

9-6-2005

Independent- Sep. 6, 2005

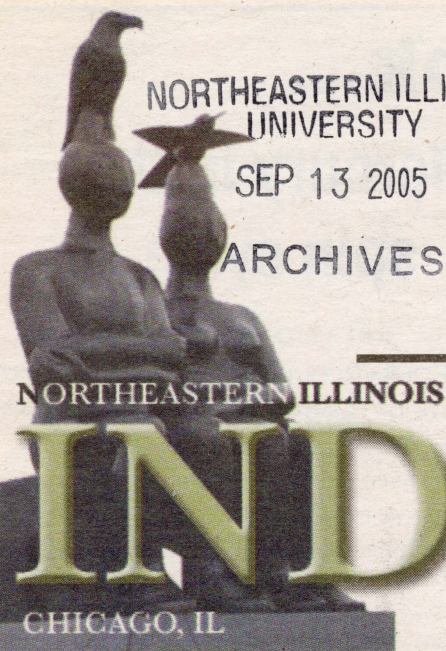
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NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
SEP 13 2005
ARCHIVES

Blagojevich and NEIU offer free and reduced tuition for Katrina victims, see page 6

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Tuesday, September 6, 2005

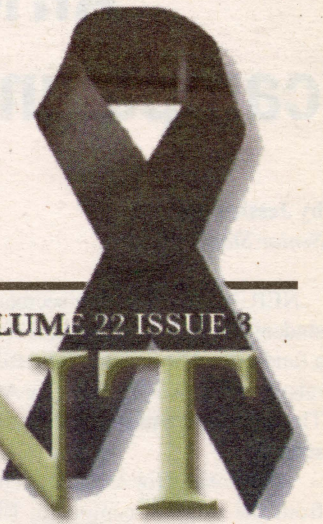
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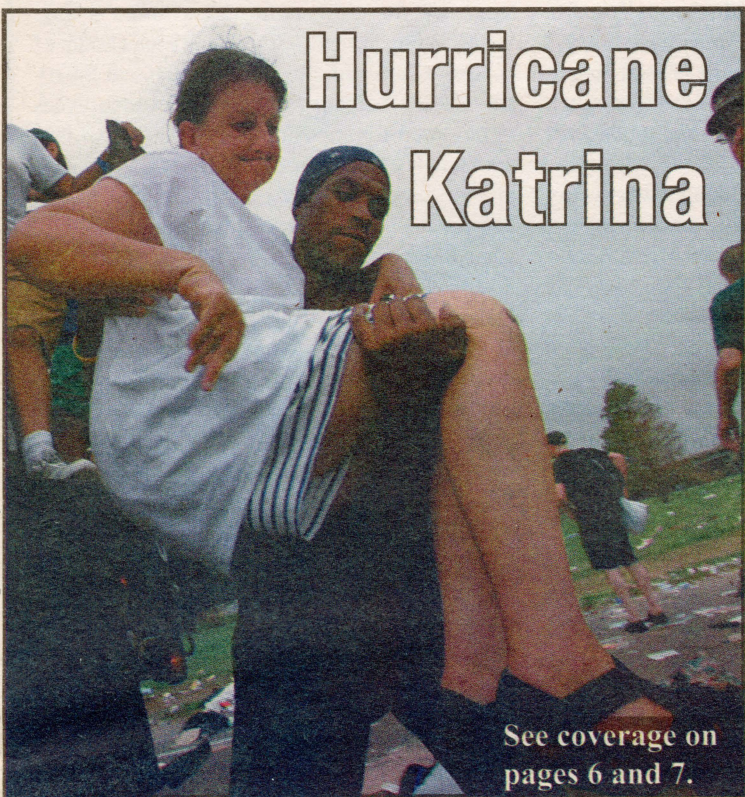
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Los Angeles Times photo by Robert Gauthier



Hurricane Katrina

See coverage on pages 6 and 7.

Throwing the book at textbook prices

by Elana Barron
Associate Editor

As students mob Beck's Books, cries of dismay over textbook prices can be heard throughout the store. "I am paying more for this book than I am for the class," one student exclaimed.

The typical student will pay approximately \$900 this year on textbooks, according to a newly released Government report.

Due to increasing student complaints, which have escalated

into formal petitions and protests, Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn is pushing an initiative on textbooks. Students may also see federal authorities and Northeastern's student government take action.

Student complaints

According to the National Association of College stores, the increase in textbook prices is primarily due to the increasing number of supplemental material that is added to textbooks, such as CD ROMs, instructions for websites, answer books, and study guides. Students are often forced

to buy such packaged textbooks for the individual textbook is not sold individually. Mike Small, manager of Beck's Bookstore, has repeatedly stressed in the past that these additional materials are only ordered at the professor's request.

Other practices seen as unfair by students include the frequent publishing of new editions of books. The former publishing industry executive for Academic

SEE TEXTBOOKS, PAGE 3

Nine-year-old dispute leaves hydrants neglected

by Tom Robb
News Editor

Tom Gustafson is a captain with the Chicago Fire Department (CFD). Nine years ago he was a lieutenant at the Peterson and Pulaski firehouse (Engine 89), which serves Northeastern. Gustafson is also a current student and has concerns about the fire hydrants at Northeastern.

Gustafson stated that he performed the last CFD inspection of Northeastern's fire hydrants in 1997, a claim the recently retired Assistant Vice President for Facilities Management Joe Kish disputes but current CFD officials confirm.

Gustafson said inspections are important for several reasons, such as clearing out the rust and other buildup in the pipes so impurities do not adversely affect CFD's pumper trucks.

Inspections, according to Gustafson, also ensure that hydrants drain properly. If they do not drain properly and water in the pipe feeding a hydrant is above the "freeze line" (six to eight feet under ground), then the water in the pipe will freeze and hydrants will be rendered useless in winter.

Two events happened in the late 1990s that may have affected these inspections.

According to Kish and Gustafson, prior to September of 1997, CFD conducted annual inspections of the fire hydrants and conducted training on weekends. Kish said the training contributed to two major ruptures of water mains on campus through a phenomenon called "water hammer."

Gary Bryan, the Facilities Management

SEE HYDRANTS, PAGE 2

Small fire empties Science Building

by Tom Robb
News Editor

A small fire started in a microwave oven caused the evacuation of the Science Building on Wednesday, Aug. 31. Chicago firefighters who responded to the alarm used extinguishers to put out the fire.

The *Independent* inspected the area and spoke with Lt. Connelly of the Campus Police who responded to the scene. Although there was smoke, the only real damage was to the microwave itself.

Connelly stated that a stack of brown napkins was put in the microwave and set ablaze. The automated smoke alarm simultaneously notified the Chicago Fire Department, Public Safety and Engineering, while sounding an audible

alarm inside the Science Building.

Some students expressed concern that there were no posted evacuation routes. When asked about emergency plans and evacuation routes, Public Safety Chief Jim Lyon stated that the emergency plans were "in draft form."

Student Meredith Canmann was in a second floor science lab when the alarm sounded. "I thought they might have hit a line," she said, referring to the construction crews working nearby.

Student Dasha Blount realized it was serious when she stepped outside, and "the lady yelled 'get away from the building.'"

Student Andrea Burns said she was guided by her professor through the stairway to the exit. "I thought it was just practice," she said.

WZRD back on the air

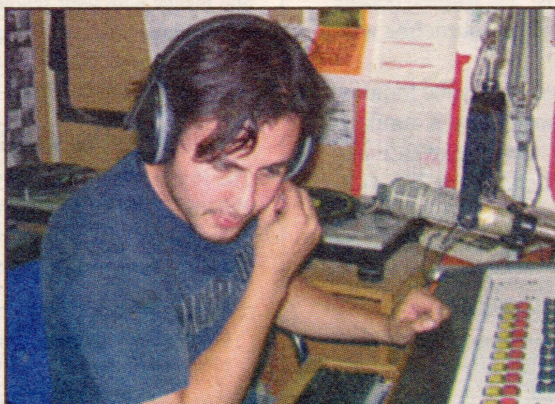


Photo by Tom Robb

WZRD DJ Victor Rivera on the air last week, after a Special Temporary Authority (STA) had been issued by the Federal Communications Commission, ending a three-day shutdown at the station that began on Aug. 25.

Professor takes his own life

Long battle with mental illness ends in drowning

by Jessica Moen
Senior Staff Writer

NEIU mourns the loss of Professor Jack Pinnix. He was only 34 when he died by drowning on July 28.

According to an Aug. 5 *Chicago Sun-Times* article, on July 28, while en route to a conference in New York, Pinnix drove to the Atlantic Ocean, swam out to sea and drowned.

Pinnix left behind his wife, Stephanie Covall-Pinnix; his daughter, Cassandra; his parents, Cleve and Marty Pinnix, who currently live in Olympia, Wash.; and his sister, Julia from Salem, Ore.

Pinnix taught at NEIU and Truman College for several years, and also had been teaching chemistry and physics at Chicago State University. He worked in Education Foundations at NEIU.

Pinnix was also director of academics for Lead America, which advocates leadership education. Sharon McNeely from Educational Leadership, and also a close colleague of Pinnix, said that he influenced students and was held in high regard by them. "He really impacted students' lives and he will be greatly missed," said McNeely.

Michael Mimnaugh, department chair of chemistry and physics at Chicago State University remembers Pinnix as being "always upbeat and jumpy around the office." He also stated that Pinnix always

SEE PROFESSOR, PAGE 2

Africa relief campaign to start in fall

by Jessica Moen
Senior Staff Writer

NEIU's administrative secretary of student affairs, Linda Leyva, is starting a fundraiser, Clean Water for Africa, to raise awareness and money for Africa. The fundraiser will start during the fall semester.

Clean Water for Africa was created from the original campaign, Blood: Water Mission, which was founded by the multi-platinum Grammy Award-winning band, Jars of Clay.

The campaign started when the lead singer of the group, Dan Haseltine, visited Africa and was upset by the fact that Africans were suffering both physically and socially. He decided to start a program that would raise money for clean blood that did not contain the AIDS virus and cleaner water that was not disease ridden.

Leyva decided that it would be a good idea to start the program here to help NEIU students participate in raising money for Africa.

Leyva is hoping to tie this project in with the World AIDS Day Charity

Drive, AIDS Quilt Event and HIV Prevention Project, and is currently trying to get help from some off campus communities.

Student Government President Evelyn Nazario-Rose released a statement of support; Leyva is looking for additional support from campus organizations and individuals.

Anna Zimowski of the Music Department and the *Independent* will be holding musical performances supporting the project, in the Village Square throughout the program. Leyva will be inviting special guest speakers, but specific speakers have not yet been confirmed.

Leyva will be tabling in Village Square and the PE Building. She will show a four-minute video from the original Blood: Water Mission produced by the Jars of Clay. A collection jar will be available for anyone who wants to donate. There is also a display case of up-coming events and what the program is doing in the south side of campus.

Leyva is hoping to raise as much money as possible by December.

Hydrants

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

director of planning and construction, stated that water hammer occurred when water was shut off quickly, forcing the water back, causing a strain on pipes.

Those ruptures led Kish to hold a meeting with then Lt. Gustafson, then NEIU Public Safety Chief Bill Curtin and CFD10th Battalion Chief Bill Kugelman. Kish demanded that the CFD stop its training on campus. Kish stated that he only asked CFD to stop training and to close the hydrants slowly. Kish believed that the CFD would continue their annual inspections.

Shortly after that meeting Gustafson stated that he received a memo from his superiors at CFD demanding they stop training and inspections on campus. Shortly before the meeting between Kish and CFD, another event occurred that affected hydrant inspections. According to Bryan, ten years ago the university changed its water meters. Those changes also changed CFD's view of Northeastern's water system from public to private.

Prior to that time there were approximately 30 water meters throughout the many buildings on campus. Facilities Management chose to simplify things by eliminating the thirty meters and installing just three water meters at three inlets where the city water mains feed the campus. This meant that the water that feeds fire hydrants on campus is considered, in the eyes of the fire department, a private system rather than directly from the city, or public.

The *Independent* spoke with current CFD Lt. Tom Voguthaler at Engine 89, who stated, "We don't inspect private systems," and therefore, the CFD has not inspected Northeastern.

Kish said he has seen CFD on campus since '97 opening NEIU's hydrants. Bryan could not find any record of Facilities Management staff doing any maintenance on hydrants. Campus Police Chief Jim Lyon was not aware of when the fire department had been on campus, as he only started his tenure at Northeastern the past summer. Other Public Safety officers refused to comment.

Bryan was provided information on CFD's hydrant inspection guidelines and stated that he will institute an inspection schedule.

Professor

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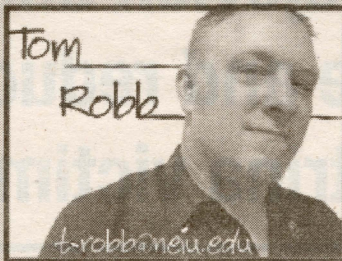
had the most positive number of written comments on his students' evaluation forms. His students all thought him to be a very brilliant man. Julia Pinnix was quoted in the *Chicago Sun Times*, saying "He wanted people to look at him the way they did -- as a talented individual, not someone with a mental illness."

McNeely said that Pinnix loved to cook, and also loved to educate himself. "He was a very varied reader," she said. McNeely has set up a fund at Chicago State University in his name, and if anyone would like to make any donations in his name to NEIU, they can contact McNeely at 773-442-5518.

Memorial services were held on Aug. 7 in the Merrick Rose Garden, in Evanston where Pinnix lived with his family.

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A Closer Look...



Mercury in the spin cycle

PUBLIC RELATIONS IS ALWAYS A CONSIDERATION IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT.

THIS IS VERY TRUE AT NORTHEASTERN, TO THE DETRIMENT OF GOOD JUDGMENT. I'M TALKING ABOUT THE MERCURY SPILL LAST JUNE.

Several years ago I worked for a large hotel (over 1000 rooms) as a security supervisor. One day we found a chemical odor coming from vents near meeting rooms.

While looking for the source and telling guests "Everything's fine, nothing to see here," I naively asked my boss, "Shouldn't we call the fire department?" He responded, "Are you --- crazy!? We'd get a bunch of guys running around here in moon suits (hazardous material protective suits). All the guests will check out and the media will show up; it would be a disaster."

I have to wonder if the same thought was in play when Pete Fortsas from the science department was brought in to clean the spill rather than the Chicago Fire Department. Also, why did the university community's only information about the spill come in the pages of this newspaper? Why were employees not tested for mercury exposure?

EPA spokeswoman Karen Thompson told the *Independent* that the EPA's National Reporting Center and local authorities, such as the fire department, had to be immediately notified if a spill of mercury was over one pound. This spill was six pounds and none of that was done. An Illinois Department of Labor cleared the university of possible violations of the letter of the law, but did they do the right thing?

When computers were stolen over the summer that contained sensitive payroll information, Chief Jim Lyon of the Campus Police sent out an advisory on the off chance that employees' personal information might be affected by identity theft. Yet workers who regularly clean in the area

of the mercury spill, or work in and around the area, including students, were not notified in the off chance they were exposed.

Vice President of Administration and Finance Mark Wilcockson's justification for not notifying employees was, "No one works down there"—at least not for eight continuous hours a day. Wilcockson clarified. Eight continuous hours of exposure, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, requires employees to be tested for exposure. Never mind that it is not known when the spill occurred and how long that mercury was vaporizing. It could have been days, weeks, or months. A positive test could mean lawsuits.

Ed Hunt, president of NEIU's chapter of University Professionals of Illinois, is skeptical of the university's actions regarding this matter. In an e-mail to professors, he stated "The mercury spill and its handling suggest that faculty and staff should be alert to workplace safety issues. We cannot assume that all the offices, labs, and storage areas are safe."

In fact, Chief Lyon told the *Independent* that a book of emergency procedures was currently "in draft form."

So, was the university working to make this as safe an environment for students as humanly possible, or was the response improvised? Or were there other considerations at play here, such as a cost benefit analysis and their own image?

They will, of course, tell us student health and safety is their first priority while keeping us in the spin cycle.

PEACE FAIR AND TOWN HALL MEETING

What does peace look like?

Saturday, Sept. 10, 2005, noon to 5 pm

Scoville Park, corner of Oak Park Ave and Lake Street, Oak Park, IL

Free Admission – Open to everyone in the Chicagoland area!

Peace Trade Show

An open Fair for ideas and learning. The first ever Chicagoland Peace Trade Show offers attendees a chance to see dozens of Chicago area peace groups showcasing their answers to the question, "What does peace look like?"

Entertainment

Musicians, performance artists, dancers, poets and other entertainers will bring their special talents to the Fair in support of building peace.

Town Hall Public Voice

Come and discuss your questions about peace and justice with your fellow Chicagoans and with elected officials. Congressional Representatives, State Legislators and local officials are invited to join us.

Children's Activities

The Fair is a family friendly, event where children are invited to learn the lessons of peace through activities including storytelling, sign-making, songs and games.



Illustration by Robert Neubecker

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Press, Erwin V. Cohen, told the *New York Times* that "Publishers release new editions for successful textbooks every few years—not to improve the content—but to discourage the sales of used books by making them obsolete."

Small tries to find used textbooks for students, however, it is dependent on professors. "The sooner I get book orders," explained Small, "the more used books I can get." When professors hand in book orders late, explained Small, the used books will have already been picked up by other universities.

Further, an investigation by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* tells of professors who admit to accepting money in exchange for the adoption of certain textbooks from publishers such as North West Publishing. The publishing companies claim the payment was for the professors to review the book.

Government reaction

The topic of textbook prices was a popular news item two years ago. It was in 2003 when Oregon Congressman David Wu first introduced a bill, requesting the General Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct an investigation of the high price of college textbooks.

The report, recently released, found that textbook prices rose 186 percent in almost 20 years, while regular consumer goods rose 72 percent. The report also found that newer editions of textbooks are being published with increasing frequency, making it harder to find used textbooks.

In response to the GAO report's findings and student complaints, Quinn is pushing an initiative that would help

students afford textbooks. His initiative would institute the following changes: a sales tax exemption for college textbooks, selling textbooks without supplemental material, have publishers provide a free copy of textbooks to be placed in the school's library, and other recommendations.

Northeastern and IBHE joining the fight

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has already been playing a role in combating textbook prices. Last year, when SGA President Nazario-Rose was an IBHE student representative, she collected 3000 signatures on a petition against textbook prices in one week in conjunction with other universities from around the country petitioning at Washington D.C.

The IBHE is continuing the fight through its report, "Textbook Affordability Recommendations," released this August. The report provides numerous recommendations to help students afford textbooks, such as using online sources, giving book lists in advance to allow students to find cheaper alternatives, and instituting book rental programs.

Nazario-Rose is enthusiastic about joining the battle against textbook prices. With the federal government's report, Lt. Gov. Quinn's initiative, and IBHE's recommendations, Nazario-Rose said, "Right now I am trying to keep the momentum going." She hopes to help implement IBHE's recommendations at Northeastern.

"I want to start passing around a petition," said Nazario-Rose. She plans on "getting together" with the IBHE student advisory committee to pass out petitions in Northeastern and universities throughout Illinois, which will be sent to the state legislature.

To further combat textbook prices, Nazario-Rose discussed NEIU's previously terminated book exchange program. "I plan to re-implement the book exchange program," said Nazario-Rose. "I plan to have it operating and in place by the spring semester."

Campus' weeping willow cut down

by Elana Barron
Associate Editor

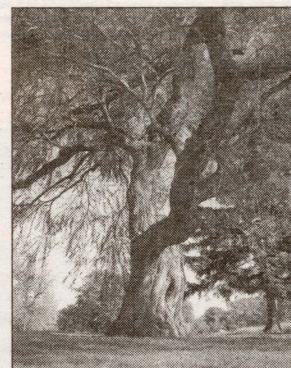


photo by Independent archives

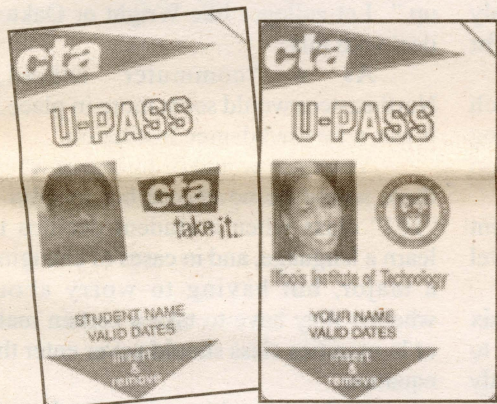
A large weeping willow between the PE Building and WTTW Ant infested tree. was recently cut down.

"It was about six weeks ago that a large limb from that tree, about two feet in diameter, fell and narrowly missed a couple of students sitting nearby," said Ralph Zia, director of buildings and grounds.

The university contacted Care of Trees, an independent contractor who maintains the grounds on campus. "They came out and investigated," said Zia, "and it was determined that it was caused by ants."

According to Care of Trees, said Zia, the ants had completely eaten through the tree, causing irreversible damage. Due to liability issues and the risk of another limb falling off, Care of Trees recommended that the tree be cut down.

U-Pass under debate again



images courtesy of Chicagotransit.com

by Nick Gaudio
Assistant News Editor

The ongoing debate over the Chicago Transit Authority's (CTA) U-Pass program and whether it will be implemented here at Northeastern is not new to anyone. This program has failed to take effect here at Northeastern due to the CTA's apparent refusal to rework their fee formula.

"I believe we and Chicago State University (CSU) are the only universities who do not have the program installed," said Student Government President Evelyn Nazario-Rose.

The Education Committee of the Latino Coalition for Prevention has initiated this new chapter in the U-Pass war for the purpose of bringing affordable transportation to low income students. The Education Committee will petition the Illinois State Legislature to include the creation of a unique formula for the U-Pass program for implementation at both campuses.

According to an informational packet regarding the petition, "neither campus (NEIU nor CSU) is centrally located, or readily accessible by public transportation." Additionally, "at NEIU every student is assessed a parking fee, and those who use public transportation must apply to opt out of the assessment."

Jeff Wilson, manager of this program at the CTA, stated that their regular formula allows for "unlimited 24-hour-a-day access to public transportation throughout the semester." This formula the CTA is unwilling to adjust for NEIU and CSU, despite their location and demographic differences; a new formula is in development. This new formula would allow students looking for the U-Pass to opt into that program while drivers can continue with their current course of action.

The *Independent* was unable to determine when the Education Committee's petition would begin to take effect.



Student union.

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Editorial

A prayer for New Orleans

There are events in the American fabric that make us all pause and take stock of our lives and our society. If the events unfolding in Louisiana are any indication, there are enough instances of bravery and courage, as well as of heartache, that will make the aftermath of Katrina a watershed moment in the history of this country.

With upwards of a million people left homeless across three states, and with a city of half a million almost completely destroyed, it is time to test those great tenets of American goodwill and generosity. It is time to measure just how much we care about our helpless neighbors in the south, or any of our neighbors, for that matter.

Do we really believe that the federal government alone will be enough to save these people? If there has ever been a time where the common citizenry of this country are needed, this is that time. Conscience demands that we all respond.

Search and rescue teams must skip the bodies floating in the water to save those stuck on rooftops. Armed gangs are running the flooded streets at night, while thousands go without food, water and medical attention.

New Orleans police were taken off search and rescue missions to focus on those, who out of desperation or avarice, are stealing anything they can get their hands on.

The pictures are haunting: anguished loved ones who dragged their dead husbands and children through the floodwaters, unable

or unwilling to leave them in their murky, ravaged homes.

Television journalists stand visibly shaken by the sight and smell of decaying bodies left on the streets and inside homes, the bodies of those who would not, or could not, evacuate before Katrina hit.

The good people of New Orleans and the entire region are depending on us, and there isn't a single thing that we could do for these people that would instantly improve their lot. Despite this, we owe it to our fellow Americans to do what we can and more for the people on our Gulf Coast.

Call in your donations, e-mail them, and mail checks. Drive down water, badly needed supplies and food—whatever it is that you can do in your power to ease the pain of the displaced.

A few places to call or visit if you want to help: American Red Cross at www.redcross.org/donate or 1-800-HELP-NOW; Salvation Army at www.salvationarmy.usa.org or 1-800-SAL-ARMY; Baton Rouge Area Foundation at www.braf.org or (225) 387-6126; Operation USA at www.opusa.org or 1-800-678-7255; Islamic Relief at www.irw.org/katrina or 1-888-479-4968; and Catholic Charities at www.catholiccharitiesusa.org or 1-800-919-9338.

There is nothing written that says that our collective response to this disaster has to be a disaster itself.

Do the right thing.

Time for NEIU to graduate from Gen Eds

Prerequisites are hurting real academic programs

by J. Louis Bracich
Special Contributor

"They need to do something about the availability of classes," my friend said as we ate lunch one day. "You just can't get the class you need!" He was a senior at Northeastern, majoring in an esoteric degree like philosophy or justice studies.

He had come to ask me if it was worth continuing at NEIU. I reminded him that it was, given his current financial situation. Pondering further, though, he did have a good point about class availability.

I thought back to those times I had to find a needed class. You know what I'm saying, that one class you know you need because without it you can't graduate.

One of the biggest reasons we have such a problem finding classroom space is because all those classes dedicated to General Education requirements simply suck up too much space. It is time for NEIU to drop its Gen Ed program.

Northeastern spends too much money and resources on getting incoming freshmen and sophomores up to date on the most basic prerequisites.

One merely has to look at the current schedule to see the disparity of 100-level classes to 300-level classes.

For example, there are currently six 170 Painting classes for those looking to meet that Gen Ed requirement, versus only one 230 Intro to Painting for the art major or minor. It's time to outsource these Gen Ed classes to the community colleges.

How much money must be diverted for classes that aren't even part of someone's major or minor? Instead of pumping money into a bunch of 100-level classes, why not invest that money in more 300-level classes?

Every semester there are students who find they cannot complete their degree because a specific class is not offered.

Beyond offering more upper level classes, attention can be shifted into more research programs. Instead of having to worry about students having the basic prerequisite for an economics degree, new accredited research programs can be had.

NEIU could, instead of focusing on freshmen, provide more for upper classmen, like developing a doctoral program.

By going after the degree and the post-graduate degree, instead of the general education route, NEIU would gain more in the long run.

I've spoken to countless professors who have told me privately that they are tired of having to teach high school work in their class so some students could "catch up." Let colleges like Wright or Oakton deal with this.

As a "commuter school," Northeastern would seem more in place if it was a focused degree institution.

Yes, there would be instances where there would be no choice but to offer a "101" class when a student decides to learn a language, and in cases of changing a major, but having to worry about whether they have to take a certain math or humanities class should never enter the equation.

Right now, this university has an opportunity to start fresh for the coming fiscal year. By dropping the General Education program, they will open the door to new opportunities in learning. Imagine new doctoral studies here, imagine research programs (and grants!), heck, just imagine smaller classroom sizes!

It's time for NEIU to graduate.

Another point of view

by Joe Hertel

You treat me like NEIU's radio station.



You mean WZRD?



Yeah, you keep shutting me down?



That's because you're a turnoff.



Old Man on Campus

A day in the war

He sat on a mound of sandbags watching the sun set on the horizon, a heavily laden fireball in the heavens, sinking below the war ravaged land he currently called home.

He watched as the blue sky changed colors with the final rays of the sun filtering through the soot soaked atmosphere. Yellows, reds, oranges, and the purple haze of smoke from still-smoldering ruins of burnt buildings, vehicles and bodies. He had survived another day in the war zone.

The blackness soon replaced the color wheel of sunset, as he sat pondering the day's events. He was safe ... for now, inside the base. Soon, he would drift into a state of semi-conscious sleep. The bunk to which he would retire

was certainly not as comfortable as his bed back in the "States," and the pillow defied any description other than lumpy.

It had been a while since he had just sat and thought about why he was over here. He had never even heard of the town he was in, much less could pronounce it. A year ago he had been enjoying nights out with his girlfriend and buddies. He didn't want to be in this miserable, forsaken place but felt it was his duty. He was a soldier now.

It had been a rough day. He was making a courier run when they drew sniper fire. Luckily, the driver knew what to do, and with calm and determination, he zigzagged and turned out of sight. It had been a rough day, but he made it through.

He sat on the sandbags. They were actually comfortable, and he recalled the day before, hearing when another courier was not so lucky. He wondered if he would survive this tour of duty. How many days left? Too

many to worry about right now.

He wondered if these people really cared. They appeared to be friendly at times and yet could turn into a human bomb at any moment, exploding into a pink mist of death and destruction. He could sense their eyes watching him and felt that these people resented his being there. Sure, they were happy when we came to help them, but they somehow regarded us as intruders. How long would we stay?

It was frustrating because he could not tell the enemy from the innocent. The enemy didn't wear uniforms. Everyone dressed about the same, even looked the same with dark hair and eyes. And then there were the children.

The enemy even indoctrinated kids to resent Americans. He liked kids, and wondered if he could pull the trigger on one of them if threatened, or would he hesitate. It was hard to tell who was the enemy until

they started shooting at you. He knew he would do what he had to do to survive, but all he wanted was to finish this tour and get out of that place.

He was tired now. Time to sleep, to rest and be alert in the morning. Stay alert, stay alive. That's what they were told.

He knew people back in the States were protesting the war. He didn't like to think too deeply about death, about killing, but he couldn't help hoping that one day his being there will mean something.

That it would be worth it. If he was to die, let it be for something. To die for nothing is ... well, time to sleep. Tomorrow is another day, hopefully.

I am not writing about a soldier in Iraq. It's Viet Nam, almost 40 years ago. War is the same for every soldier, regardless of when or where ... or why.

Complaint department closed

Look to the south, then stop whining

by Joe Hertel
Opinions Editor

Walking around the campus of NEIU this week, I was amazed at the amount of students with cell phones to their ear, or them wacky looking hands-free earphone sets that make you look extremely important or suspicious.

I could not help but overhear (one of the benefits, if you want to call it that, of standing outside having a cigarette) the banal conversations of "I'm now walking toward the library," or the equally dumb, "I'll see you in class in a few minutes."

But worse than that, considering the news this week, there was still an incessant amount of complaining being done. Complaints about instructors, homework, too tight shoes, prices of books and supplies, boyfriends, girlfriends and the all time best, parking.

Granted, there always will be complaining. The less interesting and rewarding a person's life, the more superfluous the complaints.

But the complaints should be put on hold for a while; a moratorium on complaining about how frustrating life is when the kid at McDonald's forgets to super size our order, when there is real tragedy unfolding around us.

Our minor inconveniences should shame us as we see persons, like the ones who survived Hurricane Katrina, lament over the loss of everything: home, valuables, personal items, everything. We could be in their place had we lived there instead of here.

Imagine where you live, work and attend school suddenly under eight feet of water. Imagine yourself on a rooftop waiting to be rescued. Imagine losing everything you own, everything, in an instant. Now you have reason to complain. But you don't.

You don't complain because it would do no good. You are not alone. Thousands have lost everything. Thousands are just like you. No one is sitting on a rooftop in New Orleans complaining into a cell phone about this lousy hurricane ruining their Labor Day barbeque. You're now concerned about where your next drink of water is coming from and when you will be able to eat again. That hurricane changed everyone's plans for the next two years.

I am not condemning anyone for complaining about trivial things. We all do it. It's human nature. There are times, however, where it almost seems callous and uncaring to complain about such unimportant matters when there are true tragedies taking place.

They are just too far away to affect us personally, unless we know someone who is there. The Asian tsunami that recently destroyed and swept away entire cities and coastlines was too far away.

The earthquake in Japan, tidal wave in the Caribbean, hurricane in the gulf and the war in Iraq ... just too far away to personally affect us.

We have endured occasional power outages and minor floods, but nothing major. We should stop complaining for just a while and be thankful not only for what we do have living here, but also for that which we haven't had: catastrophe.

"A" grades lack meaning

Inflating grades makes "Honors" look common

by Elana Barron
Associate Editor

Last spring, 235 students graduated with a GPA of 3.5 or higher and received awards at the Academic Honors Reception. This was over 42 percent of the May 2005 graduating class.

While professors might be inclined to applaud themselves for teaching methods that yielded such positive results, these numbers instead hint to a serious issue that professors in all universities need to address: an inflation in grades which convey little meaning.

Grades given throughout the year provide valuable feedback to students, giving them an opportunity to learn and grow. However, the majority of the time grades are only given at the end of the semester, at a point where students cannot learn anything from the grade.

Instead of providing valuable feedback, grades, which are assumed to be an objective way to measure a student's work, has simply become a means to "reward" and "punish" students.

Because of this objective attitude towards grades, with a definition solely provided by the professor, grades have lost the ability to teach students.

Frequently, students receiving low grades simply claim, "Dr. Smith didn't like it." To students, grades have nothing to do with the quality of work they submitted.

These grades now come full circle to reward professors. Websites rating professors, such as RateMyProfessor.com, show that professors who are easy graders tend to receive better evaluations from students.

These professors' classes are often the most popular. The *Journal of Educational Psychology* reported that non-tenured professors give higher grades than tenured professors, providing an extra

incentive to professors to be well liked. Numerous research studies have shown that professors believe handing out high grades will ensure good student evaluations.

Because grades have been looked at solely as a reward by both professors and students, students have become fixated on receiving top grades and professors are succumbing to this pressure, giving out mostly A grades, as reported by the *Journal of Education* and *College Teaching*. This grade inflation reflects the larger problem of the loss of meaning in grades.

There are professors and students who believe the increase in A grades reflects the increasingly harder working student.

However, the College Board's statistics point to a contrary opinion. Although grades have gone up, SAT scores have fallen.

Handing grades out like candy with little meaning is more detrimental to students than a B, or dare I say it, C grade. Rewarding inadequate work with an A grade only reinforces that level of work.

In a recent letter to the editor, Professor Harry White of the English Department lamented over the lack of standards at Northeastern. He provided examples of poorly written sentences from the English competency exam. Sentences that should not have been acceptable were given a passing grade.

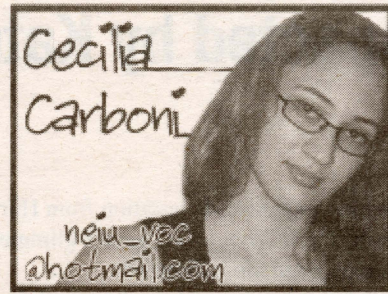
Is this why we became known as Northeasy?

Simply giving students a passing grade, while it may be easier, does nothing to help the student. Coddling is not going to help. Grades need to be utilized as a means to provide constant feedback to students.

It may be painful students, but we must return to the age-old maxim, "we learn from our mistakes." Without professors pointing them out to students, they will never learn.

VOICE OF THE CAMPUS

Professors who don't make the grade



"Sometimes it's a loud and clearly articulated, "Nooo, don't take them!" which leads into a "Man, if you already signed up you better drop it." Those tend to stick with you much more than the "Yeah, they're a good

teacher" or "A little boring but it's easy to understand."

It's the beginning of the semester, and you're already going around investigating your teacher's reputation among other students. You want to know how they teach, if they're boring, how they test and grade, and sometimes whether to just avoid them like the plague. Every student has a teacher or two that they think is just awesome. The lectures are informative but witty, the assignments are challenging and the feedback on your work is constructive.

Then there are the professors that people are fairly neutral about because they're easy. Marginally easy going, easy tests, and little to no concern about attendance.

And even further, you have professors whose RateMyProfessors.com profile is one long slew of unhappy faces. These are professors who cause students to squirm in pain when you mention them and apologize when you have a mandatory class with them. These are the names that invoke those guttural roars of warning.

These names are very different than the ones who have some sort of split in consensus. You'll always like a class that others will dread, but we're not talking about those. What happens when entire groups of students either avoid or drop out of a certain teacher's class?

"She's the devil" starts off one negative profile, which is followed by many more. Complaints of unfair grading, stubbornness, muddy lectures, and worst of all, unclear expectations. These are all rampant in varying degrees within those applicable.

Each semester we fill out teacher evaluations. What happens when half of the class drops out and never gets there? More seriously, how do administrators actually take this? Is our student opinion noticed when an enormous mound of negative comments start accumulating against someone.

When it's only one or two students that may be a grudge. Half a class, though? A whole class? Whole classes consistently throughout the semesters?

I myself have had teachers I disliked but I could see it as being for fairly small reasons. None of them could be rendered incompetent. Well, there was this one.

One minute one thing is expected of you, and then the next, it's completely different. You know it's bad when you aren't learning and the rest of the class is just saying, "Just put the least amount of effort possible to hand it in, that's what we do."

Do these professors ever realize what their students think when they leave the room? Is it maliciousness or just obliviousness? Do they realize that the work that gets turned in starts to be a direct reaction to their personalities? Do the administrators realize that their professors are being consistently perceived as obstacles to a student's future as opposed to a facilitator in it?

In the end, the true question is whether we students have any true power to decide whom we want teaching us.

Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the Editor must be signed with an address and telephone number for verification. Submissions must be approximately 300 words in length or less. Letters are subject to editing for space and style at editor's discretion. The editor reserves the right to omit any work submitted.

Published on first-come first-serve basis.
Send letters to: Independent, E-049, 5500
N. St. Louis, Chicago, IL 60625 or
neiu_independent@yahoo.com

In Katrina's wake, Gulf

NEIU and Blagojevich aid students impacted by Katrina

by Nick Gaudio
Assistant News Editor

As the aftermath of the ever-mounting devastation from Hurricane Katrina is realized, Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich gave a glimmer of hope to students, helping to ease the despair and move forward.

As the rescue crews continue to clean up the widespread destruction of Hurricane Katrina, the question of what can be done to give relief to the victims becomes prevalent.

In a press release, Blagojevich stated, "It will take months and maybe years for their communities in the Gulf States to rebuild. And until they do, if they need us, we will provide a quality education for them in Illinois."

In response, the university will provide assistance to students who are now incapable of continuing with their college educations in the southern United States. Northeastern will fast-track admission and registration and provide special counseling to find courses that meet the students' needs.

Additionally, the university will provide support services to assist those students with any other needs, such as locating housing.

Students whose residence is in Illinois will have the fall tuition waived, along with mandatory fees, as long as they can provide proof of a Fall 2005 enrollment at a higher education institution within the disaster area.

For those students that are non-residents, the university will waive the out-of-state tuition charge so that they pay residential tuition fees, again with proof of Fall 2005 enrollment in universities in the disaster area. They will also provide flexible payment plans to those affected students. The university will continue to admit the affected students with the above provisions until Sept. 10, 2005.

Local relief efforts

For anyone interested in helping Hurricane Katrina Victims through Northeastern Illinois, the Student Government Association (SGA) is hosting a relief effort meeting Thursday, Sep. 8th at 9 am. in Student Union room 217.

The meeting is open to all students, student organizations, and faculty and staff who wish to provide resources and support. Even if you have given to the overall relief effort at the national level, or are involved with other projects to assist victims, your attendance is welcome.

Anyone with questions about how they can help should attend the meeting, or call Student Activities at 773-442-4286, or email SGA President Evelyn Rose at neiusagpres@yahoo.com.



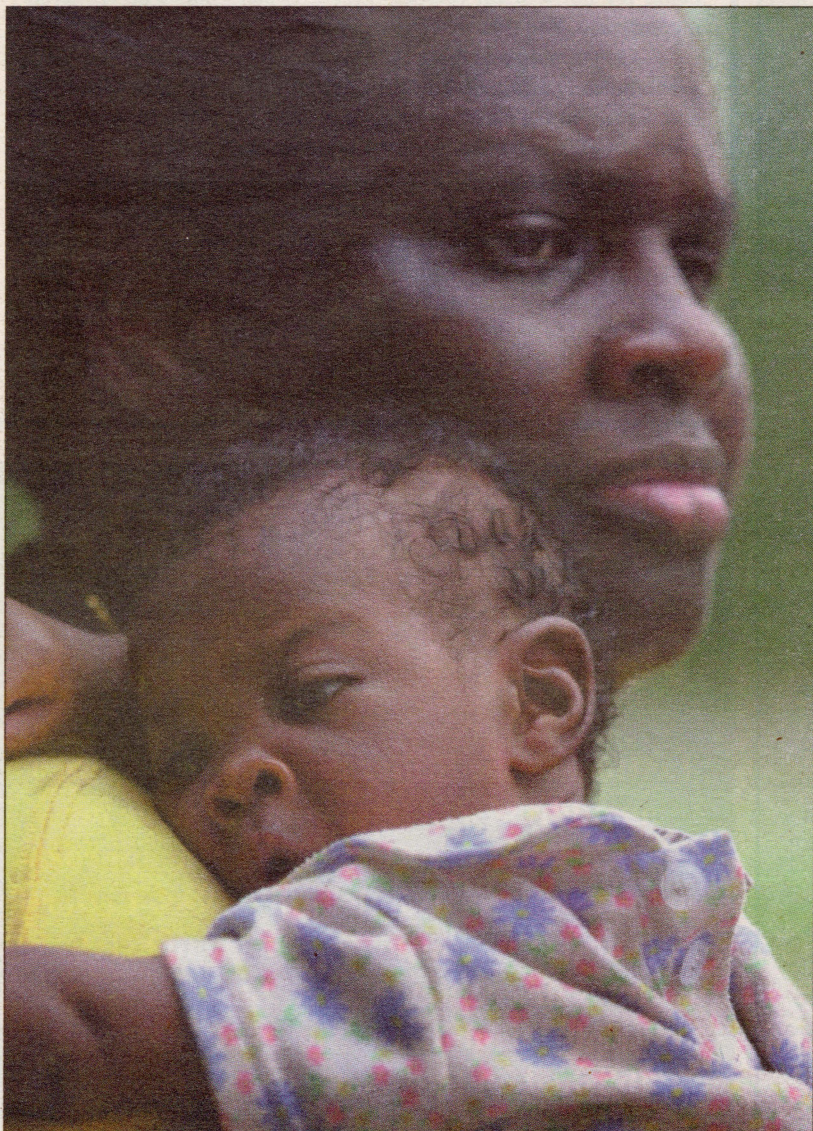
Los Angeles Times photo by Carolyn Cole

Dillan Chancey, 7, of Biloxi, Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina destroyed his family's home. His mother is also in the photo.

How you can help

There are more than a few agencies providing direct relief to those who have evacuated Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Florida:

- American Red Cross -- (800) HELP-NOW
- Feed the Children -- (800) 525-7575
- Salvation Army -- (800) SAL-ARMY
- Samaritan's Purse -- (800) 665-2843
- America's Second Harvest -- (800) 771-2303
- Catholic Charities USA -- (800) 919-9338
- B'nai B'rith International -- (888) 388-4224
- MercyCorps -- (888) 256-1900
- Operation Blessing -- (800) 730-2537
- Habitat for Humanity -- (800) HABITAT
- The United Way -- (800) 272-4630
- Lutheran Disaster Response -- (800) 638-3522
- Humane Society of America -- (888) 259-5431
- AmeriCares -- (800) 486-4357
- World Relief -- (800) 535-5433
- Oxfam America -- (800) 770XFAM
- International Aid -- (800) 251-2502
- Northwest Medical Teams -- (800) 959-4325
- MAP International -- (866) 627-4483
- Food for the Hungry -- (877) 780-4261 ext 2506
- Mercy (M-USA) -- (800) 55-MERCY
- Save the Children -- (800) 728-3843
- Relief International -- (800) 573-3332
- Mennonite Disaster Service -- (800) 348-7468
- Water Missions International -- (843) 769-7395
- United Methodist Committee on Relief -- (800) 554-8583
- The Baton Rouge Area Foundation -- (877) 387-6126
- Adventist Development Relief Agency -- (800) 424-2372
- International Medical Corps -- (800) 481-4462
- American Friends Service Committee -- (888) 588-2378
- International Medical Corps -- (800) 481-4462
- International Orthodox Christian Charities -- (877) 803 4622
- International Relief and Development, Inc. -- (703) 248-0161
- International Relief Teams -- (619) 284-7979
- International Rescue Committee -- (877) 733-8433
- Operation USA -- (800) 678-7255



Washington Post photo by Carol Guzy

Bernadette Washington of Orleans Parish with three-month old daughter Nadirah. Washington and her family of six slept under a bridge for three days. Her story is reflective of the fact that most of those who could not escape New Orleans were poor and black.

Coast fights for its life

Victims face uphill battle

New Orleans evacuees now face plight similar to Bosnia and others

by Tom Robb
News Editor

Thomas P. Robb Sr. has been working with refugees in Chicago since 1994. What he sees in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina reminds him of those he has helped resettle from Bosnia and Africa. Katrina has produced refugees as surely as any war.

Robb sees those displaced by the hurricane as refugees: "The official international refugee is someone who must leave or they will for sure die, or be imprisoned, or suffer severe prejudice and maltreatment ... what makes these people similar to the international refugee, [is that] they don't have options and they can't go home; there's no home to go to."

"Some of those refugees with resources or family who can take them in will only be in the system for a short time; others have a very long and stressful journey before them. The poor and the poorer have fewer and fewer options and the very poor don't even have cars, let alone some place to drive them to ... these folks are left behind," said Robb.

Refugees generally go through several steps before resettlement. The initial stage is to get them into safety. The first settlement area was the Superdome and the Convention Center. The second staging area, the Houston Astrodome, is more stable but still temporary.

The third is a stable staging area or a refugee camp. Once at the camp, Robb said, the systematic "processing of people into places that are willing to receive them begins, and meeting their immediate resettlement needs."

Robb concluded by discussing receiving stations, such as "churches, state office, different places around the country where people will say you can live here and we'll set you up with a place to live. We'll help you get a job and get you on the way."

With new lives, homes and jobs people will start to rebuild, but the trauma will stay for the rest of their lives.

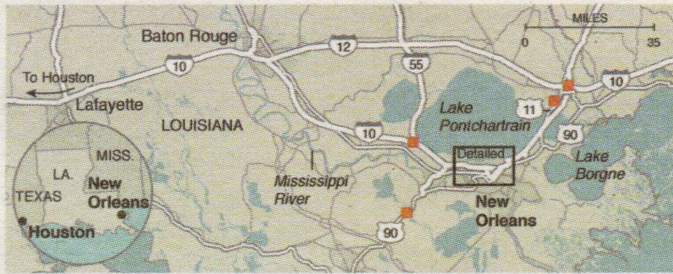
(Thomas P. Robb is the reporter's father.)



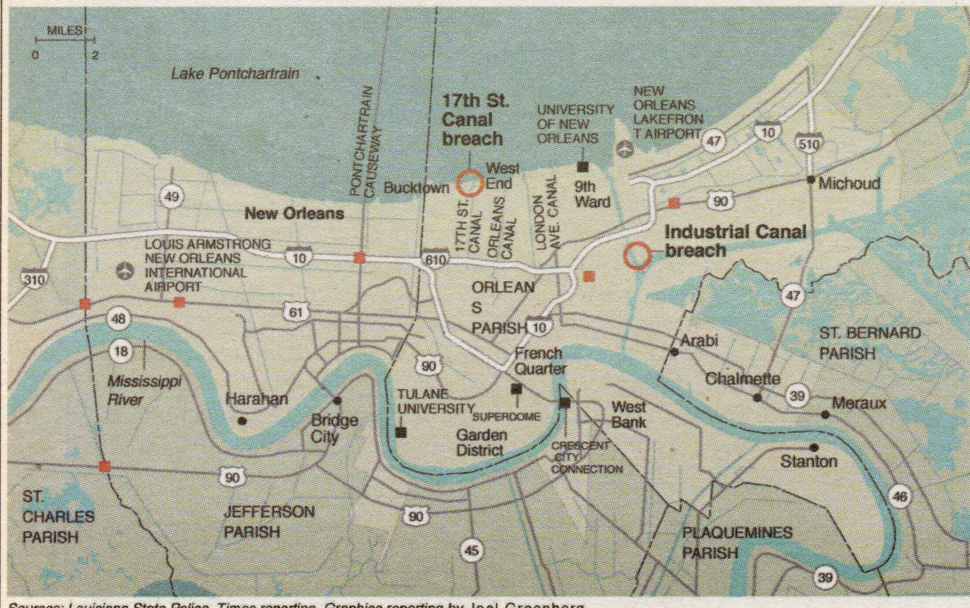
her and father survived.

Cut off from the outside

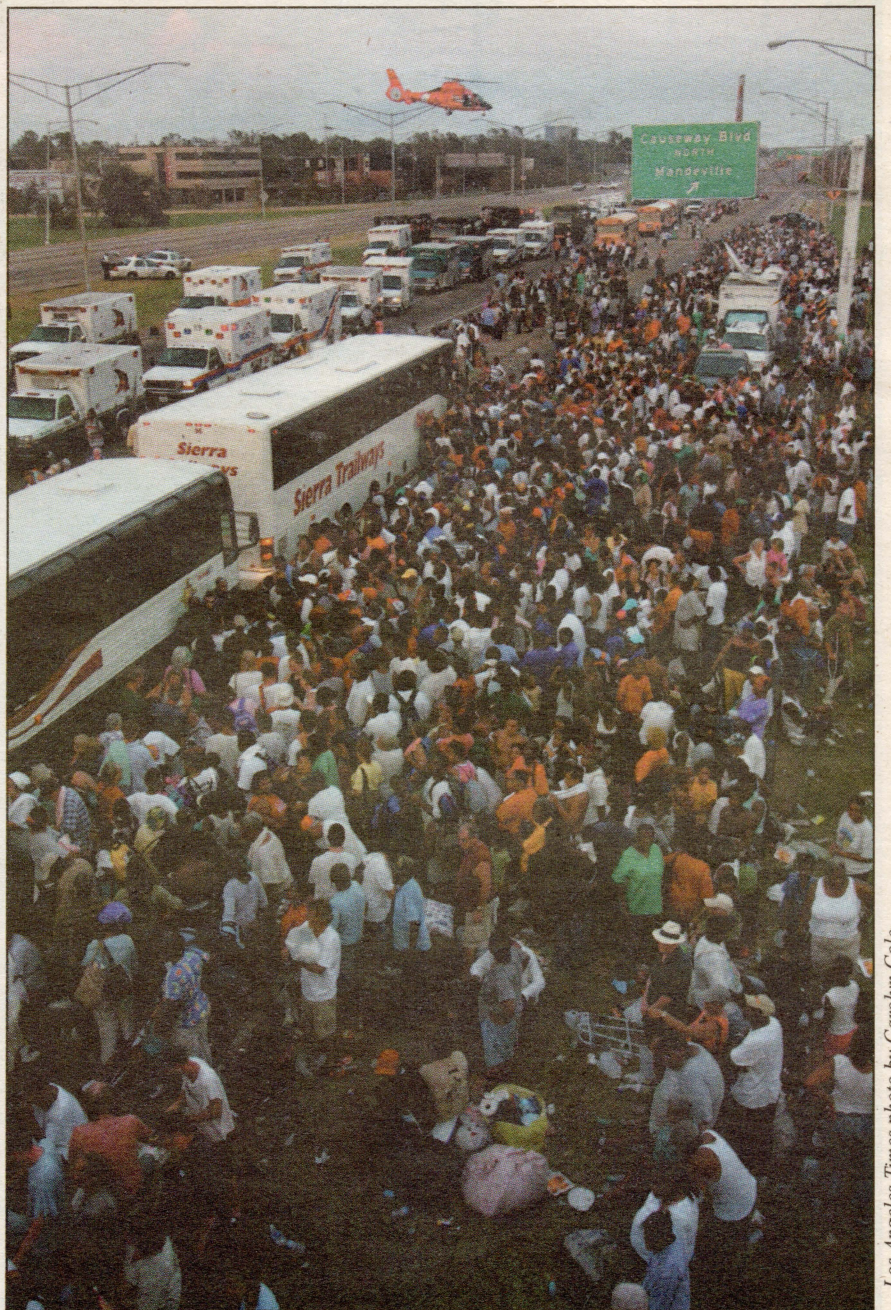
People trying to get in or out of New Orleans — including thousands of stranded survivors who are being bused 350 miles from the storm-damaged Superdome to Houston's Astrodome — face numerous detours because of flooded roads and highways.



Road closures



Sources: Louisiana State Police, Times reporting. Graphics reporting by Joel Greenberg



Hundreds gather to attempt to board buses leaving New Orleans.

Los Angeles Times graphic by Lorena Iniguez and Rebecca Perry

Los Angeles Times photo by Carolyn Cole

A sexy good time

Red-light dance revue encourages cold showers

by Andrea Zelinski
Business Manager

Like a parade of sexual divas, four "party girls" and cast strode on the small stage, donning shiny mini-dresses and black knee-high boots. They walked and danced like they knew they were hot. If that didn't scream sex, I don't know what does—though I soon found out.

The entire cast of "Party Girl" radiated sexuality. The stunningly toned men moved with such oomph, every time they popped their hips someone in the audience fainted.

The rainbow-hued group of dancers, including African-American, Latino, Asian, white, gay and straight dancers, turned you on like flipping a switch. You couldn't resist their moves of hip-hop, jazz, house, Latin, African and breakdancing. Regardless of your sex or sexuality, these performers gave you a show you could appreciate, if it wasn't too hot for you.

These are the dancers of Fivestar Boogie Productions, who've most recently performed "Party Girl" at the Hothouse, 31 E. Balbo Street in Chicago. They blew away audiences at their two performances this summer on Aug. 4 and 11 with their dance moves

creating short, poignant stories, influenced by the life of writer/producer/dancer Czarina Mirani. She said scenes like "Gang Initiation" and "Cop Dance" came straight from her experiences this past year.

Her scenes did more than infer sex; they celebrated women's sexuality. They applauded women for their strength and clever nature.

One scene ended with a guy annoying a girl with

a plunger. She rips it out of his hand and plunges his groin as she beats on him. Once he's on the ground, she looks down at him and seductively licks the plunger like a lollipop.

Later, that same girl is caught with a bag of pot. Two overtly dorky gay cops threaten to take her away. She gets down on all fours, offering to go down on the male cop in exchange for her freedom. He turns the girl towards the female cop, who's more than willing to accept.

The male cop, who likes to use his authority to abuse his inmates, has a little fun with them. The tall, skinny cop, wearing dark shades and a "POLICE" t-shirt, drops a bar of soap and makes a male inmate pick it up. As he does, the cop checks out the inmate, eventually lining his eyes square with the inmates butt, and stares at it.

Showcasing the rhythmic talents of both men and women, the title "Party Girl" was false advertising, but the audience was not cheated at all. The 21 and over crowd paid \$12 to not only see dancers, but performers who shocked and awed them with their upbeat moves and innuendos.

If "Party Girl" is representative of a Fivestar Boogie production, the titillation alone was worth the admission price.

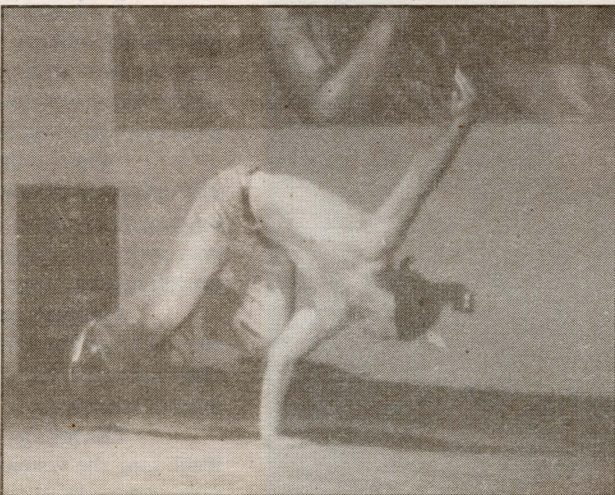
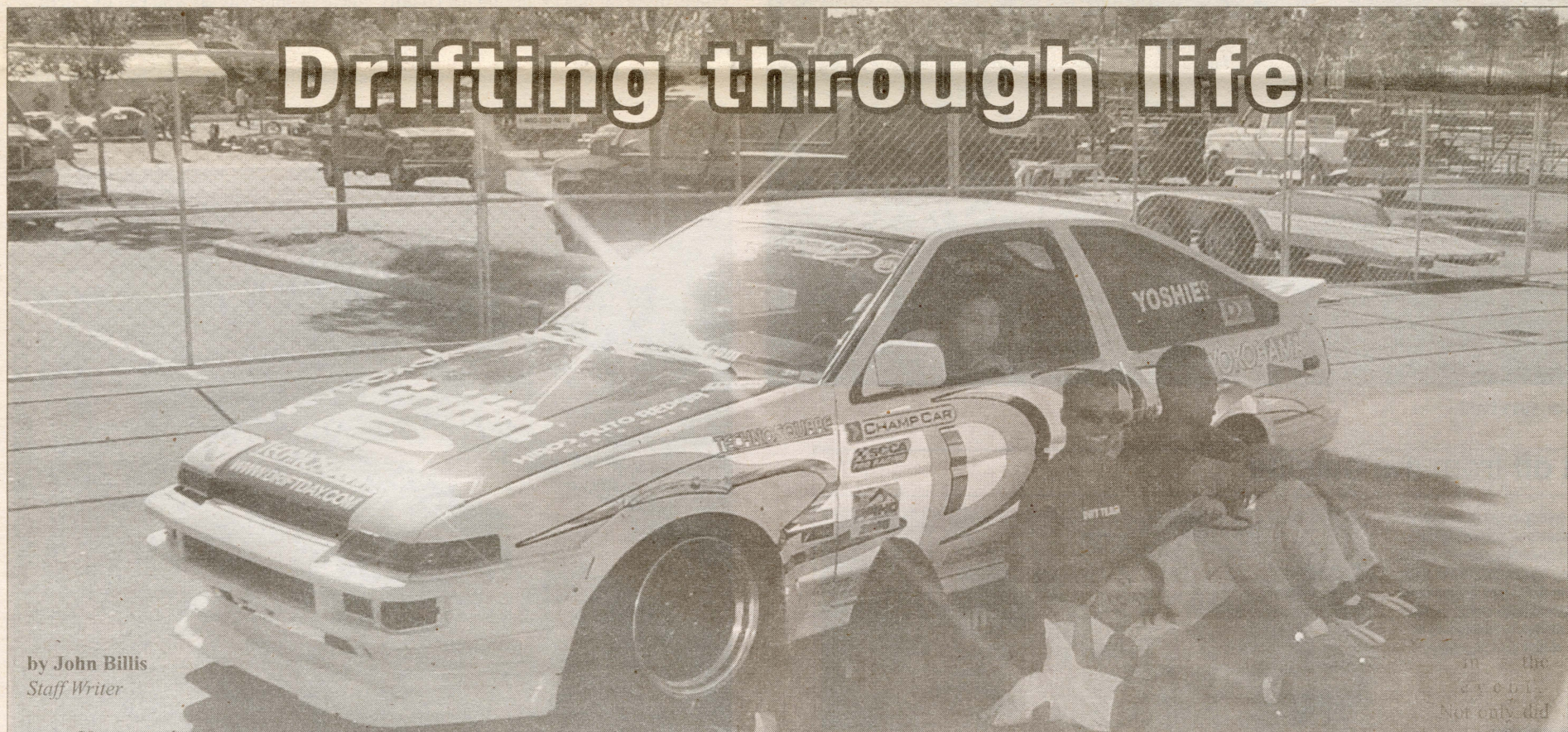


photo by Andrea Zelinski

Grace and hip hop added to the sensuality of "Party Girl."

Drifting through life



by John Billis
Staff Writer

You may have experienced uncontrolled drifting in the snowy, unplowed Northeastern parking lot, pulling donuts. If you were at Soldier Field's parking lot on Saturday, Aug. 6, you may have experienced the visual and aural awe that is drifting. Formula Drift Championship rolled (drifted?) into Chicago for the first time in a fully sanctioned event by the S.C.C.A. (Sport Compact Car Association). Over 30 drivers competed for points and bragging rights as the top drift driver.

Forget everything you've ever seen on *The Fast and Furious*, and get ready to learn about drifting, which has become a new phenomenon in the United States, although it originally started in Japan about 15 years ago. Drifting occurs when a driver pushes the car's tires past its adhesive limits, causing the vehicle to slip laterally, which results in over steering. In other words, high speeds mixed with turns causes the car to slide sideways, yet remain under the driver's control. The best cars for drifting are rear-wheel drive cars with lots of horsepower, and the worst in are front-wheel drive vehicles.

Formula drag racer Stephan Papadakis drives a Honda S2000, a car given to him by Honda of America. Papadakis managed to obtain \$10,000 from sponsors for free upgrades for his car's suspension and motor.

Driver and model Tyson Beckford tried to drift into the competition on Friday, but failed to qualify for Saturday's event. He crashed not just one, but two of his 2005 Saleen Mustangs, both given to him by Ford.

Boys aren't the only ones who get to have fun at drift events—girls get into the action as well. Verena Mei began her career as a sport compact model, and now she's become one of the first female drifters, driving a Nissan 240SX.

You don't have to be rich, famous, or sponsored in order to get into drifting. Small import shops and privately funded cars get a chance, too. Garage 112 from Oregon drove their car, a Toyota AE86, on a flatbed truck just to get a chance to compete

in the...
Not only did they qualify on Friday, but they also picked up a sponsor for their efforts, Yokohama Tire Company.

The pavement on the parking lot was less than desirable for the drivers. A few crashes occurred during the actual event, as cars slammed into barricades, throwing parts in every direction. One such accident knocked a barricade several feet from its original position, causing a photographer to jump to save his life. Shredded tire remnants were blown into the faces of those who dared to get close to the action. For those who were in the stands, black smoke posed only a slight health concern. Open access to the pits made it easy to walk off with a souvenir from the competition. Never before have I seen so many people walking around with smashed and autographed bumpers, tires and whatever else fans could get their hands on.

If you missed the Formula D event, you'll be able to catch it on Comcast's cable channel G4TechTV as part of a new show dedicated to drifting competitions and the culture surrounding it. Check them out at www.formuladrift.com.

photo by John Billis

Pollard's Picks

Shoujyo: A different kind of Lolita



As a man who studies film, I have obviously seen many movies in my time. My personal collection boasts close to 400 movies, and I've easily seen twice that number. So, I always look forward when something different comes along.

The Facets Cinematheque, located on Fullerton in Chicago, is usually a great place to find such movies. In addition to their video store, which features movies from all over the world, Facets also screens independent and foreign films in their small theater. On Aug. 26 Facets offered a screening of the 2001 Japanese film, *Shoujyo*, which roughly translates to "An Adolescent."

Shoujyo marks the directorial debut of Eiji Okuda, a veteran character actor in Japan. In addition to directing, Okuda also stars in the film as 45-year-old Tomokawa, an apathetic police officer who spends his time having affairs with married women. Tomokawa's life takes a turn for the better when a young woman named Yoko (played by Mayu Ozawa) offers to sleep with him.

After their first encounter, Tomokawa seeks out Yoko, and when he does, she reveals to him that she's actually 15 years old. The two discover numerous connections between them throughout the course of the film:

Yoko's mentally challenged older brother is a young man Tomokawa looks out for, one of Tomokawa's conquests was Yoko's mother, and one of the

focal points of Yoko's interest, her grandfather, tattooed the large one-winged bird on Tomokawa's back.

In some ways, the film is reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's classic, *Lolita*. However, in many ways it's also very different. Both Yoko and Tomokawa are shown as very miserable people. When in school and helping her grandfather in his undertaking business, Yoko appears just as apathetic as Tomokawa does in his job. Both are lost souls who find solace in each other.

This is where the film takes a rather controversial turn. Unlike Sofia Coppola's *Lost In Translation*, which featured an older man and a younger woman finding solace with each other, the relationship between Tomokawa and Yoko is definitely not on with a father/daughter dynamic. Their relationship is definitely a sexual one, but it isn't simply about sex. Through the brilliant performances by Okuda and Ozawa, the focus is on an actual relationship.

Whenever a relationship like this appears in entertainment, it is usually portrayed as unhealthy, self-destructive, and just plain wrong. It never ends up working out in the end because such a relationship flies in the face of social conventions.

Okuda, however, is unafraid to take that leap and of the potential controversy such a film like *Shoujyo* can spark. In many ways, the film serves as a comment on Japanese society and the *Lolita* complex, which can be seen in the older men.

Okuda was present for the screening, and he remained after the film for a Q&A session. With the help of his daughter translating, Okuda answered many questions regarding the film. "It's loosely-based on a 40-page short story, but much of the film is original material," said Okuda.

Beautifully shot, written, and acted, *Shoujyo* can be difficult for some to watch; I imagine parents especially may find it disturbing. However, if you can put that aside, it is a must-see movie.



Lollapalooza in Grant Park

Congregating fans rocked by Alt-rock Woodstock



by John Billis
Staff Writer

This year, Lollapalooza took place in Chicago's Grant Park on July 23 and 24, with over 30 bands on six stages. Despite the steep price for tickets and searing temperatures, Lollapalooza managed a packed house for both days. The beautiful Chicago skyline and great lineup made for one of the best musical festivals Chicago has seen.

Usually Lollapalooza travels from town to town, but this year it settled down in Chicago. The promoters did this because it was easier to have one big show in the middle of the country, rather than an exhausting tour from town to town. This way, one show would allow for the optimal performance from the bands in attendance. Other cities have their own musical festivals, but Chicago had been lacking one until Lollapalooza came to town.

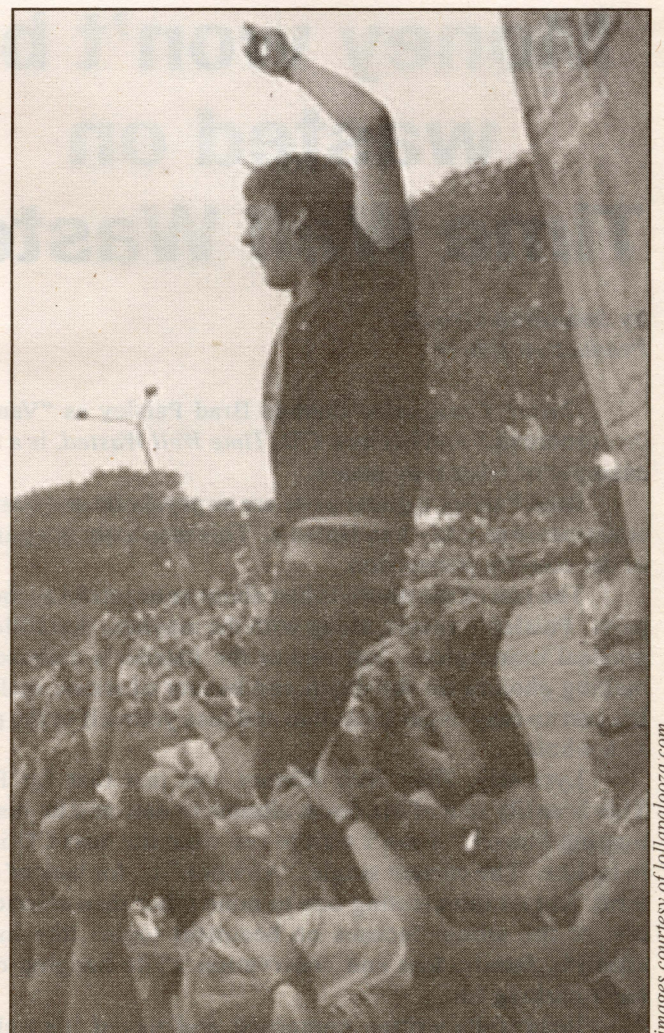
On Saturday, fans rocked out to Billy Idol, Liz Phair, Cake, Dashboard Confessional and Weezer. The city provided a beautiful backdrop on Saturday night for the droves of fans that came to see Weezer put on a stellar performance.

Sunday brought 104-plus degree weather, with fans seeking shelter under any shady spot available. It was a shame there weren't any misting tents of old days, where you'd go to cool off. Instead, lucky fans were shot with water from a garden hose. Bands like Louis XIV, the Killers, G. Love & Special Sauce, Death Cab For Cutie, Dinosaur Jr. and Widespread Panic made the heat that much more bearable.

Perry Farrell, the founder of the event, truly knows how to put on a spectacular show. Farrell works with Lollapalooza Film/ Television Coordinator Shannon Blackburn, from Capital Sports and Entertainment. Together they chose the artists and location for the show. When asked if Lollapalooza will stay in Chicago permanently, Mrs. Blackburn said, "It's looking good, but there is no formal agreement on whether we'll be back next year. Lollapalooza loves Chicago and we'd love to come back."

The two-day event left this reporter in a dizzy, and I was fortunate enough to get backstage for both days. The highlight of the two days was meeting Farrell, a wonderful person, a living legend and spokesperson for Generation X.

Let's hope Lollapalooza remains a permanent institution in Chicago for years to come. Check up on future festival status at www.lollapalooza.com.



More than 60 acts rocked fans to their core with a weekend of rock 'n roll mayhem.

Get right and buy this CD

by Jonathan Gronli
Production Editor

The Van Zant brothers have joined together yet again, making a musical force to be reckoned with another Van Zant CD, *Get Right With The Man*.

Johnny Van Zant was part of Lynyrd Skynyrd and Donnie Van Zant is from .38 Special. The two family fellows with southern rock and country roots have joined together to make one of the finest southern rock albums I've heard outside of those which were from the brothers' respective groups.

Musically, it's just a beautiful country CD, with a heavy dose of rock. Guitar, bass, drums, steel guitar, everything used just melds into one band and one sound with personalities that are larger than life. Even with that sound, it still has the underlying down-to-earth, homegrown sound you'd hope for from these guys. Donnie and Johnny's voices either

join into one unearthly voice that sends chills down the listener's spine, or they switch between their two voices so seamlessly that it doesn't even miss a beat and is equally as beautiful as the two singing together.

"Help Somebody," the single currently playing on the radio, is just a beautiful song of life lessons from granddaddy and granny. However, that is one of the more radio-friendly songs on the CD. "I Can't Help Myself," a ballad that doubles as a prayer for redemption from the hell of addiction and loss, is the finest song.

Lyricaly, despite the more complex topics, it is just simple. Simplicity is key in this style. Topics range from just living life and accepting the hand of life that you're dealt all the way, to addictions and lessons from family.

With all the heart and the talent within it, *Get Right With The Man*, is obviously a must-have.



Johnny and Donnie Van Zant have lived through tragedy and still come through with the finest southern rock ever.

Money won't be wasted on Time Well Wasted

by Jonathan Gronli
Production Editor

Guitar 1 magazine dubbed Brad Paisley as "Van Halen on cornbread," and his new CD, *Time Well Wasted*, is a shining example of what they meant.

Brad Paisley's guitar parts are as psychotic and beautifully constructed as Eddy Van Halen's. This man truly is a guitar god of the country persuasion.

The rest of the music is just about as beautiful as the guitar parts. Paisley's vocals, along with the mayhem that follows the musical masterpiece, just makes the listener's defenses from making choices on the depth and beauty of music melt away. It's just so easy to get sucked in and lose yourself in the product as a whole.

Lyricaly, *Time Well Wasted* was just that for Paisley. This is easily one of his finest albums to date and he just keeps topping himself. I can't wait to see what the next CD is going to be like. The current single, "Alcohol," is, for lack of a better term, just an intoxicating ode to none other than alcohol. The rest of the album focuses on beautiful topics like love, the afterlife, family, loss and observation while hanging out in a bar's parking lot.

Beautifully written, composed, and played, it's well worth the money. Also, the two big guest stars, Dolly Parton and Alan Jackson, should be overkill in luring listeners into buying the CD.

If you're itching for a laugh

by Anna Zimowska
Staff Writer

When thinking of a socially relevant piece of art, dance, or book, funny doesn't usually come to mind. We tend not to look at blunt and vulgar subjects of adultery, sexually transmitted diseases, rape, and police corruption as reasons to chuckle ... well, most of us don't, anyway. Such is the power of dark comedy, so wonderfully displayed in *The Pain and The Itch*, now playing at the Steppenwolf Theatre.

The play opened with a picture perfect upper-middle class urban family preparing for a holiday dinner. They quickly discover that some little creature has been gnawing on the avocados in their kitchen. This fear of something unseen invading the family's perfect home was so great the stitches binding together their fake persona slowly began to loosen, and dirty secrets poured out right in front of their special dinner guest.

The identity of this mysterious dinner guest, a Muslim cab driver who didn't seem to fit into the family circle too well, was not revealed until the end of the play. But when it finally was, the moment was equally satisfying as it was disturbing.

As any good dark comedy, the play allowed for a spectrum of audience reactions, ranging from, "this is really funny," to "this is just sickening," to "will people think that I'm a weirdo if I laugh at this?"

The play was wonderfully written, sprinkled with just enough pain, laughter and irony. The acting in this play was really amazing, especially the performance by Zak Orth (Clay) who played the bitter stay-at-home husband and father fed up with being controlled by his successful wife. The play also included a child actor (Kayla), who I really wish was better protected from some of the language and vulgarity.

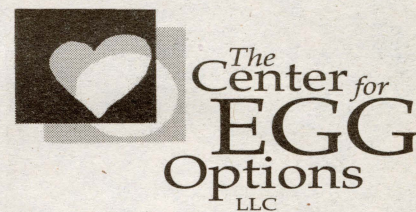
What was most ironic was that the members of the audience who were holding their bellies with laughter at these dysfunctional characters were simultaneously unaware of their own ignorance as they talked about hungry orphans in Africa while nibbling on their \$12 organic loaf of bread.

An audience made up of upper-middle class, yoga-enthusiast Bucktown neighborhood type of people, who can actually afford Steppenwolf ticket prices, were unable to make any connection of these characters to themselves.

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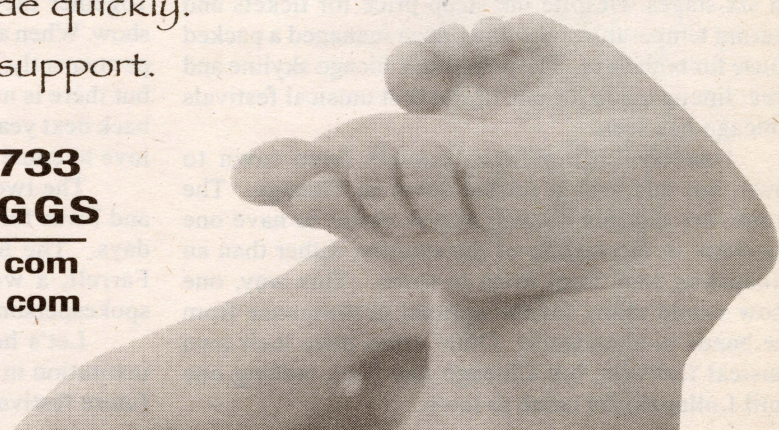
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Musicals:

by Jessica Moen
Senior Staff Writer

Movies have suddenly become a lot more, well, like Broadway. That's right, musicals! And they have come a long way from Judy Garland dancing with a bunch of munchkins and an oversized lion.

Though it is not a new idea, many musicals have been made into movies recently. Everyone remembers the classics such as *West Side Story* and *Grease*, and of course, the *Wizard of Oz*. All these were once plays, but due to the magic of the industry, they were made into movies, often with extra songs and new roles.

After these great hits, there seemed to be a 20-year gap where no real (or decent) musicals were being made into movies. So Broadway decided to take over where Hollywood had stopped, and decided to make movies into musicals. *The Lion King* was one of the many successful attempts at this, and it is still a successful hit to this day. Another very successful, and still running, hit is *The Producers*, which starred Matthew Broderick and Nathan Lane in its initial run. This was a stretch, too, since there were very few songs in the original movie, but it was a great success and actually won 12 Tony awards.

Then Hollywood got their act back together and created *Chicago*, which was an instant hit. Unlike the older musicals, this one was very much like the original play, which was nostalgic for fans of the musical. Having an all-star cast also helped, of course.

Phantom of the Opera is one of the newest musical-to-movie remakes to come out. It wasn't as successful in the theatres as *Chicago* or *Moulin Rouge*, which was actually an original musical with pre-existing songs, but it was still a movie that helps you remember just how wonderful a good musical can be.

Who knows what will happen in the future. Perhaps more classics will be remade and remastered. As of now, a motion picture of the musical *Rent* will be released in November with much of the original Broadway cast repeating their roles. Also, another remake of *The Producers* is in the works, this time an adaptation of the musical play rather than a recreation of the original movie. It will feature Will Ferrell and Uma Thurman in the lead roles. Perhaps one day we actually will see *Titanic the Musical*.

COLLEGE STUDENT SEEN BUYING GOSSIP RAG!



image courtesy of bartcop.com

Finding stories on celebrities and real-life Bat Boy

by Jenni Lada
Features Editor

They're your dirty little secret that just happens to always lie in plain sight.

Oh sure, you'll pretend that you'd never lower yourself to get caught in the snare of the scandal sheets reeking of yellow journalism. However, sometimes you end up spending a little time waiting behind someone paying for a \$5 grocery bill with a check, or there's an alluring photo that drags you in. It has happened to everyone once and a while. Occasionally you can't help yourself, or finish the article in time, and you end up buying the tripe. However, if you want to ensure maximum entertainment, you need to

know exactly what each rag provides.

People and *Us Weekly* are the classiest of the lot. These two magazines tend to feature official photographs and stories that aren't obtained by paparazzi lurking on street corners. Instead, you can find truth, pretty pictures, and some mildly entertaining buzz. These are the ones you can buy without trying to make excuses to the cashier ("I never normally buy these, really!").

Next on the gossip chain are *In Touch* and *Life & Style*. These tread the narrow line between *People* and the likes of the *National Enquirer*. There are a few official celebrity photos, but more often than not they're nabbed by the photographers you

love to hate. Stories are based on hearsay, which can often be more entertaining. These magazines also feature some fashion magazine style sections, like hairstyle ideas, ways to find designer looks for low prices, and the like. Plus these two are the cheapest, at \$1.99 each.

National Enquirer and *Star* are the last ones. They tend to feature more photos and stories that the celebrities do not authorize. *Star* tends to be showier, with lots of extra photos and a new layout that looks like *People*. *National Enquirer*, on the other hand, has various columns (including one written by Anna Nicole Smith) and more stories, which can even be about ordinary people in odd situations. Both tend to include a humorous personal section near the back that mainly contains ads from prisoners of

both genders looking for love.

Of course, if you really want glorious gossip and outrageous stories, then you have to hunt for the greatest prize of them all, the elusive little darling known as *World Weekly News*. This paper proudly displays top stories such as "Kitten Sentenced to Death" and "Bat Boy Returns." Think of it as *The Onion* of scandal rags. Each story in there is completely false and you are guaranteed a flabbergasted or disgusted look from cashiers as they quickly scan it. Most Meijer and Walmart stores carry this little gem if you know where to look.

Hopefully, with this enlightening guide you can decide which gossip rag can keep you busy next time you see the person in front of you in line has a cart full of stuff.

Blondie retires after 75 years

From playboy heir to normal dad, he's covered it all



image courtesy of www.blondie.com

by Jenni Lada
Features Editor

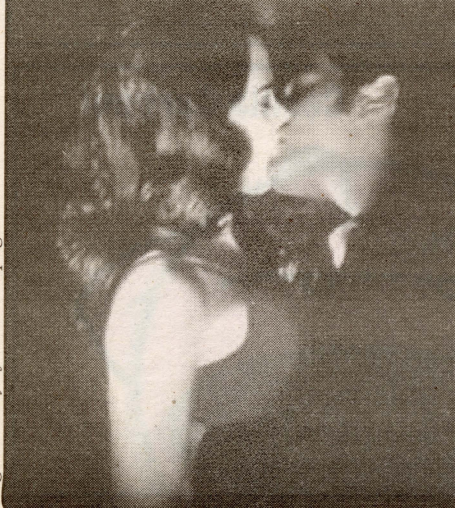
If you've checked out the comics section of your favorite newspaper in search of your favorite strip, you might have stumbled on a bit of a surprise over the past week. The pooch from *Mutts* chased a bewildered Dagwood away while he's delivering an invitation. Hagar the Horrible visited Dagwood's barber in the strip. Most of your favorite characters are all in a buzz, but what for?

The 75th anniversary party of the long running comic strip *Blondie*, featuring Dagwood and Blondie Bumstead and their two children, Alexander and Cookie, is going to 'happen' on Sept. 4 in the funny pages. In the past few weeks, the build up to this has been taking place in various comics in all papers.

According to the official site, www.Blondie.com, the long-running comic was first created by Chic Young. It focused on the character Blondie and her many boyfriends. After a time, Blondie married one of them, Dagwood Bumstead, who was originally a playboy heir. When the Great Depression hit the two were married, and Dagwood was disinherited by his family. The story became one of a normal family striving to get by in order to strike a chord with readers.

It is this enchanting story of this average family that has captivated people around the world, appearing in 2,300 papers worldwide in 35 different languages. The strip, now written by Chic's son Dean, still maintains its popularity with its heartwarming depiction of humorous family life and hopefully will continue to make people laugh throughout the world.

image courtesy of www.starspage.com



Around Campus



Friday, September 9

Presidential Lecture series in Alumni Hall at 7:00 p.m. The featured speaker will be Jane Goodall

Senior Recital
Akiko Sakatsume (violin)
Assisted by
Jane Kenas-Heller.
Tuesday, September 6 at
1:40 p.m. in the Recital Hall

Hurricane Relief Meeting on Thursday, September 8 in SU-217 at 9:00 a.m.

The Office of International Program cordially invites the University Community to attend a reception to welcome the Exchange Students to Northeastern Illinois University on Tuesday, September 6 from 12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. in SU-214.

For more information contact Alice Pennamon at a-pennamon@neiu.edu or call (773) 442-6015.

Important dates to remember:

August 29-September 7:
Last opportunity to change your registration by the Touchtone Telephone Registration System.

Wednesday, September 7

Case for Socialism Book Tour in Village Square at 7:00 p.m.



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PERSONALS

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Oh, goody gumdrops!!



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Every time I have an idea someone has to take it! No matter how crazy an idea, someone out there is sick enough to match it. Put a frog in a blender? Someone's done it! Set a squirrel on fire and its sooo been done. Talking pigs? Pime a dozen. And I was going to have a monkey with a wrench but they already elected him to office!

Cecilia Carboni

