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# SpeakEasy

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## Send in the Cows

By Doug Gray

During my senior year of high school, I accidentally incited a riot.

It happened at the start of an ordinary school day, a soft southern April morning with air sweet as the pulp of a ripe honeydew. Waiting for the bell to ring, two hundred students were hanging around on the school's front lawn, which was overgrown that month with spring clover. .

Kids were throwing Frisbees and baseballs, listening to transistor radios, flirting, gossiping. I was at my usual hangout, beside the flagpole, reading the homework that I'd put off the night before.

Sometime before the 8:30 bell, a cow came barreling over the hill from the highway. It seems that a farmer delivering livestock to market in his truck had fallen asleep at the wheel. Four cows had escaped from the wreck, and she

was one of them.

The cow stopped short on the crest of the hill, surprised by this crowd of teenagers below her, but then she spotted the thick clover with the red tassels growing at our feet. After a moment's hesitation, she decided to amble in among us to graze.

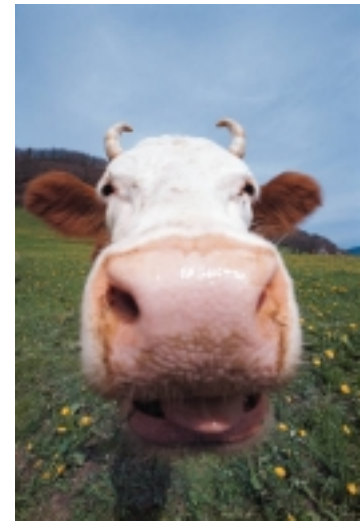
She turned out to be a gentle creature, and let dozens of kids pet her as she chewed the clover. It was like a scene out of some bucolic Greek myth, but it didn't last long. A few minutes later a cruiser pulled up, and two policemen got out, carrying ropes.

One had a bullhorn, which he used to order us to "STEP AWAY FROM THE COW!" The crowd backed off, grumbling, retreating to a point just behind the flagpole, where I had been standing the whole time.

The officers chased the cow round and round the yard, trying to catch her with their ropes, but she just loped away, outmaneuvering them at every turn. We cheered for the cow and heckled the men. After several failures, one of the officers threw down his rope in disgust, went back to the cruiser and took out a rifle. With a nod from his partner, he aimed the rifle at the cow and fired. She bellowed in pain and toppled onto the clover.

We made a gasp that sounded like a collective shout of outrage. Then silence. I was still standing there at the flagpole, a few feet in front of everybody else, at the head of the crowd, and I said something out loud that I only meant to think. Somehow, the words escaped my brain and came out through my mouth.

I simply said, "Let's get 'em."



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## COW, cont.

With that, two hundred students charged, sweeping across the lawn toward the men. The officers scuttled back to the cruiser, scarcely locking the doors behind them before we swarmed over the car, dozens of us leaping on the hood and the trunk and the roof or banging on the doors and the windows. Inside, they were radioing for backup.

Within a few minutes, three more cruisers converged on the scene and broke the riot up. At some point during the melee, though, the cow staggered to her feet, shook the tranquilizer dart from her flank, and wandered off - only drugged, not dead.

Embarrassed by the episode, the police didn't file any charges. Dances were cancelled for the rest of the year to punish the student body, and the Principal started looking for "that boy by the flagpole who'd said something" just before riot began. When he found me, he suspended me for three days so I'd have time to think about what I'd done.

The cow escaped to some woods about a half mile from the school, where she became a local folk hero by continuing to elude the police for another two weeks. As for me, I learned a valuable lesson that day: Think before you speak. Especially if there's an angry crowd behind you. Especially if the police are around. And especially if there's a cow involved.



Speaking of cows, Biopure Corporation announced that it will receive approximately \$4 million in additional Congressional funding to conduct clinical trials of Hemopure, an artificial blood made with bovine hemoglobin. According to Biopure, this product is safe, plentiful, and free from human viruses. It doesn't require refrigeration and it can be used on patients with any blood type. "We're interested in its military application," said Maj. (Dr.) Deborah Mueller. "This is big research — one of the biggest things going on in the trauma field. It could potentially help save soldiers wounded on the battlefield."



## Distance Learning: Is it fun or not?

By Gilberto Serrano

Every quarter I am approached by students who tell me they have enrolled in one of our Spanish

video-based telecourses. The idea of watching an educational soap opera is very appealing. Most of the times they apply the word "fun" to the video-based class.

However, reality can be shocking. Distance learning is much more challenging than traditional classroom learning. It is a process that requires a lot of discipline. Our Spanish telecourses require a lot of studying and preparation. Students are learning a foreign language on their own. They have to model sounds, learn vocabulary in context and, on top of all that, they must also learn and master key grammar points, that, after all, are the pillars of a language.

Successful independent learners are a special breed. They possess the discipline, the motivation and the skills to engage in such an adventure. The "fun" expected by watching the soap opera in which our audacious investigator, Raquel Rodríguez, travels to four Spanish-speaking countries investigating Don Fernando Castillo Saavedra's case, becomes a challenge. As students watch the video, they need to put two and two together in order to figure out what's actually happening.

After that, students must take the required exams, write compositions, and turn in their homework. Does it look and sound familiar? It surely does. Distance learning is as academic as traditional classroom classes. It is also as rewarding and informative. It can be fun, too.

Independent learners benefit from the facilities located at the Testing Center. Faculty involved in distance learning is committed to assist students in many ways. The advantages of distance learning are an ally to students who are used to working hard and giving their best.



## Talking About Weight

By Edward Martin

“Edward, you look terrible. You’re emaciated.” These were the not too flattering words of my neighbor a couple of weeks ago when I saw her on the street.

Now, this woman knew my need to reduce for health reasons. And she knew how I had restructured my diet to avoid fatty meats and sweets. And she knew how I have struggled to get to the gym several times a week. But when she said what she thought was brutally honest, I heard it as only brutal.

A visit to my doctor reassured me that I was doing fine. He said that the benefits of my weight loss far outweighed any stress I was putting on my system by regular exercise. However, the encounter with my neighbor prompted me to think about how we talk to each other about weight.

We seldom say anything to someone when we observe weight gain. Maybe it’s because the fact is often too obvious to need comment. But more likely it’s because any statement is likely to be taken as a personal criticism. Such comments often imply that weight gain is a character flaw--a simple matter of not eating right or a personal choice to eat too much. And we all know that the reasons for weight gain are multifaceted and complex.

Most media have reported that Americans are gaining too much weight. But some physicians will not address a patient’s weight unless it is directly linked to the immediate health issue that has brought the patient into the office. The fact is when a doctor mentions one’s weight gain, a patient sometimes feels personally attacked and may not come back.

It is also curious how we talk about weight loss. Often we associate any loss with illness. Several of my colleagues have taken me aside to ask if I am indeed “OK.”

Too often people are ready with what I think is a dreadful question: “How much have you lost?” I think this question is almost as bad as asking how much someone weighs. So in response I am elusive or just lie.

Finally are the inquiries from those who wonder if I have found some magic answer to weight loss. They want to know what I am taking or what program I am following. They quickly lose interest in my “plan” when I say that I am on an exercise machine about 10 hours a week and haven’t had any sweets or alcohol since August.

Even supportive and flattering remarks can have a down side. Weight Watcher leaders report that dieters often drift away from the program as supportive comments cease.

We need a way to talk about weight to encourage each other’s positive efforts and to show our honest concern for weight gain. Diet guru Richard Simmons tells that one of his first incentives to lose weight came from an anonymous note that read: “I like you very much, but fat people die young. Please don’t die.” It would be nice if our discourse with each other about weight could be open, honest, and supportive without the cloud of anonymity.



According to the Federal Trade Commission, “many marketers use false claims, misleading consumer testimonials, and deceptive

before-and-after photos to market their products.” According to the FTC’s “Report on Weight-Loss Advertising: An Analysis of Current Trends,” “nearly 40% of the ads in the study, including ads that appeared in mainstream, national publications, made at least one representation that is almost certainly false and 55% of the ads made at least one representation that is very likely to be false.” According to George Blackburn of Harvard Medical School, “The use of deceptive, false, or misleading claims in weight loss advertising is rampant and potentially dangerous.”



## Communicating Expectations

By Bruce Ardinger

At the beginning of December 2002, Trent Lott was full of promise as the incoming leader of the new Republican Senate in a Republican administration. He

clearly relished his opportunity to lead the most powerful legislature of the most powerful nation. Just two weeks later, Lott was full of promises as he attempted to renounce a lifetime of bigotry in order to hold onto his quickly disappearing position of privilege. His expectations were dashed because of his ill-timed communication, a communication in which, ironically, he expressed disappointment at segregation's dashed expectations. Martin Luther King had a dream to end segregation, and his dream generated actions that brought an end to Lott's dream.

This month, promises are again the focus of public attention. New Year's resolutions are already overthrown and being rationalized, but it's Valentine's month and Black History month. Lovers and movements are hoping a new set of promises will, this time, be fulfilled.

The country, too, is full of promise. The Congress is promising prosperity if taxes are cut. The States are promising cuts if taxes aren't raised. The President is promising war on Terror, and Iraq, and perhaps North Korea, and perhaps Iran (the third part of the Axis of Evil), and certainly on drugs, and apparently on the environment. (The list is already long, and the prediction is that the list of promises, and enemies, is more likely to be lengthened than shortened.)

Everywhere around us are communications designed to fuel expectations. They are among the most beloved forms of communication, and we've created a whole vocabulary and syntax to support them. We have wishes, promises, predictions, prognostications, prophesies, dreams, and revelations. Even one of the four verbal moods in English (remember those from grade school) is the subjunctive, which focuses on things

we ought to do, should do, might do--verbs of wishes and promises, of events and circumstances contrary to fact, contrary to the way we think things actually are.

Communications that promise something create two worlds of possibility, one of anticipation and one of disappointment. Promises are popular because they please; they please because they give hope. But promises are also popular because they are easy; they are easy because they rely on the future to verify their accuracy, and the future is always a tomorrow away. Actions speak louder than words, but they are much harder to implement. Political action takes much more effort than political rhetoric. That is why politicians routinely promise more than they can deliver. "There lies promise," the lies promise. Years, decades, or centuries of promises can, eventually, coalesce in an avalanche of expectations, but this metaphor reminds us that avalanches always fall and often bury those who trigger them. Just as we should be careful what we wish for, we have an obligation to be careful what we promise.

### Matt Meindl Inducted into the Video Art Production Hall of Fame



For his significant contributions to the video production courses in the Communication Skills Department, Matt Meindl was given the honor of being the first student inducted into the Video Art Production Hall of Fame at the Autumn Quarter Video Festival. Matt's contributions include *Ed is Dead*, *Frankenfridge*, and *Shivers*.

# Theatre Columbus State Presents

## An Interpretive Reading of



The cast of *Suddenly Last Summer*

Front row: Patricia Tisby, Kenny Hathaway, Leslie Thompson

Second row: Alwin Sivanesan, Kelsey Vikre, Dawn Ace

# Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*

March 6 at 3pm and 8pm

March 7 at 8pm

March 8 at 3pm and 8pm

**Nestor Auditorium**

**Readers Theater differs considerably from traditional theater: scenery is usually absent, movement is minimal and character-specific costuming takes the form of a few telling accessories. Closely allied to the more literary art of oral interpretation, Readers Theater does not attempt to create a detailed illusion of reality onstage, as most traditional theater does. Instead, this art form works to spark the imaginations of the listeners through primarily voice and body language.**

**The participants often perform from behind music stands, on which the play manuscript is clearly visible. This convention serves to emphasize the performers as readers interpreting literature. Hence the name Readers Theater.**

**Because Readers Theater is so focused on just voice and body language, participating in the art form is an efficient and effective way to sharpen one's nonverbal communication skills.**

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*SpeakEasy Online* is available at <http://www.csc.edu/docs/comm/speakez.htm>



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