

Columnist looks back on successful year

Michael Stone
Capital Times Staff

Ah, it's warm, there are no courses worth taking in the fall, and I smell a strong scent of fresh manure...it must be springtime at Penn State Harrisburg.

The courses are winding down, the Olmsted building is hot, people are frantically trying to get everything done, and Jeff Hildebrand has changed his name...all signs that the year is about over.

But, now that Jeff is Jeff Leader, will he come back in August and ask us to call him Jeff Leader Mellencamp? In November, will he be just Jeff Mellencamp? And had he chosen to write a column for this issue, should it have been called "Follow the Leader?"

When I arrived here in August, all green, ambitious and sweaty (it was about 100 degrees), I thought that May would never get here. Maybe it's because I have been extremely busy, or maybe it's because I'm getting older, but this year flew by. I have no idea where it went.

I accomplished a few things this year. Besides the fact that I split one cable box to outfit the entire Meade Heights complex with Cinemax, I joined this newspaper. It all started with a Squeeze concert review and then moved to compact disc reviews. I got tired of the music aspect and decided to do what I always wanted: follow in the steps of Dave Barry

and Erma Bombeck and write a satirical column about those crazy things you find in life.

I wrote a story about jogging and it was placed on the bottom of the opinions page. I wrote more columns and have

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now graciously received the top spot on the op-ed page, an honor I value greatly.

I've tried my best to entertain you and give you something to think about. I'm not here to give opinions about political issues, and after hearing it from everywhere else, who wants to sit down and read a political analysis? My goal is to make you laugh and maybe, just for a split second, you will forget about all the pressure and problems you might have.

Picking topics has been difficult. I have about two weeks to write the column, and I usually bang my head against a wall for the first week. I like to stick to topics I can relate to and write about. I won't write about something I'm not well-versed in, so I hope you won't be disappointed when I don't do a column on Summer Eve's (granted, I sometimes have that "not-so-fresh" feeling, but I don't think this is the forum to discuss personal hygiene).

As a columnist, I'm asking you to read

stuff in black and white and expand upon it. You don't know me, and I don't know you, but an exchange is happening. At times, I put some personal tidbits about my life into the columns. It's not a very easy thing to do, but I believe you can't accept me as a writer unless you accept me as a person.

And getting personal is a problem. There are things in my life I would like to talk about. Right before I typed my last column in, my father was diagnosed with cancer. Luckily, he has since been operated on and is going to be fine, but it was an item that I wanted to raise last issue. I thought that maybe if some of you had gone through similar experiences, it would be okay. But, I didn't want to turn a lot of people off by writing a morbidly serious column.

I also have a lot of great people in my support group of family and friends that are worth mentioning. But I think I would embarrass them more than glorify them in a column. So, I choose not to write about them, but since they influence me greatly, you experience them through my writing and ideas.

My junior year of college here changed me. I think I'm a better person (yeah, right!), but I'm also stressed out and more of a pessimist.

Three Mile Island has also made me metamorphasize into the human "Clapper." Every night that I leave the Olmsted, this one street light in the

parking lot ALWAYS shuts off whenever I walk past it--like clockwork. Well, at least I won't have to worry about thinking up names for my offspring--I won't have any.

Anyway, this year is over and the column will rest for the summer--fermenting in the stale, hot grass. Some of you will be returning in August and braving yet another year at our sacred institution. I look forward spending the final year with you and growing through our experiences.

The rest of you will be graduating from this Harvard on the Highway before next fall. To you, I say thanks for letting me write for you. I appreciated the messages of praise, as well as the criticisms, which allowed me to rethink my writing and make it better. I hope this economy gets better and that all of your future endeavors are nothing but successful.

My dream is that a few years down the line, you'll turn on a nationally successful news program, see me doing the weather, and say, "Hey, I know that guy...he's great!"

My fear is that you'll turn on a PBS documentary on sod farming, see me, and say, "Hey, I know that guy...man, is he BALD!"

Oh, by the way, I would never risk imprisonment and split cable so people could get free Cinemax.

HBO is a much better channel.

Would-be graduate expresses opinions of campus

Terry Wolf
Capital Times Staff

This is it boys and girls, this is the last time you'll ever have to read my rantings and ravings in the pages of The Capital Times. The flip side is I don't have to write them anymore. Not that writing them hasn't been fun, sometimes I got a real kick out of it, sometimes it was a pain in the ass.

Since this is my last column, I feel I should take this opportunity to give my opinion about this blessed institution I will soon be leaving. I can't be too honest, after all I do have to remain here over the summer in order to graduate, some nonsense about dropping a course too many.

I thought I would arrange this in two lists. Things I'll miss, and things I won't.

Academically I feel fairly satisfied. I am, I feel, a consumer paying good money for a product. The product in this case is an education. The education here has been very good, and I feel I've learned a lot, not just about the field of communications, but also about life. At age 31, I didn't know how much there was to learn about life.

On the non-academic side there are some good points, and some sour ones as well. I've tried to become involved as much as humanly possible, sometimes I've been satisfied, sometimes not.

In any event, here is Terry Wolf's list of things he'll miss, and those he won't. They aren't in any order of importance, I'm just thinking of them as I write this.....

Things I'll miss:

1. The computer lab - I don't own a

PC, but I do own many PC games.

2. Eton Churchill - No, I'm not brown-nosing before a final, I just think PSH needs about a dozen more like him, people who really try to get you to learn.

3. WPSH - What can I say? The

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radio station has been one of the greatest sources of my education. It directly helped me to do a better job on my internship at WKBO, and was directly responsible for me getting hired at WHP. The people I've met at WPSH are some of the best people I've ever had the pleasure to know, I will truly miss the companionship (and the parties!). I really can't say enough about WPSH so I'll stop and get on with my list.

4. The Humanities Division - Just a good bunch of people. The secretaries are always pleasant, the faculty is always helpful and Dr. Mahar is super.

5. The Capital Times - This is fun. The opportunity to express my opinions and the chance to improve my ability as a journalist was very much appreciated. It's too bad the Organizational Advisory Board looks more at meeting attendance than they do at what clubs really did on campus. Without an award for The Capital Times, the Awards Banquet will be a sham.

6. The Colonial Inn - I spent a few evenings at this quaint little establishment. The hot wings are truly the best in the western hemisphere. I'm just glad I was able to copy the recipe. I spent

a few nights sitting and talking to friends about classes, profs, and just about anything you can think of, and I'll miss it.

7. Intellectual conversations with Jeff Leader - There were times I'm sure when people thought we were going to fight, but they didn't understand that sometimes people of different ideological viewpoints actually like to engage in "healthy" discussions about the issues. Besides, I was usually right.

And now, things I won't miss:

1. Being an R.A. in Meade Heights - I won't miss being paid less than R.A.s in the dorms. I won't miss the lack of cooperation with campus police. I won't miss being the mailman for Nelson Drive. I won't miss people thinking that because I'm on duty in the Coffee House I am therefore a computer expert. I won't miss computers that were built during the Mesozoic Era. I won't miss.... well here's another topic I could really spill my guts about, but I should move on.

2. Morning classes - Enough said.

3. Evening classes - Again, enough said.

4. Being a member of SGA - Although I did miss it when I first resigned as senior senator/humanities division, I don't miss it now. The political games one has to play and the butt one has to kiss are far too much for a radical such as myself.

5. Dealing with SGA - After I resigned, and had to deal with that "club" as president of WPSH, I was really aggravated. I was very glad I quit. So many things are wrong with that organization it's hard to know where to start.

A finance committee whose ignorance

allows them to decide how much funding to give a radio station using the same criteria they use to fund the marketing club, or how about when SGA decided to go on strike and freeze all the club's funds? Then they have the audacity to write letters to the editor complaining about negative press! This is another issue I could go on about, but I've already written one column about those clowns, so I'll move on.

6. Not having any time for my family - I know I won't miss that. I haven't been able to just spend an entire day playing with my kids or spent an evening with my wife since I've been going to school here. I know I'm not alone, most "non-traditional" students have the same problem.

7. The Heritage Series in the Gallery Lounge - If I hear one more administrative type say "we're here for the students" I'm going to puke. This was the biggest waste of MY tuition money I ever saw on this campus, and I saw plenty of waste. I'm sure the administration and a few faculty liked this, they were the only ones that ever showed up. Hey, how come Main Campus gets .38 Special concerts and we're stuck with Joe Blow and his Oboe?

8. Mel Wolf - Again, enough said.

9. The feeling I have at the end of a semester - I have it right now. The feeling that I'm going to fail something and there's nothing I can do about it, the feeling that I'll never get everything done, the strange desire to commit suicide by eating in the dining hall.

That's it. I want to write more, but space and time, as well as political correctness, demand that I stop. Goodbye.