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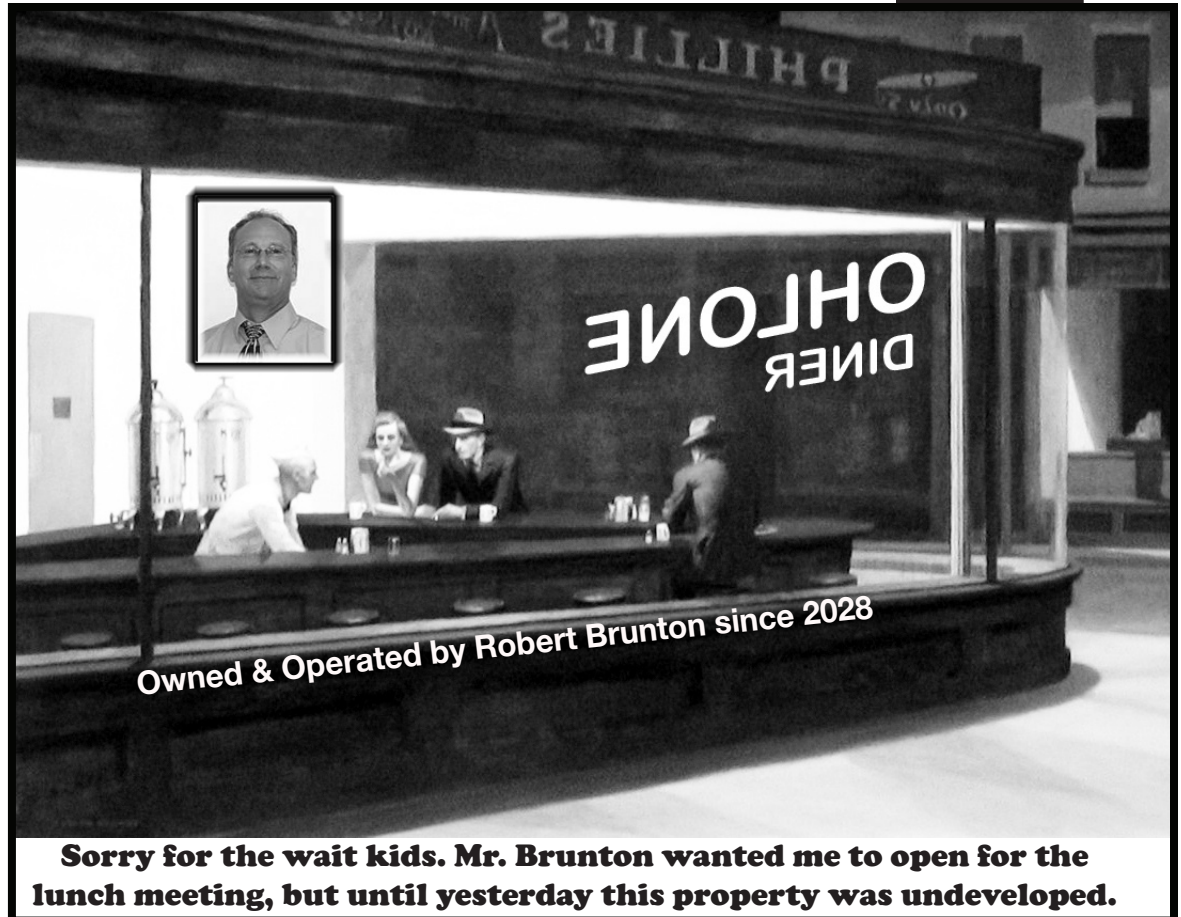


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OPINION

Pay more attention to leaders, less to Britney

By **ELISE LEON**
Staff writer

As we get closer to voting for a president, it seems people are less interested in who our country's future leader will be than what "Unfit-ney" did over the weekend. Why are we so drawn to Britney Spears? Why are we obsessed with this obviously unfit mother and yet not up to speed on any of the presidential candidates?

A couple of weeks ago, I tuned in to watch Jay Leno and saw his very popular "Jaywalking" skit. It was incredibly sad to see how many

young people did not know the difference between candidates John Edwards and Mike Huckabee. Is it any wonder other countries make fun of American ignorance when we entertain ourselves with it?

The reason why our country's young people are so behind in education (political or otherwise) is due in large part to what we consider entertainment. We should be ashamed of ourselves for genuinely wanting to see what every dimwitted celebrity might do on the spur of the moment while shopping for hats.

It's as if our society is rooting for celebrities to completely fall apart,

become dangerously ill or even die - and if that sounds like overly negative criticism, explain the website *whenwillbritneydie.com*. Where is the compassion? Why does no one help her? Maybe she doesn't want help. She is an entertainer, after all; it could be an act.

If so, why do we fall for the act every single time? Why do we respond to her as if we know her in real life? Have you sat down with her, had coffee or a deep conversation with her? No, and neither have I. The reason we do this is because we think it is harmless fun. Political rhetoric can be brain scrambling

and sometimes it feels better not to think.

But, because there is so much Britney, we have too many opportunities not to think. The true detriment of all of this celebrity nonsense is that it takes up our limited time and supplants what is really important - our country's future. We should be more involved in politics; remember, it's our country. We should have a say in what takes place.

Some are hoping that the Democrats take over the White House this election year not because they agree with the political platform

of the Democratic Party but because of the many mistakes that President George W. Bush has made. They want a change and are less concerned with what form that change takes than the change itself...any change is good enough. I am registered as an Independent, though I do lean toward the conservative side. It would be a big mistake if this country decided to vote for the left out of spite. So remember, the next time Access-Extra-tainment Tonight is on, maybe you should turn off the TV and read the front page.

Campus shootings are 'commonplace' - be nicer

By **TSETEN DOLKAR**
Staff writer

Has the news headline 'Campus Shooting' become less impressive? We will never get used to the killings but when they become a chronic front-page headline, they're no longer shocking news.

The most recent shooting happened Feb. 8 at Louisiana Technical College. Latina Williams is suspected of killing two female students. Similar to news of suicide bombings in Iraq, campus shootings no longer get much coverage. They're becoming

less amazing. This phenomena reflects our society's unwillingness to follow through. We have a tendency to overdramatize events and then fail to continue through with legitimate and effective plans.

In recent years, we've become familiar with campus shootings and their due processes. Sadly, we now know what to expect. The headlines are the same, as is the news coverage of students and parents mourning, the college president's press release, meetings held about security measure and class discussions of campus safety.

Perpetrator of the V-Tech massacre Seung-Hui Cho and Louisiana

Tech's Latina Williams both had mental health issues and committed suicide after their respective shootings. Cho's family admitted to his unstable mental health and Williams displayed signs of paranoia before the shooting. Their mental states may have been uncontrollable, but the way in which they chose to act upon them was questionably in our hands.

Easy access to firearms is the first wrong step. The second is selling them to unsound individuals.

Tragedies have an overwhelming power to unite people, and this is one positive mark the shootings have left on us. One of Williams'

victims' mothers has decided to reach out to Williams' mother and let her know that she forgives her child. Unfortunately, this act of sound conscience is a by-product of innocent lost lives.

The days of 24/7 coverage of school shootings have passed, which is a minor tragedy in and of itself.

Another contributing factor to these killings is the social aspect of a student's life and this is where you and I can help. Feeling alone among thousands of other students can often belittle you and your objectives in life. Combining that with an unstable, depressed mind

may have deadly results.

A simple step each one of us can take is to be more humane. Talk to the person sitting next to you in the computer lab. Greet each other in the hallways. Say hello.

Every time a campus shooting occurs, I feel guilty about not being as friendly as I could to other students.

Who knows? The student that I brushed shoulders with this morning could be the next perpetrator. I could be the one to add fuel to the long-burning fire in him/her and off they go on a killing spree.

CAMPUS COMMENT >>>

Name the best & the worst thing about Valentine's Day



Quais Sarwary
COMMUNICATIONS
"Sharing love." &
"Being typical."



Tracy Layden
UNDECLARED
"The nice things people do." &
"When it becomes too big a deal."



Helen Fung
ENGINEERING
"Girls get gifts." &
"Boys have to buy the gifts."



Prab Singh
BUSINESS
"You might get lucky." &
"You have to buy too much stuff."



David Pan
BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING
"Your positive mood." &
"Being oblivious to everything else."