

Perspectives Page

EDITORIAL

It Happens To Us All

By Randy Myers

You must be wary of those who cry wolf for they will not always be bluffing.

On Monday Capitol Campus had its first bomb scare [with people in the building] since the college opened in the sixties. And, as sometimes happens with a new experience, those in charge of executing the plan of action developed for such a bomb threat did not carry it out as planned.

First of all, there was an approximate twenty minute delay between receiving the actual threat and when the alarm finally rang to notify people of the evacuation. In future practice this time period should be narrowed, for the caller may not be giving this much time to react. The alarm system is the best means now available to alert everyone in the building, but a better understanding of the activation process is needed among those who might be in charge.

After everyone is evacuated from the building they need to be controlled in an orderly fashion so that emergency equipment may come or go freely. Those evacuated should also be directed, by trained personnel, to get a proper distance away from the building.

A third problem arises in having competent people in charge who know their priority of responsibilities. Outside authorities were not notified until later in the day and then only as a matter of record. The Capitol Campus Bomb Threat Alert Plan states that the Senior Security Officer present on Campus upon being formally notified of a bomb threat involving the Capitol Campus shall immediately attempt to notify the Swatara Township Police, the Pennsylvania State Police, the F.B.I., and Dauphin County Fire & Disaster Control for fire and ambulance stand-by.

The actual search of the building for an explosive device could have been better organized. A floor plan should be prepared with definite search areas designated so the search team can systematically conduct their search. Flyers could be distributed alerting people, still in the building, how to notify those in charge of anything unusual. In any case the eleven hours it took to complete the search on Monday should be reduced.

This is all, of course, Monday morning quarterbacking. What it comes down to is this - that a lot of things about Capitol Campus policy in an event of this nature need to be clarified, individual responsibilities more clearly defined both in amount and order of priority, and that these policies be strictly adhered to in the event of any future threat. Apparently some people felt that the call was a hoax. But if there was a bomb, people would have been hurt and those in charge would have had to answer for it. Were the notices posted on the exterior doors there to remove legal liability for those in charge? Even if they did remove legal liability, they would still have to answer to themselves.

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The Capitol Campus Reader is the school newspaper of Penn State's Capitol Campus. It is published by the students who attend this school. We of the Reader Staff try to accurately represent the voice of the students, and keep them informed as to current events and relevant issues. We are published on a weekly basis.

Elvis is dead and Ali is down. You remember your reaction to each, the initial disbelief, the brief dismay, and then the lingering, unsettling reflection on the meaning of it all.

Like millions of other people, you were subtly confronted with your own mortality by being forced to face that of men who were the heroes of people across the world.

Elvis Presley was the embodiment of the American dream. Born to poor parents in the South, he rose to stardom in the world of music as the foremost rock'n'roll star of the fifties.

Muhammed Ali, while less universally popular, was equally well-known. He captured the heavyweight boxing crown in 1964 by defeating the more experienced but aging Sonny Liston, rewon the title in 1974 by beating Ken Norton, only to lose it last week to 24-year-old Leon Spinks.

Though Ali lives, his career fell to the same opponent that ended Elvis' career - time. For the last several years, Ali's matches have been a contest between his experience and the stamina and nerve of a less talented but younger challenger. Similarly, Elvis' later concerts revealed an aging

man. He was tired, overweight, and withdrawn before his death, seemingly unable to cope in private life with his public role as a cultural hero.

The explanation for the tremendous impact Elvis' death and Ali's defeat had on so many people is, I think, rather simple. These two men, both of whom had risen to the top of their field, were ideals to be identified with by the common man. In seeing their heroes fall, people were forced to accept the mortality of great men and, consequently, of themselves.

Facing one's mortality leads, inevitably, to the questions that have puzzled man since his existence, questions about the purpose of man's life and his condition after death.

Historically, the various religions have provided the answers to these questions for the majority of people. The popularity with which so many religions meet is predictable, for each offers its followers the consolation which most men want to hear: the promise that life is not simply a pointless existence on earth, but rather one that continues for the soul even after the death of the mortal body.

For the early Greek's, Homer's depiction of Hades in Book XI of the *Odyssey* showed the shades of dead men roaming the underworld, still

recognizable as the persons they were on earth.

The various divisions of Christianity offer man eternal life to be enjoyed by the soul in Heaven or endured in Hell. Some Eastern religions, such as Hinduism, offer man eternal life through reincarnation.

Philosophers have developed other answers to the question of man's mortality. Plato, for example, explained in his *Symposium* that only through procreation could man achieve immortality. Lucretius, a disciple of the Roman philosopher Epicureas, held that the soul was mortal because it was affected by wine and because the body weighed the same before and after death. He reasoned that there was no reason to fear dying because the soul, being mortal, was no longer conscious after death.

The popularity of the various religions, and to some extent the beliefs of some philosophers, reveals the reluctance people have of facing the question of mortality. Death and the after-life hold a fear that few men care to face squarely. Thus, any event that forces men to face their own mortality, such as the death of a hero or the defeat of a champion, will continue to shock people with much the same force as the death of a loved one.

Misaligned Priorities

By Gary Reneker

Recently printed in the Reader was a letter to the editors, in which the author (David Nikoloff) challenged Governor Shapp's decision against increasing the allocations to state-related universities in next year's budget. I am far from an ardent admirer of Milton Shapp, but I must agree with him on this issue.

When we were just li'l rug rats most of our parents allowed us to make certain decisions on our own, but they were usually there with an emphatic "NO!" when we went too far and took advantage of their temporary leniency. That is exactly what Governor Shapp (the "Big Daddy" of all state institutions) is doing with the universities.

Every major university receiving state support has taken advantage of the somewhat autonomous position afforded them by the state government. They have transformed themselves from institutions of public benevolence into tax devouring institutions of bureaucratic growth and perpetuation that rival the bureaucracies of any other public institution.

Penn State is a perfect example of this administrative misalignment of priorities. In

the same time that the student population of Penn State has doubled, its administration has quadrupled in size, but its faculty has been diminished (to make room for more administrators). It costs more to maintain and support an administrative position that it does to employ and support a faculty member, and while costs increase the quality of education offered to the student takes a dive.

As mentioned by Mr. Nikoloff in his letter, Capitol Campus is expected to decrease its operational costs. What's the administration's solution to the problem? Well, you can bet your sweet gluteus maximus they aren't planning on eliminating any administrative positions. They claim that every one of those people polishing their nails, walking the halls, and conversing about fellow employees are essential to the efficient operation of Capitol Campus. The word has been given that they instead plan to release approximately 24 faculty members during the next few years, thereby offering Capitol Campus students a less than complete opportunity for a well rounded education at an increased price (that's efficiency???)

The state-related universities have a long history of screaming, "More money or we raise tuition", to the state legislature. Penn State has been the most boisterous in their demands. Each time the legislature has given them the money demanded, and each time Penn State raised the tuition anyway. In agreement with our Governor, I would like to see proof this time that the needed funds cannot be wrung from universities administrative underemployment systems before increasing their allocation of tax dollars.

DTK

The DTK announces their second annual Plant Sale. The sale will take place on Thursday March 2, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in Vendorville.

Buy your plants now for good growth this Spring!

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Have any questions that you want to ask your Senator? Want to talk about anything? Stop in W-110 Tuesdays and Thursdays 3-4 p.m. or call 787-1663 for arranging an alternate time.