Mock Disaster:
Students Witness A Near Nuclear Plant Disaster
In the daily newspaper, readers could argue that few stories are brought to life. Much like the columns of black print punched uniformly atop the gray background of the paper, the people and places written about are, sometimes, blandly portrayed. Fortunately, the Fall 2006 issue of “Off the Bluff” manages to inject color and soul into journalism and the multimedia arts. The writing, photography and layout design enable readers to truly experience each and every dimension of the stories. Besides, there’s no law that says fact can’t have some flair.

Enclosed is some of the finest non-fiction work completed in Dr. Dillon's News Writing and Reporting I and II classes. Special thanks to this magazine’s editors from Maggie Patterson’s Editing for Print class and to those students whose photography adorns this publication. For the magazine’s aesthetic appearance, we cannot forget to acknowledge the talented members of MODUS. Project manager Timothy Weber, Doug DiFilippo, George Yovetich, Ashley McNally, Maggie Fung, Dena Galie, Joe Strangis and group advisor James Vota crafted the layout for this issue.

The Society of Professional Journalists’ mission is to progress and protect journalism. This progression surely cannot be achieved without young, fresh minds pushing journalism forward through creative and honest writing and reporting. The students showcased in this edition uphold the highest standards of journalism. Their efforts should surely clear the path to future journalistic excellence.

Please enjoy.

Chris Young, President, Society of Professional Journalists
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Optometrists must make a killing off of college students this time of year. We stare at blank word processing screens for so long that it’s a wonder we haven’t all gone cross-eyed.

Somehow or another, those empty voids are filled with neat lines of black type by the time our final papers are due, and we sigh in relief as we re-incorporate sleep into our daily lives. Another semester of hard work stands behind us.

But don’t empty your coffee mug for celebratory eggnog just yet. How much hard work do we really put into our education these days? I probably wouldn’t need to be in school if I had a dollar for every time I or one of my peers have said, “I’ll just B.S. it,” or “This should be an easy ‘A’,” after being assigned an essay or paper. Many professors share this passive attitude toward the learning process, making the phrase “diploma mill” too weak of a description for what has become of America’s education system.

U.S. schools are a joke to much of the world, and it has less to do with the way we fund and structure our system than the way we approach the meaning of education. Graduation (of high school at the very least) is a prerequisite for social acceptance within the American middle class. Students feel they have the right to a degree for the mere sake of their reputations. Abroad, however, graduation is a privilege.

In Australia, going to “uni” is not something everyone does when they come of age. Yet those who do pursue higher education know even they might not end up with a degree to boast about. University admission does not guarantee a one-way ticket to graduation. Any student who tries to ride the system is booted off faster than a tourist trying to hitch a hop on a kangaroo’s back.

Those who lazily expect to be spoon-fed their futures — “bludgers,” as Aussies would call them — don’t make it far past the professors who expect them to maintain a vigorous, independent attitude toward their schoolwork. A typical semester involves one or two major papers and a final exam for each class. Busy work is kept to a minimum. Students only have a few assignments to prove themselves, and professors do not grade graciously (scoring an 80 percent is an accomplishment for even the brightest pupils). Any writing that sidesteps the topic at hand or fails to make a strong argument is swiftly given the poor grade it deserves. Burying the absence of critical thought in B.S. is not an option down under.

Up here, “A’s” remain as American as apple pie. Students and educators alike are more concerned with getting schooling over with than with getting something out of school. Despite all the fuss over deadlines and workloads, what does the average college kid have to show besides bleary eyes and an unhealthy caffeine addiction?

People never seem as concerned about the quality of their work as they are about the quantity of their work. Turning in pages upon pages of assignments may leave a student with a sense of accomplishment, albeit an empty one. No matter how much homework piles up in this country, we still fall short of reaching the heights of enlightenment.

So if you’re waiting for divine inspiration to carry you to the minimum page limit of that assignment due tomorrow morning, give your eyes a rest, quit the staring contest with the blank screen, and start thinking, you lazy bludger.
Walking through Pittsburgh's South Side, you see many original stores — Bead Mine, the Beehive, and Slacker to name a few. Almost directly across from the Birmingham Bridge, there are two tattoo parlors within two blocks — Southside Tattoo and Tattoo You II.

"There's work for everyone," Emil Paternoster, tattoo artist at Tattoo You II said. "It’s better than 20 years ago; everybody seems to get along these days."

Southside Tattoo claimed the area first. Opening Feb. 3, 1997, it was the first shop here, Veronica Ray, owner and tattoo artist, said.

Tattoos, a prominent trend in today's culture, were actually invented by Thomas Edison. In 1891, Samuel O'Reilly was credited with inventing the first electronic tattooing machine because Edison's tinkering didn't catch on commercially.

A trend once associated mainly with bikers has now expanded. "Tattoos and motorcycles are kind of mainstream right now," Paternoster said, making reference to the increase in businessmen owning Harleys.

With an increase in the number of people going to get tattoos, labels such as "biker" no longer exist. "The image depends on the tattoo and the person," Keena Zitkovich, a junior forensic science major said. "Both of my parents have tattoos and still look normal," she said. "So many people get them now that I don’t think you can stereotype anymore."

Tattoo You II's serious clients range in age from the mid-to-late twenties; many are in college. Band members also supply steady business, Paternoster said.

The age requirement for getting a tattoo or piercing is 18. Anyone younger requires, at the very least, a legal guardian be present, and some places have a strict policy against it.

"Sixteen is the lowest we'll go," Paternoster said. "We require a photo ID, a parent/guardian’s photo ID and proof of guardianship."

Although some cannot wait to be old enough, others have waited for a very long time to get a tattoo. Some of Paternoster's most memorable clients were going through midlife crises.

A small group of women in their '50s and '60s came into the store and all wanted tattoos. Since they were obviously old enough to give consent, he had no problem with their request, he explained. After he started talking to them, he found out they were in town with their husbands on a business trip, and during a lunch break they went off on their own and decided to do something memorable.

"They were just as giddy as the young 18 year olds," Paternoster said.

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"For some people, tattoos are just a fad, like the people who get stars on their feet or butterflies on their hipbone," Zitkovich said. For young women, the hot spots tend to be the lower back, hipbone, ankle and feet. For men, it has got to be the forearm.

"I want that tribal band," Paternoster said he hears all the time. Also growing in popularity is writing. Paternoster will not do a girlfriend's or boyfriend's name for anyone who has been romantically involved for less than two days.

Names, it seems, "are the most popular cover up," he said. A common misconception is that a tribal band will cover it best, but big colorful flowers typically work better.

"You can see it a little bit," he said, "the trick is to camouflage it."

If a tattoo cannot be covered by another tattoo the client likes, sometimes laser removal is necessary. Although it is costly and painful, sometimes the client shows up again at the parlor to get the tattoo he/she originally should have gotten.

The neck, hands and feet are off limits for first time tattoo goers at Tattoo You II. "No bad mistakes with first tattoos," he said. Consideration will be given only if the person has other tattoos and if they clearly know what they are doing by placing it on such an open part of the body.

People who are more fascinated with tattoos tend to get more and get them bigger.

"It's very addictive," Ray said. At Southside Tattoo, sleeves and full backs are often requested. This is where the whole area - arm and/or back - is filled with an array of tattoos making one large scene. It takes many hours at many different sessions and is very painful.

A full back can take as long as 30-60 hours and cost anywhere from $100 to $150 an hour, Ray explained.

At Tattoo You II, sleeves range from 20-70 hours and the price generally starts around $75 per hour. If whole body tattooing is too much and a client just wants a single tattoo, the minimum cost is $50, Paternoster said.

Not only is there art work on the walls of tattoo parlors and many binders to sift through as you wait, but many people want a tattoo of something they have personally designed. For this to work, the tattoo artist must re-draw their image and make it to the client's satisfaction before the tattooing process can actually begin. This can take time, and it also works the same way if the client has an idea and wants the tattoo artist to draw something original from scratch, Paternoster said.

As far as training goes, there is no official way to learn the art of tattooing. The artist should have at least gone to art school to achieve some sort of background in drawing, but apprenticeship is the real way to learn the trade, Ray said.

Southside Tattoo is family run. Ray, the owner, learned from her brother, a tattoo artist in Florida. Her mother does all the body piercing, and the rest of the employees are very close, Ray said.

The apprentice learns on real clients. Their tattoo is free and they are supervised at all times. That is the only real way to learn, Ray said.

"We are more conservative here," Ray commented. "[There is] lots of bad work in Pittsburgh. We don't let anyone walk out with a bad tattoo," she said reassuringly.

PHOTO BY: STACEY GAULT

"Tattoo, Inc.: South Side Parlors Thrive"
No, that's not a witch standing amid the steam rising from a 16-gallon pot, which she stirs with a five-foot-long spatula is just a bit shorter than she is. It is Regina Blanchard making today's soups for the Sean Hogan Dining Center.

Regina, who has been a cook at Duquesne for 41 years, is known for her soups. One recipe calls for up to 30 pounds of vegetables. The lighter soups only use about 20. Her culinary prowess, however, doesn't stop there. She makes an additional entree, for the daycare center and a host of other edible delights.

"I like to make soups that make people use the muscle in their jaw," Regina said. "Some people are lax and swallow everything. The only thing you're going to swallow in my soup is the broth."

Her soups take about an hour and a half to get started. The soups on today's menu are vegetarian pasta and chili. Regina uses about half of the 16-gallon pots mounted on a red drainage basin, as well as two smaller pots on a nearby stove.

Though there is a stock man who prepares the ingredients for other chefs, Regina gets her own. "I have to get my work done. I don't have time to wait for the stock man," she said. She navigates her carts of chopped onion and celery around the kitchen. With 14 green peppers bulging inside her apron, she looks like Santa Claus. Boiling and chopping vegetables, browning meat and running to the stockroom, Regina is a blur of movement.

While it is more time-consuming, and certainly a great deal more work, Regina would rather cook for a crowd.

"My husband gets mad because I cook for an army at home and it's just the two of us," Regina joked. "But I never know when my sisters are coming over. It's fun."

Regina starts her day at 4:30 a.m., though
Five people swipe their ID cards. The bell rings only once. The students tug at the door. “Hold on! You have to go back and do it slowly!” Sue Montani says in perfect Pittsburghese. As the night desk aide at Towers A side, she won’t let just anybody in.

“Are you kidding me?” one student raves. “I pay $30,000 a year to go here; I don’t have to put up with this crap!”

As the student curses outside of the still unyielding door, Sue leans back in her chair with arms folded like a queen on her throne, unruffled and patient.

“It’s not easy working a night job, any night job. The hours are lousy, and it’s often lonely. Add to that dealing with college students returning to the largest dorm on campus after midnight, sometimes drunk and belligerent. It sounds miserable, but Sue brings the perfect balance of good humor and protectiveness.

Sue, 52, of Penn Township, is relatively new to the Residence Life Staff. Hired in March of 2005, she says the toughest part of the job is the long nights. Working five days a week from midnight to 8 a.m. doesn’t make for a comfortable sleep pattern. “It’s all one big nap now,” Sue said.

Finally, the students re-swipe their cards so that each one is approved by the system. Sue reaches over and pushes the button to unlatch the door, and the scent of alcohol wafts in. The students walk behind the booth to the elevators, muttering under their breath.

Sue sighs. “Most of the kids are good to you, until they get drunk.”

Most of the kids are good to her because she is good to them. Everyone who comes and goes gets a greeting. Sue seems to know everyone’s story. She asks one student about her numerous jobs and harangues another for his smoking habits.

“Hi guys – What’s in the bag?” Sue leans across the booth to peer at a large Wendy’s bag.

“Don’t worry, Sue, it’s not beer or anything,” the student carrying the bags says. “Just coupons for free Frosties.” He tilts the bag to show that he’s telling the truth.

“Aww … We were looking for French fries!” Sue says. No French fries, but Sue gets a handful of coupons.

“Hey, thanks guys!” Sue calls out. “Have a good night!” Then, “He manages a Wendy’s, you know.” Sue was hired to temporarily replace George Potts, but hopes that he either won’t return or that another position will open up on campus. She likes having the daytime off, the university atmosphere and, of course, the students.

“I really enjoy the kids,” Sue said. And it shows.

“What is that thing?” She says to a student carrying in a battered hubcap. “I think you need an overnight pass for that!” The owner and his friend stop to show off the new acquisition and tell its story. Sue laughs and wishes them a good night.

Though Sue loves chatting and giving students a hard time for fun, their safety always comes first. If something or someone seems suspicious, they have to prove that they belong in Towers.

One apparent student approaches the booth and claims not to have his ID card, that it’s locked in his room.

“You have to bring it back down to me,” Sue says, still without pushing the button to let him in. Then the man says that he’s locked out of his room and won’t be able to get it until his roommate gets back, but he doesn’t know when that will be.

“I can get someone to let you in,” Sue says. But now he’s not even sure if his ID is in his room in the first place.

“Then I can’t let you in,” Sue says. “I’m sorry.” She knows all of the tricks, even for only
working since March, and she is not afraid to call someone out for trying to sneak in.

"You know what to look for," Sue said. "People rushing the door, trying to get the aide flustered, kids who can't scan or go to the wrong door."

Sue catches a would-be student trying to swipe his card repeatedly with the coded stripe facing the wrong way. "You need to flip it over," Sue says, the joviality leaving her voice. She leans forward in her chair, taking a good look at the picture as he finally swipes the right way.

"Hold on," she says as the student walks through. "That's not you! I know him - get out of here and tell him that he's in big trouble."

Knowing the students so well has its advantages and disadvantages. "Being human, you give more leeway to the kids you know, and you're more hard-lined with kids you don't know," Sue says, "but it's the ones you know that try to pull stuff."

When the real owner of the card comes to claim it, she tells him that he's getting written up. "He's not getting trusted ever again," Sue says.

Bright blue eyes continually fixed forward, she observes everything, from the perpetual presence of delivery people to someone trying to sneak up the front stairs.

"I don't want to be the miserable old lady," Sue says, "but we have to protect the students."

Sue genuinely cares about the students, and not just their safety.

She starts talking with one young woman about her unhappy mood, which leads to a discussion on her failing grades. Sue tries to bolster her spirits. "You still have your education," Sue says. "If you don't do the work then you'll lose the whole education."

The student claims that she has to have a few shots before she can study. After she leaves, Sue asks a nearby RA the girl's full name, planning on referring her to Bud Walkup, the campus drug and alcohol counselor.

"I hate to see someone fail if we can help her," Sue said.

Sue sees her job as important for everybody's peace of mind. "All the night desk aides care and live the mission statement: 'Serving God through serving students,'" Sue said. "We're here to protect them from each other and themselves; they're just kids."

This attitude has earned her much love and respect, and even a few admirers.

"This is my girl right here," one student slurs on his way to the elevator. "I love you Suzy!" Sue shakes her head and smiles.

"I love this woman," another says as a friend is helping him in. "Can I have a hug? What about a kiss?"

Sue laughs and waves him away. "Get him outta here," she says to the friend, but she's still smiling.

The friend drags him into the elevator but not before he yells, "Ma'am if I could date you ...!"

Sue throws her head back, laughs, and settles back into her chair, still chuckling. It's 3 a.m. It's just another Saturday night.
Imagine marching down a cool, dark corridor with only one simple goal: finding a morsel of something to eat. No one will get hurt, no one will suffer and no one will be bothered. Suddenly, a shadow creeps up from around the corner and a human voice mysteriously whispers, "Ha! I've got you now."

It's every insect's worst fear — an exterminator. But with insects and arachnids making up 80 percent of the species alive today, it's no wonder people call on exterminators to eliminate their bug problems.

It's also the reason that Duquesne University employs Ron Haut, an exterminator dedicated solely to the food service and academic areas on campus. Although insects and rodents are not a major problem on campus, even the slightest presence is cause to call the exterminator.

"I'll never be without work," Haut said. For the past five years, Haut has spent every Wednesday making the trip from his Indiana Township home to Duquesne to work out all the bugs on campus, so to speak. His eight-hour work day begins promptly at 5:30 a.m. when most of campus, insects included, is still asleep.

"[I like to] start before the bugs get their eyes open," Haut said with a smile.

Underneath the confines of the Sean Hogan Dining Center lies a storage room filled with cardboard boxes of dry food, a hot spot for cockroaches.

Although few roaches were present that morning, Haut still insisted on placing glue boards along the walls, where roaches most often travel.

"They allow us to monitor, control and service specific areas," Haut said.

He also explained that the two most common cockroaches found at the university are the German, which tend to be found in dry areas; and the American, which are most commonly associated with damp areas such as wet basements and drains.

One problem with roaches in areas such as these is that they usually lay their eggs in boxes. If there is a huge problem, Haut will recommend managers discard all cardboard boxes.

"The most effective way to get rid of bugs is exclusion," Haut said. "If you remove the food source, it will help eliminate infestation."

After spending 20 minutes surveying the storage room, the next step was to go to the actual dining hall. Inside the ceilings are Control Point Sources, a time-release tool that dispenses liquid over a three month period.

Four times each year, a team of exterminators performs an intensive service on the entire area. "We dust and spray vulnerable areas and we also have machines that create a fog that kills the bugs," Haut explained.

When his work in Towers food service area is complete, Haut climbs into his car and drives to Facilities Management where he looks at the log book to note what types of incidents had occurred from the previous week. There were
about seven areas that needed attention, including a Yellow Jacket problem on the 6th floor of College Hall.

"I have to be an investigator, like Sherlock Homes, and figure out where the problems come from."

Haut was a bit wary about this situation because stinging insects are by no means his favorite. "Any insect that can bite or sting me, I'm not interested in being friendly with," Haut said.

Near the end of September, Haut was called in to face his fear. There was a large stinging insect problem on the roof of Fisher Hall. "The problem that begins to occur around this time of the year is that cooler nights mean many insects are now seeking warmth and are coming inside the buildings," Haut explained.

Before servicing the areas in the log book, Haut heads over to Brottier, where he takes care of problems with rodents. All around the perimeter are rodent bait boxes that house blocks of birdseed laced with rodent-cide, to eventually help eliminate the number of rats found in this area.

Climbing up the hill that leads from Forbes Ave. to Brottier, Haut explained rodents are found near this building because it is "an area with heavy vegetation, which gives an ample food source for the rodents."

In his seven years of experience working at Fort Pitt Exterminators, Haut says his most memorable situations involved with rats. "[My] most interesting situation was dealing with a rat in a toilet," Haut said between laughs.

Sometimes the pesky rodents even outsmart the humans trying to capture them. Three years ago, there was a rat trapped under a garbage can. Haut's strategy was to place glue boards all around the can in hopes that the rat would stick to one. Instead, it jumped over all the glue boards. "It was smart," Haut recalled.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in being an exterminator is knowing how to handle the diversity that comes along with each situation. When dealing with ants, rodents and stinging insects, exterminators must "think dimensionally," he said.

Once Haut has learned to think like the insects he is trying to eliminate, the next step is deciding where to start.

"I have to be an investigator, like Sherlock Holmes, and figure out where the problems come from."

But the absolute hardest part of the job, according to Haut, is working in confined areas. "It's difficult to maneuver, dark and you never know what you'll be running into," he said.

After Haut finished servicing Brottier, he was preparing to face his fear in College Hall. Although, after a short phone call, he found that he was going to have to wait a bit longer. Until then, he would look over areas that had been serviced during the past few weeks.

While Haut and his company are dedicated to taking care of any and all insect problems on campus, Haut still believes that a great deal of their job lies in public relations - communicating to customers what they can do to get rid of bugs.

"About 80 percent of the responsibility is on the customer and 20 percent is on the exterminator," Haut said. "We can't kill everything."
Flip the patty, stuff the fries, heat the bun, put on the cheese, start over again.

Sounds a bit repetitive, doesn’t it? Try doing it for eight hours a day, Monday through Friday, for years and years.

Fortunately, Barb and Ametta worked through their attitude problems and became friends. “We are like two thieves. We stick together like this,” Barb said as she crossed her index and middle finger, making sure not to drop the fries she had in her other hand.

Now that they are friends, they help each other get through the work day in one piece. The routine of their job may be simple, but Barb and Arnetta try to spice it up with playful banter and “under-the-breath” harmless insults.

“I like my job and I like to have fun,” Arnetta said as she took an order from a student. The student simply gave Arnetta the what-are-you-talking-about? look, took his order and walked away.

Nina Stafura, a 17-year-old co-worker, said Barb and Arnetta make her job much more enjoyable. “They make it fun, and they make me feel comfortable,” Stafura said while taking off her apron, getting ready to leave.

The typical day for Barb and Arnetta starts at 10 a.m. when the bacon, fries and burgers start cooking. Then doors open at 11 a.m., and from there on out, it’s flip, stuff, serve, repeat.

“We open at 11 and just go with the flow,” Barb sighed, leaning over the stove, trying not to get burned.

From open until about 2:30 p.m., Barb and Arnetta have their hands full of fries, and their line is backed up about 20 feet with im
patient students waiting for their food. Their spirits are high and their comments are witty. The day has just begun, so it's too early to think about leaving. Then, around 3 p.m., things slow down a bit, and so do Barb and Arnetta. They take this opportunity to make more burgers and fries, and to take a break from the morning rush. Around 5 p.m., they are back in the game, serving the students their burgers for dinner. They push through the evening rush, fighting off the yearning to go home. Finally, closing time comes at 6, which means cleaning up and heading out.

Even though they are at work, Barb and Arnetta find fun in themselves and with each other. You'll always see them laughing at each other’s jokes. They might not be funny to you, but to each other, those jokes are what keep the lines moving faster, and what make the stove seem a bit less hot.

When they aren't laughing with each other, they are laughing with (and on occasion, laughing at) their customers.

“I like the kids. Just to see the kids and how goofy they are. The way they dress, some of them,” Barb said, chuckling under her breath, pointing out a student who caught her eye.

Although they like most of the students who come through their line, there are a few students who make their job a little bit harder. For Barb it's the "princesses." She rolled her eyes as she mentioned the name, knowing that if you went to Duquesne, an explanation needn't be given.

People who try to order while on their cell phone are also a big annoyance to both women. "Talk later," Barb said, after a student came through the line, yakking away on a cell phone. "Just tell me what you want so you can get out of line."

But just because they are behind the coun-

ter, doesn't mean they don't know what it's like to be on the other side. Arnetta sympathizes with the students, knowing they need to eat, and that it's hard being away from home and good home-cooked meals.

"I hook my kids up. I give them more if they want," Arnetta said, with a proud smile on her face. "You're so far away from home and don't get a good meal until you go home."

Then again, every job has its down side, and sometimes even jokes can't make a work day go faster. "Some days are better than others. Some days you get so tired of cooking over and over," Arnetta said, leaning on the counter, taking advantage of the slow time of day, and trying to get out of the hot atmosphere behind the counter.

Barb and Arnetta are two tough women with enchanting personalities. Both have a sense of humor that can only come with seven years of working behind the counter. So next time you are in the burger line at Options, don't look at Barb and Arnetta as your servers, look at them as your friends. And next time you order a cheeseburger with curly fries, perhaps you’ll add a “hello” to your order as well.
At about 11 a.m. on any given weekday, students stand in line on the second floor of Towers, their IDs in hand. No, they're not waiting in line for the Towers dining hall to open, but instead to mail letters or pick up packages from the small hole in the wall known as the student mailroom.

Almost all Duquesne students, at one point or another, have visited the student mailroom and chatted with Brian and Rita, two of the nicest and friendliest people at Duquesne.

Brian Koehler and Rita Kronenberger have been working together in the Towers mailroom for about six years.

"It's been too long," Rita jokes.

Rita begins her day at 7:30 a.m. at the main mail center in Rockwell Hall. After about an hour of sorting, she heads to the Towers facility.

"The mail gets up here between 8:30 to 8:45 a.m.," Brian said. "We start from there."

Although students only see the small, square-like hole that either Rita or Brian pokes their head out from, the student mailroom is quite large inside. The white tiled floors and white ceilings are made even brighter by the blinding white lights that allow the small black writing on the envelopes and packages to be easily read. The 31 shelves are covered from top to bottom with packages, and the walls are filled with rows and rows of mailboxes, some of which are too high for even a person of average height to reach.

Not many students stop to think about all of the hard work that goes into sorting and distributing all the student mail on campus. With four deliveries a day, 70 stamps sold instead to mail letters or pick up packages from the small hole each day, and 3,000 student mailboxes, Brian and Rita's job is a lot more important than one might think.

But it isn't until bigger holidays that students begin to notice the dynamic duo. Halloween and Valentine's Day are two of the busiest mail holidays for students, according to Brian and Rita.

"Halloween is big," Brian said. "We get really busy here with sending stuff out."

Sending and receiving pumpkins and candy is a problem for Brian and Rita. According to them, a lot of the students rarely, if ever, check their mailboxes. When this happens, candy and other snacks just pile up in the mailroom.

"We get a little worried when food sits around," Brian said.

Rita agreed. "If food is left around we'll get little critters." But it's the little critters that students receive in the mail that pose the real problem.

"We get chicks and illegal turtles," Rita said. "They're not well marked telling us that it's livestock."

But even these little critters aren't the weirdest things that Brian and Rita have ever encountered. It's the weird items student try to mail out that give them the real shock. Each year, students come up with new and creative ideas of
things to mail.

“We’ve had a couple of students who have mailed messages in a bottle.” Rita said.

“And one student who mailed a coconut,” Brian added.
One has to wonder who they are sending it to and why.

Even on non-holidays, Brian and Rita have to find places for these obscure things. However, it is not their job to baby-sit packages. A student gets up to two pink slips in their mailbox. After that it is up to them, according to Brian and Rita.

“Yesterday, we had a refrigerator,” Rita said. “Today we have a 32-inch high-definition TV that will sit around until the student comes to pick it up.”

Although stamps and envelopes are important to Brian, Rita and the mailroom’s existence, their most important tool is what is known as “The Bible.”

“The Bible” is a list of all the Duquesne students’ names followed by their mailbox numbers and combinations. This is so Brian and Rita can look up a student’s combination when they have either lost it or can’t remember.

“About a week before school is out we’ll get students are like, ‘Dude, can I get my combination?’” Brian said. “We’ll get a couple hundred of those.”

And if that isn’t enough, Brian and Rita are faced with one of the hardest tasks – balancing the cash register each morning.

“We have to balance the drawer so it’s even and sometimes that’s a real pain, right Brian?” Rita joked.

Even with all the work done around the campus mailroom each day, the mailroom is more organized than one would think, minus a couple of boxes lying on the floor and a small clutter of pink mail slips on the table.

“We’re very organized when things run right,” Brian said.

“Things are usually pretty good and we haven’t had any problems really with losing things.” Then he knocked on wood.

However, if they do ever run into a problem, that’s when the students, who are less experienced, come into play.

“That’s when it’s nice to have students around,” Brian said.

“We can always blame the students,” Rita added.

The Towers mailroom employs three students to help out. Both Brian and Rita believe that they have always been lucky when it comes to the student employees.

“We’re always very blessed with nice kids who are very helpful,” Brian said.

“We definitely have that this year.”

For Duquesne students, the mailroom is convenient and relatively cheap. Surprisingly, Duquesne doesn’t mark up the price of envelopes and packages to make a profit.

“I think this is the one and only ‘perse’ service Duquesne doesn’t try to make money on,” Brian said.

This is good news for students, who after spending $10 on a salad, can still afford to send a package.

Brian and Rita are staples on this campus. Besides professors and fellow students, most students find themselves interacting with Brian and Rita on a daily basis. However, it’s still a wonder that they continually go unnoticed because without them, no student would be able to send or receive any mail.

DU’s Mail Room Staff Delivers
When Life Ain't Worth 50 Cents

JILL LAPTOSKY

All that 12-year-old Marcus wanted in "Get Rich or Die Tryin'" was a fancy pair of name-brand sneakers and a big, shiny gun. But, on Nov. 9, 2005, the release date of the film, all that four moviegoers wanted was to murder 30-year-old Shelton Flowers.

Both Marcus and the moviegoers got exactly what they wanted.

The night after the murder, a West Homestead police cruiser and a black unmarked Crown Victoria parked in the driveway in front of the Waterfront's Loews Theater. Three police officers stood planted in a corner in the lobby and played with their cell phones and sipped from Venti Starbucks ice waters. A couple sashayed into the theater and cuddled, looking up at show times while a group of students purchased tickets from a calm cashier without hesitation. It was a typical night at the movies.

Police tape was removed from the crime scene. The staccato boom of each gunshot had been replaced with the echo of a subdued Johnny Cash song.

Those who stepped out of the premiere of "Get Rich" the night Flowers was murdered must have hardly expected to see the film's violent images roll off of the screen and into the concession area, where Flowers was shot. It shouldn't be difficult to differentiate what images are fictitious and which are real. But, in order for Loews to pull "Get Rich" from their theater, they must have confused fact with fictitious justifications.

After the murder, the film was removed from the theater until after the murder was thoroughly investigated. By removing "Get Rich," Loews Theater is acknowledging the film as a source, if not a catalyst, for the crime. But it is ridiculous to assume that the film incited the murder. Loews President Travis Reid even stated in an interview that it is uncertain whether or not the group of people involved in the shooting even viewed the film before the lethal confrontation. So, what does "Get Rich" have to do with the crime? Nothing.

The fact is that American middle class youths glorify the crack-dealin', gun-totin', Mercedes-drivin', gangsta-rappin', get rich or die tryin' attitude. However, at the same time, hip-hop culture is a handy scapegoat for violence insofar as its people lack the political influence or money to manipulate the images projected by the media. Hip-hop superstars like Eminem and 50 Cent may star in as many quasi-autobiographical films as they can shake a gun at, but the problem of violence is much bigger than the musical artist.

Sure, if hip-hop had a poster child, it would probably be a drive-by shooter with a gagged woman in the passenger's seat. Some of the most prominent names in hip-hop can be linked to violent acts in one way or another: From Puff Daddy's arrest for fleeing a shooting at a New York City nightclub to Grammy award-winning Jay-Z's alleged stabbing of record executive Lance "Un" Rivera for bootlegging his music. Look at Snoop Dogg. Or Notorious B.I.G. Or even R. Kelly. But to say violence stems from hip-hop is simply a false cause, a fallacious argument. I doubt anyone wants to rape minors because R. Kelly did.

These violent images are so prevalent, not just in hip-hop culture, but also American culture in general, that we are desensitized and accustomed to them. New forms of violence constantly crystallize and, when they do so, society is shocked. But, the fact is that hip-hop violence is hardly unique; it is merely a doppelganger of its predecessors. Trace recent trends in media violence from westerns to the 70's blaxploitation to recent films by John Singleton and Ernest Dickerson. Violence and crime have been and always will be present in American media, although the social class and community in which it's depicted may evolve for entertainment value.

And it is impossible to deny that violence is entertaining to many Americans. This film has a very distinct following and narrow audience—namely 50 Cent, hip-hop fans and fans of director Jim Steri-dan—but has grossed $28.4 million so far and is estimated to gross $32 million total.

The shooting at Loews has fomented discussion about the film's overemphasis on violence and crime. But, if a moviegoer watches the film through a critical lens that only evaluates violence, much of the film's value is lost, not to mention the nine bucks spent for a ticket.

The film is more than just a do-it-yourself primer for wanna be gangsters. It is also a perfect example for parents how not to raise your child, since it's basically one of those stories of how a good, happy child turns into a rotten egg. It's a BET movie with a little extra violence and nudity. 50 Cent's character even stresses the importance of self-expression, since, as he says in the film, "I either express myself or die." Basically, the film is a little "8 Mile," a little "Goodfellas" and even some "Oliver Twist."

So, what is the moral of the film? As said best by one of the film's drug lords, "Violence does not beget more money. Violence does not beget more money. Violence does not beget more money." That must have been Loews' reasoning when they removed the film from their theater.
MOCK DISASTER:
STUDENTS WITNESS A NEAR NUCLEAR PLANT DISASTER

INTRODUCTION: MOCK DRILL

No meltdown occurred. Pittsburgh was not destroyed. But on Oct. 20, 2005, 14 Duquesne University students witnessed what it would be like to confront officials after a near disaster at the Shippingsport Nuclear Power Plant.

From the news briefs to the interviews, the mock drill presented a view of what happens when disaster strikes and how the media react. The following stories, written by five students in the Editing for Print class, tell what was learned through this experience and attempt to recreate the emotions of a journalist caught in the commotion. The confusion of the would-be novice is seen through the fictional eyes of Jeff Stanek’s character, yet played against a true telling of the actual events as viewed by Emily Leone. Anne Chengery portrayed the event as if a reporter covering a real error at the plant. While Timothy Walter and Marcus Rauhut examined the history and the law that helped shaped the modern nuclear power industry. Each story takes a different path in discovering this event, showing the dynamic connection between reporter and subject.

Mock Disaster: Students witness a near nuclear plant disaster
I expected there to be chaos everywhere. People horribly in pain with third degree burns all over the exposed parts of their bodies. Engineers and plant workers lying on the ground awaiting medical assistance. Reporters running around, trying to sneak a quote from victims sitting around holding their heads in pain and shock. In other words, a carefully planned and executed mock disaster drill of mass proportions that would prepare the media, disaster teams and local paramedics for the worst. I expected we would be a part of this - 15 odd students and an advisor covering a mock disaster drill at the Beaver County Nuclear Energy Plant from a satellite location, hoping to get answers and to test our true student-journalist capabilities. Then I realized that we really had no idea what to expect at all.

0800 hours
I had never even read extensively about nuclear disaster. As I stare out the window at the passing trees and cars, I realize they sent me, a rookie with no experience, no expectations, to cover a real disaster. The job of a reporter is to find out what happened and clearly and accurately tell his audience; in this case, I need to know every detail of what exactly happened to make the Beaver Valley Power Station call a press conference. I need to report on something I don’t even understand in a way that any average Joe off the street will be able to read the story and make sense of it. Meanwhile, I don’t know what questions I’m going to ask. I’m about as familiar with nuclear terminology as I am with rocket science. I am going into this press conference blind.

0845
The media relations people lead us into the room in which the conference will take place. The panel for the morning would include the Chief Company Spokesperson of First Energy, the owner of the Beaver Valley Power Station, and a representative from Pennsylvania’s and Ohio’s Emergency Management Agencies. Maps and diagrams, media passes, a sign up sheet, a stack of papers on a table in the back with a News Announcement explaining why we were there, and I hardly comprehend a word of it. As I sit back and stroke my chin hair thoughtfully, I can’t help but plan how to try and look intelligent and informed in front of all these other reporters. I need to get the best stuff. My readers are relying on me.

Myself and my fellow reporters walked into a building smelling of strong coffee and newly-cleaned carpets. The media briefing room was that way, we were told. A reporter’s room with phone and internet jacks here. Donuts and juice there. Excuse me? I thought. This is it? There were no bodies. No people running around in gas masks and protective clothing. No paramedics pushing on through their exhaustion. But where were the victims? The news cameras? The frantic, frazzled company spokespeople who were trying to keep order and to answer the questions of us roaming reporters? Similar to the way Dorothy and her crew from “The Wizard of Oz” felt when they set out on the yellow brick road, there was a silent fear in the air. Somehow, we knew the day wasn’t going to be as easy as we had thought. The flying monkeys would be swooping at us any second now.
After being alerted that we were going to face the first of several media briefings, we all sat patiently, slightly nervous as to what would be thrown at us. To be frank, I don’t think any of us knew what was going on. We pretended to know, as we read our packet of background information about the drill, trying to absorb as much material as we possibly could. “This is a drill,” an emergency team member announced after every statement. The pretend CFO of the company began speaking, and we listened attentively. Forced to take the situation seriously, we are far from prepared.

0930 hours
The witnesses file out, ready to be questioned after making a short statement. I scribble illegible notes. Before I knew it, the panel clears, and the first conference is over. The fog in the conference room was slightly lifted, but still nothing was clear. A short time is made available to ask last minute questions to a technical advisor. How can I possibly clear up all my questions with only a few minutes to talk to the technical guy? As I think ahead to the story I will have to write, the story explaining this whole disaster, I panic and realize I have almost no quotes from anyone as the damn briefings went too fast for my pen to keep up. Stupid rookie mistake. What am I going to do? There was just an emergency disaster announcement from a nuclear power plant, I’m supposed to tell the story, and I don’t even have sufficiently complete notes! I need a cigarette.

“This is a drill.”

The atmosphere in the room started to get stressful. Things went from bad to worse for the drill leaders, but from unclear to near-translucent for us. We began asking more poignant questions and began getting more detailed answers. As the drill leaders elevated the risk levels, we sweated out our next questions, realizing that there were still holes in the information we had received. Even though it was becoming closer to our fictional deadline time, we somehow managed to briefly keep our cool. We worked together, trying to sort through all of the information that was being thrown at us. But just as we thought we were going to be done, the team threw another media briefing meeting at us. Chaos ensued for a few more minutes. Separating our student identities from our reporter-in-training selves became harder to do as we fully assumed roles of journalist.

1051 hours
The panel has cleared. The technical briefer has answered all leftover questions. My suspicion of myself as a reporter and a detective of sorts is the only thing I have left. The dame to my right seems just as nervous as I am about her story. My notes aren’t overly incomplete. In fact, I may just have something here. I might be able to put all the pieces together and turn out a good story yet. What I lack in extensive detail and nuclear jargon I can over up with some fancy make-up, a disguise. No, I can’t do that. I owe the reader more. I must be frank. What you don’t know can hurt you, and while I have the major details, this detective is going to take some bumps for this story. Not many quotes, surely some questions I forgot to ask – it was going to be long night in the office.

“This is a drill,” repeated the panelists. With barely enough time to realize the exercise was over and that we could stop play-acting, we were given a friendly guided tour of the rest of the building. Sighing with relief, we met the dozen or so people working behind the scenes, most of which we had no idea were there. It was like Dorothy had pulled back the heavy curtain to reveal the measly man of a wizard behind it. But somehow, some time after the third media briefing and the elevated emergency level, we slipped into the role of reporter. At some point, a few of us undoubtedly forgot that it was a drill, a façade of a real disaster. Though there may not have been the dramatics we were all secretly hoping for, we did get that rush, a combined feeling of slow accomplishment with an occasional twinge of “I have no idea what they’re talking about.” We worked through it, got answers, and somehow, in a very short amount of time, enjoyed learning a hell of a lot about some previously-obscure power plant. We had found our brains, our courage, and our heart for reporting. And we didn’t mind so much that there weren’t horribly disfigured bodies everywhere, either.

Caught in the Commotion
No reports of injuries or environmental danger were reported after a cooling reactor leaked gas and water into a containment building at the Beaver Valley Unit of the FirstEnergy Nuclear Operating Company Thursday morning.

The leak was reported after a failure of the reactor's cooling system at Beaver Valley Power Station Unit 1 in Shippingport. Officials initially reported no release of hazardous material, but monitoring teams were later dispatched to assess the level of radiation released. A second reactor remained active during the shutdown, and neither the plant nor the community was evacuated.

FENOC spokesperson Greg Davie initially reported the leak in the cooling system and confirmed that there were no injuries or immediate threats to the environment. "Emergency organization is in place," Davie said. "We are in the process of mitigating the leak."

Authorities were alerted at 7:45 a.m. when FENOC officials declared an Unusual Event at the Beaver Valley Unit 1 and raised the declaration to Alert status at 7:51 a.m. According to the Beaver Valley Power Station Emergency Response Plan, an Unusual Event declaration at the plant warrants no reaction from off-site authorities, although the surrounding counties and states are notified. An Alert declaration however, indicates an actual or potential hazard to plant safety and requires public agencies to activate their emergency operations centers.

In response to the Alert declaration, FirstEnergy activated the plant's Technical Support Center at 8:48 a.m. in order to establish a central location from which FirstEnergy personnel could assist plant workers in responding to the emergency situation.

At 10:14 a.m., the situation was escalated to a Site Area Emergency as water began leaking into a containment building. At Site Area Emergency status, the second-highest emergency classification, operations are initiated to respond to major failures in plant functions; however, the potential for radiation release remains limited to plant property.

Davie reported that the amount of nuclear radiation released did not exceed the level allowed under federal guidelines. He said exposure to the release would be no more harmful than an X-ray.

John Bowden, supervisor of technical training, reported that the leak emanated from a residual heat removal system only used during routine shutdown operations, conducted every 18 months. He reported no leak into the atmosphere and said that a malfunctioning valve in the cooling system caused the system failure.

The Beaver Valley Power Station is located in Shippingport, Pennsylvania, 22 miles north of Pittsburgh. The last Alert was declared at the Power Station in the 1980s and the last Unusual Event in February, 2003.

This is a drill.
NUCLEAR POWER: PENNSYLVANIA

Duke Power, a North Carolina-based energy company, is making waves and the first ripples are being felt in Pennsylvania.

It recently announced plans to order two nuclear reactors for a U.S. site from the Monroeville-based Westinghouse Electric. The news shocked new life into an industry that has been relatively stagnant for more than two decades.

After the partial meltdown at Three Mile Island on March 28, 1979, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission put a freeze on all licenses then underway. In August of 1980, the NRC reversed the decision and issued new licenses and renewal for plants already in production—but no new nuclear reactors have been ordered since 1978.

Ironically, the state that spawned the first commercial nuclear reactor and was host to the greatest disaster in U.S. nuclear history at TMI may now be instrumental in nuclear power's revival.

In essence, the story of nuclear power is very much a Pennsylvanian story, which begins in at Beaver Valley's Shippingport plant. With an adequate supply of water from the Ohio River, Westinghouse engineering in nearby Pittsburgh and the backing of Duquesne Light Co. and the Navy, Shippingport was a natural pick for the first commercial nuclear power station in the United States.

When the plant opened on May 26, 1958, it served as a cornerstone of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program that attempted to write a new chapter in nuclear technology as the pages on Nagasaki and Hiroshima were still drying. In fact, the original reactor at Shippingport was first designed as a power plant for a large aircraft carrier before being modified for commercial energy production.

Today, those first reactors at Shippingport are long forgotten in a low-level waste disposal facility at the Hanford Site in Richland, Wash. But those two experimental reactors left a legacy. Two new reactors now sit next to the old Shippingport site and four other pairs have sprung up across the state.

These plants help to satiate 36.2 percent of the state's energy needs in a nation that averages 20 only percent. In Pennsylvania, nuclear energy production is second only to coal power, according to the Nuclear Energy Institute.

Duke Power in North Carolina plans to install the AP1000 reactor, designed by Westinghouse. The reactors are capable of generating about 1,100 megawatts of electricity, whereas the original output of the Shippingport plant was a mere 60 megawatts.

If the permit is approved for this and other new reactors, they will serve as a crucial first step in achieving the U.S. Department of Energy's Nuclear Power 2010 Program. The project aims at sharing costs between the government and private industry in order to encourage and develop nuclear power production in the United States.

BY: TIM WALTER

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Nuclear Power: Pennsylvania
To emergency response manager Susan Vicinie, the regulations that require mock drills like these are a result of 9/11 and the 1979 scare at Three Mile Island.

"When that happened, there was no such thing as emergency planning. All the programs started around 1982. It all goes back to Three Mile Island," Vicinie said.

This drill was only a "mini-drill," meaning it was not evaluated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Vicinie said the Beaver Valley Power Station holds four mini-drills a year in preparation for the "big ones" every other year, when NRC representatives come and take notes on how well the company performs.

The NRC-evaluated drills are a big deal, Vicinie said, especially in light of the recent changes in nuclear legislation.

"With new security regulations coming into existence, we're having discussions (asking) 'If this happens, what would we do?' A lot of the regulations are in response to September 11," she said.

President Bush signed into law the newest piece of legislation on August 8, 2005. The Domenici-Barton Energy Policy Act requires the NRC to specify the threats that nuclear power plants must be ready to defend against. The organization must also create a federal security coordinator, who acts as a liaison between the NRC and federal, state and local governments.

Bill Mahan and Cheryl Jenkins represented two local government agencies, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, respectively.

Mahan explained how Pennsylvania, a commonwealth, would respond to a disaster differently than other states.

Because of differences in state law, responsibility for responding to a disaster rests with the municipality in Pennsylvania but is handled at the county level in Ohio, Mahan said.

In Pennsylvania, there are 27 municipalities within a 10-mile radius of the power plant. In a real emergency, FirstEnergy would make recommendations to the state on how to act, but ultimately the municipalities would act independently.

Local EMT, fire and ambulance crews were not required to take part in this drill, Vicinie said. For the federally mandated drill, on June 27, 2006, five to eight NRC inspectors and more than 100 FEMA representatives will be on hand.
An Uphill Battle: 
Navigating the Bluff in a Wheelchair

Chris Young

Handicapped for a day. That was the plan.

My professor's suggestion to document an entire day on campus restrained in a wheelchair fascinated me. We both agreed that a peek into the life of a handicapped student would make an interesting story for the Duke. And what better way to record life in a wheelchair, than to actually live life in a wheelchair?

I figured I could easily manage from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. on wheels, but then again, what did I know? Unfortunately, my optimism was quickly overshadowed by my friend's overwhelming skepticism. "There's no way you're gonna be able to wheel yourself around all day," said one supportive acquaintance. "Do you realize how strong your arms have to be to get up all those hills?"

Surely, I am no Hulk, but I do take pride in my weekly workout regimen, which demands quite a lot out of my upper body, mainly, my biceps (Thunder and Lightning, as I prefer to call them). I figured that if I had seen 12-year-old kids in manual wheelchairs before, there was no reason why I couldn't make it through one day on campus. How hard could it be?

"Here ya go," a hefty, impatient Mercy Hospital nurse said to me as she pushed a wheelchair in my direction.

"Umm, can you show me how to use it?" I asked, expecting sarcasm to accompany her answer. My assumption was correct. "You push it," she said, bitingly.

After finally getting 'Queen Obvious' to realize that I was actually going to be the wheelchair's resident for the day, she lightened up a bit. The next few minutes consisted of the both of us wheeling uncontrollably around the room, trying to figure out how to maneuver the seat on wheels. I applauded myself for being the first to realize how to turn. It was far from natural.

Most people don't know just how awkward it is to use arms rather than legs for traveling purposes. Simply put, legs are stronger than arms. But in a wheelchair, the roles must be reversed. It takes time to build up the necessary upper body strength for a manual wheelchair.

When playtime ended, I felt the need to ask the nurse one question before heading to campus. "Do you think I can make it through the day?" I asked hesitantly.

The nurse's skeptical look reminded me of my friends'. Although I wanted to hear a resounding "yes" from her, the doubt she and my friends elicited fueled my desire to conquer campus on wheels.

Duquesne has never struck me as a wheelchair-friendly campus and I wanted to find out for myself just how wheelchair-bound students manage to make it through their day.

At last, I made my way out of the hospital. But before I could make my way toward campus, I had to hike up at least one hill. My arms were already starting to burn, and I hadn't even wheeled up the slightest incline yet.

I eyed up a ramp in front of the hospital, determined to make it up without a bead of perspiration. Halfway through my short trek up the incline, sweat streamed off of my body as I yanked up the brakes and turned sideways to avoid reversing to my death. My confidence was dwindling with every rotation of the wheels.

Driving an automatic is a must.

The hook on the back of my chair acted as the hanger for my heavy book bag. As I inched down Locust Street, failing to keep my wheelchair from diving to the right after each arduous spin of the wheel, it dawned on me that my book bag wasn't helping my progress. The bag kept rubbing against the right wheel, so I had to move it uncomfortably atop my lap.

When I eventually made it to the corner of Locust and Stevenson, I had to relax my muscles. Already, I noticed scrapes on my hands and forearms were as stiff as steel, but as brittle as broken bones. The rest of my upper body I knew was there; I just couldn't feel it.

The numbness in my body must have traveled to my brain, for I actually stared up the Hill on Stevenson Street, and told myself, "Yeah, you can still make it."

With each push, I must have lost about half of my forward progress and half of my optimism along with it. When I was finally parallel to St. Ann Living Learning Center, I braced myself for the dangerous trek across the street. My arms screamed for help, but I disregarded the pain for the width of the road.

I was on campus, but my body needed the hospital.

Like a drunkard, weary-eyed and unsteady, I wheeled myself carefully along the rear of St. Ann. I was now totally disengaged from my mission. All I wanted to do was rest. When I finally reached the corner of Seitz and Upper Magee Street, I did just that. A glance up ahead saw my most intense ascent yet. It was time for a push.

I waited anxiously for a minute or so, hoping someone would come to my aid and push me up the monstrous hill toward College Hall. When no one answered my plea for help, I knew my day's future looked grim. Sadly, I glanced at the mountain ahead of me one more time. It was official - I needed to surrender.

As I turned the chair around, shamefully making my way back to the hospital, I noticed a uniformed authority figure walking swiftly in my direction. Frustrated with my inability to out-race the ants on the sidewalk, I uprooted myself from the chair and began pushing it from behind.

"Hey, do you realize that's stolen property?" said the menacing Mercy Hospital security guard. Exhausted from my rough expedition, I managed to spit only a weak defense for myself. My explanation didn't work. He said I had to return the wheelchair to the hospital immediately.

I happily cooperated and gladly handed off the seat of sadness to the security guard. Finally able to use my legs, I walked toward College Hall, cherishing my gait more than I ever had before.

Still, I couldn't help but hang my head, knowing that my friends were right. I couldn't manage a whole day in a wheelchair. Hell, I couldn't even manage a whole 45 minutes.
He lived in Africa for 15 years. He can speak Swahili and break bread on the altar. And he can recite the lyrics to nearly every Bruce Springsteen song ever recorded. But Fr. Bill Christy, whose neatly-trimmed red beard, four-legged companion Pearson and booming voice have become infamous on campus, hadn't always imagined himself as a man of the cloth.

"No I didn't want to always be a priest," Christy, 42, said, sitting with perfect posture in front of Starbucks while imploring students to sacrifice one of their meal-plan meals for victims of Hurricane Katrina. "When I was in high school, I was thinking about law, and then a military career. I decided I wanted to be in the JAG office. To pursue that dream, I joined the marine corps."

At the age of 17, Christy enlisted in the Marines as a private with the option of joining the reserves and, if he qualified, the Platoon Leader's Corps (PLC). After enlisting, Christy found himself at the infamous Parris Island, S.C. for basic training, and then at Camp Lejeune, N. C. where he completed advanced infantry training, specializing as a machine gunner.

Christy proved to be a worthy candidate for the reserves and, shortly after he completed his training and registered for university education as a political science major, he was assigned to a reserve unit that specialized in Military Police.

Now Christy was able to enter into the PLC, which allowed him to take college courses during the semesters and participate in a modified officer's training camp during summers.

At this point, his life seemed linear and ordered, and his horizons were in crisp focus: He would graduate with a political science degree, be able to enter the JAG office as a lawyer and would forge the life he thought he'd always wanted.

Around the time of his junior year in college, however, Christy began to feel uncomfortable about his future.

"Everything was moving in the right direction, and I would have my degree, I was all set ... and that's what went wrong," Christy said.

"I sat down and realized that I had the next 30 years of my life already mapped out. So I started reassessing what I wanted to do in my life."

BECOMING A MAN OF THE CLOTH

Born on October 27, 1964, outside of Pittsburgh, in Glenshaw, William Hanks Christy was the youngest of Paul and Anna Mae Christy's six children. His father worked for the PPR railroad company, where he began as a station master, billing the freight that would be sent to and from his station.

With no degree in mathematics or accounting, his father learned much of his duties on the job. He worked diligently to harness accountancy skills and to ensure accurate data, often sitting at his dining room table after dinner in order to put in an extra hour of work.

Christy recalls how he both inherited and learned his father's meticulousness, a bi-product of decades handling numbers and responsibilities.

"What that reflected in me was his attention to details," Christy said. "The son of an accountant means you have an attention for details."

Although not sharing his father's appreciation for math, Christy feels that his affinity for particulars is "in language and spoken word," two tools of preaching that he employs daily and that helped to sharpen his homily skills.

But his father's job brought with it an underlying stream of constant change as well. Over his lengthy career as a railroad station-manager, Christy's father
amassed numerous promotions that forced him and his family to trek all over Pennsylvania, from Uniontown to Oil City to Titusville. When Christy was five years old, he moved with his family to Levittown, Pa, near Philadelphia, a planned community that epitomized post-World War II suburbia.

It was amid these neat rows of Levittown houses that Christy completed his elementary education and eventually attended Holy Ghost Prep, the Spiritan-run high school that laid the foundation for his interest in becoming a priest.

And it was also his relationships with Spiritan priests here that moved him into his junior year of college and compelled him to reassess his plans for a military career.

After deciding that his life was too "planned out," and while searching for possible alternatives, Christy remembered how some Holy Ghost Fathers were military chaplains, as well as missionaries. Fr. Henry Brown, a Spiritan priest who taught and resided at Holy Ghost Prep during Christy's high school education, was a military chaplain and a member of the O.S.S., America's precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency.

Christy found hope in the possibility of a career that could honor both military and religious callings. So, he began to contemplate military chaplaincy as an option.

"I was still very much involved in the military life when I started looking at the priesthood," Christy said. "My first inclination was I wanted to be a military chaplain."

When Christy decided to enroll in the Spiritan formation program, the Congregation transferred him to Duquesne, where he finished his undergraduate studies and earned a Bachelor's degree in political science.

Yet, he was apprehensive about telling his friends and family of his newfound plans.

"When I told my closest friends I was going to enter the seminary, I thought they would be shocked," Christy said.

He began to chuckle lightly, throwing out his arms in front of him, with his palms up, relishing in the irony of this retrospection. "But their reaction was like 'What was I waiting for?'" Christy said. "[So] we're not always aware of ourselves, especially when we are growing ... we don't have that level of self-awareness."

**Finding Faith in Africa**

An instrumental part of becoming a Spiritan priest is experiencing the trials, tribulations and rewards of missionary work. During the Spiritans' four-year graduate program, a seminarian is required to complete a two-year internship as a missionary in order to receive an M.A. of Divinity.

For Fr. Bill Christy, Tanzania was the place of his ministry and the place where he would find his calling and never be the same.

He completed his Novitiate year, which is the period that a seminarian is sent away to reflect before taking vows, in Quebec, learning the history of the congregation as well.

After this, Christy was sent to language school in Kipatapala, Tanzania to learn Swahili, the dominant language spoken along the East-African coast, and was eventually assigned to the Arusha Diocese in Kikatiti.

It was here, in the market village of Kikatiti, that Christy encountered the Maasai, a tribe of nomadic pastoralists who would become the subject of his missionary work. But Christy remembers that adjusting to the wide range of cultures and the language barrier was a stark challenge for him, a young priest in a foreign land.

Kikatiti, being a market village on the borderland of many tribes, including the Bantu, San, Heshamite and Nilote peoples, forced him to learn on the job, like his father did with accounting.

"I struggled with the language at first and the differences in culture, but my interaction with the people was so fantastic," Christy said. "It's a very holistic mission. You're not only about preaching, you're about healthcare and teaching. Your faith was not just on Sundays, your role in the life of the people was not boxed."

Christy came to understand that in order to teach and preach he would have to learn to communicate in ways that circumvented the normal language barrier.

So, he embarked on a new education, learning how to herd cattle, learning traditional religions and customs of the people, learning lifestyles and world outlooks, all as a way to understand the people so he could help them understand the Gospel.

"You can't just stand up there and read the Bible," Christy said. "There's this huge culture and you have to learn how to communicate in it, and that's not only through language. I was constantly digging to make the message of the Gospel relevant to these people. There you find the right info, you find the
words to speak of Christ."

After completing his two-year internship in Tanzania, Christy's life began to take shape, and his notion of future once again changed.

"So I went into this expecting to be a military chaplain," Christy said. "But the more I was in contact with the missionaries in Africa, the more drawn and attracted I was to it."

Christy was so enthralled with missionary work in Africa that he finished his 3rd and 4th years of graduate school at Duquesne in one year, so that he could return to Tanzania and missionary life. Military life and the dreams of being a JAG officer were replaced by the callings of Africa. "By the time I left, I knew I wanted to go back. I was bound and determined to come back to Africa," Christy said. "I had this desire."

Two weeks after ordination, and shortly after asking the superior general of the Spiritans to be assigned to Africa for a second time, Christy returned to the Maasai ministry in Tanzania, where he would remain for 12 and a half years.

During this time, he was engaged in "first evangelization," which refers to the bringing of Christianity to people who have never been exposed to it before. He was also involved in the creation of over 40 churches, which sparked the growth of many communities that flourished around them, as well as countless baptisms.

Christy admits that preaching to the Maasai people was one of the most rewarding aspects of his ministry because it reflected the Apostles role in bringing the Christian message to the un-evangelized world.

"When I was telling them the Gospel stories, I was telling them to people who've never heard them before."

Sacrifice, Preaching and "The Boss"

One day, while standing in the back of the Duquesne chapel, awaiting the Mass to start, someone pointed out that Fr. Bill Christy was pacing with excitement, almost dancing.

"They laughed 'cause I was almost running in my place," Christy said, using his hands to recreate his enthusiasm. "I almost wanted to run down to the mass ... 'Wow, we've got this news to share!'"

This type of enthusiasm has driven Christy throughout his priestly calling. And many who know and work with him, like fellow Campus Ministry colleague Debbie Kostosky, feel that his characteristic hospitality and energy are what distinguish him as a priest.

"Besides his preaching, he has this amazing ability, he has the knack to make people feel welcome," Kostosky said. "And he doesn't even need the dog to do it," she continued, referring to Christy's famous canine, who has become a sort of mascot for Duquesne's Campus Ministry.

Christy agrees that his four-legged companion, Pearson, who he adopted shortly after Hurricane Ivan flooded the Glenshaw, Pa. area, has become a "great help to ministry."

"Students on campus, mainly freshmen, will know me by the dog," Christy said. "Conversations will begin or we'll meet because they stop to meet Pearson ... and people will come back with pastoral concerns and cares."

Matt Walsh, another Campus Ministry colleague, believes that aside from the recruiting advantages of Pearson, Christy's homilies and stories are his greatest attribute as a priest.

"He does have a gift for preaching," Walsh said. "He's a preacher through and through. That's what he gets up for. He's a storyteller, too, which comes from working in Africa with that oral tradition."

Though preaching is the element of his priesthood that he "most looks forward to," Christy doesn't consider it the most satisfying facet of his calling.

"If I have to [choose], I think the one-on-one contact you can have, the privilege you have in the sacrament of Reconciliation, when you can be an instrument of real peace, that brings the most deepest level of satisfaction. It is more profound and, in that, it's satisfying."

Nonetheless, Christy emphasized that he anticipates homilies above all priestly duties and believes that his love of preaching originated in his love of poetry and music.

Before leaving for Africa, Christy recalls buying about a dozen little, inexpensive books of poetry that he could keep in the glove box of his truck in Africa. With no phones or communication, Christy cherished the poetry of William Carlos Williams and Robert Frost as something that kept him grounded while living away from home for so long. It also influenced his adoration for spoken and written words, which would later help to fuel his preaching passion.

Music and, especially, song lyrics were even more crucial in fostering Christy's zeal.

Growing up in the greater Philadelphia area, as a younger brother who "picked-up the musical tastes"
of his older siblings, Christy became a feverish fan of Bruce Springsteen, who introduced him to the art of lyrics.

"As a preacher, I've always had a great interest in poetry because in poetry you have to communicate in a limited time and limited space," Christy said. "[With preaching] you're also in a limited time frame to communicate these timeless truths ... you must speak in analogies, and that attracts me to good lyrics in songs."

For Christy, Bruce Springsteen's music and lyrics not only embody the preaching style, but focus on many of the themes of the Gospel.

"If you take Bruce Springsteen, he's constantly talking about death and rebirth and resurrection," Christy said. "The first story song that really hit me was 'The River,' with the hope, the despair."

Springsteen's "The River" tells the story of a teenage boy who impregnates his girlfriend, is forced to marry her and, consequently, surrenders his potential future, diving into the river every night as a symbolic search for redemption.

Throughout the 15 years he spent in Africa, Christy also became acquainted with the meaning of sacrifice (though less ill-fated than Springsteen's dejected youth), giving up The Boss, the Steelers and contact with family and friends. He remembers that his shortwave radio was his only connection to the Western world, and the life he left behind.

While many missionaries consider the lack of amenities to be the most daunting sacrifice, Christy felt that losing connection with home, music and sports was the greatest challenge.

"I went 15 years without watching a football game," Christy joked. "And I can remember coming home from Africa and asking to see the internet. [So], there has to be an element of sacrifice in everything we do, and that was the sacrifice of my ministry."

After coming back to Duquesne in the Spring of 2003-2004, Christy, at 41 years old, took on the job of vocations director, in which he is responsible for being the "first contact" for those interested in joining the Spiritans. He is also director of the Laval House, which houses six seminarians, himself and, of course, his trusty side-kick/dog Pearson. In 2005, Christy added to his many responsibilities by assisting in Duquesne's Campus Ministry office.

When asked if he was interested in returning to Africa and resuming missionary work at some point, Christy answered with enthusiasm and hope.

"I would like to," Christy said. "If not Africa, there's also a big world out there ... Papa New Guinea, the Philippines ... I don't know."

But there is no doubt that Christy's desire to return is nearly as intense as it was when he was a young seminarian pleading to be sent back to Tanzania. His office, decorated with African replicas and a bookcase lined with two CD racks, one of popular tunes and one of traditional African music, Christy holds onto the memories of his days with the Maasai, and the lessons he learned in his African ministry.

However, in light of these lessons, Christy remains humble, understanding that the great loves of his life (his missionary experiences in Africa, as well as the daily demands of his role here in America as a preacher) did not and do not come easy.

"Everything has a sacrifice. But it's the challenge that makes it."
The days of Pamela Des Barres, author of the book “I’m with the Band,” are gone. You are NOT with the band. You never have been. You never will be.

We waited for two hours in the cold after her latest Pittsburgh show, Bonnie Raitt said little more to my friends and me than “I have to go inside, my hair is wet.” She didn’t seem to care we had all paid over a hundred bucks a pop for her tickets, let alone waited an eternity in a cold, dark alley to meet her. Her hair was completely dry, and we were completely frozen and disappointed.

The only thing more disappointing than being shot down by Raitt was the incredulous look her stagehand had given me before the show when I asked him how I could meet her. My audacity stunned him like a cattle prod. It would have probably been easier getting an audience with Queen Elizabeth. Finally, after enough badgering, he annoyingly uttered the words to LAUREN DALEY

She gave us autographs, but only after she had been ushered into her warm, high-security bus. By that time, the ink in our pens had frozen, and as her handlers rushed us for our names, it was clear our time with Raitt was over. A disgruntled stagehand threw me a ticket signed “To Steve.” Perhaps I should have opened my coat and asked him if I looked like my name was Steve. I missed an autograph with my name on it, and this guy missed a better show than the one his boss had just put on. What’s a girl to do?

I understand Bonnie Raitt cannot have conversations with everyone. No one has that kind of time. And the last thing I want to do when I get off work is to chat with people about my job. But if you are a public figure, as Raitt is, or any musician is, you are sacrificing that luxury. A musician’s success depends on the fans who buy the music and attend concerts. It does not seem unreasonable to acknowledge the few who may wait for an autograph after the show.

When did musicians become so inaccessible and self-important? Times have changed from the days of groupies sleeping with Led Zeppelin, local journalists and disc jockeys interviewing the Beatles or Janis Joplin, and fans getting cleavage and T-shirts signed by their favorite stars.

At Rolling Rock Town Fair 2002 in Latrobe, Slash had more security than President Bush. Then, later that evening, a guitar pick that he flicked off stage was going on Ebay for more than 50 bucks! A 25-cent guitar pick had appreciated in value 20,000 percent just because some guitar player had touched it. How much would it have been worth if Jesus had touched it? Or Martin Luther King Jr.? Would it even be on Ebay? Martin Luther King Jr. had great ideas, but could he play the solo to “Sweet Child O’ Mine?”


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You Are Not With The Band

When did musicians become so inaccessible and self-important?
The atmosphere is full of anticipation and leisure. The lights are low and people are happy. At about 6 p.m., the customers start to trickle in. By 7 o'clock, the restaurant is almost full and the bar is steadily becoming louder. In the dining room, a cook is standing behind a grill cooking food for several eager patrons. The smell of steak, lobster and chicken is everywhere. And customers' laughter after flames burst into the air right on their table never stops.

A hibachi chef is unlike any other cook. In Japanese steakhouses throughout America, hibachi chefs cook customers' orders right in front of them.

Mike Wilson is a hibachi chef at Nakama on the South Side. "I've been cooking hibachi for about four years now, but I really started to cook when I was 16." Mike was given the title of Master Chef by some of the top-rated hibachi chefs in the state. "It was one of my proudest moments," Mike said.

To become a Master Chef, a cook must be tested on several topics. First, the chef has to display the quickness and accuracy that is needed at a table surrounded by customers. Second, the food must all be cooked at the right temperature and taste good. Finally, a hibachi cook must put on showbiz performance.

"This is very much an entertainment industry, not just a restaurant business," Mike said. People don't come to Nakama just for the food. They also come to be entertained. Many of the chefs have a routine that they go through at each table. Mike tosses knives and spatulas into the air and catches them effortlessly. Food is tossed high in the air only to find its way into the top of his hat. And, while all that is going on, he banters easily with the customers.

There is a lot for the chef to keep track of at each table and many things to do before he even leaves the kitchen.

Mike spends half of his day prepping food for the orders that will come in later that night. "We prep all the meat and everything else throughout the day so that we can get to the tables quickly and start cooking." All the meat is cut and weighed; the vegetables are cut and placed into portions, and different sauces and dressings are made. Having everything prepped helps the restaurant run smoothly throughout a busy night.

"Timing is everything when you are cooking for people," Mike said. "While I am prepping an order, I am taking notice of everything that everyone has ordered. Then I start to figure out the timing in my head for each meal." It takes anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes for a chef to cook a table. Everything depends on how many customers there are and what each one orders.

"I remember my first table. I cooked for three people. I was so nervous that my hands were shaking really bad and I thought I'd be sick," Mike said.

Mike's hands no longer shake when he cooks. And since Mike has cooked for some local big shots (Heinz Ward and Pete Townsend, just to name two), he can't afford to let his hands shake. "I cooked for the mayor once too," he said. "That was pretty cool."

Whether cooking for a celebrity or just a normal person off the street, Mike takes pride in his cooking. "It's fun, and I enjoy doing it," he said just after he finished cooking for a table of eight. When the customer is finished eating and his or her stomach is about to burst, Mike knows that he did a job well done.
It's 8:30 in the morning. I don't have class until noon. Like any normal college student, I'm sleeping. That is, until my phone rings.

"Hi sweetie! How are you~ It's been a while since you called and I just wanted to ask you a few things..." My mother is incredibly chipper for so early in the morning. She doesn't seem to understand collegiate sleep patterns.

"So when are you coming home? Do you have to work this weekend?" I subdue an audible sigh and try to wake up a little.

She misses me. I know this. I'm the youngest child and even though I've been at school for two years, empty-nest syndrome still has not worn off. I only live about an hour away, so it is technically plausible for me to go home every weekend. However, I have a job on campus and work most weekends. And when I'm not working, going home isn't always my first priority.

This generally upsets my mother, as she seems to want me home at every possible opportunity. It's not that she thinks that I'm getting into trouble and need to be supervised; she just misses having me around. She's always been involved in whatever I've been involved in: Going to parent meetings at school, driving me from activity to activity and always standing on the sidelines or in the audience cheering me on.

Now that I'm living on my own it's hard for her to let go. Like me, the rest of my generation is largely under the watch of "helicopter parents," or parents who continuously hover over their child, even from great distances. These baby-boomer parents are used to being hyper-involved in their kid's life - from play-dates to soccer practice to PTA meetings. When their children go off to college, it's difficult to cut the cord.

"This is a group of parents who have been more involved in their children's development since in utero... than any generation in American history," said Helen Johnson, author of "Don't Tell Me What To Do, Just Send Money," a guide for college parents.

There are also other factors that contribute to the increase in hovering moms and dads. It's much easier for parents to stay in touch with their kids today with the use of cell phones. Parents can now call whenever it's convenient to them, like 8:30 a.m. And parents feel more entitled to be a part of their child's education, as its cost continues to climb over $25,000 for private and over $10,000 for public institutions on average. Parents feel entitled to a degree of customer service and make their presence felt.

For those helicopter parents not satisfied with just early morning calls to their children, universi
ties are taking action to protect new students from the bothersome presence of their hovering parents. The University of Vermont trains students as "parental bouncers" to divert moms and dads who try to attend programs, such as registering for classes, with their children. Colgate stopped supplying parents with a list of administrators' phone numbers. Instead, parents get a statement about Colgate's philosophy of self-reliance.

Luckily, my mother hovers a little farther away than some. I love my mother. I honestly do. She is one of my best friends. She wants to know all about my life at school, and enjoys telling me about what's going on at my home with my family. I enjoy hearing about it. Usually. But 8:30 in the morning is not my first choice.

I am still far too asleep to disappoint my mother by telling her that I think I do, in fact, have to work. All that I am able to do is mumble something about checking my schedule. At least that's what I meant to mumble about. Whether it was coherent to any other human being or not is unknown to me. It was early; I cannot be held responsible.

After knowing me all of my life, it only takes my mother until now to realize that my conversation is less sparkling than usual.

"Did I wake you up?" I roll my half-open eyes and grunt in the affirmative.

"Oh! I thought you had early classes today! Well, the other day your grandmother was telling me ..." I sigh and honestly can't help but to start falling asleep again.

"Sweetie, are you there? Oh, you sound tired. Why don't I let you go back to sleep ... Will you give me a call later?" I can hear how much it would mean to her if I did, and I smile with my eyes still closed. I mumble and roll over to resume my slumber.

I'm a busy, independent person, and sometimes the hovering can be a pain. I don't have time to call and I make major decisions on my own, and I know that my mom can feel left out at times. It's a process and we're working on it, but we're doing it because we care.

"Have a good day and I'll talk to you later. I love you."

"I love you too, Mom. Bye."
Wash up, dress up, rally up your friends. And then join Gary Simpson every Friday and Saturday night for the ride of your life. He may not be as popular as the bartender at Jack's or the deejay at Matrix, but he is vital to the safety of Duquesne University students on the two wildest nights of the week. Your chariot awaits, so take a seat and enjoy the sights and sounds of the Steel City's nightlife.

With his cell phone turned on, seatbelt buckled and bus fueled, Simpson chauffeurs riders about the town from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. Lauren Shepard acknowledges Simpson's job as a royal advantage to her and her fellow classmates. "It's like a limousine service, sort of," Shepard said. "He is always opening and closing the door for us."

Sponsored by the Duquesne University Office of Student Government Association and the Division of Student Life, this free transportation service allows all students to access Pittsburgh's hotspots.

Eyes bulge and ears perk with the thoughts of what really happens on this midnight carriage. Simpson calms the fears of newcomers who have heard lurid legends about drinking bouts and blackouts.

Employed by Pittsburgh Transportation Company, Simpson takes his job seriously. Cliché, perhaps, but he truly lives and breathes bus driving. Working regular shifts every Monday through Friday and running the "Happy Bus" Friday and Saturday nights, Simpson's life is defined by his routes. He wishes only that booze, smoke and filth were not among the aromas wafting through his vehicle during his Friday and Saturday night stints.

"As the night goes on, what used to be the smell of perfume or cologne morphs into a mixture of body odor, spilled beer and cigarette smoke," Simpson said. "Based on the scent, I can tell what time of the night it is without even checking the clock."

If someone vomits, the Pittsburgh Transportation Company allows Simpson to swap his soiled bus for a clean one. He returns to the garage, picks up a new bus, and continues with his nightly rounds. That's a worst-case scenario, though. It's easier to provide plastic bags and paper towels for people on the verge of puking.

There are other procedural aspects of the "Happy Bus." In emergency situations, Simpson is armed with a first aid kit and a cell phone. Fortunately, he has not had to use them for disaster relief in his nine-month SGA Loop career.

Other than crisis situations, Simpson uses the mandated cell phone as a communication pathway with his riders. He gives out the number readily so that he can better serve the students. The "Happy Bus" riders dial the number to find out where Simpson is and when he might arrive at their stop. Students find the system effective.

"Being able to communicate..."
with the driver is key,” said freshman Andrew Omstead. “That way you know how long you’ll have to wait,” he said. “He [Simpson] will do his best to estimate the time frame.”

The bus travels to eleven destinations. It takes Simpson about an hour to complete one loop and, overall, he travels over 150 miles on a typical night. At stops where there is an abundance of students, he tries to make room for everyone.

“I cram as many students on the bus so that people aren’t left behind,” Simpson said. “I try to be efficient.”

In order to maintain the existence of the “Happy Bus,” Simpson must document the time, location and number of students entering or exiting the bus. As long as the SGA Loop remains popular among the student body, Duquesne University will continue to charter the bus.

Micah Pyde finds the “Happy Bus” to be critical to the urban college community, particularly first-year students. He believes the service is the least Duquesne can offer.

“Since freshmen live in the dorms and aren’t allowed to have cars on campus,” Pyde said, “it’s almost required that Duquesne continues to contract the ‘Happy Bus.’”

Simpson confirms that by the night’s end, the bus is jam-packed. To him, the numbers indicate that students like the free ride.

“Some of the last rounds have girls sitting on one another’s laps and guys lining the aisles with no room to breathe,” Simpson said. “That’s fine with me as long as everyone shows consideration for each other.”

He also insists they show consideration to him — and they usually do.

“Duquesne students are always mild-mannered,” he said. “They are never rude and are always sure to thank me, regardless of their condition.”

Education major Nicole Nanchoff agrees.

“Somehow, he bears the obnoxious riders,” Nanchoff said. “We never leave without extending our gratitude.”

Simpson divulged a few statistics he has gathered over the past nine months. Most riders are women. The most requested stop is Oakland. Most students do not try to hide that they are inebriated; they see Simpson as less of an authority figure than a friend. And almost everyone asks the same wise-acre question of him: “Are you happy?”

Refusing to let this inquiry become bothersome, Simpson replies positively.

Freshman Holt Hair approves of Simpson’s tolerance.

“I like that he is nonjudgmental,” Hair said. “It takes a pretty patient person to deal with all the ‘excitement.’”

To witness this “excitement,” give Simpson the opportunity to escort you and your pals every weekend. If you have any questions regarding the SGA Loop, contact the SGA office at (412) 396-6617 or e-mail the officers at sga@duq.edu. Bon voyage!
It's 7:30 on a Monday night. George Semich scrolls through the TV guide, changing the program from Jeopardy! to ESPN's Monday Night Countdown. He then finds his acoustic guitar and starts jamming.

George isn't relaxing in the comfort of his own living room—he is beginning his bartending shift at Shale's Café.

"A lot of our business here is event-based," George says, perched atop a bar stool with his guitar resting on his lap. "It's either really busy or pretty chill."

Tonight is rather chill. Not surprising, considering it's a Monday night and no significant events are taking place in the city.

While many bars lining the South Side's East Carson Street draw younger, hipper crowds, Shale's Café on Fifth Avenue—like Cheers—is an establishment conducive to older folks. "It's interesting," George says. "On weekends we don't usually get kids. They usually venture to the South Side."

Although George is only 25, his laid-back style meshes well with the more mature adults he serves every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 6 p.m. until 2:30 a.m. Sporting a green Jamison Irish Whiskey t-shirt, khaki shorts and sandals, the 25-year-old bartender matches his bar's leisurely atmosphere perfectly.

At around 8 p.m., four older gentlemen and one clearly intoxicated woman slouch over the bar's countertop and sip casually at the drink of their choice. Once George knows his customers are satisfied for the time being, he leaves the counter in search of his guitar once again.

While he says he has been playing the guitar for about nine years, the short, curly-haired bartender doesn't exactly plan on writing Shale's' theme song.

"I would consider myself more of a musician than a songwriter," George says. "[Songwriting] isn't exactly a strong-suit of mine."

Although the night is far from busy, George has a co-worker to help him out this evening. (His time with his guitar should surely be extended.)

Kriss Wickerham, an exuberant theater major at Duquesne University and a Shale's bartender for three years, is assisting George behind the counter.

For the most part, crowded night clubs and rowdy bars keep spirits high. However, not all bars cater to troubled customers. In the midst of a raucous room, patrons can be lost and by "last call" they're lucky to muster up the strength, both emotionally and physically, to walk out of the bar.

When George finishes his short jam session, he strolls over behind the bar and relieves Kriss for a while. "You're such a sweet lady" slurs a highly inebriated woman from the bar as she staggers Kriss' way. "I'm a grandma."

Kriss just met the woman this afternoon and has been talking with her during most of her shift. She has learned that the woman has just recently become a grandma. Although the woman laughs...
and smiles, her celebration is without family. Kriss knows that alcohol probably isn’t the best celebration for this woman.

"I’m worried about you," Kriss says. "I feel like your mom right now. I will hit you on the head if you go back to your stupid situation," she jokes.

For about 10 minutes, Kriss and the inebriated grandmother chat about whatever pops into the woman’s confused mind. As the woman finally leaves the bar and heads toward her cab, Kriss says goodbye and makes sure her customer is safely en-route to her home.

"Congratulations, grandma," Kriss says. "Be careful."

With Monday Night Football's game time approaching, George is confronted with a Shale’s Cafe regular. George anticipates his order.

“What’s up, Jessie?” George asks. “Jack and coke?”

Jessie, a relatively unstable young man, has trouble with his speech— he struggles to confirm his bartender’s guess. Luckily for him, George knows his assumption is correct.

A quick mix of Jack Daniels and Coca-Cola fills Jessie’s glass, and the slide of an ash tray finishes the order. While Jessie sips on his drink, taking breaks only to pull on his cigarette, George decides to clean up the counter top.

George says he’s lucky to bartend at a place where regulars make up the majority of the crowd and there are few belligerents. Fist fights and verbal arguments are simply a part of the night life at most clubs and bars; George’s bar, however, avoids such problems. He attributes the lack of brawls to Shale’s Café’s noble customers.

“There’s nothing I ever need to worry about,” he says. “I’ve never had a problem. Most of the patrons respect each other.”

Standing in front of Jessie, George finds a joke pertinent to the conversation. “You were asking about unruly patrons. He’s about as bad as it gets,” George says laughingly, motioning toward Jessie.

Centered in Shale’s Cafe’s counter rest multiple beer taps. Unlike other bars like Fatheads on the South Side, Shale’s selection of about six beers is slightly insufficient. Fortunately, George’s customers enjoy what their bar offers. The sign on the back wall behind the bar even makes the patrons feel at home when they order their Yuengling draft: “Yinzling - $2.50.”

Above all, George is simply content with his place of employment. For him, Shale’s is merely an establishment to relax and hang out with his buddies.

“It’s like a bunch of guys sitting around watching a football game,” he says.

An obvious downside George recognizes is the lack of female folks targeting his bar. George, however, isn’t all that upset by the lopsided gender ratio. Surely he wouldn’t mind impressing some women with his guitar skills, but George isn’t one to mention that.

“It’s not like women never grace our presence, but it’s definitely more of a beer bar,” he says.

“I’m worried about you,” Kriss says. “I feel like your mom right now. I will hit you on the head if you go back to your stupid situation,” she jokes.