



75th Anniversary 1908 - 1983



Old Gateway humor columns

by Jens Andersen

No journalist has ever been satisfied merely to report the news. Even the most docile of our clan has at one time or another felt the urge to inflict his or her wit and opinion upon the world. And the more irrepressible and exhibitionistic of us feel this need to whoop and holler before the audience chronically and unabatingly. Hence the newspaper column.

The Gateway has had uncountable columns during its 73-year history, ranging from short-lived duds like *I Saw This Week*, which lasted exactly three installments in January 1951, to the joke column *Casserole*, which lasted over 20 years, and ended up being banned by Student Council under curious circumstances in 1943.

I Saw This Week, incidentally, contained items like:

The prettiest girl on campus walking beside the secretary of the Students' Union with stars in her eyes.

A third year electrical Engineer in what might be termed a desperate situation. Zippers are the solution to your problem.

Former Arts and Science Rep with down in the mouth (sic) striding along the corridor of the Arts Building oblivious to the rest of the frustrating world.

Hundreds of dissatisfied customers of the University Cafeteria.

And so on. Eventually four students wrote in suggesting that Gateway expand the column to a full page and include all 2,900 students on campus, adding as a footnote: "News tidbit: We were seen going to class this week." The column disappeared after that.

In other years Gateway almost had to beg for columnists, but in that particular year there were about 10 or so columns, mostly as transient as *I Saw This Week*, but also two quite regular ones: *Student Street* - a somewhat better gossip and chitchat column - and *Kampus Kwiz*, which presented such multiple choice gems as:

When you ate your first meal in residence did you:

- 1) Say that you had eaten horsemeat before.
- 2) Tell the dietician that you just had to have steaks or else you'd find another place.
- 3) Eat it and then run for the infirmary, like the rest of the gang.

If you are an Engineer with a Saturday night date at your girl's apartment, you should:

- 1) Put your bottle on the table
- 2) Put your cards on the table
- 3) Put your feet on the table
- 4) Put Mr. Billingsley on the table

Mr. Billingsley is one of the mysteries of that era, and appears quite often in the quiz.

The *Casserole* appeared from the early twenties to Feb. 12 1943 in almost every issue, and specialized in traditional gag-line jokes, mostly of the groaner variety, and usually stressing the wink-wink, nudge-nudge side of sex - such as it was in those innocent days.

The column was ordered killed by Students' Council decree a few days later, following on the heels of the Jan. 29 *Engineer's Gateway* (a regular feature in those days) which contained a *Casserole* full of "perverted humor" (as the Students' Union resolution phrased it).

No specifics were mentioned, and surveying the *Engineer's Casserole* in question it is hard to guess which of the relatively tame jokes caused the ruckus. A clue can perhaps be found in a letter from the Theolog Club of St. Stephen's College of Feb. 5 which described the *Engineer's Gateway* as "derogatory...to religion, to decency and to the student body as a whole" (They also compared it to the "immoral, decadent and sacreligious" German Kultur, and expressed horror at the engineer's motto of "We don't give a damn for any damn man that don't give a damn for us").

This leads me to conclude that the offensive joke in *Casserole* may have been the following:

Then there is the story about the small boy trying to get a tire off the car and the #%!*? thing just wouldn't come off. He was swearing loudly when a priest happened along and told him he shouldn't swear - maybe if he prayed it would come off. So Johnny said a prayer for a minute or two, and the tire fell to the ground.

"Well damn me all the way to hell!" exclaimed the priest.

In a farewell editorial to *Casserole* the Gateway editor said the column "has always been the biggest problem of the Editor...either it is too raw or too mild or it is not funny!" adding "We are not sorry to see that *Casserole* is going."

Following are a few further specimens from the column:

There was a young lady, Louise
Who was mightily fond of a squeeze
She became so improper
That in order to stop her
They smeared her with Limburger cheese

(1922)

Seen Today

Dean Boyle buying a pair of ladies' hosiery, and hoping Sandy Claws will fill them this year.

(Dec. 1926)

Madge: "We're never too old to learn."
Gwen: "So that's why you keep putting it off!" (1927)

First: D'jew ever shee me b'fore?
Second: No
First: Then how do you know it's me? (1929)

Jean had put on a new gown to go to the Sophomore dance and said quite affably to Charlie: "This is my new gown. Isn't it becoming?"
"It may be coming," replied Charlie, "but a lot of it hasn't arrived yet." (1929)

Mary had a little lamp
It was well-trained, no doubt;
'Cause every time that John came in
That little lamp went out (1930)

1st Coed: Why are you mailing all those empty envelopes?
2nd Coed: I'm cutting classes in a correspondence school. (1933)

A collection of witticisms - hilariously illiterate, "genuine extracts from letters received at the relief office in the city" - also showed up in the *Casserole* (Nov. 14, 1939). Examples:

"Unless I get my husband's money soon I shall be forced to lead an immortal life."

"I am sending you my marriage certificate and six children. I had seven, but one died, which was baptized on half a sheet of paper by the Rev. Smith."

"This is my eighth child - what are you going to do about it?"

"Mrs. Brown has had no clothing for a year, but is regularly visited by the clergy."

"I am very annoyed to find you have listed my boy as 'illiterate.' Oh! what a dirty lie. I was married a full week before he was born."

(Curiously, some of these and the other extracts closely resemble a list *National Lampoon* published recently in its "True Facts" section. Are they fabrications? Or do the lumpen proletariat, like history, merely repeat themselves?)

There were serious columns throughout Gateway's history too, beginning with early Gladstonian epistles on mental, physical and spiritual development, graduating to today's critiques on the basic structure of society. But that is another story.

Letters-cont. from p.6.

An unladylike habit

Sir,—I read in today's issue of the Edmonton Bulletin that at the regular meeting of the Edmonton Local Council of Women, the following resolution will be submitted by the committee on moral standards:

"That whereas it is considered by a very great number of people to be detrimental to health, and to the highest ideals of womanhood, we, the members of the Ladies' Aid of the First United Church (Ottawa) regret that such widely read magazines as the *Delineator* and the *Pictorial Review* should each month carry full-page advertisements containing testimonials by women as to the pleasure and comfort they receive from smoking a certain brand of cigarettes, and would, therefore, ask the Ottawa Local Council, with the concurrence of the affiliated societies, to take the matter up either directly with the publishers of these magazines, or, if necessary or advisable, through the Provincial Council, making said publishers aware of the large body of public opinion in this community or in this province, as the case may be, opposed to the placing of these suggestive advertisements in the hands of the young womanhood of our country, and requesting them to co-operate with us in endeavoring to attain the highest possible ideals of character by discontinuing same."

Submitted by the Woman's Aid of the Royal Alexandra Hospital:

"Whereas we think there is too much unnecessary publicity concerning some of the girls in the 'Vice Ring,' be it resolved that we send a communication to the newspapers asking them to bear in mind that their columns should make proper reading for children of 'teen-age, and should not contain matter that is shocking even to their parents."

Sir, can any words describe fittingly such sentiments? Will our women's organizations ever learn that it is exposure to sunlight that kills malignant germs? That it is this very repression of open discussion of evils which they advocate that is the cause of many of our evils? And that exposure of vice by our newspapers will do far more to ward off its evils from the youths of 'teen-age than all the dark mystery and whispered scandal by the grown-ups in the corner?

Mr. Editor, you have set some of us thinking in affairs touching religion. I feel that you might set others thinking if you wrote a few editorials attacking the whole modus operandi of these women's organizations.

Yours earnestly,

(Mar. 7, 1929)

READER.

DRINKS BAR
for the best in
Hot and Cold Drinks

JAVA JIVE

Now open in S.U.B.
Students' Union Bldg.

Monday to Friday
7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Saturday
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

SUELECTION

STUDENT UNION GENERAL ELECTION

NOMINATIONS ARE NOW OPEN
FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS:

SU EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

President
VP Internal Affairs
VP Academic
VP Finance & Administration
VP External Affairs

UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC BOARD (UAB)

President Men's Athletics
President Women's Athletics
VP Men's Athletics
VP Women's Athletics

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

1 Student representative

CLOSING OF NOMINATIONS:

1700 hr., Thursday, January 27, 1983

ELECTION DAY

Friday, February 11, 1983

For further information, please contact the SU Returning Office (Room 271, SUB), or the Receptionist, SU Executive Offices (Room 259, SUB).