



THE GRAIL

VOLUME IV DECEMBER 10, 2015 ISSUE VI

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ALUMNI RELATIONS

NOT-SO-SKETCHY-ALUMS

Anyone familiar with the Reed Facebook page is familiar with online rage of Reedies past. However, there's more going on in the Alumni camp than shitposting.

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FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

We hope you enjoyed going on this wild and crazy ride with us, can't wait to see y'all next semester. To tide you over, we provided some fierce fashion (9), Bowie the beautifully boisterous bunny (8), and insights on student-alumni alliances (1). Charlie's Cultural Calendar critiques the holiday canon

with *Christmas Vacation* (10). Get into the holiday spirit of giving with pear (4). Have a wonderful break, we'll miss you!

Join us after break on Mondays in PAB 105 at 9 P.M.

Love,

Jordan, Lauren, and Vikram

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Front cover photograph by Jordan Yu.



Not-So-Sketchy Alums

By GUANANÍ GÓMEZ

Reed College Archives and Special Collections

Chances are you've heard rumors or complaints about "sketchy alums" hanging around on campus. But who are they, and how does their presence affect alumni-student relations in a wider sense? Are sketchy alums a thing of the past? How do alumni contribute to campus life?

These were some of the questions I sought to answer after hearing complaints from fellow students that did not match the alumni I knew. Amanda, a Reedie who just graduated in the spring of 2015, explained the label. "The term 'sketchy alum' comes from alumni who continue going to Reed parties and events and try to sleep with people way younger than them. This is a very small percentage of alumni, and I don't even know anyone who is like this anymore."

Chris Lydgate '90 editor of *Reed* magazine, was also familiar with the concept of sketchy alums. "Students have this idea of people who maybe graduated or maybe didn't, alumni who hang around on campus and go to parties. But overall, the influence of alumni on campus is way more positive."

Sarah Kliegman '02, a chemistry professor, gave her perspective on

the concept of 'sketchy alums': "Back in my day, there'd be weird alums at dances in the SU, and CSOs would just ask them to leave so it wasn't a big deal. But when they're on Facebook and in your phone it's more invasive."

In addition to the bad reputation of alumni hanging around on campus, recent controversies on the Reed Facebook page have created animosity between alumni and current students. A combination of sensitive issues and dishonorable conduct in online forums has emphasized discord between current students and alumni, particularly disagreements about content warnings and support systems within the Reed community.

Some of these disagreements can be attributed to generational misunderstandings: alumni may still feel like students on the inside, and have more perspective on the Reed experience in the context of their whole lives. Meanwhile, current students feel like the alumni they're arguing with are disconnected from campus life and have a poor understanding of current issues.

Alumni-student relations have become increasingly complex in the

digital age as multiple generations of Reedies interact online. A particularly thorny series of conflicts on the Reed Facebook page in December of 2014 is a prime example. According to Lydgate, the Reed Facebook page was originally created by an alum to discuss "Comrades of the Quest," a book documenting Reed's institutional history. As time passed, the page became a message board about the college in general, and current students began to join what was primarily an alumni-dominated forum.

As the composition of members shifted from mostly alumni to mostly current students, controversial issues became divisive, including topics of political correctness, the gender binary, and academic freedom. The conversation quickly grew toxic; students saw alumni at their worst and vice versa. The group now includes more than three thousand members, and due to misunderstandings and negative interactions, current students' perceptions of alumni have suffered as a result.

However, many alumni are still very much an integral part of the current on-campus community. According to Reed's data, sixty-four alumni

currently work on campus, making up about ten percent of Reed's employees. Alumni who work on campus are often able to contribute in special ways, since they are familiar with the Reed experience and community norms. "We were here," says Lydgate. "We get Reed, and we want the best for the students who go here." Kliegman recalled her time as a student fondly. "My experience here was wonderful. It gave me the skills and opportunities that led to the rest of my life."

Besides the alumni who currently work at Reed, the college also depends on alumni contributions to maintain Reed financially. "In a very real sense, Reed wouldn't exist without [alumni]," explained Lydgate. In addition to making Reed possible by contributing to the college's endowment, donations from alumni make a notable portion of financial aid for students.

Another key contribution is the guidance and networking opportunities available to students via alumni and the Center for Life Beyond Reed. Becoming acquainted and making connections with past Reedies can be a huge benefit to students, especially as they prepare to leave campus and begin careers. "Just being part of the Reed community gives you access to so much information and so many opportunities," Amanda said. The wider Reed community has played a significant role in helping her establish post-graduation life. "Rely on your community at Reed," she advised. "Rely on alumni, rely on Portland in general. My professors are helping me with grad school, I've found work relevant to my major within the Portland school system, and I've been getting a lot of advice from alumni."

Alumni who continue to be involved in campus life all seem to have something in common: their experience at this college was an essential part of their lives, and they want to give back to the community and the students who are currently in the midst of their own Reed experience.

"I've always liked Reed," Kliegman said. "The community can be lovely and welcoming, and after being here so long it kind of feels like family. But family can be complicated."

Despite caring about and contributing to campus life, there are still heated points of contention between many alumni and the student body, especially in terms of newer campus support systems. "[Many alumni] think Reed was perfect when they were here, and don't understand the reasons to make changes," said Lydgate. "They are extremely proud of making it through Reed, and think the college coddles today's students too much."

Major changes have been made in the past couple decades to establish

The whole reason I
went to Reed was
so I could explode
my brain.

more support services and improve students' experiences at Reed. "Reed can be hard and alienating. You kind of have to have a thick skin," Kliegman commented. For students who are struggling academically or with other difficulties in their lives, having resources like the DoJo and the HCC can help them stay on track and get the most out of their education.

These efforts to create, expand, and staff support programs strive to provide an environment where all students can thrive and take advantage of their time at Reed, as well as a strategy to increase the formerly low graduation rate. According to Lydgate, this is a significant shift in campus structure and culture. "One of the best things about Reed today is

that we're committed to our students. We make a deal: 'Okay, you come here and work hard, and we'll do everything we can to support you and help you succeed.' That didn't exist when I went here."

On the other hand, alumni who are proud of surviving the trials and rigors of "Olde Reed" don't want it to become too easy. The situation is not unlike having an older relative tell you they had to walk to school and back uphill both ways. If Reed isn't as brutal and challenging as it was when alumni were students, then they think something's not right. In the seventies and early eighties, Reed's four-year graduation rate was below thirty percent. The graduation rate hit an all-time high of seventy percent in 2011, and now about two-thirds of Reedies graduate in four years.

"You can understand," Lydgate explained as he pointed at a graph of graduation rates, "the people who made it when Reed was like that have a sort of survivor mentality." According to him, the increase in support staff and other resources for students who run into trouble is a huge improvement. "Admissions has also become more selective, and makes more of a case to identify and admit students who can flourish here," he added. Reed's admissions selectivity has increased significantly in the recent past, shrinking from a sixty-eight percent admission rate in 2000 to only forty-eight percent in 2013.

When asked whether Reed had prepared her for the 'real world' Amanda replied, "The whole reason I went to Reed was so I could explode my brain. I never felt it was the responsibility of Reed to prepare me for some kind of 'practical' job. Reed gives you most of the tools you'll need, but it's up to you to hone them and apply them."

Lydgate also emphasized how the skills he gained at Reed influenced him, despite not using his psychology degree directly as a journalist for the alumni magazine. "My thesis was one of the most productive things I've

done in my life. It taught me how to complete a big project and solve my own problems.” Even though Reed can be grueling, many alumni seem convinced that the experience was well worth the effort, and plenty of them are excited to return to Reed and participate in the community in a new way. Kliegman smiled as she recounted her story of joining Reed’s faculty. “Returning to Reed and becoming a professor was like a dream of going to the moon. I never had it as a concrete goal, but then the opportunity presented itself right as I was looking for a job. I had to take it, and then I got it.” Reed’s close-knit community and demanding environment make a huge impact in alumni’s lives; perhaps this is why so many of them return to work here or are otherwise eager to stay involved, even if they don’t necessarily agree with changing norms on campus.

“After you graduate from Reed, the time you spent and the people you meet here will become some of the most important in your life,” Lydgate said. “Time changes your perspective on things, and the experiences can become even more important to you the older you get. You realize the value of all those hard hours in the library, and maybe you forget about some of the bad or boring moments.” It’s no surprise that alumni who feel

this way about their time as undergraduates become fiercely protective of the institution as they remember it. This is where ‘At Reed’ emails and *Reed* magazine come in. “That’s one reason why the college spends so much time and energy on alumni relations. You have to go deeper than Facebook. Reed means a lot to the people who went here, and we want to make sure to explain the changes we’re making and how they’ll make Reed a better place.”

Sometimes it can be hard to understand that alumni and current students are essentially on the same side. Rumor mills and scandals about changes being made on campus can be enormously detrimental to the community, even more so on the internet where there are more people, less information, and little accountability. “Rumors fly further, faster, and cause more damage than they did twenty years ago,” Lydgate said solemnly.

So are sketchy alums a thing of the past, or have they transformed into a more elusive specter of dishonorable conduct online? Amanda dismissed the idea. “We hold ourselves accountable to the rules of the community, and we are as much a part of the community as anyone else,” she said of alumni and recent grads in particular. This seems to be true most of the

time, especially for alumni who are employees directly involved in campus life. Even when dishonorable conduct online pits students and alumni against each other, it’s important to remember that current students are trying to make campus a more supportive place where students can grow and thrive, while also remembering to respect the aspects of Reed that make alumni’s memories of their experience here so powerful.

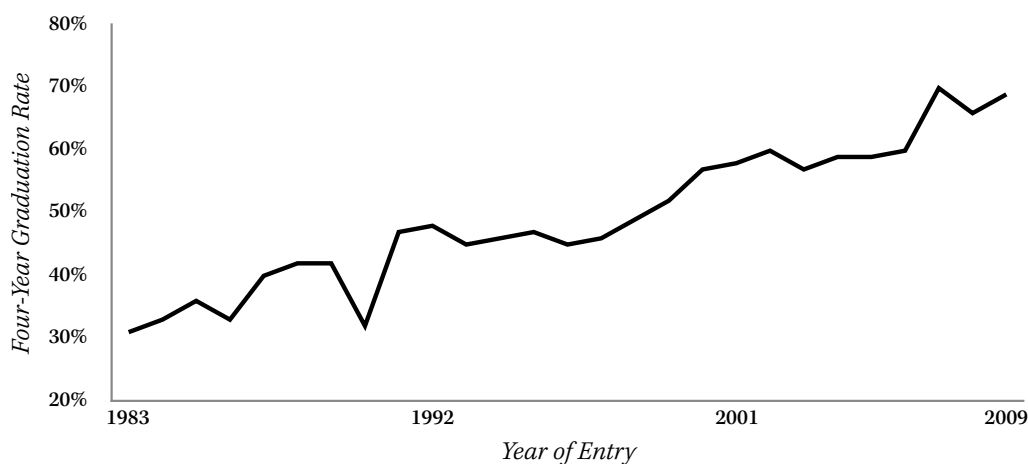
When asked what the most significant cultural change on campus has been in recent years, Lydgate smiled and looked out the window. “I’m astounded by how little the essence of Reed has changed. Some things change—hair and clothes styles change. But... students are excited about the same kinds of things. Sometimes I’ll see someone in Commons or walking in the canyon, and think it’s one of my classmates from thirty years ago.”

Despite different opinions on what should change or stay the same, on how and why Reed might add new services and networks to help current students while maintaining the challenge it’s known for, there’s one thing we all have in common.

“Alumni are proud of Reed,” Lydgate said. “They want it to stay special, and different. And so do the students.”



Producing Reed’s Alumni: 1983–2009



LOVE, TRUST, & HOPE

By SARAH RICHMOND

When you walk through the doors of *p:ear* on NW 6th Avenue in downtown Portland, it feels like coming home. I'm not sure if it's the particular quality of light that seems to filter through the floor to ceiling windows, or how that light plays on the solid and well-worn wooden tables that seem to be begging to host a conversation over a plate of warm food. It might be the art that covers the walls in various stages of completion, or the familiar clutter of paper that fills in all the empty spaces. None of these aspects within themselves define a home, but for the kids who come to *p:ear*, they all serve as tokens for a space that offers up a unique and fierce brand of love that can be difficult to come by.

P:ear is a non-profit organization serving homeless youth aged fifteen to twenty-four within Multnomah County by offering outlets for creativity, resources for job training and education, access to outdoor recreation, organic meals, and more. Through these resources, *p:ear* fosters a community that is often astonishingly absent from the lives of the individuals they serve. This organization is unique in nearly every sense of the word, and I had the particular pleasure of sitting down with three of its employees last week to discuss precisely what it is, beyond wooden tables and light quality that makes *p:ear* feel like home.

Throughout our conversation, I was astounded by how effortlessly Arts Program Director Will Kendall, Kitchen Coordinator Lindsey Kennedy, and Wilderness Programs Director Nate Engkjer all managed to respond to each inquiry about *p:ear*'s operations in a manner that was completely and unabashedly centered around the kids they serve. According to them, it is this mindset and the action that it produces that make *p:ear* such a success.

"The structure of *p:ear* puts relationship building opportunities first and foremost. Structuring our daily activities, the youth are always first. When I think of the most effective moments in my career working with youth, it's been eye-to-eye contact, listening with enthusiasm, and being present. That's the most valuable thing that we do," says Will, who among other things, is in charge of bringing in artists to run workshops with the youth and managing *p:ear*'s art gallery, which displays the creations that result from these workshops. It's this formation of trust that serves as the foundation for all the other activities at *p:ear*. As Will puts it, "you can't sit somebody down who doesn't feel like an artist and say, 'express yourself using this medium that you're probably not familiar with'. When you go out on an activity, and Nate's got you up on a hundred foot wall and he's hold-

ing the rope, you have to have an establishment of trust. We have to build those relationships before we engage youth in what makes up the education, arts, and recreation of *p:ear*."

For many of the kids they work with, trust is somewhat of a foreign concept. They are accustomed to being ignored, to being pushed through systems without the resources they so desperately need, and to receiving looks of disdain far more often than looks of acceptance. That is precisely why *p:ear* believes valuing the effects of love and trust is so crucial to their operations. Nate speaks to this process, saying that "while *p:ear* is foundationally a relational organization, there's language that we use here that nobody else is using. It's this three tiered process that we look at insofar as engaging with youth; and those three words are love, trust, and hope. These kids come into *p:ear*, and first and foremost, we create a safe place for them to be off of the street. That's where we just truly surround them with love. It's the first foundation for breaking down those walls that exist—a lot of these kids are pretty hard, coming off of the street. Through that love, trust begins to form. From that trust, we have created a place for hope to exist. That's what allows this creativity to happen and these kids to feel safe, and to be able to engage in these activities."

These foundations really are built from the ground up, and many days the first step begins with food being put into their bellies. *P:ear* offers two homemade, nourishing meals a day, and serves about forty five to fifty kids for each meal. Lindsey, who oversees all the food production at *p:ear*, speaks to the standard that they uphold; "Since I've been working here, I've been blown away by the number of times I've heard a kid say 'if it wasn't for *p:ear*, I would never eat vegetables.' In all aspects, we try to have the food and the experiences available that we would have for ourselves. We're not bringing in the leftovers of conventionally grown potatoes; if there are organic things out there, we're going to use them. *P:ear* supports the ability to get the best, finest quality." These meals often act as impetus for connections between all the different people who come to *p:ear*: staff, volunteers and youth alike. It draws back to the idea that the quality of service and care should not be decreased just because the population that they are interacting with consists of people in highly vulnerable and transitional states. Anyone, regardless of whether they live on the streets of Portland or not, can find comfort in sharing a warm meal in a loving environment.

Of course, Will, Lindsey, and Nate, all acknowledge that many of the resources and the unique structure that *p:ear* offer simply aren't available to other organizations working within the homeless youth continuum. Due to the nature of their donor base, *p:ear* doesn't need to keep statistics on the youth that they serve in the same way that most organizations do. "*P:ear* doesn't treat anyone like an agenda," says Lindsey, "Someone could come in, eat, and change her socks, and not have to do anything else besides that. There's no expectation to have gotten their GED, to have been sober, to have gone to x amount of meetings. These youth can just come in, be themselves and just take a break from trying to meet a set agenda."

P:ear's mission is wrapped up in

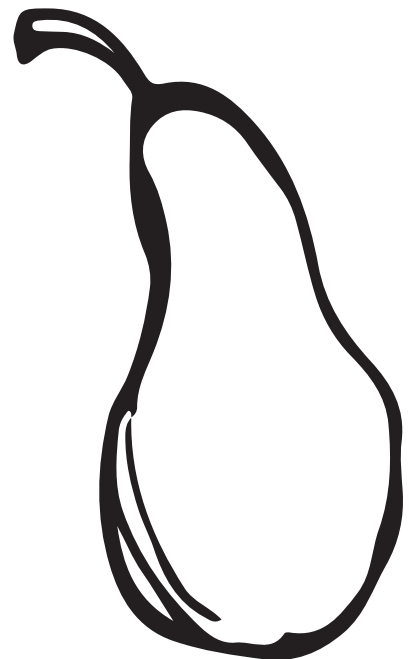
this idea of creating a safe space in which personal worth and potential can be realized. As with any kind of personal growth, it's not necessarily quantifiable, and is achieved slowly and painstakingly. The walls of *p:ear* have held countless individuals struggling with addiction, mental illness, and hopelessness at an age when most are still living within the safety of their childhood homes. Through the emotionally taxing, incredibly rewarding experience of working these kids, there's often a feeling that embeds the atmosphere, something that spans beyond words, that something *good* is being done, something that's making a real difference. It's a lot like the feeling of coming home.

"We look at every single youth who comes in here as a potential artist, a potential athlete, a potential educated young person. Everyone has the potential to do something creative or artistic, rather than just saying, 'no, they won't make it.' They may not always be in an opportune time to take advantage of all the opportunities that we offer, but the potential's always there. Everybody is treated with the same baseline of love and respect when they come in here, and that's where the potential starts." This is the outcome of *p:ear* that Will, along with everyone else that I encountered there, champions so valiantly. That there is no diploma or number of days sober that will have the same, universal effect as reintroducing hope into somebody's life. Create hope, foster love, and everything else, all the rest of the incredible potential that lies within these kids, will come too.

After spending time in *p:ear*, it's difficult to not want to expand this nurturing environment and philosophy out into the rest of the city. As much as *p:ear* has become a home for so many, its doors still close at 3:00 each afternoon, and it is up to each kid to carry their sense of worth among the less hospitable streets of Portland. According to *p:ear*, that's when the rest of the city is capable of

playing its own crucial role in helping these individuals; "Let's not look at Portland as a city and say, you need to create safe spaces for these kids. Let's look at every single individual out there and ask them how they engage with people who are experiencing homelessness. Are you saying everything's fine, or are you taking the time to treat them like human beings, treat them with the same care and nurture you would anyone else who's in a situation as unfortunate as what they're in. It's on the individuals. Just as three amazing individuals created this space, it's on the individuals of the city to take ownership, to look at the way they're engaged with these people, and make it better." ■

If you'd like to learn more about p:ear, you can visit their website at pearmentor.org, stop by their gallery on first thursdays at 338 NW 6th Ave, or donate to the organization through the Willamette Week's Give!Guide.



Buffalo

By KEVIN SNYDER

Fragment No. 1. The Butte

I slid down the snowy Montana butte, slowly at first. I was still clumsy with the snowshoes.

Did you fall down up there?

Not yet! I'm on my way.

I didn't rush. I looked out across the frozen lake with our cabin on the other side and the edge of little West Yellowstone. The clarity of the air could cut through your many layers.

The landscape was tricolor. The snow white had little blood pricks of red sagebrush along the 191 and the evergreen was dark green like the beginning of time.

My cheeks were always red like Christmas or childhood and I kept having these dreams of what my ancestors did when their mountains got misty and cold.

I bent my knees and down I went. The trees tightened the trail and I whooshed past the frozen branches of pine. Evergreens encased in ice glittered like insect wings.

I saw tiny paw prints I couldn't identify nearly as quick as I could poetic devices like metonymy, the whole for the part.

It was that fox you like.

Or synecdoche — the part for the whole — the paws for the fox.

Frag. No. 2. Woodstove

My soft academic hands wound around an axe and I felt an uncivilized happiness.

This was my job some days. The wood kept us warm at night.

We don't have internet, but we do have bookshelves and bunk beds. The woodstove was central. After the sun sets over the frozen lake and the temperature drops to the negative unimaginables, the cabin fills with sound.

We laugh. We read. We sing.

What a disappointment laptops and common rooms seemed after.

Sometimes I even got my feeling hurt in that cabin. Most times were cheerful.

Frag. No. 3. The Lake

I found something terrifying about walking on a frozen lake.

It's three feet of ice. There's no danger, city child.

Frag. No. 4. Jan, The Mom Who Didn't Get Sandwiches with Me.

Three buffalo laid down on a slope in late January.

This one close by looked right at me with this long face, a face as big as your chest was looking right at me. The wide-set eyes were black like an abyss and I felt fear and

wonder.

But I then looked into the weathered face of an anxious woman.

Listen I don't want my son to be harassed. We are honorable hunters and we thank Jesus Christ for every buffalo we kill.

I don't want to harass your son. I've had some amazing hunting experiences in my life and I hope he does too.

I lied sometimes.

Maybe we can look into getting him a deer tag. Let me get y'all some sandwiches in town. We can talk it over.

Jan took a little pamphlet I'd been supplied with. Two measly pages about buffalo.

The Yellowstone bison herd is unique, and is descended from twenty three individuals who survived the 19th century near-extinction.

Or some shit like:

Yellowstone does not provide sufficient winter range for the resident herds of wildlife due to the deep snows of its high elevation plateaus.

Jan, the mom, took it back to her car, where she had her son, her husband, and another fellow who had a large walrus-like mustache.

I had there myself, a very queer boy who was speaking in his low-voice, a volunteer who was holding a video camera aimed unflinchingly at the buffalo, and a silent veteran who crossed his arms and had already learned how useless this was.

Frag. No. 5. Walrusman

We three were rolling along a truck, all in the front shoulder-to-shoulder, when we saw Jan and Jan's son, who couldn't be older than thirteen resting a rifle on the hood of a car with his father's hand resting on his shoulder.

This was a violation. We intervened.

HEY. You can't shoot from the road.

We pulled over like nobody's business.

The buffalo saw our cars, a good twenty feet apart, and heard our forceful arguments. They got up from their slope and wandered back to the park, out of range and safe again.

The walrusman started walking toward me.

Hey.

I didn't respond.

Hey you, motherfucker.

What?

You stopped us from hunting. You fucked up our hunt.

You were breaking the law. You can't shoot near the roads or houses.

Why the fuck are you filming us?

*We're not filming you. We're filming the buffalo.
Do you know what I could do to you?*

I didn't respond.

The walrusman was in my face now.

You know what I could do?!

He started pushing me really trying to start a fight.

Hey! The silent guy spoke finally, and walrusman saw the camera was pointed at him. He retreated.

That little boy must've had such a bad day that day. I didn't hear him say a word, but I watched our film again to see walrusman walk up to me and to listen to our brief interaction, but I saw that little boy's eyes follow me the whole time.

Frag. No. 6. Soup

We made soup.

We fermented our own vinegar.

We served the soup

Then cleaned the counters with the vinegar.

Frag. No. 7. That Fox You Like

Wait. Look!

What?

See that?

I pointed at the lump. There was a tiny fox.

Pronouns are hard for animals we don't speak the language of.

The fox sniffed the air, got up, made a circle in the snow, showed a bristly tail, and sat back down to watch what we did.

I sniffed the air, made a circle in the snow, showed off my ass, and sat down, looking right back.

You're ridiculous.

I saw that fox the day after and the day after that and we did the same thing each day.

I smiled, ridiculous.

Frag. No. 8. Carne-Vegan

I didn't eat meat that month. It was the only month I haven't.

In the cabin, you met everyone.

Do you have any dietary restrictions?

I'm not eating animals. Do you?

I'm a carne-vegan. I don't eat animals I don't hunt myself.

Cool.

There were a lot of hunters there. I got to shoot a can with this one guy's pistol.

Frag. No. 9. Radio

I was trained in emergency radio etiquette.

No swearing.

Absofuckinglutely

I'm not kidding. It's illegal.

I'm not shitting you: I won't swear.

When I went into the field I always had a radio

Radio-check, Field. Are you all doing okay? Over.

Hi, Home! I could chip a tooth on this frozen cliff bar, but other than that we're good. Over

Ok. Over and out.

And then I took that job once.

And that day an emergency happened.

Hey, Home, Radio Check? Can you hear me? Over.

Go ahead, Field. I can hear. Over.

I'm watching a rancher with a full arm condom reaching inside a dead buffalo. Over.

I put down the radio.

Holy shit.

I don't take the radio jobs anymore.

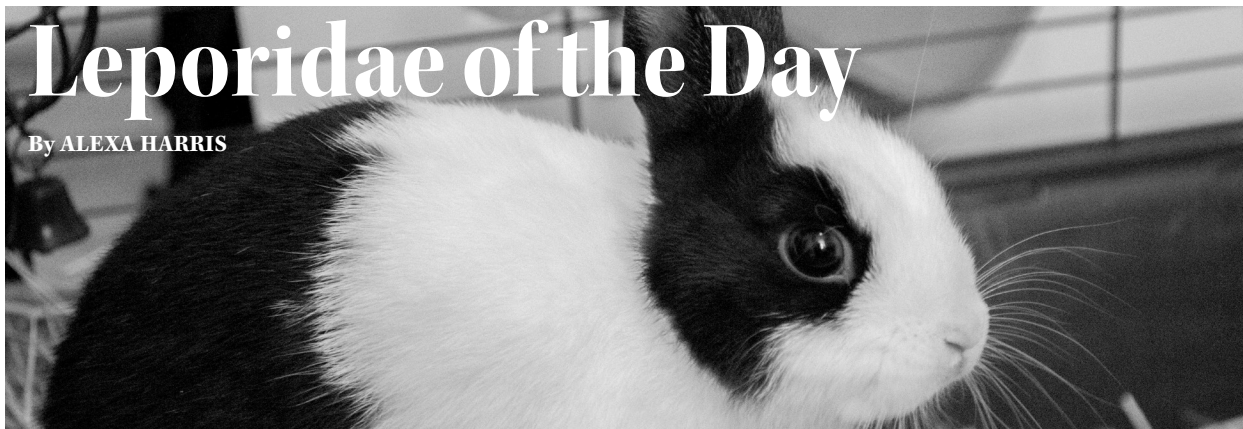
Frag. No. 10. Leaving

I got hugs, two tee shirts, a calendar, an invitation back, and a few hundred little pamphlets. I keep in touch with two of the people I met. I have those three buffalo on the background of the computer I type this on. **Y**



Leporidae of the Day

By ALEXA HARRIS



Now I know what you're thinking seeing these photos, "What a strange looking dog!" But don't be so quick to judge and jump to conclusions my fellow doofus! It's actually a whole different species. Yes, we're switching this it up this week.

So, confession time, I don't have a dog of my own. I do love dogs (and that's an understatement), which may or may not have been the motivation behind me writing a column about them. But I have to say, I've been feeling a bit of jealousy from someone in my life recently while writing about them. He sees me, sitting on the ground with him, writing about another species. He runs across my keyboard to sabotage my piece and make me pay attention to him instead. He even once managed to close me out of everything I was doing and open a picture of me and him instead (that is a true story and I am still confused by it). Needless to say, I think it's time we give some love the other fine creatures gracing this campus. And to start off, I'm going to give a totally not biased at all-nope-not-even-a-little-bit-description of my own, non-dog pet, Bowie the bunny.

I got Bowie in February of this year at eight weeks old. He's a Netherland Dwarf Rabbit (aka the smallest breed of rabbit out there with a whopping range from one to two pounds). Proportionally, Netherland Dwarfs, such as Bo himself, make no sense. They have plump, round little bodies, short ears that stand straight up, stumpy little legs, and massive eyes. They look like the most adorable mistake you've ever seen. They're like the corgis of rabbits. Upon meeting him, I've had many people react with an emotional "how is he real?" and "oh my god, no" and "he's just a little bean" (I've heard the bean comment twice from two different people).

Bowie is a very sweet little man. He never bites or thumps his legs in anger. He just likes to sniff you and hop in your lap (and maybe give you a few little licks if you're lucky). He's constantly jumping up onto whatever he can get his paws on. He enjoys jumping up on my shelves or my laundry bag, taking naps on my blankets, and chewing on my books or pencils or anything that's similar to the material used for rabbit toys that are not rabbit toys. He

has no interest in things designed for him.

Like most animals that are not cats or dogs, people severely underestimate the intelligence of rabbits. Bowie will rifle through my belongings to try to find his bag of treats, if he gets it he will take it in his mouth, swing it off the shelf, then jump down and try to open it. He gets excited when I walk towards the fridge when it's close to his dinnertime. He can also stand on his back two legs and go to his cage on command (especially quickly when a treat is involved).

People think I'm kidding when I say I have a trained rabbit, but he's genuinely more intelligent than any dog I've ever owned. He's a kind, adorable, and fairly sociable animal that deserves recognition as a legitimate pet that can form close bonds. Rabbits are not like a pet rock, they really do know you and love you (I mean when was the last time your pet rock nudged you or started licking your toes when it wanted attention?). Rabbits, in my experience are similar in personality to both cats and dogs. They resemble dogs in that they are fairly high energy and like to be in the presence of people. They also have cat-like qualities, they aren't necessarily down to give affection to just anyone, and like to have alone time. When it comes down to it though, rabbits are their own species with their own quirks that are unique to them. While I'm sure many, perhaps even most, Reedies are well aware of the joys of alternative pets (e.g., I met a pet duck the other day, which I didn't even know was a possibility), not everyone is informed about this. So if you're considering getting a pet at some point, I encourage you to think about dogs and cats, but also think about rats, rabbits, guinea pigs, snakes, ducks, salamanders, what have you. There's a wide range of lesser known/understood/appreciated pets out there. Many are considered less intelligent or less able to form close bonds, due to their uncommon domesticated nature. But as with reality, when it comes to pets/breeds and their reputations, my advice to you is this — question everything.

You can find sweet bun and I on the great lawn on nice, sunny, usually Sunday afternoons. I'll let you give him a carrot and you will earn his love.



De Sastre

Red, Gold & Black



“I’m trying to incorporate more colors into my outfits,
but I also believe in a statement piece.”

Psychological studies have found that red enhances the wearer’s sex appeal, but here in the offices of *The Grail* we found that we do not give any fucks. Instead, our study shows that red as a statement color enhances any outfit, allowing it to make the leap from the stale to the sublime. Studio art senior Paloma Martinez-Miranda spices up her simple black style with not only one, but two, statement pieces that showcase a classic red and gold pairing. Subtle gold weaves itself against the crimson threads within both her scarf and her earrings, transforming her classic black uniform into a striking image.

Look out for our own study to be published in next week’s *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* on Paloma’s universal attractiveness.

xoxo,
aa & muk

Cultural Column

By CHARLIE C. WILCOX

WITH EXTRA SPECIAL GUEST KASIE HENDERSON

'Tis the season, folks. Not only the Christmas season, but also it's Papa Wilcox's 60th Birthday. Hi Dad! Happy birthday! To honor the patriarch's entrance into his seventh decade of existence, I combined the two major seasons and watched a classic of the Wilcox household, the 1989 comedy *Christmas Vacation*. If you aren't familiar with *Christmas Vacation*, I suggest you make a trip to Movie Madness and get to know the Griswold family immediately.

Christmas Vacation is a yearly tradition in our family, which is notable since the Wilcoxes are not huge on repetitious activities. Dad has several sayings that all have the general meaning that "things are never as good as the first time you experience them," a sentiment with mysterious, unspoken origins. The sheer force of *Christmas Vacation*, however, overpowered any suspicions of recurrences. As such, I've probably seen *Christmas Vacation* more than any other movie in my lifetime. My partner, Kasie, on the other hand, has never laid eyes on its glory. This was a situation that needed rectifying, immediately.

Christmas Vacation follows the yuletide exploits of the Griswold family, first introduced in 1983's *National Lampoon's Vacation*, and subsequently appearing in 1985's *European Vacation*. (*Christmas Vacation* is easily the franchise high-point, but the original *Vacation* is also a classic. Ignore anything after *Christmas Vacation*, including 1997's *Vegas Vacation* and the 2015 sequel-cum-reboot *Vacation*, starring human-shaped khaki pants Ed Helms.) The basic premise is that Clark Griswold, the family-man father under duress played by Chevy Chase, dreams of putting together the perfect fun old-fashioned family Christmas for his entire extended clan, but just about everything that can go wrong does. And when things go wrong, they go very, very wrong. Christmas tree fires, squirrel invasions, disastrous turkey mistakes and cat food in the jello all factor in, not to mention fried cats, full shitters, and false hopes of plump Christmas bonuses.

Christmas Vacation is too close to my heart for me to even attempt to critically evaluate it, but Kasie, with her

critical eye firmly intact, may be able to offer some fresh thoughts on the masterpiece. Here is what she says:

I understand perhaps why Christmas Vacation isn't Christmas canon (in the vein of A Christmas Story, The Santa Clause, or Elf). The humor in Christmas Vacation is more conceptual than most Christmas cinema. As fitting for its affiliation to National Lampoon, the humor seems to define the parameters of the story's universe, unlike other festive films that are more informed by "the holiday spirit." In fact, the humor in Christmas Vacation is nearly edgy, biting, as it combines classical slapstick gestures (patriarch Griswold repeatedly falls, rams into 2 x 4 s, and finds objects stuck to the pine sap on his fingers) with more contemporary conceptual comedy (Griswold often ends conversations like "Merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah, kiss my ass" as if the surrounding characters cannot hear him—and indeed, they don't). Christmas Vacation largely plays to these moments of comedy, leaving the decorations, and eggnog as window dressing. Owing to the John Hughes production, Christmas Vacation also at times loses the holiday for the Hughes. The film is spiked with a Chicago atmosphere and a tinge of nostalgia, but not really in a holiday way. Overall, though I enjoyed the ruckus, I feel like the movie could have committed more to the holidays—maybe that's why my favorite characters were the yuppie margarita-drinking neighbors.

Well there you have it, folks. A logical and satisfyingly distanced critique of the film. I fully expected my par amour to hate the film (as she does with my other childhood favorite, Pee Wee Herman, but that's another story) and couldn't be more delighted that she found it alright, although she is cruelly misguided on the yuppie neighbor front. They are *such* douchebags, even if their main sin in John Hughes' eyes is lack of amusement and appreciation for the nuclear family and the tidings that it brings.

Anyways, have a happy holidays, and enjoy your well-earned break. I'll be back in January with my 2015 year-end lists. Can't wait!

