

EDITORIAL: ATHEIST STIGMAS

Military is now aware of its actions

Once again, the founding fathers are turning in their graves.

Recently, lawsuits were filed against the military for denying soldiers religious freedom, yet another sign that the American military doesn't allow people to express non-traditional beliefs.

There's a definite stigma attached to being an atheist in the military, said a Penn State professor.

In response, the military says that it does its best to accommodate people who don't believe in God. When atheists enter the military, the words "no religious preference" are printed on their dog tags, and the ROTC programs try not to force religion onto its members.

When asked to observe a moment of silence, soldiers can use the time for self-reflection, instead of prayer, said

Penn State ROTC Lt. Brian Marquardt.

Certainly, a handful of letters don't indicate a widespread problem among the more than a million members of the United States military; however, these people deserve to be heard if they're willing to take the time to find an organization, sit down and write a complaint.

One organization is listening to soldiers' complaints. Members of the American Atheists organization say they see letters from soldiers claiming they're forced to choose between attending religious services or cleaning the latrines, said the organization's president Ellen Johnson.

She added that she found it "shocking" that unit cohesion is used to justify the military's policy.

"If you can't be around someone who is gay or atheist

in your own unit," Johnson asked, "then what kind of person are you going to be when you have an enemy combatant coming down on you?"

And what about life outside the military unit? Not everyone is a heterosexual, Christian man.

Perhaps, they didn't realize their infringement on religious freedom. But the military doesn't have the most tolerant past, and they aren't known for a warm-hearted acceptance of people's lifestyle choices.

Now, the military should be more aware of its actions and do something to correct them.

While other soldiers attend religious services, atheists could have time for self-reflection, reading or journal writing, rather than being forced to swab toilets.

Then, surely, our founding fathers will rest just a little bit easier.

LETTERS

Despite nearby drought, PSU wastes water on lawn

According to a New York Times article yesterday, many cities in the Southeast are literally months away from completely running out of water.

North Carolina, which has been severely affected, has asked residents not to use water for any purpose "not essential to public health and safety."

It puzzles me why we have been watering the grass outside the library for over a week now. People, just a few hundred miles away, are literally two to four months away from not having drinking water.

Yet, we are watering our lawns in October. In a few weeks, the grass will be covered in snow anyhow, and no one will know or care how green it is.

Penn State needs to control its wastefulness and consider those who truly must go without.

Christopher D. Lute
senior-electrical engineering

PSU graduates from all campuses are successful

I wish to respond to Kaleena Dunkle's letter "People at University Park work harder to get degree" Oct. 9.

As a Penn State alumnus and after attending both University Park and a commonwealth campus, let me assure you that you are not better than your counterparts who may go to PENN STATE Worthington, York, Altoona or any other campus.

Your assumption that you did better in high school to get into University Park is laughable since two of our commonwealth campuses are a medical school and a law school.

Do you presume that you are smarter than those people as well?

As far as your theory on your right to Penn State football tickets, here is my opinion: Tickets should be first-come, first-serve on the day of the game, no matter what campus you are from.

I have tickets that I pay more than \$1,200 a year for I find it insulting that every time I go to a game well into the second quarter the student section still isn't even close to being full.

Yet, University Park students complain that they need more seats.

If you want to have pride in attending the campus, then give it back the class it deserves.

Stop booing at the stadium, get the chip off your shoulder and realize that success is given to those who work hard and earn it. It has no bearing on what Penn State campus you went to.

Sean Wolfe
Class of 2006

Special edition pennies worth a whole lot of cents

This is in response to Jim Tuttle's column "American cents don't make much sense" Oct. 15. Pennies are pretty much useless in daily transactions.

However, there are occasions that pennies are worth more than just that one cent.

For example, in WWII, copper was needed to produce shell casings for the war effort, and so it was decided to use steel covered in zinc to make the 1943 penny. However, accidentally the San Francisco and Philadelphia Reserves produced some copper pennies.

Today, the 1943 copper penny, which is still in circulation, has been auctioned off from \$10,000 to \$73,000, according to experts at [About.com](#).

Brendan T. Murphy
senior-management information systems

PSU should take pride in soldier receiving big award

As a National Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) midshipman, future Marine Corps officer and Penn State student, I was both moved and filled with pride to read "Alumnus, fallen soldier receives Medal of Honor" Oct. 16 about Lt. Michael Murphy, a 1998 Penn State graduate who will be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in Afghanistan.

Michael's sacrifice should bring pride to every American but especially the Penn State community that he was a part of. Amidst the daily barrage of mundane and often depressing news we read, let us not forget the price some Nittany Lions have paid for our nation.

Kyle Nelson
freshman-business

LOCAL CARTOON BY BENJAMIN MCKENNA



COLUMNIST

Students must think about housing now

By Caitlin O'Malley

THIS IS THE season in State College—for virtual tours and roommate selections, applications and fees, realtors and appointments, money worries and tours, tour, tours.



MY OPINION

For many students, renting their first house or apartment is the biggest financial decision and responsibility faced thus far in their lives. With parents miles away at home, this may be also be one of the first major decisions students make completely on their own. However, it's also a decision that many students feel unprepared for and overwhelmed by. Unfortunately, bad choices when it comes to housing often have serious legal, social and financial implications that are felt every day for 365 days of the year.

About 28,000 Penn State students live off campus in State College or its surrounding areas, according to Student Affairs' Web site. With the competitive market for housing, students have been applying earlier and earlier each year to avoid being left out in the cold. Most realtors in the area are currently accepting applications, and some have even finished accepting applications for certain buildings. For students who get a late start on their search, the pressure is on to find the place of their dreams (or at least not of their nightmares) and lay claim to it quickly.

However, Loretta Doss, Penn State assistant director for Office of Off-Campus Living (OCL), said students need to take their time to look for housing. The OCL is run by Student Affairs and guides students through the rental process. Doss said students should consider their households, the property's amenities and everything included in the rental

price. It is also important to think about the property's proximity to campus, parking, grocery stores and laundromats if washers and dryers aren't on the premises.

When is the move-in date? Will the apartment be furnished? Is subletting allowed? Are pets permitted? Will the lease be joint and several or individual? With individual leases, you are only responsible for your part of rent. With joint and several leases, you can be held financially responsible for your roommate's rent if they pull out of the apartment or fail to pay it. Ask your realtor all of these questions and write down their responses. After looking at multiple apartments or houses, remembering these details can be confusing. The OCL Web site also advises asking your realtor confirm their statements by signing them.

"I suggest at least looking at five different styles of places," Doss said. "It has to be what you as an individual want."

Doss added that you should never submit an application until you are certain you want to live in a property because applications are usually legally binding. If you submit an application and are later offered the apartment, you are usually obligated to take it or pay rent until another tenant can be found. Doss said students who fill out an application too hastily might later regret their decision after finding another property they'd prefer.

"Filling out an application means you intend to live there," said Doss. "Don't sign anything unless you can afford to pay for it." This also means that you should not accept an on-campus housing contract and submit an off-campus apartment application or submit applications to more than one realtor.

The Apartment Store is now taking applications with a \$25 processing fee. Administrative assistant Nicole Farington said this process is for students who are "100 percent sure which building they want to live in." Westside Village will begin taking

applications with a \$35 processing fee in late October, according to leasing consultant Katie Eick. However, Eick says potential tenants would have to sign their lease for their commitment to be official.

Students need to carefully read their entire lease and understand that it is a binding legal agreement, Doss said. If renters are having difficulty understanding their lease or their rights they need to go through it with their property managers or contact their state Attorney General for free general legal advice.

The OCL can also assist students with some of these concerns and with landlord disputes. They can be found in 135 Boucke or reached at (814) 865-2346. The OCL's Web site suggests that if you have been promised any amenities by your realtor that are not explicitly stated in your lease, get these guarantees in writing before signing the lease. Do not take realtors at their word.

Let's face it: With the vast number of students seeking off-campus housing and the speed with which apartments and houses are filling, students are at the mercy of landlords in many ways. This lack of power often contributes to students feeling undervalued and disrespected, in addition to settling for less than ideal treatment and property maintenance by landlords. Being informed of your rights and getting information in writing can put power back in the hands of students and take some confusion out of the daunting process of finding and renting your first "home."

While some of this advice may seem overly cautious or cumbersome, your housing decision is one that'll affect you in profoundly positive or negative ways on a day-to-day basis. I hope your apartment, however humble, is a place you can enjoy coming home to every day and won't make you want to kick yourself 365 times.

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OPINION

THE DAILY Collegian

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Letters

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Letters should be about 200 words. Student letters should include class year, major and campus. Letters from alumni should include year of graduation. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification. Letters should be signed by no more than two people. Members of organizations must include their titles if the topic they write about is connected with the aim of their groups. The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters. The Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all letters it receives. Letters chosen also run on The Daily Collegian Online and may be selected for publication in The Weekly Collegian. All letters become property of Collegian Inc.

blog lines

Collegian: Travis' Travels

"At the Christian Science Monitor, there is a fountain. But this isn't an ordinary fountain.

Computer-generated words are projected from the ceiling onto this fountain. The words appear to swirl around in the middle of the fountain, until they spill over the edges and onto the floor.

Once on the floor, they swim over to one of several screens hanging on a wall — and once there, merge together to form inspirational quotes from famous people.

Seeing as how Christian Scientists have a thing against using drugs, it makes sense that they'd have to get their kicks from somewhere..."

Read more of the **Collegian: Travis' Travels** blog at www.collegian.psu.edu under the "Blogs" heading.