

North Avenue Review

Winter 1999

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Information Overload 6:

Freddy's Dead

(Well, from our little experiment last issue, I now know that at least a few people read this column, if only to see if they are mentioned in it. For people like that, I'll warn you ahead of time: I wrote this with a hangover after a party that occurred a few weeks before you'll be reading this, so don't be surprised if your words are here to bite you. Anyone else who wants write-access to my brain: Get in line)

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Okay, I've kept quiet this whole time over the FlyTrap issue, because I figured that everyone else was talking about a few blowjobs and lies more than enough to make up for me not doing so. But now that's it's kinda sorta over, my two cents: If it was about sex, well what's the point of becoming the leader of the free world, aka Alpha Male #1, if one can't get some on the side? And if it was about an abuse of power: Does a POTUS's lying/perjuring himself in a civil matter affect the running of the country? And if it was about lying to the people of the country he supposedly serves: A)Doesn't every politician, don't we know and expect this from every politician, and didn't we specifically elect this one with the knowledge that he was prone to this kind of thing. B)The POTUS should have more power than the rest of us. That's what he's there for. I don't want him accountable at the same level the average person is. And with this, I shut my mouth forever on the issue...Everybody's homework for the next few weeks: Research into what tangible policies/legislation/any non-talk-show-appearing-work Bob Barr has done as a member of the House. Because, frankly, I said I would, but I'm just too damn lazy...Just read a newsgroup post worrying that ANAK is acting as the secret government of Georgia Tech, and as the lapdog of Pres. Clough is insuring that all of his desired goals are implemented easily. Now, I'll publicly state that I am not a member, and therefore am not the most informed person to talk on the subject (although, I do know some people who have been "outed" as members, and as far as I can tell (which isn't too far) I don't quite see it), but if it turns out to be true, well, good for them. To get anything done at a place as large as this Institute, there needs to be a small group of people who take it upon themselves to decide policy and implement it. Committees agree on nothing but beige...No, I didn't mean for this issue's column to be the pro-fascist edition...Interesting Question: Is it something about the C. S. program that causes their students to always wait until the last minute to do anything, or is it something about people who always wait until the last minute to do anything that makes them enter the C.S. program?...Interesting Question (equal air time edition): What is it about me that causes me to attack C.S. majors so? Is it that I am so opposed to their actions that I can't keep quiet, is it that I'm afraid that they are negatively affecting the culture of the school, or is it just me lashing out against certain C.S. majors in the most passive-aggressive way possible?...

(The opinions expressed above are not those of the North Avenue Review, which has no opinion, nor even necessarily those of the author, who has all too many opinions. They are merely a collection of various thoughts, beliefs, and ideas collected over the previous three months. However, feel free to write to the paper at the addresses in the front on any or all of the above.)

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Melodramatic Tendencies and White-Wash Fantasies

by Carl Cox - 2/10/99

The bleak-eyed morning hours are lonely times for the professional. Soft fingertips of rain brush my coat, my shoes, my hat. The mud cakes like fine powder on the soles of my shoes, and balancing proves difficult. It is a time of reflections, of preparation. No self-respecting killer would think of attacking at this time, when the sun has not risen from her slumber, and the moon has already retired. It is a time to consider, to ponder. Ponder of yesterday and tomorrow.

The crying darkness cowers behind leafy shadows, and the liquid sky hovers low, fearful of these hours. Everything seems fearful now, in these hours, these tired, tired hours. Crimson memories blaze quiet searing torment across the clouds, probing and prodding holes in my soul, feeling them, pulling. Friends, family, lusts, loves, caught in the maelstrom of the past, spinning, screaming those old fears, those old bloodshot morning fears. So many faces, so many mistakes. Dashed hopes, crumbled dreams. So many.

In the cold, breathy sighs turn to white beauty, snaking quietly across the trembling wind. I know what it feels. My bones quiver too. The wind and I are old friends, comforting each other each day. Carried on it's arms I can feel what I can't otherwise; these faces bore into my deeply gored heart. Some dead, some mad. All gone, so far gone. I hid in the welcomed rain just as the darkness does in those shadows. We all need a place to hide.

I glare across the fraying metal fence at the smell of diesel and rubber floating along the interstate. Tons of steel death racing at 35 over the speed limit, as if where they were going was really all that important. This job always seems to taste of dark-bitter reality, especially when I stop to taste those flowers. Any one of them could be my target today. Any one of them could be searching for me. Any of us, those racing for their five-by-five cubicles for the early morning shift, or me, standing in the gentle tears of heaven, could die today. Or tomorrow. If I knew my friends would cry these tears tomorrow for me, would I be standing here? Would I bother going to work? Would I use my precious time like that? Hiding in cubicles?

How do I know I won't die tomorrow? Hope, I suppose, or ignorance. They say to live like that is self-destructive delusion, wasteful and uncaring. But to live to the fullest, not waste a minute in needless windings and trappings, to feel each flavor on the mind's tongue as a burst of life and light; wouldn't that be an ideal life? Not in fear, not in hiding, but in love and frivolous ecstasy.

I shake my head and move towards my car, burgundy metal, grinning like the pale face

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of flustered pain, headlights wide in fear and loathing. I can't live like that, in the open, unafraid. Too much of a risk for a plotting keyboard like me. Too disordered, too unplanned. I need my darkness, my place to hide, my place to feel. Besides, I have to prepare.

Prepare for tomorrow. If it comes.

The ice of the wheel feels numb in my hands; the windshield is glazed with thick water. The waterfall of millions of past lives, wasted on living to live. Well, I can avoid that much, at least. Maybe I can't live for the moment, perhaps I must live to live, hiding behind the shroud of life, as so many others do. But I can live to love as well. Then I won't be wasted. Not on hate, not on fear.

The rain has stopped, and while the mud is still wet and the trees are still drip-drying, I think I see a little ray of sun from the horizon. The time of introspection is over. The day has begun.

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Notes for Eng2301 10.8.95

This piece has been removed from the web as requested by the author.
Now that his past has been erased, we at NAR hope he will go on to start a prosperous and illustrious future in politics. hooray!

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Passengers Wanted

by Jimmy Lo (unreal@cc.gatech.edu)

1. Describe a situation in which you used your leadership skills to influence the outcome for the betterment of a group.

You may think I'm crazy or that I REALLY don't want this scholarship, but I would like you to at least read through this and form an unbiased opinion.

I have always had a problem with this question in scholarship applications. It isn't because I am not a good leader. Do high school clubs count? I can spend endless hours counting the Beta clubs or the Honor societies. But when it comes down to it, they're just a bunch of self absorbed pricks who think they are better than everyone else -- so much that they think they can start an exclusive membership club and give people awards. What about the countless hours I spent doing community service? Is that supposed to be a redeemable coupon here? I can talk about my experiences at the food bank, or how I helped change the community by giving a homeless guy a dollar or two. Or the small things like telling my friend Mandy that she did a good job teaching a class. Small things like a smile here and there, or words of encouragement on a daily basis. How about starting a literary zine on the internet that has since come out with 8 issues of literature? Do these accomplishments somehow make me better than the average Joe who is also applying for this scholarship?

No. In fact, I don't think that leadership makes any difference at all. At least not in terms of whether or not a person is worthy. Can a person not be worthy simply because he does not possess a desirable character that "society" deems rewarding? What is it about leadership that can make people flutter with joy? What is it that makes people giddy, make their eyes dilate, their fingers reach out for the phone to call mom?

It stems from one simple misconception -- leadership is admirable. We have overrated leadership as the most desirable quality that someone can possess. Undeniably, our society is based on a leadership model in that every job has its leader. No job can be done without a leader. However, every job must also have followers. These are the people willing to put up the commitment, sacrifice the time, and understand the vision of the leaders. A good follower does not follow blindly. Instead, he questions and challenges the leader, but still supports the leader's decisions if it is within reason.

The general attitude towards followers is a negative one. Everyone has heard someone say something like "Oh, he's just a follower". This is normally meant as a horrible insult. Followers are frowned upon. Leaders are the gods.

The western world seems to relate leadership with a sense of individuality. We seem to tag on an immortal quality to our leaders, even as we make them the butt of our jokes (read : The Clinton scandals). But where is all the attention for all the followers? If everybody were to be a leader of some sort (maybe hold a political office or do something equally important) then there would be nobody left to do the equally important tasks to keep a society running.

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Let's face it, the secretaries, the advisors, and the gophers who support our leaders, writes their speeches, and brews their coffee -- these people are just as important (maybe more so) and just as worthy of recognition.

And even though you value leadership so highly, I'm sure you cannot deny that leadership is only a means to an end. This end is what that leader ultimately wishes to accomplish. There is no guarantee that what he is trying to accomplish is right or beneficial. Which means that leadership, like every other gift, is not good or bad alone, but must be wielded like a sword. How a person uses this leadership is what determines the ultimate nature of the person. Just as there are good followers and bad followers, there are also good leaders and bad leaders.

In fact, when it comes down to it, leadership is just a personality trait. Some have it, some don't. You wouldn't base your judgement of somebody's worth based on whether or not they are extroverted or introverted. By the same token, why would you judge the same person's worth by another equally foggy trait? Whether or not a person is truly a good person is inherently independent of personality traits that we have all been assigned at birth. Being a leader in the community is important. But being a good follower is equally important. It involves judgement and insight. It involves feeling and community. It involves a faith in others. It involves a motivation for the betterment of the group that is independent of self promotion.

On the road of life there are drivers and passengers.

Both drivers AND passengers wanted.

Question taken from Georgia Tech Alumni Association 1999 Student Leadership Awards for International Study application form.

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Growing

by James McDuffie

It all started when I jumped from the train right before it was about to cross the bridge. I can not explain why I felt like I had to jump, it was just an instinct. I am just glad that instinct had sense enough to get me to jump before the train went over the bridge that crossed the high canyon which at the bottom lay a small quiet river. I was also confused on why I felt so strongly to cross on this side of the bridge and not on the other. I was also fortunate that the train had slowed down from its usual cruising speed so that it could enter the upcoming rural town.

In any manner, here I was standing beside the gravel lined rail tracks, somewhere I knew not. It was early in the morning, only the light of the moon illuminated the forest that these tracks cut through. I had fled from the city and all of its confusion and materialism. The train yard where they loaded lumber for transportation was not far from my apartment in outskirts of the city. I had decided to just hop aboard one of the open rail cars and let the train take me where ever it went. I had been in that car for hours and had fallen asleep not long after the sun set. I had no idea where the train was headed or how far I had come.

I was free from everything, nothing to tie me down anymore. This place was peaceful, only the sounds of the night insects entered my ears. No more would I have to wake up early in the morning to sit my ass in front of a computer where I wasted away my day, never really learning anything only using the same old techniques that were perfected in the seventies. The city had made me angrier day after day. The smell of polluting automobiles, the utter stupidity of people I encountered all had a negative impact on my feeling for my former home. Never more did I want to go there, but where I could go from here I knew not.

I decided to just wander, hell I did not care anymore about things like death and injury. If I slipped and fell busting my head on a rock paralyzing my body I would actually enjoy it. It would be great to enjoy such an experience, to feel the pain of the cold as my body experience hypothermia, to see the animals gather near waiting for my death. But it was summer so I had nothing to worry about freezing. It was very warm here, I felt like I was being cradled in the arms of a loving mother. The warmth I felt was far beyond the physical sensation. I had never felt this way in the city, only negative energy hit me.

I crossed the rail tracks and walked straight ahead into the unknown. Even though I was now in a wooded area the light from the almost full moon showed me all that I needed to see. The foliage here was not dense and it seemed that these trees had a way of keeping competitive weeds and other undesirable plants from growing around them. The ground around the trees showed signs of plant life here and there but

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nothing like what should exist due to the overwhelming amount of sunlight that must hit the forest floor due to the lack of overbearing trees. These trees felt like they were more than just ordinary trees. I did not know what type they were, their foliage was not anything I recognized. They are probably a common tree but my ignorance in the face of horticulture kept me from placing a name to them.

In a few minutes I could no longer see the rail tracks from where I had come. I was walking down a gentle hill. It seems to me that the rail tracks are the apex of that slope. Every now and then as I walked down the hill I would look back at the tracks increasingly becoming distant and higher. They were the last reminder of what I had come from. I decided to go to the river which lay under the bridge, maybe I could drown myself and experience the feeling of water entering my lungs and slowly depriving my brain of oxygen. I had nothing else to do, I knew not how to live off the land or how to get to any sort of "civilization." Why was I out here? What had possessed me? Right now it seems that the only thing I could do would be to die.

I walked down the slope thinking of the various ways I could die. I thought about being mauled by grizzly bears. I imagined the feeling of their teeth biting into my body. I wondered how being thrown up against a tree by their awesome strength would feel. Would I bleed to death first from all the internal injury or would I suffer sufficient brain injury to cause it to stop wanting to work? Another fantasy of mine was to go to the bridge walk to the middle and dive off into the canyon. I imagined my body hitting the ground beside the river and feeling for a microsecond my bones pushed into my internal organs by the impact. But I would not go back to the bridge for something beckoned me to the river below.

I can not tell how long it took me to reach the river. It could have been an hour, maybe less, maybe more. There was no sense of time here, it seemed to not exist. Only the quiet of night existed here, the coming of morning seemed far away. I was content in my knowledge that I was probably the only human being here. I was probably the only human awake for miles and miles around. The walk to the bottom had not been tough but effortless, I felt like I had walked on pockets of air the whole way down.

The river was not very full, it took up a thin strip of movement between the two static, yellow river beds that encased it. The yellow sand on either side of the river showed no sign of foliage and was moist. A mighty river had roared through here at one time or another, but not tonight. Despite its moisture the bank was firm and took all of my weight without leaving more than a slight footprint. The moisture of the sand was only slightly above dryness. I bent over and picked up some sand, and ran it across my hand. The sand felt dry as I poured it onto the palm of my other hand. But when the sand hit the bank again it regained its moisture. I could almost see as if from a third person perspective the twinkle in my eye that occurred from this simple observation.

I walked to the edge of the water and looked into its mystery. It was clear and I could see that the bottom was lined with rocks who were half buried in sand. It seems that they were at once completely covered by sand but the current had exposed them. I placed my hand into the river and felt a gentle tug, like that of a friendly nudge. The

water was just a little bit cooler than the surrounding air. It cooled my hand as I let it move around in the clear wonder. But the cooling was not a depleting cooling, it seemed only too cool enough to satisfy my slight hotness.

I decided that this was the time to enter the water, to feel its love it entered my life organs. I unclothed my self and threw my jeans, t-shirt and sports shoe into a pile away from the river edge. I stood there right on the water's edge nude and saw a slight shadow cast by the moonlight of my body upon the river. Slowly I entered the water, wading into deeper and deeper water. I felt both cooled and warmed at once by the water. I was firmly planted, the current was not strong enough to even move me an inch. As I reached the middle of the river I found that the water only reached to slightly below my shoulders. This gave me sufficient room to drown but was not the overwhelming depth I had been hoping for.

I was about to go under and experience the unknown when I heard a small splash of water, hardly even noticeable. I turned in the direction upstream and saw a beautiful brown haired woman swimming towards me. She like I was also nude. I was astonished like her beauty and could swear that I was a faint glow around her head. I wondered how I had not noticed her. The river was rather straight at this part and it would have been hard not to have seen another figure standing out against the yellow banks. This question did not matter me any. I did not care how she had gotten there. Despite the fact another human was coming towards me, I still felt peaceful.

When she arrived she did say not anything. She stopped about a foot from me and looked into my eyes with an intensity that made my inner self churn. She smiled as I looked back into her eyes sensing an overwhelming radiance. She then took both my hands and pulled me towards her. She embraced me and I felt the warmth of her body. I felt every curve that had been so sexual to me previously but now it was more than just sexually, I could not explain the way her body made me feel.

As she embraced me I noticed that I what was me was melting away. Our bodies were no longer touching but rather were becoming one. I felt it slowly as she pressed into me. After awhile there was no sense of pressure on the front of my body, all I could feel now was her arms around my back but I could also feel my arms around her back. We had one skin now. Soon there was only one torso and then our legs became one. We placed our hands against each other's hands and pressed and soon there were only two arms. And then as we kept starting into each other's eyes we pressed our foreheads together. Soon there was only one head. Soon there was only one us.

Then we climbed out of the river and stood upon the banks. I was fully aware of myself. I was also aware of her, she was there too. I could feel everything from the new body as if it were my own. Everything the body did was something I wanted to happen. I was in complete control yet it seemed that so was she, but there was no difference in our will. Our desires and needs were one, we acted as one but existed as two. The new body was feminine, an utter triumph in womanly beauty. The curves I looked down upon were so alluring and filled my heart with desire. We looked at the moon, it was no

longer just a little towards being full. The moon was now a perfect circle in the sky, directly over us it shined warmth.

As we stared at the only celestial body that gave warmth that I have ever been able too look into, I felt our body melt away. We sank into the sands but not as if we were being buried. We lost corporal being slowly as the body melted into the moist banks. I caught a last brief glimpse of the moon as our head melted away completing the merging. Then I felt like I was somewhere else. Even though there was no sense of vision I felt like I was upon one of the hills that lead to the river. I was under the ground in an open spot and knew that the ground was above me. Then I move beyond the ground and climbed out into the air once again. It was not with a human body that I climbed, but with that of bark and leaves. I grew into a fully grown tree on that hill. Once I had stopped growing my vision was restored. Now I could see everything that was relevant. I could see the tracks, the bridge, the river and all the trees that lined the hills leading to the river. I could see all of these at once. I noticed that the woman was no longer the only one around me, now there were countless others. With this I smiled in a way that has no physical significance, and this way I stayed.

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The Hidden War - Morale in the Civil War

by Carl Cox

Note on this text: Originally submitted as a term-paper for an English class, this paper has been edited once again for spelling and grammatical errors, but the body remains intact. Please submit opinions, thoughts, and comments to NAR (dsadmpn@prism.gatech.edu).

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Men have fought wars on many occasions in the pursuit of wealth, power, and honor. Yet within each war many smaller wars take place: individuals determine if they are fighting for good, discrimination attacks the heart of the ranks, and anger spurs battles between individuals, all within a single regiment. One of the most common and most devastating of these unseen wars is that for higher morale. During the American Civil War, the Confederate troops lost this fight due to their unrealistic expectations of war, its difficult conditions, strenuous camp life, and lack of effective equipment.

The men who eventually became the troops of the Confederacy during the Civil War didn't know what they were getting into. The last war that most Americans had fought began in 1812, forty-nine years before; the last-predominately ground war was the American Revolution, and few living remembered that. Few really knew war's truths, and consequentially, most people saw it as an adventure (Catton 150). "War, with its offerings of travel to far places, of intimate association with large numbers of other men, of the glory and excitement of battle" seemed to be the perfect break from everyday life (Wiley 17). These ideas probably developed from earlier stories and tales of war that tend to celebrate it, tell of glorious battles and stunning heroes, of great foes and breathtaking victories. Wherever obtained, though, these soon-to-be soldiers expected war to be thrilling and to gain glory with little or no work and certainly no discomforts.

In order to keep their lives as pleasant as possible, the soldiers took with them to war many of life's little luxuries. As troops packed for war, they did not forget their common pleasantries, such as clean clothes, books, cards and the like. They started from home with "wine casks, food packages, tobacco and cigars, fine linens" on their backs; the occasional soldier even "brought faithful slaves" (Vandiver 111). Troops would enter camp carrying parting gifts (Wiley 22). One soldier later recalled that he carried to war "myself, saddle, bridle, saddle-blanket, curry comb, horse brush, coffee pot, tin cup, 20 lb. ham, 200 biscuit, 5 lb. ground coffee, 5 lb. sugar, 1 large pound cake..., 6 shirts, 6 prs. socks, 3 prs. drawers, 2 prs. pants, 2 jackets, 1 pr. heavy mud boots, sixty feet of rope with a twelve inch iron pan attached" (24). But these useful items which seemed essential to everyday life were later seen as luxuries and excess baggage and left with sadness in the field behind the army (23).

Yet, to begin with, the soldiers thought war would be fun and short-lived. In fact, most Southerners thought that the war wouldn't take any time at all. Officials predicted it would last a couple of battles near the disputed border at most (19). Many thought that the northern states would avoid fighting to save the Union because it would be too much work (286). And furthermore, even if the Northerners did fight, the Confederate armies "[could] whip the Yankees with pop guns" (286). The massive numbers of volunteers in the South made huge armies, and that coupled with the idea that all Southerners were born to the saddle and gun gave the troops excessive confidence that they could easily defeat anything that the Union could throw at them (Vandiver 66-67). This proved untrue on many occasions to the troops' disappointment.

Once in the training camps and later in battle, many other problems that would destroy morale became apparent. One of these was that the soldiers elected most officers from their own ranks (Wiley 20), and these elected officers had little military knowledge themselves (19). Many of these officers found it impossible to learn the basics of combat except with the common soldiers, which gave the troops very little respect for them (Catton 152). Many officers also wanted the soldiers to like them (152), which led to neglect of proper discipline and lower morale (Vandiver 109).

The actual battles fought during the war also served to bring morale down. For many, their first battle was the most horrific sight in their lives (Wiley 32). The common rigors of battles placed intense pressure on the soldiers. They "often went into combat hungry and remained long under fire with little or nothing to eat" and "sometimes [they] fought after exhausting marches" (89). Even if they began with full stomachs, battles tended to make soldiers extremely hungry and thirsty (74). In addition, the Confederate forces were often vastly outnumbered (89). The course of battle often forced the troops into trench style warfare, an extremely dangerous form of combat (79). The

mortality rates ran high for both soldier (209) and officer (89). In the winter troops fought with no fire for hours in the frigid air (74). Battle required that the soldiers "[lay] on the ground or... [stand] in line" for extremely long periods of time in the cold wind or "broiling sun," exhausting the men (73).

Dead everywhere after a battle devastated the men's morale. Soldiers sang laments such as

It's many a mangled body
The blanket for the shroud
It's many a mangled body
left on the field alone
I am a rebel soldier
And far from my home (Jennings, "Rebel Soldier")

as they searched the bodies for survivors and buried the dead. Some of these bodies lay on the ground in strange and grotesque positions (Wiley 75). These corpses foretold of the living soldiers' inevitable fate. Perhaps even more disheartening after a battlefield defeat was the loss of fallen comrades both dead and alive to the enemy (76).

The battlefield was not the last place that led to loss of life or morale. Diseases took an even larger number of troops than did the Yankees. One source estimated that for every case of injury in Confederate armies there were five cases of sickness (244). Near the beginning of the war, over one-half the troops were incapacitated at once (244). This intensity of disease owed itself to many factors. Numerous Southern soldiers, for example, originally lived on a farm and thus were susceptible to common city diseases (245-246). Uncleanliness of water (247) and camp also contributed, as did swarms of insects that infested the land (245). Soap was extremely difficult to come by, and bathing soon became rare (248). Cold and rain often plagued the troops for long periods of time (246), and food was often poorly cooked (247). All these factors combined and enhanced each other, causing wide-spread outbreaks of measles, dysentery, diarrhea, malaria, typhoid, small pox, pneumonia, bronchitis, catarrh, scurvy, erysipelas, pulmonary, and tuberculosis (251-256). The inferior medicines and bygone procedures of the doctors, however, contributed the most to death by disease.

Doctors found medicines extremely difficult to procure in the South (Vandiver 114). The Union had declared all medicines contraband, making the Confederacy's initial source of medicines inaccessible (173). This, along with the deficiency of industry, including medicine making industry, and the blockade of southern trade, made common medicines quite uncommon. Most of the cures used in the Southern armies came from troops' home remedies (Wiley 256). This could lead to any number of assorted variations depending on ingredients found in the surrounding area. Many of these probably did nothing, and some possibly hurt the patient.

But even if doctors had access to acceptable medicines, modern practices of the time lacked effectiveness. "When [a soldier] fought, he was likely to be hurt pretty badly, when he stayed in camp, he lived under conditions that were very likely to make him sick; and in either case he had almost no chance to get the kind of medical treatment [required]" (Catton 163). The entire concept of sterilization had yet to be conceived (164). No one knew why wounds became infected; diseases that were otherwise curable or at least survivable "were dreaded killers" because no one knew proper procedures for curing them (164). Conditions such as these led many soldiers to want to leave the war for loved ones back home (Axton).

When not fighting in battles, soldiers spent their time either marching or in camp. This camp life alone often was extraordinarily demoralizing. Days upon days of the monotony of camp extremely bored the soldiers. Food rations rarely appeared in either good quality or quantity (Bowen 59). The "cornmeal mixed with water and tough beef three times a day" wrote one soldier "will knock [a soldier] under faster than Yankee bullets" (Wiley 134-135). Typical rations consisted of some small combination of "cornbread and beef... pork, peas, flour, hardtack, potatoes, rice, molasses, sugar, and... vegetables" (Bowen 59).

Food quality proved to be an incessant problem. One could rarely find a kitchen in camp, and bakeries were virtually nonexistent (Vandiver 112). Further, cooks possessed few utensils (Wiley 103). To make up for this, soldiers made every kind of improvisation: half canteens served as plates; beef was broiled on sticks; turtle shells made effective bowls (104). Even with these improvisations, though, food was not cooked very well (247). To top it off, "Southern soldiers were terrible cooks" probably owing to the men having had a wife or servant cook for them (Vandiver 112). A far greater problem concerned the soldiers much more, though: quantity of food. The amount ordered for commissioned rations had begun to be reduced just after the start of the war (Wiley 90), and the trend of reducing rations continued (91). Further, the armies could rarely meet the the amount of rations ordered to be commissioned due to lack of food (Bowen 59). One reason stood above all others to explain these shortages: the department in

charge of issuing rations was the worst organized department in the Confederacy, according to Wiley (96). The department lacked funds to buy food, means of transporting it, preserves to keep it, and boxes to package it (97). The soldiers, therefore, rarely received edible rations; more often they were spoiled.

Troops fended for themselves when shortages occurred and found many ways of acquiring food. Common methods included foraging, purchasing, and receiving food as gifts, but these were of little help (102). The armies stripped entire fields of their vegetables, leaving none for either themselves or anyone else for later (Vandiver 113). Capturing food from fallen enemies became the most popular method, however (Wiley 102). A soldier once yelled in battle, "Charge 'em, boys! They have cheese in their haversacks!" (Davis 123)

Lack of adequate rations combined with harsh winter weather every year for a massive attack on morale. During the winter months, when snow was possible and cold inevitable, most fighting between the armies ceased. The troops then built their winter camps and stayed there throughout the season, generally inactive. The troops often had to make their own personal shelters against the wind and snow from whatever materials they could find, including scrap wood, trees, fence-posts, or anything else (Wiley 60). These shacks could only be thrown together because the soldiers made them between drills and duties. In addition, the hard winter conditions made soldiers even more susceptible to diseases (Vandiver 198), and food transportation was severely hampered.

Anytime, winter or summer, camp proved an extremely boring place to be (Wiley 151). This fact led many soldiers to develop ungainly habits to pass the time, and these habits were often destructive to individual moral. One such practice was drinking. Many soldiers found liquor a convenient way to allow themselves to forget their dreary situation (40). Even officers drank to an extent, a poor example to the troops (41). This became such a major problem in the Confederate military that the war department in 1862 ordered the generals to stop drinking with all means possible (40). The troops ignored even this strong, order, however, by finding creative ways to obtain and keep their liquor from the officers' knowledge (41).

Gambling also took a foothold in camp life. People gambled out of sheer boredom (36). Card games such a poker, twenty-one, euchre, and keno became the most popular form of gambling, followed closely by raffling (37). Cavalry units raced horses for sport with troops betting on the winner (38). When such conventional methods of gambling were not available, soldiers improvised (38). They gambled on paper sail boats, bug races, and even bug fights (38). The men bet anything for the chance to win (30); troops lost entire paychecks in a single day leaving the unfortunate loser penniless (39). Like drinking, many regiments set stern rules against gambling, and also like drinking, the soldiers ignored the rules (39).

Other poor habits developed in the armies as well. Theft from other soldiers, both dead and alive became common (46) with food the prime target (45). Prostitutes flourished in cities near the troops, and occasionally came into the camp (51). Loud and frequent swearing could be heard at all times (48). All in all, camp life proved disheartening, and after several years, morally degrading.

These distressing times often came out in songs that the soldiers sang. One song in particular explains very well another aspect of their falling moral:

Well, we hadn't any powder
And we hadn't' any shot
And we hadn't any money
To buy what we ain't got. (Jennings, "Unreconstructed")

Not only did the soldiers lack gun powder and bullets, but they lacked good clothing, new weapons, and many other necessities.

Clothing was hard to come by in the Confederate armies. When registering to fight, recruiting officers asked volunteers to bring their own clothes to camp (Wiley 108-109). Continued exposure and use wore the standard home-spun clothing very quickly, and because the government would not supply them, the soldiers had to find another way to get clothing. According to Shotwell, a soldier could not purchase clothing for six months due to lack of vendors in the field and the small salaries made by the soldiers (296). A common method for the soldier to replace clothes was to write home and request that their wives, children, or slaves make and send extra garments (Wiley 113). Soldiers bought or borrowed clothes from other soldiers (114). Many soldiers even stooped to stealing the clothing from dead enemies or allies (Catton 181). In fact, the armies obtained so many clothes from Union officers that the Southern troops appeared to be Union (Wiley 115).

Most soldiers rarely had shoes (89); lack of shoes became the largest of the South's deficiencies (119). Shotwell recalls a statistic that "fully ten thousand of [Lee's] men were barefooted " (295). Sometimes soldiers fought for hours without shoes; one general reported leading over 100 men thus (Wiley 51). Furthermore, the Battle of Gettysburg, one of the largest battles in the Civil War, started as a Confederate army looking for shoes in the town (Davis 136).

What clothing the soldiers could procure was often in poor shape. " My shoes is wering out very fast and my pants is warin out as fast as my Shoes is," one soldier wrote (Wiley 129). Many think of the Southern troops as wearing gray uniforms, but the colors worn more often reflected availability than conformity (110). The Southern government decided that wool should be the common cloth for clothing, including during hot marches in the mid summer and fighting under the scorching sun (Bowen 44). Leather supply dropped as the war progressed due to the reduction of herds of hogs, cows, and horses, making shoe production or repair difficult (Vandiver 173). The condition of clothing and the need to keep what one had in good repair even prompted the soldiers to carry small sewing kits commonly called housewives to fix minor damage (Wiley 166).

As with clothing, the South faced major shortages of weapons during the Civil War. Confronted with this lack of guns, the armies had to find ways to outfit their troops (288). The Southern government could not produce weapons due to lack of industry, nor could it import them because of the federal blockade. Therefore, Southern leaders turned to different approaches. One of these , collecting weapons from the civilian population (Catton 36), led to several problems. The civilians rebuked at losing their guns, and the army collected a huge variety in gun types, requiring an even larger variety of bullets (Wiley 290). Simply retrieving weapons from the battle field proved a more practical alternative for obtaining guns, but this still left many problems, including a large variety of weapons (Vandiver 240).

Due in part to these problems and to the Southern agrarian lifestyle, very few of the weapons in the southern armies were modern; only about 10,000 modern guns existed in the Confederacy (Catton 36). Most soldiers fought with flintlocks much like those used in the Revolutionary War (36), and rain caused these to malfunction (Wiley 288-289). Some of the weapons broke easily or were extremely inaccurate and hampered fighting (290-291). Artillery pieces could even explode during battle, severely harming or killing nearby soldiers (Catton 158).

The soldiers of Confederacy encountered many hardships during he Civil War. Faced with a strong enemy, they did not back down. For four long, difficult years they fought for what they believed. Yet, because they did not understand the truths of war, and because they had to face harsh conditions both on the field and in camp, and because they lacked useful and modern equipment, they lost their battle for higher morale.

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Newsgroup Personalities

by DeAnna Janecek

Newsgroups, those virtual chat areas where people can talk, argue, and contemplate anything that they wish. Here at Tech, it's one of the main ways that people communicate what's going on at school and in their own lives. In my observation of these newsgroups over the past year, I have noticed that there are several different personalities that appear on newsgroups, and you can generally find one of each on every 'group. Here they are, with descriptions of each type.

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CAPITALIST: Capitalists see the word socialism, communism, Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, or any other type of socialist -ism and immediately go off the deep end. They claim essentially that the person who mentioned it is a Commie and go on to point out the faults of said doctrine. Such people generally do not know the difference between the various types of socialism, probably not even knowing what socialism is in itself, and assume they are all the same, no matter how much the victim of the attack tries to point out that's not what (s)he is talking about.

COMPLAINER: Complainers post complaints, obviously. Rarely does anything good come out of their posts. One would think that the Complainers would be bred by the most bitter majors (ChemE for example), but often they rarely have anything terribly awful they need to complain about.

FLAME BAITER: Flame baiters enjoy tossing out some sort of comment that no one will agree with, probably not even the person who wrote agrees, just to see how many people will get angry at them. These people would make good talk show hosts as well.

"FLUFF" CREATOR: This person always has something to say, although it generally is not anything of any importance. Somehow, there are always a few people who will find the fluff interesting enough to post a response to, and the thread will often expand to +100 posts.

LURKER: Lurkers just read the newsgroup. You might see them on your favorite server and see that they are reading news, but they will never post even when you ask them to show some courage and post.

OLD FLAMER: Same as a flame baiter (see above); however, they pick up on a thread that's been dead for several weeks / months and decide to start the argument up again.

SOCIALIST: The poor victim of the Capitalist (see above). (S)he might mention something related to socialism once, and be branded a socialist of some form forever. No matter how much they deny it or try to switch sides, the Socialist will be so branded

for the rest of their existence on the newsgroup.

Those are all of the personalities I have seen the most noticeable on Tech newsgroups lately; keep an eye out for another installment coming soon.

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How to deal with your hollow soul: a primer

by Mike Doyle

Pop Quiz: what do Jim Baker and Newt Gingrich have in common? Besides the illegal sex and controlled substance "experimentation," they both give you their assurance that your life would be better if everyone did just as they said. Both of these men are propagators of some form of ideology, and they both know what's best for you.

Here's how an ideology works: someone somewhere finds an idea that fits his or her lifestyle and talks about it to a bunch of people who are willing to adjust their lifestyle if they could only find out the Great Idea. Of course, everyone is looking for an answer that they can use to destroy the uncertainty and sense of uselessness that mediocrity begets. And a promise of eternal happiness is icing on the cake. Especially if you don't have to exert much energy to reach the pie in the sky. "If you put faith in it, it will become true." Why, if you put that in a chain letter, you'd make a mint.

But our young, hip society is more aware about worldly goings-on. Our television shows us when someone kills something because it disagrees with their idea of the Great Idea, and we think that to do such a thing is bad. After all, it would be unprofitable for a television station to hint otherwise. "Too many have tried, too many must have failed, and I'm too damn apathetic," says the cynical, post-modern Generation-Xer. And if you agree, you probably have a bland hair-do, a copy of *Clerks*, and an adherence to some form of nihilism. Nihilism is the abstinence of a belief of this supposed Great Idea. "No. Sorry but there really is nothing we can count on. Now if we can just get everyone to forget about the Bible and all the rest of that other TV crap we could make the world a better place! We could make their lives better!"

Oops, what was that? Unfortunately when you believe in nothing, that "nothing" becomes subjectified. It possesses a name and a place and becomes something you can point at. Nihilism is still an ideology. Oh, as far as ideologies go it's fairly inexpensive. Can you afford a pair of Doc Martens? I knew you could. "But what else is there? I can't believe in nothing and I don't wanna believe in something. How do I keep my progeny from committing genocide against those other people?"

I'll tell you what I've been doing for the past year... that is, if you want to go changing your life around over it. I worship Reverend Jim. Yes, that's right Reverend Jim, the less than kindly street preacher who comes to our school on his annual collegiate circuit of sinners and soul-winning. Why would I do this? Well, I believe in Brother Jim because I can see him. I can touch him. These things are important to me. I believe in swordfish too, but I'll dance to anything.

That was good for a laugh. Now the reason I worship Brother Jim is because the man

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is full of shit. You may scoff at this "belief" system and feel that it is self-contradictory in nature, and your feelings serve you well. I'll explain why this is important. The way I see it, if I have to believe in something, it might as well be frivolous and nonsensical so I don't get into long, heated debates that I obviously can't win or start killing all the Muslims in Atlanta. And what the hell! The man is entertaining. The Church of the Subgenius is too expensive for my tastes. Eternal salvation for thirty bucks or triple your money back? Are you nuts? If I had thirty bones, I'm sure I could find better things to do than write for you people. Brother Jim is free! I don't have to go to him, he comes to me! And not too often either.

He's anal-retentive. He prefers the David Lee Roth incantation of Van Halen to the Sammy Hagar one. He called my best friend a horny whoremonger for simply knowing what a Nazarite was. What's not to love? If you can't turn a deaf ear to his somewhat sexist and homophobic rants and can shell out thirty bucks, I suggest you go check out the Subgenii. But give me Jim or give me death!

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