

The Girl Who Cried "Booze!"

You can fool some of the people some of the time...

IT'S AN ALL-TOO-COMMON OPINION that P.E.I. is a boring place. Many of the forward-thinking fixed link boosters drool at the very thought of a bridge that would enable them to blow this provincial popsicle stand at will. Our sleepy little landmass is a particularly agonizing environment for the average journalist. How often can you report on the latest potato scandal before turning into a vegetable yourself? This is the challenge facing Island journalists- and unfortunately, our perpetual news drought sometimes drives sensation-starved reporters to desperate and pathetic extremes.

Take U.P.E.I., for example. One has but to whisper the slightest hint of something potentially newsworthy, and reporters descend upon the joint like Japanese tourists on Green Gables. Last year's alleged sexual assault springs to mind; before the incident had been confirmed or even made known to all levels of the administration, reporters were crawling all over the place like ants.

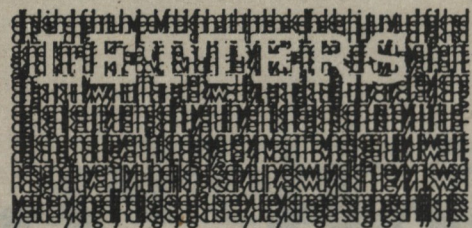
While many Island journalists go into feeding frenzies over the smallest morsel of news, that's to be expected of most reporters anywhere. Our job is to cover the news. What is truly disturbing is when journalists are apparently desperate or unethical enough to try to manufacture news.

Sadly, there are more than a few do-it-yourselfers out there. Take, for instance, the recent controversy over the Panther lounge's end-of-semester pub. *Evening Patriot* staff writer Barb McKenna wrote the catchily-titled "Dad bucks booze bash" article wherein McKenna told readers about the decadent "Drink the Barn Dry" annual event, which was supposedly soon forthcoming and which had drawn (purportedly) complaints from a single, solitary parent "who wished to remain be anonymous" [sic]. This covertly concerned citizen reportedly complained to protest the promotion of drunkenness on campus- particularly "in light of the controversy surrounding the RCMP Mess", since students were involved heavily in the protests against serving liquor in the mess (the outcry having stemmed from an RCMP officer hitting and killing a youth with his car while driving home from work after several drinks). The RCMP scandal was huge news, so what could be better than cooking up a spin-off article or two? Take one anonymous complainant, add an allegedly drunken campus, stir in a topical but irrelevant RCMP alcohol controversy with just a hint of hypocrisy, and presto! Instant news.

Like most instant products, though, stories like this are instant gratification without much in the way of substance. The article was

obviously sensationalistic and tried to generate controversy by linking two unrelated things. Even if students were a pack of drunkards as the anonymous complainant implies, that would

be irrelevant to the issue of whether the RCMP should serve liquor; moreover, the article has very little basis in verified factual sources. The only "sources" cited were anonymous (the complainant), unverified (the supposed lounge staff member) and irrelevant (Dr. Eliot, who was unconnected to the matter). Had McKenna bothered to dig a bit deeper or double-check, she would have learned that the



One more anti-football fan

I would like to lend my support to Bruce Davison as a fellow UPEI student who feels that football and this university do not mix. With our yearly student costs rising so much each year, how can people expect a Board of Governors, that is constantly looking for ways to cut corners on spending, to agree to fund a football program which would require serious funding to get off the ground--not to mention the cost for the upkeep and running costs.

I'm tired of hearing about people whining that they had to go away to university in order to play football. I guess they forgot about the primary purpose that universities are here for: EDUCATION. If the only reason for your enrolment at university is to play college athletics, then why don't you go to a school that is only there for that reason? Leave this learning business for the people who take it seriously.

One reason that many people think that football would be a good idea is that it would draw people together. Well, I think that the university hockey and basketball games do a pretty good job of that. If you want to watch a sport outside, why not check out a soccer game, I'm sure that they would love some fans,

pub event she wrote about is no longer the excessive alcohol-fest it once was- there were no plans to attempt a liquidation of the Lounge's inventory last semester. For that matter, the

Take one anonymous complainant, add an allegedly drunken campus, stir in a topical but irrelevant RCMP alcohol controversy with just a hint of hypocrisy, and presto! Instant news.

"employee" McKenna questioned by phone for her article was not actually a Lounge employee (nor did he say he was)- and he claims that McKenna wildly misquoted him to boot.

This kind of newsmaking is far from rare- another recent instance would be the reaction of a *Guardian* reporter to the X-Press's then-forthcoming sex supplement last October.

plus it's pretty enjoyable. Or if football is all that you want to see, then go and watch the city league play. The Potato Bowl wasn't bad football.

In short, be happy that you can play football on PEI-- at least you're getting a chance to play. The jump from that level to university would probably be more than most players in that league could handle. It's not like PEI is just a big hotbed of football talent. You have to be realistic enough to realize that the university cannot afford a luxury like a football team. So why don't you stay home on a Sunday afternoon, do some school work and watch the NFL? It seems like a plan to me.

Sincerely fed up with football,
Scott MacDonald

"E-Mail: The New Drug?": A legit commentary or a cry for help?

In response to "Iceman"'s commentary in this year's eleventh issue, I feel he is merely an E-mail junkie who is blaming a good thing for his non-existent will power. That's the problem with this country, people are always looking for things to dump on. Next thing you know, he will be trying to "ice" pub-nites.

For "Iceman" and all you other pessimistic people, there is a way to censor E-mail from your system. Before you have a cow, know your facts (I just got a message, I have to go!).
Sincerely,
Jean-Claude Van Damme

Our advance poll for the supplement incurred no publicity or negative feedback until the *Guardian* article saw print, and even after its probe into how "shocking" our supplement might be, we received no significant negative feedback. Like the recent alcohol controversy at the Barn, this was simply an unsuccessful attempt by a reporter to make news.

Though reporters are often stereotyped as sensationalistic muck-rakers, the majority of journalists are dedicated, ethical chroniclers of current events as they come to light. It's a shame that the profession's credibility should be damaged as often as it is by irresponsible journalists. Leading or self-perpetuating journalism is self-indulgent and ultimately self-destructive, eroding its own authority. The more reporters cry wolf, the less attention they'll command from the sheep they presume their readers to be. Thankfully, you can't always pull the wool over the public's eyes.

Sean McQuaid
Non-alcoholic editor

**NEED A CAR...
...CALL A STAR!**

892-6581

Avonlea Bookstore
14 Water Street
Summerside
436-1921

Wanted:
Used paperback literature
Joyce, Dickens, Atwood, etc.