

A dabble in sassy snow vignettes

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As February winds down, I notice this quickly-passing month has been a busy one—at least for me, anyway.

So, without one huge topic staring me in the face, and with a deadline closing in on me, I'm choosing to make this column a series of print vignettes. I'm not one for good transitions, so hold on.

I guess the biggest thing to happen in February has been the return of snow to the area. I mean *snow*. We finally got out of the rut of measly whitish-gray, icy, rainy, light-blankety "snow" and experienced some serious, ivory-white, deadly silent, fluffy snow. And we got two fairly big snowstorms in a row. I checked the old climatological records, and we haven't had a serious snow since December of 1990 (no, it wasn't on Christmas...that would ruin an area tradition of rainy, 50 degree Christmases). Granted, the recent storms do not compare to the two-foot blizzards of ten years ago, but for snow fans like me, the events of the last few weeks have been emotionally satisfying.

Snow means a lot of things to a lot of people (here I go getting profound again). To the skiers, it means enjoying local skiing on non-synthetic snow.

To children (or, children at heart), it means day of playing hooky, and seeing how cold and wet you can get before retreating into the house (and I guess seeing if you can survive a snowball fight without getting hit in the ear with the dreaded iceball. It's a pain that would make even the toughest Marine cry for his/her mom).

Snow means innocence and a day of catching up. Maybe some schoolwork needs attention; a good book that's been

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waiting to get read gets picked up at last; the microwave gets fired up for some cocoa; or, if your home is so equipped, you build a fire. A snow day might mean a day of total relaxation...watching some favorite TV programs or videos that are missed during the weekly routine, or perhaps just opening the curtains and watching Mother Nature coat the world with a blanket of white (there are very few places that don't look damn beautiful with a fresh blanket of snow on them). Then again, doing absolutely nothing at all is a great way to spend a snowy day.

There are the people (myself included) who see snow as a challenge. For some reason, when it snows, I feel like I *MUST* go somewhere—to a diner, to the store, or the post office. I don't know why. Maybe it's the fact that I can't spend a day just sitting around relaxing, but I think it's some latent male urge to conquer the elements. I'm in a heated car, with insulated boots and gloves, a wool coat, and plenty of gas to get me to Virginia, but I'm still conquering, dammit.

Then there are the people that absolutely hate snow. They've been pretty happy the last few winters, but now their hatred of the white stuff has returned. Maybe it's because of snow shoveling. The slushy mix we're used to getting is a back-breaking annoyance. Even the best snow blower can crap out in wet snow.

Why else do people hate snow? This

brings me to driving in snow. It shouldn't be that difficult, should it? But why do some people make it that way? Unfortunately, we live in an area that's prone to sleet and freezing rain, thus throwing extra factors into the overall driving equation. If you're careful, proceed somewhat slowly, leave room between cars, don't slam the brakes, and turn in the direction the rear end of the car is skidding, then you'll do fine. But why wasn't everyone taught this—or at least, why doesn't everyone remember this?

When it snowed earlier this winter, I remember seeing a Camaro (a car specifically designed for snow) on the side of the road, twisted and contorted in strange ways. My guess is that the driver wasn't observing the winter rules of driving. Then, as I was proceeding down the highway, most of us were traveling at about 40 or so, this Jeep whips down the (unplowed, untraveled) fast lane at about 75 mph. The Jeep went about 300 yards, hit some ice, slammed on the brakes (shall we review our rules for winter driving?) and skidded right off the road into the median. The driver came to a stop without harm or collision with anything, but as I laughed uncontrollably in my car, not equipped with four-wheel drive (which is the gateway, it seems, to fast winter driving), I couldn't help but think, "What a moron."

A little relaxation, defensive driving and some patience would make winter driving less of a hassle. So, be safe.

This month, with the arrival of significant snow, my imaginary friend, Gus, got breast implants. (I just wanted to see if you're still with me.)

I guess no discussion about snow

would be complete without mentioning the fine, art-like process of snow removal. This year hasn't been too bad considering the amount of ice we've had. (Although previous years of snow removal performance once caused Atlanta to fax us a page saying "And we thought WE had problems.")

And I must admit, the campus workers make the main road safer than most interstates. The road that goes from the Olmsted building to the dorms and Meade Heights is another story. A wintry drive on those roads can be more physically draining than a five-mile hike (with full gear) and more emotionally wrenching than a ride on Astroland's Cyclone roller coaster. At times you wish you drove a Zamboni.

But say what you want, I for one am happy that central Pennsylvania is finally getting a taste of real winter. I'd say it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...Christmas in northern Maine, maybe (but with nuclear reactors that have crummy security).

Oh yeah, I mentioned something about vignettes (I guess a concrete topic developed as I wrote). Not going back on my promise, I'll sum up in a few lines:

My 22nd birthday was the other week. It was about as eventful as this sentence.

Valentine's Day was shortly before my birthday. It was equally as exciting, perhaps as a preview for my birthday fun.

And, Hillary Clinton came to the campus this month. For details about the excitement levels felt during her visit, see the sentence about my birthday.

Drive safely, campers...Phil saw his shadow.

Apathetic students: stop your complaining

Lisa Malask
Capital Times Staff

Where were you? I constantly hear students complaining about student activities fees, budget cuts and never being consulted as to how their tuition is spent. Well, you had your chance, and you blew it! You see, quite recently, Associate Provost and Dean of Faculty Ernest K. Dishner, and Associate Provost for Administrative Operations James D. South, held an open meeting. The topic of discussion was the impending budget cuts and how these would affect the student body. The only people who attended were some SGA members, an advisor, a member of the college press and one other student. Even professors and administrators were not present. Don't bombard me with trivial rationalizations, as this meeting took place on a Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. (when everyone has a break), and it was publicized. There were advertisements all over PSH.

Had you been interested enough to grace us with your presence at the meeting, you would have been informed as

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to the new computerized way that students will be choosing their classes. You would have learned about the new parking fee and how the proceeds will be dispensed via maintenance and security. You would have learned about the cutbacks regarding health services and PSH's alliance with the Hershey Medical Center. This was your opportunity to ask questions, but you didn't care enough to be there. What does this tell you?

Whether you are a commuter or live on campus, there is no excuse for apathy. Yes, I know that every semester somebody dares to accuse students and faculty of being indifferent, and maybe you're sick of hearing it. Nevertheless, this is a problem that must be articulated. Even hatred is

healthier than apathy. When you despise a situation, many times, action is taken; but, indifference is like numbness. Simply, it's an "I don't care" attitude.

Apathy is a plague that sneaks up on people and infiltrates both body and soul. It's a contagion. If one person doesn't care, the mood is set. Soon, nobody cares. This pathological outlook is detrimental to the present and the future. No, I am not being melodramatic. It is unhealthy for people to let others make their decisions without any inquiry or challenge. Are the people making the decisions always capable? Perhaps, if more people had challenged Hitler before he obtained so much power, the Holocaust might not have taken place.

That's only one example. My point is that we don't have to be, and shouldn't be, mechanical, robotic people who allow others to make our choices for us. Assert yourself. Go ahead and take the plunge. Stand up for your principles, or agree to disagree. Make your voice known. How can you live your life to its fullest

potential if you are oblivious to your surroundings?

There is a distinct difference between living and existing. Those who are indifferent merely exist...hanging in limbo all of their lives, waiting for someone else to assess situations and take command. On the other hand, you have the option to live to your fullest potential...to make your opinion known. Sometimes you'll win, and sometimes you'll lose. Correction! If you at least endeavor to take a stand for or against something in which you believe, you are a winner.

Don't ask me to recapitulate or regurgitate what was discussed at that meeting. You had the chance to be there, but it wasn't one of your priorities. You didn't care, so why should I care whether or not you are apprised of what took place? Get it? I DON'T CARE! Pass it on...unless you just couldn't care less...because I don't care whether or not you care. ...And the "apathy syndrome" perpetuates!

Fees and "flirtations": the big stink at PSH

Michele Loeper
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Originally this was going to be another "Why are the students at PSH so damn apathetic" column, but I really didn't feel like beating a dead horse (no pun intended). Rather, there are other more important Penn State issues that could use some colorful commentary.

First of all, FORTY BUCKS??? TO PARK??? Give me a break!! I mean who is the genius who came up with this one. I realize this campus needs some improvement (I know. You're probably thinking, improvement? This place? No!!).

Maybe it's just me, but I certainly can see \$40 a semester going to something a little more beneficial than a neatly paved

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parking lot. It's bad enough that I have to spend \$35 a semester to use a computer in a lab that, well, how shall I put this--sucks!! But now this bureaucratic, capitalistic, shrine to Pepsi, wants me to shell out 40 shekels to park my car. I'm appalled!! Someone please call the police; this place is raping my wallet!!

Before I get off of this wonderful topic, I have some food for thought: In the

parking story on the front page of this issue, it says that students can pay less if they agree not to park in the spaces closer to campus. Again I ask, who is the genius who came up with this stuff? How are they going to work this one? What happens if I only want to spend \$10? Does this mean I have to park in the airport long term shuttle lot? Or, what if I agree to pay \$60 a semester? Could I then get my very own front row space with a personalized sign--"Michele's space"? Just curious. After all, it is my money.

Another thorn in my "Lion's" paw is the ridiculous hell that the bursar's office keeps putting me through. As with many of us, I have invested in several student

loans to pay for the outrageous price tag a degree from this university holds. If it's not bad enough that I have to live knowing that after I graduate I will be living at home, in debt, for another two/three years just to pay off these humongous loans, the bursar's office is stressing me even further by holding my money.

For some reason, it has decided not to release the money into my account because I apparently didn't sign a release form (which incidentally I have signed--twice!!) Is this stress really necessary? Is it really that difficult to get a little

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