

the perspective

A PUBLICATION OF THE TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

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Hello once again, valued reader! In advance, we at *The Perspective* would like to wish you a happy holiday, whatever you may celebrate, be it Christmas, Kwanzaa, Chanukah, or Festivus this issue is an early gift, packed tight with goodness. It is also a bit schizophrenic: the first two pages are fun and wacky, with pretty pictures, *caliente* food and clever rhymesmithery; the latter half is sobering and serious. For in them, not one but *two* Writing Center alums cast their pearls of wisdom, offering knowledge hard-earned in that alien realm called the "real world." Rather than producing an unpleasant jarring sensation, we hope the sharp contrasts in this issue's tone will create a sublime harmony, like a well-crafted rollercoaster, or Outkast's new double disc. So grab a mug of cocoa and snuggle up to someone you trust, and enjoy the hills, death drops, and corkscrews of your favorite Writing Center publication. I'm off to the Pole for the Feats of Strength.

-Ty Fagan

CAUTION: CONSULTANTS AT PLAY

Staff dinner at La Pachanga a wild success



LEFT: Kim Zamastil and Andrea Northam share a hearty chuckle at the Writing Center Social Dinner at La Pachanga, Dec. 2. Such merriment was typical of the gathering, and the cuisine was enjoyed by all. [Editors note: Especially me.]



ABOVE: The consultants (and friends) in attendance at La Pachanga, Dec. 2. **RIGHT:** Recursion blooms as Michelle Meinloth demonstrates her cell phone's digital camera capabilities, Dec. 2. Though some resisted being photographed by this device, none could escape its compact, sleek yet functional eye.



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Kreative

Korner

This is the first (but hopefully not the last) installment of Kreative Korner, a nook of the *Perspective* for the artistic expression of its readers. This issue boasts some fine magnetic poetry and one stylishly organic pen drawing. Enjoy, and keep the good work coming.

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Kreative Korner -
original poetry
and visual art

Random Stuff I Saw When I Was At the Meeting
Diane Gollaher
November 14, 2003
Pen on Meeting Agenda

drunkness
tiny girl
beauty sleeping
ironing a dress she will
put on
sad lies use her
leave her winded
power & lust
easy but void
yet you could live

boiling languid drool
incubate hot meat water
the sweet sordid juice

who said
snot
blood
milkshake

I recall
summer days
I am with him
we are still
near
sit and sun
cool spray
cool spring
sunshine like white roses
falling playfully through her hair
behind you light
garden lake
time is delicate
together always

it is the language of lovers
and the apparatus of TV

a peach
a knife
it smells like my puppy
i manipulate egg
show me an enormous repulsive gift
raw sweat and bitter black sky
a thousand-headed shadow
in frantic dreaming
chains rust beneath elaborate waxy fluff

driving to a field
is like
whispering to you

when life floods the moment sing for eternity

HEY YA!

Attention talented Writing Consultant! *The Perspective* wants YOU to contribute your ideas, words, and images to this humble newsletter. We are looking for the following: stories, photography, art, poetry (ferromagnetic or otherwise), right-wing rants, left-wing rants, wingless rants, shameless self-promotion, and Lyotardian historiographic metafiction. Email any of these, or anything else, to crizzledizzle@hotmail.com or drop a copy in Ty's staff mailbox. Don't be shy--let's make this YOUR publication. Or else...there'll be non-denominational stockings full of coal for all 'a ya!

That's Life...After the Diploma

On Joining Corporate America

by Elisa Tomlinson

Writing Center Staff, I send you warm wishes from the wonder that is my cubicle here in the Lou. Word has reached me that some of you have completely disregarded my last column and are continuing recklessly along your path of self-destruction toward a degree. I urge you to reconsider. Owning a \$60 frame with your name and "summa cum laude" stamped on it is poor compensation for the degradation you will encounter when you enter what *should* have been the reward for all your efforts: the workforce. Welcome to corporate America. Let the brown-nosing, back-stabbing, ego-debilitating life of The Low Man On The Totem Pole begin!!!

Low man on the totem pole:

It's almost like being a grossly abused intern, only worse, because you know that it's indefinite. Those co-workers who hate you for no reason? Here to stay. Your insane boss who yells at you every single day? Not going anywhere. The

fact that your most scintillating job every day is hole-punching? Well, maybe that'll change in a couple of months. But for now, your existence depends on three modular walls and the life you may only have experienced once in a nightmare.

I am the current Low Man On The Totem Pole here at Plus Communications. I have never been in this position before, which is bad enough. But what makes my plight infinitely worse is the fact that my old summer job was working for a company run by my dad. Oddly, people yell at me a lot more and blame unfortunate mishaps on me now that I don't have the same last name as the vice president of the company. I find this very strange and am looking into possible causes for my apparent fall from glory.

But perhaps you are wondering what is required of (or demanded from) a Low Man On The Totem Pole. Since you persist in pursuing this job title for yourself, I would deem myself negligent if I didn't at least enlighten you about what to expect. So, allow me to paint you a little picture . . .

Your cubicle is strategically positioned in the worst place in the office . . . *right* in front of the copier, fax machine and break room. This means you are

accosted almost minute-ly by the other employees of your office, all of whom feel that they must make small talk while they are making endless copies. But hey, maybe you *like* being intimately acquainted with opinions about the weather, your co-worker's mother's ulcer, the cost of Toyotas, and the indiscretion of the media.

Fear not, my friend. You won't sit in your cubicle *all* day. It just so happens that the reigning secretary is pregnant, so she goes to the bathroom every 15 minutes, leaving you, Low Man, in charge of the switchboard. The Powers That Be would hate for Low Man not to experience the joy of being yelled at by four different customers at once via telephone.

Once you have reached your quota of three misdirected calls and are sufficiently frenzied by your temporary role as receptionist, you will be exiled back to your cubicle. But don't worry, you will have been given another job before you even sit down. This is what Important People like to call "busy work," but I like to call "a test of patience." Your job for the morning: find 6-volt batteries for your boss's five-year-old son's mini-cooper. And you were afraid that life as a Low Man would be less-than rewarding!

Around ten o'clock, The Gatekeeper (the man who has to approve everything before it can go anywhere in the plant) ambles along to use the copier. But he sees you as he is preparing to make his copies. Why, you're not doing anything of consequence! Would you mind making two copies of thirteen forms of four-page web plans and dropping them back at The Gate when you're done? Thanks so much.

Just as you are stapling the last form (because you didn't realize the copy machine could do that sort of thing for you), the Human Resources manager breezes by, asking you to collect two reports of twenty-six pages each from your four sister companies in order to make thirteen copies of the whole package by tomorrow morning's staff meeting. And could you run to Office Depot for eight more three-ring binders? (No, she doesn't thank you. This is one of the ones who doesn't like you because your last name doesn't match her supervisor's).

Right about now, your boss flies back to your cubicle in a complete panic because

the books he's running for one of his biggest clients are behind schedule (surprise, surprise) and he needs someone to de-strip the film *pronto!* Would you please drive to Sunrise Printing and manually de-strip the Harvest Corp. film for five hours? THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!

[I would like to take this opportunity to say that although your boss *claims* this is just his way of acclimating you to the various aspects of printing outside your office, it is *really* because he secretly hates you and wants your fingernails to be red for two weeks. Trust me, de-stripping film will give you a whole new appreciation for the word *monotony*.]

By the time you get back to your office, you have exactly twelve minutes to devote to your *actual* job . . . which, ironically is still undefined four months after your start date. So, you sit there, in your cubicle, staring at your modular wall, wondering what to do until five o'clock. Luckily, your twenty-one year old brother calls right then, to survey you for one of his business classes. "What is your definition of the word 'marketing'?" he asks you.

You find out later that you are the joke of his entire class. Somehow, everyone thinks its funny that you, originally hired to be the Marketing Director of Last Communications, do not have the slightest idea about the definition of the word "marketing." Do they not get the fact that you were an English major who never took a business class in your life?! Can they not comprehend that new college graduates must contact every acquaintance in their address books to get *any* job, regardless of their qualifications for it?! Do they understand NOTHING?! Where is the respect you deserve?! You did *not* give Truman State all the hard-earned cash you received from your Dad so that they could give you a worthless degree that wouldn't even earn you the sympathy of your juniors!!

Welcome to the working world, future Low Men On the Totem Poles of America. You're gonna love it.

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On Joining
Corporate
America

All Disquieting on the Southern Front: WC Alum Reports Back from the Post-Truman world

By Brad Herndon

Editor's Introduction: Brad Herndon is a Writing Center alum, having graduated in the spring of 2002. During his time here, in addition to consulting with thousands, possibly even millions of students, he also proved to be a promoter extraordinaire as chair of the Publicity Committee. But what cements his place in the annals of Writing Center history is his series of letters, written under the pseudonym Phil, that offered excoriating and insightful criticism of the Writing Center. As an insider taking an outsider's view, "Phil" shook the Center to its very foundations. Although "Phil" has retired from the critical lifestyle, his body of work justifies his standing alongside such fearless critics and satirists as Socrates, Voltaire, Wilde, Hunter S. Thompson, and Carrot Top. Brad is currently working with children of Conway, Arkansas, in a full-time ministry position for the K-Life organization. In this exclusive column, he gives us the inside scoop on what he learned from his time in the Writing Center.

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Brad 'Phil' Herndon
radios in from
Arkansas

The other day I was walking out of Kroger (the grocery store) down here in Conway, Arkansas, and I held the door open for the lady coming through behind me. It gave me the same feeling I had while driving down Prince Street later. I spotted an anxious mother trying to turn her Pathfinder into traffic (probably to pick up the kids from gymnastics). By force of habit, I slowed down and waved her in front of me (of course I got the thank you wave, everyone down here gives the wave, it's Arkansas).

A similar feeling of satisfaction came over me while helping one of the student volunteers in my organization. One night after a long day in the office he called needing some help to finagle some pictures for a presentation the next day. We stayed up until one in the morning putting the project together.

Graduating from the Writing Center program, the greatest thing that has escaped with me is not a stellar eye for misplaced commas. It's not a right understanding of semi-colons. It's not knowing how to slyly add my own suffixes to words or how to keep Mary Lou's cookies in a constant flow into my mouth during meetings. In college, I was a mediocre writer. After two years in the guts of Arkansas, I've worsened. It sounds like a Hallmark card, but the greatest skill that the Writing Center gave me does not revolve around composition at all. The greatest skill is knowing how to help people.

Nope, never mind, that's way too sappy. Even in the "season of need" it would be ridiculous for me to work that angle without feeling shameful of the sentimental-goody-two-shoes-theme. Let's try this one: Working at the Writing Center taught me how to say the hard things. "Your introduction sucks." "You missed the point of the prompt." "You need to use verbs." Translated into my adult-status in the real world: "I don't think you know what you're talking about." "That idea is terrible." "You smell."

Nope, I still don't like the angle. Working at the WC taught me how to...

...Admit I don't know things. Common saying of mine in McClain 303: "I really have no idea, but let's not be satisfied in our ignorance and instead look it up in one of the fine resources on the shelves behind us." Translated now: "Well (Mr. Bossman), I'll have to get back to you on that."

...Work with people who don't speak English very well. MC302 in 2002: "Your sentence construction has come a long way, and your understanding of verbs is almost there." Translated now: "Your Arkansas back-country talk doesn't work inside these city limits pard-ner. I'm gonna have to ask you to pull your tongue out of the back of your throat and use consonants."

...Understand that there are a lot of people who care a whole lot about the theoretical framework of writing centers. And a lot of these passionate people don't like each other. I, on the other hand, never got into it (but I enjoyed the war of discussion). Translated down here: "I can't believe an entire state can so seriously mourn a loss by their prized SEC football team." It's southern state one playing southern state two, and the best part of the rivalry is not the teams, its watching rich old southern men and their wrinkled giddy wives wear 50-year-old letter sweatshirts and cuss out the scoreboards while throwing their pompoms at the refs (in the stadium, that's a long way for a seventy-year-old man to launch a seven-ounce bundle of ribbons)."

In all honesty, life on the other side of the Writing Center severely sucks. There are no purple surveys to tell you how you're doing. You can't organize your life by a wipe-poster on the front door and there's no sweet secretary (with a big bite) on the other side of the high-walled desk. You have to be in charge of your own Word of the Day, bring your own plate of stale cookies for your lobby and of course, you must host your own dinner party at make-believe-Mary Lou's house every semester (bring your own digital camera too).