

Editorial Opinion

Penn State glasnost Soviet students at the University are a sign of the changing times

It's refreshing to see glasnost take place on a local level.

During the past few weeks students from the Soviet Union have been making the mountains, the prairies, Stone Valley and Penn State their home sweet home.

University officials have agreed to participate in the People to People Youth Science exchange program which brings 83 academically gifted high school juniors and seniors to University Park to take classes. The foundation contacted the University and asked them to take part in the program.

Programs like this one are helping to dissolve the heavy red cloud surrounding the Soviet Union, and to bring people and nations together. Coming to terms with people of other cultures is the first step in making the cold war a thing of the past.

And while most of the students do not speak English well, they will certainly take home with them an understanding of American people and lifestyle that can't be learned from a text.

The students, who arrived at the beginning of July, are taking classes in astronomy, astrophysics, computer science and physics. This

sharing in the classroom is a new start. Before, Russian knowledge was locked behind the iron curtain, and American technology was closely guarded.

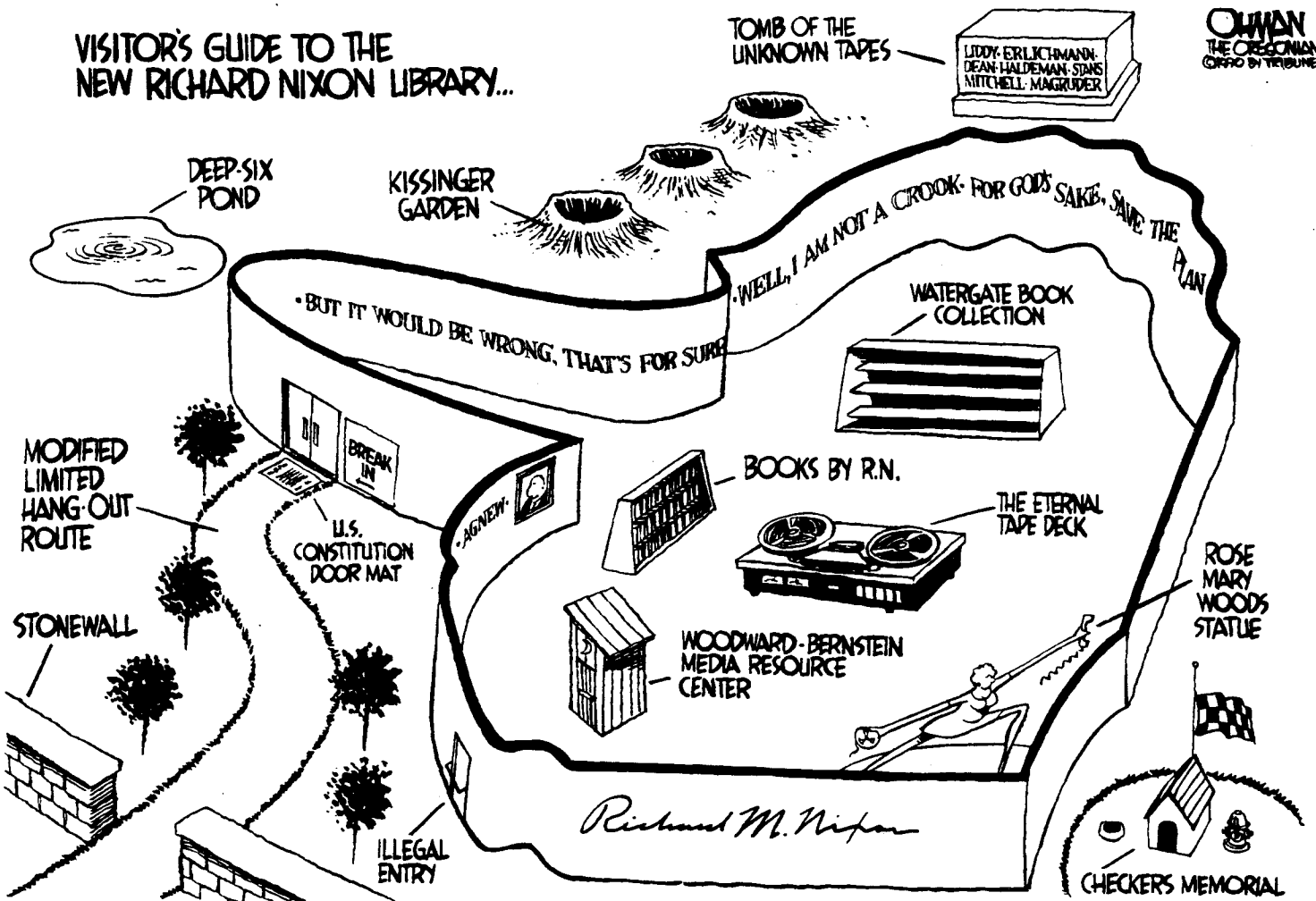
Now our understanding of the universe is universal and can be shared in a classroom populated by both Americans and Russians.

This is the real meaning of glasnost.

The students will also be taught the basics of teenage social life in America: golf, picnics, plays and pizza parties are included in their curriculum. Perhaps "The Simpsons" will be added as an extra-curricular activity.

The teenagers will be able to make comparisons between the two cultures to create better understanding. And even if burgers don't taste better than borscht, at least the Soviet students have the chance to try new things and bring their knowledge home with them.


University students can become a part of this cultural exchange by welcoming the students to our campus. By going out of their way to talk to any of the visiting Soviets they meet on campus, Penn Staters can help break thorough cultural barriers.



Quote/Unquote


Question:

What would you say to the incoming University president?




Do something about the parking situation for undergraduate students. Increase the parking area for us. I live way off campus; I have to drive in, and the closest I can park is eight blocks off of Lot 80.

Ted Starinshak
senior-nuclear engineering




You know, in Pennsylvania tuition is increasing \$200 or \$300 for Pennsylvania people. That's a lot. . . Control the budget.

Leo Suniaga
senior-exercise science



I think diversity is an important issue that needs to be thought about in terms of getting more minority students up here. Not only that, but also making awareness more known about for students other than African Americans — gay and lesbian students, Asian students and such.

Aaron Lecoin
senior-engineering



Get in touch with the student body, and try to maintain a good relationship with the students. Keep up with their opinions, because things change so much and so fast.

Michelle Carlson
freshman-chemical engineering

Compiled by Jesse Fox Mayshark and Chris Gaydosh

the Collegian

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Playing tennis in white and other menstrual myths

Early in the sixth grade, the athletics instructor one day took all the boys to the gym. Then the completely starved school nurse gently herded the girls into a cramped room where we received our first formal instruction about menstruation.

My Opinion



Words like "uterus" and "follicles" and "pubic symphysis" descended into the electric air around us; impressive words, we knew, designed just to confuse and delude us about the reality of this ominous and inevitable thing — blood, and more years of it than we could imagine.

But not to worry. The nation's leading tampon manufacturer had taken on the responsibility of allaying the fears of millions of tittering prepubescent girls.

In a film called *The Curse*, we learned that menstruation had been long maligned through-

out the dark centuries. But with the invention of a Space-Age plug of cotton, we wouldn't have to suffer the way our foremothers had, hiding themselves away during their periods, secretly wringing out bloody rags far from the scorn of men. Instead we could bike, play tennis in white, swim and ride a horse in complete confidence.

The tampon fixed everything. And the best thing about it was that "No one will know."

After the movie, we were given complimentary tampons and attractive carrying cases (if a boy got into your purse, you certainly wouldn't want him seeing *those things* there). The art teacher then distributed informational pamphlets liberally decorated with flowers and smelling suspiciously pink.

The school nurse showed us a chart of our internal sexual organs, pointing to the fallopian tubes and saying they reminded her of fingers. I thought instead of cow udders.

One girl with an older sister told about a secret little calendar marked with red circles hidden in a drawer. Someone else admitted her mother still wore old-fashioned sanitary belts (this was prior to the advent of peel-and-stick pads). Most of us were simply embarrassed.

We all left that room in wadded lines, our party favors hidden away. I wondered if I'd ever feel those fallopian tubes-fingers-tiny udders fluttering deep inside me. We felt uneasy, but somehow older, and when we finally met up with our male classmates, we knew that everything had changed.



This is the 1970s message I got about menstruation: It's a woman's thing and should only be discussed with other women, particularly those in sanitary uniforms, but it's something to be endured privately rather than discussed publicly. Ostensibly, tampon manufacturers had liberated women, but this freedom was

granted to us on the condition that women never really admitted something extraordinary happened to us every month. As long as we denied this and never actually let anyone — aside from a few good female friends — know that we personally bled, everything would be tennis-whites fine.

The 1990s message takes a different angle: Yes, women do experience radical, hormone-induced mood swings, and talking about it in public is OK since premenstrual syndrome is now used as common fodder for talk-show hosts and stand-up comics, a defense for murder and a lousy excuse for why women shouldn't be president.

Once again, the media-and-manufacturing powers that be have passed judgment on the nature of women's bodies. The new decade has given us a sense of humor about menstruation. We've also got lots of little caplets billed as wondrous cure-alls.

Humor and pills — neither approach considers women seriously. The unstated assumption of present-day attitudes about menstruation is that there's something that needs to be fixed, an attitude not dissimilar to the dark ages.

I am a woman who cannot get through a menstrual cycle without pain relievers, and even then I sometimes wake up from a deep sleep with cramps that I swear could kill a strong horse. I'll be the first to admit that a period is not exactly a joyful experience, but it is a time, I believe, that I and other women see the world most clearly.

I recently saw a pin that read, "I'm not premenstrual. I'm always like this." The descriptive word most often linked with "premenstrual" is "bitchiness," and the image is not pretty for most people. Why? To beat an old feminist drum, men expect us to be nice. My husband's main complaint about my menstrual-affected conversation is that my observations are ruthless and my language is strong. I cut to the bone, and I feel the chill of every incision.

A few years ago I began noticing that my creativity fluctuated along with hormone surges, and that when I'm premenstrual, I'm innovative and energetic (albeit, intolerable to some). I've never read about this, nor have I ever heard anyone talk about it. But I do know that I don't want a pill to fix it.

I always wondered what the gym teacher talked about with the boys the time I saw my first cross-section of a uterus. I had supposed they were seeing similar charts of male genitalia. I had hoped they were learning about the amazing potentials of girls' bodies and would forever regard us as creatures of deep mystery and power.

When I went to my 10-year reunion last summer, I finally asked an old friend just what happened in the gym that day. "We talked about jock-straps for a while," he said, "then we shot hoops the rest of the time."

Gigi Marino, a graduate student in English, is a columnist for The Daily Collegian.