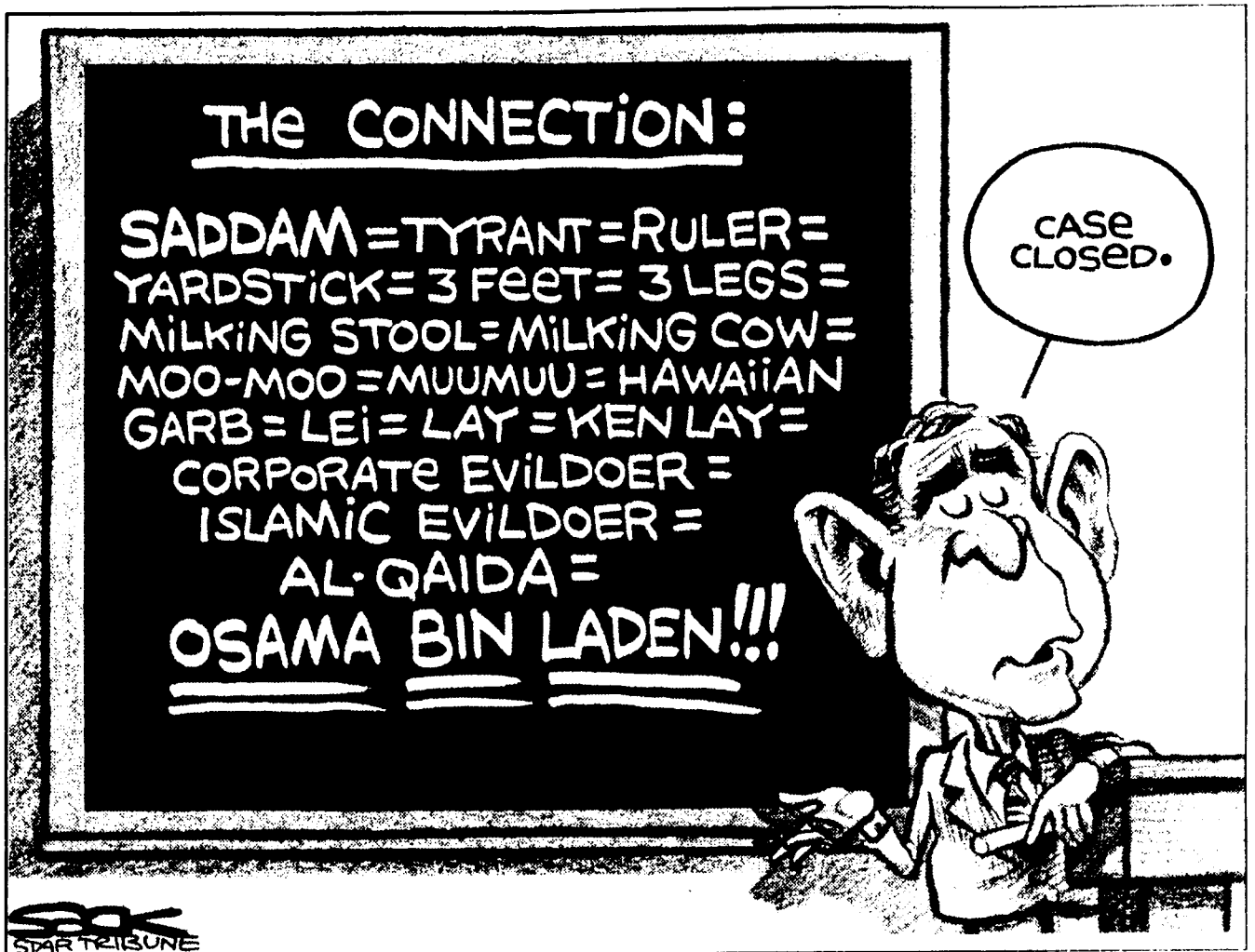
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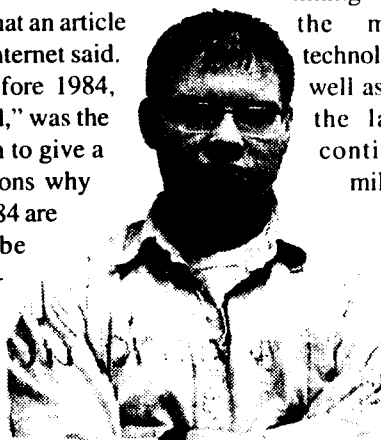
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Email Behrroll2@aol.com with you letters to the editor. Please include your name, semester standing, and major.

Defining the new mini-generation gap

Last week I found out I was old. Well, at least, that's what an article I was reading on the Internet said. "If you were born before 1984, you are considered old," was the title; the story went on to give a list of humorous reasons why people born before 1984 are considered to be something of a mini-generation. I think, though, there is definitely a mental mindset gap between those of us who are in our early 20s, as opposed to some of our peers who are just a few years younger than us.



Rob Wynne
Editor-in-Chief

Sure, one can argue this and say, "those are typical transition years for young adults," but there is more to it. Aside from the light-hearted magazine article, I began to think about some of the times in which I, as well as anyone else is in their early 20s, grew up. Whether we accept it or not, our small age group happened to have perfect

timing when it came to some of the major cultural and technological breakthroughs, as well as political happenings of the late 20th century and continuing into the new millennium.

For starters, there is the Internet. I'm sure some of you are thinking "thank-you, Captain Obvious for that example." But take it a step further. Look at how people communicate with one another in a way they couldn't even five years ago. Our mini-generation helped usher in e-mail, AOL IM, and Internet discussion groups. At the college level, we have been guinea pigs in what some of the old-timers paradoxically call "interactive learning," where the only interaction is between a student and a computer interface. Okay, so maybe we need to tweak that area just

a bit. Also, along the technology lines, I find it very interesting when some students talk about the speed of their computer as if it was a sports car. "Yeah, I maxed my machine out at 2Ghz...it's pretty fast, now all I need is to hook a subwoofer into it."

Our clan will also be remembered not just for making it out of the eighties (just kidding), but beginning our families and careers at the start of a new millennium, one that brought fear, terror, and a sense of compromised individual security with it. Also, a growing distrust of the government and economy ties into our feelings of distrust and uncertainty of finding a decent job in the near future. Just a few years back, the economy was well off, and job prospects seemed to be a bit brighter when we were graduating high school.

Technology also contributed to what I call the downfall of common sense, as we know it. Again, it's safe to assume that a majority of us probably starting using computers on a regular basis in junior high. So, roughly about half of our education was old school, the way

it was done for years and years before us, and our latter years were donated to the experimentation of interactive learning. For example, the flash cards and basic time tables we used in math were replaced by computerized versions, not necessarily for better. The same applies to English, in which "spell-check" and "grammar-wizard" replace the ability to recognize our own language on a hand-written document. Can you diagram this sentence? Say what? I thought so...

The technological revolution just happened to coincide with the mass-retirement of the baby-boomer generation of teachers. Some of us were fortunate to have as teachers, who knew their subject and knew it well. Today, many new teachers lack common sense themselves, and are unable to help their young students in the most basic lesson of teaching, how to think. Many times it is because our mass retardation of society has allowed the students to control the classroom, because no other form of discipline outside of a detention is allowed. No paddles, no criticisms,

and no challenges to student are permissible.

Lessons about diversity and tolerance, although essential in our education, often take precedent over some of the more basic studies that high school graduates lack, like the ability to write their own name, or figure out how much in taxes are being deducted from their paycheck at McDonalds. I kid you not, this is pitiful state that our education system is currently in. An education is a tool, but for many people today, remains unused in the toolbox of life. In essence, our mini-generation was one of the last to be built upon the teaching about character and self-discipline of previous generations were.

So, my fellow twenty-somethings, what does this mean for me? I wish I could say, I do know, however, that we are not old, but perhaps just a bit wiser than some of our friends who were born after 1984.

Wynne's column appears every three weeks.

The 'Preacher'

A modest crowd was gathered outside of the Reed Building. When I walked down the spiral staircase, I saw a crazy Bible-thumping preacher. Was this the man that I had been hearing everyone talk about?

As I stepped outside I found out I was in luck as I heard those words we have all heard him say, "You're going to hell."

Here he was, the man who has been causing so much talk around Behrend for the last two weeks. He was grasping his Bible as though a random student was hiding behind a parked car just waiting to jump out and steal it from him. He was holding the leather-bond as if it contained all his principles and ideals.

The "Preacher" talked in a loud voice, a voice that was filled with conviction. I disagreed with most of the man's points. He said that we were all going to hell for attending college. He said that we were all going to hell for drinking. He said one student was going to hell for having a tattoo. He also listed entertainers who he felt were going "straight to hell."

Now, I am no theologian. In fact, I was kicked out of CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) and proud of it. I hold very few strong religious beliefs and have to plead ignorance in any discussions about the topic. But I find it hard to believe that Jim Morrison, John Lennon, and anyone else involved in the creation of the art we call music are in hell or going there. I cannot buy that rock and roll and rap are evil. I cannot see how attending college and reading books are equivalent to traveling down "the road to hell."

The preacher seems deranged and quite

honestly, if I see him again I'll pay little attention to him and even less to his preaching. But while I don't see the Thirteenth Apostle, I do see a man who has



Guy Resenthaler
editorial columnist

strong beliefs and solid convictions. He is convinced he is right and is willing to take volley after volley of criticism from us. This I respect, as should we all.

I come close to throwing up when others try to shove their religious beliefs down my throat. Is this man doing this us? Yes, and I ask myself, "Who is he to try to convert Behrend?" Yet, all negatives aside, I respect him for exercising his First Amendment right. I admire him for confidently defending his beliefs which he holds most dear.

How many of us believe in our beliefs the way this man does? How many of us have what it takes to stand on the street and express our opinions, our viewpoints, and our ideals the way this man does? Mahatma Gandhi once said, "One must

be slow to form convictions, but once they are formed they must be defended against the heaviest of odds." This sounds a lot like our preacher.

When I watched him speak I strongly disagreed with his arguments. In fact I was somewhat angered by his insistence that I was (how did he put it?) "going straight to hell." Yet, I was appalled at those who were violating The Preacher's personal space, getting in his face and screaming. This man, like all individuals, deserves our respect. We may not agree with him, but we should honor his right to speak publicly.

Look, here's how it is: "The Preacher's" arguments angered just about all of us. I'm not sure if this man is even all there. He does seem a few Commandments short of a full 10, but I do respect the man for having such strong beliefs. It is questionable if he is schooled and well read in Biblical studies. On the other hand, we must all admit he is a brave man and a proud man. We may think he is dead wrong, but we have to give him his props.

When he tells us that we are "on the path to hell" we should walk away, approach him in a civilized manner, or observe as others do. We should not shout at him, slap him hard on the back, or get in his face. We should reflect and try to form as solid convictions in ourselves as he has and remember not to fear expressing them.

Maybe we should all try to emulate the good qualities of "The Preacher."

Resenthaler's column appears every three weeks.

Hate lingers 4 years after Matthew Shepard's murder

by Heather M. Ross
KRT FORUM

Four years ago I stood in a crowd of people listening to a woman talk about her gay son. She loved him and hoped that no hate-filled, ignorant person would ever hurt him.

This was a crowd of people, gay and straight, that had gathered together on a cool October night in Toronto. We were there because a thousand miles away two young men had murdered a young gay college student named Matthew Shepard. This was one of many such vigils held by people who never knew Shepard but felt the need to do something to protest his horrific death.

It has been four years since Shepard was brutally beaten and left to die in a field in Wyoming on Oct. 12, 1998. His killers are in prison, where they will remain for the rest of their lives.

In the years since Shepard's murder some things have changed, others have not.

Gay-rights advocates have won in the courts, and even some at the ballot box. Most telling was the Sept. 10 vote in Miami-Dade County, Fla. Voters there did an about face from the days of Anita Bryant and upheld anti-discrimination legislation that the county commissioners passed in the wake of Shepard's murder.

California, Vermont, Connecticut, Hawaii and several cities now recognize same-sex domestic partners for a

variety of rights and responsibilities.

But Congress is still sitting on the hate-crimes bill, with the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives refusing to call a vote. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act has also suffered the same fate.

And assaults against gays and lesbians, simply for who they are, continue - some physical, some not.

Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell said homosexuals were partly responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks because they have angered God. According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, there have been more than 50 gays and lesbians reported killed in anti-gay attacks since Matthew's murder, just as there were many before it. The actual number of deaths is likely higher because anti-gay attacks are underreported.

The key to preventing these heinous crimes and bringing an end to bigotry and discrimination of all kinds is changing people's hearts. While as a society we have come a long way in the past four years, we still have a great distance to go.

In Shepard's memory and the memory of all those who have suffered at the hands of intolerance, we must stand up and say "Enough." We will no longer allow homophobia, racism or any other fear of those who are different to eat away at us. We will no longer allow hatred to take lives.