

# OPINION

## CULTURALLY INEPT A BI-MONTHLY PONTIFICATION

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Now, I know dating is not exactly an original topic, but for me, the first date queen, the word dating is a new state of being. In the world of Oscar, first dates are the ultimate event—you get the intriguing experience of meeting someone new, a free dinner at a possible restaurant of choice, and, if you're like me, you get to say just how far from all the way you wanna' go!

Aside from the one time purchase of a new, but used, Mini Cooper, I spent most of my summer test driving new and—safe to say—used cars. When one hears the word used he or she might often relate to a negative opinion; however, for me, I think experienced and still alive—must be good!

Used for me is a nice Christian Dior track jacket with all the pretension of its name, but with far less of a loss when driving it off the lot.

It is also a period Empire sofa for the low Pennsylvania price—equivalently, in its low, to none other—or even a breathtaking 19<sup>th</sup> century painting to woo the mind

and calm the soul. And apparently, a good deal on a used article can often come around to bit you in the arse.

Last month, after the aforementioned deluge of unfortunate events, I found myself really down in the dumps about my own person when a persistent e-person decided to ask me out one last time.

After a moment or two, I took an unprecedented dose of optimism and thought to myself—could he really look that bad? After a two mile run and several strokes of the flatiron later, I found myself in the possession of an overweight wanna-be thirty-five year old braggart who, by way of his 1981 Buick—or should I say pew-ick, conveyed me to my dating safe-place—the movie house.

Making love to a huge tub of popcorn, which I felt, him paying for was penance for being such a far cry from his picture, allowed me to escape the smell of my date's formaldehyde and release from me the pungent stench lingering from his damp velvet upholstery.

Safe at home that night, I queried my mind for a reason as to why I would stoop to such a low level. It

was then that I realized my sport had become almost to contact based for my own fancy. I waited a whole two weeks before testing the waters again, but, in the interest of honesty, I must say that old habits die hard.

Just two Fridays after my dating disaster, I found myself test-driving the newest of all prospects—the eighteen-year-old youthful college freshman. After a lovely dinner at Café Fresco, with some of the usual medial chitchat, we embarked upon my abode where all the way went just a little too far.

After about thirty minutes and one of my quickly fabricated stories, I found myself alone and without out the experience of another to cure the back ache that my date had just given me.

I wondered if my far cry from freaky Friday was, instead, a clear indication that my contact sport had gone from philosophical to physical. While I marinated in the mixture of bad dates and unemployment, I wondered, is test driving really that risky and, if so, why is it so easy to leave your license and go?

For a first date queen, it's necessary to occasionally test

drive a new car to ensure the real importance of that comes when you finally find that 2004 Mini with low payments and the ability to get that extra special gas mileage we all need. As for the old—the wanna-be thirty-five year, maybe, even he—or she, sometimes needs that extra special late date.

And as for this new state of being, I have been secretly test driving one particular model. It just so happens to be a 1979 Aston Martin—well, at least that's my representation of this new dating companion.

After publicly admitting that I might just be saddling down to that state of being we call dating, I must ask myself, how far I will allow it to go? This leads me to ponder the prospect of real intimacy and the notion of it driving me away.

Does such a prospect indicate an unwillingness to be happy? No, because, with myself—and even despite all the recent turmoil—I am happy.

So, no, the question is not to attack my person, but instead to pose to you a new question—dating, is it a sport or just a journey to find what's right for you—whether that be Mr. or Mrs?

## A minute with Mauti



By **LISA MAUTI**  
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Are you ready for some football? I'm sure that most of us, whether we like it or not, instantly think of crazy things when those six little words get said in any context. But I want to know if your relationship is ready for some football!

Football is a good old American sport where a bunch of pumped up, sweaty men get together in spandex and practice the ritual of butt tapping, head butting, tackle action that most non-professional sports playing men love.

You see the stereotypical images of men sitting around drinking beer and eating wings, getting rowdy during awesome plays or throwing a fit when their team loses the ball.

The advertising business greatly plays to most of these attributes in commercials that are shown during games. I don't know, maybe guys feel they should act that way because that is the way the guys in the commercials are acting.

One of those stereotypes that can be seen is men ignoring women during games or that if their team loses, there will be no sex. *Sex and the City* has addressed this issue, as well as many other sitcoms.

There are even pillows out there that say, "We now interrupt this marriage to bring you football season." Is there any truth in these stereotypes? I have never dated a guy during football season that was as passionate about their team as I am for my boys: The Steelers. (I was born and bred in Pittsburgh, so I can't account for the fact that I bleed black and gold, get defensive when people mouth off about them, and get into the games just as much as a guy can.)

Previous guys I have dated just didn't have a team that they were crazy over or loved the Steelers. I have started seeing a guy that when we met it came out that he liked the Eagles. I just laughed it off and said, "Sorry about your luck."

I mean come on; Pittsburgh and Philadelphia have one of the biggest rivalries when it comes to sports. But a few Sundays ago I was in utter shock when he just couldn't quit rubbing it in that the Eagles had won and the Steelers had lost. Every two seconds it was like, "Hey Lisa, did you know that the Steelers are 1 in 3?" Which of course pissed me off by the third time I had heard it. I told him to knock it off and that maybe we should just talk again in February.

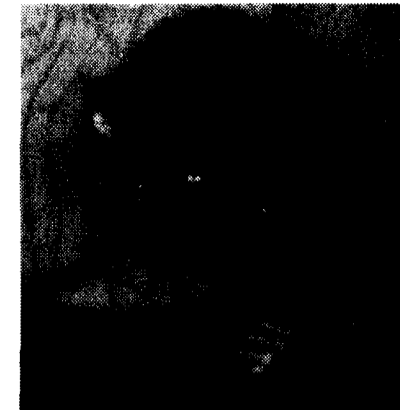
Now of course this is all in just fun and games and I wouldn't do that because I really like the guy, but something has got to give or it is going to be a very long season.

So I thought, okay well maybe I can be the bigger person and I could cheer for the Eagles when they are on and he could cheer for the Steelers when they are on. I know that wouldn't work in games when they play each other, but I figured it was worth a shot.

That was until he jokingly told me that everyone from Pittsburgh was born with one strike against them: The Steelers. So I in turn threw the whole, "being the bigger person" thing out the window.

Obviously neither of us is going to win in converting the other to be nice to each other's teams. So maybe we just shouldn't talk about football right after the games are over, unless both teams win. I know this is starting to sound completely ridiculous, but I like this guy too much to let a little, little bird get in the way. So as in a lot of aspects of relationships, compromise and being open will have to become the primetime event of Monday Night Football.

## President's Corner



By **ARIEL O'MALLEY**  
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Ladies and Gentleman of Penn State Harrisburg it is time to clear the air. Let's talk about club budgets.

In the spring of '06 SGA created a new budget proposal form. This form was created to include areas for clubs to go into detail about what monetary needs are of the highest priority to the organization.

The form now also includes a place where clubs can tell the committee about their organization (how many people are in it, the goals of the organization, etc.) so that the committee can make a well informed recommendation.

All clubs and organizations were made aware of this new form and when it would be due in order to receive funding in the fall semester. These new forms were printed for every club and organization and then put into their mailboxes with the deadline highlighted.

Once that club or organization has filled out their budget request it is then submitted to the Finance committee. The committee looks over the budget and then submits its recommendation to the SGA Senate to make their decision.

When the budgets are being discussed club representatives are allowed to speak so long as they raise their hand and wait to be recognized by the chair. If there was confusion about this matter I apologize, but sometimes it helps to ask questions if you are not sure about the procedure.

I am well aware that various clubs and organizations on campus are upset due to not receiving every penny they asked for. The facts is that SGA started this semester with a mere \$36,520.00 to disperse to nearly fifty different campus organizations.

Do the math folks, that comes out to under \$800.00 for each club if the funds are divided evenly. Clearly when clubs are submitting budgets asking for thousands of dollars someone is going to be disappointed. Now let's be fair. Many clubs who had problems came and spoke to members of SGA afterwards to work things out. One club, PSPEC (Pennsylvania State Professional Engineers Club), came back to SGA and asked for some reconsideration on part of their budget.

They felt it necessary to have more money from SGA to fund their annual resume booklet which helps many of our students to receive jobs every year. After some discussion the Senate came to a vote and decided to allocate \$500.00 to support PSPEC.

Though some of you may not be aware, the members of SGA are very understanding people. We are here to serve you and make things as easy as possible for you. If you did not get all of the funding that you were hoping for I apologize but if you look at the numbers you can see that clearly every club was not going to get every cent they asked for.

As wonderful as it would be to make this happen for all of you it simply is not possible. Again I apologize to any of you who have taken the budget process personally and feel offended.

If any of you have concerns please come and speak with us. We are more than willing to sit down and work things out with you.

On another note, October 28<sup>th</sup> is family weekend. Registration will begin at 8:30 AM. I encourage all of you to come out and enjoy a fun day filled with all sorts of activities ranging from ultimate Frisbee to a talent show. I hope to see you all there!!

## Pirate knowledge in the writing world

By **MATTHEW KABIK**  
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The writing world is somewhat ethereal. It's not a place you can go to, nor a single element you can define. It's the "out there", the "other". I know it sounds really dramatic, but it's true. The writer essentially excludes herself in order to write, and that seclusion produces a place that can neither be found nor seen.

It's an ocean, if you will, always flowing and pushing against the shores of everyday life. You can hear its lapping waves and feel its seductive power trying to drag you back in, away from what we have to do (i.e. work) and take you to what you love to do (i.e. write). But that's a fine way of getting yourself drowned (i.e. having no job, no agent, and no respectability).

So how does one cope with the ocean of creativity, the sea of thoughts and sentences? I think we could all learn a few valuable lessons from our friends the pirates. No, you should run around with a Cutlass taking what you please from other ships at sea (though I think that I'd be rather happy in that life). But when you get down to it, pirates really knew a thing or two.

One, they didn't work for anybody directly. Sure, the crew worked for the

captain, but who did the captain work for? Often, it was for the crew. Pirates elected their captain more often than not, and he had to have his crew's interest in mind. He had to look after the ship, make sure that what he did was good for it, and what he didn't do was likewise the best option.

In writing, we have to work for no-one but ourselves. I know it's been said that people "sell out", and that we think that we'll never do it. But if someone had the money to buy my work, and asked that I only change a few things in it, I don't know what I'd do. I might just "sell out" just for the cash.

But in the pirate thought process, that would be like selling off some of my crew to make my ship more handsome. You just don't do it. You let your work stand as it is, and don't start writing one style that you hate just because you'll get paid to do it. Write what you love, and it will all be smooth sailing.

Two, pirates knew their contracts. Every pirate on a vessel read and signed a contract that assured them of what to expect, and explained how much they would be paid along with how much health insurance they got (that's right, health insurance).

Likewise, we have got to be sure we read over everything: the contract, the other work that the publisher or editor prints, and what the critics say of our

work. When you work in a business that deals in words, it's a good idea to read as much as you can when it comes to your own stories, poetry, etc..

There is nothing as horrifying as signing a book deal only to realize that you'll be making less than 5% on each book sold, and no money on books sold overseas. The pirates, I feel, would laugh at you.

Pirates were acutely aware of the happening around the world. They had to know because of alliances, wars, and the possibility of making both of those work to their advantage. Pirates often played on country against the next, becoming a "privateer" for England while being a "pirate" to everyone else. Good thinking.

Writers also have to know about wars and alliances in two ways. The first is obvious, and that is actually knowing about wars and alliances. Contemporary events are a goldmine of the creative mind. Especially considering the events over the past 6 years, there are thousands of stories that haven't been told yet.

The second way of knowing about wars and alliances is different. Often times I have brought up a publication company only to have everyone at the table start laughing or cursing. Certain groups of publishers are roadblocks, not green lights.

## Is there something strange in the neighborhood?

By **OLIVER EISLER**  
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If there's something strange in your neighborhood; if there's something weird and it does not look good; who are you going to call? The Ghostbusters would be a better choice than John Zaffis.

Based in Connecticut, Zaffis has spent 30 years working as a paranormal researcher and demonologist. In 1998 he founded the Paranormal and Demonology Research Society of New England, which he continues to run to this day.

Zaffis is widely considered an authority on paranormal research, a title that brings expectations of greatness with it.

Unfortunately, Zaffis's recent presentation at Penn State Harrisburg on October 13 left many students disappointed and downright baffled by the ludicrousness of the presentation.

As he began his hour-long boasting session, Zaffis proudly related, "I have traveled the world and I have seen many things that may disturb your sense of reality. You have been warned."

The lights in the room went off to produce a darker environment as slides were displayed on a large panel behind Zaffis. "This, as I'm sure you all know, is a Ouija Board," he said while pointing to the panel. "Never pick this up, ever," he continued in a later interview. "If you at all value your spiritual sanctity then you will never touch a Ouija board!"

The rest of the presentation consisted of various slides featuring pictures of allegedly haunted objects accompanied by narrations of how Zaffis overcame a certain evil spirit in one of his many adventures.

Occasionally, Zaffis would interrupt the slide-show to relate some personal accomplishment, one of which was hosting a paranormal

investigation that aired on the Sci-Fi channel alongside equally realistic shows such as *Battlestar Galactic* and *Extreme Championship Wrestling*.

To break away from the tedious repetitiveness of the so-called "scary ghost-hunt," which culminated in Zaffis leading a non-frightening stroll to and throughout the Education Building, the following quotes have been extracted from both the presentation and an over-the-phone interview with Zaffis:

"Parker Brothers is responsible for corrupting kids... [They] make Monopoly which teaches [kids] to cheat with money and Ouija Boards which transport demonic entities from the from the spirit world into the hearts of foolish young ones."

"I am one of the greatest experts when it comes to demons. I have studied for thirty years. I know my demilology... eh, I mean demonology."

"Those [are not] any white spots

from the sun on the camera's lens. Those are spirits. And if they're black then they're demons."

"Anytime you see darkness, it means evil. Evil is scary and bad."

"My partner here can paralyze you with his psychic powers, but not right now."

"What? Do you think I'm just here spouting crap to you?"

"The spirit world is a scary place... No, I haven't been there, but I know."

"The reason some kids are scared of dolls or clowns is that they are spiritually sensitive. They know evil when they see it."

"Never destroy an evil object. It will get you."

"No, I have never actually seen a ghost."

With the above quotes in mind, it is left up to each individual to make up his or her mind in regard to the legitimacy, or lack thereof, of the hotshot paranormal investigator, John Zaffis.