

opinion

Focus on the homeless

A couple of miles outside the tiny town of Cherokee, a row of small cottages stands beside the highway.

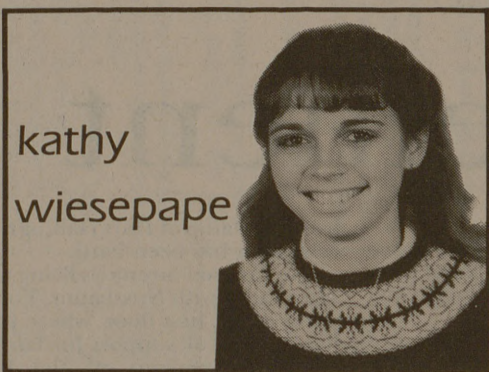
A group of little boys plays football in one of the yards, beside the large sign that says, "Cherokee — Home for the Children." In the gravel driveway, three children race on bicycles — Christmas presents from long-absent parents.

Few of the children who live here are orphans. Most have been abandoned by their parents, or sent to the home by parents who were unable or unwilling to provide for them. Some of them spend the school holidays with what they call their "real families," as if, somehow, the blood relatives that they see once a year are more real than the houseparents that take care of them every day.

Tonight, Cherokee High School plays Goldthwaite in basketball, and boys from the home make up over half the varsity team. The children who aren't on the team will pile on the bus to go and watch.

The girls' team plays first. Veronica, one of the oldest girls from the home, is the team's star.

Not exceptionally tall, but as muscular as any of the boys on the varsity team, she's a terror on the court. She's not fast, but she hustles, playing as if her life depended on it. She wears a look of utmost concentration and determination. She



kathy
wiesepape

never smiles, not even when her team scores.

Veronica takes pride in the fact that she's fouled out of every game this season. She's tough.

She's tough off the court, too. Her thick black hair is cut short. She wears jeans, T-shirts and a rebellious expression that seems to defy femininity. Nothing can hurt Veronica.

Veronica feels, but she's an expert at hiding her feelings.

"You can't trust anyone," she says. "Your best friend will turn around and stab you in the back."

So there is no trust in her life. Church groups come to visit the children and

work at the home, but she doesn't let anyone get close to her — not anymore.

"They just come and stay for a while and then leave again," she says. "They say they'll come back, but they don't. They say they'll write, and they usually don't."

Even when she gets letters, she doesn't write back. She's afraid that she'll let someone get close to her, and "get all torn up inside again."

She speaks from experience. Her young face already shows lines of pain, and her dark eyes belong to a person who's older than 18. Although I'm older than she, I am the child.

I don't ask her about her life, because that would break the shell she's built around her. I want to tell her about trust, and about love, but what can I say to anesthize the memories of her past? And what have I experienced in my sheltered life, that I can tell her that her perception of the world is wrong?

I look at her and see her tough exterior, but the younger children see more. She's the one they go to when they need someone to cry on, and she's the one the younger teenage girls confide in.

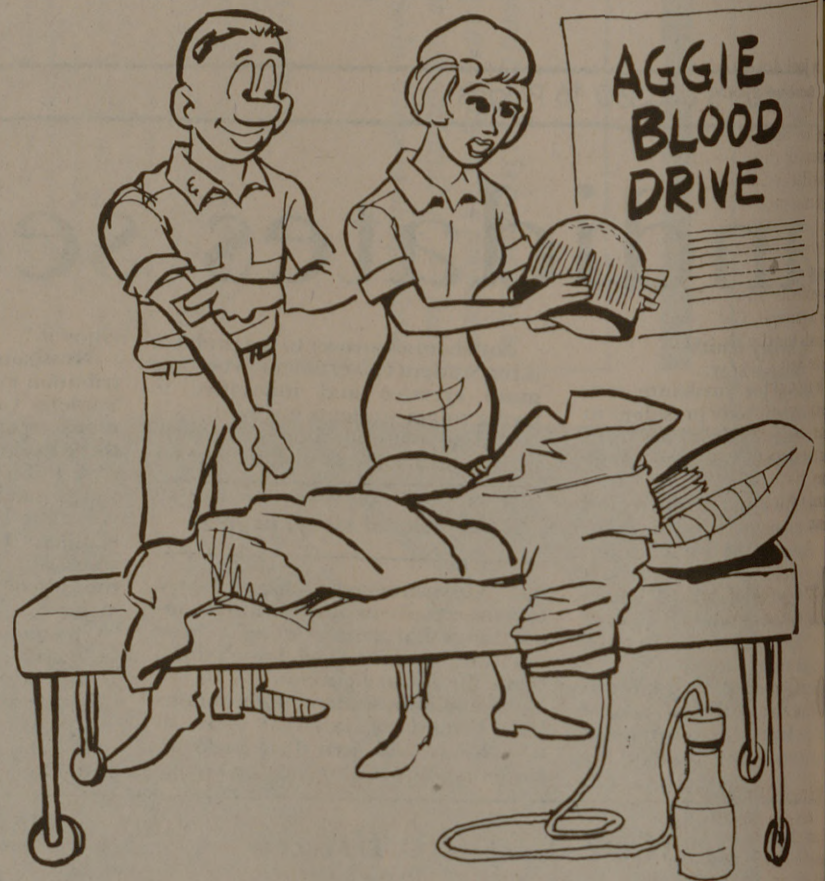
And she's the one who's written pages and pages of poetry, giving a verse to a special child now and then.

She gives of herself, and I feel small. Like most college students, I am the center of my world. Classes, schedules projects, clubs, activities, parties, friends an occasional call from the folks at home — everything revolves around me.

But Veronica, and the rest of the children, throw my neatly ordered priorities into confusion. I think about the children, step outside myself for a while, and realize that failing that test next week and not lining up that big date for the weekend are minor worries.

They force me to shift my focus off myself and look at the pain they live with every day. And my visit has been worthwhile if I can see a small boy's eyes light up when I offer to play catch with him, or give a big, warm hug to a little girl whose life hasn't been filled with the hugs and kisses a child needs.

Slouch By Jim Earle



"There's nobody here!"

the small society

by Brickman



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9-30 BRICKMAN

'Waste World' tour could be highlight

by Dick West

United Press International

WASHINGTON — It's a miserable disaster indeed that doesn't blow, shake, rattle or roll somebody some good.

When the eruptions first started, Mount St. Helens may have seemed an unmitigated calamity. But that was before the federal government designated the catastrophe as a National Volcanic Area, and souvenir dealers moved in.

Now, with another vacation season getting under way, it behooves both governmental agencies and private investors to provide more cataclysmic attractions.

Tourists are a hardy lot. All they need is a little encouragement and even debacles can become Grand Canyons.

Thus far, to cite one distressing omission, hardly anything has been done to upgrade the sightseeing potential of Times Beach, Mo., and other communities contaminated by toxic material.

Yet environmental adulteration would be an almost ideal leitmotif for a theme park.

I am even willing to suggest a name: "Waste World." Here's the drill:

The promoters of "Waste World" buy up tracts of land that have been condemned due to spraying, leakage, spillage or some other inadvertent method of spreading poison.

Each piece of property is then developed to carry out part of the "Waste World" theme.

I visualize as a typical unit an amusement park called "Pollutionland." It is built around a towering, Alpine-like structure — Mount Dumpmore — that is

composed of barrels and steel containing toxic wastes.

Fun-seekers willing to stand in line rewarded by a roller-coaster ride and through Mount Dumpmore, they can see the containers rusting, disintegrating, their contents oozing a nearby creek.

After that, board an elevated rail for a trip across the creek to a made island where a faulty nuclear reactor is regularly venting radioactive into the atmosphere.

The final thrill might be a ride simulated railroad that ends with a car jumping the track and defiling surrounding area with a deadly chemical.

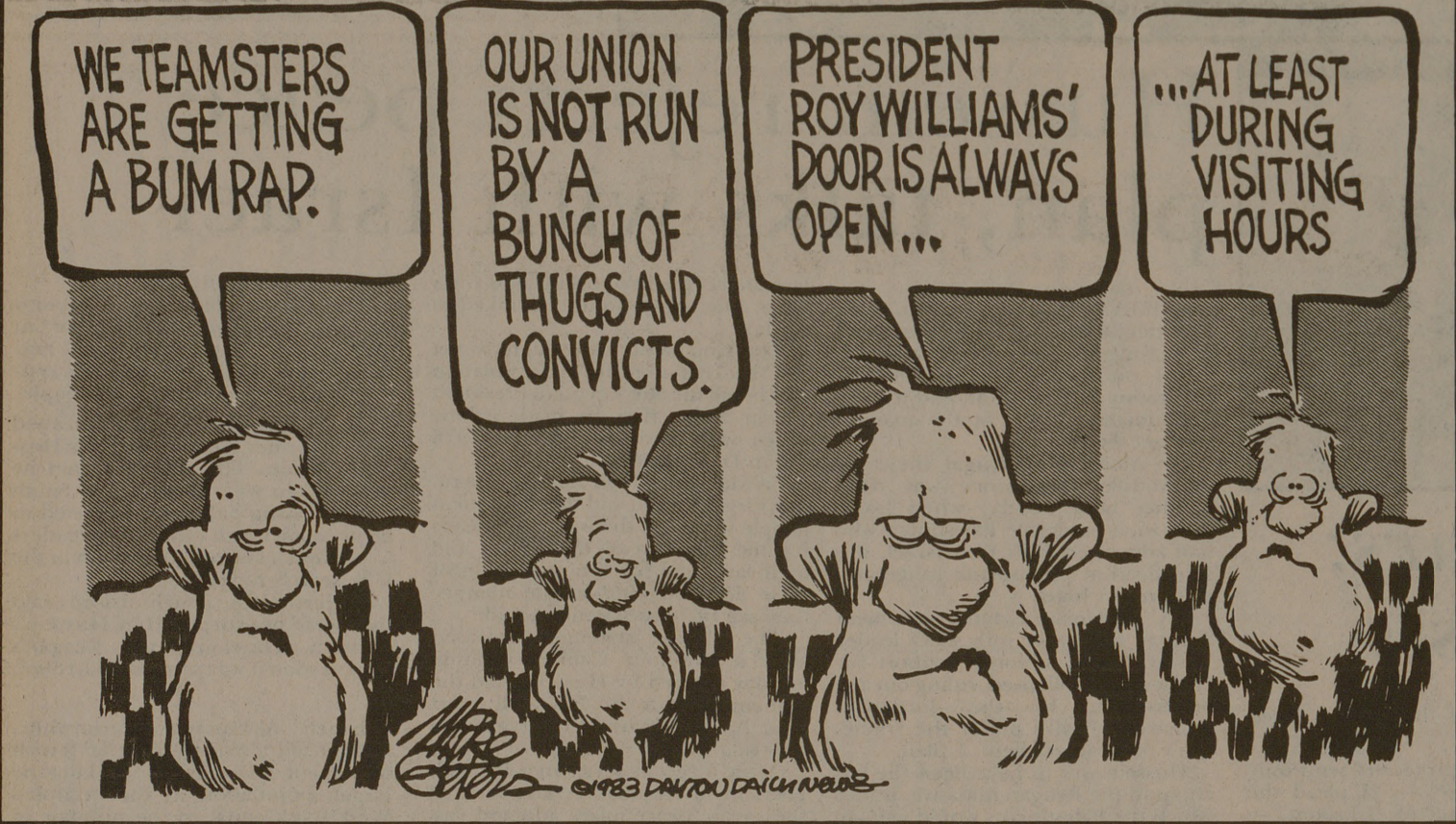
The single admission ticket allows tourists to watch panic-stricken students being evacuated to temporary centers in churches and public schools.

Much of the appeal comes from a requirement that all park visitors wear contamination suits and headgear, complete with individual oxygen apparatus and Geiger counters.

Most tourists, I'm sure, would be younger members of a vacationing family. It would provide an element of nature you just don't get climbing the tower of Liberty, traipsing through the Capitol or driving through a giant wood.

Upon leaving "Waste World," you would pass through a detoxification chamber, something like a car wash which they would be scrubbed and brushed clean of any contamination. What fun!

Add a trace of acid rain falling on a food pavilion and how the money will in.



Letters: Palestinian complaints

Editor:

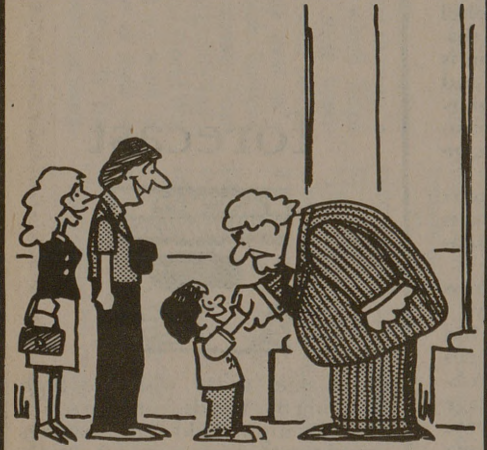
I agree with Carol Parzen, that the Holocaust and its victims should never be forgotten, because as she said, "Deeply

inhuman crimes require us to take time to reflect on how to prevent them from ever happening again."

it's a habit, against my people, the Palestinians.

Emad Yasin '83

Berrys World



"Someday, I want to be a congressman just like you so I can go on neat junkets too!"

"Ironies of ironies" that these otherwise truthful and words should be spoken by a person who, herself, supports state, built on the suffering and oppression of an innocent people. One wonders where you get the nerve to speak on crimes against humanity, while you are doing the same thing through expulsions and massacres, killing children, women and innocent people as if they want to prove to the world that history can repeat itself.

For example, look at what was accomplished recently in Lebanon by those who talk about unparalleled crime against humankind. Aggies don't buy that anymore, they are fed up with worthless words and pretending because they are aware of what's happening in the world. So your letter was a nice attempt and your Israel Awareness Week, too, but it does you no good. And believe me, once you turn the lights off and you have a moment of silence, all you will see is nothing but the reflection of the brutal crimes which are committed daily, as if

Election thanks

Editor:

Howdy Ags!
I'm writing this just to thank you. Thank you for being so nice and tolerant of myself and the many other candidates who knocked on your doors or talked with you while we campaigned for our respective races the last couple of weeks.

Thank you also for turning out to vote March 29th and 30th. I would also like to encourage you to vote in the run-offs Tuesday. Have a voice in who represents you.

Again, thanks Ags., for without you, campaigning and elections would be in vain. Win or lose, the Twelfth Man makes it all worth it.

Gig 'em!

Frank Reister
802 Natalie

The Battalion

USPS 045 360

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