

# THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 16 Issue 45  
November 21, 2008

## **What Comes Next**

Some thoughts on aging

## **Mental Health**

A silent work issue

## **Dante's Inferno**

Medieval puppetry

*Plus:*

*The Interviewer,  
From Where I Sit,*

*Music To Eat Lunch To, and much more...*



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**The Voice  
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



## ON THE HILL

Sandra Livingston



## For the Record

The Liberals may not be planning to vote against the recent throne speech (or any specific legislation that comes out of it), but the foundation for Canada's next general election is already being laid as the race for the Liberal leadership heats up.

Sadly though, it looks like a lot of election dollars may be spilled for nought, because unless the current Conservative minority gets things horribly, painfully wrong (we're talking on a grand, George W. scale here), neither of the Liberal frontrunners

will overcome negative election portrayals any better than Stéphane Dion did.

That's not to say that Bob Rae and Michael Ignatieff aren't qualified. (New Brunswick MP Dominic LeBlanc has thrown his hat in as well, but Rae and Ignatieff are the ones to watch.)

Both men are experienced, intelligent, and have the political savvy to play the game. Rae began his political career in 1978, as an NDP MP in Toronto's Broadview riding. He went on to become the Ontario NDP leader in 1982, and the province's first NDP premier in 1990. He was elected as a Liberal MP in a 2008 byelection.

Ignatieff's resume is even more impressive, even without the lengthy political experience. There are the 16 fiction and non-fiction books, one of which made the Booker Prize short list and another that won the Governor General's Award. There are the years of experience as a respected writer and broadcaster, most notably on democracy, human rights, and security, much of it gained after firsthand experience in hotspots like Kosovo.

The problem, especially when it comes to future election campaigns against the Harper machine, is that both men come with a clearly marked Achilles heel, and it will be a target their opponents will take every opportunity to aim at.

For Rae, it's his disastrous record as Ontario premier during the '90s, a period that saw the province struggle through one of the worst downturns in its history, including high unemployment and record deficits. The era's woes can't all be blamed on Rae but the connection has stuck, and Rae himself acknowledged it when he announced his leadership bid, telling reporters "It's a simple fact that I couldn't hide my record even if I wanted to."

For Ignatieff, it's his original support of the war in Iraq. He has since publicly backed away from that stance, but with the state of public discourse today, his opponents will be able to effectively reinforce the image with sound bites while the finer points of his argument are lost.

None of which is to say that other politicians haven't made huge missteps and recovered from them. But in this case, both Rae's and Ignatieff's flaws are tied to front-page issues: the economic crisis and the Iraq (and Afghanistan) wars. With both poised to drag on for the foreseeable future, the next election may just find the Liberals right back where they were with Dion—running defence more than a campaign.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



### Stephen Jenkinson: What Suddenly Breaks on Your Shore

*Stephen Jenkinson is a palliative caregiver whose unique approach to palliative care is informed by profound personal recognition of the nature of death and dying.*

*His work is the subject of Griefwalker, a recently released National Film Board of Canada documentary by award-winning filmmaker Tim Wilson.*

*Jenkinson is currently on a country-wide speaking tour accompanying the film's screenings. Donations taken in at screenings are given to hospice and palliative care*

*facilities in the areas in which the film is shown.*

#### How it Started

Someone who knew me and who worked in a hospital asked me to become involved in the palliative care unit there. She said, "This is your work."

I said, "How can it be my work if I've never done it?" I had been self-unemployed for the last 12 years, and I don't do well in organizations. But I told her to give me a small discrete project and we'd take it from there.

#### The Silence of Men

She gave me this group of men—husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons of people who were dying. This group unnerved everybody, so they just wanted me to take them off their hands.

I asked what was so unnerving about these men and was told, "They seem to fall into two groups; one group is violent, aggressive, belligerent, hostile, and obnoxious, and the other group is much worse. They don't say anything at all."

That's the most terrifying thing there is for women—guys who don't say anything. If somebody's not too verbal you're not going to be too impressed with him. You're going to think of him as a problem to solve.

But I have an understanding of what male silence is. When faced with dying, his own or that of a loved one, the man is distraught beyond describing. I'm generalizing, but one of the instinctual responses for a guy in that circumstance is to withdraw.

If you've bought the idea that the gold standard of emotional health is what they call "high-expressed emotion," then any guy who doesn't talk is unhealthy at the very least. So your solution for him is to crowbar his mouth open and get him to ramble.

***"I don't advocate a solution to dying. I advocate dying as an antidote to the death phobia that informs everyone's experience of death. Dying is not the problem—it's the solution."***

***Stephen Jenkinson***



I'm going to offer an alternative. With most men, early in their lives something awakens in them which sociologically is called "the provider instinct." Part of this, when they have families they feel responsible for, is a defending, protecting instinct. It's very strong even though it's been utterly disqualified, scoffed at, belittled, and slandered. Women led the charge initially but a lot of men chimed in. But there is such a thing and it has at least as much credibility, necessity, and merit as any maternal instinct.



The silence that is being misapprehended as passive-aggressive is that provider instinct pressed into radical service. What these men are trying to do is to keep their own mayhem away from the people that they're trying to protect.

### Recognition

I planned to conduct the group for six to eight weeks but it went for 18 months. Somewhere in that 18 months I recognized that I was born knowing how to do this.

Now that wasn't palliative care—it was more like the collateral damage of the dying. My first home-based palliative care visit was to the home of an oncologist. In the death room there were all these name plates with initials after his name and I thought, *Honest to Christ, this guy's a doctor! What are the chances that the very first dying person I have to work with is a physician?*

Then I found out he was an oncologist dying of cancer. The irony was amazing. I can't say I did it fabulously well but as soon as I sat down I knew exactly what to do. I knew why I was there, which was something no one had ever told me.

### Dying as Solution

The truth is that the training is so meagre and inadequate in this line of work that there is little explication of what you are actually there to do. One of my jobs over the years has been to say that there's nothing self-evident to me about what passes for self-evident in this culture when it comes to anything to do with dying, diminishment, suffering health, or the instinct for help. Dying has no place that's legitimized in the care of the dying.

I don't advocate a solution to dying. I advocate dying as an antidote to the death phobia that informs everyone's experience of death. Dying is not the problem—it's the solution. Refusing to die when it's your time, *that's* the problem. When you accept that you're dying it doesn't mean you're actually dying.

I reinvent the language. This is pretty much what I've got and what I teach so I insist the language carry the meaning that I intend. In English it is impossible to say I am dying in the passive voice. The English language is teaching us that, because you cannot use the verb "to die" in a passive voice, dying is not a passive event.

When you realize that this is not a matter of grammar but of epistemology then what suddenly breaks on your shore is the knowledge that if dying is what you do then it's possible to *not* do it.

## THE LEARNING CURVE

Sara Windross



### A Life Without Barriers

There are quite a few challenges I face in my daily life, some of which are more difficult than others. These challenges test my will to be positive because to manage them effectively I must rely on the kindness of strangers.

When I go out in my wheelchair, I need to be aware that the store I'm going to has wide aisles, making it easier to get around. But sometimes a store that has wide aisles will also have high shelves, and when that happens, I need to ask an employee to hand me a product I can't reach.

Most of the time, I don't mind asking others for help. I always say thank you with a smile and have a very

positive attitude, but there used to be days when keeping this attitude was hard work. I didn't want to ask for help. I'd do it, but I wouldn't appreciate any help given because I felt angry and bitter about my life on wheels. I'd want to be left alone so I could wallow in self-pity for a while.

Fortunately, I found keeping a journal for several years helped me let go of these emotions. This hobby also helped me accept my life on wheels, and I rarely have these hard days now.

I appreciate help even when someone offers it without me having to ask. To me, this is the best type of assistance because I feel it doesn't draw attention to my physical limitations. Sometimes, those limitations act as barriers; their obviousness makes others uncomfortable. When people feel this discomfort, my wheelchair is all they can see and that's the reason I always have a positive attitude when I ask them to assist me.

Asking for help from others all depends on your tone of voice and on the words you choose. For example, the phrase "Would you mind helping me?" lets a person know you'll appreciate their help and implies you are in a good mood, whereas the phrase "Can you help me now!" conveys the opposite (especially if you don't thank them).

This brings to mind the memory of a childhood acquaintance: she had a physical disability but the difference between us was that she never appreciated any help. "Why are you so bitter?" I inquired, feeling curious about the reasons(s) she never thanked the people who helped her daily. Her answer to my question was silence. In that moment I realized something: if you have a physical disability and you're often bitter and angry about it without knowing why, then these emotions can be just as significant as the one you already have. In my mind, this person now had "two disabilities for the price of one and that's no bargain!" For readers who take this quote seriously, don't. I'm just kidding.

Today, I realize that a positive attitude will always get noticed. If I ask someone for help and say thank you to let them know I appreciate it, they don't care how I choose my words. Instead, it's my tone of voice that comes across. The fact that they might see my limitations as obstacles won't matter because, in that moment, I live a life without barriers.

## HEALTH MATTERS

Behdin Nowrouzi



### Mental Health and Work: A silent health issue

Striving for mental health is about establishing and maintaining a balance in the social, physical, spiritual, economic, and mental realms of our lives. Given the hectic pace of many peoples' lives today, this can be especially challenging.

In fact, it's estimated that depression will rank second only to heart disease as the leading cause of disability worldwide by the year 2020.

Economic losses associated with worker depression include absence from work, short-term disability costs, workers' compensation claims, safety incidents, employee turnover, and on-the-job impairment.

Various researchers have attempted to estimate absence costs associated with depression, and some have found that persons with depression were absent more and experienced significant work cutback when compared to individuals with no psychiatric problems.

These findings also determined that workers with depression experienced between 1.5 and 2.3 more short-term disability days than workers without depression over a 30-day period.

Mental illness is widely acknowledged to be a leading cause of workplace absenteeism and a significant factor of general work-related illness. In 2000 alone, it is estimated that depressive disorders ranked second among the most common reasons for visiting a physician in Canada, after high blood pressure.

Studies that have measured improvements in psychosocial constraints at the workplace have noted steep declines of between 9 per cent and 55 per cent in symptoms related to mental health and illness absences.

Several factors have been identified as barriers to return-to-work after a mental illness, including individual and organizational barriers to care.

At the individual level, stigma, lack of motivation to seek care, ignorance about treatment, lack of confidence with their physicians, deficiencies in primary care physicians training, and health care system shortcomings have been identified as barriers.

In terms of physician training, some general practitioners may lack the necessary interviewing skills to diagnose and treat depression, while many others may lack the time to fully evaluate and respond to depression with injured workers. Some physicians may not feel comfortable dealing with mental health issues and are more comfortable treating the medical aspects of the individual's complaints. Moreover, their focus for treatment may be directed at physical conditions.



Maintaining productivity at work and home is the main difficulty that a depressed person faces, and the challenges facing health care professionals are to sort through the many factors underlying a person's illness, identify the patient's needs, and develop a treatment and return to work (RTW) plan accordingly.

For more information on mental health and work, visit [Mental Health Works](#) or the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#) website.

## FROM THE GALLERY

**Sandra Livingston**

We may be just a few weeks away from winter break, but AUSU council is still hard at work. Their latest general meeting took place November 17, and here's a brief update on the latest news.



One important item was the review of policy 9.01, council's position paper on the deregulation of tuition. The policy was simply up for mandatory review, but it's important to note AUSU's position on the subject. Council remains resolved that, as the policy says, a "regulated tuition policy guarantees some degree of predictability of tuition rates for students," and that this reflects the will and needs of AU students.

Council also voted to continue the popular SmartDraw program for 2008/09, and reserve funds have been set aside to purchase the licences. If you haven't downloaded your free copy of this software yet, visit the [AUSU homepage](#) and scroll down to find out all the details.

The president's report contained good news on the economic front: in spite of the current downturn, AUGC predicts that the university is still on track to meet its budget. As well, AU has undertaken a study of communication with students, specifically to find out where gaps in communication still exist and to improve these areas.

The VP external reported that AU has increased the amounts of several smaller awards. (To find out if you're eligible for any AU awards, check out the Student Awards page [here](#).) Another interesting item raised in the report is a posting in the General Student Chat area of the discussion boards (it's the Copyright Legislation thread). There are several items that may be of concern to students in the government's proposed copyright legislation bill, and as part of a package it's preparing, the AUSU executive wants to find out students' thoughts on the subject.

In news from the awards committee, the current fiscal year began in October and the committee has awarded five available AUSU bursaries to students, as well as one computer.

And as many students have already noticed, pre-orders are being taken for the 2009 AUSU Planners! These are a popular item, and the executive director reports that several new pages have been added to the current edition. They're free to all AUSU members, so be sure to visit the homepage and reserve your copy.

The last word goes to the AV Committee. They are looking at the possibility of an online radio station, and their initial recommendations will be ready to go to council before the end of November.

Council's next general meeting will take place January 19, 2009. See you there, in the gallery.

## THE 2008 VOICE MAGAZINE WRITING CONTEST!



Write for *The Voice* and win money for your education!

*The Voice* is launching its 2008 writing contest, with categories for both fiction and non-fiction.

We've got over \$1,000 in prizes to give away: one winner in each category will receive a scholarship of one Athabasca University undergraduate course.

Please read the contest rules and regulations and submission guidelines carefully to ensure you are not disqualified.

It's free to enter, but the length limits are firm and all entries that go beyond these limits will be disqualified. Good luck!

### Categories

#### Non-Fiction:

In 1,500 words or less, write about any issue affecting freedom of speech. You may write about issues in the press, in politics, or on a personal scale. You may focus on current issues of free speech, or take a historical approach. Feel free to use research or statistics in your article (with proper citations), or write a creative opinion piece.

#### Fiction:

This category is open to your imagination! Write a 1,500 word or less fiction submission in any genre or format. Short stories, poetry, a scene from a play, even a comic. Be creative!

### Rules and Regulations

- The *Voice* writing contest is open to anyone 16 years of age or older, with the following exceptions: AU, AUSU, and *Voice* staff and AUSU councillors are not eligible to enter the contest.
- Winning entries will be published in *The Voice*. *The Voice* reserves the right to print non-winning entries at a rate of remuneration in accordance with current *Voice* freelance submission rates. *The Voice* may use portions of non-winning non-fiction entries in a composite about perspectives on free speech. No remuneration will be provided for such use.
- All decisions regarding this contest and the selection of winners remain with the judging panel and are final.
- Entries will be judged by a panel to be selected by the *Voice* editors, and this panel may include: AU students, AU tutors, and/or AUSU councillors. The panel will include at least 3 members.
- *The Voice* editors will collect articles and oversee the judging, but will not be judges.

- Entries must be original works that have not been printed or published elsewhere (including online), and must not be course assignment papers or derivatives of.
- Entries must not contain any information that would make the identity of the author evident to judges. To ensure fairness, all entries will be forwarded to the judging panel with a reference number attached, but no personally identifying information. *The Voice* editors will keep the identity of the authors private until the contest closes. *The Voice* editors will keep a record of the authors of submissions, and will be the sole owner of this list.
- Entries will not be edited for grammar, spelling, or content, although *The Voice* editors may black out any personally identifying information contained within the submission. Otherwise, entries will be forwarded to the judging panel as is, with the exception that all entries will be converted to use the same file format, margins, font size, and font style to ensure that all entries are equally readable.
- The deadline for submissions in both categories will be December 31, 2008. The winners will be announced by February 28, 2009. *The Voice* reserves the right to extend either deadline if necessary.
- One grand prize winner will be selected in both the fiction and non-fiction categories. If no entries are received in one of the categories, the prize money will be returned to the *Voice* scholarship budget. Prizes will be awarded in the form of a certificate for one free Athabasca University undergraduate course. Prize certificates have no cash value.
- *The Voice* reserves the right to add additional, secondary prizes.
- *The Voice* is not responsible for lost emails. *The Voice* editors will confirm receipt of all entries by email. Please follow up if you do not receive a reply in two business days.
- All entrants agree to allow their name and city of residence to be printed, along with their submission, should it be selected as a winning entry. No further remuneration—beyond the contest prize—will be paid to the contest winner when their entry is printed.
- Winners will be asked to sign a standard Release and Indemnity form; each prize winner agrees to release the sponsor and its agents from any liability in connection with the prizes awarded in this contest.
- Any entrant found to be tampering with the contest results, or attempting to influence any of the judging members, or using any forums or other public communications media to advise others of which entry is theirs will be disqualified; or if *The Voice* editors determine, at their sole discretion, that any other form of tampering has been attempted, that entrant will be disqualified.
- No preference will be given to regular *Voice* writers. Entries will not identify the writer as a regular *Voice* contributor when sent to the judging panel.
- Where applicable, this contest is subject to all federal, provincial, and municipal laws. Contest void where prohibited.

***The deadline for submissions  
in both categories will be  
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winners will be announced by  
February 28, 2009. The Voice  
reserves the right to extend  
either deadline if necessary.***

### Submission Guidelines

- Your submission must be an electronic file attached to an email and submitted to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org). Submissions sent as the body of an email will not be accepted. Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) if you require instructions on how to attach a file to an email.
- Submissions should be in Microsoft Word format [.doc or .docx], rich text format [.rtf] or plain text format [.txt].

- If you use footnotes or endnotes, type them in at the end of the document, rather than using the endnote feature of your word processor.
- If you use a word processor other than Word or work on a Mac computer, you can save a file in one of these alternate formats using the 'save as' function and selecting the desired format on the save menu. Contact *The Voice* editors if you require assistance in formatting your submission. Users of older Macs may have to send entries in HTML format.
- Each entrant may submit one entry in each of the two categories.
- All entries must be under 1,500 words due to judging time constraints. Length will be determined by the word count feature in Microsoft Word. Your references and citations section will not be included in the word count.
- References should be formatted consistently according to a standardized publishing style guide, such as the American Psychological Association (APA) or the MLA press style.
- Entries should not include unnecessary formatting such as drop caps, graphics (unless the graphic is integral to the work), or unusual fonts. Entries must be text; scans of handwritten or typed documents will not be accepted.
- The email should include the following information: Your full name, AU student ID number (if applicable), email address, telephone number, mailing address, the title of your entry, and whether you are submitting to the fiction or non-fiction category.
- Make sure non-fiction entries are based on the topic question detailed above. Fiction entries can be on any topic you like. Do not include your contact information within your article but be sure to include a title.

Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Non-Fiction entries will be judged on originality, creativity, accuracy, and how well your support your assertions with data or argument. You will also be judged on the presentation of your article, including professionalism, proper spelling, grammar and syntax, and readability. You may write in journalistic style or essay format.
- Fiction entries will be judged on creativity, entertainment value, and the originality of your writing style.
- Regardless of the genre you choose, you will be judged on the effectiveness of your piece and your technical writing skills.

Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) if you have any questions.

## DID YOU KNOW?



### Holiday Exam Requests

Planning on writing an AU exam as the holiday season approaches? If so, there are a couple of important things to keep in mind.

If your course contract ends on December 31, you'll be allowed some extra time to schedule your exam. As the AU calendar explains: "All examinations for courses with a contract end date of December 31 must be completed no later than January 15 of the following year." Remember, though, that all your other coursework, including assignments and quizzes, must be completed on or before the December 31 course contract end date.

As well, the university will be closed from 3:00 p.m. December 24 until January 2. For all the details, check out the [AU calendar](#) online.



# The Interviewer

It is the ninth decade of the twentieth century...

written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis

## Rock Head #1: Station Wars

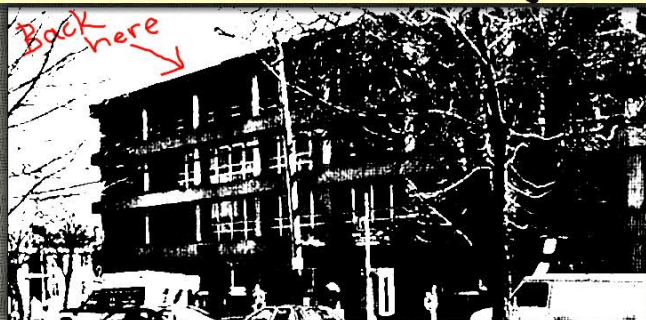


Brad, the student union president, wants to get rid of CKDU and have the local top forty station pipe tunes into the student union building.



Reuben and his cohorts at the station would sooner swallow lightbulbs than listen to that bilge.

The radio station is in a corner of the top floor of the Student Union Building.



Three studios are lined up shot-gun...



...and linked by windows.

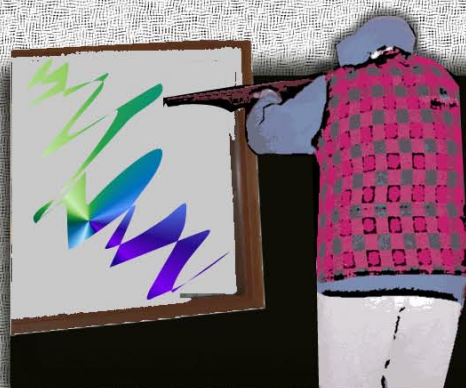
Brad despises Reuben and frequently smears him.



Reuben Pike is a card-carrying communist!



Reuben, not having a card, has never taken offense, but he can't ignore Brad's arseholery any longer, this based on recent intelligence.



So you can stand in any one studio and pick off every occupant of the other two.

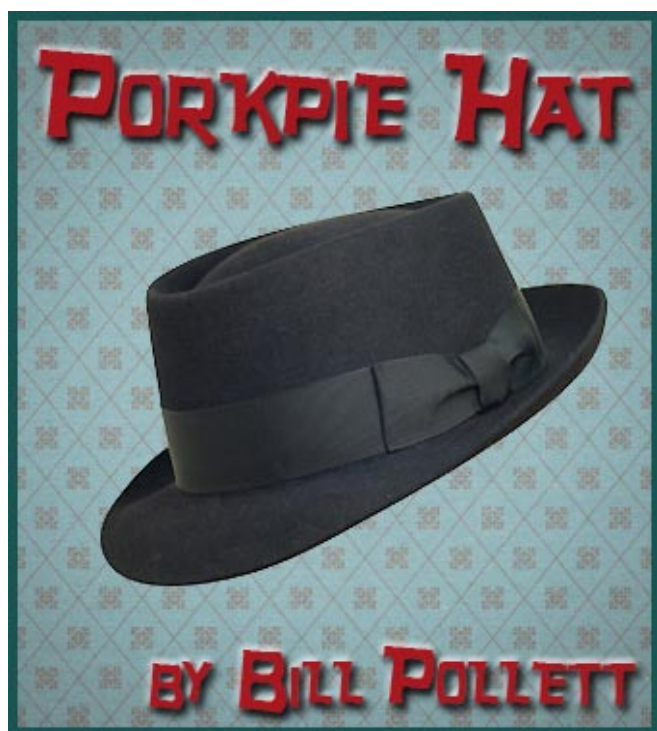
Reuben ponders this during controversial late-night shows and repeatedly asks the students if the entrance is locked.



You really know your onions, girly girl!

next: Noxious Insect





## What Comes Next: Some Thoughts on Aging

The accepted milestones of passing time are meaningless. What are birthdays? What are New Years'? It's all nothing but noise and cake.

One day, your life is a bright red balloon, clutched tight in a snotty-nosed kid's little fist. There's a distraction, something shiny catches your eye, the grip is relaxed for a moment, your life escapes, floats up, is carried off on errant currents, a spinning polymer satellite that gradually loses helium, lands in a suburban back yard, is caught on a rose bush.

If you really want to have some gauge of the incremental progress of your existence from crib to coffin, there are much more subtle and accurate instruments of measurement. There's your first kiss, for instance, the one down by the abandoned railway tracks, or in the basement on that couch that smelled of cat piss and the Labatt's Blue your older brother

spilled.

There's the first time ever that you fart in bed beside a lover without feeling embarrassment, or the night you start adding essential oils to the tub, or stop relishing films in which someone does someone else wrong with the working end of a meat cleaver.

For me, the latest signs of my approaching rocking chair days are coming thick and fast. Disturbingly, there is the newly minted urge to strike up conversations with complete strangers in supermarkets. *Can you believe the price of those mangoes? It's that damp cold, out there today, isn't it?—the kind that goes right through you.*

There is the going to bed before midnight, the checking out of mystery novels from the public library, the imbibing of gallons of herbal tea, and the deep, sad urge to be invited just one more time to someone's wedding in order to join in with a conga line or chicken dance.

Perhaps most problematic of all, there is the weird tenuousness of thought, the nagging notion that I may not know everything—or, indeed, very much at all—the awful willingness to admit doubt, to see things from others' points of view.

I had assumed, not so long ago, that one of the benefits of the aging process would be a clarifying narrowing of the mind and gelling of viewpoints, a delightful increase in certainty, crankiness, and pomposity. Alas, I find myself wavering and doddering, willing to concede points and relinquish grudges.

I watch films without subtitles. I still listen to PIL and Mingus, but I also find myself singing along to the Carpenters. Surely, it is only a matter of time until I have no opinions left at all, and spend my days writing out Hallmark greeting cards, weeping out loud and humming along with "The Greatest Love of All." I just can't wait to see what comes next.

## MUSIC TO EAT LUNCH TO

Mandy Gardner



### Ontario Concert Listings for November

If you live in Ontario or happen to be visiting at some point this month, it's the perfect time to take in a Flatliners' show.

Since the release of *The Great Awake* last year on Fat Wreck Chords, the band has seen a sharp rise in its audience and people have not only been grasping for CDs and posters, but for the chance to see the band live in action.

Until a punk band reaches the heights of fame such as that of NOFX, No Use for a Name, or even The Misfits, it can be pretty tough for many of us to catch a live show anywhere in Canada, since the failsafe stops are always Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver.

This month, however, The Flatliners are making a decent round of their home province of Ontario, with four stops throughout the province between the 20th and the 30th.

The venues will be the London Music Hall on the 20th, Brantford's Club NV on the 21st, Milton's St. Paul United on the 22nd, and finally The Red Rooster in Burlington on the last day of the month.

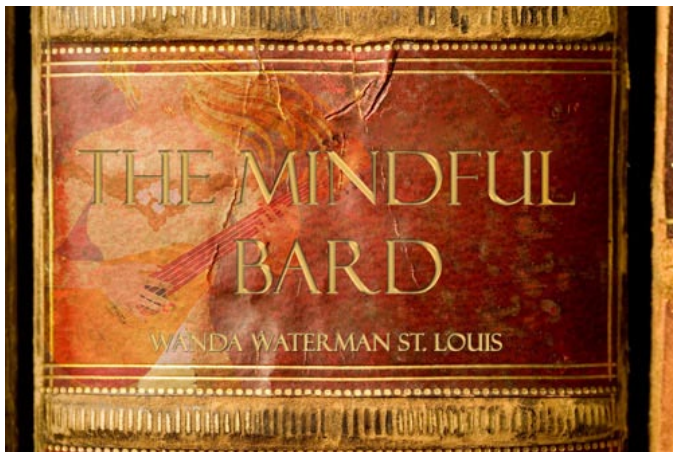
For anyone lucky enough to have tickets for any of these shows, you are in for a double treat because not only are The Flatliners gonna give it all they've got, but they've paired up with fellow Ontario band the Ceremonial Snips for the tour.

The Ceremonial Snips, a.k.a. The Snips, hail from Wellington, Ontario, and will add the perfect tone to the show; both The Snips and The Flatliners play a clean, polished, and energetic mix of punk rock and ska that will have the crowd on their feet every second of the show.

All four concerts are unmissable for the punk/ska enthusiast, and whichever night you choose to turn up for the show is bound to be an unforgettable, fantastic time.

If you are still unfamiliar with the music of The Flatliners or The Ceremonial Snips, you can check them out on MySpace ([The Flatliners](#), [The Ceremonial Snips](#)); The Snips' site shares their new video, "Gazebo of Love."

If you've grabbed your tickets already and planned ahead for the event, all of Ontario and Canada has good reason to be extremely jealous of you right now! The concert listings also include guests Rocket Reducers and Time Tide, and are open to over-19 year olds as there will be booze flowing freely throughout the events.



## Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

**DVD:** *Dante's Inferno*

**Theatrical release:** August 26, 2008

**Production Company:** Ricochet

**Starring:** Dermot Mulroney, James Cromwell

**Director:** Sean Meredith

### Paper Doll Puppets Enact Mythos of Medieval Christendom

*"Okay, let's see . . . organs . . . guts . . . insides . . . It's—insider trading! Woo-hoo! Where's my Buick?"*

Dante in *Dante's Inferno*

If your childhood unfurled in the days before cable TV and Nintendo, you may have done one of those craft projects from *Family Living* magazine in which you mounted your paper dolls on sticks for puppet shows.

You may even have constructed background scenes from cardboard boxes, against which your stick puppets could play out your childish fantasies.

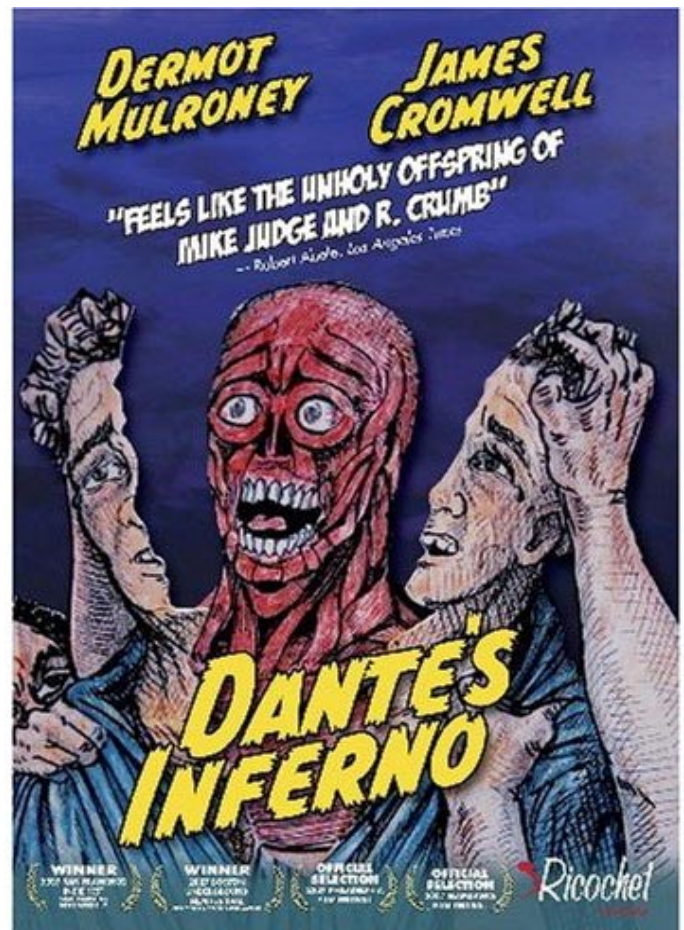
Well, that looks like what Sean Meredith and his cohorts have done with Dante's *Inferno* in their movie of the same name. If you have any imagination at all, this concept alone will have your hair standing on end.

*Dante's Inferno*, the movie, is a modern retelling of the book *Inferno*, the first third of *The Divine Comedy* written in the fourteenth century by Dante Alighieri.

In *The Divine Comedy* Dante recorded a medieval Roman Catholic mythology that forms part of a conceptual framework supporting more of modern thinking than we care to accept.

I kept looking for spiritual discernment here just as I had done when first reading the book *Inferno*.

I couldn't find any, and remembered that in the book the tour of hell didn't grant Dante Alighieri any noticeable insight either; it took *Paradise* to transform protagonist, hence reader.





There is no spiritual dimension to the arbitrary application of moral standards, not now, not in Dante's time. From unbaptized babies to sex addicts to gluttons, one is hard pressed to find a distinct pattern of truly righteous condemnation.

Maybe the reappearance—and re-examination—of this mythology constitutes a farewell to modernity and a formal ushering-in of postmodern thinking. Epics do, after all, emerge during periods of cultural decline: Virgil's *Aeneid* during the decline of the Roman Empire, for example, and Dante's *Divine Comedy* during a period of unbelievable corruption in church and state in medieval Europe. Perhaps the present time is ripe for a serious look at our preconceptions about the nature of sin.

So back to hell for a second: Is this justice? Were these people really so awful? And didn't others deserve worse? And should quite so many popes be in hell? And why is Hitler condemned solely for consulting psychics?

A rehashing of the spectrum of misbehaviours typical of politicians, as much as it sounds like exactly what those of us on the left are always either hearing or saying, is just as meaningless an exercise as the moral posturing of the Dark Ages. Are we really morally superior for knowing how many affairs John McCain has had? Do we really have the right to gloat when corrupt politicians get caught and sentenced? Do we think we're righteous enough to throw that first stone?

In the movie the character Dante is not changed by watching the sufferings of the damned. There are too many contradictions and discrepancies for him to see any spiritual sense in it, or even to discover what consistently *not* to do in order to gain a semblance of justification. To complicate matters, Dante identifies with many of the sinners.

This movie is no more politically correct than the original book and its era and even compounds the offences. *Dante's Inferno* the movie casts a harsh light on Muslims, gays, and blacks, for starters. The movie does not attempt to provide a modern version of morality; its aim instead is to question the foundations of our concept of morality and how we apply it.

When faced with contradictions, dig beneath them.

I would dearly love to see Sean Meredith tackle *Purgatory* and *Paradise*. Sure it sounds preposterous, but so does *Inferno* with paper puppets on sticks. The frontiers are open.

*Dante's Inferno* manifests seven of The Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it confronts, rebukes, and mocks existing injustices; 3) it makes me want to be a better artist; 4) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 6) it stimulates my mind; and 7) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on my view of existence.

*The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to [bard@voicemagazine.org](mailto:bard@voicemagazine.org). For a list of criteria, go [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.*

***I would dearly love to see Sean Meredith tackle Purgatory and Paradise. Sure it sounds preposterous, but so does Inferno with paper puppets on sticks.***



## *From Where I Sit*

Hazel Anaka

### Signature Redefined

Several years ago I wrote a column entitled "Signature" in which I raised the idea of adding a new definition to our understanding of what signature may mean. I suggested: "the definitive way one distinguishes oneself" should be the new, grown-up definition. This passionate belief arose directly from my experience as a federal census taker in 2001 in a rural area near where I live.

In a short time I was exposed to hundreds of people I didn't know and would likely never see again. It hit me that for better or worse everything we say or do becomes our signature. Every day in every way we choose whether we sign our lives with excellence and pride or whether we cut corners, take shortcuts, sign with shame. It's the idea of doing the right thing whether anyone is watching or not. It's the notion of karma and what goes around comes around.

I still believe it and try my damndest to live it. I try to treat everyone I meet with respect without hope of reward or benefit. I try to walk the talk and lead by example. Naturally, I fail more often than I care to admit.

In the last few days I've heard two stories from friends that convince me there's another dimension to this.

In one case an applicant was eliminated from landing a coveted job when one of the interviewers remembered something. All things being equal, sometimes a tiny fact or feeling is enough to either win or lose the job for a candidate. In this instance the applicant hadn't kept his word and done what he had promised to do as a volunteer for another organization.

He was a no-show and let a charity down. Maybe he had a good reason. Maybe he had no idea that his action, or in this case inaction, would come full circle and be enough to lose him the job. He had no way of knowing that "little thing" would be noticed by a stranger-cum-interviewer.

In another example, a former boyfriend of a friend's new daughter-in-law has been behaving like an ass. And so has his mother. They are spreading lies and trying to sabotage the young woman's new job. Once-friendly relationships with even extended family members have soured. Chance meetings cause averted eyes and abrupt changes in direction.

All this made for an interesting story in some bizarre "aren't people crazy?" kind of way. It took on a whole new importance when I discovered I knew both the estranged boyfriend and his parents. So here's a family acting wacky in seeming anonymity when in fact someone they know (me) now knows they're behaving irrationally. Would they care if they knew? Perhaps.

It all boils down to the whole six degrees of separation theory. There is no escaping our behaviour. Somewhere someone is aware of what we're doing and because it's a small world our most embarrassing, damaging, or dumb actions can come back to haunt us. It boils down to signing our lives with integrity and congruence, from where I sit.



## AUSU This Month



### 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

The 2009 AUSU planner pre-order form is up! You'll find the order form on the AUSU [home page](#), but please note, the planner will only be sent out when it arrives in our office in December.

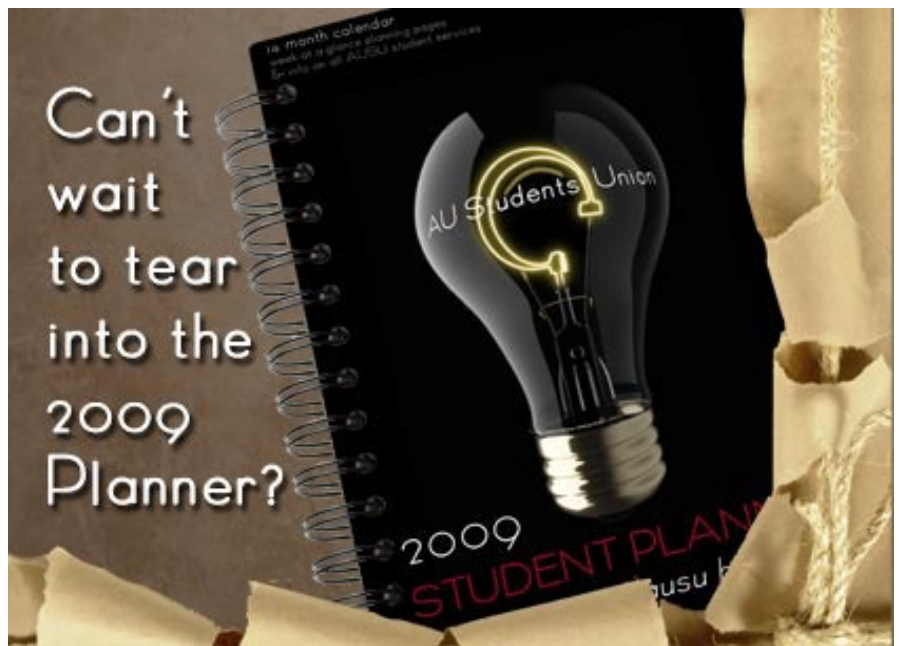
Anyone who pre-orders will be in the first batch of planners mailed out. If you order early, you should have your new planner by the time the January pages run out in the old one—and hopefully well before that!

As always, we'll be excited to know what you think of the planner, and especially want to hear of any improvements you think could be made.

### Merchandise Still for Sale

We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere.

The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go. With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it. *The Voice* memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.



### AUSU Lock Loan Program

Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination, and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

### SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our website.

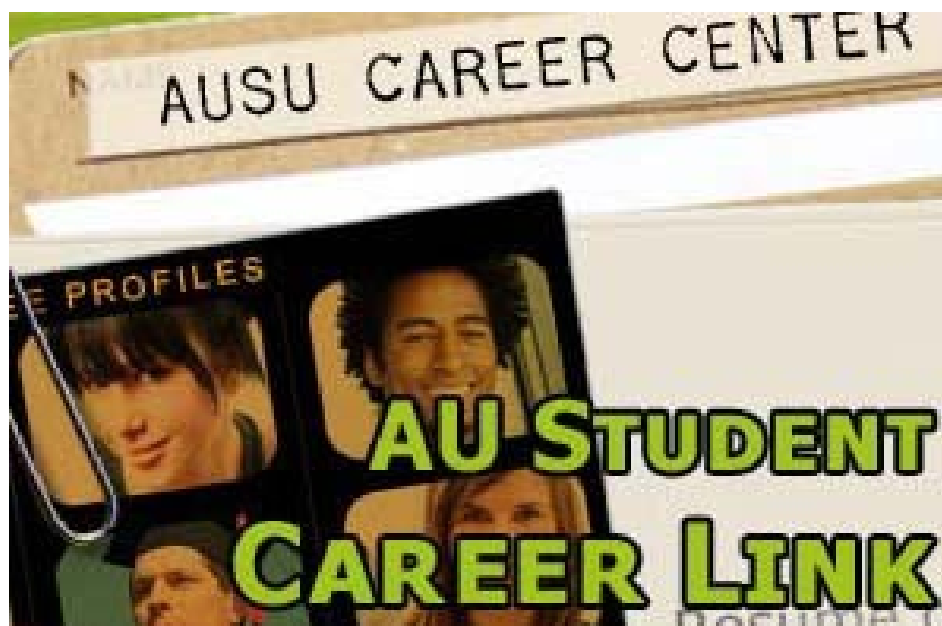
SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email. Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

### Employment Site is here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there.

The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student. Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!



### Appointments

AUSU VP External, Barb Rielly, has stepped down from her position as chair of the AUSU Awards Committee, and new Councillor Bethany Porter has taken on the role. Council wishes Bethany good luck in this position, which can involve making some hard decisions.

Increasing AUSU's representation within AU, VP Finance and Administration, Sarah Kertcher, has been appointed to AU's integrated learning centre steering committee. This committee will examine the possibility of integrating all AU sites in the Edmonton Area into one building. Sarah will ensure that the committee keeps concerns of our members with respect to ease of access and exam conditions as well as AUSU's own special needs for storage and physical office space well in mind.

The MyAU steering committee sees two new AUSU representatives, President Karl Low, and VP External Barb Rielly, joining to provide their input on how MyAU could be better structured to meet your needs. If there's something that's been bugging you about the MyAU system, now is a great time to call or email our office and let them know. We'll be sure to bring your concerns forward.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Alberta man harassed after buying repossessed home

When Bruce Grondin bought a repossessed house and moved to PEI in May, he likely didn't expect that his new home would come with an extra feature: the angry former owner.

Daniel Murphy, 41, began a campaign of harassment that included leaving a dead cow and tonnes of manure on the edge of Grondin's new property—the property Murphy used to own.

In provincial court recently, Murphy pleaded guilty to mischief, damage to property, and breach of an undertaking. Two additional charges were stayed.

As the [CBC](#) reports, part of Murphy's sentence includes writing a letter of apology to the new owners—and then leaving them alone. He was also given a conditional discharge and 18 months probation. If he abides by the court orders, he'll avoid a criminal record.

Grondin told reporters that, besides dumping the cow carcass and manure on his land, Murphy also caused damage by allowing cows and pigs to wander onto the property. At the time, Murphy still owned a farm next to his former home, but has since sold it.

### In Foreign News: EU bans Angolan airlines, citing safety concerns

On November 14, the European Union (EU) updated its blacklist of airlines considered too unsafe for European skies, and all Angolan airlines are now banned.

This is the ninth updating of the blacklist, and all airlines on it are banned from flying to EU countries. In part, the list is compiled based on audit reports by The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). In its October 2008 report, the ICAO noted there were "significant safety concerns" surrounding not only TAAG Angola (which was previously banned), but that these concerns extended to all airlines certified in Angola.

The EU added that it will continue a program of consulting with Angolan civil aviation authorities in an effort to improve standards and gain recertification.

Along with all airlines in Angola, eight other African countries are on the list. These include Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), all cited for lacking satisfactory national air safety standards.

All but two airlines in Gabon are also banned, while in other parts of Africa the EU restriction was limited to single airlines, including Air West from Sudan and Silverback Cargo Freighters from Rwanda. Other countries facing a complete ban on their airlines are Indonesia and the Kyrgyz Republic. North Korea, Afghanistan, and Ukraine fared better, with only single airlines being added to the list.

While the affected countries may not be happy, air travellers will likely welcome any action that forces lax airlines to improve their safety records.

## EDUCATION NEWS

Ian MacDonald



### Aboriginal post-secondary levels lag behind

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) - A recent study shows aboriginal students are less likely to finish university than non-aboriginals—a fact one expert attributes to inadequate high-school education.

Aboriginal students aged 25 to 34 have a post-secondary completion rate of 42 per cent, and those aged 35 to 44 have a rate of 47 per cent, according to a study released by the C.D. Howe institute. Non-aboriginals come in at 68 and 62 per cent respectively.

The data took five years to compile, and reflects the state of education as of the end of 2006, when the most recent information was available.

Adrian Tanner, a former anthropology professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland in St. John's, says the difference can be tracked to high-school graduation levels.

"Essentially, you're dealing with people whose home life is a totally foreign culture to what is being taught," he said. "You can't start at the post-secondary level; you've got to start earlier and get more kids who feel confident to tackle any post-secondary institution."

Less than 40 per cent of aboriginals under 45 have a high school diploma, while non-Aboriginals have a nearly 90 per cent high-school completion rate.

Tanner, who has done multiple studies on aboriginal education in Newfoundland and Labrador, says the low numbers stem from an ill-equipped and under-funded education system that isn't ready to prepare aboriginal youth for a future in post-secondary.

Part of this poor preparation comes from a lack of understanding between teachers and their pupils, he says. Young graduates, drawn by isolation pay, leave school after a short stint, giving educators little time to understand the issues faced by their students.

There is also a lack of aboriginal representation in the curriculum, says Tanner. Some aboriginal students feel the education system strips them of their identity.

"They've got to try, on the one hand, to prepare the kids for post-secondary," he said. "[Then] they've got to try and do this second job that the community is asking of them. That is to make sure the kids don't grow up totally ignorant of their own people and their own way of life."

Tanner puts the blame, in N.L. at least, on a lack of funding from government. Aboriginal education, for the most part, comes under provincial jurisdiction.



With a larger cash flow, he says the curriculum could be adapted to the aboriginal way of life. This would reduce the fear of loss of culture, increase the graduation numbers, and send more kids to higher education.

Things can be done at the campus level as well, Tanner says. He calls for university programs that incorporate aboriginal issues and prepare teachers for the barriers they may face in aboriginal communities.

Although all these efforts would increase the availability of education for aboriginals in N.L. and across the country, Tanner says it is still up to aboriginal students to take advantage of them.

"It is up to groups like the Innu or the Inuit how far they want to go and how far they want to assimilate," he said.

## **CLICK OF THE WRIST - Hot Wheels**

There's a lot of talk these days about a possible bailout for the auto industry, and many North Americans are bemoaning the lost glory days of the Big Three. But automobiles (and their makers) have been evolving since ancient times—beginning with Leonardo da Vinci's sketches of self-powered vehicles.

### **Great Minds**

That master of the Renaissance, da Vinci, may be credited with the earliest drawings of automobiles, but he wasn't the first one to imagine such a machine. Apparently, the Greek poet Homer was way ahead of him.

### **The First Automobile**

While Karl Benz built the first true combustion-powered automobile back in 1885, it was Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot who really got things moving back in 1769—even though his steam-powered military tractor only reached speeds of 2.5 miles per hour.

### **History in Motion**

This archival footage of a Model T assembly line is of remarkably good quality. The link to the right of the image takes you to the full story.

### **Classic Muscle Cars**

This slideshow gets right inside some of the best-loved classic muscle cars. If you can't get enough of '68 Camaros and '67 Shelby GTs, then this site is for you.

### **Cars of the Future**

All these concept cars were entries in the Peugeot Design Contest 2008. Hmm . . . the wind turbine may be a great idea for recharging batteries, but what if someone reverses too quickly with that giant propeller on the back of their car?



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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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