

The Charger *Slant*

News from a different angle

May, 2011

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Student Voice

If you could have one wish come true, what would it be?

Linda L., junior, says: I wish someone would finally recognize my talent – I've been singing and dancing and acting since I was five. But I'll show them. See, I already have a big, *exclusive* audition lined up with this new talent agency called "Lucky's Luscious Ladies." They say they'll start my career with a bang.

Keung-Cho I., sophomore, says: I wish people wouldn't stereotype! I mean, just because I'm Asian-American doesn't automatically mean I'm some violin-playing classical music whiz. Like, really? With the price of SAT prep courses these days and the amount of time I spend keeping my GPA up, violin lessons aren't worth it. My family can hardly even afford ramen any more.

Andy N., junior, says: If only a girl would finally notice me. I notice girls all the time; and I try to give them nice things, flowers and notes. I just wish I would get something in return. Not even a kiss – just a thank-you would suffice, for all I do. I mean, do you know how hard it is to keep binoculars steady in a tree?

Shanna G., senior, says: All I wish is that someone would appreciate my poetry. I've written all these wonderful poems, about love and stuff that, but I guess the world isn't ready for "I Fart on Your Heart" or "To Put It Blunt, I'd Lick Your

Artists' Corner

My Favorite Tree
By P. Ping Tom

The wind blows, and
My heart is rattled.
Leaves blow across my face,
But you move ever with grace,
As upon the stallion of my heart you are saddled.

The wind blows, the limbs
Creak! I am shaken,
As the willow in which I wait,
Plays games with my very fate,
And I watch you mix some dough for baking.

The wind blows, my finger slips –
Down go the binoculars from my grip!
I am horrified, and I feel blind,
As you snatch closed your window blinds.
Of the iceberg of my love, this is only the tip.

You are so lovely, and oh so fair!
I catch your scent on the morning air, as
Roses are red and cop cars are blue,
Handcuffs hurt and my heart does too.

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confidant, never got so much as a smack on the rear from him, in spite of following every single rule laid out in my September 2009 article “How to attract men” whenever he was around. He was a gentleman and a scholar... and oh, so dashing. He was to the *Slant* what Heidi Klum was to Victoria’s Secret.

So before I sign out, readers, here’s the last thing he ever had to say.

Dear Readers,

I have written this should I ever vanish mysteriously on the job. The work is terribly perilous, and sometimes I fear for my own safety. Like the time the shrieking eels almost took me.

I want you to know that I always did it for you, my readers. I wrote from the heart. All I ever wanted was for the ink of the Slant to circulate like the blood in my veins, to get the truth out the best way I could. If you don’t have the truth, what the heck do you have? Something that isn’t the truth, that’s what.

It always stung to hear the cruel laughter. Some people, somehow, thought my writing was a joke! They almost acted as though the Slant was some kind of satirical slop or something like that. That would always break my spirit, and sometimes I just wanted to put my pen down for good. But I would always press on – no matter how hard it got to write, no matter how long the words were in coming. I had to do it.

And that’s why I’ve always kept my identity to myself. Sure, it’s a thankless job, giving up all I could have just to write for a tiny handful of people who hardly take my work seriously. But I always cared for the integrity of my writing. I don’t just want you to read what the man, J. Bouti, says. I want you to see the truth that J. Bouti opens your eyes to.

So you don’t know who I am, and you probably never will. Here’s a clue, folks – I’m not the man you thought I was. That person was a fake, a cover, a nobody. He was the only lie I ever told you. He had nothing to do with the Slant, but I let him take the credit, take the heat off me. He seemed to like the attention anyway.

That’s all folks. Who knows, maybe someday you really will figure out who was really writing to you this whole time. After all, all you have to do is look at things... from a different angle.

Yours truly,
J. Bouti

Local aquarium now sleeping with the fishes Curator fails to keep aquarium afloat

By J. Bouti, May 8, 2011

The North African sucking fish was one of the deadliest fishes known to man.

In its prime, it was a fearsome creature, a fish to be reckoned with. It had won (and, in some cases, eaten) the hearts of thousands of aquarium aficionados. It earned a cover story in Chum Magazine, but not before disemboweling the poor journalist who wrote it. It had been photographed so many times in its tank that it would have gone blind, had it actually been born with eyes.

Today, the North African sucking fish sucks no more; all that is left of it is a pile of dry bones at best, picked clean by the vultures and stray cats – just like every other priceless specimen from what was once the Las Vegas Aquarium.

“Sea life was my second love. My first love and I divorced in ’56; so then sea life was my only love,” remarks Randy Warner tearfully as I interview him over sushi. Curator of the Las Vegas Aquarium since it was founded in 1952, Warner has seen the facility through its best days and its worst, come hell or highly-oxygenated water.

“Did you know Elvis visited us once? He did, back in ’77,” reminisces Warner. “That was only a couple of weeks before he died. Walked in with a guitar slung over his shoulder, slicked-back hair, leather jacket, just like the glory days... we took him to the rock lobster exhibit and he started singing ‘Jailhouse Rock Lobster.’ The song is really just called ‘Jailhouse Rock,’ but he added ‘lobster’ to it just for us.”

Indeed, the Las Vegas Aquarium had had its fair share of triumphs, before its finances began to run dry. At one point it was home to over 14,000 aquatic creatures, including incredibly rare specimens captured from exotic locales like Atlantis and even Canada. “Few aquariums really go to the lengths that we did to provide an experience for our guests. We even almost caught a little mermaid, but she wasn’t much use since she couldn’t talk. I guess she’s still

under the sea somewhere. Instead, we used her exhibit for a crab and a flounder.”

As times changed, however, the aquarium itself began to flounder, under the burden of harsh public scrutiny and devastating scandal. The turning point, claims Warner, was the shrieking eel fiasco of '98.

“At that point in time, we had just picked up a pair of Brazilian shrieking eels, these magnificent creatures that get louder as they approach human flesh. Now, that exhibit was a huge hit, until the ambassador of Brazil showed up and saw it. Apparently he had a bad experience with shrieking eels as a kid, they ate his dog or something. And when he heard the shriek of the eels... boy, he just lost it. He blew the damn place up! Knocked down some kid on crutches, very nearly broke the glass on the Welch’s jellyfish exhibit.” The incident, which left the Brazilian ambassador comatose, was a public-relations catastrophe for the aquarium, bringing allegations of cultural insensitivity and public endangerment, and a disastrous legal battle.

But even this calamity was not what it took to crack the aquarium’s keel. Warner declares that what truly sank the Las Vegas Aquarium was an ebbing of the tide of society, a drought of true aquarium lovers.

“Back in the day, you’d have all sorts of people just walk up. Schoolchildren would come over once school was out to watch the minnows swim around in little schools, just like them. Doctors from the hospital down the street would stare at the serene surgeonfish after a long, tough graveyard shift. Showgirls from the Strip would stop by when work was over and take a gander at the pretty Flying Tittyfish we used to have.

“Hell, nowadays you’re lucky if you can even get people to set an animated picture of an aquarium as the background on their iMacs! It’s a shame. A damn shame.” And with those parting words, Warner rides off into the seaside sunset in his '76 Cadillac, swimming trunks and snorkel in hand.

Care to witness firsthand the wonders of the Las Vegas Aquarium? Well, sorry. You’re out of luck.

When the ink runs dry On the disappearance of J. Bouti

By R. Wanda, editor-in-chief, May 17, 2011

Journalism bites. Or, more precisely, Brazilian shrieking eels bite, as J. Bouti was shocked to discover as he machete’d his way into the deep of the Amazon in the spring of 2007. It was his first story as a staff writer with the *Charger Slant*, and what a story it was! He effortlessly found, in that dazzling way we all now know him for, that certain *something* – that indescribable *essence* of a story, that journalistic *je ne sais quoi* – that every one of us reporters looks for, and some of us never find.

The shrieking eels were only the beginning. See, Bouti had quite the knack for reporting on situations riskier than stuffing your bra on the night of the eighth-grade dance when your own mother is chaperoning. He hardly broke a sweat in March 2009 as he dove headfirst into the sink-or-swim story of the Las Vegas Aquarium, collecting sound bites from the curator while dodging bites from North African sucking fish. In October 2009, he bravely worked up the machismo to hang with Clark High School’s gridiron gang for a day, covering the story of the football team’s beloved star towel-boy. Bouti even revealed a sleuthy streak in December 2010, when he lent his own private eye to the mysterious case of the vanishing Detective X.

But, like how wearing a cup size too small will have you slipping a nip, it looks like Bouti’s fearless antics have finally caught up with him. His most recent gig, a feature piece on the tormented and tragic inner lives of high school hall monitors and janitors, might have been his most dangerous to date. He could hardly take the strain; he would even have nightmares of flooded bathrooms and dress-code violations and lovestruck teenagers making out inappropriately!

And one fateful night, as he plunged himself deeper still into the dank world of public school staff, notepad and pen in hand, J. Bouti left us for good. Maybe he lost his mind chasing down phony, wrong-colored hall passes; maybe he just got fed up with seeing kids leave chewing gum on sidewalks. Who knows what happened? Bouti was a private man. Even I, his right-hand woman, his