

If you don't vote, don't complain

Ron Besser
Photo Editor

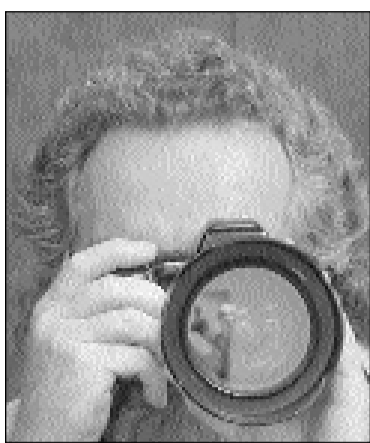
As I passed through the Commons Great Hall at 12:30 p.m. April 13, Tina Cruz, election commissioner for the Student Government Association, told me that more than 200 students had already voted in this year's SGA election.

Two-hundred is an amazing number considering roughly 500 students voted last year.

By any election standards, that's a disgusting number. Considering there are more than 9,000 students at the University of West Florida, that's about five percent of the students who vote people into office who are making important decisions concerning the future of our campus and the use of \$1.8 million in Activity and Service fees.

In past years, the SGA election kind of snuck up on people.

Because of the dates when applications were accepted and when candidates could campaign, it was not uncommon to see nothing about elections until a day or two before



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you had to vote. This year, we have had more than a week for candidates to get the word out on why they needed your vote with little more than one unpublicized "debate," only one ad, and one letter to the editor in *The Voyager*.

Only the presidential and vice presidential candidates gave a speech.

I would like to get to know the candidates for the other offices. Who will be sitting on the finance committee and deciding which organizations deserve funding? And

then there's the academic and student relations committees.

Does anyone know what they do, let alone who is running for these seats?

Often times, these important positions have fewer candidates running than seats needing to be filled. Fortunately this year, with the exception of finance chair, there are choices for the elected positions.

At every campus where I attended classes before coming to UWF, the school paper has had a one or two-page spread with pictures, short biographies and the candidate's positions on school and SGA policies. That included the candidates for all offices, not just the top two.

I have always felt *The Voyager* should provide information about all the candidates, but there was never time to get input from everyone.

The other fact is many candidates don't feel the need to use their school paper for their campaign.

During my long stay at UWF, I can only recall a few people who wrote a letter to the editor, and only one who was not running for presi-

dent. I guess the lack of competition for most offices and being a part of major campus organizations gives a feeling of overconfidence to some.

This year the computer system is working, and you can vote from any computer by connecting to the Nautilus site, or go to www.nautical.uwf.edu/comm/se.

Martha Hancock, office assistant for SGA, sent a Student News Special Edition to all Argomail student accounts so you can look at the presidential and vice presidential candidates who submitted their information.

Not all candidates provided biographies or office goals. This doesn't mean they are not worthy of your vote, but merely that, for whatever reason, they did not get back to Hancock.

Voting will be held from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 14, in the Commons Great Hall or online.

If you are reading this after that time and haven't voted, you have forfeited your right to complain about anything the elected officials do.



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Illiteracy is a widespread problem that affects all areas of people's lives.

Illiteracy: More common than you think

Megan Martinez
Commentary Editor

Reading is a skill that most college students take for granted. Of course, many people know there are those who can't read. Articles and stories about illiteracy's being an epidemic are common in newspapers, but how many people do you really know who are illiterate?

Well, it would seem that if you grew up in this area, then you probably have known quite a few people who can't read well.

That is, if you are even able to read this.

According to the front page story of the Sunday edition of the Pensacola News Journal, roughly half of Escambia County high school seniors who took the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test failed and were unable to graduate on time.

How is this possible? How did these students make it all the way through the school system only to fail an assessment test?

Social promotion was cited as playing a crucial role in the graduating of students to the next grade who weren't academically ready. But what are these teachers thinking when they do this?

Maybe we should look at the way the teachers are instructing. If all these students aren't able to pass an assessment test, then it has to have something to do with teachers who aren't doing what they are paid to do: teach.

It isn't the fault of the students if the teachers don't properly educate them and then pass them on to another because they are "good kids."

Reading skills are something that students learn in elementary school and are the basic groundwork for the rest of the subjects they are taught in school. So if you are never taught to read comprehensively, wouldn't that mean you are unable to really understand pretty much every other subject?

Other reasons cited for the alarming number of students with reading skill problems are curriculum that wasn't standardized and the lack of reading skills being taught in middle school.

Many middle and high school teachers feel unequipped to help students, said Judith Irvin, an education professor at Florida State University in Tallahassee.

So does this mean that teachers are allowing this situation to continue because they don't know what to do?

Not only are students now unable to read well, and sometimes cannot read at all, they are unable to hold down jobs because of their impairment. On a larger scale, the lack of reading comprehension can potentially deter employers from seeking workers from this area.

I bet the teachers weren't thinking about that when they passed students who weren't ready to graduate.

Now that the damage is done, schools are looking at what went wrong in the past and what they are going to do about it. Schools are becoming more active in making sure that their students are prepared to take and pass the FCAT.

But what about all those people who have graduated over the years without the benefit of a standardized test to tell them that they need help in reading?

Illiteracy is an epidemic that is closer to you than you think. Luckily Florida has finally caught up with this problem, but at what cost?



Megan Martinez
Commentary Editor

U.S. government retains traces of roots

J. Bryant Roberts
Staff Writer

The idea of monarchy in America was supposed to have perished with the expulsion of the British via the Revolutionary War. Still remaining, however, are enduring vestiges of the Tory influence that attempted in vain to defeat American independence in that long ago struggle for freedom.

The 18th and 19th centuries saw the rise of egalitarian reforms and parliamentary governments that sought to end hundreds of years of rule over the people of many nations by kings and queens.

Rarely in human history has the totalitarian rule of a monarch produced anything but misery for the people governed.

Monarchies were invariably associated with greed, cruelty and oppression, and have rightly been rejected by contemporary societies for this reason. Generations of wealth and inbreeding do not produce individuals with the compassion or intelligence required to be proper custodians of the public trust. For evidence, we need only to look at Iraq's Hussein family or the deposed Shah of Iran.

Both of these despots, incidentally, were supported for many years by the power of the United States government.

According to a recent book, "American Dynasty" by Kevin Phillips, several families, some claiming ties to British nobility, have launched an effort to concentrate political and economic control of America in the hands of a new dynasty of their creation. Family ties,



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Monarchy in America is alive and well.

secret societies and deception on an international scale are purported to be the tools used by these self-serving and ruthless clans to wrest control of America from its people.

Many members of our current Congress have the familiar names of their predecessors in those offices: Kennedy, Udall, Dole and many more. Many relatives

of President George W. Bush can be found in government offices.

His grandfather, Prescott Bush, who had strong ties to the German government in the 1930s and early '40s, started the current Bush "dynasty" as a U.S. Senator in the 1950s.

By using family influence to attain powerful positions in government, the weak and inexperienced are allowed to shoulder responsibilities that they have no hope of coping with.

From movie stars to momma's boys, men who have attained no measure of success in solving real world problems have been given the highest and most demanding positions in the world today, with disastrous consequences. Before President George W. Bush thoroughly trounced his dubious record, Ronald Reagan had run up the largest deficit in U.S. history. Many feel that, like his father, President Bush is now mishandling another war in Iraq because of inexperience and poor judgment.

The founders of our nation understood basic concepts of successful government, such as less government is best government, and fiscal responsibility is good for individuals as well as nations — concepts that have been largely ignored lately.

They also understood that those who occupy political office should be subject to the revolving door policy — in and out quickly. New faces are better than family names. Think of politicians like the water in your fish tank. If you don't change it regularly, it starts to stink.

CD sales drop, lower the cost ... it's that simple

Josh Mullins
The Daily Athenaeum (West Virginia U.)

(U-WIRE) MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — Well, apparently CD sales are back on the upswing.

Overall music sales, including CDs, DVDs and legal downloads, are up to the tune of 9.1 percent.

And you know, I have to say I'm ecstatic.

I was so worried that top record executives and my favorite boy bands weren't going to have enough money to eat.

The funny thing is that all these industry officials are speculating on the different reasons CD sales have gone up. Some of them think it has to do with the crackdown on Internet piracy. Others say it has something to do with certain artists releasing antic-

ipated albums.

Here's a news flash. It might have something to do with the fact that CD prices dropped.

Amazing that no one even mentioned that. Let's see, CD prices drop for the first time since the inception of the format two decades ago, and people start buying them again. You would think that one was common sense.

Since the advent of file-sharing software, the music industry had seen a three-year decline in sales. Now, say what you will, but I have to believe programs such as Napster and Soulseek are directly responsible for this slump. But that's not necessarily a bad thing.

People shouldn't be subjected to high-priced CDs that aren't worth half of what they're being sold for.

And until file sharing came along,

there was no other way to get your hands on that music. But the biggest revelation that file sharing brought was the ability to check out an entire CD before you bought it.

I don't think I'm alone in saying one of the biggest disappointments a music buyer faces is purchasing a CD only to find out that the single is the only good song.

To me, file sharing was the only way that consumers could show the record industry that we had had enough. Sure, people could have boycotted buying music at all, but it's hard to go through life without some tunes. So why not just let them know we weren't going to pay for the crap they churn out?

Last week, I was out tracking down a new release I was looking forward to. Oddly enough, the local store didn't get this particular CD the

day it came out, so I decided to bite the bullet and head to the mall. Knowing fully well that I was headed into the heart of the beast, I prepared myself to part with 20 hard-earned dollars. You can imagine my surprise when I only had to shell out \$12.

I have to tell you, I was shocked. I bought a brand new CD for \$12, and it wasn't even on sale. That was the sticker price.

Maybe the music industry is onto something. If you want sales to go up, just lower prices. And I'm sure the top dogs are still going to get the biggest cut of all that. That's why they had to lay off thousands of workers during the sales slump. It wouldn't make any sense to lower their already ridiculously high salaries to soften the blow all around the company. Nah, just get rid of some hard-working people instead.

VOYAGER

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