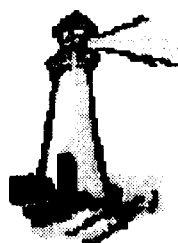


Friday April 9, 2004

The Behrend Beacon

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

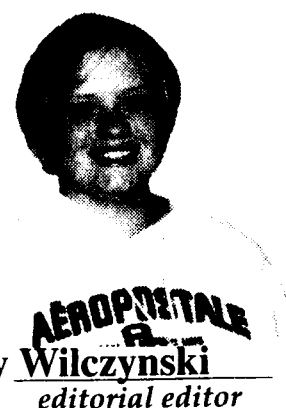
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the Behrend College;
First Floor, The J. Elmer Reed Union Building,
Station Road, Erie, PA 16563.Contact The Beacon at:
Telephone: (814) 898-6488
Fax: (814) 898-6019
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It will all be worth it in the end

As my 17 years of schooling draws to a close, my mind twirls in the satisfaction that I will soon have a bachelor of arts degree in communication and media studies. I will soon be considered a Penn State alumni.

I bought my cap and gown this week; here's to the good ol' blue and white. When I watched the woman check my name off of the graduation list confirming that I had purchased my cap and gown, I felt a sigh of relief sweep over me. I am almost done with college. I made it. I never was quite sure that I was cut out for college; in fact, I didn't even want to go to college. I kept telling myself that I wouldn't need a degree because I have my license in cosmetology and spent three years during high school earning my Pennsylvania state certification. So, why would I need a college education? It all sounded like a big waste of money that I didn't have. The student loan process was a big pain in the butt and I didn't get half as much state money as I thought I would. I suppose that's one of the drawbacks to being middle-class.

My first year of college was harder than I had expected. I failed a history class my first semester, which did not give me encouragement to continue my education. I was convinced that I just wasn't supposed to be going to college.

Amy Wilczynski
editorial editor

My dad was always the person who reminded me of how worth it a degree would be to me in the future, in case I ever wanted to get out of the hair/cosmetology business. I ended up finishing the year and when summer came, I felt like a free woman. I worked full time at a local salon and I really enjoyed my job.

I made a deal to myself that if I was seriously dreading going back to school in the fall, I wouldn't go back. If I wasn't dreading it and felt I could handle giving my second year of college a shot, then I would go back.

As it turned out, I realized that working a full time job, at the age of 19, wasn't as fun as I'd expected. So, I went back to college. I was planning on declaring psychology as my

major, but I realized that I had lost interest in that field of study. I began exploring new majors on the PSU Web site and found that communications interested me. The following semester I enrolled in several communication classes. I decided that I would definitely declare Communication and Media Studies as my official major.

After my first year of college, I never hesitated again about returning the following semesters. I worked harder than ever to catch up to the amount of credits I was supposed to have. I took 22 credits during both semesters of my junior year. It was hard, but it was important to me that I graduate in May 2004, with the rest of my class.

So here it is, April 2004, and only one month until I graduate from college. Reflecting back, I realize that I am extremely glad that I decided to go to college. A college degree is valued in any work environment and I am proud to say that I will finally possess one on May 15, 2004. College is a journey, no matter what the situation. Stick with it, don't give up, and as my dad always says, "It will all be worth it in the end."

Amy Wilczynski's column appears every three weeks.

Stop the dissecting

When students at a high school "Participation in Government" class were asked to invite outside speakers to debate controversial issues, I accepted this opportunity to discuss why I believed the school should stop purchasing animal "specimens" for teaching biology, and should instead use lifelike three-dimensional plastic models with removable parts and/or interactive computer programs.

I showed the class a People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals video, "Classroom Cut-Ups," which depicted, among other abominations, workers at a dissection supply house embalming animals - from cats to

crabs - while they were alive.

Frogs are usually dropped into an alcohol solution, which takes about 20 painful minutes to cause death.

According to Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, the formaldehyde used to preserve the animals' bodies can harm people exposed to it. Formaldehyde is carcinogenic irritant to eyes, skin, throat, lungs and nasal passages.

The National Association of Biology Teachers has urged schools to offer alternatives to dissection.

I shared all this with the students and asked if their biology class dissection experiences helped them learn biology. Most replied no.

One student wondered if it was unethical to dissect fetal pigs that were taken from the bodies of their butchered mothers. They would not have survived anyway. I replied that dissecting fetal pigs was perhaps a lesser evil than killing live animals for dissection, but why dissect any animal?

Serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer told "Dateline NBC," "in ninth grade, in biology class, we had the usual dissection of fetal pigs, and I took the remains home and I just started branching out to dogs and cats." I suggested to students that while I trusted their dissection experience had not demonized them, I nevertheless agreed with Adelphi University Biology Professor George Russell, who wrote that "dissection not only fails to promote reverence for life, but encourages the tendency to blaspheme it" by desensitizing students to cruelty and to the sanctity of life.

But most schools and colleges in America continue to emphasize dissection. Educational administrators should listen to what one student told PETA - "I passed geography without leaving my home state, and passed geology without seeing planets collide. It's insulting to argue that students can't understand anatomy unless they stick scissors into a frog's brain."

Joel Freedman
Animal Rights Advocates of Upstate
New York

Letter to the Editor
I want this muzzle removed

Once upon a time, in the fall of 2001, at a Behrend campus near you, a little newspaper called BUDPOT reared its ugly head and captivated a college for one semester. No, I do not feel "captivated" is too strong a word. Its creators were regularly recognized and congratulated on campus, despite their attempts at anonymity. At least one department's staff meeting was at one point dominated by discussion of the paper and "what to do about it." I know because a professor in that department told me all about it herself.

It's been over two and a half years since that paper, created by my roommate Michael Angelone and myself (under the aliases of Miguel Sanchez and Crafty Barnardo), gave the Behrend community something to talk about. I don't know how many current students or staff members were around when BUDPOT existed, but I'm hoping that those who were will take the time to enlighten the uninitiated.

I'm bringing up this ancient history because of recent events at Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Scranton and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Student newspapers at all three campuses have found themselves in hot water after printing supposedly offensive content in their April Fool's Day issues. Two of the three papers have ceased publication for the time being. I find myself more appalled and offended by the trouble these people have gotten into than anything that could have appeared in the papers themselves.

To be fair, I haven't seen the content of the controversial issues myself, nor do I expect at this point I will

be able to. I will have to base my views of the matter on vague descriptions of the "offensive" content that appeared in news stories about the controversy. The fact of the matter is that these publications are financed and therefore governed by the institutions they are affiliated with. This naturally puts a clamp on the voices of the writers. Pardon my French, but c'est merde de taureau!

Of course, any university that runs a student paper has every right to have final say over what can or can't be published. The fact that most student papers are financed by the institution is the problem that must be faced. Sure, we have freedom of speech, but would good be it if there's no forum that will allow us to speak freely?

This is exactly why BUDPOT existed, and exactly why every school needs a paper like it. Only through independent publications can the true voice of the student be heard. Mikey and I wrote, edited, designed, produced, financed and distributed every issue of that paper with a bare minimum of resources. If two slackers like us could accomplish that, there's absolutely no reason why a group of students couldn't band together at any college campus to accomplish the same. I'm not suggesting you go out and try to imitate BUDPOT - it was an entity of its own. However, every student population deserves an independent, uncensored forum with which to express themselves. Sure, it won't be fancy - BUDPOT was nothing more than Publisher files printed at the local copy shop - but it doesn't have to be. If it's there, people will read it.

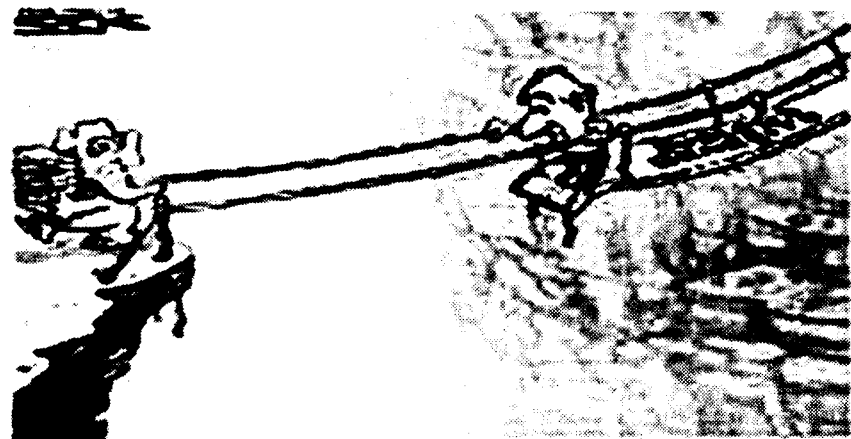
Don't get me wrong, the official

student publications have their place. They are invaluable resources to anyone interested in learning about journalism, writing or advertising, to name just a few fields. They can also be an informative and provocative source of information to the student body. However, as long as they are controlled by the school they will be limited. (On a side note, I offer hearty kudos to the Beacon should this letter get published.) There needs to be an alternative publication in which students can say what won't be printed otherwise. Trust me when I say we printed a lot of controversial material in BUDPOT. At least half of it we didn't even mean, we just said it because it was funny, and because we could. We never even came close to any kind of consequences, even when we revealed our real names. The fact was there was nothing anyone could do. It was our paper and we could say what we wanted. End of discussion.

Thus, I implore you to organize, collaborate and create. There's no reason why the staff of the Beacon can't get involved either. Think of it as a side project. Even though I'm no longer a Behrend student, I'd be more than happy to do my part by contributing material. I can be reached at jdf179@yahoo.com. This is your mission, and you really should choose to accept it.

Even the smallest voice can be heard above the crowd if it has something different to say.

Keep on truckin',
Jason Fickley (a.k.a. Crafty Barnardo)



YOU'RE OUT OF LUCK. WE NEEDED THE REST FOR OUR
"ECONOMIC RECOVERY MISSION ACCOMPLISHED" BILLBOARD.

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Editor in chief
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Advertising manager
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Calendar editor

News editor
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Student Life editor

\$\$ PAID POSITIONS \$\$

Submit letters of application to Student Affairs by April 19 at 5 p.m.
Letters must include name, semester, major and writing experience.

\$\$ PAID POSITIONS \$\$

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LETTERS

Letters must be signed and include a telephone number, major, semester standing and full name. Letters more than 350 words may be edited. Letters that are libelous or are personal attacks will not be published. Send to: The Behrend Beacon, Reed Union Building Club Mailbox, 5091 Station Rd, Erie, PA 16563. E-mail: behrcoll2@aol.com