

# Question authority; the answers are wonderful

Michael Starkey  
Capital Times Columnist

Everywhere you turn there seems to lurk a mystery. For the majority of my life, I've been intrigued by the unknown. The questions no one else asks always intrude on the screen of my mind. I'm sure some of you reflect on the meaning of life and the puzzle of our relationship to the cosmos as I have on those long nights when you can't sleep and there's no one to turn to. I always sought out the physicists because their theoretical sojourns into the abyss were tempered by the elegance of their discoveries. Really neat stuff like the curved universe and the discovery of quarks were a fine counterpoint to the visceral amblings of the philosophers that often twisted my head so tight I wanted to scream. That was then and this is now...the philosophers sound like scientists and the scientists' discourse is riddled with philosophical content (pun/fun!). I hope we all live to see the solution to the unified field theory as the

implications for all of mankind are staggering. Just think, a real understanding of the way the universe

## STARKEY'S SANCTUARY

works would allow us to travel through time, mend the planet, plan for a better future for all of us, and besides the mere knowing would be a comfort to those of us who always crave answers.

My father and I didn't agree on a whole lot in life. He was more self centered and less inclined to quizzicalness than I am. MY dad did manage to, "pound a few things through my thick skull" - among them was the concept that the guy who knows how will always have a job, the guy who knows why will always be his boss...even though I've no real desire to be anyone's boss, I really do need to know why. Maybe this is the result of a self-replicating DNA slave gone awry, maybe it is the result of a mother that always induced her children to,

"question everything and don't accept glib answers that don't stand the test of time". Hell, with a set of bright folks like I had for parents, it's a miracle I managed to sneak into the philosophy department at all. I mean after all, what use is a philosopher to a pragmatic society like ours anyway? We all know just what needs to be done and just how...all we really need is the impetus to strike out in that direction and solve all the nasty problems we face. You know the BIG ISSUES of the day, go on pick a day, any day, and what issue faces you? Planetary demise? Rain forest depletion? World hunger? Global warming? The demise of hundreds of species a year? The pollution of our water? The threat of nuclear annihilation? Street crime? Drugs? NOT!

Read your history, study it, learn it, and learn from it! Think carefully before you side with anyone who promises a cure or a solution. Ask yourself every time someone wants you to make a commitment to a cause just

what it is they really want. Search out the underlying basis for the proposed action. What is the agenda and who benefits most? As Deep Throat (not the movie, the subterranean source from Watergate) was fond of remarking, "follow the money."

We, here in the United States, are constantly on the move, stalking one crisis or another, shifting our attention hither and yon as the winds of change blow upon us...this begs a pop aside...Bobby Zimmerman AKA Bob Dylan wrote, "ya don't need a weatherman to tell ya which way the wind blows," ain't it da truth!...So the real question as I see it, the crux of the biscuit as it were, is why do I want to believe in anything I see or hear that doesn't make sense to me?

We are all involved in an institution of higher learning (at least as long as our profs can hold out against the rising tide of bean counting business oriented administrators). So we must devote ourselves to the process of learning critical thought, and we must develop

the ability to make judgments and decisions based on careful analysis of all available facts. This also means we must be ready to admit mistakes and adjust as needed. We must resist the temptation to respond with emotionally driven choices rather than deciding action based on unbiased and sober reflection. This whole process isn't easy and requires our intellectual involvement and the judicious application of a healthy dose of skepticism.

So go on and jump in, the water's fine. Question authority, don't respond to any Pavlovian bells, get out of your Skinner box on your own by looking UP as well as around; make people in power nervous by asking questions and demanding sensible answers...Meanwhile I'm gonna find out why it is that every line I join at the grocery store automatically becomes the slow line, and why it is I always have pennies 'till I need 'em...Answers, ya gotta love 'em!

# Open your mind and release your fears

E. Mikael Hein  
Capital Times Columnist

My college experience away from home started last spring with a great case of the stomach flu. I moved in with the help of a friend who, thankfully, unpacked my things for me. Fortunately my illness only lasted for 24 hours, which is more than I can say for my roommate.

I'm no stranger to fear. I had heard the rumors and teasing thrown my way all through high school. I can only assume that my roommate was afraid too. Afraid of the fact that I am gay. Fortunately, the matter was cleared up with some discretion. As far as I know, he never mentioned my sexuality to

anyone else on campus. Unfortunately, he didn't have to.

As the weeks passed, I became aware

## OUT IN THE OPEN

of guys looking the other way when I walked down the hall. I noticed the bathroom tended to clear out when I entered, and people that once talked freely to me now seemed reserved. Apparently my private life was now public.

It was about this time that I decided to start coming out to selected friends before they were caught up in the rumors. I was both surprised and enlightened to find plenty of people who accepted me for who I was. Before

I knew it, the hang-ups of other people didn't matter. Or did they?

Sometime in April the Tarnhelm was published. To my surprise, two of my poems were chosen for publication, one of which contained "gay imagery." A few days after the magazine's release, I was approached by a resident assistant from Wisburg Hall. He wanted to warn me that he had heard some students conspiring to harass me because of my work. At first I thanked him for the warning, but then I began to get angry.

Did it ever occur to the RA to say something to the students who were planning on doing something against university policy as well as against the law? I'm sure in his own way he thought he was doing the right thing by telling me. But why should I have to live on campus in fear of what might happen?

Were they not the ones who were doing something wrong?

The semester ended without any action taken by my "fan club." While this was a relief, I am well aware that it is not over. I know that there are other people out there who still are afraid of who I am.

People who have never met me or talked to me. There are still people who whisper about me when I walk down the hall in Olmsted.

And there's a curious breed of people who will out of the blue try to start a conversation with me, saying something like, "I have a friend who has a cousin who is gay." This usually evokes a smile on my face and a response like "really, I have a friend who is straight."

Simply put, I am gay. This does not make me a circus wonder. I don't sway down the hall in dresses muttering

"fabulous" under my breath. I am a man who works on his car as well as his hair. I am not going to jump in your face waving rainbow flags and pink triangles demanding your respect. I expect to earn it, just as you would from me.

It is important to note that an estimated ten percent of the population is like myself. That obviously means that I am not alone on this campus. Currently, there is no gay and lesbian support services offered on campus. Fortunately, however, Harrisburg has a very active organization called BGLYAH. For any information regarding the organization or any gay and lesbian issues, call the switchboard at 234-0328.

Hopefully somehow we can reduce the fear projected towards gays and lesbians and be free to love our boyfriends and girlfriends without fear.

# Tofu and zodiac make breakfast exciting

Jeff Feehrer  
Capital Times Columnist

Salutations to aspiring juniors, returning seniors and remaining professors with tenure or less than six years of instructing. Create or update your resumes, but welcome to the land of the fee anyway.

What a week. Your chronicler of cackle is nearly winded. First, my womanfriend--PSU class of '88 and a New Age vegetarian who communes with dolphins, deals tarot cards and embraces all minority factions--returned from a week in the Adirondacks where she visited a stressful mind reduction retreat.

My lady of the zodiac dined contemplatively if not palatably. Arising at six in the morning to commence an hour of meditation and yoga, she then breakfasted on the tasty options of a bowl of birch bark flakes, harmonic convergence porridge or tai chi tofu. Lunch was yin-yang bouillion with sassafras-and-hematite salad, and dinner was devouring three chapters, pepper permitted, of a Robert Bly or L. Ron Hubbard novel.

The stomach boggles. Her purse returned thinner, too, after sampling the die-in-diet and the queasy-in-cuisine. Scouring up money for this stressless seminar drove her crazy. As a master's graduate student working in counseling, my orchid of astral projection is poor. And securing \$755 for a week of psyche-chasing and raccoon fodder would even stymie Slick Willie.

But where there's a chakra there's a way. She staggered, with the glassy eyes, growling tummy and benign smile of the enlightened and malnourished, into my enveloping elbows to narrate later, over a dinner at the Olive Garden, on the redemptions and absolution of a balsa and mandrake and Paramahansa Yogananda menu. Well, isn't that what homeopathy is all about? Worked for my favorite woman who rummages with wolves.

Yes, I did reach for a star, address a heavenly body, swarm at the feet and felt tip (Tom Berringer autographed the brim of my Indians' cap) of Hollywood in Harrisburg. Admittedly, my progeny and I were stagedoor Willies - more like foul line fellows - sequestering bit parts in the sequel "Major League II." Barring a ravenous film editor and myopic cameras, we should appear, not for fifteen minutes of fame (Warhol), but for fast seconds of Cinemax history as Pirates, Mets and Cleveland fans.

Crushed to speak, your sagacious stylus told Tom that he was fantastic in

"Platoon." His polite but succinct, unsmiling and cool "thank you" mirrored most of his celluloid personae. Of course, he and I are nonchalant to notoriety. Once I sent a letter to Merv Griffin who used to open his talk show, wisely defunct, with a song. This man couldn't carry a tune on a Kenworth and I professionally advised him so, claiming that his crooning degenerated music to thumps on a hollow log. Apparently Merv read - and sacrificed his nominal vocals and torpid TV hosting to become a multimillionaire impresario. Years afterward, he has yet to acknowledge my part in his career change to auric avenues.

Prior to that... Cue my immemorial former rock band, the Mistie Foggs (because groups then had cerebral, conflicting names: Electric Prunes, Moby Grape, Iron Butterfly, Strawberry Alarm Clock, Led Zeppelin). We

coagulated in Sink(ovitz)'s attic one dreary March evening during the Gold Rush of Rock uncovered by the Beatles, when the adolescents of Earth were hungry for every new name and song and styling. We hoped in their halcyon, hormonal feeding frenzy that they would sanction us earlessly, without listening.

Mistie Foggs were Scrig(noli), our cherubic lead guitarist, Gary L. on bitter bass guitar (he wanted lead but was two strings short), my second B-flat clarinet and three-string acoustical guitar, and Sink tripling on vocals, drum and harmonica which he wore poised near his mouth, like Bob Dylan, on a strategically mangled coat hanger. More innovative - every group had a gimmick - was our percussion, a solitary snare drum replete with gray duct tape mending a hole and enhancing tympanics.

During both rehearsals Sink sweated

worse than James Brown, frenetically loosening and tightening the lugs to synthesize the timbre to the song, singing, gasping through the harmonica. On our other, softer number, he switched to the prosthetic acoustical, again furiously twisting tuning keys like a mad surgeon to camouflage the missing fourth string while I beat the snare/kettle/bass.

But behind Sink's wire-rims and in all our eyes was the diamond gleam of a dream. Five days later, we were still working on "Louie Louie" and a rock number that could incorporate my clarinet when Sink announced our fate.

"I got us a gig, man," he said, in a whisper as he perspired heavier.

The Mistie Foggs opened a gas station in Rutherford Heights on a Saturday afternoon. But the clown handing out free hot dogs drew a larger audience. No one would drive us to our destination in rock history, fearing

transportation would perpetuate our career. We had to portage our equipment on bicycles--no-speed, blimp tires, American bikes.

We had no mikes, no sound system but loud and irrhythmic, and the neophyte Texaco owner wouldn't donate one extension cord. Gary L. and Scrig, with dueling guitars, both played lead, picking discordant chords faster and wilder for the adoration of our fan. Sink finally surrendered and collapsed over the drum in an apoplectic stupor. After our desperate, twenty-minute extended version of "Louie Louie," the dented but dauntless Foggs attempted a measure or two of the Stones' "It's All Over Now." Cruel hands applauded, and the Texaco owner smiled.

"Never heard Montevani on an electric guitar before," he said. We assumed it was a compliment.

Coda, listeners.

## STAIRWAY TO HELL

by Trev Stair

