

# Have some algebra... it's good for you

# The Missing Pieces

by Mark Owens

I'm unhappy. Heck, unhappy isn't a good way to describe how I feel. I'm talking about a low-down, nasty, cheesy blue funk -- and I have no one to blame but the American education system.

Last week *The Collegian* ran a story about the expected starting salaries of some majors, specifically science/engineering and liberal arts. If you recall, chemical engineers will make \$38, 100, closely followed by mechanical engineers with \$34, 700. The lowest of the science/engineering majors was accounting, which gets \$27, 900.

The reason that I'm unhappy is because I'm not a science/engineering major. Rather I have a liberal arts major, which tends to net its graduates the same amount of money per week as, say, a 10-year-old's allowance. The study shows that a communication major (that's me) will make

\$22, 900 a year. And a journalism major will make only \$19, 500. Yikes. That won't even buy luxury items, like food or clothes (beer and pizza are basic necessities -- there's always money for that).

But I didn't know this when I was a freshman. At that time, all I wanted was a major that didn't have math or science in it, kinda like a kid wanting stuffing without the crunchy things in it.

And that's where the American education system comes in. Ever since the third grade I've had this love/hate relationship with math and science -- namely we loved to hate each other. It's not that I was dumb at it; they just weren't fun subjects. So I went through high school and college, shunning the sciences and that evil math stuff for writing. Had I found math and science more fun and interesting, I think I'd be blissfully calculating the stress on load-bearing beams for a PennDOT men's room today.



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And that's something education needs to do: make the sciences interesting to today's young people, who at the moment are using their math textbooks only as something to rest a Nintendo

on. One thing that should be done is to make new movies.

When I was in elementary school we used to watch these science films made in the early 50's. I'd sit in the back of the room and shoot rubber bands at Suzy Emerson while "The Voice Of Science" droned on and on about how volcanoes worked. After the movie was over my teacher, Mrs. Geeseman (who looked an awful lot like Karen Carpenter), would ask me how volcanoes were made. My answer: "BOOM! Then the villagers loose their huts." Mrs. Geeseman usually left me alone after that.

Through my long and, well... long educational career, I've never seen a school film younger than 1986. In fact, two weeks ago I watched a film in one of my communication classes starring -- believe it or not -- "The Voice Of Science."

I can't help but think how bored fifth and sixth graders are watching "up-to-date" movies older than their parents.

I really think that if schools treated math and science the way parents teach their children how to eat we'd be in better shape. Sure it may be messy at times, but I think it would work. Here's what I mean:

**Father:** *Go ahead and do your algebra, son. It may not be tasty, but it's good for you. See, your mother is having some. Isn't that algebra great, hon?*

**Mother:** *(shooting dark, evil, I'm-gonna-knock-you-out look at husband) Yum.*

**Son:** *Yech!*

If educators follow this idea, hopefully in a few years we'll have more and more enthusiastic engineers and electricians who enjoy their field of study so much that they won't need to be bribed with insane beginning salaries. Then maybe us journalism majors could eat once in a while.

## Campus Voice

If you could change one thing at Behrend, what would it be?

"Behrend should offer more financial aid. Just because it is a state school doesn't mean everyone can afford it."

**Bridget Hannon**  
Third semester  
Nursing

"A bank should be put on campus. It would make life much easier for everyone."

**Terry Speck**  
Clerk  
Behrend Bookstore

"Air conditioning in all the classrooms!"

**Jason Flesher**  
Seventh semester  
Psychology

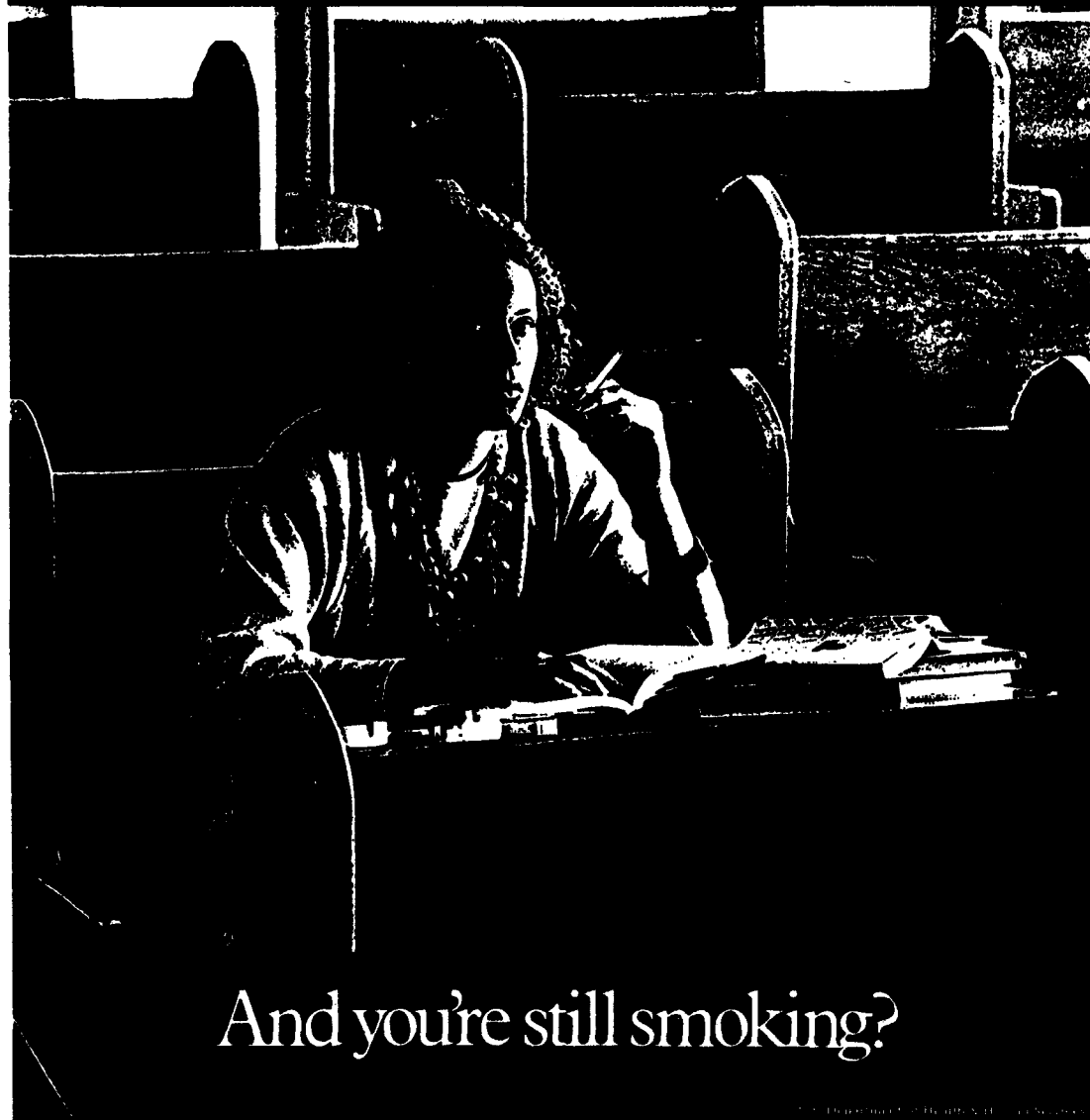
"Fix up the dorms, make them bigger and cleaner."

**Ann Walsh**  
Third semester  
Psychology

"They should have a bigger variety of varsity sports here like football and wrestling."

**Jose Hernandez**  
First semester  
Accounting

You're smart enough to write about Alice Walker's use of African storytelling traditions.



And you're still smoking?