

OPINION

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. - The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

The Behrend Beacon

Published Weekly by the students of Penn State Erie



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Beacon

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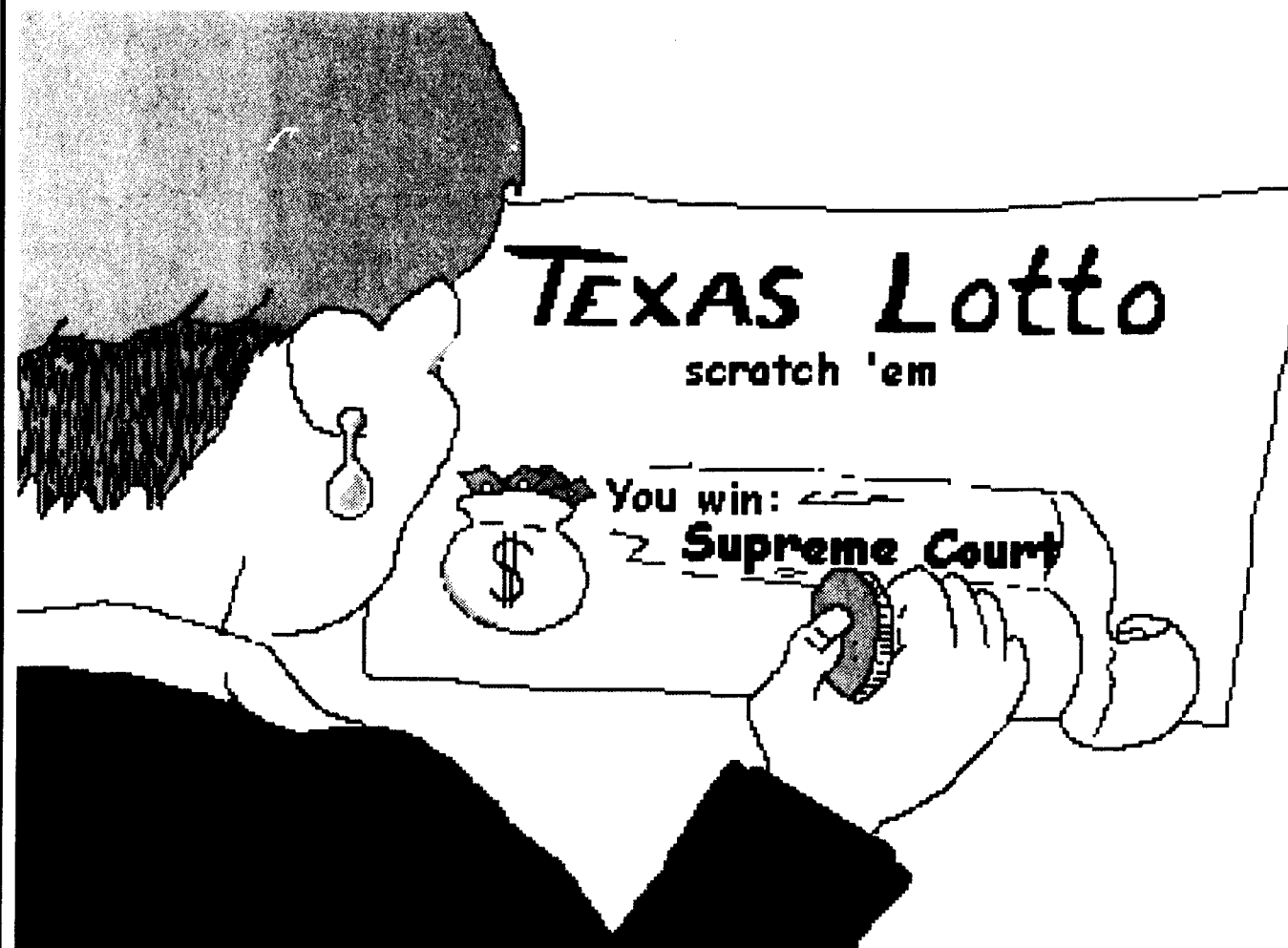
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ZACK MENTZ

Quote of the Week

"It pays to make the U.S. school system a crock of **** because the dumber the people are that come out, the easier it is to draft them, make them into docile consumers, or, you know, mongo employees. There are plenty of yuppies out there with absolutely nothing upstairs. Graduate airheads with PhDs and everything, but they don't know anything."
 ~Frank Zappa

Black Friday? Try Black Tuesday

By **KJ Margraff Jr.**
student life editor
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Does everyone remember Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas" movie? I do; it was a good movie depicting the ghoulish tale of Jack Skellington, the Halloween King and how he kidnapped our beloved Santa Clause and took over Santa's happy holiday. Well, over the past few years I've noticed a developing trend making me think that Burton had it all wrong.

It used to be that "Black Friday," the day after Thanksgiving, was the official kick-off of the holiday shopping season. But more recently Christmas has been creeping further and further back through the calendar, overtaking everything in its path.

You'll see the devastation for yourself in the next week or so as all the Halloween decorations quickly disappear and the smell of holly stealthily attacks your senses. An explosion of red and green along with dump trucks of glitter will detonate inside the mall leaving no store untouched. And the Christmas spirit will possess mall employees like something from a Sci-Fi horror flick, pushing for you to "start your holiday shopping early." Frank Sinatra's voice softly echoes, stuck in the back of your brain, haunting you in your sleep: "Oh, by gosh, by golly"

It didn't happen overnight however. This was a well planned out attack executed with the grace and cunning of the Navy SEALs. It started innocently enough. The malls would advertise their incredible "Black Friday" specials a week or two in advance, getting everyone ready for the holiday season. They weren't pushy, but they definitely put the thought into your head that the time was drawing near. Hanukah and Kwanza didn't really put up a fight; they thought they were safe under the Christmas season umbrella, but they were wrong. Santa kept his friends close and his enemies closer, quickly nudging them off the scene, overpowering them with TV specials, all the while saying "Season's Greetings" with a fake smile.

Then slowly the decorations started to go up before Thanksgiving. Christmas music started to creep onto the mall radio waves earlier and earlier every year, and before anyone could react, our beloved Turkey Day was deep fried and served with gravy to a jelly bellied beast lurking in the shadows. Santa's hit list gets shorter and shorter; I fear for Halloween.

No matter how hard we try, it is already too late. Christmas has become a cancer spreading and growing -- but how far will it go? When I finally realized that Thanksgiving was dying, I didn't want to accept it. "Surely," I thought, "Turkey Day will survive; this is just a one time thing." But I was wrong. And now, what will happen to Halloween? Could Burton's movie actually be a clever scheme by Santa to take over yet another holiday? We won't know until this war is over and we start to pick up the pieces. With all hope, if Santa does win, then he will stop there, but I doubt that also. "Christmas in July" might one day be more fact than fiction. We can only wait and see.

So enjoy this Halloween weekend. Dress up, go to costume parties and eat tons of candy, because who knows... this Halloween could be your last.

Submission Guidelines

The Beacon welcomes readers to share their views on this page.

Letters and commentary pieces can be submitted by email to opinion@psu.edu or directly to the Beacon office, located in the Reed Building.

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries should be limited to 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run

the submission.

All submissions must include the writer's year in school, major and name as The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters.

Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue. All submissions are considered, but because of space limitations, some may not be published.

All submissions must include consent to be edited before they can be edited for pub-

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

There is a trend among all Beacon editors to change the paper so that it's fresh and controversial, but after a few weeks of little or no news, they submit to publishing articles of little or no importance to the students that read them.

My example is the article published last week on pumpkin carving. Why would you send a staff writer to cover this event? Was there any student who picked up the Beacon in the Koche Building last Friday that read that article?

I believe you have resorted to writing articles for the sole purpose of filling up ten pages of paper every week. If that is the case, then shame on you.

And I understand your position that Behrend is a small campus, virtually devoid of big news. But there is news. It's not always some student kicking a hole in the elevator shaft. Sometimes, you have to do a little research. One story possibility I would love to see you cover is the "Dobbins Effect." Anyone who has ever eaten at Dobbins dining hall knows what I'm talking about. Put a staff writer

or two on the story and tell us students why our bowels are a mess after the first week of school, 'cause it ain't homesickness.

Some other ideas: Will Behrend ever build a parking garage for students? How are students paying for their textbooks with the bookstore being overly expensive? Is it true that Penn State receives monetary benefits if they accept a certain number of minorities? How are commuters handling the rise in gas prices?

I could continue, but there is a word limit for this letter. Contact me if you need more ideas.

For the love of God, and for our sakes, be creative, be controversial and most of all, be informative. And don't send your staff writers out to waste their valuable time writing articles no one will want to read. If you don't have anything informative to say, then don't say it at all.

-Keith Doak, a.k.a. "Doak"
Creative Writing, '05

ISBNs spell trouble for campus bookstore

By **Robert Frank**
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Every college student returns to the fall semester with anticipation. After a long summer they are ready to start the next semester. Continuing your path toward a degree and being one step closer to graduation fills the air with excitement on move-in day. Excitement manages to hit a brick wall at around noon. This is about the time that students arrive at the bookstore in the Reed Building. It is there that students realize all of the summer's long hard work will be dumped into their textbook buying. Students feel used and taken advantage of after they leave.

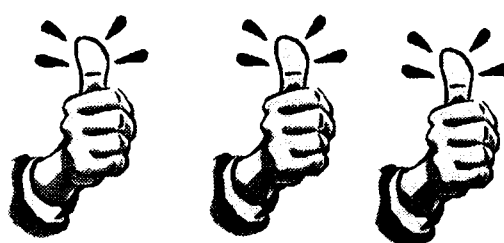
Bookstores took advantage of students for many years in this way. Last semester I saved over three hundred dollars on my books by buying them online. This seems to be a trend that many students are following recently. Even the SGA is interested in helping this endeavor by creating the ISBN number database to make online book buying easy. For a long time, students have been taken advantage of by textbook sales. Professors have openly admitted that there is virtually no change between edition one and edition two, and most of the time the new addition was at the recommendation of the publisher.

Personally, I don't see any reason that students should not be allowed to write down ISBN numbers. If you were in the market for a new TV, you would probably go

to Best Buy, Sears, Circuit City and any other electronic retailer and compare prices and plans. You ultimately would compare the same brand and model over three or four stores to find the best price. It's called comparative shopping. These retailers understand this process and adapt to maintain their business. Take a look at the 110% price match guarantee or the Sears Card discount weekends. These programs were instituted not only to give back to the consumer for being loyal, but also to challenge the rival retailer into lowering their prices. This competition between businesses is what keeps prices at a reasonable level and it's what keeps the business going.

Of course, it seems to upset the bookstore when students only walk in to write down the ISBNs and leave. Although I can understand where the bookstore is coming from, I can also see it from the view of the students. It's nothing more than trying to get the best price for your money. Is it fair to overcharge \$300 for a set of textbooks? Many other businesses have adapted their sales to manage against Internet sales, but the bookstore seems unwilling to do so. In a world where businesses are constantly competing, you would think the bookstore would be interested in maintaining its "clients." I think it's time that the bookstores on college campuses realize that students are dissatisfied with their service. If they want to continue to sell textbooks, they need to start trying to compete with outside sources instead of pretending they don't exist.

Beacon Thumbs Up



- Only two more weeks until "Cardboard City."
- Matchbox Players costume contest this Sunday in the McGarvey Commons.
- Free candy.

Beacon Thumbs Down



- Professors who use students' GPAs to determine in-class groups.
- Overcooked omelets at Dobbins.
- The impending arrival of winter snow.