

OPINION

THE BEHREND BEACON

FOUNDED IN 1948

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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.

The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Please include your major, faculty, or administration position and semester standing. Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue.

The Behrend Beacon reserves the right to edit any submissions prior to publication.

Please keep complaints as specific as possible.

Email submissions to rcr5057@psu.edu or drop them off at the Beacon office.

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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.

Beacon Thumbs Up



- Dmitri Upper
- Daytona USA
- Nicknames like "LJ"
- Hoodies with no hoods

Beacon Thumbs Down



- JoePa kicking you off "his field"
- Cars hitting the house
- Bush League jokes
- Bizarre alarm clocks

Common Sensinomics

By Chris Brown
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A recession for the U.S. economy seems to be inevitable. Soaring energy costs, the declining dollar value, the drying up of capital for businesses, the increasing number of bankruptcies, and the growing number of foreclosures in the United States add up to a long road ahead for the economy. Congress has stalled on a stimulus package that will most likely end up being too little and too late for any real effect anyways. While the talking-heads on T.V. can't agree on what all this means for the future of the economy, almost all agree we have not seen the worst of it yet.

I was watching MTV's serial documentary program *True Life* the other day. This episode followed young Americans in their early 20s who had forgotten too far in debt and were struggling to pay their bills or were going through bankruptcy. One of them had bought a house she couldn't afford and expensive furniture she didn't need. Another was living in her parent's garage because she had no money. At one point she visited her bankruptcy lawyer to go over paperwork, and of all things she could have had in her hand, she had that oh-so-needed status symbol of a Starbucks cup. I was shocked. This image stuck out to me more than anything else.

Here was a person who couldn't make rent, didn't have a steady job, and was filing bankruptcy, but she somehow managed to scrounge up enough money to buy a cup of over-priced, sugary, coffee. I suspect this was not an isolated incident. This example illustrates an important point about the state of our economy that the numbers don't reflect: for all practical purposes the words 'need' and 'want' are now synonyms in American vernacular.

Today, if one person gets a new car, all of their neighbors need one also. As soon as the latest gadgets come out, everyone needs to get one. Today's spending habits are driven more by greed and attempts to define one's self-worth through their material possessions.

I'm not quite sure who so blame, the predatory lender and savvy salesperson or the person who spends beyond their means. Do we blame drug dealers or the drug addicts? Both, drug dealers and greedy corporations, sell instant gratification that require people borrow against their future in order to purchase.

Yesterday, retailers released figures that showed consumer spending dropped precipitously over the last few months, dealing the latest blow to the American economy. As reported by the *New York Times*, consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of economic growth; a decline almost guarantees a recession. I can almost hear the blame game beginning. Democrats will blame Republicans, Republicans-Democrats. Bush will blame Congress, Congress-Bush. Current Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke will blame former Chairman Alan Greenspan.

I think there will be enough blaming to go around. But, I want to take my own share of responsibility for the decline, cause you see, I'm one of those consumers that refuses to buy things I don't need or spend money I don't have. So partly the decline in consumer spending is my fault; sorry.

After almost every economic recession economists develop a 'new' theory so past mistakes don't repeat themselves. After the Great Depression, Classical economics gave way to Keynesian macroeconomics. Stagflation in the 1960's gave way to Monetarism. Declining productivity in the late 1970s brought Reaganomics and trickle-down economics. And the economic recession of the early 1990s led to even more ideas on how to think about economics. No doubt, economists will come up with some hot-new theory to explain the lessons learned from this most recent economic decline.

However, I think the next economic theory will be called Common-Sensinomics. It's main premise: don't spend money you don't have on things you don't need; don't sell things people don't need. I know, it goes against everything we've been taught from

List-maker learns how to live spontaneously

by Aeriele Kramer
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Growing up, I was an avid planner. From laying out my clothes the night before so I already knew what to wear the next day, to what I would say if the guy I had a crush on at the time decided to ask me out, I had the world in the palm of my hand. Schedules, agendas, and lists took up a good portion of my free time, and if they weren't planned, I had my own ideas of how conversations should run, and how situations should turn out.

It wasn't that I was domineering, as I was a rather quiet person. I just happened to think that if I planned life out, if I mapped every corner, every angle, then I would never be disappointed.

A friend told me to not write in my agenda for a week and I just laughed. Who were they kidding? Everyone needed a plan; everyone needed to know which way their life was heading, and when to duck when something was coming your way that you weren't exactly expecting.

Then, one day, it hit me, out of the blue, completely unexpected, completely and wonderfully unpredicted. I couldn't even begin to say when I started being spontaneous, and stopped living life so utterly scheduled.

It suddenly felt great to go to shopping at the mall and randomly see a movie instead. People think it's such an abstract thought to live life by an agenda, but a few years ago, it was the only life I knew, and unabashedly loved.

I gradually began to give up making so many lists, writing down unspoken conversations, and not planning out everything in my agenda. I learned how to live life instead of taking notes now and promising to live later. I learned that the only way to experience life is to not think so much, not plan so much, and most certainly not let a set schedule get

in the way of what just might happen.

Starting my car up on a rainy day, not having a specific destination in mind, but revving the engine up, regardless, is now one of my specialties: I make sure to get myself good and lost, with a cell phone handy of course, and then just drive. My friends now love it when I show up in their driveway late at night, never knowing where we're headed, but the fact that we'll end up somewhere unknown makes an evening seem that much more exciting.

Nowadays, I might be in the middle of last minute homework, but a knock on my window at midnight, begging me to come sledding is usually an offer I won't refuse.

To this day, I still surprise myself quite a bit by how much I've changed.

Life was once a piece of glass, ready to shatter apart if something didn't pan out the way I'd imagined. Now, life happens to be a big Indiana Jones adventure, never knowing when the floor beneath my feet might drop, and I am loving every minute of it.

Although spontaneous living has me enthralled, I still pick out my clothes the night before, and I might still have expectations of what I think should happen in certain situations. I'm no longer the person that plans her life out to a tee however, cringing when something doesn't pan out how it's supposed to.

I am the person that smiles when it rains as soon as I step outside to take the dog for a walk, the person that laughs when I get lost driving around at midnight, knowing that I still have a test the very next morning. I am the person who lives life as it comes, not living according to a written-in agenda.

Living life with plans is not so awful; just make sure to leave room for what might be coming around the next corner, or that road trip that requires no MapQuest directions.

Memorable Super Bowl; long winter without football

By Rachel Reeves
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This year's Super Bowl was everything anyone could have asked for (excepting the odd Patriot's fan.) The horrendously underestimated underdog held on all through the long, gritty game and scored on the clinching drive. The insufferable, cocky favorite crumbled under the pressure that they once thrived on. And all of America celebrated as perfection was foiled and reality was graced with a little touch of the impossible.

I myself was speechless for at least three minutes after the clock ran out. No one bitterly proclaimed the Patriot's automatic win more insistently than I had. No one was more sure of the outcome than I had been. But I watched the Giants eat my words. As beautiful as Tom Brady admittedly is, watching him get sacked immediately and repeatedly was even better.

Best of all, I got sweet justification as a Green Bay fan. Not only can I not begrudge a team that took out the undefeated, but I can stand losing to a team that the Brady-Belichick superpower lost to as well. And it was so nice to see the Lombardi trophy go back to an NFC team once again.

But the Super Bowl is over, and I'm staring down the barrel of seven long months without any football in it. Some people count the Pro Bowl as actual football, but if Favre is not in a Green bay Packer's jersey it's only half a sport.

I personally, watch the competitions before the game, and watch on Sunday to catch my last glimpse of football and sunlight.

Last weekend was a chilling preview of the winter ahead. I did homework, I called a friend or two, I watched TV movies. I shamefully admit to succumbing to figure skating for a few moments before I could pull together some strength and turn off the TV. I know that I used to occupy my time on Sunday afternoons before football season started, but I can't remember how. Maybe I really did sit and stare at the blank television, longing for football, until bedtime.

March Madness is coming on quickly, and that is one redeeming prospect. Although the squeak of sneakers on the basketball court is not the same as of helmets and pads crunching in a head-on collision, it will hold me over until spring comes.

There is tennis and golf soon, which is pleasant to do homework and nap to.

While we're at it, there is always the cooking channel and infomercials. I could master the subtle differences between NFL and Arena football, maybe even support a local indoor team. I could expand my reading, or learn Italian, or quantum physics. I could learn how to build a time machine and go back to August when preseason starts.

No. Nothing I can think of is going to fill that football-shaped hole in my heart. So I'll just have to wait and dream until the next football season. Who knows, maybe Green Bay will go all the way next year...

All of America celebrated as perfection was foiled and reality was graced with a little touch of the impossible.

CONTRIBUTED CARTOON BY FRANK WELTNER

I think the world needs...

Super Tuesday parties. America has Super Bowl parties. Chips and dip and beer, and all of your friends sitting on the couch placing bets and enjoying the best commercials of the year. Oscar parties are also popular. It's usually a good excuse to put on the prom dress that you're madly in love with but have only worn once and make elaborate snack foods with your friends. Well, why not Super Tuesday parties? Everyone could dress up like their favorite candidates, which would admittedly be for most people dress shoes with dress slacks, a white shirt with the sleeves rolled up and a red tie. Maybe yellow depending on your skin tone. And, of course, the odd coral pantsuit. Appetizers could be served while the votes start coming in and the talking heads begin to gear up. Conversation could fill in the gaps between the candidate's speeches. Guests could place bets to thier hearts' desire, or take a shot each time thier favorite candidate wins a state. Best of all, instead of an annual event, you have four whole years to plan the next extravaganza.