W&L SPECTATOR

Inside:

The Assault on Contact

Are We a Pro-Choice Campus?

And much more!

THE Student Journal of Fact and Opinion

The Spectator rides again!

Volume XII Issue 1
Winter 2006

Letter from the Editors

Paul Lagarde and Ray Welder founded *The Washington and Lee Spectator* in September 1989. They introduced *The Spectator* to encourage student awareness and involvement on campus. Today, our objective remains the same. We seek to offer intelligent discourse about issues that pertain to our campus and the history and legacy of Washington and Lee.

The original editors of *The Spectator* wrote, "We sense a change in the atmosphere on this campus. We have found that certain time-honored traditions are being increasingly ignored and sometimes even attacked." We share their concerns. *The Spectator* continues its mission of identifying and defending W&L's core values: **honor, free speech, and student autonomy**.

When Robert E. Lee was president of the university, he established honor as the bedrock of this institution and it continues to be the driving force behind W&L's claim to a unique niche in academia. The common refrain that our honor system discourages "lying, cheating, and stealing" is a start, but the honor system is far more than a set of rules used to punish delinquency. It gives voice to the sometimes forgotten notion that morality is about duty, not just rights. C.S. Lewis once wrote, "In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst." *The Spectator* firmly believes that, at least within the walls of this institution, virtue and enterprise should not and will not be lacking, and honor will be our highest virtue.

Our second core value is free speech, a right first enshrined in the Constitution. Unfortunately, this basic right seems to be held in less esteem by academia than by our Founding Fathers. *The Spectator* favors an environment which is conducive to the free exchange of ideas; in fact, we would go so far as to say that it is this free exchange which embodies the essence of education. We consider political correctness to be an enemy of free speech and, as such, abhor it in all its forms.

Finally, we believe student autonomy is essential to the formation of an educated, public-minded student body. As president of Washington College, Robert E. Lee recognized this essential truth: paternalism is the enemy of both morality and freedom. He thus ceased unannounced inspections of the faculty and created an honor system which, rather than being imposed on the students, would be shaped and enforced by them. General Lee realized that his students should sustain a high level of personal freedom, not because students' affairs were none of his concern, but because self-governance allowed them to become stronger citizens, rather than obedient servants.

The Spectator intends to apply these core values to topics such as culture, politics, and university affairs. Our aim is not to be controversial, but to provide honest and insightful analysis. It is our hope that whether you agree with us or not, you will always enjoy reading us and will not hesitate to respond.

The Editors

Alex Weintz & Heather Hart

W&L Spectator

Volume XII, No. 1 Winter 2006

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Mission Statement

The W&L Spectator is a non-partisan publication dedicated to promoting honest discourse. We, as staff, seek to serve the W&L community by infusing it with the ingredients necessary for a balanced educational experience. These ingredients include conservative, libertarian and classical liberal thought. We believe that peace is best achieved through strength, that utopia is nowhere, and that true equality is blind to race, creed, sex, and sexuality. We take it as our mission to expose the inadequacies of the non-traditionalist ideas that do not understand and fail to work with our student body. We strive to adhere to the beliefs of the student body that the administration often overlooks. We invite the active participation of any student or alumnae who shares our vision and would like to join our movement.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in the articles herein are solely those of each respective author. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any other staff member or of Washington and Lee University.

The Spectator is a member of the Washington and Lee Media Board, which can be reached at mediaboard@wlu.edu

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Love us? Hate us?
Tell us what you think!

spectator@wlu.edu

Dear Editors:

What great news to learn of the revival of the *Washington & Lee Spectator*! We could not be more pleased that a group of W&L students have gathered once again to challenge the leftist and anti-traditionalist ethos that has crept into the modern University, including our own beloved W&L.

The free press is a grand old institution, and *The Spectator* is a great avenue to explore and expose, among other things, our ever-expanding administration, the politicization of the course catalogue, and outrageous tuition increases of late. As Professor Jeffrey Hart encouraged students fifteen years ago in Lee Chapel, "Publicize their deeds. Let the Heavens ring. The academic left welcomes publicity as much as Dracula welcomed the dawn. Their deeds cannot stand the light of day. Hit them with relentless publicity."

We wish you much success with the new *Spectator*. We know it will be a quite a challenge, but it will be great fun too. We only wish we were fifteen years younger.

Sincerely yours,

Raymond Welder and Paul Lagarde

Want to support the Spectator?

Contact us at spectator@wlu.edu or P.O. Box 4392 Lexington, VA 24450

On the Right

One good thing about Women's Studies...

It will always provide plenty of amusement for the staff of *The Spectator*. As I was walking to my study, I noticed a brightly-colored piece of paper announcing a course offering for Winter Term: Women's Studies 120 (INTR 120): Introduction to Women's Studies (note that this meets a General Education Requirement in Fine Arts, History, Philosophy, Religion). The course description states that the class "presents a plurality of feminist perspectives in a dialogic manner, and broadens the views and knowledge of students with regard to various theories . . . of feminist thought." The description goes on to note that the course will examine "important roles that women have played throughout history, in shaping our world." After reading this broad description of topics, at the very least, I imagined that the course would address the historical feminists, as well as women who oppose the distinction and unnecessary creation of "feminism." But, how naïve was I? I emailed Dean Mayock to find out what the readings for the course were and, not to my surprise, no mentions of Phyllis Schlafly's *Feminist Fantasies* or any historical references to Margaret Thatcher existed. Rather, Dean Mayock said she had not prepared the syllabus for Winter Term yet, but she suggested I look at the books the course read Spring Term in this class. Ready for a laugh?

Bell Hooks (recently identified by David Horowitz as "one of the 101 most dangerous academics in America"): *Feminism is for Everybody. Passionate Politics*. Interestingly enough, the book does not even reference Susan B. Anthony (I guess because she was pro-life) and instead, has chapter titles like, "Feminist Class Struggle," "Our Bodies, Ourselves: Reproductive Rights," "Feminist Masculinity, Total Bliss: Lesbianism and Feminism"... I could go on, but it's too painful. The other text is written by a Professor of Sociology at Berkeley . . . exactly.

So again, if the course encompasses "important roles that women have played throughout history . . .", why is there no mention of Susan B. Anthony? Why is it that liberals are afraid to have conservative authors in the classroom? I thought the idea of a liberal arts education was to discuss a variety of viewpoints; why are we limiting those viewpoints to liberals and women?

Where is the diversity?: The lack of conservative authors in the classroom.

This fall I enrolled in Interdepartmental 101, Poverty: An Introduction. I did this for two reasons. First, I think the problem of poverty is an epidemic that our society inadequately addresses (but not for the reasons the left cites). Second, I made a promise to Professor Beckley that I would take the class before I graduated. He assured me that there would be plenty of room for my conservative ideas (which to his and Professor Taylor's credit, I have found to be true).

While my class experience was enjoyable, I am a little disappointed in the syllabus's lack of diversity in choices of authors. For instance, here is the list of authors we have read: Amartya Sen, the World Bank (please...), Lawrence Mead (NYU Professor), Rebecca Blank, Jason DeParle (NYT reporter), David Shipler (guest scholar at Brookings Institute), Alex Kotlowitz (WSJ reporter), and David Ellwood (one of the chief architects in Clinton's welfare reform). Which one of these is conservative? NONE. And while some might say Mead, my idea of "conservative" is not one who promotes more (and bigger) government programs as a solution.

Now, some might say that liberals are the only ones who write about poverty and welfare issues. Really? What about folks over at the Heritage Foundation or American Enterprise Institute? The authors we read reference them, but our class reading does not include an explanation of their arguments. I thought liberals liked diversity in education. Maybe next year Professor Beckley will consider adding excerpts from Charles Murray, F.A. Hayek, or even a few essays from *The Essential Civil Society*. That would ensure we are getting a truly balanced education. When I suggested some students read Marvin Olasky's *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, Professor Beckley responded by saying "I do not suggest reading trash [Olasky], I would read the good, liberal stuff." And I thought I was going to a liberal arts school . . .

Rachael Seidenschnur is a senior Religion and Politics major from Little Rock, Arkansas.

Is W&L a Pro-Choice Campus?

When I came to Washington and Lee, the College Republicans claimed over half the school as members, but the campus had no pro-life group. My sophomore year, I decided to change that.

W&L Students for Life (SFL) began in Fall 2003. The decision was made early on that the club would console rather than accuse; we had no intention of assaulting the campus with pictures of aborted fetuses. Our purpose was to change hearts and minds through compassionate action and education; we wanted to help women experiencing unplanned pregnancies choose life. Feminist for Life's slogans "Women Deserve Better than Abortion" and "Abortion is a reflection that our society has failed to meet the needs of women" fit our vision well. While conservatives often form the base of the pro-life movement, the club was not meant to be politically exclusive; in fact, one of our founding officers was a self-declared liberal.

Our very first meeting brought in a lot of people, but the numbers tapered off as the semester went on. This became a yearly cycle and I wondered why more students weren't as passionately or actively involved in an issue which literally involves life and death. If W&L is the conservative school we so often make it out to be, where are all the pro-life activists?

Unfortunately, getting students involved isn't that simple. I asked some of the core members of SFL about the lack of activity on campus, and received a range of responses in reply.

Coming soon to W&L?
(http://slate.msn.com/id/2120861/)

Senior Kate Heflin believes that it is the controversial nature of abortion which breeds discomfort and a perception of apathy. She said, "People don't want to discuss the issue here at W&L. They get pretty uncomfortable if the subject happens to be brought up."

This aversion to controversy and conflict is probably not unique to college campuses, but it seems particularly common among conservative students. Conservatives seem allergic to the types of rallies, boycotts, and demonstrations that liberals engage in at the drop of a hat; they see other responsibilities (work, school, family) as more pressing.

This problem is compounded by W&L's "work hard, play harder" environment, where social life can edge out politics. Sophomore Liz Cameron, secretary of SFL, said, "[Conservatives] seem to be worried about what other people think too much, or they're just too busy to participate." Between the endless school work and a demanding social life, many may not find the time to add another commitment. Some, as Cameron suggested, may even worry that becoming involved in such a sensitive issue will hurt them socially.

Another reason for conservatives to remain silent on the issue is their relatively dominant position on campus. On larger, more liberal campuses, conservative students are beginning to speak out and rebel against the prevailing left-wing, politically-correct academic culture. Since conservatives don't face the same stigma here, they may not feel a reason to speak up. As Cameron said, "Since there are more conservatives on this campus, the liberals are more vocal."

But what are the consequences of keeping quiet on abortion? Jameson Graber, a sophomore and SFL vice-president, says that student apathy makes them pro-choice by default. "In practice," he said, "W&L is pro-choice. Ignoring the problem is the easiest way to be Pro-Choice, and W&L students try their best to ignore abortion."

To understand abortion, however, is to be unable to ignore it. Freshman Jack Stanton called on conservatives and pro-lifers to lend their voices to the fray, "If it is the case that one believes that abortion is wrong, then one believes that America currently holds up the wholesale slaughter of innocent youths as the status quo. With this being said, it is a daily tragedy that we … do so little about it. Where is our conviction? Where is our sense of justice?"

The tacit acceptance of abortion may have less to do with the political makeup of this campus and more to do with the ugly underbelly of college culture. College students are at a time in their lives when they are experimenting, often with destructive behavior, but aren't willing to accept the consequences of their mistakes.

Students at W&L may be theoretically pro-life, but don't want to speak out against abortion because they are unsure that they would not turn to it if they were faced with an unwanted pregnancy.

"Ignoring [abortion] is the easiest way to be Pro-Choice..." - Jameson Graber

As Graber put it, "Unintended pregnancies are often the result of sexual misconduct; sexual misconduct happens a lot in college; thus most college students, even if they can't bring themselves to endorse abortion, secretly feel they need it as a way out."

While W&L remains a more conservative school than most, the conservative spirit does not appear to translate into action on abortion. In fact, if anything, it seems as if the pro-choice movement is gaining momentum on campus. Students for Choice was founded last year; perhaps as they begin to grow and agitate, conservatives will feel a new sense of urgency to defend their views. Hopefully, it will not take the school swinging violently to the left before conservatives finally wake up and get vocal.

Alexa Moutevelis is a senior Politics major from Ipswich, Massachusetts.

In March when we Celebrate Women at W&L, let's make sure the Administration does not forget about celebrating CONSERVATIVE women! And even if they try to forget, we can make sure they don't succeed. This is why we the students are bringing Phyllis Schlafly to Washington and Lee.

Mrs. Schlafly is the author of over 20 books, including her 1964 best seller, *A Choice, Not An Echo*. She is also president and founder of the Eagle Forum, a pro-family group.

http://www..pupress.princeton.edu/images/k8012.gif

On Wednesday, March 8, 2006, International Women's Day, Mrs. Schlafly will speak in Lee Chapel.

Sponsored by the Contact Committee, The Christian Legal Society, and the Federalist Society

DANGER: A CONSERVATIVE WOMAN

Earlier this year, when discussing possibilities for a keynote speaker for Celebrating Women at W&L, an administrator told a writer for *The Spectator* that a woman "speaker must come from the left; anything else would be a Republican woman's mouth speaking men's ideas."

At the risk of regurgitating my father, brother, and future husband's ideas, I personally invite Dean Mayock to come hear Mrs. Schlafly speak... maybe then she will realize conservative women think for themselves! But, until then, my parents are paying tuition for me to learn how to regurgitate oppressive, male viewpoints...

-Rachael Seidenschnur

The Assault on Contact

Since its inception in 1964, the Contact Committee has suffered a virtually unending barrage of criticism. Its objective is deceptively simple: to bring the outside world to Lexington. The manifestation of this objective, however, has repeatedly earned it the disapproval of faculty and student body alike. Contact is responsible for exposing the Washington and Lee community to a wide variety of speakers, a duty they approach with the utmost sincerity and dedication. "Our mission," said newest member Jack Stanton, "is to bridge the gap between purely academic speakers and speakers that are entertaining. We have to try to achieve a balance." Unfortunately, words like "variety" and "balance" generally mean that someone is going to be disappointed. After all, not all interests can be represented at the same time.

In fact, the representative nature of Contact has been challenged in the past. The committee is small and, until recent years, fairly homogenous. It is difficult to imagine how a body that few students know how to communicate with and whose members are not democratically elected can accurately reflect the desires of the Washington and Lee population. This particular issue has been a stumbling block for the Contact committee for some time, especially when concerned with the types of speakers selected. "In the past, we've really been criticized for having primarily political or conservative speakers," said Vice-Chair for Publicity Logan Gibson, "but this year we're really trying to diversify the kinds of people we bring to the students."

The push for more varied speakers has had several consequences. It has resulted in individuals such as Dr. Neil Baer, executive producer of Law and Order: SVU, and Dr. Richard Lindzen, a leading global warming theorist, being invited to speak on campus later this year. This will hopefully increase the audience in Lee Chapel beyond the regular political science majors and lecture enthusiasts, reaching a broader section of the student body. Of course, appealing to everyone is impossible, as Jesse Ventura's visit demonstrated. Many of his views were different, to say the least, and not necessarily appreciated by a contingent of students.

Faculty interference behind the scenes is damaging Contact's reputation and authority.

What the individuals who complained failed to understand, however, was that many students enjoyed his visit precisely because he was different and entertaining, a far cry from the usual dry academics. Said freshman Rebecca Taylor of Ventura's visit, "As someone who does not consider herself to be exactly a Democrat or a Republican, I identified with some of the things he said about third party politics. His ideas and strategies for the government, even though I did not agree with all of them, were thought-provoking and insightful. I consider myself fortunate to go to a school that can get such diverse and distinguished speakers." Students who feel marginalized by Contact have to remember that the desires and interests of an entire student body are being considered.

What the individuals who complained failed to understand, however, was that many students enjoyed his visit precisely because he was different and entertaining, a far cry from the usual dry academics.

Students were not the only ones to object to Ventura's controversial visit. The faculty, too, took issue with Ventura's presence, suggesting that a much more intellectual lecturer could have been contracted for significantly less funds. It's important to keep in mind, however, that it is more economic to have an expensive entertainer speak to a full house than an inexpensive scholar to an empty one. The pressure put on Contact by both the faculty and the Executive Committee is partly responsible for the dissatisfaction associated with the organization.

In order to combat rumors that Contact was simply an extension of the College Republicans, the committee was pressured by administrators to bring in several very liberal speakers. Dean Mayock, for example, told Contact member David Kronenfeld, that the "[the Celebrating Women's Committee] only wants a woman from the left or a democrat. A speaker from the right would simply be a woman's mouth voicing a man's ideas." The completely erroneous nature of her comment aside, Dean Mayock's statement is deplorable for several reasons. She was not only abandoning the

principle of balance in speaker selection, so important to maintaining Contact's integrity, but also attempting to manipulate student funds to support a faculty-led initiative. This type of intrusion, combined with Contact's overcompensation for groundless accusations of partisanship, only increased the irritation and perceived incompetence of the committee.

The student body of Washington and Lee is many things, but liberal is not one of them. The interference of the faculty behind the scenes is damaging Contact's reputation with its constituents and challenging its authority to select speakers. Instead of being held accountable by students, which the committee should be, it is now facing an additional and counterproductive responsibility to please the faculty.

Even when things run smoothly, Contact will never be able to please everyone. According to Charlie Yates, EC Chairman, the biggest problem with the relationship between it and the student body is that the "the students have unrealistic expectations." They want diverse speakers representing a wide range of interests, provided those interests match their own. They want big names on a small budget, and lots of them. In attempting such a difficult balancing act, the members of Contact need to be careful, lest in trying to please everyone, they end up pleasing none.

Jennifer Sanow is a freshman International Relations major from Leesburg, Virginia.

The Search is On

The trustees of Washington and Lee face an immense challenge in the selection of a new president. Their decision will determine whether W &L retains its unique character along with its reputation as an outstanding institution, or whether it is molded into another cookie-cutter liberal arts college.

The new president will follow in the footsteps of truly great men, men that were instrumental in shaping the university. Lee knew that being president was about more than simply running a college, and he demonstrated the tremendous influence a president can have on determining the future of a university. His greatest legacy is the rich culture of academic excellence, honor, and pride.

Brian Murchison, W&L's Charles S. Rowe Professor of Law, is leading the effort to find an individual equal to the task of running our distinguished institution. Also on the Presidential Search Committee are twelve faculty members, eight current trustees, an emeritus trustee, five members of the University staff, two students (one undergraduate, one law), two alumni representatives, and the Secretary of the University. The committee has retained the services of Barbara Taylor of Academic Search Consulting Service, who assists the committee with procedural tasks, protocol, and strategy.

In an attempt to understand the opinions of the student body, Murchison and members of the committee spent the fall visiting student organizations on campus. According to Murchison, this experience provided the committee with an immense amount of insight into the qualities students believe are essential for the next president.

Students expressed a strong desire to have a dedicated president who is committed to maintaining Washington and Lee's unique character. They want a president that is visible around campus and views W&L as a final destination, not simply another step in their career ladder.

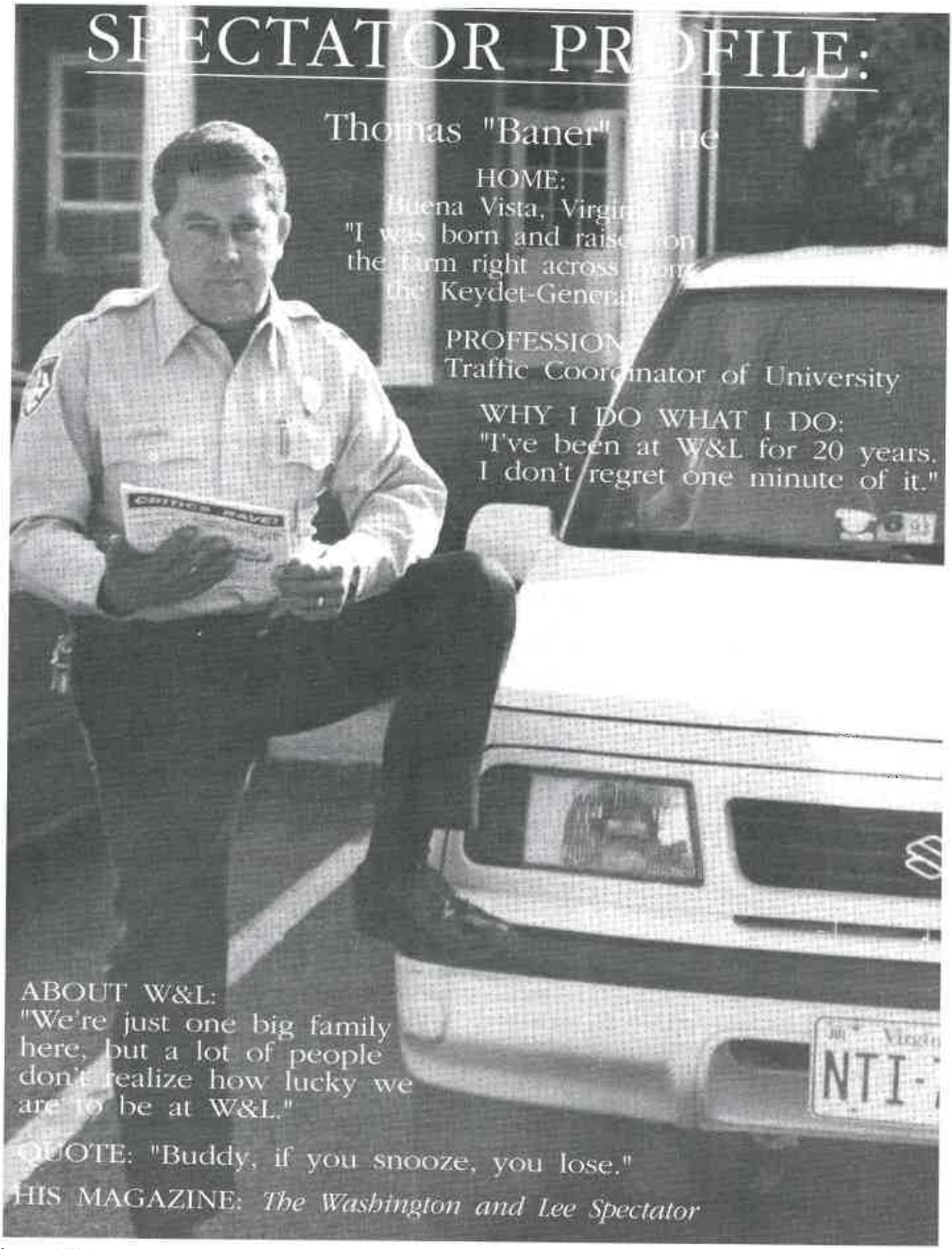
The committee also created a report out of ideas collected from alumni, faculty, and staff to aid in the selection process. Murchison believes that through this report, the committee will be able to take a university-wide view to determine which candidate best fits Washington and Lee. Jim Farrar, who served on the search committee that selected President Burish, emphasized the importance of the report in making sure that all constituencies were represented in the process.

Not surprisingly, a theme repeatedly expressed by students and faculty alike is the importance of a president who understands the values of our university and has a vision for it, one that can advance W&L while preserving its distinctive tradition and character. The committee has attempted to communicate the unique essence of W&L to potential candidates on the Search Committee website. The committee hopes that this document will draw candidates whose interest in the school stems not only from its prestige as an institution, but from an understanding of its unique nature. The committee wants candidates to recognize and appreciate that those of us at W&L – faculty, staff, and students alike – have a strong sense of pride and loyalty towards our University.

The Trustees are doubtless aware of the effect that this decision will have on the nature of our community and the future of our university. It is a daunting task to find a president that can act both as a custodian of our finest traditions, and a forward-thinker who can lead us into the future.

Heather Hart is a junior Politics major from Blackstone, Virginia.

Blast from the Past



Alum Fights Pork, Corruption

With the Republican establishment embroiled in ethics scandals and a cry of discontent coming from fiscal conservatives, it seemed inevitable: a W&L graduate has arrived to restore order to the GOP. Jeff Cook, class of 2000, has announced his candidacy for New York's nineteenth congressional district, where he will challenge incumbent Representative Sue Kelly in a primary next year.

Cook certainly has his work cut out for him – Kelly will make full use of all the benefits that come with incumbency – but Cook has a profile and an agenda interesting enough to make him a serious challenger. At 26, Cook's age is enough to attract attention on its own, but his status as an openly gay candidate is sure to raise eyebrows as well.

While Cook's sexuality and his call for inclusiveness in the party will certainly influence voters, it is his promise to renew the Contract with America that voters should be paying serious attention to.

The Contract—whose authorship and implementation is typically attributed to Newt Gingrich—was a national platform adopted by Republicans (including Kelly) in 1994 which was largely credited with restoring a Republican majority to Congress. It emphasized fiscal discipline, accountability, and an end to the ethical lapses to which the Democrats in power seemed so prone.

Unfortunately for those of us who care about honest government, the Contract with America is, as Cook puts it, "in breach." The minor ethical lapses of former majority leader Tom DeLay, uncovered at the end of 2005, have proven to be just the tip of the iceberg. The recent row over disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff is nothing short of a debacle for the Republican Party, and rightly so. Abramoff's dirty deals, which may or may not involve buying off elected officials, reveal a Capitol Hill culture where money trumps values. Kelly, while probably not directly involved in anything overtly dishonest or illegal, is implicit in helping to create this culture. She has been a frequent beneficiary of DeLay's Political Action Committee, now under investigation for laundering money, and voted against a resolution to strengthen House ethics rules. With Abramoff pushing ethics to the forefront of America's consciousness, Kelly will be in a precarious position in her primary and, should she defeat Cook, in a general election.

The Republican "Revolutionaries" who endorsed the Contract in '94 are failing to follow through on their other promises as well. The posturing of Kelly and her cohorts as fiscal conservatives has been laughable, as the federal budget continues to swell and the country continues its dramatic descent into the red. Bizarrely, Democrats almost sound credible when arguing for fiscal sanity. One can often witness Congressmen blaming each other for playing "the blame game" where credibility is concerned. Either they don't realize the essential hypocrisy of their words, or Congress is working on fleshing out a very dry sense of humor.

Cook's criticism of Kelly, as well as his campaign against her, essentially boil down to ethics and pork. Where ethics are concerned, Cook can plan on putting a big check mark in the win-column. If the Republicans currently in office are still besieged by ethical scandals later this year, that alone could tip the scales in Cook's favor. Cook also seems to have a plan for rectifying Congressional corruption, not just fixing it. He blames Congress' inability to police itself on partisan values (witness the Republican crucifixion of Bill Clinton or the Democrats' giddiness over the Valerie Plame scandal). To combat partisan warfare, Cook proposes a somewhat novel idea to address that problem: the creation of a new ethics committee made up of former Congressmen. The committee would play an advisory role in the investigation of complaints and

W&L Grad Jeff Cook '00
http://www.logcabin.org/triangle/photoalbum.html

the proposal of sanctions. What Jimmy Carter is to free elections, this panel would be to congressional ethics.

The anti-pork aspect of Cook's candidacy, however, may be a more difficult sell than ethical reforms. The problem for Cook, and other enemies of bloated government, is that their positions look decidedly unappealing on the local level. It is easy to criticize federal funding for local projects when one isn't talking about one's own neighborhood. The same Lexington conservatives, for example, who speak so vehemently against such projects would probably approve of the federal funding for the Shepard Poverty Program (a constructive program, which nevertheless could be classified as "pork"), of which W & L is a part. Cook faces two difficult tasks: to separate his district's Shepard Poverty Programs from its "bridges to nowhere," and to convince voters that the national debt is more important than projects of the latter sort. This won't be easy, since part of what he is arguing is that Kelly should be thrown out off office for bringing back too many resources to her community.

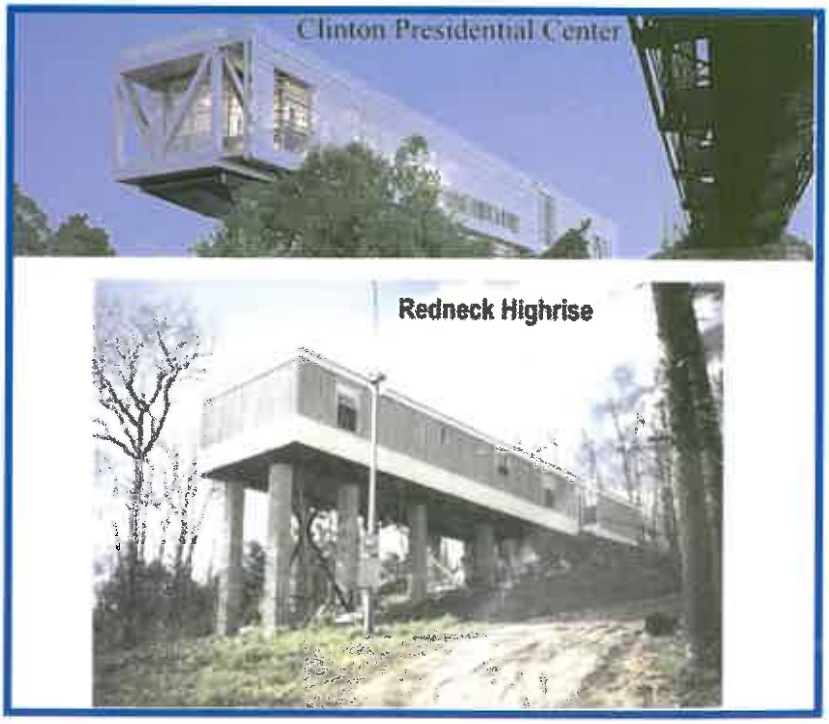
One way of combating pork that Cook champions is the establishment of block grants to the state. States would essentially get an allowance which they could spend on whatever projects they choose. That way, they would be forced to better prioritize their spending, hopefully putting things like education in front of less necessary projects. Federal funding would then be limited to real interstate projects, like highways. This plan has the advantage of avoiding federal "cuts" of specific projects, while pushing decision making down to a local level.

It is clear that Cook certainly boasts a wealth of ideas. Anyone can wail about ethics and government spending during a campaign, but after a conversation with Cook, it's obvious that he believes he can actually create some change. For a party that seems increasingly fatalistic about government spending, serious critics of big government should at least welcome the dialogue which Cook is trying to force Kelly to have.

Cook has an uphill battle to fight – Kelly is an entrenched incumbent with party support – but it would be foolish to write him off. Regardless of the outcome of the election, Cook's candidacy foreshadows what may become a crisis for the Republican Party: ongoing dissatisfaction from members of the base who thought they had elected small government conservatives who understood the meaning of the word "ethics." If the party establishment continues to write off the naysayers, it does so at its own risk.

Alex Weintz is a senior Politics major from Ossining, NY.

Picture of the Month



In Defense of Pledgeship

"Pledgeship is the best eight weeks that you never want to do again." A senior told me that two years ago, right before I began my own eight week odyssey. As a young, naïve freshman, I didn't know what to think of this obvious contradiction. Now, looking back, I know exactly what he meant.

Everyone on this campus hears rumors about the hazing rituals, physical stress, and sleep deprivation that comprise fraternity pledgeship. What many outside the Greek system fail to understand is that the strain and challenges of a constructive pledgeship inevitably unite the pledge class and the fraternity as a whole.

Let me be clear that I am adamantly opposed to any form of hazing which is abusive and dehumanizing. Forcing new members to participate in demeaning activities such as eating dip or consuming alcohol—or worse—is not only shameful and cruel, it is counterproductive to the purpose of pledgeship.

Humiliating tasks such as these cause animosity between the freshman and the rest of the house that can last for three years. Pledgeship is not meant to serve as a rift between the pledge class and the class above them, it is intended to bring the house together.

Opponents of pledgeship argue that hazing only unites pledges by instilling them with a common hatred of their abusers. The trials and tribulations of a constructive pledgeship, however, has nothing to do with hatred; at its best, it promotes discipline within the group and cultivates shared pride. It is very difficult for freshman, especially at an academically rigorous institution such as Washington and Lee, to balance academics, extracurricular activities, and pledgeship. With so many onerous tasks to accomplish in limited time, an individual's true character becomes readily apparent to his pledge brothers.

Pledgeship breaks down personality barriers and exposes one's flaws. The new members not only learn about each other, they learn about themselves. Selfishness, indolence, and elitism have no place during these arduous eight weeks. A positive pledge education program also serves to prepare one for emotional challenges in life. Pledgeship promotes self-discipline and challenges one to learn to cope with difficult situations. If pledgeship is the hardest eight weeks of one's time on earth, they have led a very privileged life [Editor's note: It was, and I have – Weintz].

What many outside the Greek system do not understand is that the strain and challenges of a constructive pledgeship inevitably unite the pledge class and the fraternity as a whole.

Both relationships and emotions are part of human nature. Whenever people share the same sentiment, whether it be stress, happiness, or anxiety, they band together. New Yorkers rallied together after 9/11. New Orleans united during Hurricane Katrina. And, while not on the same scale, a pledge class comes together during pledgeship. New members share the feeling of stress. They share in the feeling of frustration. And when it is all over, they share in the feeling of accomplishment. My class did not unite because they loathed the actives, but rather we came together because we shared the same experiences. I am not only good friends with both of my pledge educators, but I am truly grateful of the sacrifices they made to help my pledge brothers and me develop close, long lasting friendships.

When I chose to join my fraternity, I knew only a handful of my pledge brothers. After eight weeks, I realized that my constructive pledgeship helped me understand the concept of brotherhood. After I was stranded three hours away last year when my car broke down, my roommate did not think twice about driving in the snow on a weekday to come pick me up. That is what a friend would do. That is what a pledge brother would do, and I would have made the same sacrifice for him. Finally, I now understand what this senior was trying to tell me. Freshman, hopefully in five weeks, you will look back and understand the oxymoron that is pledgeship: the best, and worst, eight weeks you will have here.

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Bush's Rhetorical Failure

and why it's hurting the war effort

Republicans have to stop fooling themselves. They are never going to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. That does not mean, however, that the men and women of the armed services are fighting this war for no reason. Contrary to popular belief, WMDs were not the reason the United States invaded Iraq, and they are not the reason we remain today.

This is a simple truth that has been repeatedly undercut by the Bush Administration's foolish overstatement of the WMD threat. Bush campaigned for war in 2003 by telling the world that Saddam Hussein was developing these weapons, that an occupying force would find warehouses full of them. He was wrong. Even in the months after the invasion, however, we heard rhetoric on how the search continued.

The emphasis on WMDs and the accompanying charade has left us with a country that fights without knowing why. It is time, finally, for the president to articulate, clearly and consistently, our reasons for going to war. These reasons do not involve WMDs or even Saddam Hussein so much as they involve freedom and economics. Despite the low priority these sometimes get in the president's speeches, they are oft-debated issues within the foreign policy establishment. The President's National Security Strategy articulates these ideas where he does not. In it, Condoleezza Rice explains the importance of democracy in America's newly retooled foreign policy. She writes, "We do not seek to impose democracy on others, we seek only to help create conditions in which people can claim a freer future for themselves." The NSS also declares our intentions to guide and assist the development of poorer nations, using America's powerful economy as the vehicle for tangible increases in quality of life.

The Iraqi war is a tactical stage in a broader grand strategy that seeks to actively change the Middle East by introducing economic and political freedoms. This new strategy – as its supporters and detractors both agree – presupposes that the American system of liberal democracy and market economics can be both universally appealing and successful. We are charting a course, as Frances Fukuyama famously argued, towards "the end of history." The assumption that liberal institutions represent the way to govern is not an exercise in arrogance; it is a truth validated by history. Monarchy, totalitarianism, and communism have all failed to live up to the challenge posed by liberal democracy. The war we fight today is waged against another ideology: Islamic fascism. The question remains, however, why Bush failed to focus on this in 2003.

The Iraqi war is a tactical stage in a broader grand strategy...

Popular logic says that the Bush administration feared that the American public would not support a war founded on ideology. The threat of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons could be immediately explained, while ideological threats require nuance. In the wake of 9/11, citizens were more afraid of the weapons terrorists might acquire than the ideas that motivate them.

The problem for the Bush Administration is that while WMDs do not link Saddam Hussein to the perpetrators of 9/11, ideology does. Both Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein are waging a war on Western power and values. Both seek to tip the balance of power towards authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world.

The irony of this war effort is that a real explanation of the threat we face – violent Islamic fascism – would ultimately unite the country behind the Iraqi war in a way that the imagined threat of WMDs has failed to. After 9/11, Americans understood that we could no longer consider ourselves safe until we began to more actively fight terrorism. They lacked, however, a cogent explanation of what that threat represented. Bush has cynically refused to provide that explanation, and his refusal has hampered this war effort from the start. Our president has lost the trust of the majority of Americans, and the success of a war which is vital to our national interest is now in jeopardy.

If the president is going to salvage our project in Iraq, he must first explain to Americans why we are there.

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Lex Vegas Bumper Stickers

¡Gracias!

What the GOP has forgotten

Amen!

Putting the "W" in Dubyuhnell

Support Our Troops

Thank God

Unless they are semi-automatic!

And fighting for your country isn't?

Depends on the question!

And with Gore you'd have more?

Or why not support France and defeat Bush?

Time to move on.