

Letters to the Editor

Wednesday, November 13, 2002

Dear Editor,

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on a few things and comment on some of the recently published letters to the editor.

The job of editor is largely a thankless one that remains misunderstood by most and behind the scenes. It is your responsibility to produce the paper regardless of the efforts, whether good or bad—late or on time—of your staff. You have accomplished this admirably. If this were a “real-world” publication I would also say “profitably,” since this is the first time *The Capital Times* has consistently run full-page color ads.

I was the editor last year. Sad as it is, I know from experience that the paper rarely receives written compliments, often gets criticisms, and even more often—receives no feedback at all. You have received a great deal of both compliments and criticism. I do agree with Terry Wolf (the last letter to the editor) who said that the criticism has been “nitpicking” at best (is that supposed to be hyphenated?)

The fact remains however, that *The Capital Times* is a student publication, and as such, is your forum to try new things. Again, kudos—you have taken the reigns with gusto, and made the paper your own!

I must also agree with T. Wolf on most of the points made, including one very important one: an editor commenting on a letter to the editor is one thing, but criticism aimed at those who wrote the letter, is another. The style and tone (often linked to credibility by others) of your publication is set by these policies. For instance, tabloids attack letters to the editor (and even—dare I say it—make them up) newspapers and magazines generally do not. So, the question is: the paper is yours for this round, how do you want it to be perceived? This is as much a style decision as the look of the front page.

Which brings me to my own personal soapbox concerning one of T. Wolf’s comment: “That’s not to say that what the paper looks like isn’t important, but your number one concern should be accuracy of information, not whether the font on page four is consistent with page six . . . that’s very minor in the grand scheme of things.”

In my humble opinion, accuracy is also a style decision (witness the deliberately inaccurate satire of *The Onion*), but if the cover looks like crap nobody will even pick it up to read the contents. Granted, *The Capital Times* has a limited and somewhat captive audience. You are assured of at least a dozen (or so) readers consisting of the Captimes staff, the advisor, and the printing staff at the Middletown Press and Journal. Anyone else even picking the paper up, much less actually reading it, does so as a direct result of the efforts put forth in producing a front cover that is either thought provoking, appealing, or just plain eye-catching.

When T. Wolf quoted the unknown letter to the editor and said, “‘Reading up on the rules of layout and design’ (whatever that means) isn’t going to help you not miss typos” shows a sad lack of knowledge and perception by T. Wolf, concerning the careers and life efforts of a great many people on this planet who consider the issues of aesthetics to be paramount. It is astounding to think that a “Communications/SecEd English” student at the university level, on this or any other campus (Penn State, what IS your reputation these days—football?) could graduate without at least a cursory understanding of the principles of art and design. Penn State offers entire classes on the subject. If a student misses the components of design in the areas of communications (like advertising) and educational presentations (like Linda Ross’s art class—a required education core I believe) then life observation alone should reveal that the motivation for picking up a CD, book, or magazine, and reading the teasers on the back or inside (here’s the clue—) is the pretty picture on the cover.

As an artist, it bothers me when people fail to realize the importance of the arts in every day life (see my next essay—on educational and art funding cuts!!). The very words being read here are due to an artist spending their time developing (designing) the font you are now using to form words in your head. Everywhere you look—whether you know it or not—you are looking at someone’s design (the building you are in, the car you drive, the chair you sit in, the colors on the walls . . .), need I say more?

Thank-you, Stacy, for the fine job you are doing at our campus newspaper. I think that in the long run, these experiences will serve you (and your staff) well.

Mitchell Bentley
Humanities student and former editor of *The Capital Times*

November 8, 2002

Dear Editor,

I was recently on campus for Alumni Weekend and picked up an October 21st copy of *The Capital Times* only to find a Letter to the Editor that I found very cowardly.

To the author of that letter, where are you when *The Cap Times* was looking for staff members with editing, layout and design and Quark experience? Where were you when people are needed for story assignments and ideas? Where were you when Stacy and Pete are still designing and proofreading the final copy before it has to be to the printer? If you are like most people you were probably doing other things deemed more important than “putting your money where your mouth is.”

When I was a student at PSH, I made a commitment to *The Cap Times* to be there and help as much as my schedule would allow. I was there in the early hours of the morning when the final copy was being proofread. I was there for story assignments and pitched several story ideas. I was there with my writing and photographic skills, editing, layout and design and Quark experience. And even after taking a 40 plus hour-a-week internship with the Harrisburg Horizon, I still made time to help as much as possible, even if it was only making sure that the photos were picked up or the pizza was ordered and delivered.

So my point is this, where do you get off pointing out another person’s mistakes when you yourself aren’t willing to help make things better? Next time, put your money where your mouth is.

Remember, this is a major time commitment and learning experience. Humans can and often do, make mistakes. And as the student voice of PSH, *The Cap Times* can’t do it all without help from the very people that it represents.

Sincerely,

Rebecca A. Swab-Hudson
Class of 2002 - Communications

Deadline for the next issue is: Monday, Nov. 19

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