

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 11 Issue 24
June 11, 2003

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CLASS OF 2003

Worth The Loss

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talks about his weight loss surgery

Class of 2003

Debbie Jabbour prepares for grad

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Jun 11, 2003

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We love to hear from you! Send your letters to voice@ausu.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter in the Voice.

Quote of the Week

Millions long for immortality who don't know what to do on a rainy afternoon.
-- Susan Ertz

THE VOICE

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EDITORIAL PAGES

Convocation is here! SUPPORT AU GRADS.

Send your best wishes for our graduating class, to be published in the next Voice. I will also forward best wishes up to the AUSU office to be taken to convocation, if there is time. Let them know how proud of them we all are.

The Voice would like to congratulate AUSU President Debbie Jabbour, who will graduate this week with Great Distinction! Way to kick ass, Debbie! Your accomplishment is immense, and we look forward to your final instalment of the graduation article.

Friday, June 13m - Convocation - Graduate Ceremony
Saturday, June 14 - Convocation - Undergraduate Ceremony

THIS WEEK

WORTH THE LOSS - An Exclusive interview with AUSU Council member Nicholas Palamarchuk. 7 weeks ago, Nicholas underwent a radical stomach bypass surgery, and he's doing great. This week he shares his story with Voice readers. It is sure to inspire you.

Just CAUS - CAUS Chair Shirley Barg shares more insights about the proposed Alberta Government education bill 43

GRADUATION 2003 - Read Debbie Jabbour's second graduation story - this time the convocation of her daughter, who obtained a chemistry degree, with distinction. Next week, hear more about Debbie's own graduation.

AUSU Council Report - read my perspective on the most recent AUSU council meeting.

NEXT WEEK: A convocation special issue. Coverage of convocation will start next week, and follow through the next few issues. Don't miss it! One day, it could be you.

CONGRATULATIONS AU GRADUATES!



CAUS represents university students across Alberta. Visit the CAUS and the Tuition CAUSE websites to learn more about what CAUS is doing to keep Alberta tuitions affordable.

CAUS: <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/caus/alpha/>
Tuition Cause: <http://tc.su.ualberta.ca/>

AUSU COMMITTEES SEEK MEMBERS



AUSU Committees are looking for student members who can volunteer just a few hours a month to answer email or attend teleconferences. Anyone who wants to become more involved with AUSU Student Council can gain great experience and insight through committee work.

The External Committee, chaired by Shirley Barg, needs representatives from Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Northern Canada. Contact Shirley at sbarg@ausu.org if you would like to get involved, and help improve services to AU students in your area.

The Academic Committee was dormant for awhile, but now it's back up and running under chair Tamra Ross Low. We will be working on ways to help assess student satisfaction with AU's academic services, and need student input into how we should collect data, and what questions we should be asking. A past project of the Academic Committee was the Course and Program surveys on the AUSU website. If you want to have some input into our next project, contact Tamra at trosslow@ausu.org for more information.

Attention Artists

AUSU is seeking artwork for the cover of the 2003/04 student planner.

A prize of \$250 is being offered, and your work will be seen by thousands of students.

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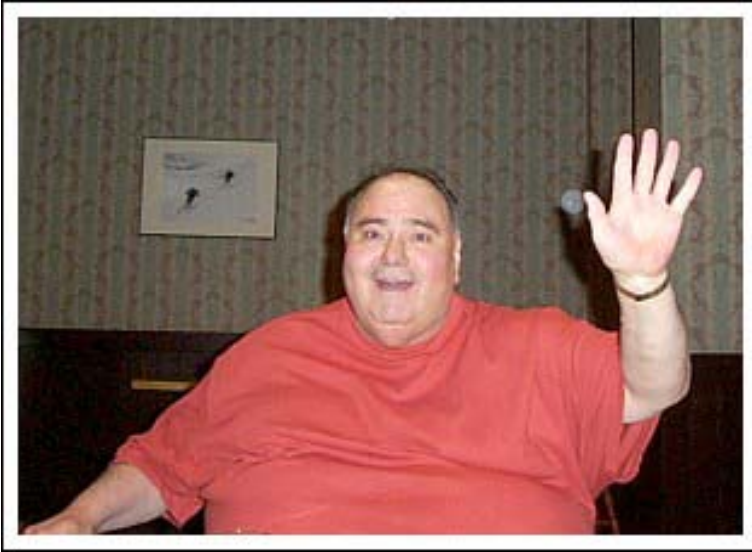
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WORTH THE LOSS

Adjusting to Life After Weight Reduction Surgery

By Tamra Ross Low



When I asked AUSU Council member Nicholas Palamarchuk in a recent interview why he decided to undergo an extensive gastric bypass surgery seven weeks ago, he replied simply: "I was tired of being fat."

To be more specific, he was tired of the limitations placed on him by his weight, which had topped out at 438 pounds. Nicholas had obtained most of his first degree - a Bachelor of Education - through Edmonton's U of A, but when his weight became a barrier to remaining an on-campus student [he had to walk a couple of miles a day to get from class to class], U of A recommended that he take his final courses through AU. He took their advice and became an AU student to finish his first degree in

2000. If it were not for distance ed, however, completing the degree would have been much more difficult.

Nicholas's weight also became a barrier to accessing emergency health care. Nick is allergic to bee and wasp stings, and because he lives in a rural area, he has to carry an injector to administer drugs to himself in the case of a sting, and then he must call for emergency treatment. On one occasion, as he was rushed to the hospital in an ambulance, his condition became so dire that EMTs thought they might have to perform an emergency tracheotomy to open his throat and let air into his lungs. He arrived at the hospital in time, but was later told that if the emergency procedure had been required, they might not have been able to open his throat in time due to the amount of weight on his neck. Another time, Nick had to wait for the fire department to assist in putting him in the ambulance. He feared that one day, this type of delay could cost him his life.

On top of this, he started to experience high blood pressure and other weight-related medical problems. His knees are both quite arthritic due to an injury in early life, and one knee is now "just bone scraping on bone." Doctors have been unwilling to operate on his knees until he loses weight. Nicholas knew that something drastic had to happen.

Not only did he choose to make some dramatic lifestyle changes and undergo a serious surgery to alter his weight - Nicholas has also been quite willing to talk about his weight problem, and the restrictions it has imposed on his life. His story is not an uncommon one, but we seldom hear from others in his situation. So many suffer in silence because they are ashamed of their weight. Morbid Obesity is on the rise, and often sufferers comprise an almost invisible minority. Every obese person has a story of something that they could not do, or a place that they could not go, because of their size. It can be a barrier even to obtaining an education, not only because of the extensive walking required to attend classes on most university campuses, but because very big people might fear walking into a classroom filled with desks that they cannot get into, or the potential hazards of sitting on flimsy chairs.

For Nicholas, the choice to undergo surgery became very simple as his health problems increased. The path to the operating room was not an easy one to tread, however. Before Nicholas could even have his surgery, he had to spend extensive time under the care of a personal nutritionist and doctor, in a sort of training regimen for how

he would eat post-surgery. He had to show, for example, that he could discipline himself to eat meals as small as a half cup of food at a time.

Eating tiny meals is a necessity after weight reduction surgery. Nicholas had what is traditionally known as a stomach stapling, but in his case doctors placed a vertical bound around his stomach instead, to reduce the volume of his stomach from the normal 300 ml to only 5 ml. Additionally, they performed a Y bypass on his colon, reducing the length from 28 feet, to 2.5 feet. This means that food passes through his system very quickly, and absorption is lessened. Essentially, food now passes straight down through his stomach, and then quickly through his intestine. All food is processed within 2 hours. His doctor performed a bypass rather than removing the unused colon so that if Nicholas later loses too much weight, the bypass can be reversed. The use of a band rather than staples may also reduce complications that can arise if staples rip out of the stomach. The band has some give - this makes it safer, but it also means that it can stretch over time if the large meals are eaten.

Closing up Nicholas's stomach incision after the surgery was quite difficult, due to the size of his stomach, and he says that he not only had stitches, but his incision was crossed train-track style with large steel staples from top to bottom.

Such a drastic alteration to the digestive tract means that he must learn to eat very differently. To begin with, he ate only soft, bland foods like Cream of Wheat. Slowly he is introducing new foods, one at a time, as his stomach heals. He says that he makes sure he's near a sink when trying something new, because he's never sure what he will be able to keep down. Certain foods that he used to love - like steak - will never again be on his menu. His new, abbreviated digestive system could not handle it. His food must be easily digestible, and in small portions. At first he was only able to eat 1/4 cup of food at a meal, but now he's up to 1/2 cup. In time he will increase to a full cup at each meal, but no more.

This sounds like a very small amount, but when you take into account that a normal human stomach is only the size of your fist, and that medical associations like the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation say that most people eat far more at a sitting than they should, then these portions seems a little less drastic. Nicholas must now eat 3 meals per day, plus 3 snacks. Eating small meals frequently not only keeps him from overloading his belly, but will also work to increase his metabolism - a weight loss secret that works for many people without surgery.

He now must avoid foods that expand in the stomach, like popcorn, dried fruit, and sodas [unless they are allowed to go flat first]. Sugar makes him feel nauseated, and he can't drink milk, although cultured dairy products like yogurt and cheese are fine. His diet now contains a much higher proportion of vegetables, and Nicholas says he uses the Canada Food Guide as his template. He's eating peanut butter and digestive crackers, and will soon introduce some raw veggies into his diet. Because of the limitations of his stomach size, he does not drink anything for a half hour before or after a meal, otherwise the amount he drinks will reduce how much food he can have.

When I talked with Nicholas, I wanted to know how he was doing, and if it was all worth it.

It turns out that in just 7 weeks, he's lost an incredible 68 pounds! His medication is already down to half, and he's starting to regain his strength after a lengthy convalescence. Early after his surgery, he drove his car a little sooner than he was supposed to, and there was a little leakage around his stomach and he had to spend more time resting. Stubborn as he is, he soon tried driving again with the same result. Now he's doing well, though, and can drive without complications. He's not quite ready to do his full his exercise regimen, but he's getting a start on this by working out his calf muscles while sitting and doing some gentle half situps. In time he'll start walking - something he used to do all the time - and doing a muscle building workout.

Nicholas is at an advantage in that he used to work out very regularly - in fact he exercised too much at times. He also used to walk several miles a day, and he's looking forward to being able to do that again.

His doctors feel that he'll lose about 200 pounds in the first year, although results are hard to predict since it depends on how his metabolism reacts, and other factors.

When asked if it was worth it, Nicholas says that if he was faced with the same decision today, he would not hesitate. He's finally losing weight and his outlook is excellent. He's a full time AU student, now taking his second degree in Health Administration, and he plans to continue on to AU graduate studies. In fact, he's already taken one AU grad course as a non-program student. He's also been a member of AUSU council since march of 2002, and this week he'll be travelling to Athabasca in order to support this year's graduates.

Nicholas was tired of being tired, of sleeping all the time, and finding it hard to walk and climb stairs. Now he's excited that he's finally moving toward removing those limitations from his life, and he appears to be very accepting of the sacrifices that he's had to make in order to achieve that goal.

Nicholas credits his outlook on faith. He's a deeply spiritual man, who once planned to become a priest, and who has dreamed of working with children. He has overcome many obstacles in his life beyond his weight problem, and several years ago made some significant changes and became a very different person from who he once was. Nicholas says that these days, he lets most things just roll off his back, where-as in the past he would have allowed his perfectionist tendencies to take over. His story is inspiring, and shows that with determination, anyone can dramatically change their life and become a new person.

The Voice will continue to follow Nicholas's progress, and will run updated interviews and photos as the months go by. I think I speak for everyone on council when I say that Nicholas is an incredibly warm and inspiring man, and many of us who have worked with him have felt like we've gone through parts of the surgery process with him. We knew when it was booked, and we all talked and wondered about him when over the week he was in hospital. Some councillors visited him while he was recovering, and relayed news to council and to me as well. It has felt very much like a family affair. Because he has shared so much of his story with others, perhaps Voice readers will also feel like they know Nicholas, and become inspired by his success.

We'll keep you posted, and feel free to forward your best wishes to Nicholas via the Voice, or write him directly with your questions at npalamar@ausu.org.

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We return to the continuing drama of Bill 43. In this episode, four students—members of CAUS—supported by two policy researchers and a note-taker ascend to the 11th floor of the downtown Edmonton offices of Alberta Learning. In their satchels, the CAUS emissaries carry important documents that outline the locations of dead ends, blind curves, and dark corners contained within the innocent-looking white pages of Bill 43. The CAUS mission: to have a frank discussion with a top Alberta Learning representative about the pitfalls of Bill 43.

All right, it wasn't really all that dramatic. But in reality, no other government action in at least a decade has had the potential for such broad reaching negative effects on students' organizations as has Bill 43. It's not only Alberta students who are concerned about the implications. National student groups like the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) and the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) are keeping an eye on Bill 43, knowing that if it passes without amendments in Alberta, other provincial governments may follow suit.

On May 29, CAUS members met with Connie Harrison of Alberta Learning to go over the proposed Post-Secondary Learning Act. This Act amalgamates the Universities Act, the Colleges Act, and the Technical Institutes Act into one piece of legislation. The Act received first reading earlier in May and was then tabled until the fall session.

One of the key areas of concern with the Act is that a good deal of critical detail, such as the tuition fee policy, and purpose and structure of students' associations has been removed from legislation and will, instead, be captured within regulations. I realize this doesn't sound like cause for alarm; however, while changes in legislation are done publicly with opportunities for public debate, changes in regulation can be made with or without consulting with stakeholders.

The usual reason for moving something from legislation to regulation is to give it more flexibility. CAUS strongly believes that areas such as the tuition fee policy, which is the government's commitment to accessible and affordable post-secondary education, should not be subject to the whims of government. Accessibility and affordability should be chiseled into stone.

Another dark corner that CAUS pointed out to Alberta Learning is that of the mandate of students' associations. In the new Act, the mandate has been downgraded from being the "official medium of communication between the students of a university and the board" (Universities Act, section 57.1) to that of "maintaining appropriate communications" (Bill 43, section 95.1). Unfortunately, "appropriate communications" is such an ambiguous term and can be interpreted so many different ways.

CAUS also discussed the auditing of students' associations, and when we asked why this section was included, we were told that some politicians wanted it there in the event that a students' organization "runs amuck," and that the section was added late, just days before the Act was printed. It appears that some politicians aren't aware of the extensive accountability practices already in place within students' unions' constitutions and bylaws that have been effective in reprimanding and removing negligent councillors and executive in the past. It also appears that little forethought on the organizational implications went into the inclusion of this section. Students' unions have a mandate of representing the voice of its members and being fully accountable to them. If a students' union is put into a position where, on one hand, it's accountable to the students, and on the other hand, it has to be accountable to the board, the students' union could find itself in a position of severe conflict. Which masters should they serve?

Besides the areas of concern I've mentioned, there are numerous other ones, such as the proposed Act giving universities the power to delegate authority to any committee or sub-committee, including the authority to develop and implement additional mandatory student fees. CAUS has brought all these problematic issues to the attention of Alberta Learning and will continue to do so through informal and formal submissions and meetings.

In spite of, or more accurately, because of Bill 43, there have been some positive happenings. For the first time, CAUS has teamed up with its counterpart, the Alberta Colleges and Technical Institutes Students Executive Council (ACTISEC) to develop and propose amendments to the Act. The resulting alliance represents the voices of 150,000 Alberta post-secondary students, and thousands more Athabasca University students across Canada and around the world.

Another positive is that the President of Athabasca University, Dr. Dominique Abrioux, is pushing Alberta Learning for more student representation on AU's Governing Council. AU administration has also expressed its opposition to the auditing section.

I invite any AU student who would like more information about Bill 43 or about CAUS to email me at sbarg@ausu.org.

Shirley Barg
Chair, Council of Alberta University Students

The Council of Alberta University Students provides a combined provincial voice for all students of the four Alberta universities: University of Alberta, Athabasca University, University of Calgary, and University of Lethbridge. Post-secondary education decisions made by the Alberta government affect all Athabasca University students. Shirley Barg, Chair of CAUS, is the Vice-President of the Athabasca University Students' Union

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URBAN-RURAL COMFORT

By Wayne E. Benedict

Luckily for me, while I was growing up my father was equally comfortable in the city and in the country. After separating from my mother, he and I (at age 4) settled in the suburbs of Vancouver BC, where I lived until my late teens. Of course, I was very accustomed to the hustle and bustle of city life and I learned the street-smarts that most urban teenagers do. But to my parent's credit, I was also exposed to the wilderness at a very young age. Every summer, from the age of eight, I would spend a month with my mother and step-father camping and such; and weeks in the deep wilderness with my father. I saw my first wild grizzlies at that age and cultivated a lust for the wilderness rivalling that of my father. By my early teens I was an avid hiker and hunter, and I practically lived the ten months per year of urban life waiting for the two months of rural life to come around.

There is definitely a strong sense of self-assurance that comes with the ability to survive in the wild; one that carries over to the rest of an urbanite's life. I know that the woodland experiences that my parents, in their own ways, gave to me in my youth moulded me into the man that I am today. After all, if a person can face a charging bear and live to tell about it; just how bad can a bad day at the office be anyway? These days with work, studying and the daily grind, I find myself without the time I once had to retreat to the woods and regain some semblance of peace and sanity. But I know it is important that I make time to do so; not only for me, but more so for my children. I want to give them the same gift that my parents gave to me - an ambidextrous urban-rural comfortableness.



Last week, while my wife was out of town and I was acting as Mr. Mom, I took the kids to stay over at their grandpa's house. When my father retired seven years ago he settled in Penny BC, a very rural town of which I have previously written. His house is set virtually in the middle of wilderness and he often is faced with wildlife right in his yard. He has seen a grizzly chasing down a moose, been chased by black-bear, and shot a moose all within yards of his house. Although my son and daughter are only 6 and 5 respectively and too young to hike into the high-country, they are old

enough for wilderness exposure and they are awed by nature's bounty. The three of us set out with our van loaded for an overnight stay and on our 24 hour round trip, we saw 7 black bears, three moose, and three mule deer. A couple of weeks earlier on a trip to Penny, our family sighted a similar amount of wildlife plus two grizzlies—the first wild grizzly (outside of the Calgary Zoo) that my children



have encountered. They were thrilled.

Once at Penny, the four of us made a small camp fire and roasted wieners and marshmallows a mile or so from my father's house. While we ate, a black bear broke out of the edge of the tree-line and stood up, sniffing to sense what we were. After about 30 seconds it went back into the trees and the kids chattered about the sighting for a few minutes. Unknown to them, I am reliving my early rural encounters through their eyes; the first wild (and giant) grizzly; the first black bear, moose, & deer; and all of the countless wildlife experiences since then. If I do my job well, my children will become adults who are equally at home doing business in a major urban centre, or watching grizzlies forage for food on the side of an alpine mountain. My bet is that they will prefer the latter - as do I.



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- Picture 3: Bear number 1 on the Penny trip.
- Picture 4: Left to right: Wayne Benedict's dog, son, and daughter.
- Picture 5: Left to right: Wayne Benedict's father, son, and daughter.
- Picture 6: Bear number 4 on the Penny trip; watching the family roast wieners over the fire.

Wayne E. Benedict is a Locomotive Engineer at BC Rail and President of the National, Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada (CAW) Local 110. He is working toward his Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations at Athabasca University.



DIGITAL MADNESS – COPY CONTROL STUPIDITY

By Karl Low

They say you never have a second chance to make a first impression. This is advice that the recording industry would have done well to take as, until now, I had never really thought specifically about any one record label. Now I have, and the results are probably not what the label would like.



What brought on this revelation was receiving the new album *Think Tank* by Blur. The album is put out by the EMI record label, but is not on a CD. Oh it looks like a CD, and, for the most part, it acts like a CD, but if you look the whole thing over, you'll note that it's missing that little "Compact Disc Digital Audio" label that all actual CDs have.

Instead it has their new Copy Controlled icon. What this icon essentially means is that you are purchasing digital audio that doesn't work.



Typically when I get a new CD I like to put it into my computer and rip all the tracks to MP3 format. This makes it easy for me to deal with the music instead of just the CD. It lets me easily set up play-lists in my music player, mix and match the music with other music that I have, move it to our little MP3 player if we want to take the music with us, and, equally important, lets me put away the CD and case so that I have a little less clutter on my desk. Imagine my surprise then, when putting the Blur album into my drive and seeing a little window box popping up telling me that it wanted to install something to let me play the album. Taking a quick look at the sleeve I noticed that it said it was copy-controlled and assumed it would simply be adding some registration information or something like that so that record labels could track what computer the songs came from if I were to upload them to the internet.

Instead, it installed its own little player to play the album. This little player is, quite simply, pathetic. It cannot be used to make a play-list of any sort, which means that I cannot re-order the tracks, skip the ones I don't want to hear, repeat the ones I like, or add any other music that is already on my computer to the mix. Naturally it won't record any of the music to my computer at all either.

Wanting to know a little more about what was going on, I did some searching on the internet, and came up with EMI's Copy Controlled [FAQ list](#). One of the more blatant lies on that page is question number four, which reads:

"Does the Copy Control technology cause any degradation in sound quality?"

"We would not endorse anything that would damage the quality of our artists' music. Our providers are testing continually to secure best audio/video quality."

The group Blur, for those of you who might be unaware, write techno and electronic music. Like many electronic groups before them, they have made this latest album in a "seamless" style, which means that each track blends directly into the next with no breaks between songs. The copy-controlled player, however, automatically inserts a small break between every track. This is jarring to say the least, as the music gives no hint of ending then suddenly pauses for a second before beginning again. To say that this does not damage the quality of the artists' music is simply ludicrous.

What is worse, however, is that the Copy Control does not even work that well. When attempting to show my wife what has happened, she found no difficulties at all in having her regular music player read the album and was even able to rip the tracks onto the computer, taking the exact same steps that I did. When I later put the album into my computer a third time, I found that in one drive the album would be recognized by my music

player (though strangely, it was unable to actually produce sound) while in the other it caused a minor lock-up of my system. Of course, once the MP3s are recorded, there is nothing to prevent sharing them across the internet or burning new CDs with them. Even if my wife had been unable to rip the tracks, the copy control still could have been avoided with the simple use of a patch cord from a CD player to the back of my computer, and recording the audio tracks directly to my hard-drive. Once there, I could easily convert them to MP3 format. EMI's FAQ even acknowledges that the copy control technology only prevents (sometimes) direct digital copying. They seem not to realize that it only takes one copy to be made for the music to spread all over the internet. Indeed, a quick search of the peer-to-peer network Shareaza showed me that I could already download the entire album if I wanted to. This of course means that buying these Copy Controlled albums will simply wind up costing me more money to pay for a technology that is a hassle for me, and does not work for the labels using it. The only people who really profit are the shysters who are selling the technology.

Further, this technology specifically goes against the spirit of legislation in Canada. The CPCC or Canadian Private Copying Collective have lobbied the federal government and succeeded in getting legislation passed that imposes levies on blank, recordable CDs and cassettes, to combat the effects of piracy. (A warning, if you go to their site, you will find none of the links work. Simply add the "www" to the beginning of any link that you wish to go to. Apparently for a group concerned about the uses of technology, they have little idea how to use it themselves.)

Because of these levies, however, it is acknowledged that it is perfectly legal for Canadian consumers to copy music for their own personal use. (It is still illegal to upload it to the general internet – as that does not fall under personal use). This Copy Controlled technology prevents that. In essence, Canadian Consumers are now paying an extra levy for absolutely nothing. It seems reasonable to suggest that if Canadians are going to pay a levy on blank media, they should be able to actually use that media for what the levy is intended to compensate for. On the other hand, if record labels have taken steps to prevent Canadians from exercising their rights, they should be refunding the money that they take as compensation for this exercise.

So, EMI has made their first impression on me. And, true to the adage, they will not be getting a second chance as I won't be purchasing more music from them.

- The Compact Disc Digital Audio Logo is a trademark of Phillips and Sony
- The Copy Controlled Logo is a trademark of the IFPI



WRITE FOR THE VOICE!

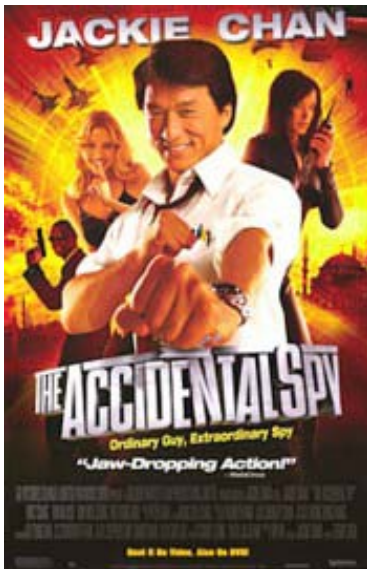
Contact The Voice editor at voice@ausu.org for details on writing for The Voice. Provide a sample selection of writing and preferred genre.



THE ACCIDENTAL SPY

A film review

By Laura Seymour



Well well well...I've found my favourite Jackie Chan film! Hilariously, his character Bei is a failed exercise equipment salesman. He becomes a spy by foiling a jewellery heist. This leads him to Liu, a private investigator who convinces Bei he is actually the long-lost son of a wealthy Korean businessman. He's soon involved in an international conspiracy revolving around the cure to a lung virus.

What makes this film better - or just different - from other Jackie Chan films is that there is so much mystery and suspense in it. The scenery is breathtaking and there is more serious content. This is no doubt because Jackie produced the project at a cost of 25 million dollars - the largest amount ever for a film in Hong Kong (at that time) (Cinecom).

This film is so opposite to Jackie's usual work, which features constant comic antics and lightweight plots. Don't get me wrong ... I ADORE Jackie's antics. I bought *First Strike* simply for the great comic touches throughout. The shark scene with a bad guy and knives was hilarious. When the knife wielding foes sliced one another's thumbs open - a dangerous condition when sharks are about - I nearly collapsed laughing; the scenes of Jackie chasing bad guys wearing a hilarious kid's white polar bear hat made me grab for the Kleenex. But, when all is said and done the *Accidental Spy* showing on local Alberta movie channels is enough to take the cake.

Shot in locations like Hong Kong, Korea and Istanbul it is the most scenic film I've seen him do.

Jackie's character is highly intuitive and keeps combating crime with his martial arts training and flashes of intuition. Since all that activity puts him in the limelight, he finds out his birth father is dying in Korea and is wealthy. Surprise, surprise! Dad wants to leave his money to his birth son but needs some proof. Jackie goes there and soon the bad guys follow and a crackerjack fight scene using defibrillators ensues. I was in danger of falling off the couch with that one! The king of martial arts is known for his unique fighting props but still the medical content and the "damage" they did was just too much laughter for one time!

Hmmmm...I guess I should include a bit more plot! Well, let me see. Dad was a Christian and left his son... no, not millions... a check for ten grand, a box and mystery. The box, we find out, has dad's cross, and a key in it. The key isn't for a house. Jackie goes to his mother's grave and notices a dried tulip and below it an inscription...in English, "WAIT FOR ME." It takes just a short while for Jackie to figure the inscription has enough letters to be a phone number. It has to be Istanbul according to the plot connections. The phone number leads to the Bank of Istanbul. Well, he quickly finds out the cross has his personal stamp on it and the key is to a safety deposit box. Inside the safety deposit there is a book and a pile of money.

Time for some fun ... there is a chase and round up with taxis that was quite unique, especially when he fights the bad guys through the back window of the taxi! Trust Jackie to make me wonder how on earth he does that! Later he gets away and goes for a "relaxing" Turkish bath. Hehehe, of course -- not quite! I laughed just as hard at Jackie sliding across the marble tops of ancient Turkish baths. Too funny! Soap, sliding, and martial arts! Take a look at the film just for those clever defence moments.

As Jackie escapes, he gets into a market and we get the "gratuitous" nudity that gave the film a PG-13 rating. HAH! The Chinese are so tame! I can hear everyone in Hong Kong wanting more, but blushing as they do so! His butt is cute but we've seen it before, so after an extended scene with locals pulling his "cover ups" off and his quick move replacements I didn't expect him to dazzle me. He turns a corner into an alley and finds a huge white cloth hanging to dry. He pulls a hole for his head and begins to spin. It's not a simple as that and it's amazing to watch. Something seems almost spiritual or otherworldly to me as he pulls this off. I gasped. I am amazed. And then of course I roar when women walk by dressed exactly as he is -- to a tee.

Also amazing is Jackie being in a film with a pretty lady who is addicted to a super drug -- a derivative of opium.

I really recommend this Jackie Chan film -- especially if you're open to a change in his style.

Laura Seymour first published herself, at age 8. She has since gone on to publish a cookbook for the medical condition Candida. She is working toward her B.A. (Psyc).



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FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

Graduation Special - The Class of 2003

by Debbie Jabbour

Author's note: This is the second of three articles that will detail three very special and very different graduation experiences. I have the privilege this year of participating in three graduations - my youngest daughter has graduated from high school, my second eldest daughter has graduated from university, and I will be graduating myself on June 14! Each of us will be celebrating a very unique kind of achievement, and each of us face very different futures.



Last week's article detailed the experience of my youngest daughter's graduation from high school – an event accompanied by an elaborate ritual of dress, hair, makeup, limousine and parties. My second eldest daughter, Marni, also graduated a few weeks before from university, and her ceremony and attitude towards the whole process was very different.

Unlike my youngest daughter and her friends, who seemed to place little importance on the commencement ceremony, and more on the party afterwards, Marni was not interested in even attending her reception. For her it was all about the accomplishment of graduating from university, and for her,

the moment she crossed the stage to receive her diploma was the highlight. She graduated with a BSc (major in Chemistry, minor in Music) from Concordia University College, her hard work earning her a degree "with distinction," along with a science award which she had received several weeks before at the Concordia awards ceremonies.

Concordia is a smaller university college based in Lutheran theology. It initially was affiliated with the University of Alberta, then became an independent institution. This year marked their 16th Annual graduation convocation ceremonies. Although not of the Lutheran religious persuasion, my daughter chose it because it had been highly recommended to her by a former music student of hers. It turned out to be a very good choice, as the small classroom sizes gave her an opportunity to build a close rapport with her professors, and her summers were spent working in the Concordia science lab. During her last two years, she had a wonderful chance to get involved in an original chemistry research project, one which earned her a prestigious award at the 2003 Western Canada Undergraduate Chemistry Conference.

Because she and I were both full time university students for the last few years, this gave a very unique slant to our relationship. Both of us have been incredibly busy and have had little time to spend together. But we both understand very well what each of us is going through. We've also been able to collaborate on some projects, such as a music therapy presentation she did, and a communications studies course she helped me with. Our collaboration has been somewhat limited, since we are studying very different topics, but we proofread each others' essays and assignments and commiserate when exam time comes around. It's been a wonderful opportunity for me to learn more about science too, and I regret not pursuing a BSc myself instead of a BA. She also provided me an on-campus link to student life that helped me better understand the uniqueness of the AU student experience.



Her graduation day began with a private breakfast at the home of the President of Concordia, attended by a select group of the top graduates. From there the grads all headed over to the University building for the morning ceremony. Although the grads all entered ceremoniously, this was more of a religious service, accompanied by Concordia's excellent choir, and led by the resident pastor. His talk was the kind of forward-looking discourse I expected (and did not hear) at my youngest daughter's graduation. He encouraged the grads to build on their accomplishments as they went out into the world, always keeping respect for others and a sense of spirituality at the forefront. I found it quite inspiring.

After that ceremony, Marni and I headed off to collect the rest of the members of the family for the afternoon commencement. This was being held at Edmonton's Agricom, a dark, barn-like building where trade shows are generally held. By the time we arrived, the huge room was almost completely full, and we were forced to sit at the very back. Graduands entered the building to the sound of a marching band, followed by the national anthem. The convocation address was given by a Mr. Frank Kobie, former chair of Concordia's Board of Regents, and was entitled "Is it the Truth?" It was an interesting talk, but I must say it was the most negative and discouraging discourse I have ever heard at a graduation ceremony. He first recited lists and examples of people who were dishonest and who took advantage of others in a big way (ie Enron and other such corporate scandals) then elaborated on all the awful things going on in the world. I kept waiting for him to add at some point, "the world is a really messed up place but you graduates can go out and change things" but he never did. In retrospect it was very much a religious-inspirational type discourse, more of a sermon than a graduation speech. It was probably appropriate for a university college operated by a religious group, but I found it almost depressing!



There were over 300 graduates, and I was surprised to see the after-degree diploma recipients also included (although they only numbered a few dozen). Each was announced, knelt to receive their hood, then walked across the stage to shake the hand of the university president. Those with distinction or high distinction also received a gold cord. At the beginning of the presentation, the audience was asked to hold their applause until the end. This, of course, is one of my pet peeves, since I think the audience should be allowed to acknowledge each person as they are introduced. When no applause is allowed, family members and friends compensate by cheering and yelling instead. Of course some grads are more popular than others, or have more friends and family

present, and receive more cheers. Another daughter, Amaya (who readers will know from previous articles) and I were standing up at the front of the stage to take pictures. She started to feel really bad for those who were announced without anyone cheering for them and decided to become the personal cheerleader for them! She would wait a split second to see if anyone else was going to cheer, and if not, she'd yell "go Jill!" or "yeah Mark!" or "whoohoo Bradley!"

I was a bit embarrassed by her antics until a lady came up and said, "can you please cheer for my daughter when she is announced? I want to do it but she'll be really mad at me!"

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, the graduates were led out to the tune of "The Sting". I thought the choice of music was rather odd, but it did seem to fit with the theme of the convocation address! The audience spilled

out into the concourse of the Agricom and although we tried to gather together in the crowd for some group pictures, we were unsuccessful. It was really not the greatest venue, although in Edmonton it's one of the more popular graduation locations.



life behind to face an uncertain future. Instead you have the sense and confidence that you are now prepared to grab hold of life, take what you have learned, and make a mark on the world. Your attitude towards graduation is dignified and appropriate to the occasion.

Unlike my youngest daughter, who is planning to find a summer job so she can go shopping as soon as possible - Marni is taking some time to rest and recuperate. She is weighing her options, and is planning on working for a while before returning to university to pursue a masters degree and possibly going into med school at some point. I asked her how she felt at achieving this degree. She said, "Mom, I picked the hardest subject I could find - chemistry - because I needed the challenge, and I just wanted to prove to myself and everyone else that I could do it. I've succeeded, and now I want to try out some other things, and spend some time enjoying activities I've put on hold, like music and dance."

Her comments made me think about how wonderful it is to graduate and have a lifetime ahead where you can still experiment with options and try new and different things.

So now I head into my own very special day - my own graduation. The culmination of seven years of hard work and sacrifice. How will it feel to cross that stage? Will I be able to maintain some decorum, or will I lose it and break into tears of joy as I receive my degree? Will I party like a 16-year old? Stay tuned...



Debbie is a native Edmontonian, and a single parent with four daughters. She has worked as a professional musician for most of her life, and has enjoyed a rich variety of life experiences - with many more to come! Debbie is working towards an eventual doctorate in psychology, and currently serves as the president of the Athabasca University Students Union.



Dear Sandra,

I have a serious problem that I hope you can help me with. I found out that my manager is doing some things at work that are not very ethical. Some of his misdeeds include misusing business funds (e.g. Takes his wife for dinner and his buddies for drinks claiming these personal outings as business expenses), treating employees like dirt and telling lies to the owner of the store where I work. What should I do? I love my job and the other people I work with and I don't want to lose my job, but it's getting harder and harder to work with this man! What should I do?

Upset in Ontario

Dear Upset,

As kids we called it tattling, in the grown-up work world we call it whistle-blowing. It is easy to do the whistle-blowing if you are asked or forced to perform unethical acts yourself, but when it comes to blowing the whistle on someone else doing them, it can get to be pretty nasty.

Ethics are based on generally accepted principles of right and wrong. Teaching ethics in universities and colleges has become big business, it's just too bad it's not a *required* course. Most companies and professional organizations have specific ethical codes that employees should adhere to; this way an employee has a better sense of knowing what exactly upper management considers ethical and unethical. If an act that is deemed as unethical derives from an established code of ethics, there is more support from both the company and your co-workers than if it is simply derived from a personal ethical sense.

On the flip side, even though ethical codes and standards are in place stating that employees should behave in a particular way, enforcing these codes and standards is extremely difficult. Certain codes are also up for interpretation; for example a company may promote honesty in their code of ethics, but what is their definition of honesty? It all comes down to one's personal values. No one is 100% honest, we all tell little white lies (e.g. telling a friend you can't attend their Tupperware party because you are busy that day, when you are not just to spare their feelings), but each one of us differs as to where the line is drawn between a white lie and full-fledged dishonesty.

So what are your choices?

- **Do nothing. Maybe the problem will just go away.** You'd better hope that no one else knows that you know he is being unethical, because if his misdeeds ever come out along with the fact that you knew all about it, you'll most likely be in the same boat as your manager – the unemployment boat. If he is getting away with it now, do you really believe his behavior will change? Probably not, meaning you are eventually going to get fed up and quit and the circle will continue with some other poor chump taking your place wondering if they should blow the whistle.

- **Tell your manager that you know what he is doing is wrong and ask him to stop.** I'd pack your bags on this one first as you'll probably have something blamed on you the next day resulting in your dismissal. If you don't get fired immediately your work environment will be about as painful as childbirth or gallstones. If you confront someone who is being "bad" they will go out of their way to discredit you before you make your knowledge of them public. He may not try to discredit you immediately; instead he'll spend weeks or months preparing his case against you. He may resort to questioning other employees and even customers about things you have done or said, probably amplifying the actual incidence 10 times to discredit you. Maybe, you'll open his eyes and he'll realize what he is doing is wrong and he'll stop, but I wouldn't bet on it.
- **Go straight to the top boss.** This will probably work as your manager is mispending your boss's money; try to have some physical proof to present to your boss rather than just hearsay. However, what about those employees back at your level that may have been loyal to your manager. He may not have treated every employee like dirt. Once he finds out you "told" on him, his anger will probably propel him to take you down with him; make sure there are NO skeletons in your closet for the reasons I've stated above. On the other hand if he is treating employees like dirt, you may gain some respect by getting rid of him. Your main boss, if you handle the situation with the utmost professionalism, may even give you a raise or promotion OR, he could see you as a trouble maker, it's hard to say.
- **Be Anonymous.** Don't expect an "anonymous" tip to result in the dismissal of your manager, I'm sure the FBI gets thousands of "anonymous" tips every day from disgruntled wives, co-workers and just plain crazy people convinced that Satan lives next door and is planning to take over the world. Face it, there's no credibility in an anonymous tip.
- **Go External.** Call up the newspaper or the labor board to "expose" your manager. If you choose this option, it is highly recommended that you resign first as you are unavoidably going to get fired if you have not tried to deal with the matter internally first.

Take into consideration how your decision will affect others in your personal circle (your family, friends, and co-workers), how it will affect the company in general and the people the company serves, and how it could affect your career. For each of those questions ask yourself what is the worst that could happen and the probability of it happening. Of the options presented above, one will just seem natural to you. A friend once told me that your initial reaction to a decision or question is usually the one your conscience is begging you to go with. I've given you some options and the repercussions involved and now it's up to you to decide how to proceed.

I realize that I presented options to you that may not seem too desirable, but in reality we are a society that frowns upon whistle-blowers that is why it is important to really think about how you plan to proceed. Good luck!

Sandra

I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! TELL ME YOUR TROUBLES. YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

This column is for entertainment only. Sandra is not a professional counsellor, but is an AU student who would like to give personal advice about school and life to her peers. Please forward your questions to Sandra care of smoore@ausu.org

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STEM CELL RESEARCH

Exploiting Little Frankenstein's Monsters, or a New Paradigm for Western Medicine?

By Tamra Ross Low



"Researchers [sic] at Dalhousie University are leading groundbreaking studies into stem cell treatment of Parkinson's disease and stroke and into the ethics of using stem cells from human embryos for research and therapeutic purposes" says a June 5th press release from the university.

This research, which seeks to utilize the regenerative properties of adult and embryonic stem cells, is expected to yield effective new treatments for a number of illnesses that were once thought incurable, including Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer's, type 1 Diabetes, and even spinal cord injuries.

Despite the incredible promise of this research, and its potential for restoring health and physical ability to the chronically ill and severely disabled, it has been stymied by public concerns about the ethics of

using embryonic cells. Some pro-life groups even claim that the practice amounts to the destruction of one human life, to save another. Oddly, the same argument is not applied to the harvesting of organs from brain-dead accident victims for transplantation into people in dire need of new organs.

The pro-life outrage over stem cell research, then, seems to imply that embryos are being created and destroyed solely for research purposes, whereas those who donate organs tend to die from accidents and other unavoidable causes.

This claim is misleading, and simply untrue. It also perpetuates a rampant misunderstanding about the nature of stem cell research. Here are some facts:

Stem cells are unspecialized human cells [meaning that they are not part of any organ, and they do not have a specific function] that can renew themselves over long periods of time through cellular division. Their special property is that under the right conditions, "these cells can be induced to become cells with special functions such as the beating cells of the heart muscle or the insulin-producing cells of the pancreas" (NIH).

Essentially, stem cells are microscopic remnants of the primordial soup that our bodies use to create new cells as needed. Newly fertilized embryos are very rich with stem cells, because they are in the process of being formed, and many such cells are needed to create tissues, organs, bones, and other body parts.

To many, the concept of the regeneration of body parts may sound like science fiction. In reality, it is basic and demonstrable biological possibility. Our bodies regenerate to limited degree throughout our lives. When we are cut, our skin mends, broken bones knit together, and if we bleed our body creates new blood cells to replenish the supply. This sort of limited regeneration is taken for granted, and yet we have difficulty imagining the ability to re-grow entire parts. This is not all that rare in the animal world, however. When crustaceans like lobsters and crabs have entire legs or claws torn off, they will re-grow new limbs within a few years. The regenerative power of the planaria - a small, wormlike creature often used in biological demonstrations in middle and high schools - is well known. Like most worms, if it is cut in half it will form two living creatures. If a portion is cut off, it will regenerate what is missing. Many reptiles demonstrate similar properties.

It has long been understood that if animals can regenerate to this degree, then there is quite possibly some way to trigger a similar process in humans. After all, when our bodies first form, our stem cells generate entirely

new sets of functioning organs, a rigid, weight supporting skeleton, eyes, hair, teeth, hearts, lungs, and everything else we require to support life. Therefore, human cells have the inherent ability to create every part of our bodies. Further, we know that the DNA in each and every cell of our bodies contains the blueprint for all of our body parts. All that is required to stimulate regeneration, are the undifferentiated cells that can create any organ or body part needed, and some way to stimulate the cells into providing what we need.

For some time, research was done on human growth hormone (HGH), as it was believed to be the key factor in cellular growth. In human stem cell research, however, a much more likely key has been found. In fact, this research has already been shown to be effective in treating Parkinson's disease - a disabling condition long thought to be degenerative, inherited, and incurable. However, in the past decade, Swedish doctors have treated a few Parkinson's patients with injections of stem cells into the affected areas of their brain, and the patients have responded with a dramatic reduction in symptoms. It would appear that the stem cells have replaced those cells in the brain that have been damaged, and actually become part of the new living brain tissue. This very different from treating illness with the drug -- it shows promise of an actual cure.

Some success in combating diabetes has also been obtained by transplanting adult pancreatic islet cells (Diabetic News), but cellular rejection is still a problem, and the transplanted cells may have a limited lifespan. Stem cell research, using the more adaptable embryonic cells, could produce similar or better results, and the risk of rejection and cell death would be reduced.

So why would anyone want to block this kind of research?

Because of the notion that embryos are being created for the sole purpose of having their precious cells harvested for research.

This is simply not true. In a perfect world there would be no unwanted embryos, but this is not a perfect world. Current fertility enhancing procedures require scientists to create multiple embryos in the laboratory for implantation for *in vitro* fertilization methods. In most cases, more embryos are created than are required, and once pregnancy has occurred the extra embryos are usually destroyed. In some cases, the donors have agreed to allow the cells from these embryos to be used in research. It is interesting that the objection is not to creating unwanted embryos, but to how they are used when they are no longer needed. Apparently some protestors feel that anything is acceptable in the pursuit of children, but that any benefit beyond pregnancy is somehow repugnant.

Abortion is another issue tied up in this debate. There are harrowing tales of aborted fetuses being kept alive in secret labs, and drained of their stem cells for medical use. In fact, the stem cells being used in research are from eggs fertilized *in vitro*, not in a woman's body. They are from blastocysts [the first form taken by the dividing cells of a fertilized egg] only a few days old - not functioning fetuses.

However, when the isolated stem cells are grown in the lab, there are tales of little Frankenstein's monsters, being nurtured and grown to provide raw human materials. In reality, a growing fetus is made up of all kinds of specialized cells, which begin very early on to create organs, limbs, and other body parts. This is why embryos, early on, begin to look like babies. A mass of stem cells, however, is not a baby - the cells are not specialized, and they do not form organs, or body parts. They are alive as individual cells, but do not comprise an organism anymore than a strip of your skin - if cultured in a lab to grow larger - would constitute another person. Stem cell masses only have to *potential* to become specialized cells. In fact, the goal of research is to keep the cells unspecialized. When cells are prompted to specialize and begin growing tissue, it is typically of one kind - i.e., liver, or heart cells, or perhaps neurons.

Clearly, a mass of liver cells does not constitute a living human by any measure. If it did, then when a diseased organ, or portion of an organ, is removed from a human for therapeutic reasons, that organ would be granted

rights as a separate organism! In reality, researchers obtain no benefit from keeping viable embryos alive, or growing little monsters in petri dishes, as some would have you believe.

Given this, the claims of cruelty and killing when these cells are used are bizarre to say the least. Because stem cells remain unspecialized and self-renewing for many years, they are in essence *not* a functioning part of the living organism, but an extra supply of cellular material used for renewing worn and injured parts. Call it biological redundancy if you like.

It is also important to note that researchers are learning that stem cells taken from adult tissue may have a better ability to create new tissue than once thought. Stem cells taken from adult tissue have shown promise in the treatment of Parkinson's, diabetes, and heart damage. As more is learned about how to utilize adult stem cells, the need for embryonic cells lessens.

This exciting branch of medical research is the first promising sign of a new medical system that will move away from the reliance on controlling illness with the application of drugs, to curing illness by repairing damaged tissues. The famed naturopath Paavo Airola often said that when the body is given the rest and care that it needs, and when factors that cause illness are removed, it will tend toward good health. Our systems are designed to repair damage, combat viruses and bacteria, and protect us from the environment. In many ways, stem cell applications aid the body in this natural healing process.

The Dalhousie release says that "stem cell research, although a complex and sensitive issue, may one day revolutionize the practice of medicine and cure diseases now considered incurable." Dr. Ivar Menzed, head of Dalhousie's Division of Neurosurgery and Chair of the Brain Repair Centre, says that "stem cell research offers us a real possibility of replacing damaged cells with healthy cells. This means we may actually be able to reverse the ravages of the disease as opposed to just slowing the progression.

"The stroke project, bringing together some 25 researchers nationally in a major multi-lab effort, will investigate harnessing the brain's own ability to repair itself by seeking ways to recruit stem cells naturally present in certain areas of the brain to help repair damage in other areas. 'The hope is that, within two years, researchers will know whether adult stem cells could potentially be used to repair damage to the brain caused by stroke,' said Dr. Mendez."

In order to address concerns about whether there really are sufficient "spare" embryos in fertility clinics to conduct this research, the Dalhousie group will survey "all 23 in vitro fertilization clinics in Canada to determine how many embryos are currently in storage and potentially available for research use."

Dalhousie University Press Release (June 5, 2003). *Exploring The Physiological And Ethical Implications Of Stem Cells*. Online at: <http://www.dal.ca/~pubrel/media/2003/2003-06-05.html>

NIH. National Institutes of Health. *Stem Cells: A Primer*. Online at: <http://www.nih.gov/news/stemcell/primer.htm#2>

Diabetic News (June 6, 2003). *Preliminary Results of Islet Transplant Trial Confirms Potential Patient Benefits*. Online at: <http://www.diabeticgourmet.com/tdn/news/501.shtml>

An advertisement with a green background. On the left, the text "Missing out on all the deals?" is written in a large, bold, yellow-green font. Below it, the website "www.ausu.org/services" is listed in a smaller white font. On the right, the text "Get an AU ID card, today!" is written in a large, bold, light blue font. To the right of this text is a small image of a white AU ID card. The card has the text "Dalhousie University", "Student Identification & Library Card", "Jane Q. Student", "1234567", and "Library Access" with a small photo of a woman. The University of Alberta logo is in the bottom right corner of the card image.



Why Distance Education Matters

As AU students, you're all aware of the various reasons why good distance learning institutions are useful, if not vital to the education of Canadians. But now the federal government has statistics of its own to reference. Statistics Canada, following up on an earlier study about how distance affects post-secondary attendance, have now released statistics on how distance from an institution affects children of upper, middle, and lower income families.

To make a long story short, distance from a post-secondary institution has a significant effect on the percentages of students going on to post-secondary if they come from a low or middle income family. Students from lower income families were less likely to attend any post-secondary education at all, but those not in proximity were far less likely to attend than their closer counterparts. On the other hand, there was only a marginal difference among the students from families with higher levels of income.

What this means is that in order to promote access to education we have to do one of two things – build more institutions in general, or ensure that our distance education systems are well recognized and affordable. The latest Alberta Government budget and new post-secondary act seem to show that the Provincial Government of Alberta is moving in almost the opposite direction.

With a total funding increase to Athabasca University being less than inflation over the same period, and with Athabasca University being exempted from recognition in the new Bill 43 it seems that Premier Klein is very happy to squander the Alberta Advantage of a well-educated work force, in order to continually ensure that his budgets have amazing surplus numbers he can parade to the voters come election time.

Ontario Legislates Non-Contracted Work

The Ontario Provincial Government has gone ahead with its proposed legislation that not only forces teachers back to work, but also requires them to do work not specified in their contracts. I am hoping and expecting the teachers union to challenge this legislation in the courts, for the simple reason that allowing this type of legislation is akin to allowing conscription or legislated slavery.

Since this legislation only affects the teachers, and then only forces them to do things that seem perfectly reasonable, such as putting comments on report cards, and meeting with the parents on parent-teacher nights, people will probably not really care. But really, is there much difference from this and from legislating that nurses must be always be on call and cannot refuse extra shifts? Or that police men must do presentations to school children after their shifts? Or perhaps combine services – make a law that has the police picking up people's garbage in addition to their normal duties. They are travelling all over the city anyway, we could fire the garbage men and save money doing this.

What it boils down to is that if the government feels that certain duties are necessarily the responsibility of teachers, it should be willing to put its money where its mouth is and include these duties in the contracts. Passing a law that forbids "work-to-rule" actions, or in other words, requires working beyond the agreement you and your employer arranged, is simply wrong. It's an abuse of legislative powers and I can only hope that the Ontario voters remember this come the next election.

AUSU Council Meeting

May 29, 2003, 17:00 MST

Reported by Voice Editor Tamra Ross Low



Chair: Debbie Jabbour, President - handed to Shirley Barg part way through
Carla Benavides

AUSU Council Members: Shirley Barg, Karie-Anne Getta, Nicholas Palamarchuk, Sandra Moore, Mac McInnis, Karl Low,

Voice Editor: Tamra Ross Low.

The May 29th Council Meeting was a lively one, to say the least. Chair and AUSU President Debbie Jabbour was hurrying to get ready for her youngest daughter's high school graduation, and she chaired much of the meeting from her cell phone as she drove to the grad location. You can read details of her hectic day in her article from last week, but I have to add that the meeting ran quite smoothly and it was productive and professional despite the unusual circumstances. AUSU council are some of the busiest people I have ever met, and it's not that uncommon for councillors to attend meetings from diverse locations, or to squeeze them in between shifts at work. In fact, Councillor Getta came home from work for the meeting, and then returned to the office afterward.

As always, the meeting ran quite long - well into it President Jabbour had to leave for her daughter's grad, and she handed off the chair duties to VP Shirley Barg for the remaining agenda items.

The Agenda was as follows:

New Business

Approval of Agenda and Adoption of April 22 Minutes	All
Committee vacancies	D.Jabbour
Grad Association steering committee	D.Jabbour
2003/2004 planner committee	D.Jabbour
Update on collection of overdue accounts	D.Jabbour
Student service scholarship	D.Jabbour
AGM debriefing	All
Discussion on computer loan for Councillors and staff	D.Jabbour/S.Moore
Meeting schedule	S. Moore
General manager hiring process	S.Barg
Tutor surveys	S.Moore
Bylaw approval process	K.Low
Convocation plans	S.Barg/S.Moore
Newsletter update	T.Ross Low/S.Moore
Bill 43 update	S.Barg
Strategic planning	N.Palamarchuk/S.Barg

MY REPORT:

I attended the meeting to report on what happened. I am not an AUSU council member, and these notes are only my perspective on the meeting. Contact AUSU for more information on any of these items.

Committee Vacancies

After the agenda and minutes from the previous council meeting were approved, President Jabbour brought up the issue of vacancies on AUSU committees. At this time, two committees of AUSU are dormant: The Student

Services Committee - which was chaired by Darren Kereluk before his removal from council, although this committee did not ever meet - and the Academic Committee, which was chaired by me when I was a member of AUSU Council. When I left council, I expressed an interest as continuing as committee chair [you do not need to be a member of council to chair a committee], but once I was hired as Voice Editor, council felt it prudent to check the AUSU policies to ensure that there could be no conflict of interest issues arising from a staff member chairing a committee.

No policy conflicts were found, and President Jabbour put the question to the council at the meeting. All were in agreement that I could continue to chair the committee. I was asked if I would like to revive the committee, and I said that I would. I have already secured one student member and I look forward to our upcoming projects.

Grad Association steering committee

President Jabbour mentioned that when she was doing her history of AUSU for an upcoming Voice issue, she learned a great deal about how the council was initially formed. She realized from this research, that the first step in forming the union was the creation of a steering committee. President Jabbour proposed that the planning of an AUSU Grad association - which has been in the works for some time - would be best facilitated by forming a similar steering committee.

2003/2004 planner committee

For many years AUSU produced a yearly student handbook/planner, which was free upon request to all AU students. In 2003, however, the handbook was not produced as it became apparent that the old planner needed to be updated and possibly produced in a new format to increase its usefulness. Instead, a package of AUSU logo gifts was produced, and these may now be requested from the AUSU office [see the AUSU website for more details]. A new planner will be produced for the upcoming school year, and at the council meeting it was decided that council member Sandra Moore would head up an ad hoc committee to design the new planner. [note: it has since been decided that council member Mac McInnis would chair this committee, and work is already underway.]

Update on collection of overdue accounts

In the ongoing battle to collect on overdue accounts that were written off by ex- AUSU VP Finance Gurpreet Dulai, little progress has been made. This is due mostly to the fact that most of the old records were lost, and that too little documentation exists to collect these items. Many companies insist that the bills have been already paid. Due to the lack of records, many of the old accounts [dating back up to 4 years ago] have had to be abandoned, and new finance procedures will be put into place to ensure that all overdue accounts are billed and followed up on in a timely manner.

Student service scholarship

The student service scholarship will not be going to anyone this year, due to requirements that have been deemed too strict. A few student names were put forward, but none qualified because of the minimum course completion requirement. After discussion, council realized that while this requirement makes sense for other scholarships, since the Student Service Scholarship already has the built-in criteria that the student must have performed some significant service for other students, and have shown a commitment to the AU community, no other requirement is needed. Unfortunately, the requirements of the scholarship cannot be changed for this year, as they are already published in the AU calendar. However, they will be changed for the next school year.

Discussion on computer loan for Councillors and staff

It has been recognized for some time that to be a member of AUSU council, you must have a modern, working computer and a good internet connection. However, the price of a new computer is restrictive for some councillors, and anyone who is on council cannot apply for the computer bursary. This means that low-income students have a difficult time being on council. To address this, there have been discussions for some time about how AUSU can assist councillors in purchasing a computer to do their jobs. At this meeting, VP Finance Sandra Moore proposed a plan where councillors could obtain a loan from AUSU, to be paid back to the union

by a direct reduction in their monthly honorariums. Should the councillor leave AUSU before the computer is paid for, then they would owe the remainder of the computer cost at that time.

There was some debate on this issue, as some councillors felt that the amount of personal and financial information that was being asked for in order to qualify for the loan was too invasive of their privacy. One councillor noted that he could obtain a bank loan without divulging so much information. VP Moore, however, said that it is very important that AUSU have enough information to ensure that they will be able to receive full payment of the loan should the councillor leave council, and that the proposed program was better than a bank loan in that it is interest free.

After some debate it was determined that the program is worthwhile, but that it will need more discussion and revision before becoming policy. The item proposed at this meeting was for discussion purposes only.

Meeting schedule

Normally AUSU council meetings have been scheduled by the President proposing a date, and then asking the rest of council about their availability. Through discussion, a date is chosen that will allow most or all council members to attend. Due to the very busy lives of AUSU councillors, the dates of council meetings can be quite variable and are often not decided until a few days before the meeting. Several council members have pointed out, however, that it would be easier for students to attend meetings if they are set up well ahead of time and on a fairly regular schedule. After some discussion, it was decided that council meetings will be set up for the last week of each month, with the date posted well ahead of time.

General manager hiring process

AUSU decided a few months ago that a general manager should be hired to oversee many of the council's administrative tasks. The job will be posted soon, and filled as expediently as possible. Since all of council has an interest in who obtains this position, it was decided that all of council should be able to listen to the interviews of the final few candidates either in person or by teleconference, though the actual interviews will be conducted by the personnel committee as usual.

Tutor surveys

In order to track student concerns about academic staff [and also to determine which staff are exemplary], AUSU will be creating their own confidential tutor evaluation surveys. Sandra Moore has created a draft survey, and asked at this meeting for input into the questions. As the acting webmaster for AUSU.org, I was asked if we could use the website survey feature to put the questions online, and I indicated that this would be fairly easy. The surveys will be reviewed again at a future meeting.

Bylaw approval process

The new AUSU bylaws were finally approved at the recent Annual General Meeting, where students had an opportunity to discuss them. The next step was to have the bylaws approved by the Alberta Government's Corporate Registry department. At the council meeting, however, Councillor and Legislative Committee chair Karl Low admitted that one small omission was made. A required item - detailing what would occur should AUSU be disbanded - was omitted in the final version of the bylaws. Therefore this item will be added to the bylaws, and a brief Special General Meeting [SGM] will be called in order to pass the corrected bylaws.

Convocation plans

There was a brief update on the plans for this week's upcoming convocation. The main item of discussion was when AUSU would present graduates with their graduation gifts. In the past this was done in front of the stage before grads were called up to accept their parchments, but it was a bit awkward for grads to have to hold their gifts while mounting the stage and receiving their papers. Also, it meant that AUSU had little visibility at the convocation, although the union provides grad gifts each year, and pays for and hosts the breakfast, entertainment, and the afternoon luncheon. After last year's grad, it was noted that AU did not even mention the significant AUSU contribution in their online convocation photo book. This year, AUSU will have a place on the back of the stage where the union will not only be more visible, but where they can hand out gifts to the grads as they are ready to be seated.

Newsletter update

After a few delays, the next AUSU Newsletter - created this time by Sandra Moore - will be ready to go out very shortly. I have been helping out as liaison with the printer [because I worked with them on the last newsletter], and with some final editing. Sandra and I were asked at the meeting for an update on the newsletter status, and I listed the few items that I still needed before the project could go ahead. Most of these items have been provided and we are almost ready to go! Look for your newsletter soon.

Bill 43 update

VP External and Council of Alberta University Students Shirley Barg provided an update on the Alberta Government's Proposed new education bill. Shirley is much better versed in this bill than I, and I suggest you read her *Just CAUS* column this week for more information.

For more information on any of the items mentioned in this report, please contact any AUSU councillor, or council as a whole. Contact information is on the AUSU website. All information presented above is based on my perspective as an observer, and more complete and detailed information can be obtained from council or the council website directly. Any errors or omissions are my own. I am not a member of AUSU council.

Notice to AU Graduate Students and Those Considering Grad Studies at AU

Athabasca University Students' Union is in the process of establishing an AU Graduate Students' Association.

Here's a sampling of benefits of belonging to a grad students' association:

- Grad student representation on University Committees
- University and government advocacy and lobbying
- Affiliation with provincial and national graduate students' organizations.
- Assistance with university/student dispute resolution
- Information source
- Networking

For more information contact:

Shirley Barg [sbarg@ausu.org], Vice-President
Athabasca University Students' Union
Call: 1-800-788-9041 ext 3413

NEWS FROM AU

Contributed by *The Insider*



Aurora research facility going on-line; asteroids feature topic at most recent Lunch 'n Learn event

Sir Isaac Newton, Connors told his Lunch 'n Learn audience May 21, "Looked like a rock star - but was really ugly." Despite appearances, the late scientist's Laws of Motion formed an integral part of Connors' research into "Earth's Companion Asteroids."

The already-operational Athabasca University Geophysical Observatory will be on-line by next week, Dr. Martin Connors told attendees at AU's most recent Lunch 'n Learn event, held May 21 in the Governing Council Chamber.

The new facility, under construction since Oct. 31, 2002, is allowing Connors to continue his study into space weather, and the effect of auroral activity on things such as navigation, power grids and satellites.

It's exciting work, and Connors is enthusiastic about conducting his research in Athabasca. However, his real reason for being there was to talk about asteroids. The AU scientist was part of a team that, in 2002, determined and described the characteristics of 2002 AA29, a companion asteroid of Earth.

An appreciative audience listened as Connors, Canada Research Chair in Space Science, Instrumentation and Networking, described how a group of such apparently harmless asteroids are traveling toward the Earth. According to Connors, 2002 AA29 is about the size of a football field, and full of precious metals, like platinum.

"If it was possible for it to hit us, it could do some damage," he explained. "If we could get to the asteroids, it would be worth trillions and trillions of dollars."

As this asteroid is one million times too faint for the unaided eye to see, Connors relies on telescope images that are gathered in places like Hawaii – or downloaded from the Internet. Connors noted he hopes to have more happy research news for AU staff soon.

"We have found some interesting things we've published and we're working on more interesting things," he said. "Hopefully I will get to talk to you soon about something we can send a spacecraft to."



The origins of humidity - Can You See Your Breath?

Greg Wiens, Director of Facilities and Services at Athabasca University, presents part two of a three-part series devoted to helping us understand humidity, where it comes from, and how it affects comfort levels and personal health issues at AU.

What is the correct level for indoor relative humidity? Or is there one?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have published a guide for indoor air quality.

There is considerable debate among researchers, IAQ professionals, and health professionals concerning recommended levels of relative humidity. In general, the range of humidity levels recommended by different organizations seems to be 30-60 per cent. Relative humidity below this level may produce discomfort from dryness. On the other hand, maintaining relative humidity at the lowest possible level helps to restrict the growth of mold and mildew. The concerns (comfort for the most part) associated with dry air must be balanced against the risks (enhanced microbiological growth) associated with humidification.

The guidelines for indoor humidity levels, as published by the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), indicate that satisfactory indoor humidity levels are achieved when relative humidity is between 25-60 per cent. While ASHRAE's report does note that these levels may not be achievable in certain areas due to local conditions, it outlines discomfort issues of high or low indoor humidity, and emphasizes the potential for excessive humidity to cause long-term problems.

The issue of moisture condensing on, or in, a building's walls is a concern in many locations, but most notably in areas where colder, dryer weather occurs for a portion of the year, as in the Canadian prairies.

Saskatchewan Labour has published a guideline specifying the following maximum indoor humidity levels during the colder weather:

When the outdoor temperature is, the maximum indoor humidity should be:

-10° C 30 per cent

-20° C 20 per cent

-30° C 15 per cent

The humidity levels of ventilation at post-secondary educational institutions also varies, as detailed in the following summary:

a) University of Alberta – Above 0° C maintained at 25 per cent; below 0° C maintained at 17 per cent.

b) Montana State University – No humidification, except for the library

c) University of Colorado, Boulder – No humidification, except for libraries, special-collections rooms, computer rooms and the music building.

Thus, there is no one humidity level that can apply to every location. Local weather conditions and building design influence workable humidity levels for individual buildings. Both high and low humidity can cause discomfort for occupants, but high humidity can have a more serious long-term effect on both the building and the health of its occupants.

CIM joins the military



Left to right: Brigadier General Robin Gagnon, CD; Colonel (ret.) J. J. Lehmann, Registrar, Canadian Forces College; Peter Carr and Lee Weissling, Corporate Relations Manager, CIM at recent signing ceremony in Toronto.

On May 16, AU's Centre for Innovative Management and the Department of National Defence (DND), through the Canadian Forces College (CFC), signed an agreement to provide Canadian Forces officers with increased access to AU's Executive MBA programs. The agreement is the first of its kind for CIM, and reflects the growing prominence of AU's MBA programs among Canada's military forces.

Under the terms of the agreement, AU recognizes the academic rigor and managerial level experience of the CFC programs, and their high level of transferability within the Executive MBA context. Canadian Forces officers who have successfully completed at least six CFC courses will be given transfer credit for elective requirements in the Executive MBA programs.

Peter Carr, Executive Director of CIM, highlighted the mutual benefits of the unique alliance.

"Our agreement with the Department of National Defence is evidence of the growth and success of our graduate management programs," he said. "It will broaden the scope of our MBA programs to include the specialized and highly complementary expertise of Canadian Forces officers.

"We are pleased to team up with DND in this new collaboration," Carr continued. "It reflects both organizations' commitment to graduate education that meets the present and future needs of Canadian Forces personnel."

For more information, visit CIM's web site at www.mba.athabascau.ca

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

For scholarships available through the Athabasca University Student's Union, see the AUSU website at www.ausu.org



ACCD EDUCATION FOR LIFE BURSARY

Value: \$500

DEADLINE: JUNE 30, 2003

Administrator: Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities

Notes: Available to those in or entering in their first year of study and who have a general disability. Valued at \$200 to \$500. Must become a member of ACCD (Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities). Must include a letter of reference from an adult other than a family member. The cheque will be mailed to the post-secondary institution.

Contact Information:

Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities
10339 - 124 Street NW Suite 707
Edmonton, AB T5N 3W1
Phone: (780) 488-9088
Fax: (780) 488-3757
Toll Free: (800) 387-2514
Web Site: <http://www.accd.net>
E-mail: accd@accd.net
Application Address: <http://www.accd.net/Bursaries.htm>

FAIRFAX FINANCIAL HOLDINGS LIMITED PROGRAM (60)

Value: \$5000

DEADLINE: JULY 02, 2003

Administrator: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)

Notes: For students entering or in their first year of study who demonstrate financial need. \$5,000 for an undergraduate university program. \$3,500 for a college diploma program. Candidates must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents. Must be a full-time student and have a high academic average. Students entering a cegep program as preparation for university or any preparatory schools in any jurisdiction will not be eligible for a scholarship to fund their preparatory education. Applications are by nomination only.

Contact Information:

Canadian Awards Program
Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
350 Albert Street, Suite 600
Ottawa, ON K1R 1B1
Phone: (613) 563-1236
Web Site: <http://www.aucc.ca>
E-mail: awards@aucc.ca

CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

Contributed By AU's *The Insider*



- **ICDE World Conference** - 21st annual - June 1-5, 2003 - Hong Kong. **POSTPONED INDEFINITELY** Details: http://www.ouhk.edu.hk/hk2003/e_postpone.html
- **CADE** - June 7-11, 2003 - St. John's, NF. Details: <http://www.cade-acad2003.ca/>
- **STLHE 2003** - June 11 - 14, 2003 - Vancouver, BC. Details: <http://www.ubcconferences.com/events/stlhe/>
- **"Women and Leadership in Higher Education: How Thick is the Glass Ceiling?"** - International Conference - June 12-14, 2003 - Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. Details: http://www.swaac.ca/Prof_Dev.htm or <http://www.swaac.ca/Regional.htm>
- **EDEN 2003 (European Distance Education Network)** - June 15 - 18, 2003 - Rhodes, Greece. Details: EDEN 2003
- **LIDC** - The Second Annual Summer Institute on eLearning in Higher Education - June 16- 20, 2003 - Vancouver, BC. Details: LIDC website.
- **FAC** - June 19 & 20, 2003 - Pomona, CA. Call for Proposals and Registration material are available at <http://www.iats.com>.
- **FLC Developers' Institute** - June 20 - 22, 2003 - Pomona, CA. Call for Proposals and Registration material are available at <http://www.iats.com>.
- **ED-MEDIA** - "World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications" - June 23 - 28, 2003 - Honolulu, Hawaii. Details: <http://www.aace.org/conf/edmedia/default.htm>
- **IASTED** - "International Conference on Computers and Advanced Technology" - June 30 - July 2, 2003 - Rhodes, Greece. Details: <http://www.iasted.org/conferences/2003/greece/cate.htm>
- **Distance Teaching & Learning Conference:** - 19th annual - "Working Smarter - Building on Success" - Aug. 13-15, 2003 - Madison, Wisconsin. Details: <http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference>
- **AU Learning Services Conference** - October 3 & 4, 2003 - Edmonton, Crowne Plaza Chateau Lacombe. Details to follow.

OTHER CONFERENCES

- **CAPDHHE [Canadian Association for the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment in Higher Education]** - To be held in Calgary, October 29 - November 1, 2003. <http://www.capdhhe.org/conference2/index.htm>
- **Teaching In A Digital Age** - the impact of new communication technologies on teaching and pedagogy. l'Université de Montréal. <http://profetic.org:16080/coll2003/> [French only]
- **China Conference 2003** - Edinburgh July 2003. China Conference Info welcomes people from the commercial and educational sector involved in E-Learning, Distance Learning, Training, HR, IT Training, Localisation, ICT or Knowledge Management, to this world first international event. China represents the biggest target market for these sectors ever and is still largely untapped.

Entering the Chinese market place is a complex move. This conference provides a forum on exchange of market information not only on product and service requirements, but on specialist market entrance requirements. If you are working in any of these sectors you should seriously

consider entering this event in your diary. The conference will be patronised by professionals from, China, the USA, Europe and Australia and represents the largest collective gathering of these specialists centred around the Chinese market ever!

For more information:

<http://www.chinaconferenceinfo.com>

Summer Symposium on Health Ethics

Wednesday 6 August 2003

Stollery Executive Development Centre
Business Building, University of Alberta
11211 Saskatchewan Drive
Edmonton, Alberta

The John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre (JDHEC) invites you to attend a one-day symposium on health ethics. This course will offer a series of presentations by JDHEC Faculty that will challenge you to examine and explore the essential place of ethics in health care practice.

Sign Up for:

Full Day Symposium: \$100 + GST

Student/Limited Income \$ 50 + GST for students

Price Includes Lunch

Who should attend?

- Health care professionals
- Administrators
- Students in health sciences, law and humanities
- Ethics committee members

Speakers:

Worried, troubled or anxious? It may be moral distress: Wendy Austin, RN, PhD

An exploration of the distress arising when moral choices in healthcare practice are thwarted by constraints.

Ethics in the Trenches: Paul Byrne, MB, ChB, FRCPC

This session will focus on the practical aspects of clinical ethics consultation and education.

"So you want to do research..." : Glenn Griener, PhD

The main principles of research ethics and their application to projects from clinical trials to chart reviews.

Bodies Here, There, and Everywhere: Barbara Russell, PhD, MBA

Philosophers and ethicists debate how our bodies impact our individuality and humanity. This session will focus on insights and ideas from this debate that are relevant to providing care for people.

From a Glint in the Eye to Bringing Up Baby: Ethics and Reproduction: Laura Shanner, PhD

Explores the implications of family relationships in assisted reproduction and pregnancy management.

For more information:

Website www.ualberta.ca/bioethics

Email Dossetor.Centre@ualberta.ca

Phone 780-492-6676

Know of an educational conference that is not on this list? Contact voice@ausu.org with the details and we'll list it in Conference Connections.



CLASSIFIEDS:

Students of AU may print classifieds in The Voice free of charge (maximum three per issue) as long as they are not representing a company or product.

Classified ads should be submitted to the editor at voice@ausu.org with 'CLASSIFIED AD' listed in the subject title.

The Editor reserves the right to refuse any classified advertisement at her discretion. Thank-you.

THE VOICE

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