

Beware of the killer squirrels from PSU

Michael David Winter
Capital Times Columnist

Editor's note: This report arrived over the summer when no one was in to read it or send help. We have since extricated our man in a surgical strike which created no casualties among the civilian chipmunk population. The report is being published as a public service to our readers who head up to State College for football games, and to explain why no one else will be in the office while Michael is there.

Dateline: The Pennsylvania State University, University Park Campus, State College, Pa.

I am basically a city boy. I was raised in a quiet corner of one of the larger and nastier cities in New Jersey and I worked for four years in New York City. This is not to say that I know nothing of flora and fauna. Well, fauna at any rate, I only met Flora once. Let's just say that I've put in my time around the woods. I get around. Then again, from what I hear, so does Flora.

Anyway, through my travels, I would say that I've gotten to know squirrels pretty well. In fact, even some of my

The Wasteland



best friends know squirrels. Not to speak to, mind you (whatever were you thinking?), but enough to qualify as lay experts on the subject (get your mind out of the gutter, that is not what I meant). No, we don't know the scientific name for them - although if pressed we would probably come up with something from out of a Roadrunner cartoon (*Nuteaterus Bushytailicus*), but their habits are as easily identifiable as their appearance.

Now all this firsthand information I have gathered leads me to ask this question - what the hell is with these squirrels here at State College!?!?!?

Do the squirrels hang out a little too close to the nuclear reactor? Have the bio-engineers and geneticists been having a bit of fun? Have the wildlife management majors managed to cross breed a squirrel with a pit bull?

Or maybe the squirrels are all in ROTC, because I will tell you that these babies are aggressive.

I can see a Sergeant-Major squirrel drilling them now:

"All right you rodents, get up on your hind legs! What do you think you are? A bunch of MARSUPIALS!? Hold those tails straight. I said straight Squeaky! A fine bunch of rejects I have to work with. I bet you're all here because you couldn't cut it in the flying squirrels. Fine, they have all the glamour; and fine, they get all the girls; but they aren't what we are supposed to be, which is the roughest, toughest, meanest bunch of ground squirrels north of Mexico!! Which is what makes what happened yesterday all the more disappointing - don't look away Charlie. How could you let that grad student get by you? And don't tell me that she's been here for six years. That's no excuse. A tenured professor I can understand - you need an act of God to do anything to them - but a student? I hear there's a high school junior coming to see the campus today, maybe you should try to see if a sixteen year old is something you can handle. Now I want

you guys to quit acting like something out of a Disney movie, and get out there and get some handouts or I'll ship you all out to the 'Rescue Rangers'!! Have you got it? I can't hear you! Good! Now go, GO, GO!!"

Realizing that whole premise is silly, I just can't understand why these squirrels don't run away when people walk by. In fact, these squirrels close in and block your path. I'll admit that I don't think I have seen a single squirrel in all the time I spent in New York City [although I do think I saw an opossum, but I can't be sure - it's hard to tell when they're all smashed out like that. It could have been a rat (Yes, Virginia. They do grow rats that big in New York.)]. However, I don't believe that squirrel habits would change that radically in so short a period of time. Maybe all the local squirrels are actually from New York City. It would certainly explain their behavior, and answer why there are no more squirrels in N.Y.C.

Of course, if this is the explanation, then I'm surprised there haven't been any headlines like, "Rogue squirrel robs candy store - steals all the yogurt

covered peanuts - Police clueless, left up a stump."

Then again, maybe these stories are being reported, but killed by the local chamber of commerce or some such organization, fearing a tabloid will pick up the story and scream out a headline like - "Your nuts or your life" - grown man faces dilemma when mugged by squirrel. "Took me a second to realize that it didn't want me to take off my pants."

But what are you supposed to do when confronted by one of these aggressor squirrels? I have tried circling around, only to have the squirrel continue to move in front of me and block my path. I've stood still, waiting for the squirrel to move on, only to have it start to close in on me with a malice-filled expression on its little, furry face. I've even tried to back away until I found myself completely surrounded by a platoon of the creatures [I won't describe what happened next as only Hitchcock could do it justice].

I don't have any answers, but if you do, could you send them to me? I haven't been out of my apartment in weeks.

Strategy for sensible eating

Jennifer Esposito
Capital Times Staff

Semester after semester, students' age-old complaints echo through the halls of Penn State Harrisburg.

"My books cost \$350."
"Another fee?"
"All of my classes are closed?"
"I need another signature?"

And on the bottom of the ever-growing pile, lay complaints about the food served in the dining commons; "This food is so fattening. They don't serve anything nutritious."

Are the students right or are they misinformed on how to make low-calorie, low-fat choices? While some of the food served in the dining hall is high in fat and cholesterol, there are several alternatives offered for athletes, dieters, and vegetarians.

"If you come in and you're nutrition minded, you have to pick and choose," says Kenn Medina, Assistant Manager of Food Services.

"You can go to the deli bar, the wok bar, or the salad bar. We offer plenty of options. It's up to the students to make the best choices," Medina said.

However, for those students who don't know how to choose healthy alternatives, here are several steps

you can follow to create a low-calorie, low-fat diet in the dining commons:

• Always eat three meals a day or six small ones. Skipping meals only leads to binging.

• Eat a high-carbohydrate diet, focusing on vegetables, fruits, and grains.

• Choose low-fat meats - turkey, chicken, and fish - as opposed to ones high in fat.

• Limit egg yolks to two per week. Egg white omeletes are offered in the dining commons as a low-fat substitute.

• Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. Starchy vegetables - corn, peas, beans, potatoes - should be used as a bread serving.

• Two servings of milk are recommended daily. Choose skim over whole milk, low-fat yogurt, etc...

• Choose non-fat or low-fat dressing instead of mayonnaise or regular salad dressing. Food Services also offers lemon juice and vinegar.

• Avoid fried foods. Choose meats and vegetables that are boiled, broiled, or baked.

• Avoid sauces, gravies, creamed vegetables, cream soups, extra sweet cereals.

• For dessert, substitute potato chips, ice cream, and pudding for low-fat, low-calorie alternatives: jello, applesauce, fresh fruit, popcorn, non-fat yogurt.

• Avoid sugared juices and soft drinks.

• Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water daily. Hint: Drink two glasses of water before each meal. It will curb your appetite, quench your body's thirst, and fill your daily requirements.

• Most importantly, a low-fat diet must be accompanied by exercise. Doctors recommend 30 minutes of cardiovascular activity three to five days per week.

If you have any questions or suggestions for the dining commons, stop by Food Services.

"We'll accommodate," says Medina, "If you have ideas, bring them to us."

Comics Zap! Pow! back to popularity

Christopher L. Stine
Capital Times Staff

In 1984 I had quit reading comic books cold turkey.

Since that time, Spiderman got married, Robin, Batman's partner, was murdered by the Joker, and Iron Man had a bout with alcoholism. These were topics that I found to be rather heavy for super heroes in the comic book medium.

After all, can we take seriously a form of literature where men and women dress in gaudy costumes and fight evil doers who dress in even gaudier costumes?

In a word, yes. Today, comic books have evolved far beyond simple dialogue and the good guy vs. bad guy formula. The modern hero today is impressive not because of muscle size or their costume, but because so many of them could be you or me.

Spiderman, for example, finds himself beating his enemies one day and struggling to pay his rent the next. He has earned the respect of other heroes but finds that his occupation puts a strain on his marriage. Despite superhuman strength, it is often his humanity that saves the day. Death also affects him the same way it affects us when we lose someone close. Recently, Spiderman lost his best friend Harry Osborne, who was also the Green Goblin, one of his worst enemies. It happened while they were fighting each other.

Many of the heroes in modern comics reflect the society today. The X-Men are united together because they are mutants, fighting for their place in the world against those that resent them for being different. Batman and Captain America are believable because they fight for justice without the aid of death rays or the strength of 100 men.

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Coming Up Next Issue:

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Aquatic Aerobics: Wet and Wild fitness in the 90s

Jennifer Esposito
Capital Times Staff

The daily work out has taken a twist from iron bars and sweat shirts to swimming pools and swimsuits.

Pumping iron will never be the same.

Aqua aerobics is the new wave in fitness. Classes like aqua step, hydrotone and aquatics for arthritis provide several benefits for all ages and health conditions.

"Water aerobics was designed to provide a high-energy, cardiovascular and strength training workout with little or no impact," said Holly Davis, aqua instructor.

Aqua workouts are the safest exercises and are highly suggested for injury victims, the elderly and athletes. Water aerobics reduces stress on the bones and joints, as well as next day muscle soreness.

Water aerobics also provides cardiovascular and muscular development with intense aerobic and toning workouts. The density of water creates an even and fluid resistance, which allows muscle groups to be equally worked. This allows for balance and efficiency while comfortably toning and strengthening muscles.

In aqua aerobics, the degree of intensity depends entirely upon the individual.

"It's intense enough for serious athletes," Davis said, "and safe enough for the elderly or the beginner."

Classes are offered at several recreation centers and health clubs in the Harrisburg area. For more information, call the East Shore YMCA, Central Penn Fitness Center, or The Alpha Club.

Choices at the Lion's Den

Ashlie Watkins
Capital Times Staff

There are a tremendous number of student concerns about the food served at the Lion's Den. But the Lion's Den staff is not to blame says "Harv" Pittman, Lion's Den employee. Their responsibility is only the grill items.

Students question the lack of vegetarian specials, lack of variety, and the pricing policy.

Soups and specials at the Lion's Den are set by the dining hall. Currently being planned is a new "Healthy Choice" meal to be offered Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays. These will be mainly vegetarian and consist of lowfat ingredients, Pittman said.

As far as complaints about the variety of foods available, as well as

crowding during the day, Pittman said "there is just no room to expand anything."

Pricing of items at the Lion's Den is based on University Park prices. There has been no response to our questioning of following these guidelines when PSH is considered to be its own college. However, in addition to the campus meal plans, Food Services offers a discount program called "Diner's Club." This allows a 10% discount on the cash prices of items in both the Lion's Den and the dining hall. The Diner's Club plan also exists on other Penn State campuses, including University Park.

Anyone with suggestions or comments will find a box for these to one side of the cashier in the Lion's Den. Anything helpful will be appreciated.

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