

Little stars amid clouds of smoke

Davidson Cults: the third article in a series

By now, people are well aware of my columns on cults at Davidson. So as I stood amongst various clouds of smoke on the porch outside the 900 room last Tuesday night, I was not surprised to hear one of them say, "What're you gonna say about the 'tas, man?"

I looked at the cloud's shoes and, noticing the holes in canvas, determined that it was none other than the group's one-time guru, Russ White.

Good question, Russ. There are the shoes. There's the pretentious unpretentiousness (Quick, gimme your Top Five all time Jean Claude van Dame films, not including "Hard Target"). There are the parties and their song lists 25 pages long. There are the wardrobes of forest green, dark green, and green.

Mostly, however, there are the emails.

Like this one that I received from the cloud of smoke next to Russ:

comments & criticisms



NICHOLAS CARLSON

Dear [expletive],
Your silly articles are weak. You aren't [expletive]. Make us cry. Bring it.

Love,
Sterling Rozear
Emily Drew
Andrew Haupt
Jimmy Newlin

Oh! Oh! We use bad words AND irony! Yeah! We're the 'tas! Or how about the invitations to *Libertas* meetings?

1. do you like nintendo?
2. do you like Chick-Fil-A?
3. do you like Kristy Marynak?
4. do you hate Kristy Marynak?
5. are you interested in writing, editing, laying out *libertas*?
6. do you like nintendo?

if you answer to any of these questions is yes, you should come to the *Libertas* meeting, this tuesday, 9 pm (21 military/eurotrash time) outside the office on the third floor. there will be chicken and sweet tea, and possibly punch and pie. Come plan the first issue! Join Us and make the world a safer place for children and cows!!

He said Nintendo AND Kristy Marynak twice! And who saw that line about cows coming? Woah-ho!

What would a cult be without parties? What would *Libertas* emails be without a just-plain-wacky salutations?

friends, associates, and other ne'er-do-wells:
consider this your official invitation to "THE SPACE-STATIONS OF THE CROSS" party saturday at the depot apartments. for more information, visit: <http://www.angelfire.com/rings/braindeer/>
bring friends and also (lots of) booze.

I've come up with three reasons why they never capitalize words. 1) Damn the man. 2) It's lame. 3) Didn't you read the issue on corporations man? It's CAPITALISM, man.

Far be it from me, however, to paint an even nearly negative picture of *Libertas* and its followers. I, a columnist for the sell-out, establishment-serving *The Davidsonian* could just never. Yet, in my tongue-in-cheek language, there may be some truth.

Until the Yowl or Purple Bunnies makes a nighttime raid on one of our two Union offices, *The Davidsonian* and *Libertas* stand as the only two substantial publications on campus. And while *Libertas* has a cult administered through email, pretentious or not, the *Davidsonian* un-cult admittedly socializes solely through scientist.davidson.edu as well. Sometimes, we get crazy and go with *desdemona*.

The 'tas crowd may be a cult, but at least they're offering some kool-aid to drink on the weekends.*

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of perfection?

BY GEORGIE AHRENDT
Staff Columnist

Go to the fitness center at any time of the day or night, and you'll be sure to see dozens of students in their usual 24-7 pursuit of perfection. They chug away on their machines with eyes to the television or noses to their books. They pull away at weights with expressions of pain and determination. They sweat without noticing and focus their stare with drive, resolve and purpose.

Welcome to a day in the life of the Davidson College student. The activity in the fitness center, just as it is in the classroom, is indicative of the lives of many of the students here at Davidson. There is no room for failure, there is always room for improvement, and time is a precious commodity.

The computer labs on campus also harbor this driven attitude. There are always people in the labs on any day or at any time. With tired eyes and mechanical hands they type away, passing the hours and maybe skipping a meal or two.

I wonder where it is we learned this habit of striving for nothing less than perfection. Perhaps it began at birth, but it has undoubtedly been reinforced as we've grown up. As we've gone through school, we've learned to believe that our GPA can meter our worth. After we received our high school yearbooks, many of us couldn't help but look at the superlatives and buy into the

belief that there may be such things as the most attractive, the most intelligent and the best overall.

We hold onto the belief that we can mold our futures into the perfect shape with the intention of fitting into them like a glove. We believe that out in the real world there waits for us the perfect job, the perfect husband or wife and the perfect life. Most of us here at Davidson have been so far very privileged, making it difficult sometimes to accept the fact that perfection is not a realistic goal.

So perhaps during our hurried days of time crunching, dedication and sacrifice we can take the time to put our lives into perspective. That's not to say that we should settle for less than our personal best, but being realistic never hurt anybody.

The old adage "stop and smell the roses" would be appropriate here, but allow me to offer an alternative: stop and take a taste of the unsavory truth. Not everyone can get a 4.0, not everyone will have the "perfect" body, not everyone is going to like you, and no matter how hard you try, there will always only be 24 hours in a day.

But there's nothing wrong with all that. To quote *Hamlet*, "This above all: to thine own self be true." I agree wholeheartedly with this piece of advice.

The perfect kind of life is living for you and no one else. Achieving your own personal perfection is doing what makes you happy. Perfection is impossible, but happiness is very real.

Fear, ignorance, keep Bush against gays

BY LESLIE SMITH
Guest Columnist

It appears as though our president, George W. Bush, is afraid of homosexuals. This seems to be an unwarranted fear since homosexuals are not weird creatures with too many appendages and fireballs coming out of their eyes. They will not destroy the U.S. if they are allowed to live freely and are treated as equals. Rather, homosexuals are just the same as heterosexuals with only one difference, they are attracted to members of their own sex.

One thing that needs to be understood is that one cannot choose to be a homosexual or heterosexual any more than one can choose to be African American or Hispanic or White. Thus, the discrimination against homosexuals can be seen to equate itself with racism and other severe forms of prejudice.

Consequently, having George W. Bush imply the need for a constitutional amendment against same sex marriages would be similar to a president in the late 50's early 60's implying the need for a constitutional amendment against inter-racial marriages, or even further saying that only whites can marry. Why is it then that Bush holds these prejudiced beliefs towards homosexuals?

There is an old adage that says, "One hates that which one

fears and fears that which one does not understand." Thus, the reason Bush hates homosexuals and wants to deny them the freedom and happiness that heterosexuals enjoy, is because he fears homosexuals. This fear is bred out of his own lack of understanding about homosexuality. The most unfortunate part, however, is that Bush hides behind this ignorance, and refuses to listen and learn more.

Ten percent of all the people in the U.S. are homosexual, though many are still in hiding due to this hate they feel from people like George W. Bush. It would then appear that Bush is turning a blind eye to ten percent of the population to which he is supposed to represent.

Looking at a similar statistic, this is comparable to Bush turning a blind eye to all African Americans in the U.S. (12.3 percent of US population); or to all Hispanics in the US (12.5 percent of US population); or to ten times more people than all the Native Americans in the US (.9 percent of US population); or to roughly three times as many people as there are Asian Americans in the US (3.6 percent of US population).

It does not appear that Bush intends to lead America. Rather, he intends to lead White-Heterosexual America. If you do not fit this category, then you join the ranks of the OPPRESSED and the FEARED; so much for the land of the FREE and the home of the BRAVE.

Don't blame the mass media for 'Cult of Thinness'

BY JOE TAYLOR
Staff Columnist

On Monday night, people who attended "The Cult of Thinness" were really enlightened about "The Cult of Stupidity."

Totting publications and formal degrees, Dr. Sharlene Hesse-Biber presented her disorganized, unprofessional, and rambling sermon of recycled garbage to a large group of students and faculty.

According to Dr. Hesse-Biber, the "Anglo Saxon" culture presents unrealistic depictions of body image via media and consequently is responsible for the creation of a "Cult of Thinness" throughout the world. Capitalism, apparently, is responsible for eating disorders.

Stupidity, not capitalism, is responsible for eating disorders.

Why does everyone blame everything on big, generic, meaningless words like "media" and "capitalism"? Media is a reflection of what people want to see. Why, then, is the media blamed for things like sex, violence, and thinness? In all forms of media, including television, music, and movies, exaggerations are compelling; who would watch a movie if it were full of everyday events and everyday people?

Ratings, not reality, determine media. Dr. Hesse-Biber may have laughed at a 1980's Virginia Slims advertisement for its presentation of "the logic of thinness," but she failed to realize that the people producing those ads do not necessarily believe what they write; they merely exploit insecurities in people and outsmart them.

The problems arise when people don't think. The media presents thin women and muscular men because they are part of natural sex appeal and health; it is perfectly natural for human beings to want to exhibit those qualities. Do scantily clad plus sized models turn you on? How about overweight men romping around without shirts?

There is nothing wrong with men wanting to be muscular and women wanting to be thin. There is something wrong, however, when people take things to extremes and stop thinking altogether. Sure, everybody wants to look great. But don't throw up after you eat, don't starve yourself, and don't go on some absurd and temporary diet fad that encourages consumption of saturated fat and abstinence from food that can be burnt off.

Stupidity, not capitalism, is responsible for eating disorders.

Contrary to what Dr. Hesse-Biber claims, being physically fit does represent discipline, self control, and resilience; maintaining a reasonable weight and an attractive body does improve self esteem, first impressions, overall health and quality of life. Ironically, people who blame the media for unhealthy body images do not have attractive bodies.

Everyone who feels insecure about their body always has an excuse; people claim that being overweight is a result of genetic factors but they are not the ones eating grilled chicken sandwiches and working out six days a week. Surely some have faster metabolisms than others, but they also maintain that metabolism with diet and exercise; work on things within your control rather than complaining about things beyond it.

Without elegance or logical flow, Dr. Hesse-Biber continued to blather on about how our media has created superficiality. How could our media be responsible for eating disorders and vain manipulations of the body? In her own presentation, Dr. Hesse-Biber brought up ancient Chinese foot binding and Greek gods; how, then, could our modern culture be responsible for this supposedly new superficiality? Did Dr. Hesse-Biber ever consider circumcisions to be gross, vain, and purposeless distortions of the human body?

In a stunning sequence, Dr. Hesse-Biber appealed to the superficiality of society by relaying a story about a thin college student who was denied the opportunity to tryout for the cheerleading squad because she didn't make the "weight cut." Dr. Hesse-Biber thinks that the people responsible for the weight cut were superficial? How about that thin college student who was devastated for years of her life because she didn't fit a certain stereotype? Damn J Crew! Damn Barbie! This girl's life is over!

Ironically, Dr. Hesse-Biber has made significant contributions to her conception of our superficial society. Rather than focusing on blind adherence to religious or political ideologies, Dr. Hesse-Biber focused on blind adherence to weight and body image.

Rather than holding people responsible for their own thoughts and actions, Dr. Hesse-Biber blamed the media and pretended like people were part of a Cult of Stupidity. Perhaps she is on to something.