

When the slugs come home to roost

by Quinn Solem

"In a democracy, people tend to get the type of government that they deserve."

-Unknown

Indeed. But do we deserve to suffer through another decade of shameless mismanagement at all levels of government? Can we really be that bad?

Apparently so.

About 95 percent of the legislators who run for re-election this year will win. They are the folks who gave us the S&L crisis, the immense national debt, and a tax cut for the rich at the expense of the poor and middle class.

Closer to home, elected officials have allowed untreated raw sewage and deadly chemicals to pour into Presque Isle Bay and Lake Erie for years. These are the politicians who have been encouraging us to swim and fish in the lake, which is the source of our drinking water.

We deserve this. We

elected these people. They are accountable to us if and when we vote. We consistently re-elect the same legislators over and over again, insuring that government will not be much better in the future.

Strangely, not many people seemed concerned about this trend.

I call this the "slug effect principle" of American democracy. Create an atmosphere of apathy, indifference, insensitivity and self-indulgence, and legislators can do just about anything they want without fear of future accountability.

The "slug effect" has been working for over a decade now, and the slugs have come home to roost. We've created and maintained a corps of politicians who know that no matter how inept they are, they'll still have their jobs after the next election.

Legislators are encouraged by indications that the next generation of voters will follow in the gastropod tradition, adopting the "slug effect principle"

QUINN SOLEM

We could all get T-shirts that read "Unresponsive and proud of it!" on the front, with our school motto, "Behrend College - Home of the slug" on the back.

with unquestioned faith and enthusiasm.

Here at Behrend the "slug effect" has become more than a principle; it is a way of life.

Raised in a society that stressed self-centered

attitudes, individual wealth, and conspicuous consumption, we have remained steadfastly unconcerned about anything affect us.

So what if the economy is in shambles, or if the world is becoming unlivable because of greed-inspired pollution? Why should we care about educational standards, the trade deficit, or even the upcoming war in the Mideast?

With apathetic arrogance we ask "How can any of this compare to our deeply-felt need to meaningfully express ourselves with day-glo windshield wipers?"

Sooner or later, we'll all have to come to grips with the fact that we're slugs. Overcoming denial is the first step. We could all get T-shirts that read "Unresponsive, and proud if it!" on the front, with our school motto, "Behrend College - Home of the slug" on the back.

The Human Relations Programming Council could host a gastropod awareness forum, which no one would

attend, confirming strong slug solidarity. Instead of Greek Week, we could decorate the campus with thick wet goo and have "Slime Semester."

Sadly though, the age of the slug will eventually come to an end. A recession will hit, a war will start, or the day of graduation will come....Some event will shower salt into our lives.

We will squirm and howl and twist, and be driven out into the wilderness of the world. We may even be forced to think and act like responsible citizens of the oldest democratic nation in the world.

But that day is not yet here. Until then, keep the faith.

Quinn Solem is an 8th semester Communications major. This is his first appearance as a columnist for The Collegian. His column will appear every other week in The Collegian.

Cinderella story for a lucky prince

by Mike Royko

Teacher Georgiann Carlson has a valid literary criticism.

She says that fairy tales such as Cinderella and Snow White are sexist because both young ladies don't find happiness until some macho prince comes along.

They also lack independence and self-worth. Snow White, she points out, is content to cook and clean for a gang of dwarfs.

There's much more that bothers Ms. Carlson: The emphasis on good looks, the idea that being old means being ugly and women being portrayed as competitive and jealous.

Carlson, who teaches at a school in a Chicago suburb, believes such stories aren't good for little girls because they might believe the old "some day my prince will come" routine. How will they feel when a nerd, not a prince, pops the question?

So Ms. Carlson has been rewriting the fairy tales and giving them different endings. She has Snow White rescue the prince, instead of the prince rescuing her. Then Snow White turns down the prince's marriage proposal and lives happily ever after as a single woman.

As for Cinderella, she gives

her prince the brush-off, too. And she marries a stable boy instead.

I can't argue with Ms. Carlson's critique. Neither Snow White nor Cinderella are exactly liberated females. As she said of Snow White: "She's passive, selfless, silent, pure and innocent. This is patriarchy's dream come true."

And I'm intrigued by the idea of the fairy tales being rewritten to bring them up to modern social standards.

In fact, I'm thinking of trying something like that myself. And the other evening I stopped in my favorite bar for a drink to consider a plot.

Then I noticed a handsome young guy sitting on the next

stool and I said, "Say, aren't you the prince? Yeah, I recognize you. Nice to meet you, prince."

He nodded and said: "My friends call me 'your highness.'"

I thanked him and said: "I don't want to meddle, but what are you doing in this joint? I heard you and that Snow White girl got hitched. Lovely dish that she is, I would think you would be home billing and cooing."

He shook his head and said: "Nope. She gave me the old brusheroo. Said she values her

independence, her own space. Said we can still be friends, but when I call, all I get is her answering machine."



"Hey, I'm sorry I mentioned it, man. It must be tough to handle."

"No sweat, forget it. Fact is, she did me a favor."

"How's that?"

"Well, after I thought about it, I realized that, sure, she was a knockout, and she liked to clean house and was a good cook. But basically, she's an airhead. I'd

suggest that we take in a play, but no, her idea of a good time was sitting around singing dumb songs with those seven little guys. She even got mad at me when I told her I didn't think there was anything wrong with dwarf-tossing."

"Boy, you just never know about people."

"Right. So since she dumped me, I've had more time for myself. My golf handicap has dropped. I get out to the ballpark whenever I feel like it, and I play poker once a week and don't worry how late the game breaks up. If I want to stop in here for a few beers after a hard day at the palace, I don't have to worry about anybody phoning the bartender to see if I've left. And I can play the field, if you know what I mean."

"I can imagine, a young prince like you. Anyone special?"

"Yeah, for a while I had a thing for this girl Cinderella."

"A looker?"

"Better gams than Snow White, if you can believe it."

"I believe it. So what happened?"

"Splitsville. She fell for a stable boy."

"You're kidding."

"Nope. And they got hitched. I sent a broom and shovel as a wedding gift."

"Hey, you're a good sport. How are they doing?"

"Not too good. I walked by their place the other night--they live upstairs of the stable--and she was yelling at him for not changing his shoes before he came in the flat. And I hear she's after him to go to school and get an MBA. I'm not surprised, though. She was always into fancy clothes, glass slippers, going to formal balls and the night life. No way she's going to spend the rest of her life with a guy who shovels manure. Well, I got to go."

"Date?"

"No, I'm going bowling."

"Alone?"

"No, with those seven little guys. They snuck out of the house. Told me they're tired of sitting around every night singing, 'Hi ho, hi ho.'"

Mike Royko is a Chicago-based syndicated columnist whose column appears weekly in The Collegian.