

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 11 Issue 51
December 17, 2003



Plus: From My Perspective, FedWatch!, Flicks & Folios, Primetime Update, Net Nerd's Profiles, Dear Sandra, and news, announcements and opportunities from your university and beyond.

THE VOICE

Dec 17, 2003

Volume 11, Issue 51

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

[re: Nadine Bulous-Jarvis' "The Next Step" - Dec 10, 2003 - v11 i50]

Wow! Loved the article. Been on both ends of that conversation - well, maybe not the part about stepping out on a partner, but definitely have had my heart broken and I have broken a few. It has been a long time since I have been through the break up of a relationship but I do remember how the time of the break up tends to become surreal and how eventually we do heal and can love again.

I also want to applaud The Voice for publishing the article at this time as holidays are one of the worst times to experience a relationship break up. Everyone is supposed to be having a great time, how then do the broken hearted cope with lost love and shattered dreams? Thanks to Nicole and you for reminding us, and I paraphrase, "the weeping lasts only for the night and in the morning there is great joy."

Regards,
Lance Bevan-Herringshaw

[re: Editorial - Dec 10, 2003 - v11 i50]

Being distance education learners, AU students are at a disadvantage in certain areas. One of these areas is making your opinion heard and The Voice editor, Tamra Ross Low, addressed this in last week's editorial.

Being physically removed from student contact can be a deterrent in speaking for or against issues that affect you as a student. Some of these issues can also include your student government. Tamra raised some important issues about the role of The Voice in airing these concerns.

THE VOICE

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University's *The Insider* for its
frequent contributions

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The Voice is an important vehicle for AUSU members (a member is any active AU student) to voice opinions and concerns about AUSU activities, whether negative or positive. At no time should anyone be concerned that their criticism won't be printed or taken seriously. As Tamra pointed out, The Voice is funded by AUSU but is still an independent publication in the sense The Voice has autonomy over content. The Voice also is an acting "watchdog" for AUSU by being the medium that students can access and use.

I would like to stress that I am not speaking on behalf of council in this letter to the editor, but rather as an individual councillor (but I'm sure the rest of council will agree with the message). So as an individual councillor I would like to say: Please, please, and please feel free to critique council on their operations by using The Voice or even the message forums on the home page. To stay informed on operations and the current happenings please attend as many council meetings as you can (even if you can stay for only a portion of it) and ask AUSU councillors as many questions as you want. Speaking for or against council operations is common in other universities (the University of Lethbridge even has a councillor rating survey on their website!) and Athabasca University should not be the exception.

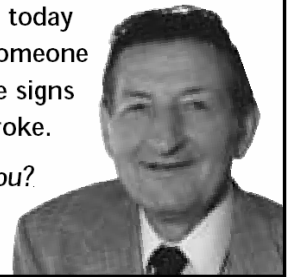
With elections coming up soon, now is even more important to brush up on AUSU's current operations and projects. So criticize, suggest, support and ask away! Use all and any means available to you. This is what Athabasca University Students Union is here for.

Stacey Steele
AUSU Councillor

Walter Gretzky, Stroke Survivor

I'm alive today
because someone
knew the signs
of a stroke.

Do you?



**STROKE
WARNING SIGNS**

WEAKNESS

Sudden weakness, numbness
or tingling in the face,
arm or leg

TROUBLE SPEAKING

Sudden temporary
loss of speech or trouble
understanding speech

VISION PROBLEMS

Sudden loss of vision,
particularly in one eye, or
double vision

HEADACHE

Sudden severe
and unusual headache

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especially with any of the
above signs

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or your medical
emergency number
immediately.



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(1-888-473-4636)
www.heartandstroke.ca



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VOICE!**

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Voice. Provide a sample
selection of writing
and preferred genre.

FIRST IT WAS ELECTRICITY
THEN IT WAS NATURAL GAS

NOW THEY'RE COMING FOR EDUCATION

a bill 43 policy
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Only students who can afford to pay exorbitant tuition fees will be admitted. Graduate degrees images of shattered
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EDITORIAL PAGES

THIS WEEK

SAD DAY FOR AUSU COUNCIL - VP Sandra Moore resigns minutes before council meeting to decide her fate, and councillor Nicholas Palamarchuk is removed from council under bizarre circumstances. Read the special editorial report to learn more...

GETTING ALL LIT UP FOR CHRISTMAS - Bill Phillip's adventures in holiday decorating, and some common sense advice.

CHRISTMAS 2003 - A Christmas message from Wayne, on spending the holidays far from home...

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The conclusion of Debbie's perspective of presiding over a student council

THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER - Stacey Steele asks, why decriminalize?

SCULLY AND THE LORD - Inspirational fiction for the holidays.

AUSU columnist moves on

The Voice regrets to announce that the Dear Sandra column will no longer be part of the Voice regular features. We wish Sandra luck in the future and thank her for her many contributions.

AUSU elections, announced

Read the news section of this issue for information on the upcoming AUSU elections. Any active AU student may throw their hat in the ring. Get involved, and help make this a great election with plenty of choices and some lively debate!

If anyone is thinking that the recent strife in council might mean that the experience is not rewarding, think again. Your editor was on council for a year, and yes, there was plenty of strife, but also plenty of support, wonderful opportunities, and an incredible opportunity to learn new skills and do rewarding work. I won't lie - this job is tough, but so are AU students! I look forward to speaking with all of the candidates!

December 31st, our very best

The Voice writers are on holiday until the January 7th issue, but there will be a Best Of issue of The Voice on December 31, featuring a selection of articles from the past year that have been particularly memorable or informative to AU students. Catch up on what happened at AU.

Council reporter wanted

The Voice needs reporters who are able to write clear, critical and balanced reviews of what goes on at AUSU council meetings. Meetings take place about once a month, and may be attended by teleconference from almost anywhere in the world. Inquire with the Voice editor at voice@ausu.org if you would like more information on this opportunity.

Please see *Sad Day for AUSU Council* for this week's editorial report.

SAD DAY FOR AUSU COUNCIL

Tamra Ross Low

One member resigns amidst allegations, another is removed under strange circumstances.

VP Finance resigns

Sunday, December 14th was one of the hardest days yet for AUSU council and staff, and when it was all over, AUSU's ranks had decreased by two.

The main item on the agenda was the motion of removal against council VP Finance and Administration, Sandra Moore. This motion had been announced at the previous meeting, but not presented, and was still a pending document. Also introduced at the previous meeting was a motion of reprimand against Moore, which was presented, discussed, and then tabled until December 14th at Moore's request. President Jabbour was also brought up for reprimand in the November meeting, but waived the two week preparation time. The reprimand motion was passed by a majority of council.

The motion of reprimand motion against VP Moore was in relation to expenditures for AUSU clubs, which Moore had approved. Since Moore was the head of the club's committee, the AUSU VP Finance, and also the head of one of the two clubs in question, there had been some argument as to in which capacity she had approved the expenditures. Argument was also given that Moore made the purchases without notifying anyone on council, and that money was never allocated for the purchasing of club related gifts.

The November discussion wound down into a she-said, they-said battle, in which Moore insisted that she was not aware she would need approval to allocate clubs funding which was already set off in the budget, while council insisted that she did not have the right to spend budgeted amounts without notifying council and seeking approval, and that the intent was never that the budgeted money would be used for gifts. Moore apologized for the error, and said that she would never have done this had she known it was improper, and maintained that she believed that the gift purchases fell under the AUSU volunteer appreciation policy. She then asked for two weeks to prepare a defence, which is her right under AUSU policy. Her request was granted, and her defence was scheduled for the next AUSU meeting - December 14th.

During this time Moore also prepared a defence for the motion of removal which was announced by the AUSU President at the November meeting. This motion had not yet been discussed, nor had it been officially presented to council. Only a notice of motion had been presented at this point.

Council members were shocked when Moore posted the motion and her defence notice on the public AUSU forums three days prior to the December meeting. The document in question, having never been presented, had not become a part of council records, and also contained information pertaining to employees and a student which was confidential. Both the employees and student were mentioned by name, and details of employment agreements were discussed.

Council members also noted at the meeting that motions of removal such as this probably should not be public documents until they've been resolved one way or the other.

The Sunday meeting was scheduled for 1:00. Exactly five minutes prior to the meeting, Moore forwarded an e-mail to council indicating that she was resigning from all of her positions with AUSU, effective immediately.

Council then had three items pertaining to Moore on the meeting agenda: the motion of reprimand, tabled at the last meeting; the motion of removal; and Moore's resignation. The motion of reprimand was presented first -- after a brief discussion about whether a reprimand could be issued against someone who had resigned -- and passed by unanimous vote with very little discussion since no defence had been presented, and the item had

been discussed at length at the last meeting. The result of such a motion is simply a public recognition of wrongdoing, which is on the official council record.

Next on the agenda was the motion of removal. In light of Moore's resignation, President Jabbour withdrew the motion. It was also noted at this point that because the motion had never been presented or even discussed at council meeting, it was not part of the AUSU document record, nor had it ever been. It also was felt to contain confidential information which could be damaging to Moore, and which violated the privacy of some parties included in the document. Therefore, council determined that the item should be removed from the AUSU forums, with a note of explanation posted in its place. VP Shirley Barg offered to write the notice immediately after the council meeting.

Finally, Moore's resignation was considered, and accepted by all of council. Many Council members expressed regret over how difficult the situation had become, and noted that Ms. Moore had many strong qualities which were of benefit to council. No further action is planned regarding the various complaints against councillor Moore, who has also resigned from her committee positions (although she does not have to be on council to sit on or chair a committee) and as a columnist for The Voice.

Councillor Karl Low, who has chaired the AUSU legislative committee for nearly two years, was asked to fill the role of VP finance.

I understand that Sandra would like to move on and explore some new opportunities, and that she is almost finished her studies. Nevertheless, many Voice readers will surely miss the popular Dear Sandra column, which has been an important part of the Voice column line up for more than a year and a favourite of many readers. I wish her the best of luck in her future projects.

Councillor Palamarchuk vanishes, and then reappears

In the most bizarre event that has taken place since I came into contact with council, long time council member Nicholas Palamarchuk was also removed from council at the meeting. Nick and I ran together in the election of 2002, and served together as fellow councillors until I left council in January of 2003.

No, Nicholas was not removed for any wrong doing. In fact, council regretted having to make the move and took every step possible to avoid it.

You see, Nicholas, who has been an active and jovial member of council since March of 2002, disappeared - almost literally. It was the end of October when Nick informed council that he had other commitments and would not be able to attend an upcoming committee meeting. His absence was excused, and everyone assumed he would return soon. But, Nick never came back. Council members emailed him over and over with no reply.

I emailed Nicholas more than once, to find out where he was. I had pictures from his weight loss article to return to him, and wanted to find out if he was home. There was no reply. People phoned Nick at home over and over, but he never answered. The November council meeting passed, and Nick did not show, nor did he indicate he would be absent, though he had been emailed the meeting details. Council members and staff asked about him all the time. We all wondered, where had he gone, and why? Council was required to note that he had missed one council meeting without an excuse. Under policy, that can only happen twice in a row.

I emailed Nick again, and so did others. I even told him we were getting worried about him, and asked that he please respond to let me know if he was ok. Others tell me that they did the same. I also emailed to apologize to him, because the last email we had exchanged contained a query from me that I was afraid he might have taken negatively. I was grasping at straws a little, but I wanted to be sure he had not been offended. It was as good a guess as any.

After a few weeks, people began to worry that Nick might be very sick. He did, after all, have a serious surgery for weight loss this year, as has been well documented in The Voice. Everyone was really concerned, and imagined the worst. Some thought maybe he had an accident, and no one knew who to call. I had spoken to Nick on the phone for the second instalment of the article, shortly before his disappearance, and I was very concerned. He had been in terrific spirits last we talked. I was informed a couple of weeks ago that inquiries had been made, Nick had been determined to be at home and ok, but no one had spoken with him.

For those who wonder why people would be so worried about a co-worker, let me explain. The council of 2002-2004 has been touched by more than its share of tragedy. Among other stressors, four of us [I say 'us' because I was on council when these events occurred] lost a parent to cancer in the space of a year. Everyone kept on working, we turned to each other for support, and people bonded in powerful ways.

None of AUSU council or staff knew what to say or think about Nick, but it became assumed that he did not want to be on council. At that time, AUSU decided that Nick's honorarium should be suspended until he could be contacted, and it was noted at the November meeting that a letter would be mailed.

Council also wrote a hard-copy letter to Nick, reminding him that if he did not contact council or show up for the next meeting, council would have to remove him from council per the policy regarding absence from council duty. There was no reply, and Nick did not attend the meeting. Through this time, Nicholas remained on the AUSU email alias, and received all AUSU email. He was sometimes referred to and even directly addressed in many of these mails (I frequently commented that I'd like Nick's input on items).

Everyone was bewildered, and concerned, but since there was little choice, Nicholas was removed from council at the Sunday meeting, with regret and confusion noted by all present.

Now for the really bizarre part: the very next day, in the AUSU forums, in the thread regarding the resignation of S. Moore, Nick re-appeared like a ghost from the fog. His cryptic messages do not make any sense to me, and based on the replies that have been posted, they make no sense to others either. He seems to be speaking in defence of S. Moore, and yet even she seems bewildered by his comments. I won't repeat them here - you all know where to find the forums, and I'm sure this strange story will continue.

Nick also suggests he's glad to have finally been removed from council, but does not explain why he didn't simply resign, or state his intent to leave.

His comments suggest that he feels there have been cover-ups in council. However, these would have occurred while Nick himself was on council. I can't speak for council, nor am I privy to all of councils internal communications, but I have attended every council meeting since I left council, and all meetings while I was on council with Nick. Not once did Nick bring forward any allegations, though he was free to.

In contrast to his comments about cover ups, a motion of reprimand was brought against the council president - Debbie Jabbour - last month, because she had requested an expense payment before the proper approval procedure had been completed, and this motion was passed and the reprimand was placed on her record. S. Moore was also reprimanded publicly this week. Clearly these issues were not covered up, and council has not been afraid to take members to task for wrongdoing.

At the very least, it's nice to know that Nick is still alive. I'm not sure what happened to make you so upset, Nick, but know this: no one wanted to see you leave, and we all recall that you made the AUSU council meetings so much lighter and more fun. Take care Nick.

Other items

Other items discussed at the council meeting included a lengthy and informative presentation of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) - an organization which AUSU has considered joining.

Council approved a plan to create a new web page within the secure area of the AUSU web site in order to post the minutes from all AUSU council meetings, and to archive past minutes.

Council member Stacey Steele brought forward a proposal to form an AUSU judicial committee, and council gave Ms. Steele and VP Shirley Barg the task of investigating how other students' unions have formed similar committees.

Finally, Ms. Steele presented a list of the 10 most important projects for AUSU to consider over the coming year, as determined by the AUSU strategic planning committee. Oddly, this list contained eleven current projects :-), which were:

1. Student Mentor Program up and running
2. 25 Coffee Groups
3. Grad Student Association
4. Automatic Student updating
5. Cost Shared Publication of handbook (an AUSU/AU joint project)
6. On Line Voting for Spring Elections
7. Student Awareness - 4x a year contact
8. 10% of members registered on website
9. Geographic Lobbying
10. Judicial Affairs Board
11. National Student Group Representation

These are all fine goals, though I might suggest that they are just that - goals, rather than projects. Clearly the majority of council focus at this time is on public relations, and increasing the number of students who accessed the current AUSU projects. The first item on the list, the student Mentor program, is still in development but slated to begin in the new year.

Other suggested projects for the new year include:

1. Water for Exam Centres
2. Framework for an AUSU hosted Distance Ed Conference
3. Revising AUSU scholarships, and increasing needs based scholarships.
4. Increased Geographic Representation on Council
5. Higher Profile on AU site
6. Discounts from AU for courses (re: bursaries and contests)
7. A Database of Student Inquiries

As always, if you have any questions about my comments, write me. If you have questions about the plans or actions of AUSU, write them at ausu@ausu.org. Either way, ask, ask, ask!

That's all folks...

Merry Christmas to all Voice readers

Tamra Ross Low
Editor in Chief



GETTING ALL LIT UP FOR CHRISTMAS

BILL PHILLIPS

There is a rite-of-passage that we must go through at this time of year.

It is a time-honoured tradition whereby we risk life, limb, and sanity all in the name of good cheer. Hanging up Christmas lights. I just hope it was Santa Claus or someone like that who came up with the idea of hanging up Christmas lights.

We better not be risking our rational thought all in the name of consumerism. Nah, Christmas lights can't be about consumerism. Christmas itself hasn't been consumed by consumerism, why would the hanging of lights be?

Silly me, I don't know what I was thinking about.

This year we purchased some of those new LED Christmas lights – the newest fad since icicle lights. You will see the LED lights around many towns this year. They are very nice. They cast a kind of eerie, neon glow. Unlike the television ads suggest (hence my confirmation this is not about consumerism), you will not fool your neighbours into thinking they are looking at the Northern Lights. Well, you might, but then you really have to start worrying about your neighbours.

The benefit to these lights is that they are very energy efficient, which is a good thing, bulbs are unbreakable, and they are supposed to be good for 200,000 hours.

Most of us won't live that long, so how can we refute the claim? Just asking. (Okay, before you get the calculator out, 200,000 hours is 8,333 days or just over 22 years.) But that leads to another question. Don't they think someone might want to change their Christmas lights before 22 years is up? Again, just asking.

There is something the average consumer should know about these lights. They are not all the same colour. Before you start commenting that Christmas lights should come in different colours – red, blue, green, yellow – etc., I'm talking about the particular shade.

They're not all the same. We purchased three boxes of blue lights, which should be enough to replace the 'outdoor' string we bought last year that worked fine as long as it wasn't cold or snowy (we checked the box and they said 'outdoor' lights).

There is also another lesson to be learned here. It's not really a lesson, but more of a common sense suggestion. Common sense only really works if you use it.

The common sense suggestion is checking your lights before you string them up. We used common sense. We plugged in the lights before we strung them up, and they worked fine.

Then comes the rite-of-passage part – climbing the ladder umpteen dozen times to string the lights up. The risking life and limb part of this story is all about using the ladder in ice and snow, with frozen fingers and in a hurried rush because the Canucks game will be on in 10 minutes.

Everything worked just fine. It didn't take too long to accomplish the feat and, as with all feats that go too easily, something was up.

I didn't notice it right away, since it was still light out. However, as soon as it got dark the too-easy task took on a new light (sorry about the pun).

The lights weren't the same colour. One string was a nice light blue; the other was definitely a shade of purple. We checked the boxes. There is nothing on the boxes saying what colour they were other than the colour picture of the bulbs. They were identical.

Out came the ladder again and I went into my best impression of Sir Edmund Hillary. The offending string came down. No problem. Off to the store we went to replace the purple lights.

The store was very accommodating and let us exchange the lights. Back home it was time to challenge Everest again. With fingers that could be used to keep fish, I reattached the lights. We zapped them with the minimal amount of electricity that they need and ... the purple lights came back on. Purple? Weren't they supposed to be blue? The second string was still blue. Yes, it was the hard way to find out that the lights are actually supposed to be purple, not blue. The blue string was the anomaly. Probably a factory defect.

At any rate, the lights endured 200,000 hours of curse words and I will be testing the unbreakable bulb theory as soon as my hands thaw out.

To the nice people at the store, I'll be back to, probably sheepishly, exchange yet another string of lights. Merry Christmas.



This column focuses on a wide range of issues affecting post-secondary students. Students are encouraged to submit suggestions and educational topics they are concerned about, or personal experiences with courses or university situations they feel other students should know about.

Debbie Jabbour

What is the difference between a three-year bachelor degree and a four-year bachelor degree? Well, for one, it's a difference between a total tuition a little over \$16,000 or more than \$22,000 (based on current AU per course cost of \$541).

But does that extra year really make a difference? Well, it depends on what your goals in life are. University people will tell you that a four-year degree is always preferable because it allows you to get into graduate programs. This is generally true, although students should closely research their program of choice to ensure what the admission requirements are. At AU, the Executive MBA does not even require a completed undergrad degree.

What about employers? Do they differentiate? Not necessarily. A BA is a BA, regardless of how long it took or how much it cost. An undergraduate degree at three years is just as valid as a four year degree for many, if not most, employment opportunities.

Of course, there are specializations, and these are sometimes the best way to go. University certificates and diplomas that can be achieved in one or two years are often excellent ways to beef up one's resume and improve career prospects without spending excessive time, money and energy.

The choice of how many years really depends on where you want to go in the future. If you want to continue on with your education and are in pursuit of a Master's degree, a PhD, or a professional designation - then a four year undergrad degree may be required. If you just want to improve your job prospects, get better credentials, or just say you have a university degree - then three years or less is plenty.



I have to admit that my Christmas spirit is somewhat sparse. Over the years I've been jaded by the commercialism of the holiday. The bombardment of advertisements seems to arrive earlier every year (Christmas commercials in October): "buy her a diamond to show your love"; "spend lots of money to show them you care." The implied corollary would seem to be that if one doesn't spend thousands of dollars on Christmas presents, s/he doesn't really care for his/her loved ones. Our capitalist stock-markets eagerly anticipate, and react to, the after-season announcements of retail sales achievements. Sometimes it seems like the *raison d'être* of Christmas is merely production and consumption to increase faceless corporate profit-margins. Not being a religious

person, I also draw no inspiration from the Christian locus of the event. But I do remember how important Christmas was to me as a child.

Luckily my wife works hard at making our family's Christmas an event that our children will remember with joy. This year I am especially grateful to her, as I have been too busy for anything but preparations for law-school exams. Our house, which we only moved into two weeks ago, is already decorated with interior lights and statuettes; and the tree is trimmed and twinkling in the living room. The kids are getting more excited by the day and I have to admit that I am as well. I find the exuberance that our children show in opening their presents on Christmas morning to be contagious and for an hour or so I reconnect with my childhood experiences.

For me the holiday's only real importance has always been the proximity of family and friends. This year seems to be especially meaningful in that regard since our family-unit has been transplanted to a new city in a new province away from all familiarity, extended-family, and friends. The importance to me of my wife and children has been accentuated and intensified by our life-altering experience and I am very much looking forward to the end of my exams and some overdue quality time spent with them. The weekly lunch-visits with my father that I took for granted back in British Columbia are sorely missed and I await his Christmas-visit arrival with great anticipation. I also miss the frequent conversations with Dave Veniot over lattes or caramel macchiatos at the local coffee-house in Prince George—they were even more important to me than I knew at the time.

It is insights like these that have made me realize that Christmas really is an important time to me. However, if I could reshape the holiday to my personal specifications there would only be tangible gifts given to children; preferably created with love by the donor his or herself. And the gifts between adult family and friends would be restricted to those incorporeal feelings of love that are vastly superior in worth than are the diamonds or toys incessantly promoted by corporations through our ever-present mass media. I wish you all a Christmas as merry and meaningful as the one that I intend to experience with my family this year. Merry Christmas.

Wayne E. Benedict has a varied career history and strong links to the Canadian labour movement. He is working part-time toward his Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations at AU, and is a fulltime first-year student of the University of Saskatchewan College of Law. For a more detailed writer bio, see *The Voice* writers' feature page. Wayne can be reached at wayneben@sasktel.net



"The cupboard's empty, Lord."

So often Scully and his wife had spoken the words throughout their lifetime together. Now, bitterly, he recalled the familiar prayer.

The cupboard's empty, Lord.

Scully and Bethie had knelt together and spoken it the very afternoon before she died. The Lord had filled the cupboard - Scully's railway pension cheque had come early and they had stocked up on groceries. But the Lord took Bethie that night while she slept in Scully's arms. The old man awoke to find his wife dead at his side. Like a thief in the night, the Lord had taken her from him.

Now the cupboard stood empty.

He had to face another morning without his love of more than five decades. How he despised the rising sun.

Scully dressed slowly - buttoning his shirt to the top and at each cuff, folding the handkerchief neatly for his front pocket. Bethie had always liked him well dressed. "Spiffy", she had called him. "I want my man looking spiffy." She had bought or made all his clothes, embroidered all his handkerchiefs, and knitted all his socks, since he was seventeen years old. Some had thought they were too young to marry, but Scully and Bethie knew they'd be together always. Nothing could pry them apart. "God willing, we'll be together forever," he had always said.

But God had not been willing. God had robbed him of his wife, and now he had to face life without Bethie. And Scully would never forgive the Lord.

"Damn you." Scully spoke through clenched teeth. "Damn you to hell if I could." His hands shook as he fastened the last button on his grey flannel shirt sleeve.

Habitually, he reached for his coffee mug. "First Place 2001" - the print was barely readable now. Bethie and her little friend, Paulette, had won it for him at the powwow that year with their dreamcatcher design. Scully was always annoyed by the chief's talkative, pestering, little daughter Paulette. But Bethie had adored her and enjoyed her company. Many days Scully had come home to find them baking in the kitchen or plotting to play a trick on Scully.

"There's something very special about her." Bethie use to say. Scully smiled at the memories until once again he realized that's all he had now - memories. Memories and bitterness.

The cupboard was empty. There was no coffee. There was no food. Fine. He'd go hungry. He'd starve to death before he'd ask God for anything. Scully would rather go without than ask Him for another damn thing now -- ever. He tossed his empty coffee mug into the sink. It broke in two.

Another long, hungry day stretched before him. He looked around for something, anything, to do. Finally, Scully sat in the rocker by the window. It creaked familiarly with his weight. Scully had wanted to get a new rocker years ago, but Bethie wouldn't hear of it. Now he never would. He stared at a row of fish baskets she had weaved. Everything reminded him of her and the life they once shared. He shifted his eyes to the wooden cross that hung over their bed. It angered him. They had had such faith in God.

His knees ached.

"The cupboard's empty, Lord." How often they had prayed this!

They hadn't asked for much out of life. They hadn't needed much. The two had lived their lives quietly in their tiny cabin on the edge of the Wattern Reserve. Sometimes the kids down the road would come up with thick alder branches and beg Scully to carve whistles for them, and all the youngsters on the reserve loved to have Bethie tell them stories, and of course Paulette was a familiar face. Other than that, they were alone - happily, contentedly alone. Just them and their God.

His stomach growled.

He rose to look one last time in the cupboard. Was there anything left? Anything at all? Maybe he missed something. It was empty. Not so much as a can of tuna and a dry biscuit. Funeral expenses, visiting relatives and a suit for him to wear to bury his wife, had cleaned out the savings. The railway pension cheque was not due for another week.

He could pray. That's what Bethie would do. But Scully would be damned *damned* if he'd ever talk to the Lord again. He slammed the cupboard shut.

The knock at the front door startled him. Scully didn't expect company, but that it would arrive uninvited and unexpected wasn't a great surprise on the reserve. He ignored the persistent pounding. The door was locked from the inside. No one would be barging through.

"Old Scully, you in there?"

He recognized the voice. It was Paulette. She'd been around a few times since Bethie had died but Scully wouldn't let her in. He did not want to see her. Not yet, not ever.

"Mama says you're in there, Old Scully, and that I'm suppose to knock until you open the door. She says that I need to visit you so that you're not alone and so that she can go down to the falls with Dad and the boys. I'd just fall in again. Mama says if I were to give you these pussywillows you'd know how to make them keep forever." She added a kick to her pounding fists. "Come on, Old Scully, I know you're in there."

"Damn it." Scully said, realizing the only way he'd be alone was to tell her to go. She wouldn't be ignored away this time.

"I'm just not in the mood for company Paulette." He said, finally opening the door and stepping out. The sun assaulted his eyes. It had been days since he'd left the cabin. "I just want to be alone. You go home and tell your mama to take you with her."

The little girl stomped a red-sneakered foot and crossed her arms for dramatic effect. She looked at him with dark, astonished eyes. "Are you *serious*. Like, hello! They won't let me have a net and I cut myself on the bellies of the boy fish when I tried to catch them by hand last time. See?" Paulette proudly showed him the cuts on her palms in hopes he'd understand.

Scully didn't answer for a moment. He looked at the trees, the dam, anything but the girl. "Paulette, I just can't take you today."

She sat on the bottom step of Scully's cabin. Paulette sighed. Her pussywillows drooped to the ground. She wasn't use to rejection from Scully.

Her back was to him when she finally spoke softly. "You still mad at God, Old Scully? Mama says you've been mad at God ever since Bethie died. She says you shouldn't be though."

Scully's patience ended with her bluntness. Wide eyed he looked at her. The veins in his neck strained against the collar of his buttoned shirt. His angry, hungry stomach growled. His jaw tightened as he spat out the words.

"Your mama don't know squat. The Lord took my Bethie. He stole her. You couldn't know ... she was all I had, and He took her. I'm just an old man alone now. An old man in an empty house with an empty cupboard. So damn it, don't tell me who I shouldn't be mad at." Scully raised his hand to steady himself

against the house. How dare they! Paulette was just a child. Her mother had no idea. What the hell did they know about being alone? What did they know about long days and empty cupboards.

The little girl sat quietly, drawing pictures in the dirt with the end of a pussywillow.

"Yeah, but Old Scully, Mama said God took her. That's true. But, like, didn't He take her to Heaven? I asked Mama where Bethie was, and that's just what she told me. 'Bethie was in Heaven.' So it's not like God stole her, it's kind of like He ... kind of like God's just looking after her for you until you get there." Paulette smiled at her wisdom. She was sure Scully would understand now. "Aren't you glad, Old Scully. I mean, that the Lord took her to Heaven to wait for you. I think that's so *cool*. That way you can be together forever."

Scully stood there looking at the little girl. He felt stunned. He felt slapped. The sun burned hot on his head. He felt weak with hunger.

From his pocket Scully pulled a handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from his brow. Bethie had given it to him their last Christmas together. He knew what was embroidered on it even before he read the words. He gently fingered the golden-threaded letters. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Scully stood there for a minute trying to decide what to do. How he wanted to be angry. He started to take a step back into the cabin, but his feet wouldn't move. He opened his mouth to curse, but the words wouldn't form. He put his hands into his trouser pockets, and then pulled them out again.

And then Scully cried. Tears raced for release down his weathered, dark face. They dampened his shirt. They fell onto the step. Scully held his head in his hands as he wailed with grief and understanding.

Paulette was silent while the old man cried. She made no attempt to leave, but stayed beside him. She waited until he was ready. Finally, Scully, blew his nose, and wiped the last of his tears away.

"Paulette, you're a smart little girl, you know that."

"Yeah, I know." she flashed him a big toothless grin. "Mama says so too."

He sat down on the step beside her, folded his hands, and bowed his head. The sun warmed him now. Scully swallowed and took a death, shuddering breath before he spoke. "The cupboard's empty, Lord." He sighed the words out.

"Bet its not. Bet you're teasing me, Old Scully." Paulette jumped up and ran into the cabin to look in the cupboard. She was sure Scully had a surprise in there for her. Scully let her enter.

"Look, Old Scully," Paulette returned beaming with excitement. "I found this big molasses jug in there. Bethie and I filled it with cattails last year for you. Remember? You really liked it." She nodded her head up and down to emphasize her words.

"Why, that's just perfect for pussywillows," Scully said as he stood and slapped his knee with enthusiasm. "Grab me my jackknife and I'll show you how to trim the stalks so those pussywillows will keep forever."

They sat together on the porch perparing the flowers. Paulette sang and told bad jokes. Scully clapped along and laughed at even the worst of them.

It was noon before Paulette's mother came to get her. "Hey Old Scully," she said. "The gasperau are running. I brought you a dozen and some fresh buttermilk bread. We got about two hundred more fish in the truck. Scully, if you want to smoke them for us, we'll split them with you."

The cupboard was full again.



A few hours after the publication of last week's Voice, I received two emails. Both were from AU students, regular Voice readers. These students expressed how much they appreciate my articles in the Voice and offered words of encouragement and appreciation for my role as President. Their words brought tears to my eyes, and gave me an important, balanced perspective that I had lost sight of recently. Where I've so often been feeling overworked and under-appreciated, to hear these individual students express their appreciation made it all worthwhile. During the week, others came forward as well, to encourage me to keep at it and not let the actions of a few diminish the value of the work I'm doing on behalf of AU students. When I stopped to look at the big picture, I realized that lately I've been allowing the negativity of a few individuals affect me disproportionately - when in reality there are so many who work with me and support me positively.

Several weeks ago, in writing about the honorary degree received by Dr. Dominique Abrioux, I commented that "the highest accolades anyone can receive are those that come from one's peers." I've received many such accolades from my peers, both university administration and AU students. The university executive have often expressed their appreciation for my hard work and loyalty on behalf of students, and they have said how much they value the excellent working relationship we have developed. In spite of the times when I have to take the university to task for something, this respect is undiminished. For example, when we fought against the change in course extension policy, AU administration was not happy that we had joined forces with the tutors to protest this. During a meeting where the policy was debated and eventually cancelled, tensions were running very high. But the mutual respect between all parties involved kept the meeting on an even keel, and we all walked out of there satisfied that even though we disagreed, we were still able to work productively together. The same occurs at AUGC when I argue against tuition increases and other university policies. President Abrioux was very unhappy with AUSU when he announced recently to AUGC that AU would be kept under Bill 43's tuition fee policy. But he acknowledged that students had done what they needed to do and stated that he respected our position.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my representation on AU committees is the respectful atmosphere in which work is done. In spite of the long hours and the heavy commitment this committee representation entails, it has been an invaluable learning experience. Seeing how a board can operate when all members treat each other respectfully provides a balance for me, and is a model I try to follow in AUSU operations. I always look for parallels in how the university operates, since we are an extension of the university in many ways. I've come to realize that there are some deep divisions and dissensions within the university community about many issues, but these are never brought to the board meetings in an angry or disrespectful manner.

I also see many similarities between President Abrioux and myself. Dominique is highly involved in every aspect of the university, and very little occurs without his knowledge or approval. He carries an extremely heavy workload, and is stretched very thin at times, yet he is always willing to be there when you need him. As noted in my recent article, he is also unwilling to take personal credit for his accomplishments, always acknowledging the importance of the contribution of those around him. For me, this is one of the most important aspects of my role as president. I celebrate the accomplishments of the AUSU group and I'm very proud of what we've done during the past two years. Although at times it may be a single individual receiving a particular accolade or thanks, nothing would have been accomplished unless the whole group worked together.

For the most part we've managed to do this. Conflicts within a group are inevitable, and we've weathered many. One of the most difficult aspects of being president is taking responsibility for the group when there is a

conflict. It's a very serious matter to bring a formal motion of removal against a councillor, and it is my responsibility as president to ensure that any such motion is supported with sufficient evidence and firmly grounded in our policies. Unfortunately, motions of reprimand and removal have occurred on several occasions during my term as president. From the outset I've advocated that the best way to deal with policy violations is by taking a strict line, and dealing swiftly and decisively with issues in order to protect the integrity of the organization. This is often easier said than done, however.

In retrospect, when considering those who have been removed from Council, or resigned, it saddens me. Most of these students had many positive things to contribute for students and to Council, and most of them did spend many productive hours on Council. Somewhere along the way, unfortunately, these good intentions were lost. Why? Some of it may have been because they were on council for the wrong reasons, as I mentioned last week. But I think it had a lot to do with not being willing to accept a reprimand and not being willing to admit when one had made a mistake or done something wrong. Even there, some have used the excuse that they could engage in unacceptable and disrespectful behaviour, as long as they said "sorry" later. This only works to a point. I've certainly done my share of apologizing, but I've also worked very hard to ensure that the mistake is not repeated. Saying "I'm sorry" then going out and doing the exact same thing just doesn't cut it, in my opinion.

I believe students have a right to know what goes on with AUSU Council. At the same time I believe there are limits to the level of detail provided. Any group has problems and differences of opinion, and we work to resolve these properly. If these differences are publicly aired in great detail, before they have even been discussed within the group, what is accomplished? Nothing positive, really. Constituents start to lose confidence in their elected members, and the difficulties become amplified. I cited an example of this several weeks ago in the case of the Edmonton Senior's group whose good work became obscured because several individuals chose to take the problems they were dealing with into a public forum. In politics, indeed in any organization, a certain level of professionalism must be maintained. Professionalism means we respect each other, we respect the rules and regulations, and we respect those we interact with publicly.

Even in writing these articles I wrestle with ethical issues and how much I should say. There is much more I could write about, but I don't. Sometimes I'm placed in a position where I cannot defend myself because I will be perceived as speaking on behalf of Council - so I remain silent under attack. There are issues even with writing for the Voice itself - some have questioned whether this is an obligation as a Councillor, or whether my voice when writing is my own or whether I am always speaking as president of AUSU. It's often a fine line to tread, and it's difficult. I'm always conscious of what I say and spend hours re-reading portions of an article prior to submission, to ensure that I'm not crossing that line. Readers have said they enjoy hearing about my day to day struggles, my sharing all the simple and sometimes crazy things I and my family do - not just because I'm a student like they are, but because it makes me more human as president of AUSU. So it's hard sometimes to draw the line between me as president, and me as student and writer. I trust that Voice readers are intelligent, mature adults and they are quite capable of seeing the difference.

In conclusion, I'd like to say that overall I've loved being president of AUSU, in spite of the difficulties. I've learned so much, and I've gained so much. I'm disappointed that certain individuals have been a source of discouragement to me, and I'm even more disappointed with myself that I let these individuals discourage me. But I have had the respect of the university, students, the staff I oversee, and the majority of Council. I have one executive member who has done her best to be a support to me and to Council. Even though we've had our differences, we've both managed to transcend these and continue to work together to put student interests first. The same is true for the majority of Council and our staff. I know I'm not the easiest person to work with. I'm a demanding perfectionist and all too often lately I've allowed personal stress to spill over into my dealings with others. This is something I continually work to remedy. Perhaps if I can sleep for a week at Christmas I'll recover!

The most rewarding thing about life at the top, however, one which makes up for all the discouragements; is the relationship I've developed with my fellow AU students. Whether this relationship is that of colleague, staff member, AU employee, or student at large - I've been so pleased and proud to be able to be a part of this unique student body and to be able to play such an important role in trying to make the student experience better for all of us.

Merry Christmas everyone, Happy Holidays, and a politically correct Best of the Season greeting to all!

Debbie

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.

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The same Voice mugs and fleece jackets that you have seen pictured as prizes on the Annual Reader Survey page, are also for sale at great introductory prices.

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The Voice

Classifieds

The Net Nerd's Profiles



Ahh... the joy of goofing off. Recently I described an acquaintance who is unemployed and plays PS2 all day as a "slacker." "Not so," a friend reminded me, "slackers are people who actually have jobs but go to work and do nothing all day." So true, so true. So this week I dedicate my column to all the slackers out there. Hang your apathetic flag proudly and get ready for hardcore inactivity!

The holiday season is upon us. Wrapping presents and sending out cards sounds a lot like work. Don't worry, your Mom will still love you if you wrap up a can of tomato soup at the last minute rather than shop for her (golden excuse #1: "The soup represents all the love you put into preparing our favorite foods"). Instead of all that rushing around this December turn on the computer and try out some of these games and other time wasters (golden excuse #2: "The commercialization of religious holidays has gone to far, so I decided to celebrate the holiday season with internal reflection and thought rather than contribute to a consumerist Christmas."). So if you don't feel like baking, believe the presents can wrap themselves, and know that 12 page essay on Kohlberg's stages of moral development will wait, you need:

EIB: Elves in Black <http://www.christmas.com/pe/897>

Cute game, obviously a satire of *Men in Black*. Sign up as an agent and go on missions such as the *EIB Training/Holiday Advent Calendar Game* that has a new Christmas game each day. Cute animation, cute ideas, and cute elves. *Rating*: ***/5 A variety of games to choose from, but you have to sign up with your e-mail address (potential SPAM alert!).

Santa Balls <http://www.christmas-stories.com/christmas-games.php>

Eliminate Christmas balls by clicking on rows of 3 or more of the same color. Check out Santa's chipmunk voice. He sounds like I always thought he would. *Rating*: **/5 Although slightly addictive, nothing to write home about.

Christmas Trivia Quiz <http://www.christmas-stories.com/christmas-games.php>

From the same website as *Santa Balls*, *Trivia Quiz* is -- you guessed it -- a trivia game! Interesting facts and challenging enough to make you think. *Rating*: ****/5 It's stimulating enough if you're a trivia nut like me, and short enough if you have a limited attention span (not unlike myself). Check out other holiday games on the same website.

Star Trek Night Before Christmas <http://dmrtc.net/~thompsde/xmas.html>

Not a game, but I thought I sneak it in for all those geeky Trekkies and my mom. If you like this I'm sure you'll enjoy these *Star Trek* Christmas carols: <http://www.sonic.net/~roelofs/humor/trekmas.html> .

Santa's Grotto <http://www.xmastime.co.uk/funstuff/santascafe.htm>

Santa Claus is broke and he needs to sell mince meat pies or turkey sandwiches to raise money. Check the weather forecast to decide what will sell. Interesting game for all those budding entrepreneurs out there. After playing this game I have abandoned my dream of running a restaurant. *Rating*: ***/5 Easy to figure out and a lesson in marketing (albeit a rudimentary lesson). *Hint: all the prices are in Pounds and Pence so hard to figure out if you don't know UK currency.

Naughty or Nice Rating http://www.claus.com/naughtyornice/nn_hmpg2.shtml

Again, not really a game but a fabulous time waster. Is it just me, or is there something creepy about a fat man who only leaves the house once a year but he knows when you are sleeping, knows when you're awake, and

puts your name on a list? Just a thought. Type in your first and last name and get an instant rating on your annual behavior. *Rating* *****/5 No thought involved and it takes up other's valuable time (if you're at work). A definite 5 out of 5!

Santa Goes Butt Boarding <http://www.ezone.com/games/santabutt3d/>

Hey it's Christmas and what could be funnier than Santa's ass? Santa's fallen on a mountain and is sliding down on his behind. Help save the presents that are sliding with him. *Rating* ***/5 Very long loading time (at least on my computer), but you have the option of playing a "loading game" while you wait.

Silent but Deadly Night <http://www.jibjab.com/cartoons/nasty/ns%5Fmovie06.htm>

More funnier than Santa's bottom? How about farting elves? Not really a game, but you can select different Christmas carols for the elves to "play". Gotta love that bathroom humor. *Rating* ***/5 A few giggles at first but gets old fast.

Mr. T vs. Santa <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Rampart/6331/santa.html>

An online story book. Santa steals Mr. T's milk and pays dearly. *Rating* **/5 Starts out funny but just gets stupid. Try *Santa and the Jolly Green Wrapper* instead (*contains adult themes and some violence- This cartoon is racy and not for everyone) <http://www.joecartoon.com/pages/santayodaddy/>

Rebel Noel in The Wrath of Santa <http://www.campchaos.com/timekillers/circusx/rebel%5Fnoel.html>

Santa's gone postal! Assume the identity of Noel, a mouthy little elf who's just ticked off Santa. Try to get away from the fat man in red before he clobbers you with a sledgehammer. *Rating*: *****/5 Simple game, fun and you get to see a psycho Santa. What more can you ask for?

There you have it, games for everyone. Whether you celebrate Christmas or not, these games and various time wasters are fun for all. So Merry Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa Bodhi Day, Zarathosht Diso, Winter Solstice, Gantan-sai, Guru Gobindh Singh Sahib birthday, Vasant Panchami, and a Happy New Year!



The Voice regrets to inform readers that Sandra will no longer be writing the Dear Sandra column. We wish Sandra the best of luck in her future endeavours, and thank her for her frequent contributions to this student publication. Sandra has been a reliable and passionate writer for the Voice for nearly two years, and she also provided the Voice with numerous graduate interviews from this year's convocation.

Thanks Sandra,
Tamra Ross Low

Primetime Update

Week of December 3, 2003

Amanda Lyn Baldwin

Missed your favourite shows? No problem. Primetime update gives you the rundown.

Survivor: Pearl Islands

In the last edition of Primetime Update, we lost Christa because the women were still too stupid to get rid of Jon and Burton. This edition is all inclusive, covering a whole 3 hours of Survivor, from the 13th episode last Thursday and the 2 hour finale on Sunday. If you watched the reunion show, good for you, I haven't yet.

On episode 13, the tribe returns from tribal council and Sandra, suspecting that she'll be next, plans to sabotage the tribe by hiding their knives, machetes, etc. However, the boys plan to get rid of Darrah, while the third member of their alliance, Lill, thought it unfair. She knew if they turned on Darrah, they'd turn on her too.

The reward challenge consisted of many pieces of prior challenges such as untying knots, digging in the sand for keys, getting out of a prison, shooting plates with a slingshot, and completing a word puzzle. The reward: spending a night camping out in the ruins of Panama City, complete with a cultural feast. The winner: Burton, who chooses to take Jon with him to Panama City where he is also given a brand new GMC Envoy XUV. The three women are left with the chance (which many doubt they'll take) to plot and scheme against the boys. The decision: to get rid of Burton.

When Jon and Burton return from their excursion, the women play dumb and act as though they didn't even talk to one another. Both Lill and Sandra pretend to go along with the plan to get rid of Darrah.

Immunity, which will decide whether Jon or Burton is sent packing, requires each tribe member to use their canteen to fill a tube with water high enough to reach a float to which a key is attached. The key releases a plank which gets the survivor to the next tube. Five retrieved keys and lowered planks allow flag retrieval. Returning to the beginning with the flag secures immunity. The challenge goes neck in neck with Darrah maintaining a small lead over Burton, but since he can't catch up to her, Darrah wins immunity, leaving Burton available to vote out. And so, we again say goodbye to Burton Roberts.

The 14th episode, and season Finale, begins with a breakfast brought to the island by host Jeff Probst. Each of the remaining four Tribe mates receive a letter from home, and of course Lill threw herself a crying party, which overshadowed Darrah, Sandra, and Jon's excitement about their own letters.

With only four remaining, Jon opens his mouth about what he really thinks, which is that they have to get rid of Lill because she's the most liked by the Jury. Lill turns around and attempts to get rid of Darrah, as she's the biggest physical threat (which is ridiculous b/c there are only two challenges left and they likely won't require too much effort).

Immunity is put up for grabs, not only by the final four, but the jury is also given the chance to take it away from the remaining competitors. Multiple choice and true/false questions are presented which relate to pirate survival, folklore, and knowledge. The first to five wins immunity and all five members of the jury compete as one brain. AND since five brains are better than one, the jury steals immunity and all of the final four are vulnerable.

Since no one wants Darrah to have the final immunity (and the choice of who to take to the final two), Lill, Jon, and Sandra get rid of the 22 year old mortician from Mississippi.

On returning to camp from tribal council, the remaining three get mail requiring them to get up early and be at a shipwreck by dawn. They take the extinguished torches of survivors past and place them aboard the shipwreck one by one (since Osten quit the game, he is not honored in the ceremony.) The trio then take up muskets and fire on the wreckage, which burns down in a blaze of glory.

The final immunity challenge has been the same type in every season of Survivor I've ever seen; a battle to outlast one's enemies by sitting or standing or perching, or whatever. This season, we're introduced to pirate torture. The castaways are each placed on a small raft which they are only allowed to touch with hands and feet. Contact with one's bum or knees forfeits immunity. The tribe member to endure the most wins 1) immunity, 2) a place in the final two, and 3) the decision of who to compete against in the final tribal council. After fifteen minutes Jon and Sandra become obviously uncomfortable, and Lill, thanks to aerobics, is just fine. Sandra gives in right away and topples over, but Jon perseveres for over two hours before the old hag kicked his butt.

Do you remember what I said when Lill was voted out the first time? That it was about damn time the loyal little puppy was shot in the head? Well her loyalty and compassion strike again as she chooses to keep Sandra, out of sympathy for their similarities as mother and wife, and get rid of Jon, who would be easy to beat because of people's dislike for the guy. Good bye Jon. Then evolves the most boring ending Survivor has ever had.

The couple spends a relaxing night back at camp, before the deliberations are set in motion. The final tribal council brings out the true character of each finalist. Sandra began and ended the game in honesty. Whether or not it was what people wanted to hear, Sandra insisted on telling it how she believed it to be. She admitted to her lies, and highlighted her good moves. Lill, on the other hand, is a total hypocrite. She said one thing, then something that completely refuted the first thing. The opening statement she made included her confession of her pride in that she played the game according to who she is as a person. However, in her final remark she regretted bringing her Boy Scout oath and uniform into the game. Is one's job not a part of who one is as a person? You can't go into a game as one person and be proud of that person after you've changed who you are through lying and backstabbing and then regretting (on national TV) that you'd brought that first person with you. In the end, pity and respect are NOT given to Lill. Instead, Sandra's honesty and integrity are rewarded with the title of sole survivor of Pearl Islands by a six to one vote, along with a new GMC Envoy XUV, and a "small check for a million bucks."

Survivor airs on Thursdays at 9:00pm Alberta time on Global (channel 7 in Calgary)

The Bachelor

For the last two weeks we watched Trista and Ryan plan the wedding of a lifetime, and spend time with the friends celebrating themselves as individuals as well as their relationship. This week, the couple is to be married in a multi-million dollar ceremony, complete with helicopters trying to sneak a peak. There's not much to say about it, since it was your basic wedding, but it comes down to the fact that I cried. I'm a sap for romance, and I cried watching two people I've never even met before in my life take their vows. It's proof to what TV does to a person - it makes them live in another reality, someone else's reality. I guess that's why it's so relaxing.

If there are any other shows you want updates on, or any comments you wish to make, please email me at abaldwin@shaw.ca!

THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER

Stacey Steele



Weed, herb, grass, mary jane, blunt, dope, pot, joint, hoot, bowl, four twenty, and my all time favorite, "spliff", are some of the two hundred slang terms for you know what: Marijuana, the common name for a drug made from the dried leaves and flowering tops of the Indian hemp plant *Cannabis sativa*. You can smoke it like a cigarette with rolling papers or blunts, light it up in a pipe or bong, boil it down for the oil, or bake it into cakes and cookies. Almost everyone I know has smoked at least once, I'm sure once you go down your list of acquaintances you can say the same.

Pot culture is at an all time high for visibility and medical use for marijuana is gaining more and more acceptance. It could also be in the near future that possession of personal amounts is decriminalized. All of

this is good news for a lot of people, but is it right?

The active ingredient in marijuana is delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol, also known as THC. How THC works is it suppresses the neurons in the information-processing system of the hippocampus, the part of the brain that is crucial for learning, memory, and the integration of sensory experiences with emotions and motivation. In other words, you get stoned. THC is just one of the 400 chemicals found in marijuana, but it is the most effective. It sticks around in the body's fatty tissue's for up to 45 days (this is evident in the commercial boom of products geared for passing "piss tests"- the one that made me laugh the most: "the Whizzinator", I swear it does exist!). The higher the THC level found, the better grade of dope. Apparently, the strength of today's weed is ten times greater than thirty years ago. The Woodstock generation quit at the right or wrong time, depending on who you ask.

According to all the latest health research these are some of the common short-term effects of THC use: sleepiness, impaired short-term memory, dry mouth, rapid heartbeat, some loss of coordination and poor sense of balance, and slower reaction times, along with intoxication and we can't forget about Old Dutch's favorite, the munchies. Long term effects include impaired memory, lethargy, lack of concentration and obesity due to high consumption of Cheetos. According to www.theonion.com, marijuana is also linked to sitting around and getting high.

Although still an illegal drug, weed may be the most accepted yet misunderstood illicit drug in western culture today. Many civilized countries are now adopting medicinal use of marijuana as a legal form of medicating and some countries have embraced decriminalization of pot (the Liberal government is trying to pass this now-whether the new leader be Paul Martin or Shelia Copps, I predict a landslide victory for the Liberals next election). All of this aside, what do people really think of marijuana?

Marijuana is a gateway drug -- Marijuana users don't usually abuse any other drugs. This debate is often presented as a black or white issue, with both sides presenting statistics to support their claim. I think it's a half a dozen on one -- six on the other, type of issue. Maybe it's predominantly marijuana users who abuse heroin and crack or maybe it's mostly heroin and crack users who abuse marijuana. There is most likely a higher correlation between caffeine use leading to nicotine use, or alcohol use leading to solvent abuse, but we don't see as many stats about that.

A popular argument in the medical community is the therapeutic value of pot. To me and many others this is a moot point. If a person is terminally or chronically ill, shouldn't the best means of treatment be used for the individual patient? Persons in the latter stages of AIDS often smoke up to regain their appetite, people receiving chemotherapy smoke to alleviate nausea, and MS patients smoke to alleviate pain. Whatever the

reason or illness, obviously the numbers are there to show that marijuana is an effective means of treatment. At least the Canadian Government thinks so.

Right now the laws in Canada governing marijuana possession are harsh (not by American standards though). A possession charge gives you a criminal record. The controlled Drugs and Substances Act was passed in 1986 by the Liberal government (the same party that is trying to reform these laws).

Here are some of the basics on this Act:

Greater powers of search: Essentially this means a search warrant for a property includes all people in that property. If you're at a club, the police can do a mass search and arrest.

Widened Seizure and Forfeiture: This means that anything remotely related to the illegal substance can be seized (ie.cars, homes).

Minimum Sentencing: Possession of over 30 grams of Marijuana - Indictment is five years less a day (no trial by jury), summary conviction for a first offence is six months and/or a \$1000 fine, a second offence is one year and/or a \$2000 fine. Possession of under 30 grams - Summary conviction is 6 months and/or a \$1000 fine, second offence one year and/or a \$2000 fine. A summary conviction is still on a criminal record. Those are the current laws in Canada. Once marijuana possession is decriminalized, a fine will be imposed and the one fined will not have a criminal record.

Every once in a while the newspapers and television will report another person arrested or protesting for medicinal marijuana or the decriminalization of pot. One of these persons is Calgaryian Grant Krieger. Despite the fact that MS sufferer Krieger was granted the right to grow, cultivate and possess his own marijuana for medicinal use in December, 2000 by Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench, he is still continually arrested and charged by Calgary police for possession of the drug he uses to assuage Multiple Sclerosis symptoms. These many arrest and court dates have cost the terminally ill man thousands of dollars. Why? So that he could be made an example of. Is this effective policing procedure by the Calgary City Police, or just a witch hunt?

So the million dollar question is: is the decriminalization and the medicinal use of marijuana right for Canada? In an interview with the Winnipeg Free Press on October 3, Prime Minister Jean Chretien defended his new marijuana bill, that would replace criminal sentencing with fines. He said, "It is still illegal, but do you think Canadians want their kids, 18 years old or 17, who smoke marijuana once and get caught by police, to have a criminal record for the rest of their life? What has happened is so illogical that they are not prosecuted anymore. So let's make the law adjust to the realities. It is still illegal, but they will pay a fine. It is in synch with the times." Our insightful PM perhaps summed it up for all pot users far and wide with this quote, "I will have my money for my fine and a joint in the other hand".

SOURCES:

Calgary Sun, June 09, 2002 , "Leave Grant Krieger Alone", by Licia Corbella, Calgary Sun Editor
www.cannabisnews.com

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/protection/marijuana.html "Medical Marijuana"
www.marijuanaparty.com
www.marijuana.com/myths
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/protection/marijuana.html

CANADIAN FED WATCH!

NEWS ACROSS THE NATION...

By Karl Low



It's the season to be giving, so I thought as a gift to Premier Klein, Minister Oberg, and a whole new Federal Cabinet, I'd give them the gift of a week's silence, and myself the gift of not having to read their self-congratulatory releases this week.

Merry Christmas folks!

AUSU Job Posting Chief Returning Officer



The Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) represents AU students and their interests. The Union strives for a fair and accessible election process for members to the Students' Council. To this end, AUSU is seeking a student to fulfill the role of Chief Returning Officer (CRO) for the 2004 AUSU General Elections.

Position Duties and Responsibilities

The CRO's responsibilities, as outlined in AUSU policy, include arranging to receive, collect, and maintain ballots in a secure location, overseeing the counting of ballots with two (2) Scrutineers on March 21, 2004, notifying candidates of the results, and conducting the appeal process as required.

The CRO reports to the Executive Director of AUSU and AUSU Students' Council.

Selection Criteria

- Applicants must be currently registered as an AU student.
- Applicants must be bondable.
- Applicants must have strong organizational and logistical abilities.
- Applicants must be able to analyze and apply policy to ensure a fair election process.
- Candidates in the 2004 AUSU General Election are ineligible for this competition.
- Candidates must be able to operate out of the AUSU head office located in Edmonton, AB.

Remuneration

\$500 stipend

Application Deadline

Saturday, January 17, 2004.

Apply to:

AUSU, 2nd floor North Tower, 10030 – 107 Street, Edmonton, AB, T5J 3E4

Phone: (780) 497-3413 or toll free 1-800-788-9041 ext. 3413

E-mail: ausu@ausu.org



Brotherhood of The Wolf (2001)

Film Review

By Laura Seymour

Magnificent camera work and intricate plot make you stay put. I am astonished at this film's impossible to describe genre. It is a sludge pile of martial arts kick-fest, medieval art project, bawdy sex romp and science fiction. This project from France is labeled a "horror," but honestly I see that as only one aspect of this particularly unique film. Forgive me if I fail to truly capture the complexity of this film. The only thing you need to know –it works.

One unfortunate problem is the subtitling – it isn't that it is that hard to read -- maybe for some people who are slower at reading -- but that it forces you to stop looking at the incredible scenery on the screen. I had to jot down the name of the director of photography, Dan Laustsen, who captured creepy and yet magnificent beauty during this production.

Canada has a part in the project...or at least through scripting. Our "native Mohawk/ Iroquois" character Mani is a dear friend and wolf-hunting partner to France's Fronsac -- the two having met and bonded in New France, a.k.a. Quebec. Actor Mark Dacascos (Mani) was born in Hawaii and grew up in Germany. Mark is fluent in German and does well in Mandarin! His French was pretty darn good in the film too but I guess with very few lines he managed to cover up any problems. Read more on this actor at his website www.dacascos.com.

The language is no barrier between the characters but since the film takes place in 1764 I wonder if North American natives would have had problems understanding men from France at that time? I'm willing to suspend disbelief if you are.

What's the plot you ask? Oh man...let me try. A beast of some unknown kind is ripping people apart across the French countryside in the mid 1700s. The attacks are attributed to a wolf. Panic ensues and the King orders the animal killed.

Together Mani and Fronsac are forced to track down wolves...and an icky scene of slaughter occurs. Thankfully both Mani and Fronsac disagree that the beast is one of the ordinary wolves that have just died to satisfy the many frightened people. Fronsac is versed in natural healing and later proves he can more than hold his own in defense strategies. He is also a gifted taxidermist and is forced by the King's official to "end" the hunt by taking a slaughtered wolf and altering it to make a beast of horrific proportions. Under the King's direction, Fronsac gets out his tools and, with the aid of some straw, paint and some fake teeth and eyes creates a "fearsome" beast that the royal court is delighted to put on display. Except of course the real beast has only been shown in shadows and is far more hideous. Spikes, fangs, and about the size of a Sasquatch! The work of Jim Henson's team has made a fearsome screen beast that we would rather avoid on a stroll to ... anywhere.

A twisting, turning plot finally reveals that the beast is an African import that has been trained and forced to be more and more ferocious by a man with a twisted mind...and his equally twisted daughter! The beast has been utilized by the church to enforce the teachings of the Bible. Quotes about the wrath of beasts are used to frighten the poor villagers – thus drawing more people to a "pious" life. The quirky order meets in secret but



our big showdown finally reveals who is doing what to whom. The plot in this film makes some of those "surprise" plot twists in film thrillers look pretty amateur to me.

Sex is involved although again handled in the most uniquely styled manner and is anything but gratuitous. Even the local whorehouse has important characters who are important to our finale. For more detailed plot I will only say that the wolf revamping is not the end for Fronsac and Mani. They hunt for the real beast in quiet. Although Mani is a victim toward the end, Fronsac eventually gets his man ... oops! Beast.

If you can overlook some gruesome scenes this film is a must see for those who respect film that is done right. This project is rated R for nudity, sexual scenes and gore.

I truly must dedicate my last "new" review of the year to our Voice editor, Tamra. Thanks for tipping me off to this amazing film. I hope this review agrees with your assessment of a film you spoke so highly of to me.

Hope all of the Voice readers, and my fellow writers will have a great 2004! --Laura

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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Are you an artist?

**AUSU supports
the arts!**

AUSU is interested in purchasing original works of art from students for promotional purposes. These promotions may include: gifts from AUSU to graduates at convocation, tokens of appreciation for volunteers, special presentations, etc.

The works of art must:

- be created by an AU student
- have a value range \$0-\$500
- be accessible or easily transportable to Alberta

If you are an artist of any kind who creates a product you feel we would be able to use for such a purpose, contact:

Debbie Jabbour
[djabbour@ausu.org].

Supply a description of the object, a picture if you have it, and its market value.



Here's Your Chance to Get Involved! AUSU Elections 2004

Dear AU Student:

Have you wondered how you could get involved with your Students' Union? Have you wanted to play a role in shaping the experience of AU students? Here is your chance! It is election time again for the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU). Elections will be held on March 20, 2004 so get to your post office or computer and send in your nomination for AUSU council today. Send nominations by e-mail to president@ausu.org or mail to the AUSU office at 10030 - 107 Street, 2nd floor, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 3E4 Attention: President. For further information, call 1-800-788-9041 ext. 3413.

Anyone submitting a nomination must be a registered student of AU at the time of the nomination as well as at the close of the election and must remain a student at AU throughout his/her term on council. Students, as defined by the AUSU by-laws, are those who are currently enrolled in an AU course, or who have completed a course within the past six months. If course extensions have been purchased, the revised end date is used to calculate student status.

As stated in the AUSU By-Laws, "Any Active Member in good standing may submit to the Council a self-nomination together with the individual's written consent to act, if elected" (Article 11_Elections, Section 2-Nominations).

"Member in good standing" means an individual who is a member of the AUSU in any of the categories of membership prescribed in the By-Laws, has paid all fees, and has not been subject to disciplinary action from the University or the AUSU.

Students must submit their name, student I.D. number, address and/or e-mail address, and the individual's written consent to act along with their nomination. Deadline for self-nominations/nominations is January 17, 2004.

All self-nominations/nominations will be acknowledged after the closing date. Nominees will be given an opportunity to withdraw their name from the list of nominees provided their notice of withdrawal is received by the last day of January, 2004.

Debbie Jabbour, President
Athabasca University Students' Union

*Does the pressure of having to
study alone keep you up at night?*

AUSU Study Buddy

AUSU THIS MONTH



A Special General Meeting was held on October 15, 2003, to pass several changes to the proposed new AUSU bylaws, which had been requested by Alberta Corporate Registries. The bylaws were passed contingent on acceptance by Alberta Corporate Registries. Unfortunately, Corporate Registries has returned the bylaws with several more requested adjustments that they did not identify the first time around. We therefore need to hold another SGM to approve these additional amendments, which are listed below. All students are encouraged to attend. For further information or to book a teleconference line for the meeting, please contact the AUSU office at ausu@ausu.org, or by telephone 1-800-788-9041, ext 3413.

Debbie Jabbour, President AUSU

NOTICE, Special General Meeting, December 19, 2003, 1800 MST:

A Special General Meeting will be held on December 19, 1800 MST, to vote on the following two special resolutions:

1. BIRT, by special resolution, the current objectives of AUSU are replaced by the attached objectives, to take effect upon acceptance by Alberta Corporate Registries.
2. BIRT, by special resolution, the current bylaws of AUSU are replaced by the attached bylaws, to take effect upon acceptance by Alberta Corporate Registries.

For more information and supporting documents, see: <http://www.ausu.org/agm/sgm.php>

AUSU IN PERSON DISCUSSION GROUPS

Getting together physically with fellow AU students adds to your university experience. Other students will be able to understand and relate to the joys and frustrations of distance learning. It's also a way to stay abreast of information relating to AU and the Athabasca University Students' Union.

See the Coffee Groups web page on the AUSU site, at <http://www.ausu.org/coffee> for a list of groups.

Anyone interested in starting up a group in your area (anywhere in Canada, from small towns to major centres) please contact SANDRA at smoore@ausu.org.

NEEDED – VOLUNTEER MENTORS FOR NEW STUDENTS

Do you remember your first few months at AU? Do you remember all the questions you had and the confusions you encountered? Every month at AU there are close to 1500 new registrations and these new students will be in the same boat you were once in. How about helping these students out by offering to be an AUSU mentor? AUSU mentors are "experienced" AU students who are willing to provide a little guidance and support to new AU students. If you are interested in participating in this new venture of AUSU's or if you'd like more information please contact Sandra Moore at smoore@ausu.org

CHAT WITH AUSU ONLINE

If you have a question for AUSU, or would like to get to know your council, drop by the chat-room [accessible through the 'Message Forums' option on the AUSU home page www.ausu.org. You will need an AUSU web site account.] **Times are MST**

Mondays at

8:00 PM

Councillor Karl Low

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

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



HALF PRICE COMPUTER BOOKS ESSAY SCHOLARSHIP

Value: \$500

Deadline: December 22, 2003

Administrator: Half Price Computer Books

Notes: Awarded to a Canadian Student. The essay should be between 500 and 750 words, on ONE of the three predetermined topics posted at our Web site. For full details, visit our scholarship page.

Contact Information:

Half Price Computer Books
125A Glacier Street
Coquitlam, British Columbia V3K 5Z1

Fax: (604) 945-7229

Toll Free: 888-663-0063

Web Site: <http://www.halfpricecomputerbooks.ca>

E-mail: <mailto:scholarship@halfpricecomputerbooks.ca>

Application Address: <http://www.halfpricecomputerbooks.ca/scholarship.php>

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT BURSARY

Value: \$3000

Deadline: May 15, 2004

Administrator: Alberta Scholarship Programs

Notes: Applicants must have been residents of Alberta for a minimum of three years prior to applying. Must be within two years of graduation from their post-secondary program. Recipients are required to work for one year within the Northern Alberta Development Council boundary upon graduation. Please see Web site for more information.

Contact Information:

Alberta Scholarship Program
9940 - 106 Street, 9th Floor, P.O. Box 28000, Station Main
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4R4

Phone: (780) 427-8640

Fax: (780) 422-4516

Web Site: <http://www.alberta-learning.ab.ca/scholarships>

E-mail: <mailto:heritage@gov.ab.ca>

Application Address: <http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships/forms.asp>



CUTC 2004 (Canadian Undergraduate Technology Conference) **January 22 - 24, 2004 - Delta Toronto East Hotel**

The Canadian Undergraduate Technology Conference (CUTC) is about technology, innovative ideas, and the people who turn these ideas into reality. The Canadian Undergraduate Technology Conference was started in 2000 by a few visionary students from the University of Waterloo, and is now in its fifth year and continues to be organized exclusively by university students from across Canada.

The last four conferences sold out, each bringing together approximately 500 students from 20 universities across Canada from every aspect of technology. The three-day conference features hands-on workshops and seminars featuring leading speakers from industry and academia. Filled with events such as ThinkTank, TechExpo, CareerExpo, TechPanel, TechShops and TechTours, all of this is made possible by the generous support of our past sponsors, including Bell Canada, Redknee, Microsoft Canada and IBM Canada Ltd.

We are excited to announce that Glenn Edens, Vice President of Research and Director of Sun Labs, will be a keynote speaker for CUTC 2004. Other speakers include David Kirk, Chief Scientist and VP of Architecture at NVIDIA, who will give a glimpse of future graphics technologies and explore the factors that make inventors out of engineers, and Ray Mowling, past president of Monsanto and currently the Executive Director for the Council for Biotechnology Information, who will be speaking about genetically modified foods.

For more information, visit our website at <http://www.cutc.ca> or contact info@cutc.ca.

Contributed By AU's *The Insider*

- **ISIMD 2004** - Jan. 5 - 7, 2004 - Istanbul, Turkey - "2nd International Symposium of Interactive Media Design." Details: <http://isimd2004.yeditepe.edu.tr/>
- **LEARNTEC 2004** - Feb. 10 - 13 - Karlsruhe, Germany - 12th European Conference and Specialist Trade Fair for Educational and Informational Technology. Details: <http://www.learntec.de>
- **ICDE 2004** - Feb. 18 - 21 - Hong Kong - 21st ICDE World Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education. Details: <http://www.ouhk.edu.hk/hk2004/>

OTHER CONFERENCES

- **WITHINSIGHT 2004** - January 21-24, 2004 - Ottawa, Ontario. Details: "A four day forum for the discussion and exploration of prominent Canadian issues based on an interactive format of communication with current Canadian leaders. Open to post-secondary students from all across Canada and from all disciplines. Applications are due by November 3rd." http://www.withinsight.ca/en_site/index.html

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

classifieds

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@ausu.org for more information.

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RED DEER COFFEE GROUPS

Red Deer Athabasca University students meet at the Chapter's Starbucks on the last Thursday of every month. From 8 pm to 9 pm, the goal is to share ideas that will help us all be successful AU students and collectively resolve our specific issues. The next meeting will be on January 29th, 2004 due to Christmas holidays. Contact Ryan, lowrystcol@hotmail.com.

THE VOICE

c/o Athabasca University Students' Union
2nd Floor, 10030-107th Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4
800.788.9041 ext. 3413
Editor In Chief Tamra Ross Low

THE VOICE ONLINE: WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE

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