

# "Fie on you, nay-sayers"

by Andrew Festa

"I'd like to go to college, but I don't know what I'd like to study."

"What do ya enjoy most?"

"Well, I love to write."

"No. I mean, what do ya like of the professions?"

"What's wrong with writing?"

"It's ok, as a tool, like a pencil, but you can't go nowhere without a reel job."

"But, I thought writing was a profession."

"No, it's not. Writing is for people who can't do nothing else with there lives or for them that wants to take the easy rode thru school."

"I think I'll talk to an English professor."

"Don't do that!"

"Why not?"

"You mite wake some body."

I've been told, "writing is nice, but you'll never make a living at it," to which I say, "*oh ye of little imagination and of less faith, open your eyes.*" Some English teachers here have said, "writers are limited in what they can do and they don't make much money," to which I say, "*oh ye of little faith and of less imagination, open your minds.*"

Fie on you, nay-sayers.

Why speaketh thou so damningly of so worthy a profession? "Profession: A vocation or occupation requiring advanced education and training, and involving intellectual skills." (Webster)

I hadn't realized how far reaching a writing degree could be until a communication teacher brought in a guest speaker from Saint Vincent's Hospital. She told the class that her department considered hiring writers before communicators.

Granted, both are communicators, "but," she said, "more companies are realizing the value of writers because they (companies) are tired of communicators who can't spell or put together a proper sentence."

Perhaps those in the English department who truly care about the writing profession, and I'd like to believe there are many, might want to consider a task force comprised of students and teachers. With such a task force, ideas could be generated to help build the English department into something of much greater importance.

Of course, this 'team effort' presupposes teachers believe in students and

students are willing to work with teachers.

I've heard the rumor for years that University Park doesn't want to allow the English department at Behrend to grow beyond its present scope. If this is true, then those people responsible are dotards -- see Webster -- and they are cheating students and shortchanging Behrend.



If, on the other hand, the fault lies (that's lies, not lays) at the feet of Behrend faculty, those people lay (not lie) the field of English at the foot of stupidity and should be hung by sensitive parts.

Why are we, in 400 level classes, still being required to memorize for tests (upon which a great part of our grades depend) rather than

analyzing, comprehending, and understanding?

Why is there still a discrepancy between 400 level classes in which students are asked to memorize lengthy texts of authors' works while, in others, students are asked to write a reading response (a much more intelligent approach)?

Different teachers do use different methods. That's not unrealistic. Memorization, however, in an upper level English class should be outlawed or, at the least, shackled to its antiquated ideologies and otherwise dispensed with, post haste.

Writing is a field, subdivided into two main groups: literary and creative writing options. By virtue of the existence of these two options, one should be safely able to assume there's an innate value to the art of writing. Writing, then, is not simply a tool for use in other fields. Rather, it is both a tool for use in other fields and a field within itself. The tool, and the field, however, are often abused.

Think of the tools within one's toolbox. Now, imagine needing to hammer a nail into a piece of wood and, not finding a hammer, deciding to

use a pair of pliers. So what if the nail bends, the wood chips, or the pliers break. The job is done, no?

Having seen the works of people, including seniors, in other fields, I'm more than shocked at the number of pliers being used. (Kinda makes one feel sorry for the nail.) English majors aren't faultless either but they, one can only hope, see the value of writing. If not, why not?

It is, I feel, the English department's duty and obligation to work toward building a better image for the profession of writing. If it can't presently be done, perhaps new plans should be drawn, or new faces should be shown?

The English department needs no insipid insincerity nor jackal-like inefficacy. May the good of you who read this understand my intent, and ignore the nay-sayers' wrath, lest it (wrath) lie (not lay) at your feet.

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# One-man truth squad versus David Duke

by Mike Royko

If Bob McLane scared easily, he would have backed off after two men ominously snapped a picture of his daughter as she got off a school bus. Or when a Jeep drove on his lawn at night and dumped litter. Or when the phone rang at 2 a.m. and the voice asked if he knew how much damage a stick of dynamite could cause. Or the 10 times he's had death threats.

But McLane, 46, a Marine in Vietnam, doesn't scare. So he's pushing along with an organization he formed called Dukebusters.

It's aimed at David Duke, the ex-Nazi and ex-Klansman who is trying to con the voters of Louisiana into electing him governor.

During the past few years, McLane, who lives in Bossier City, La., and sells real estate, has become something of an expert on Duke's background and thought processes, if they can be called that.

He puts out material on Duke that is both disturbing and funny.

There's a quiz. Ten quotations. You are asked to identify which five came from Duke and which five were Hitler's words. It isn't easy to tell the difference. The

scoring chart says, "0 to 6 correct: average confused Louisiana voter."

McLane also gives out before and after photos of Duke. Before he had his face lift: baggy eyes, crooked beak, a sneaky, rodent-like look. After the face lift: the clean features of the modern TV candidate. And the question above the photos: "Aryan or not? Only his plastic surgeon knows for sure."

"And last spring," McLane recalls with a chuckle, "he said he wanted drug testing for people on welfare, I had a press conference and invited everyone to send Duke their urine once a month. Some did. He hasn't forgiven me about that."

McLane's loathing for Duke is both personal and civic.

The personal side: As a Marine, he has contempt for Duke's claim to have been a CIA operative in Laos. "He was a draft dodger. So he comes up with this hokey story about being some kind of CIA guy, and nobody in the world can say it's true or isn't because the CIA never confirms or denies that kind of information. But the fact is, he ducked the war."

The civic side: "I love Louisiana, but I'm hurting for this state. I'm embarrassed. I

think of Duke as the AIDS virus of politics. But so many people here have tunnel vision and are poorly educated. Dropouts who never took history. They don't know what his being a Nazi means. My uncle was fighting Nazis on D-Day. How could I look him in the face if I didn't try to stop this guy?"



"But now it's respectable to be a Dukcoid. They can say it out loud. They're proud of it. This plastic man, the ultimate in packaging, and it's working. That's what scares me, not the threats from his people. They're cowards like him."

"And I'm depressed as hell about it because he can win. He's

a fraud, but you win or lose elections on TV, and on TV he comes across as Mr. Wonderful."

McLane is right, of course. Duke knows how to use the tube, whether he is coolly calling the cerebral Michael Kinsley "a worm," or chatting with the always-cordial Larry King. It is not considered good form for a TV interviewer to say: "Duke, you are really a scummy guy."

"It's like he's got momentum. It's all coming together for him, and people don't care. I wish the TV stations would do nothing but play World War II movies every night until the election until some of his young supporters figure out what a Nazi is, because they sure didn't learn in school. My 8-year-old daughter knows more about Nazis than they do; I've made sure of that."

Despite his personal efforts, McLane is convinced that Duke will not only be elected governor of Louisiana, but has a mad plan to run for president some day. And that prospect does frighten him.

That's where he and I differ. I think Duke's candidacy and ambitions are good for the country. There's been enough talk about being a kinder and gentler nation, 1,000 points of light and all that kissy-face nonsense.

Those 1,000 points of light are beady eyes, glaring with hate, envy and resentment.

And all that hatred can't be measured by pollsters or the Census Bureau. When they take the census, they don't ask: "Which of the following groups do you think should be marched into gas chambers: ..."

But Duke could provide us with this valuable information. Sort of a national hate-thy-neighbor referendum.

It's kind of like the second "Ghostbusters" movie, when all the rage and anger in New York turned into a river of throbbing glop beneath the city that gave energy and power to the evil dead King Vigos.

Maybe somebody should check the sewers in Louisiana to see what's flowing down there. If need be, Bill Murray could be brought in to give Duke a squirt of good slime.

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