

"If it ain't broke..." doesn't work

by Andrew Festa

For as long as I can remember, I've stuck my neck out hoping to open peoples' eyes to the fact that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" doesn't work when you don't look at something hard enough to see if it's broke or not.

During my stay here at Behrend, I've heard countless complaints from many students about things that needed fixing, but those complaints are rarely voiced outside mutually exclusive social circles.

Prior to the implementation of the smoking ban several years ago, I held a rally. Though it was a smokers' rally, my focus was on the continued eradication of American rights.

Several hundred students signed the petition I had circulated (supporting the ban, but calling for an indoor smoking area), but few people had the nerve to stick their necks out.

Students Today For Tomorrows Earth, a group supporting action now for the protection of Earth tomorrow, is falling apart for lack of membership participation, but

Greek organizations are flourishing. A new group I've heard about but have never seen (Habitat for Humanity) isn't a registered organization because it barely has 1/2 the twelve members needed for SGA recognition, yet Bruno's can draw 'em in like a magnet. Am I the only one who sees something broke with this picture?

The purpose of a columnist, as I see it, is to get people to think about the 'broke.' A columnist's greatest triumph is when he or she touches someone's mind. I try to create a medium from which solutions might be brainstormed.

When I have gone farther out on a limb than what I do in this column, I've found people will tend to agree (or disagree), but most invariably offer some excuse as to why they can't get involved. I say, "If you're afraid to rock the boat, it's more than likely because you're afraid it might sink. If this is the case, get the hell off the boat!"

I will not, within the medium of the newspaper, go so far out on the limb as to distort the truth (as the University Park columnist did when he totally disregarded

the cultural significance and societal implications of people). I won't malign the living with the actions of the dead.

A few weeks ago in an English class, I took a position which put me at odds with the women of the class. I wouldn't cave in to



intimidation (they contemplated the thickness of the window and how hard they'd have to throw me to send me through it).

During those tense moments, I was the only one defending my point. When class was over, several guys, close-lipped in class, came up to me in the hall and agreed

with me. Where were they when they had the chance to speak?

I try to live by some basic principles: if it's worth doing, it's worth doing right the first time. If you're going to do anything, do it big. If you begin something, reach for a conclusion. If you have something to say, speak -- if you speak, make sure you're heard. And, don't compromise your beliefs, values or ideals.

May sixteenth, many of you will be graduating. - You people will be the newest in a long line of American voices and innovators.

Engineers, don't just create new technologies and let the Japanese apply them (as has been done in the past); YOU, Americans, APPLY THEM!

Lawyers, don't do something because "that's the way it's always been done." DO IT RIGHT instead!

Doctors, don't put technology before the patient. People are not replaceable -- machines can wait.

Advertisers, radio and television people, do your part, however small it might be, to get the industries to say "Thankś, I needed that" rather than "I've fallen and I

can't get up."

Teachers, don't just pump bullshit into the minds of your students and ask them to regurgitate from memory, teach them how to learn, then teach them how to apply what they've learned.

Parents, and many of you eventually will be, everything your children learn, everything your children do, everything they are and can be begins with you. Don't shove education on them as many parents tend to do; instead, show them the value and the adventure of a good education. I'm sure you can figure out how.

As for those not yet ready to graduate, you're next in the same line the graduates are in.

And the most obscure group of all, those considering a career with Penn State: IT'S BROKE! IT'S BROKE! IT'S BROKE!

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Race has nothing to do with Tyson

by Mike Royko

Mike Tyson has been found guilty by a jury, and that ought to be it. But it hasn't been. All sorts of social significance is being found in his trial and conviction. And some of it I find strange.

First, there is the view by some blacks that Tyson is the victim of some sort of white conspiracy to bring down successful black men. On the black radio call-in shows, these conspirators are known only as "they," which means white society.

The trouble with this theory is that it would mean that white society somehow persuaded a young, black beauty contestant to go along with its plot. And other black contestants were persuaded to testify about what a slob Tyson was.

And they also found a few blacks to serve on the jury and join in on the scheme.

I suppose it could have happened. But why would white racists go to all that bother? Is there a blond, blue-eyed heavyweight contender waiting to become champion? The current champion is also black. And so are all of the other contenders. What is to be gained by putting Tyson in prison?

Looking at the trial, one could

just as easily say that white, middle-class America -- and it doesn't get any more white and middle class than Indianapolis -- was showing that it would go to considerable lengths to defend the virtue of a young black woman who was set upon by a cruel man.

Of course, that's not necessarily true, either. If the victim had been a black motel cleaning girl and the rapist a black street-corner lout, it's doubtful that the case would have come to trial.

So in a way, Tyson was a victim of his own success at beating faces to a pulp for multimillion-dollar fees. If he beat people up only for their wallets and wristwatches, he might be off the hook.

Then there is the theory, stated by many women's advocate groups, that this will send a message to society that date rape will be taken seriously.

At least that's this week's message. It wasn't long ago that the not guilty verdict in the Willie Smith trial was supposed to be sending a gloomy message that a date-rape victim will not be taken seriously.

But when that trial began, the message was that because Smith was being prosecuted, date rape will be taken seriously.

So we'll just have to wait

until the next prominent person goes on trial to see what the next message will be. If there is any message.

I don't believe that there is. In the Tyson case, we had a young woman who is intelligent, well-educated and not lacking sophistication. She had to be aware of his highly publicized divorce, in which he was



portrayed as something that ought to be caged. And she surely knew that he was not the kind of guy who would bring flowers and suggest a movie and a malt.

But she still wound up sitting on his bed in the middle of the night. I'm not Mike Tyson's type, but I wouldn't want to be sitting on his bed in the middle of the night.

So if any message comes out

of this, it should be that you ought to have a movie-and-malt date with a guy before you visit his bedroom. We teach little children to run like hell if a stranger offers them candy and invites them into a car. If kids are expected to show caution, why not young women?

It's amazing, though, how much trust people place in strangers. We have a trial going on in Milwaukee. Gay young men went to a stranger's house. They were murdered. The rest of the grisly stuff you'll have to read elsewhere.

So the message from Milwaukee to gay men should be that you do not accept an invitation from a stranger to go to his apartment to engage in sex, pose for kinky pictures, or even have a cup of tea, right? Add the risks of AIDS and such visits are unthinkable, correct?

Wrong. I recently looked at one of those computer bulletin boards in which people send in messages on all sorts of subjects. You can take part in forums on just about anything.

But the single biggest forum, with thousands of messages, is the gay forum. There you will find strangers seeking out other strangers from all over the country for ... well, more than a cup of tea. If the Milwaukee fiend had been a computer hacker, he

wouldn't have had to bother cruising the bars. A few strokes of the keyboard would have brought him his next victim.

Another goofy reaction is that of some whites who believe that Tyson's behavior shows that blacks, even those who become millionaires, are beasts at heart.

Well, Tyson might be a thug, as most successful prizefighters are, but he hasn't cooked and eaten anyone, as that very white young man in Milwaukee did. Or buried them under his house, as the very white John Wayne Gacy did. Or slaughtered women en masse, as Richard Speck did.

Is there something in the white man's genes that makes him a potential mass murderer? If you believe that Tyson represents a racial tendency, then it stands to reason that the Milwaukee gourmet does the same.

So maybe we ought to look at it the way the jury did. Tyson is black and rich and famous. But he's still a mean, vicious guy. Michael Milken is white and brilliant, but he is still a swindler. Gacy was an amateur clown but also a fiend.

There should be room for all sorts in the prisons.

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