Thank You, Jeff Thomas

By Kurt Rosenberger

In the last (Sept. 18) issue of the Weather Vane, Jeff Thomas wrote a letter to the editor criticizing the recent editions of our student newspaper. In his letter, he outlined a couple of points that he felt the editors were falling short on. He also accused our newspaper of being anti-EMU; this is the issue of his letter that I would like to respond to.

He reminded us that we ("students, faculty, and staff") are here by choice. We have the ability to choose our learning environment and if we do not like how things are going here on campus, we are welcome to leave whenever we please. I have to wonder though, is leaving our environment really the best way to handle a situation that we do not find ideal? I feel it is not. It is true we are here by choice. Many reasons went into that decision and we still care about the place we chose to get our education. This is why we are not going to leave over issues we think we can change.

We want our education to be the best it can possibly be, and for that we need professors who aren’t afraid of being fired over taboo controversial issues. Leaving this campus is not what people should be doing. What people should be doing is following your example. That’s right. You, Jeff Thomas, are a perfect example of what people should be doing, and for that I thank you. Instead of leaving EMU and giving up on your environment, you stuck it out and tried to make a difference. You have expressed your feelings with the hope of changing EMU. That is what you chose to address was the writing and editing in the Weather Vane. Hopefully your letter had an effect (it did on me). This is why I disagree very much with your accusation of an anti-EMU newspaper. I think it is the exact opposite. The reporters and editors of the Weather Vane are as pro-EMU as possible. They love EMU and want it to be the best university it can be for everyone (‘students, faculty, and staff’).

Recently, they have chosen to address issues surrounding Dr. Arbaugh. They are reporting on what they see from their perspective. I highly doubt that anyone on the newspaper’s staff is purposely trying to mislead our student body. If you feel that their perspective is way off from where the rest of the student body is then I plead with you to provide a different perspective and contribute more. You claim to have the knowledge of experience from your time at Hesston, so please try to put it to good use.

I do hope, however, that you can see that what you were trying to accomplish in your letter is the exact opposite of what you have worked hard in the Weather Vane is trying to bring about. A better EMU.

Kurt Rosenberger

Foot In Mouth

September 25, 2003

Letter to the Editors:

MSHL Cuts Are ‘Intolerable’

Apropos the article about the crunch and the Mennonite Historical Library, I am writing to say that the MSHL [Mennon Simons Historical Library] has been loaded with more than its share of this situation. After suffering from two drastic cuts of its budget, it is now ordered to close its facility half-time. Last year 1,707 users came to the library. One can be certain that of these came during the morning hours when the door is now shut. Is the EMU now on a half-time operation? Are there no longer classes in church and Mennonite history, and no longer faculty and students coming for study and research?

By Al Keim

History of China

Have a contribution? Send it to us, along with the professor’s name and data.

Al Keim

Ninjas - aren’t those chocolate-covered cookies?

“Ninjas - aren’t those chocolate-covered cookies?”

Al Keim

History of China

My family, on both sides, arrived in South Carolina, western films, try music, the mountains of Virginia. My family is, and has been, predominantly blue collar but I can only comment on what I know, and many of them have been signed n i c e a t y ch a l l e n g e d throughout my career here at EMU. Before attending this institution I would have argued (until I was blue in the face) that I was as true a Mennonite as there was. That is, that my beliefs were typical to Mennonite history, and no longer classes in church and Mennonite history, and no longer faculty and students coming for study and research. My family, on both sides, arrived in South Carolina, western films, try music, the mountains of Virginia. My family is, and has been, predominantly blue collar but I can only comment on what I know, and many of them have been signed n i c e a t y ch a l l e n g e d throughout my career here at EMU. Before attending this institution I would have argued (until I was blue in the face) that I was as true a Mennonite as there was. That is, that my beliefs were typical to Mennonite history, and no longer classes in church and Mennonite history, and no longer faculty and students coming for study and research.

Why Feel Guilty About Being American?

By Ben Weaver

Upon my entrance to EMU as a freshman, I didn’t know a lot of things. Even with my ignorance, there were some things I knew and many of them have been signed n i c e a t y ch a l l e n g e d throughout my career here at EMU. Before attending this institution I would have argued (until I was blue in the face) that I was as true a Mennonite as there was. That is, that my beliefs were typical to Mennonite history, and no longer classes in church and Mennonite history, and no longer faculty and students coming for study and research.

I grew up in a Mennonite church but if the predominant views I have seen at this school are representative of the larger Mennonite population overall, I have to question exactly what I am. The following issue is only one of many that continue to divide our body of believers.

The issue is that of guilt. It has been consistently drilled into me throughout my classes/discussions at EMU that it is a "duty" as a Mennonite to constantly question the U.S. and our status as American citizens. Worldview is indeed an important part of our faith, but is it so integral? This apparent pre-require of my faith is something entirely new to me and something that I did not understand. I was not raised in a community that marched against the School of the Americas. I did not participate in that action nor did anyone I know refuse to pay his/her taxes. Nobody I knew referred to soldiers as criminals or to capitalism as the great evil. I was not told to feel guilty about shopping at Wal-Mart or buying an American-made SUV or truck. People did not tell me not to go hunting, nor did I feel guilty about owning firearms. Living in a suburban/rural area was not seen as a negative nor was clashing to the traditions of my ancestors. I have encountered all of these opinions at EMU and have learned many valuable lessons from them. What I have to wonder, however, is how I, as a Mennonite, should define my faith when there are so many competing opinions? Is it the majority of the Mennonites I encounter outside of my community?

My question in this article is also the title—why must I feel guilty about being American to be a true Christian/Mennonite? My family, on both sides, arrived in North America in the late 1700’s. Surely we are American. I worship in a church that is over 200 years old and which George Washington once visited. My church possesses a cemetery containing the remains of General Nash (the namesake of Nashville Tennessee). I live 45 minutes from the liberty bell where it was cracked (legend has it) on the road that runs right next my house. My ancestors labored the Mennonite faith really are, I see no reason for them to feel guilty about their every day struggles. Some people may not agree with U.S foreign policy or Third World labor policies, but I will rebuke anyone who refuses to give some level of respect to our country and government for their actions or for their fellow Americans who keep the wheels of this country turning. The very fact that so many Mennonites remain in the America they openly chastise has me question whether they are truly serious or merely putting on an idealistic front. I would argue that many really do love America and that realization makes them very uneasy. But why does it have to? Why does loving the U.S remove one farther from God? Does our faith history cause many of us to feel anxious about being so comfortable here? I would argue that we need not be worried.

We can criticize and challenge authority and I myself take part from time to time. Consumer luxury is part of the beauty of America. We have been given that right. It is for this reason that many of our ancestors chose this country in the first place. The views I described above may represent only a small minority at this ever increasingly liberal school; I really don’t know. I don’t want to paint an inaccurate picture of what some aspects of the Mennonite faith really are, but I can only comment on what I see around me. As such, I am still uncomfortable in a definition of my faith. Having opinions is completely fine, but I see many who are very impressionable when they come to an institution such as this and consequently are easy to mold through “radical” opinions. The entire idea of my being an American does not help those around me and complicate toward their struggles. However, I do not feel person responsible for my government’s mistakes in the past or the present. I did not commit such atrocities and those who did will be or have been held accountable. I only need to act for myself as to positively influence those around me. Following Jesus is as possible here as it is everywhere in the world. My guilt about being an American does not help those around the world: only my actions do. We need not feel guilty to be Americans in order to be better Mennonites.

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