

editorial opinion

Misplaced priorities

A year ago tomorrow, America lost its Miss to Penthouse and now our conception of Madonna is no longer immaculate. At a time when South Africans are fighting for their rights, nuclear threats are made, innocent men and women are used as political bargaining chips by terrorists — the news of Madonna's indiscretions make headlines.

Why? Why should it be news? Because people are interested. With front-page articles and headlines reminiscent of the gossip tabloids littering the sides of checkout counters, it seems people have shown more interest in a public display of dirty laundry than real issues.

Last week Penthouse and Playboy magazines released pictures of Madonna in the buff, and although she was reported saying that she does not find the photos important, many people think the contrary.

On July 23, 1984, Vanessa Williams — the 57th Miss America — surrendered her title, rather than damage the image of the Miss America Pageant, as people rushed to newstands to see her stripped of more than just her title.

Without question, some people have and will continue to argue that these matters do not belong in major national newspapers, and without question, others will contend they do.

So far, the Madonna expose has taken the front pages and centerfolds of newspapers

and magazines across the nation for the past two weeks. And although there are more important news stories on more crucial matters concerning the future of our nation, public interest in the story behind Madonna stripping for all to see has become important because enough Americans want to see it. Playboy and Penthouse executives are benefiting from Madonna's full coverage only because millions of Americans buy the issues.

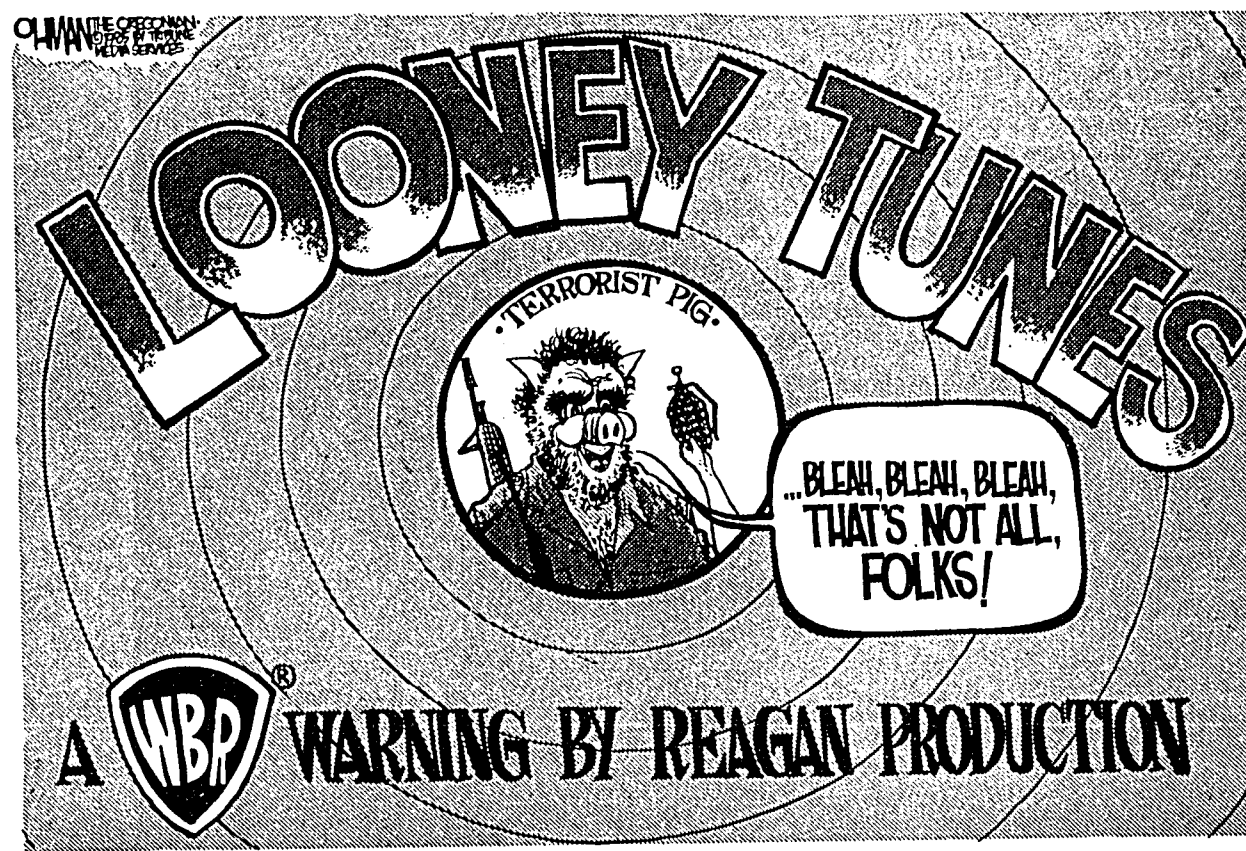
When people want to know about trivial items, the press is doing its job in letting the public know the details.

But no matter what newspapers or the public consider newsworthy, Americans must not allow their priorities to be set by scandalous ravings of issues that, in the end, are unimportant.

Although the harsh reality of war, famine and discrimination are not the happiest or most entertaining of news items, these problems must remain in the foreground of our thoughts and actions if they are ever to be solved.

What people want to know — that Madonna stands proud with or without clothes — is entertaining and to some extent newsworthy. As I read through the bill, I thank my lucky stars that I am not a science major. Today I open my Weekly Collegian to find yet another surprise — the administration wants to convert Beam Hall into office and classroom space! I congratulate the timing of your decisions — most of the students are away earning money for school next fall. I also congratulate your successful avoidance to student input. However, all things aside, what do you, the administrators, intend to do with 100 students that will be displaced pending a conversion of Beam Hall? Maybe we could convert Old Main into a dormitory again, and shift the administration to Beaver Stadium?

What people need to know — what's happening in South Africa, what has been decided in Geneva or what will result from the hostage's release — is news.



reader opinion

What a gift

It must be Christmas at Penn State as the administration is bestowing its students with numerous gifts. One day before the bill arrives, I hear that tuition is to increase yet again. As I read through the bill, I thank my lucky stars that I am not a science major. Today I open my Weekly Collegian to find yet another surprise — the administration wants to convert Beam Hall into office and classroom space! I congratulate the timing of your decisions — most of the students are away earning money for school next fall. I also congratulate your successful avoidance to student input. However, all things aside, what do you, the administrators, intend to do with 100 students that will be displaced pending a conversion of Beam Hall? Maybe we could convert Old Main into a dormitory again, and shift the administration to Beaver Stadium?

We, the students, are not so misguided that we cannot see a good idea from a bad one. These past two years have been productive in many ways — such as improvement of Dorm Contract Acceptance. ARHS has done much to improve student life on campus. Orientation has, also, improved by student input to hopefully better aid freshmen. Even the new Dining Hall system has been prevented from cutting its own throat (by not letting the dining halls be open to any student thereby causing complete chaos in areas such as West Halls) by student input. Occasionally, we students do come up with feasible ideas; and its about time the administration acknowledges our ingenuity as students who are capable of matching the administration's strange solutions. You never know — we might come up with a good one!

Alison Jones, senior-history
July 17

What do you think?

It's summer time and there are many hot issues facing Happy Valley. If you would like to speak out and voice your opinions to faculty, staff or students, write a letter-to-the-editor with your gripe.

The Daily Collegian's editorial editor welcomes the opinions of students, faculty, staff and area residents about issues and topics of interest to the Collegian's

readership. Letters-to-the-editor should be typed, double-spaced and must be submitted with the author's name, phone number, semester and major. They must be presented with identification in 126 Carnegie Building. The Daily Collegian reserves the right to edit letters-to-the-editor. All letters become the property of Collegian, Inc.

So, instead of just complaining at dinner about what issues and problems are facing Happy Valley, do something constructive — write a letter-to-the-editor.

the Collegian

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Gail L. Johnson
Editor

Michael A. Meyers
Business Manager

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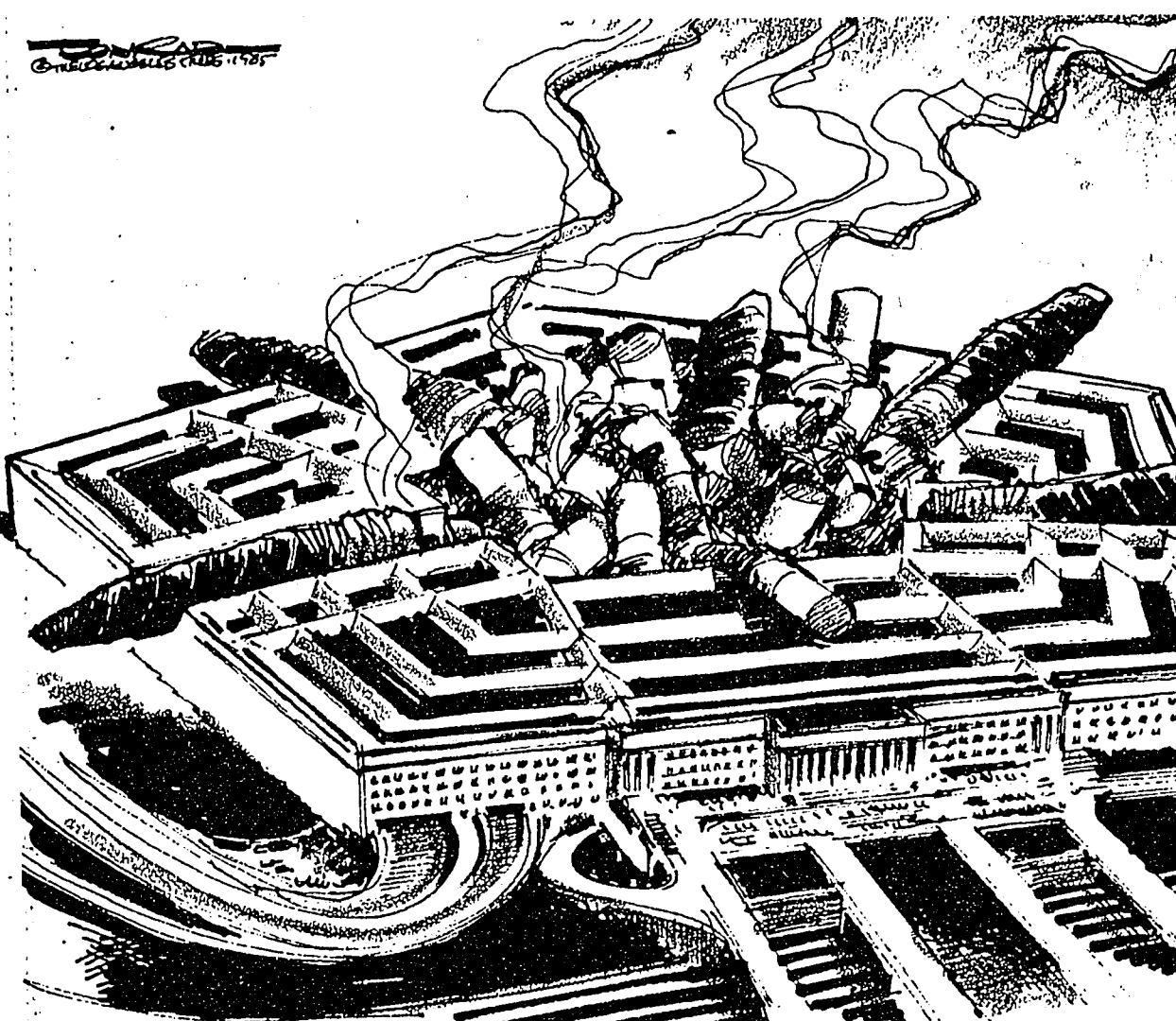
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Letters Policy: The Daily Collegian encourages comments on news coverage, editorial policy and University affairs. Letters should be typewritten, double-spaced, signed by no more than two people and not longer than 30 lines. Students' letters should include the term, major and campus of the writer. Letters from alumni should include the major and year of graduation of the writer. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification of the letter.

The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters for length and to reject letters if they are libelous or do not conform to standards of good taste. Because of the number of letters received, the Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all letters it receives.

Mail letters to: The Daily Collegian, 126 Carnegie Building; University Park, Pa. 16802. Names may be withheld on request. Letters may also be selected for publication in The Weekly Collegian.

Complaints: News and editorial complaints should be presented to the editor. Business and advertising complaints should be presented to the business manager.



THE PENTAGON'S \$286 BILLION ASHTRAY

Live Aid:

The concert only proves that both idealism and hope are very alive in today's society

"They came together to feed the world." Dick Clark summed up the whole day with that statement. Over 100,000 people in Philadelphia, 72,000 in London, and as many as 1.5 billion around the world united, if only for a day, and tried to save the world.



Some estimates of the amount of money raised go as high as \$70 million. AT&T, who provided a toll-free number for people to call and pledge donations, said that phone lines were flooded with calls for days after the event had ended.

Bob Geldof, the originator of the idea behind Live Aid, gathered the greatest rock n' roll entertainers around, and reunited some older ones from another era.

Most though of the people involved in the production tried to deny any similarities between Live Aid and Woodstock, the com-

parisons were impossible to avoid. Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, two figures who symbolize the activism of the 1960s, performed at Live Aid.

Crosby, Stills, and Nash, The Who and several other bands who played at the 1969 event in New York, were also in Philadelphia for this show.

But what took place on July 13, 1985 was more than an effort to help the starving people in Africa. It was the event that will go down in history as our generation's reply to the criticisms dealt to us concerning our apathetic attitudes and self-absorbed lifestyles.

Philadelphia officials publicly commented how pleased the city was that drugs, violence, and pandemonium were almost non-existent during the event.

In an age that has seen concert goers trampled to death and drug use reaching higher proportions in younger people, a peaceful gathering of 100,000 rock music fans is an occasion to be proud.

Our generation has born the weight of some harsh criticisms. Many of them are well earned.

We believe drunken drivers should be prosecuted but view driving drunk as an unfortunate consequence to a Friday night out and so we persist in doing it because we

don't want to pay for a taxicab home. We'll spend \$25 a week on pot or veg out in front of MTV for three hours at a time but when a professor suggests we should buy the study guide for his class we say we can't afford the extra \$10.

Yes, we have deserved many of the eggs thrown in our face. And for a while we didn't even think to duck when they were thrown. But Live Aid has opened a door for us that we thought was closed.

We survived the "me decade" and the defining of a new sector known as "yuppies" and issued a statement to the world proclaiming, "Idealism is alive. We care about the rest of the world and we want to help."

The 1970s was not an easy time for us. Watergate, OPEC, Iran, skyjackings. We had to face a plethora of issues that our parents' either didn't face until they were older or never had to face at all. And being exposed to these issues at a young age influenced our outlook on the world.

We're a little more cynical about the problems that our parents' say we should be concerned about. We worry more about how much tuition is going up than about the nuclear waste site being proposed for Pennsylvania.

We're a lot less serious about many things

and we have a unique way of justifying what we see as our faults.

For example, the fact that the Reagan Administration is heading dangerously to the right doesn't bother a lot of us because we're satisfied with the relatively low unemployment and interest rates, two economic factors that determine what we may be doing in the future.

More than any other generation, we are a product of an environment that underwent rapid changes before we were ready to deal with them.

Just when we thought we were beginning to understand the workings of the political process, the government of the early '70s threw a wrench into our engine.

Elementary school taught us about honesty and our great political system of checks and balances. Then, from our living room's, we witnessed the courtroom drama of corruption in government and the first president to ever resign.

We are a generation that holds grudges. All politicians are suspect and cheating at any level of business doesn't surprise us.

We marvel at the technology of the computer age only to hear about new ways to commit crimes with them.

Our preoccupation in the "me" syndrome

is overzealous at times, but we're not totally responsible. We've been brought up with books like, "Looking Out For Number One," and movies like, "Rocky," that applaud the struggle of the individual.

Even our universities are partly responsible for the direction we have taken. We're continuously shown the virtues of integrating mathematics into any discipline but given only 12 credits of electives in which to learn about culture, philosophy, or any of the other courses that help to make us better people.

Live Aid is our first attempt at making our world a better place to live. If you saw the end of Live Aid, and all the performers gathered onstage to sing, "We Are The World," and if you felt the roar of the crowd as they joined in, then you were part of an event, a unified effort that our generation has not experienced before.

Ride the momentum that Live Aid has provided us with. It was just the boost that our generation has needed.

And to the 172,000 people who gathered at JFK stadium in Philadelphia and Wembley stadium in London: Thank you.

Michael Kutner is a senior majoring in finance and a columnist for The Daily Collegian. His column appears every Monday.

Soc. Sec. 'goes computer'

By CHRISTOPHER CONNELL
Associated Press Writer

BALTIMORE — It's a scene familiar to anyone who has been in a bank, stock brokerage or travel agency recently: Customers sit across from staff members who handle an entire transaction on desktop computer terminals.

But this scene takes place in a Social Security office, and the agency's leader says it is the first step toward better, faster service that the public can expect nationwide by 1988.

The agency has begun taking benefit applications directly on terminals at its main downtown office here and in York.

The equipment will be installed in 18 more offices from Brooklyn, N.Y., to Wenatchee, Wash., by late autumn, and in all 1,300 Social Security offices within three years, Acting Commissioner Martha McSteen said.

The agency, under fire a few years ago from congressional investigators for being too timid in joining the computer revolution, embarked on a five-year, \$200 million modernization program in 1982.

McSteen said the public is already realizing benefits. It takes only 10 days, down from three weeks, to issue new Social Security cards, she says, and there are fewer disruptions at headquarters in suburban Woodland, where giant computers keep track of the earnings of 123 million Americans and pay benefits to 37 million others.

"There has been a real major change in the way Social Security does business, and we're still in the process of vastly improving our record-keeping process," said McSteen.

The downtown office is in an imposing brick warehouse where Social Security's records were stored from 1936 to 1960. Today, it is outfitted with modular furniture and ergonomic chairs and 43 terminals. The staff numbers 65.

The manager, Velma Seabrooks, a veteran of 28 years service, said, "I wanted this to happen long before now. They told me this kind of system was coming 20 years ago."

McSteen said, "We were surprised that the people who came in to file claims really felt more comfortable with the terminal ... than perhaps we did as employees using it for the first time."

So far, there has been no sign of "fear or resentment or distrust from the public" about the fact that "the most confidential information about them" is going into a computer somewhere," she said.

"They seem to be very accustomed to that sort of thing," she said.

Wanda Jones, a claims representative, said the staff was panicked at first about switching to the terminals, but that soon subsided.

Now she sings the system's praises, saying, "It really makes (work) a lot easier. No more trips to the computer room."

It also will eventually eliminate the jobs of data review technicians, who used to take written applications, encode them on computer forms and send them to Social Security's master computers.

The Reagan administration wants to eliminate 17,000 of the 75,000 jobs at Social Security through attrition by 1990, claiming modernization means fewer workers.

Although Social Security prides itself on an accuracy rate exceeding 99 percent for paying retirement benefits, McSteen said there was a chance for error each time a clerk had to retranscribe a person's earnings or other data.

Under the old system, 23 days were needed for a local office to retrieve a person's entire earnings record from Social Security's main computers. "Now, we're getting earnings records in 10 or 11 days," said Jones.

Shirley Lawrence, a data review technician, said, "The earnings reports are requested right away now instead of giving them to the different clerks. Sometimes we did it that day and sometimes we did it the next day. Now, they're requested even while the applicant is sitting there." The agency plans to find other work for the technicians.

The color terminals flash in red whenever a claims representative makes an error, such as entering a Social Security number wrong the second time.

The program takes each applicant through a series of questions about their birthdays, marriages, military service, whether they worked for the government — even whether they were Japanese American internees during World War II. (Internees get military service credits on their Social Security record.)

Lebanese face effects of war

By RIMA SALAMEH
Associated Press Writer

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Conflict day in and day out not only takes its toll of dead — one in 40 of Lebanon's 4 million people in a decade — it also takes a heavy toll in the mental and physical well-being of those who survive.

Drug addiction, drunkenness, divorce and depression have reached record levels, experts say, as side symptoms of the tensions and traumas born out of the conflict that explodes in streets, neighborhoods and countryside villages.

Widespread drunkenness and alcoholism and an upsurge in divorce are accepted by sociologists and marriage counselors as unfortunate but predictable results of prolonged stress.

On the basis of interviews with patients and studies in this capital, Dr. Adnan Sabagh, a psychologist at the American University of Beirut, offers grim statistical pointers to the extent of the social ills:

- Thirty-five percent of newly delivered babies are born physically deformed or mentally retarded because their mothers "couldn't take it anymore" and turned to tranquilizers such as valium during pregnancy.

- About four-fifths of teen-agers smoke cigarettes as opposed to 2 percent before the outbreak of civil war in April 1975.
- Forty-five percent of adolescents regularly use heroin or other hard drugs, a fivefold increase in 10 years.

A professor of nutrition and pathology at the American University, who spoke only on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of his practice, told The Associated Press,

"Many teen-agers, mostly (militia) fighters, came to me for treatment. These were really drug addicts. They were badly involved with strong stuff — heroin. Most of them were uneducated. I couldn't go into details (about their problems) with them."

But he noted that fewer cases reached him in the last year because some religious leaders, who frown on drink and drugs, have sought to transform Lebanon, whose population is 60 percent Moslem, into a fundamentalist Islamic state.

Militiamen needing rehabilitation, he said, now fear that doctors will report them to their leaders. "If these people had come to us, they could have been treated," he said.

War psychosis cases include rich and poor, country peasants and urban professional people, Christians and Moslems, the experts say.

Mirvat Awada is typical of some Lebanese who suffered from war-induced unemployment, which is believed to have hit about half of the work force.

"My husband couldn't afford to rent a house," she said. "He couldn't find a job, so we slept at my family's home for a while, then at his parents' house until there was a time when he couldn't take it any more. He began drinking and became alcoholic. Thank God we don't have children."

She divorced him. "I feel very sorry for both of us, but this is how the war has affected us all. ... And I'm not the only one."

For some young lovers marriage prospects are dashed.

"I had a job and planned to get married," said Wassim, 40, an engineer who lives in the southern port city of Tyre and, like others interviewed, asked not to be identified by his full name. "But my fiancée left

the country in 1981. She couldn't take it any more. One day she and her family left for good to Egypt. That was the end of my plan to raise a family, to have a family of my own. I've never dated anyone else since."

Wassim, who now lives with his mother and younger brother, added, "This war has touched everyone one way or another."

Young children are the innocent casualties of war.

Three-year-old Saadeh still suffers from intestinal and breathing problems after her parents spent several weeks in a Tyre bomb shelter after Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982.

"It was terrible," her mother, Marjiam, recalled. "We lived in the dark, breathing the smoke from nearby smoldering buildings and exploding shells."

Some Lebanese have unwittingly cashed in on war psychosis.

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