

EDITORIAL

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The Behrend Beacon

The Behrend Beacon

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**THE BEHREND
Beacon**

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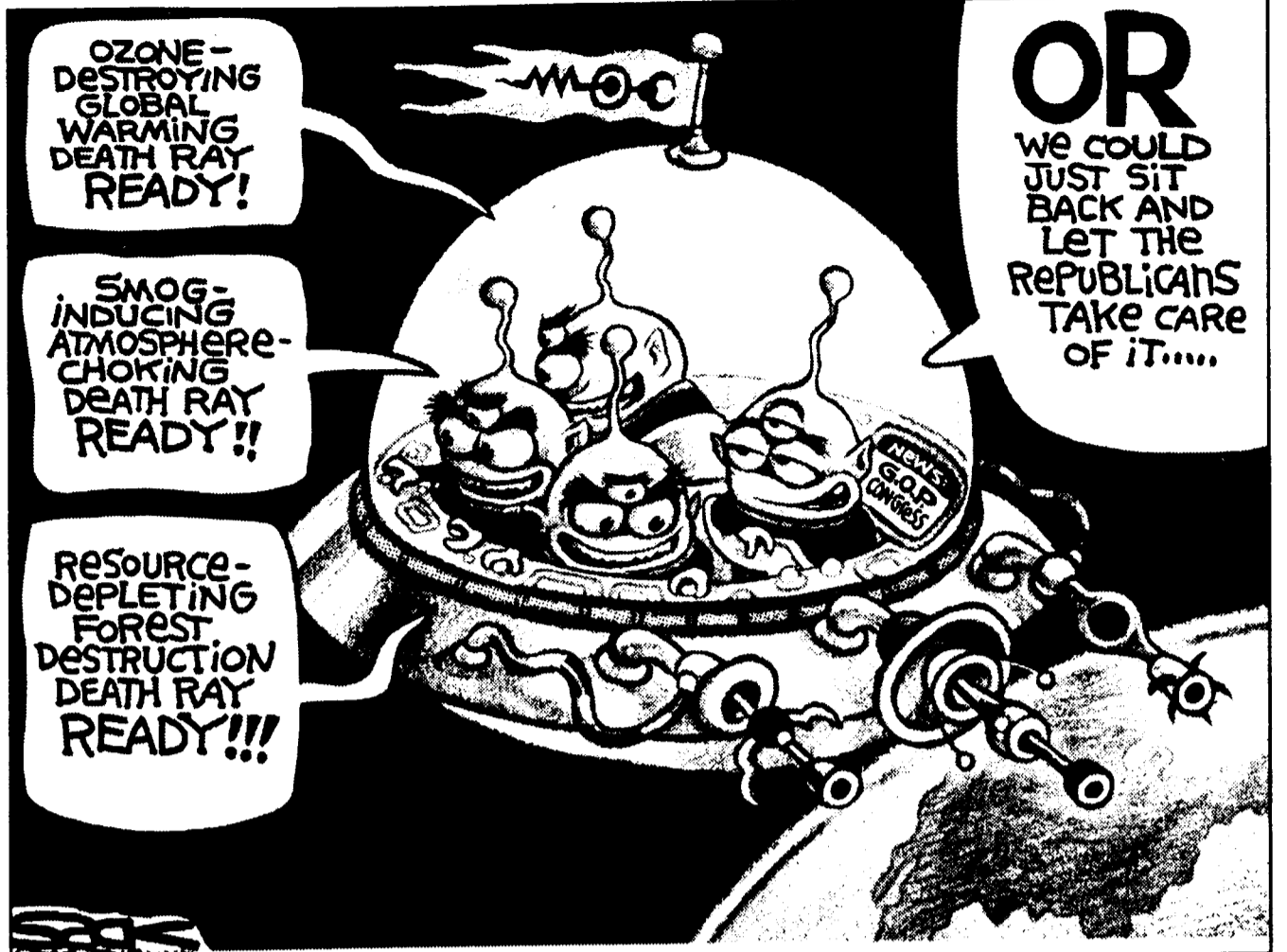
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Send Letters to the Editor!
Include your name, major, and semester standing.

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The secret to holiday cheer

My brother and I had a huge argument about a holiday song on the radio. On our commute home from classes one day, the male singer started crooning about a young boy that walks into his shop and asks for a pair of shoes for his dying mother. Of course, the boy only has some pocket change for the shoes, but as we learn from the song, it is the spirit of giving and charity that makes the holidays, not who makes the most money.

I was angered by the fact that this singer's story was sad and sappy, just like all the other Christmas Hallmark specials that are shown on TV. My brother was angry with me because I missed the point of the song.

This might be true. I'm not one to bash someone trying to do a good deed or deliver a profound message to others about the holidays, but please. What's the singer doing with the money he's making from that song? Is it going into his own pocket or to the Make-A-Wish Foundation? Given that it was playing on the local Christian station, I'd assume that this singer had decent intentions for creating that song - perhaps his publicist really didn't recommend that song in order to boost his ratings or improve his image.

Here's the thing: We complain that Christmas is marketed, sold, reduced 50 percent off, and based on the crazy rush

to get the perfect toy or gift for loved ones. We complain that every year, we lose the spirit of the holiday and expect people like Britney Spears to get us in the mood again with a pop-culture version of "Jingle Bells." We expect our frustrated trip to the mall on Black Friday will officially jump-start that spirit of charity that hibernates deep in our bones for the other 11 months of the year.

Please. Try again and really THINK what Christmas means. For Catholics and other Christians worldwide, it is the celebration of the birth of Christ (for some, it's the one time out of the year that they have to attend church).

But that's only the beginning. For everyone, it should be a time to celebrate charity and giving to STRANGERS, not just your boss or your Kris Kringle exchange. Not everyone has the family to share a meal with, and not everyone can afford gifts, even for their own children. How would you like it if you knew Santa was about to come on Christmas Eve and you woke with no presents under the tree? IT IS HAPPENING IN THIS COUNTRY, perhaps even down the street from where you live!

Don't waste your money on purchasing the newest holiday albums or waste your time watching Hallmark specials. Get up and go do some charity work. Buy a present for someone who has to

visit the soup kitchen for their daily meal. Donate an awesome gift - something that every little kid wants for Christmas - to Toys for Tots (which you can drop off at the Peach Street Wegmans, by the way.)

Short on cash? Try baking cookies and delivering them wrapped in red and green ribbon to the homebound and the bedridden. Ask your local parish/worship space about visiting members of your church who are in the hospital. Seek out the lonely, the sick, the dying, anyone who needs some love (yes, people lose their loved ones even over the holidays). Drop that last dollar in your wallet in the Salvation Army's red bucket outside the Millcreek Mall.

I don't mean tell you that you're bad citizens. But there is so much more charity inside when you actually give it out to others. I don't care if you all are broke, you have the advantage of being at a college and getting your education. That's privilege enough that others cannot fathom. But charity does not have to equal monetary donations; it's the giving of time and love and caring to someone who doesn't receive it very often. To borrow a quote from the Diocese of Erie (and this is slightly modified to fit in my editorial): If you're waiting for a sign to start some charity work, this is it.

Weindorf's column appears every three weeks.

Is disestablishmentarianism dead in college newspapers?

by Jonathan Zimmerman
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Twenty years ago, I served as editor-in-chief of my college newspaper. My co-editors and I stayed up until six or seven in the morning, five nights a week. We drank stale coffee, smoked cheap cigarettes, and banged away on manual typewriters, trying to affect a grizzled, hard-boiled image. Most of us were privileged kids from the suburbs, not working-class gumshoes. But the tough-guy image we cultivated included a deep skepticism of authority--especially of the authorities who ran our university.

So we made it our job to make them miserable. Every day, our newspaper attacked the university. It wasn't providing enough financial aid; it wasn't hiring enough minority professors; it wasn't assisting the nearby community. Whatever the university did or didn't do, we denounced it.

Open up a college paper today, and you'll find a very different sensibility. Today's editors embrace the cool vibe of popular culture. Their stories focus less on university politics and more on music, film, fashion and sex.

Especially sex. College newspapers can't get enough. Many papers now feature regular sex columnists, almost all of them female. At the University of California at Berkeley, Teresa Chin dispenses frank ad-

vice in her "Sex on Tuesdays" column; at my own institution, New York University, Yvonne Fulbright serves as our paper's resident "Sexpert"; and at Yale, Natalie Krinsky authors the popular "Sex and the (Elm) City."

Like the show whose name it borrows, Krinsky's column combines snappy writing with a strong postfeminist slant. Rather than seeking to change the world, Krinsky urges girls--always "girls"--to, well, get theirs.

To be fair, some papers continue to criticize university policies. Over the last few years, for example, the Yale Daily News has blasted Yale's efforts to block graduate students from unionizing. But generally, today's student journalists give administrators a free pass--or, at the most, a light touch. That's why you rarely read a letter or comment from an irate school official condemning the school paper. Twenty years ago, administrators routinely called us to scream--yes, scream--about our attacks on skyrocketing tuition costs, school disciplinary procedures, or poor dormitory security. These folks must celebrate when the college daily turns to more urgent matters, like stress-induced impotence or the politics of lovemaking.

What's going on here? Some papers might temper their coverage of university politics for fear of reprisals. Last year, officials at Governors State University in Illinois suspended publication of a student

newspaper after it attacked the teaching performance of two professors. The editors sued the university, which has claimed the same powers to censor student papers as high school principals possess.

The Governors State case will be heard in January by a federal appeals court in Chicago. Even if the court rules in favor of students' press freedom, though, the decision won't do any good if students don't take advantage of it.

Most of all, universities won't be called to account without a strong and independent student paper. The only other campus news comes from "public information" offices, which put a cheery gloss on everything the school does. If student journalists don't present another side of the story, nobody will.

Two decades ago, I'll admit, we should have gathered more information--and done more thinking--before we embraced the other side. We were too quick to malign the university, too assured of our own moral righteousness. We were kids, after all.

But if kids must err, as apparently they must, let them err on the side of excessive criticism rather than of cool detachment. Sure, there's a place for light entertainment--including sex columns--in the college press. When heavy breathing dominates school newspapers, however, school officials breathe a sigh of relief. And that's bad news for all of us.

I think Christmas is stupid

I can remember when I was a little kid on Christmas Day. I was so excited I couldn't sleep and I always opened what was in my stocking before everyone else in my family. I remember one year it was four or five in the morning. This sucked because I had to wait numerous hours before anyone else woke up. I can remember the occasion like it was yesterday: my older brother Ray screaming at me when I tried to shake him awake, his permed hair matted to his face like an oil slick engulfing a small Caribbean island. How I miss the 1980s.

However, awaking everyone was well worth it. In fact, it was nutteracker sweet. I remember mounds of toys: Transformers, GI Joe figures, sports cards and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle figures, all for me. I was a gnarly dude.

Nothing could ruin the day. Not even gifts of clothes. One Christmas, when I was in middle school, my grandma gave me an Olympics sweatshirt with an ice skater on the front. To make matters worse, the skater was outlined in glitter so I went to the store my grandma bought it at and exchanged it for a Karl Malone T-shirt (which fell apart and is now a used as a cleaning rag, which sucks).

Oh, yes, nothing was better than presents. However, as the years went by, I became a Christmas-disliker. At first I wasn't sure why, but now I have tons of reasons why Christmas bites.

First off, I think it's stupid people buy presents for one another. I don't want presents from my family members because I love them and don't want them buying me things. If anything, all the people who I dislike should buy me things in order to kiss my butt and get back on my good side. My parents do enough for me and I don't think they have to buy me presents to show me they love me or to let me know I'm their special playa. I don't mind buying things for people, but I hate getting an influx of presents all in one day. Bake me a cake and surprise me one random afternoon.

Stores and manufacturers are the ones who want Christmas and they've already

screwed the world up. The true meaning of Christmas is to help people who are less fortunate and show appreciation toward those an individual holds dear by spending time with them, not by buying them things. Remember (those of you who are Christian/Catholic/etc), Jesus was born on this day and that's what Christmas is all about. Honoring our main man. However, most people celebrate presents on Christmas.



Karl Benacci

Another thing that annoys me are the people who only go to church twice a year--Christmas and Easter. Why does this irritate me? Two reasons. First off, I can't stand the people who rarely go to church and then act like they're more sacred than the blessed holy water. These people sicken me. Another reason these people make me mad is because they come early with their family and take all the good seats, forcing those who go to church every week to sit in folding chairs in a hallway outside the church and listen to the service through speakers. Punks.

What else sucks? Peach Street, or, the land of hate. If anyone has been reading the *Beacon* for a few years, he or she may remember my Christmas editorial (two years ago) where I mention the guy who flicked my friends and I off--yet the guy had a car with a Christmas wreath on it. Way to spread the holiday cheer, Mr. Natural Selection Gone Bad.

Now the typical Christmas consists of me being the last person in the house to wake up after my mother has knocked on my door for a while. After a long shower and a lot of food, I join my family for presents. By that time, they're pissed for waiting, but oh well. The tables have turned, as they say.

However, Christmas will be different this year. I'll lock my door, stick in a few earplugs and dream of Britney Spears under the tree, waiting for Uncle Karl. Hmm...now there's a gift that would keep on giving all year round...

Have an awesome Christmas!

Benacci's column appears every three weeks.

The Beacon is looking for Editorial columnists for Spring 2003. Send a 500 word editorial to Behrcoll2@aol.com for review.