

The Charger *Slant*

News from a different angle

December, 2009

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Student Voice

What would you do with a thousand dollars?

Fisher T., junior, says: A thousand dollars? Well, it is that wonderful time of the year again. And as for me, I would probably set up a big net above my house to catch some of Santa's reindeer. Then I could ransom them off! Nah, I'm just kidding. I bet Santa really needs his reindeer.

Phil I., sophomore, says: Easy. I would get me a sweet computer setup! Wide-screen monitor, high-speed internet, plus a webcam and ergonomic keyboard to chat it up with the ladies. No mouse though – the chicks like watching me use my touchpad.

David T., junior, says: Two words, baby: electric guitar. Not to mention a huge Marshall stack amp to go with it, and a full set of rockin' effects pedals. And maybe with the leftover money I could buy some talent.

Ashley S., senior, says: Shoes, clothes, makeup – anything to make me look pretty... I've always wanted to hear someone tell me I look like a thousand bucks.

Artists' Corner

Jailbreak

By X. Lax

It is twelve o'clock, and
My body is a prison.

An inmate attempts escape
A slender fellow he is, long and brown
He sneaks past a guard and slips smoothly down

Yet no true freedom awaits him, you see
For there is no toilet underneath me
And here I sit, alarm bells ringing
It's a riot now, and for the gates they're springing

Jump out of my seat; I can't hold it any more
A few seconds longer and I'll shit the floor
So I run to the bathroom, throw open the door!

This stall's locked, that one's flooded
This one won't flush – no better than a bucket!
These two haven't any toilet paper
And I just stepped in someone's piss – clean it off later!

The sentence is up – they're off parole
And out they rush into the toilet bowl

So much for my Converse, dripping wet
At least I didn't shit my pants
...with one exception

Upon his return home, Jenkins promptly galvanized the American mass-production machine into a nationwide plastic paratrooper assembly line. Now one of these gutsy grunts accompanied each box of General Mills cereal sold; and soon, it seemed, every household in the United States garrisoned a veritable platoon of miniature military men. The demand for them became so great, in fact, that special edition models were created; Sergeant, Machinegunner, and Field Chaplain figurines were introduced, while the scantily-clad Women's Air Corps model took on an overwhelming popularity of its own.

Like their flesh-and-blood counterparts, however, the inanimate infantrymen ran into fierce opposition; not long after their deployment, General Mills was deluged with lawsuits regarding the pint-sized fighters. One, for instance, came from the owner of a prize-winning show dog that had swallowed an artilleryman, and subsequently lost all its fur (the veterinarian diagnosed it as "shell-shocked.") Another came from a family whose two young boys wanted to see the skydiving soldiers "in action," and – to make a long story short – left the family Ford looking like a gutted M4 Sherman. Citing safety concerns raised by the lawsuits, a massive recall was ordered. Catastrophic casualties had been inflicted upon this army of toy soldiers.

To add insult to injury, General Mills' rivals hastily capitalized on the trend, using Jenkins' stroke of brilliance for their own profit. Kellogg's, for instance, introduced a line of widgets, knick-knacks, doohickeys, and thingamajigs to accompany its breakfast cereals, to great fanfare.

Jenkins was heartbroken, his creation bastardized and vilified in the American household. No longer did his plastic paratroopers descend on enemy-held kitchen tables and countertops; they had all been shot down in a blaze of corporate flak.

Or had they?

Yes actually. They had.

Interested in seeing a genuine General Mills Plastic Paratrooper in person? The Smithsonian Institute owns the seven known to remain, the rest having been melted down in the recall to make Hasbro toy slingshots.

Christmas cheer a rip-off How much will joy and happiness cost you?

By R. Wanda, staff writer, December 3, 2009

Christmas is upon us, much like my boyfriend after a few Cosmopolitans too many. (Don't drink during the holidays. You may wake up to Santa Claus coming down your chimney... and he might get stuck there too.) For many of us, this season brings to mind wintry comforts like fresh snow and singing of Christmas carols and bonding with family and friends at the fireside. But quite frankly, presents are the most important part. Receiving them I mean. Brand new, expensive ones.

On the other hand, getting gifts also means giving gifts, which is awfully hard on the wallet – basic necessities of living like eye shadow and lip gloss and mascara and Adam Lambert's new CD cost enough as it is. How is a girl supposed to cope? As much as I love to reciprocate and give, I simply can't abandon my own shopping pursuits, relegating myself to the fashions of yestermoth, just to buy presents for all of my friends. (There are so many of them! I got carpal tunnel syndrome trying to put all of their names into all of my phones.)

Giving presents isn't the only part of Christmas that bothers me; Christmas trees bother me too. It's practically a mass genocide of completely innocent plants that never hurt anybody except when they fall over and crush people. To cruelly bind them in hot, energy-consuming lights and cover their poor branches with heavy ornaments and decorations is utterly inhumane, or intremane or whatever you want to call it. And don't try to convince me that using fake trees is okay, because the plastic they are made with could go to other more important causes, like making shoes for children in poor countries who have to make shoes for a living. This is the 21st century people!

And even without having to give other people pricey presents, and besides worrying about getting killed by vengeful tall Christmas trees, the seasonal celebrations inevitably lead to another exasperation of mine – eating. I don't know how this holiday (that is, after all, about giving) came to be associated

with something so selfish as taking things in your mouth and then swallowing them. As welcoming as my mouth usually is, I'm not interested in putting away pounds of cookies and pies and turkeys and gravy just to indulge the holiday spirit.

To be honest, I'm a little fed up (not literally, of course) with Christmas as a whole. I feel as though everything that the holiday truly means, things like charity and goodwill, is obscured by the insignificant issues – simple matters that we should be able to put aside. So this year, I won't give out any presents at all; that way I won't make other people feel like I am trying to one-up them on all the presents they gave me. This year, I won't buy a Christmas tree; I'll buy some sneakers instead, so that all the poor children out there don't feel that their hard work is in vain. This year, I'll save my appetite out in the brisk weather for the hottest dish there is – ole Saint Nick, barreling down my chimney as I speak.

Are you tired of holiday cheer too? Take R. Wanda's advice and leave all the Christmas spirit at the North Pole. And don't worry – New Year's Day aside, the next big holiday is Martin Luther King Day, which no one really celebrates anyway.

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How one plastic man became a concrete fixture in history

By J. Bouti, editor-in-chief, November 27, 2009

The date was May 21st, 1945.

The peoples and nations of the Western hemisphere had been only months ago been embroiled in what was possibly the most terrific armed conflict in the history of mankind: the Second World War. But now the firing of the guns, the pounding of the mortars, had ceased. Treaties had been signed, arms laid down. Peace dawned over the European theater. Soldiers from all sides sailed solemnly home. The explosive conflict was now but a spent shell casing, smoldering on the hallowed pages of a high-school history textbook.

Yet even in this day and age, WWII remains ingrained in the forefront of the psyche of society. It endures in many forms: the lucky few veterans still alive to tell its tales; the books and films it spawned; and the Call of Duty series. But perhaps the most impressive image, the most lasting legacy left by the war, was stamped out in the hundreds of thousands – all from a single factory mold.

Meet Parker Jenkins. This fateful day in May found him one of a multitude of soldiers being shipped back from Europe aboard an American vessel. The surrender had at last been drawn. Jenkins eagerly awaited a return home to his family and friends, and his father's General Mills factory where he worked.

Here, inspiration struck him, figuratively speaking, from the heavens. As he recalls in his memoirs:

May 21st, 1945: A vision has struck me from above – it is the paratrooper! Together he and his brothers in arms embodied victory on wings. A mass-produced toy version of this gallant hero would make the perfect accompaniment to my father's breakfast cereal!