Editorial

A master of public relations once said, "The medium is the message." His realization was that it is not so much *what* you say, as where and how you say it. A sad little piece of information, but true nonetheless.

Take, for example, the Letter to the Editor written by on Neil Barry, concerned linguist-at-large. Recently, Mr. Barry took it upon himself to enlighten us here at the 'news'paper of our many great failings, and submitted his letter with a copy of The Cadre covered in ink due to his many comments and corrections. His letter raises many interesting questions that I strongly feel need answering before I file it in my special folder marked 'yadda-yadda-yadda.'

First, I'm not quite sure what I should feel: (a) pride that someone thought the paper worth correction in great detail, or (b) amazement that someone would actually take a pen, sit down, and correct the paper in great detail. Do I offer my thanks or do I suggest professional help?

Second, I'm confused as to Mr. Barry's purpose. If it was his intent to offer positive criticism of the newspaper, accompanied with suggestions for improving both content and style, then, I must admit, he has failed -- rather miserably, in fact. If, however, it was his intent to humiliate a small group of volunteers, belittle their efforts, and create general feelings of inferiority and uselessness, then he has accomplished exactly that. Bravo, Mr. Barry! You may now move on to kicking the occasional stray dog.

In Mr. Barry's defence, the comments he made in the paper he corrected are, in many ways, quite true. The spelling mistakes, the lack of reference for our quotes, the lapses in analytical reasoning, the essay-like writing style -- they exist. There is more to journalism, though, than style. Sometimes, just sometimes, the content is important as well.

I do not deny that we have a duty to present that content in our best way and with the best possible research. We are students, though. We have essays and exams, classes and schedules. We do what we can with the time and resources we have, and sometimes, just sometimes, we fall short in our mission. Perhaps it is your duty, then, to be a little more forgiving when that happens. Forgiveness, however, requires understanding. You know, walking a mile in someone else's shoes. Maybe we can help you a little with that perspective.

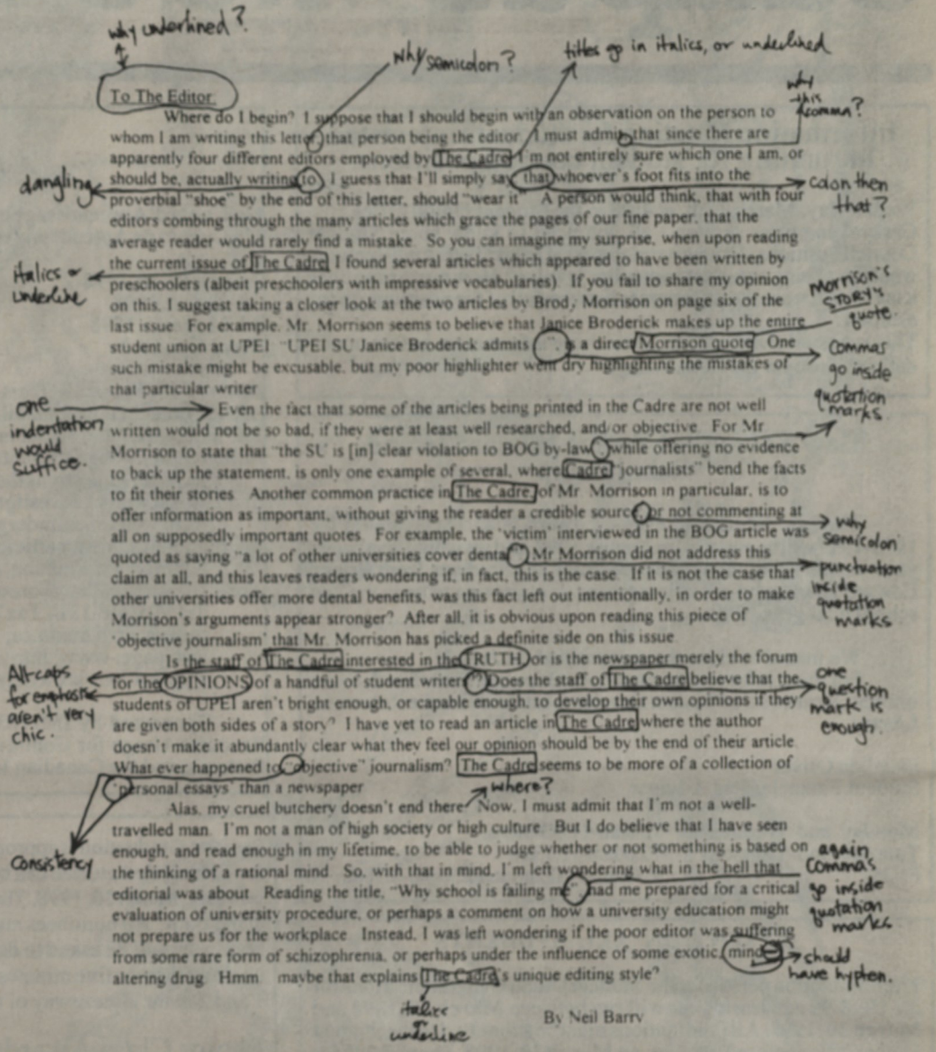
You will notice that your letter has been printed in its entirety, much to your misplaced belief to the contrary. You will also notice a little bonus, proof that we have taken your kind words to heart. With the same meticulous attention you gave our newspaper, we have decided to display, in great detail, your grammatical errors and lapses in reasoning. This is not a simple exercise in revenge. This is a lesson in empathy.

You see, I want you to know what it is like to have your name appear under a big headline, with your thoughts and feelings on display for everyone to see. I want you to know what it's like for people to be less concerned about *what* you say then *how* and *where* you say it.

Rest assured, sir that somewhere, right now, someone is reading your article. Someone, somewhere, is shaking their head, wondering why we let preschoolers write for our paper.

Welcome to our world, Mr. Barry. I hope you enjoy your stay.

Letters to the editor



Dear Editor,

After reading The CADRE dated Feb 17, 1998 I realized how shallow and naïve I must have been as a University student in the late 1950's.

For example the Editorial concerning the cancellation of phone usage at the library because of student abuse is a real loser. Is this one of the important issues on the UPEI campus in 1998? If it is, either UPEI is the next place to heaven or today's students are a bunch of sheep or both.

Another example is the story of Peter Gillis, private investigator who exposes the antics of a collection agency in Ontario. I wonder why Mr. Gillis can't find something close to home to expose? (Like at UPEI.)

The CADRE is polite, politically correct, very serious and very boring. Let's pull up the next few issues and surprise everyone with some lack of respect, humour and boldness. Who knows it might be fun!

D.D. Steeves

P.S. Devote an issue to bird courses at UPEI and student assessment of teachers of bird courses.