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Montana Kaimin Letter Bed, April 29, 1994

Associated Students of the University of Montana

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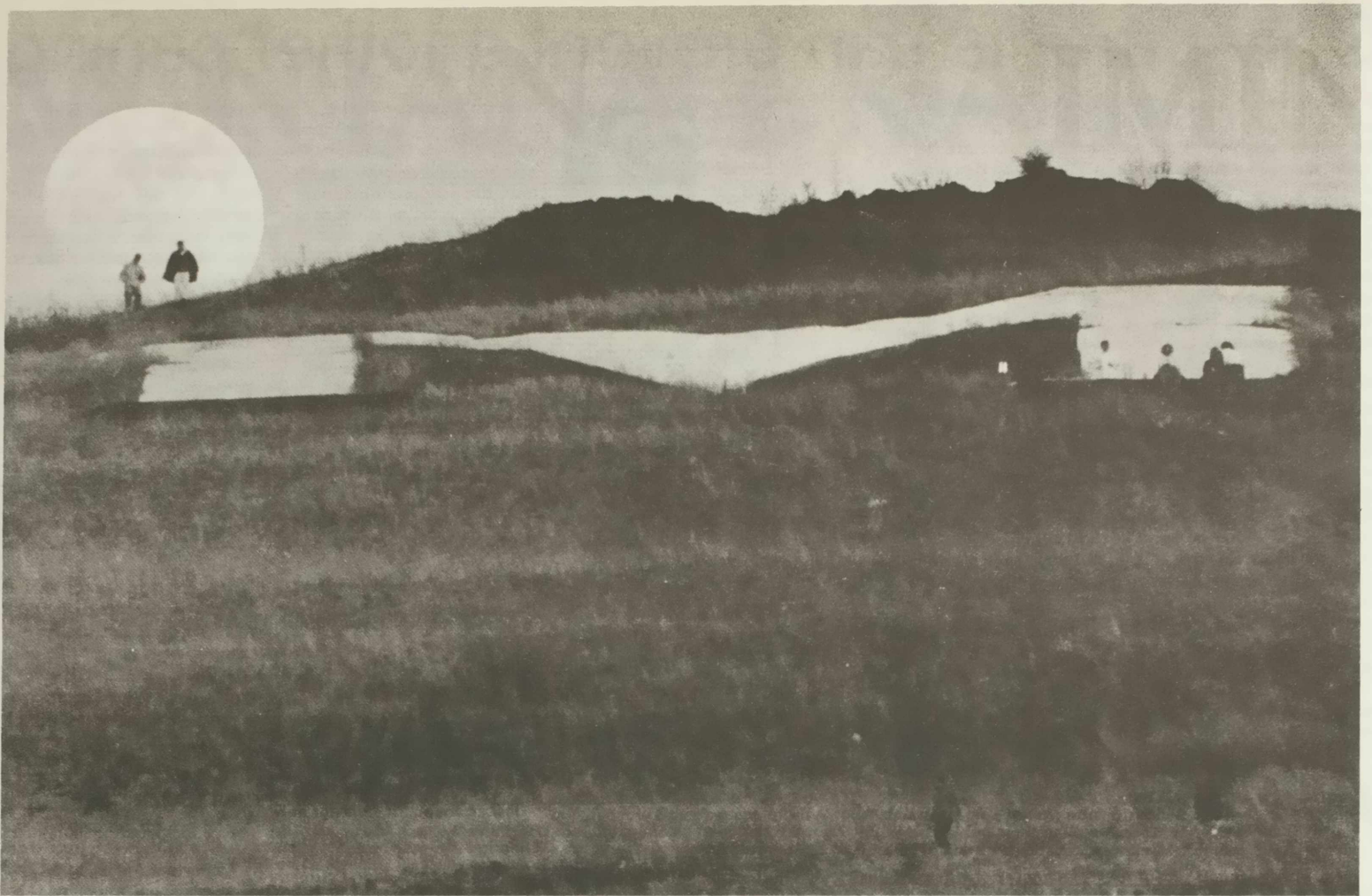
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Sweet dreams, letter writers

Thanks for keeping our mailboxes full

The Montana Kaimin thanks everyone who has written letters and guest columns. Keep sending us your words next fall.

Linda Lee and MontPIRG
J.P. Betts
Brian Barnett
Jason Powell
Kent Curtis
Allison Grant
Jeanne Windham
Josh Arnold
Shawn Fast
Evan Katzman
Jennifer Panasuk
Alison Redenius
Teresa Schlosser
Donielle Boyle
Betty Gregory
Greg Wigen
Tom La Voie
Jon Lindsay
Jim Brown
Gerald Johnson
Lisa Dudick
Tana Rogers
Adam Benton
Richard Fifield
Timothy Leggett
Maria Schneider and her
Pathetic Geeks
Sarah Elizabeth Akhtar
Jeff Moncalieri
Niles Brush
Kevin Roberts
Kevin Kenelty
Michael David Thomas from
Behind the Cue Ball
Steen Simonsen
Russell S.R. Neville
Jason Watson
Matthew Barrett
Chris Wheeland
Ross Best
Jim Kittle

Heather Tweet
Gilbert Jensen
P.S. Mueller and his minimalist scrawlings
Michael Rehm
Benjamin P. Doan
Todd E. Manes
Fitzhugh Elder IV
Heidi Brown
R.N. Baker
Mike Edwards
Kelli Hodge
Rob Dewar
Dan Engler
Bret Baldassin
Lewis James Rusk
Virginia Jones
Jeff Kicklightner
Clarice Streets
R. Michael Jentile
S.E. Caldwell
Glen Zeller
Debra Brinkman
Kevin Pope and his Little
Funny Square Stuff
Fred W. Reed
Maureen Curnow
William H. McBroom
Steve Bonds
Charles Hansberry
Kim Halvorson
Jim Nozell
Phil Howard
Alain Burrese
Aaron M. Simard
Eric Wilson
Julia Watson
Julia Stone
Jennifer McKee
Sean M. Sullivan
Bill Bevis
Rob Bourriague
Dave Ojala
Julie R. Amster
Catherine Berkenfield
Kent Curtis
Erik Hansen

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Jill Frampton
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G.H. Booker
Brett Silverman
R. Michael Jentile
Will Cowdrey
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Lori Seitz
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Mark Nunez
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Dehlen Michael Howe
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Erinn M. Beloate
Stephanie Glaros
Zac Houston
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Genna Hanson
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Michelle Moss
Jeff Moncalieri
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Erik Hadley
Tofer Towe
Julia Stone
Erin Bentley
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Charlie Sperry
Steve Maughan
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John McKee
Lauren Saine
Krista Schulz
Dirk E. Lee
Shannon Garner
Karl Stetson
Koji Hoshino
Richard Smith
Peter Talbot
Don Partain
Benjamin Basintal
DC Haas
Louise Saunders
Greg Layda
Stanley Grossman
Alan Sillars
Robert Oakberg
Shawn Abbott
Savannah Miller
Todd Eberline

See Thanks page 8

Only parents can prevent another caning

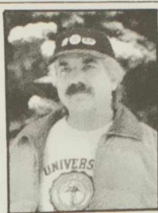
Whether or not Michael Fey gets punished for his reckless mischief in Singapore, and why he did such a stupid malicious thing in the first place, is a debate that will be studied for years. The question is not new but the same one asked each time a child is jailed, or one is killed just trying to be a kid. How could this tragedy have been prevented?

A recent workshop in Helena touched on an old and unpopular theme, that the parents must stand between their own kids and potential trouble in order to prevent it. I agree. The Fey's of today do what they do with learned impunity. They have gotten away with so much more so long, that the fear of any punitive action is nearly nonexistent. This attitude is obvious across geographic and socioeconomic lines.

The early lesson in zero responsibility young kids are learning, from parents too

lazy, or too preoccupied to apply basic parenting skills, is quite evident right here in UM's Family Housing Villages. Children as young as four and five, run free doing what comes naturally to kids. One of those natural things is to gang up, and follow a stronger child with weaker morals to mischief. As I went to check my mail the other day, I observed four such children doing everything in their collective power to break into the newspaper box. They were kicking, shaking and pounding it with rocks. They were unsuccessful, and moved to the mail boxes. The most startling thing of all was that upon my approach, and admonishment, they were not fazed one bit. I had to step through them to get my mail, and they were still going at it as I left. When I was growing up in suburban Detroit, all adults represented authority because most of my friends and I had authority in

Guest
Column
by
R. Michael
Jentile



"The early lesson in zero responsibility young kids are learning, from parents too lazy, or too preoccupied to apply basic parenting skills, is quite evident right here in UM's Family Housing Villages."

the home. I remember being constantly chased out of one industrial thing or another, or my favorite, the rail yards, and through some fantastic com-

munication system that still amazes me, my mother knew about it before I got home. She made sure I didn't do it again until the peer pressure or my attention span got the best of me, then the process was repeated.

That efficient network, as well as the discipline, has broken down for the better part, and even the children's health doesn't seem to be a disciplinary consideration. Today I had to shoo five of my neighbors well-fed kids out of the dumpster so I could use it. This is a regularity, but today one of the many mothers came up to the scavengers and asked if they had seen her daughter. When they said no, she left without one word about the disgusting behavior.

If this lackadaisical attitude toward parenting I have witnessed here for the last year is a microcosm of the family in America, I have no wonder why our cities are rife with

amoral behavior and delinquency. A lot of causes for this have been cited in recent months, and few possible cures. The only real cure is for parents to parent their children, and others if necessary. I like children, and have grown children of my own. The dynamics of child development is energetic, very special, and fleeting. Letting your kids run wild is not doing them, or society as whole any favors. You parents who fall into this category are going to have to take responsibility for your children now, and help turn the tide, or you may find yourselves on the nightly news crying into the bright lights, wondering why the police and social services have become such a big part of your life.

—R. Michael Jentile is a junior in sociology

Affirmative action policies stifle society

I was subtly amused by sophomore student Alex Karklins' letter explaining the virtues of affirmative action policies in creating educational parity among the disenfranchised.

I was more than dismayed, however, that he confused the issue by employing fallacious syllogism, sweeping generalization and lending his own brand of culturally-sanctioned bigotry.

Unrealistically, Karklins equates academic achievement with economic status. He goes on to construct a straw man out of the so-called disparate "racist conservative policies of the government" that have, in Karklin's estimation, effectively barred minorities from improving their lot in life through higher education.

Quickening the tempo of this comic opera he goes on to state that Asian-American and Jewish Americans are "far more economically advantaged" than African-Americans and hispanics, affording the former group far better schooling at the primary and secondary levels.

Other than endorsing the popular myth of minority as victim, Mr. Karklin's has myopically mis-evaluated the entire issue of affirmative action.

In reality affirmative action has radically changed admissions policies at colleges and universities nationwide by creating a double standard among applicants. So as to promote pluralism and diversity on campus, administrators have altered admissions rules in order to fill a large portion of the institution's freshman class with certified minority groups — primarily blacks and hispanics — even though these students scored considerably lower on

Guest Column
by
James Spainhower

standardized tests and had lower grade-point averages.

Since it is often more difficult for students admitted on the basis of preferential treatment to compete academically, a vast majority of colleges and universities regularly afford minority students with cash grants and other disquietable incentives to stay in school.

For instance, as a means of increasing black enrollment by 50 percent Florida Atlantic University implemented a program during the Fall semester of 1990 whereby every black student admitted to the school would receive free tuition regardless of financial need. Miami-Dade College lures African-Americans to its campus by offering to refund these minority students their tuition money if they don't find employment in their fields of study following graduation.

In an attempt to force the round peg of race into the square hole of higher education, administrators have engaged in selective discrimination targeting whites and Asian-Americans under the guise of cultivating ethnic proportional representation. Unfortunately, these affirmative action quotas often fail to reflect statistical resident racial populations, thus serving as nothing more than instruments of exclusion for many non-minority applicants. Even staunch advocates of

affirmative action grudgingly admit that minorities, especially blacks, are given preference in admissions and job hiring at the expense of better qualified white and Asian-American applicants.

Compounding the tyranny of the minority in higher education affirmative action policies have served as the impetus for a number of changes in the central role of the university, thus threatening to destroy the highest ideals of liberal education and furthering the rift of racial discord.

I am offended that Mr. Karklin's would even suggest that special compensation be afforded to minorities strictly on the basis of spurious claims of an inadequate education, levels of neighborhood violence and peer pressure to drop out. The simple fact is that all people, regardless of ethnicity, are responsible for their own actions. Furthermore, the vast majority of socioeconomic problems — especially the burgeoning crime malaise — can be traced directly to the criminal proclivity of minorities, as evidenced by recent data in the 1993 U.S. Statistical Abstract.

The sobering realization that we are accountable for our behavior and ultimate success or failure in life might explain why a large percentage of Asian-Americans, many whom are recently immigrated "boat people," have grappled with and overcome poverty, language barriers and cultural differences to succeed in virtually every arena.

Furthermore, as a progressively-minded people, all Americans must cast aside the concept that minority status demands special compensation

at the expense of citizens willing to work hard for themselves and thus enhancing the public good.

Somehow in our collective commitment to a multi-cultural agenda we have imperiled Mill's basic tenet for Democracy affording the greatest good for the largest number of its citizens, replacing this time-honored value with a curriculum and faculty organized not by merit or intellectual standards, but rather, by race and gender lines.

In the final analysis, I subscribe to the philosophy espoused by John Henry Newman in his book, "The Idea of a University," that the focus of a liberal education is "that true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things as a whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence."

I do not nor will I ever embrace social policies seeped in political correctness masquerading under the guise of furthering intercultural harmony; policies that serve not to promote the public good, but acting instead to promote ignorance, intolerance and hybrid racism aimed at society's achievers.

Affirmative action policies are, for the most part, effectively stifling any chances for a diverse academic community, balkanizing college campuses and lending power to race-conscious tribal enclaves desiring not to further the commitment of liberal learning but fostering an agenda of garnering the most power and influence over others at any cost.

—James Spainhower
freelance journalist, Arlee

Frolicking Pebble
By Howard Sherman



Howard Sherman

Don't punish victims in newsprint

Dear Editor:

This letter is in response to the April 15 article about an alleged sexual assault. I am concerned that the piece contributes to, reinforces and perpetuates the attitudes that make rape prevalent. Perhaps the reporter who covered this story was not aware that less than two to four percent of reported rapes are false. She also may not fully understand the emotional trauma that an assault entails. I was especially offended by the implications that if a woman knew the perpetrator, then it was not rape. "From the start, the investigation hinged on whether the incident was consensual because the woman knew her attacker."

It is because of these misconceptions and ignorant attitudes concerning sexual assault that victims don't report incidents that victims don't report incidents to the authorities and acquaintance rapists get the message that they have done nothing wrong. If the Kaimin is going to delve into sexual assault reports in the future, at least have the tact to write in a manner that doesn't persecute the victim publicly.

—Mischa Jakupcak
freshman, undecided major

Grade inflation hurts self-esteem

Dear Editor:

Reading Doonesbury recently has made me concerned about the issue of grade inflation. Charges of grade inflation have been made towards this university and that also has bothered me. This is not to say that I do not find the mere notion of grading petty and limiting, but I must confess, I own a certain element of pride. When I get an A on a paper, it warms the cockles of my heart and gives me some much needed self-esteem. I like to think that the A was earned, that I deserved it.

When I was a pimple-popping deadbeat in high school, I muddled through with a 2.83 GPA. Now, as a graduating senior, my GPA is about 3.25. I like to think that my improvement was due to the fact that once I got into a learning environment where instructors actually rewarded autonomous thinking and respected their students, I began to respect myself and do better. However, all this talk about grade inflation has given me doubts. If it's true, then how am I to know that I deserve what I have received? How reliable of an indicator is my GPA?

It seems to me that making charges of grade inflation is a risky endeavor for it breeds doubt and brings down morale. I hope that those who do, do so in earnest. It is also my hope that instructors have the sense to give grades relative to their perception of a student's ability. If this is not the case for some, I would urge them to do so. If my lot in life is to be flipping burgers, I would like to have known that before I spent thousands of dollars I did on higher education.

—Greg Martin
senior, political science

"Trickster" is dead

Dear Editor:

The "Trickster" is dead, Dick Nixon's death is a moment of great celebration for peace loving people around the world. Nixon was on of modern time's most vile political leaders, he waged war against the people of S. E. Asia, America and Chile with impunity. A homicidal

paranoid, his personal achievements are formidable war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. They make Nixon one of this centuries notorious mass murderers.

Nixon set the standard for international treachery, his "peace with honor" campaign during the Vietnam war, influenced many totalitarian dictators. Its current incarnation is clearly visible in Bosnia, where Serb slaughter of innocent humans is justified as peace with honor. His highly regarded trip to China and the Soviet Union were just cynical political ploys to cover his evil crimes here and overseas.

In these final years of the "American Century," human existence on Earth has evolved into a wildly violent, horrific butchery shop. There is no doubt that Dick Nixon and the despotic, militaristic traditions he represented are directly responsible for the murderous bedlam our planet is engulfed in. We must realize that the way of Nixon and his successors is a bloody dead end and our hope for a future lies in a non-violent feminist inspired social revolution.

—Bill Bakeberg
Missoula, MT

Pope sets record straight

Dear Editor:

Let me clear up a few major misconceptions right now. First and foremost, I am not from California, I am a native Virginian. In my original article, I said something along the lines of "we Californians," for two reasons. First, I had lived in Berkeley, Calif. for a short time before coming to Missoula, and my fiance is from Los Angeles originally, so I can empathize with Californians. Secondly, I referred to myself as a "Californian," simply because all out-of-staters seem to be blamed for the economic problems of Montana, after all, that bumper sticker doesn't say "Gut Shoot Californians At The Border." Nor did I say that Montanans did not have a right to their resources because Californians pay taxes for them, as has been said recently. What I did say was that all Americans, including Californians AND Montanans pay for federal services like welfare, National Parks, and the military, and that if Montana were to no longer be apart of this nation, then it would lose the right to these services. I was merely trying to make a point, all of us, as Americans, have the right to move here or there, or anywhere of our choosing, and that discrimination against out of staters was wrong. That's it, nothing more, nothing less.

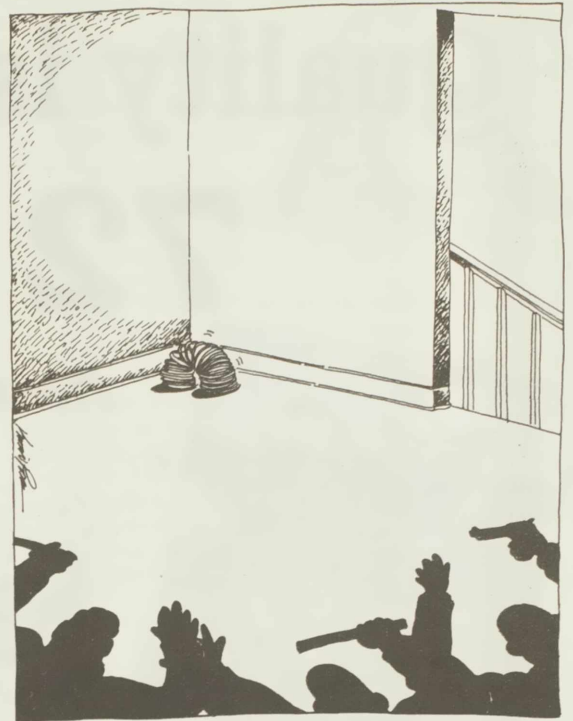
Now then, on a more recent note, I'll say this. I am NOT against the athletic program. I do think it's an integral part of college life. And I DO think it should be given money. I DON'T, feel that it is right for the students of this University, who voted against a mandatory athletic fee, to pay it, and not to have a choice in the matter. And I don't think that the athletic aspect of this University should take precedence over the academic side, this is a University after all. I simply want to be given the choice in the matter.

As for the recent attacks on the First Khurkh of Kount Khokula, I AM NOT the leader. We don't want one, so we don't have one. Anyone who is taking it so seriously that they would actually attack it or be threatened by its silly nature, simply isn't getting the point, and is doing a good enough job of making himself look like a total ass that I need not say anything.

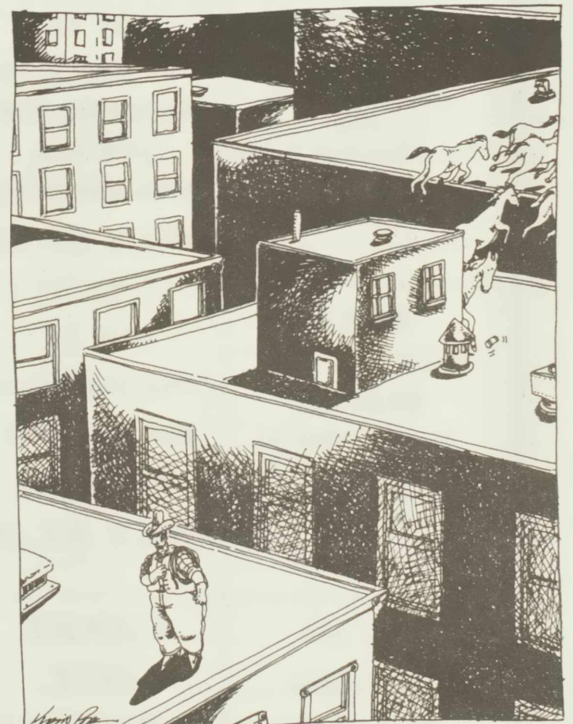
—Pope John Stanton
sophomore, English

Little funny square stuff

by kevin pope



Little did the thugs realize that even though he was cornered, he was not trapped... Mr. Slinky had already spotted the opening to the stairs.



After being called in nearly a week ago to rid the rooftops of an apparent wild horse infestation, Clem hadn't seen diddley and was seriously thinking about packing things up, when suddenly...

**The Kaimin
will accept
more letters
starting Fall
Semester.**

Jim's Journal

Today Tony said, "Hey, Jim, I hear you're looking for a new apartment."



He said he has some friends who need a roommate.



"It's five guys sharing a basement, and you'd get the space next to the furnace," he said.



"You know what five of my friends living together means, don't you?" he asked. "Round-the-clock PARTY!" he said.



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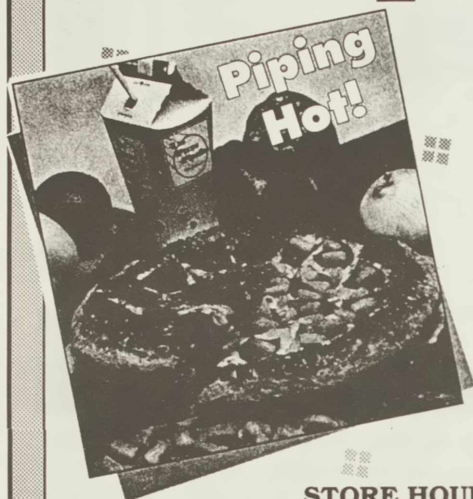
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The Pizza Pipeline • 2100 Stephens • Missoula, MT

Confessions of a red-neck cowboy

I have a few confessions to make. I have not been faithful to my fellow red-neck brothers. It pains me deeply to admit this, but I've been everything but true to the stoic, conservative, boots and hat image that we cowboys are supposed to have. It scares me to think how my forestry pals will react, but for the good of my soul I have to bare all.

My palms are sweating as I think about writing my first confession. I don't know if I can go through with it; oh but I have to... I must confess that I adore granola chicks!... I love the way their coffee cups dangle from backpacks that hug their cute little hiker butts. Their legs are so lithe and tan in cutoff shorts from endless amounts of fitness. But before I'm labeled as a sexist pig, my feelings go deeper than the physical. These granola chicks seem so connected to the earth and full of energy; they have a real sensitivity to their fellow humans and the planet we all share. They are truly ALIVE!

Wow, this confessional stuff is harder than I thought. Maybe I should terminate my mission right now. No, I'm in too deep to turn back, and there is a cute granola chick sitting in front of me in the computer lab. Just her presence motivates me to keep going....

I must also confess that I really like to hike. This is coming from the guy who used to make a living on the back of a horse. I love that feeling when you break away from the trailhead for a long hike into the hills. All the baggage of every day life is left behind as you climb higher and higher into the solitude of nature. I don't always hike alone but many of my favorite trips have been in solitude; shared only with some ponderosa pines, a few Canada jays, and an elk or two. I usually look for that perfect lunch spot, the one your legs burn trying to get to. Higher and higher, steeper and

Guest Column by Charlie Sperry

steeper, one more rise, just a few more minutes up the hill. Then you finally find it's at the moment your legs can't take anymore you plop down in the warm alpine sun and soak in the beauty of the day....

"I, the guy who still walks bow-legged from time on a horse, even admit to liking llamas. Ooooh, the ultimate cowboy sin. True, they have almost gotten me bucked off my horse a time or two, but they are quite intelligent creatures that grow on you quickly."

Sorry, I got side-tracked for a moment; I'm here to do a confessional and there is still more to say. I must also confess to being a liberal, I voted for Clinton and am a strong supporter of wilderness legislation. I believe in women's lib and equal opportunities for all. I have a hard time understanding gays, but feel they should not be condemned. Whew, it's all coming out now... I, the guy who still walks bow-legged from time on a horse,

even admit to liking llamas. Ooooh, the ultimate cowboy sin. True, they have almost gotten me bucked off my horse a time or two, but they are quite intelligent creatures that grow on you quickly.

I'm feeling rather light-headed now after revealing so much of my inner self. Oh my God, I just realized the implications of what I've done... I've admitted to a campus of 10,000 students that I'm a CLOSET GRANOLA! Will I ever live it down, will my classmates ever forgive me? Don't worry fellas, I still love my horses and believe that logging can be an integral part of forest management. I'm still a heterosexual that admires a gal in a pair of Wranglers. I still feel most comfortable wearing jeans, boots and a hat.

I have come to realize though we are all "brothers and sisters" on this earth. Labels like "granolas" and "red-necks" should be put behind us. We probably have much more in common than we think. You may not always like someone's lifestyle or the way they dress, but remember we are all on this planet together. We should all make an effort to see beyond the superficial and find the common ground we share. Peace to you all.

Charlie Sperry is a graduate student in resource conservation.



Students can have direct representation in Helena

I am a candidate for the State House of Representatives in the district which includes the UM dorms and family housing—House District 65. When I decided to seek this office, I spoke with many people involved in local and state politics, seeking insights into the district and possible strategies I could use to get elected. The people I spoke to have extensive experience in electoral politics and therefore, it should be assumed, are able to identify possible constituencies and their impact on any given election. Save two dissenters, every person I talked to advised me to ignore the student population because they do not vote. In essence, they said I would be "wasting" my time campaigning on campus. Their view may not concern you from an electoral standpoint, what should concern you is how that view equates to funding for the University and ultimately to the quality of your education. As a non-traditional student, it greatly concerns me.

Currently the Montana State Legislature, when faced with pressing budget cuts, is able to cure those fiscal ills at the expense of students because students are not a constituency that

must be taken into account when making those funding decisions. Plainly stated, if students do not vote, some legislators feel they can unfairly force students to shoulder more than their fair share of responsibility for the state's funding requirements.

My solution, from a student's standpoint, is to elect our own representative to the Legislature. The University district is made up overwhelmingly of students. Apathy will dictate that the status quo will continue, but if students decide that we've had enough, we can have a tremendous impact on the future of our education and the education of our children. If current trends continue, students will be forced to move out of state in order to afford to repay student loans. Additionally, those same students will not have had the advantage of a properly funded education. That is a recipe for disaster

Guest Column by Dave Parker



for Montana students. Decreased services and increased tuition is not what we need (or can afford) from our State or our University.

I understand that many students vote at home but the time has come to take

action here in Missoula. Students can register to vote, using their Missoula address, and receive an absentee ballot before they go home for the summer. Students can have an effect on the policies that affect their education, but they must make the commitment to vote.

On the University level, from athletic fee choices to the Honors College site, students' desires are constantly being dismissed. Our views are dismissed because like some of our state legislators, University officials and the Board of Regents do not think they have to properly address the real concerns of students. Again, I would submit that the reason this occurs is a perceived student apathy and the belief

that "they" know what is best for students. I decided to seek office to ensure we do have a voice in Helena. If University officials and the Board of Regents will not listen to us individually, we must force them to listen to us in unison. A student legislator will have the unique ability to ensure that our views are represented in Helena.

I have been active in Montana politics, from helping Pat Williams defeat Ron Marlenee in the 1992 Congressional race to managing several facets of the recent re-election campaign of Missoula Mayor Dan Kemmis. Additionally, I am a current executive board member of the Missoula County Democratic Party and have spent time in Helena during the legislative sessions, learning the system and making important contacts, contacts that are necessary to effectively push forth our legislative agenda. Finally, I would appreciate the support of the University Community in the June 7 primary election and would also enjoy the opportunity to represent the views of students in Helena.

Dave Parker is a junior in wildlife biology and political science and a candidate for the State House of

Frolicking Pebble by Howard Sherman



Let your heart loose for spring

I think Tennyson said it best when he wrote "in the spring a young mans fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love." Well he could not have said it better (for either gender.) When spring arrives it seems that the thoughts of love run wild, and for some love controls their every action. Yet others would prefer to completely ignore their hearts desires, and continue along their lonely way.

Time and time again I find myself distracted by the many women here on campus, from the women playing volleyball to the occasional

artist drawing the outdoor life. I love to look at the many different women that grace the earth with their very presence. People may think that for this I am some sort of a male chauvinist, or say that I don not respect women for their true beauty when in reality it is just the opposite. for example, when I look at an artwork such as a Michelangelo painting, I study the picture and look for its hidden beauty and grace. I look for the feelings behind the beauty, and what really makes the person.

Yet some would call me a bit of a romantic. I find no crime in this, I in fact take pride in this. I would prefer to see a return to more of a romantic era, where love is expressed through courtship, and romance played a major role in any relationship. Where love is not just a word that we casually toss around, and we are not afraid to express our feelings for one another.

So often I find that my friends take an interest in someone and yet they do not let the other person know how the feel. This unfortunately

Guest Column by Jason Jury

accomplishes nothing more than a distant adoration, and a feeling of an unfulfilled desire. When in reality the other person may be thinking the same

thing that you are. So often we neglect to express our feelings, and for this reason we do not fulfill our desires. We make excuses to cover up our feelings, and we never understand why we sometimes feel alone. We try to tell ourselves that we are better off if we just ignore what we feel. When in reality what we are doing is depriving ourselves of the basic human

need to communicate.

The majority of the time I hear excuses like "they would never

"I want to encourage you to take a chance, talk to a stranger, and maybe even ask them out for coffee or tea. I am not telling you to ask them to marry you, just don't be afraid to express how you feel.

like me" or "I would feel uncomfortable." SO WHAT!! Maybe they don't share in your feelings, but then again maybe they do. If you are rejected so what, then it's their problem for being shallow and narrow-minded. The worst thing that you can do is suppress how you feel and always wonder what if. You may even find that the friendship or even love of a lifetime is right before your very eyes.

I want to encourage you to take a chance, talk to a stranger, and maybe even ask them out for coffee or tea. I am not telling you to ask them to marry you, just don't be afraid to express how you feel. Give a little and you just might get something in return, you may even be surprised at the results you get.

Jason Jury
freshman, communications.

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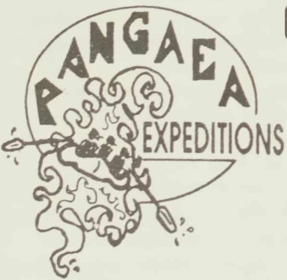


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Literature rescues past from oblivion

Mempo Giardinelli, an Argentine novelist and short story writer, visited UM last week to talk about contemporary Latin American literature and writers.

Giardinelli discarded the awkward label of "post-boom Latin American fiction," tacked to his artistic generation by scholarly critics. ("Boom" refers to that fantastic group of Latin American writers that emerged in the '60s led by Garcia Marquez, Jorge Luis Borges, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, Alejo Carpentier and others.)

Instead, Giardinelli preferred to be catalogued, if at all, as the "Latin American writers of the regained democracy."

Over the last 10 to 15 years, Latin American countries have slowly but steadily undergone a shy political process that has shifted from criminal military authoritarian regimes to at least "formal democracies" where voters are called to the polls to choose.

However, stubborn forms of oligarchy linger in the social, political and economic stratus of these societies.

The Mexican PRI's unyielding party hegemony for more than six decades, Fujimori's constitutional coup d'etat in Peru, reported irregularities in census of progressive strongholds in El Salvador's democratic elections, doubtful presidential pardons of assassin *militares* in Argentina, or Chilean Pinochet's *tour de force* last year when he went on a ride on his tanks, indicate that there is still a long way ahead for these historically-beaten societies to achieve sound—and pluralistic—democratic systems.

The generation to which Giardinelli belongs, and represented here at UM, is the generation that suffered directly from exile, torture, political persecution, state terrorism and a large list of *desaparecidos*, (missing persons) buried somewhere in anonymous mass-graves all along the South Cone.

Column by
Ibon
Vilhelabeitia



"Today, these contemporary Latin American writers, though writing in democracy, revindicate the value of the word literature as the instrument to rescue their past and their collective memory as a people from oblivion. It is as well for them a therapy to exorcise the daemons of history, and learn from them."

(Only Argentina, after a right-wing dictatorship, suffered more than 30,000 *desaparecidos*.)

"The history of Latin American literature is the history of the fight for freedom," Giardinelli said in his speech.

Today, these contemporary Latin American writers, though writing in democracy, revindicate the value of the word literature as the instrument to rescue their past and their collective memory as a people from oblivion. It is as well for them a therapy to exorcise the daemons of history, and learn from them.

Latin America literature, Giardinelli said, is the creative effort that bridges past and future, an art that feeds constantly on memory to project and

reinvent it.

Although Giardinelli's words were confined to the Latin American experience and their "lost generation," it is possible to add a universal appendix to his words.

The struggle between memory and oblivion, which Giardinelli named as the sign of the Latin American tragedy, is unfortunately the sign of the world's tragedy.

We celebrate our times as the demise of some authoritarian ideologies —fascism, communism— when in truth we have learned little from history if we check the convulsed present that surrounds us.

And the reason is simply because we don't read from our past, or refuse to understand it.

Besides, history always hides half-truths, prunes facts here and there, shapes times, and picks sweet little lies to give a coherent picture out of chaos, as only winners write the history. (Winners accidentally commit "collateral damages" when they massacre civilians; losers overtly commit crimes against humanity and are later tried by international courts and historians.)

But there is a living testimony of the past in literature, like in any art, to rescue the memory from oblivion.

Picasso's "Gernika" painting tells more of the Spanish civil war than all the shelves of history of the Library of Congress and the British Museum together.

"A society that forgets its past and memory is culturally suicidal, and has lost the social control of democracy," Giardinelli pointed out.

That fight for freedom in the Latin American literature, is therefore the fight for a freedom we should all read.

Let's rescue literature - art in general- and rescue it all from oblivion.

—Ibon Vilhelabeitia is a graduate student in journalism.

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Life's darkest questions might forever go unanswered

I don't often dwell on life and death. It tends to depress me. But I had to ask myself the other day, "What is it all about?"

I had a hard time answering that one. In fact, I didn't really come up with an answer.

I came up with this... "Why?"

Why do we worry about money or grades. Why do we suffer from tension headaches? Why do we struggle through relationships that are, at best, fleeting?

Why?

Consider this analogy.

We are placed into the "in" basket and processed and eventually sent to the infancy development section.

We spend several years here where we begin to take shape. Outlined, so to speak.

Then we're sent to the department of childhood.

In childhood, we are processed and given more clarity. We begin, at this stage, to be defined.

We are then sent to the board of puberty, where we are slightly altered and then faxed to adulthood.

We spend the bulk of our existence in the department

Guest Column by Paul Sample

of adulthood, becoming refined and solidified. Here we are separated and organized, each according to our merit, until we become dated.

Then we are pushed into the old age bureau for processing.

Again, we are altered and all our flaws are identified.

So loudly are they pointed out that often the department of adulthood can hear it and complains to any other department that will listen.

One day, if we are lucky, we go gently into the "out" basket. From there we are packed into a crate and put into storage somewhere that we hope is peaceful and not too damp.

It might be that we serve a higher incomprehensible purpose. It might be, as we are

finding nature, that everything has its place to make the whole function.

That we have a place within the whole.

Even so, my question remains the same.

"Why?"

As you can see, I really didn't answer my question. But then again, greater minds than mine have failed to answer that same question.

—Paul Sample is a junior in journalism

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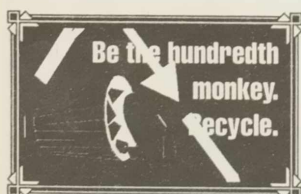
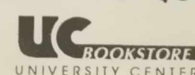
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