Spontaneous Combustion, Hate Mail, and the Silent Majority

At the beginning of this semester, we editors were worried that we might not see the same amount of reader response that we did last semester. Boy, were we wrong.

Since Friday our mailbox has spit out no fewer than three letters in response to opinions expressed on our editorial pages, and our readers are probably familiar with the letters in the Sept. 18 issue from former EMU student Michael Ng and senior Jeff Thoman, objecting to some of our operational practices and accusing us of bad journalism.

The language employed in these letters is not subtle. One, which we couldn’t print because it was anonymously signed only “Staff,” called the Vane "anti-Bible, anti-EMU, and left-wing” (apparently those are synonymous). Another, from senior Matthew Yoder, which is printed this week on page 12, takes specific issue with pieces by Andrew Jenner and Kurt Rosenberger on last week’s Opinion pages and calls the Vane in general a "waste of time and paper."

The impression we get from all this mail is that there are people in our audience who are convinced that (1) Weather Vane is so liberal it’s amazing the paper doesn’t spontaneously combust before we get it into the distribution boxes, (2) there is a "silent majority" of students and faculty at EMU who disagree with opinions expressed in the Vane, and (3) we editors make no effort to let this silent majority be heard, or are even involved somehow in actively keeping it silent.

On the Vane being perceived by some as "liberal:" we simply point out that as student editors, we are expected, indeed, consider it our duty to voice a student corporate point of view, but we certainly don’t consider that the last word on any subject or issue. That’s why there is op-ed (opposite the editorial) space devoted to other views.

As for the "anti-EMU" charge, we hope that our readers can distinguish between "questioning" administrative procedures, for instance, and "trashing" the institution. Some have said that if we hate EMU so much, we should leave. Actually if we did hate EMU, perhaps we would leave, but that’s not the case. We are loyal clients with some questions. Is that wrong?

"Anti-Bible" hardly deserves the dignity of an answer. All of our thinking, critical and otherwise, is informed by the Bible, as shown two weeks ago with our critical discussion of church and state. In critiquing the actions of religiously-obsessed Alabama chief justice Roy Moore, we quoted from the New Testament books of Matthew and John.

We won’t defend anything said on the Opinion pages that doesn’t have our own names attached, but we can promise that these voluntarily-written columns were presented with no pressure to present a certain point of view and were not censored in any way. If we were censoring anything, we certainly wouldn’t print letters that criticized our work.

We make it a policy to do only minimal correcting for spelling and grammar on the Opinion pages. We distinctly remember sending out e-mails early on in the semester, asking for volunteers to write for the Weather Vane. If there are so many on campus with views opposed to those already expressed on the Opinion pages, why isn’t our mailbox running over with submissions from this so-called disenfranchised "majority" instead of complaints about their lack of representation?

We repeat: we’ll give column space to anyone who is willing to submit a reasonably readable opinion piece and a columnist photo. Don’t snipe from the sidelines – join the club! We’d love to have a more diverse Opinion section.

Or does the "silent majority" lose its moral authority when it ceases to be silent?

~jby and mjs

OPINION

Believe in Truth and Dare

By Roxann Allen
Columnist

I believe in dare and truth. I believe in caution and youth. I believe in truth we tell lasts longer than if we know it well. If I can believe that two plus two is four, can I forget the twos and believe in the end?

My unwillingness to end early-morning dreams led to the truth about them: they made me see the four problems I’ve had since youth: original sin, Job, circumstance, and punishment. Well five: and endings. Every day I tell myself, "don’t tamper with good intentions," and I tell myself, "Job suffered more than you," and end the day’s misgiving with forgiving and, well, the truth, because isn’t the truth supposed to set you free from youth’s corridor of mistakes and the four times you sinned, four grains of life sand to tell God who will flash them to glass like youth’s melting passions?

But in the end, you see, all that matters is the truth of your engagement—the tears well up in your eyes—heath is not wellness it’s your four-year anniversary and the dare you took in truth or dare that left you panty-less to tell the world, “it’s not the end!” (of the game) or youth’s passions because you know youth’s darter’s story—you know it well from beginning…to end because time, my sister…four times one times three is 12. I tell you this because I know the numbers (truth) come from something real—truth as true as my dad’s skin rubbed by an Amish youth’s hand to see if he can tell that it’s real (real dark, maybe).

Well fine and good, but circumstance is special. The four (above) got to hear the one and three’s stories to end in 12. Youth’s passions can tell well-meaning non-darters four things: dare, multiply, suffer, and truth lies in the middle, not end.

The Weather Vane