

a look back

BY NINA ELKADI

Although many readers may only be familiar with the sleek, in-color *West Side Story*, there was a time when the paper contained stories about Beatlemania, Nixon and student animosity toward ITEDs. Some things never change.

WSS's first issue came out in 1969, and since then WSS has made a tradition of reporting on issues that matter. Here are some that make us look back and wonder.

1985

PORNOGRAPHY: MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

High schoolers can often be wary covering controversial topics, but this 1985 WSS cover story on pornography refutes that.

"I'm not sure [this] was a burning story that was preoccupying everyone at the time. But there was definitely an effort to censor song lyrics in albums at the time, so issues of censorship were in the air," said the writer, Josh Barkan, via email. "To me, it feels like an earnest piece of journalism. Maybe a little too earnest."

Barkan recalls getting inspiration for the story near the dumpster behind a store. By the dumpster were snippets of pornographic film and from that, he began looking into the world of buying and selling porn.

"I tried to teach the kids that they had to be pretty thorough," said Ben Van Zante, West High's journalism adviser from 1971 to 2000. "They couldn't publish something if they didn't have evidence for what they were talking about."

Accordingly, Barkan set out to find his evidence. The article features West High students who admitted to purchasing pornography, and store owners in denial.

As one junior who wished to remain anonymous said,

"We rented a video from Rentertainment with three different parts ... I don't remember all of the names but one cut was called Savage Lover ... The guy running the store didn't ask to see any form of identification." But Rentertainment's Schmidt said with confidence, "We check everyone if they look like they might be under age. We're really careful. Besides, it's obvious if someone tries to rent a video and is a minor."

Maybe not obvious enough. The junior who rented the movie has never shaved.

Barkan recalls the article being received "without much fuss," but another student on the WSS staff attempted to draw attention to a much more controversial topic at the time: homosexuality.

"The one thing that created a stir is that a student at the time [added] the words 'Josh is gay' at the bottom of the second column. It so happens that I'm not gay. I've been

married to two women, and I'm not [bisexual] or in the closet," Barkan said. "What I'm getting at is that being openly gay in those days was something much more controversial than it is now. So I think that once I started writing an article about something more risqué, the selling of porn, it led to this little sabotage of the piece."

Barkan is currently a writer and professor of creative writing at Hollins University. In high school, he wanted to become a journalist. He also wrote for The Daily Iowan in addition to WSS, and he is able to pinpoint the moment he decided journalism may not fit the type of writing he wished to pursue.

"I told the editor [at The Daily Iowan that] I hadn't been able to investigate the whole story and all the

facts by the deadline. There was more to say, which felt important. But the editor said the story just had to print at the deadline," Barkan said. "Eventually, I became much more interested in the aesthetics of writing, and there was less place for that in standard journalism."

Barkan has a new collection of short stories entitled "Mexico" coming out in January 2017. It can be found on Amazon and Barnes & Noble.



TEACHER'S LOUNGE: WHERE DO WE SMOKE?

1977

As high schoolers today, one thing we've never had the chance to debate is where teachers should be able to smoke on campus. Peter Van Allen, a WSS editor at the time (who has since done freelance journalism for *The New York Times* and now works as the editor for Mainebiz), got the idea to do a photo survey in high school from the "man on the street" technique he saw in the *SoHo Weekly News*. The technique allows a photographer to gauge the reaction of the interviewee and grab a quote or two on how they feel. The photo survey asked teachers their opinions regarding the recent ban of smoking in the teacher's lounge.

The survey included teachers in disagreement, as some talked about how the ban was handled unfairly, while others said it encouraged teachers to interact with students during lunch. One teacher even proposed having a smoking and a non-smoking lounge.

"I can't believe I was brave enough to talk to those teachers," Van Allen said via email. "I used the [man on the street technique] many times over my career. The key is working with a good photographer. When someone on the street is approached by a camera person and a reporter, it's much less threatening than if a single reporter walks up."

Some teachers were more than willing to express their opinion on the situation. Brooke Workman, an English teacher, was one of them.

"The teachers' lounge wasn't really a lounge. It was a storage room for the cafeteria," Van Zante said. "That's where everybody ate, and Brooke said, '[Smoking here] is not a healthy situation.'"

On the previous page in the 1977 issue, there is a column entitled "No Smoking," expressing the stance of the editorial board. It suggests enforcing a no-smoking rule for everyone during the school day.

"Eliminate smoking in public places unless providing separate rooms or partitioning off smokers is possible," it reads. "The smoker's right to smoke ends where the non-smoker's air for breathing begins."

Little did the authors know, it would take over 30 years for Iowa to pass such a law, the Smokefree Air Act which was passed in 2008. It "prohibits smoking in almost all public places and enclosed areas within places of employment." Almost word-for-word, the students predicted what was to come.



NIBBLE ON THIS

Peter Van Allen's father is James Van Allen, a world-renowned space scientist. He discovered the Van Allen radiation belts, which are zones of high-energy charged particles trapped at high altitudes in the magnetic field of Earth. He was named Time Magazine's Person of the Year in 1960, and both Van Allen Hall and Van Allen Elementary School are named after him.

1970

TEACHING SEX: MIKE ROE

One story that continues to pop up through years of archives is a continuum of coverage on a man named Mike Roe. Roe was a teacher at West High in the '70s who was fired for reasons not quite specified.

The book "Stop the Presses! I Want to Get Off!: A Brief History of the Prisoners' Digest International (Voices from the Underground)" did an entire piece on the story of Mike Roe.

According to this book, Roe brought in members of the Iowa City Gay Liberation Front to class to discuss their lives and interactions with the straight society. Parents that found out went to the board of education, and Roe was set to have a hearing. WSS covered this incident for over a year.

"How Mike Roe got that [teaching] job, I don't know for sure," Van Zante said. "Mike had this rag-tag bunch of students, mostly boys, and they were the smokers, they were the troublemakers, they were the students who were more controversial than some of our others."

Roe came to West High after teaching at South East Junior High. Van Zante explained that he was brought to West so the principal at the time, Ed Barker, would be able to "get the goods" on Mike so they had the grounds to terminate his contract.

"You can see by the stories that he was controversial," Van Zante said. "That was one of the things that kept some of the kids in school. That was his method."

According to Van Zante, Roe supposedly didn't really "teach" a class, but rather provided a space for the at-risk kids.

"They had their own room on the bottom floor of the school, and it was full of couches and overstuffed chairs,"

said Rox Brandstatter, who wrote over four articles for WSS about Roe. "The atmosphere was very relaxed, and there wasn't a lot of traditional academic teaching taking place, which may have been one of the problems in the eyes of the administration."

One article in WSS describes what parents wrote to the school board. They were worried about the incident in his sexual education class, and wanted to use it as a way to get rid of sexual education indefinitely.

"They are also concerned with the effects such a course could have on their children," the article read.

The parents cited in their letter that in Sweden, such a class increased rates of sexual promiscuity

and mental illness.

Roe was ultimately fired after a hearing, and there is no information on where he went following his debarment.

Attempts by WSS to contact Roe were unsuccessful.

Trial begins March 12 on sex ed

Two more weeks remain before the trial begins concerning the Iowa City School District and citizens of Iowa City over the issue of certain methods of teaching used in Family Living courses.

A suit was filed in the state's highest court by the state's attorney general, but was dismissed by the state's supreme court. The suit is the teaching itself, but was dismissed by the state's supreme court as a basis for the trial.

In addition, the state's attorney general, Mr. Edwin J. Kirk Hansen, has filed a suit against the state's attorney general, Mr. Kirk Hansen, in the state's supreme court. The suit is the teaching itself, but was dismissed by the state's supreme court as a basis for the trial.

Teachers in the state's supreme court are also being sued by the state's attorney general, Mr. Kirk Hansen, in the state's supreme court. The suit is the teaching itself, but was dismissed by the state's supreme court as a basis for the trial.

Sex education suit



A 4x5 FEET MAP of the world was presented by Dr. Robert C. Brown, father of Peg (72), Tom (74) and Steve (74), to West Junior-Senior High School recently. The map is hanging in the classroom. (Photo by Warren Bigelow)

Object to sex education course— Parents threaten suit

Parents of West Junior High School students voiced disapproval of last year's family living curriculum at the Nov. 10 meeting of the Iowa City School Board.

Last May the ninth grade health classes were given the opportunity to make a list of their questions concerning sex. A copy of the questionnaire was sent home to the parents. A class discussion was then held, using the questions as a basis for discussion.

Through an attorney, Mr. D. C. Nolan, the parents are threatening to sue if the procedure is repeated this year.

"Our teachers aren't using that approach this year and don't intend to do so," Mr. Keith Bench, principal of West Junior High School, said.

The school board is going to give a presentation of the present curriculum on Nov. 24 in the West High Little Theater.

The Nov. 24 meeting is open to the public and all interested persons may attend.

"These questions are questions all of us have asked at

West Junior High School. We were obtained by talking to an older friend who knew. The program was intended to put the subject in a classroom situation."

Various views from parents "We have parents who are

said, "We may be able to move at the end of the first semester next year, but there is no guarantee of that."

Mr. Bench, who will be the head principal at the new junior high, stated that combining the two schools for the fourth year will cause some new problems and add to some old ones.

According to Mr. Bench, one major problem will be that of scheduling classes, because of the anticipated increase in enrollment. Modular scheduling for both schools seems to be out of the question next year.

upt. We also have parents who have looked at the program and have seen the value of it. I'd rather have my daughter learn about sex in a planned course, compared to hearing misconceptions from friends."

Debaters win first with 6-0 victory

Coach David Kanellis' cross-exam debate team won first place Saturday in West's invitational debate tournament.

The team really earned its "A1" classification as it swept its division with a 6-0 victory. Mike Kanellis (72) and Sarah Reusswig (72) represented the affirmative, while Pete Koltes (72) and Jim Larew (72) defended the negative side.

West's other cross-exam debate team finished with a 2-4 record. It consisted of Deb Lauenberg (72) and Barb Norris (71) affirmative, with Rick Larew (71), Leslie Davidsen (72), and Warren Bigelow (72) negative.

The Trojan debate team also received a third place varsity competition trophy Saturday, Nov. 7, in another invitational

Waller (71) and Karen Ames (71) coupled with two Lone Tree debaters to win a second-place trophy. Waller placed fifth in speaker points with a total of 77 out of a possible 90.

The other Trojans varsity debate team ended up with a 4-2 record. It consisted of Alice Barker (72) and Gina Rabunovich (72) affirmative, and Dave Randall (71) and Greg Monahan (71) negative.

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Quarterback Kevin Long '00 (middle) launches the ball during the semi-final game.

FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

This year was the first time since 1999 that the West High varsity football team has made it to the UNI Dome to fight in the finals for the state championship.

1999

2016



Davonte Lane '17 catches the football in the 2016 state championship game.



(From left to right) Kathy Schrock '73, John Hunt '72 and Barb Spenler '72

SHOW CHOIR

In 1971, show choir was referred to as "swing choir." One of the choirs was called "Something Better" instead of what it is now, "Good Time Company."

1971

2016



(From left to right) Sydney Meyerdirk '18 and Jade Merriwether '17



Glinda (left) played by Rya Dunnington, Dorothy (right) played by Elyse Nelson

THE WIZARD OF OZ

The last time West High put on a production of the Wizard of Oz before this year was in 1989. In the 2016 production, a real dog named Skipper was used on stage.

1989

2016



Glinda (left) played by Olivia Manaligod '18, Dorothy (right) played by Kate Vander Leest '17