

OPINIONS & EXPRESSIONS

Sweet Homecoming

Sometimes a party is more than a just a party. A case in point was this past fall's homecoming, or, as the headline of the following week's *Record* editorial called it, "Home sweet Homecoming."

A large, diverse crowd of students, alumni, faculty, staff, and area residents gathered on a gorgeous fall afternoon to revel in each other's company and exult in the Ephs' shutout of the Lord Jeffs.

As if that weren't enough, excitement was added by the presence of the wildly popular ESPN program *College GameDay*. If you aren't aware of the GameDay phenomenon, check it out on YouTube.com (search for "Williams GameDay"). This two-hour pre-game show telecasts each week from the location of that day's hottest rivalry. After 149 visits to Div. I schools, the producers chose to originate the show's 150th edition from Williamstown. Their purpose: to show the world what Div. III athletics are like.

Almost 2 million households tuned in to GameDay, and what a show they got. In front of the backdrop of the beautiful Berkshires, Weston Field, and reveling fans, the show's stars talked not only about the major Div. I games of the day but also of what it's like to be part of Div. III football, where athletes who truly represent their student bodies play for the love of the game, and a wonderful rivalry such as Williams-Amherst can bring out the best in both schools. We were honored and, to be honest, a bit lucky to be able to represent

in this way not only NESCAC but all of Div. III.

The effects of the day promise to linger. At that Sunday's meetings of first-year entries, there was talk about how to keep the spirit of the weekend alive. And in my meetings with alumni and parents, I've heard how much they loved the sense of almost being here, in a way, through the telecast.

"Engaging in the community," the *Record* editorial said, "be it by welcoming back old friends or cheering at the top of your lungs in the stands, is just plain fun."

Colleges are many things. They're primarily places of academic learning as we prepare our students to make their mark on the world. But much learning takes place in building the campus community, and part of community is sharing fun. The day showed a positive way to greatly enjoy coming together. Would that all parties at Williams were so healthy.

"An exceptional satisfaction with and pride for Williams showed itself this weekend," the *Record* editorial added. "As a result, we see this weekend as not only a great time, but also a reasonable challenge. We've seen how great this place and these people can be when we all come together; now let's do it when



Kevin Kennefick

the cameras are off and the alums are at home."

Thanks for the success of the day go to the students who devised creative tailgates; to student leaders in College Council, the neighborhoods, and entries who helped organize things; and to the very many staff whose flexibility and hard work, often behind the scenes, made it all possible.

That was some party. As Anouk Day '09 from Toronto wrote elsewhere in the *Record*, the experience "seemed to magnify everything that *is* Williams. Over the weekend, Williams College became that much more Williams, that much more dedicated to those 'things' that define it." ■

—Morty Schapiro

Perhaps there's too much of Al Gore's Puritanism in my own blood, but instead of all your self-congratulations on going green at commencement (I really loved the one about carbon offsets), you could have done many times better at far less cost by simply banning water bottles and telling everyone to drink that wholesome tap water from the Berkshires ("Green Graduation," September 2007).

I was also disappointed not to see any mention that Hummers and other gas guzzlers were hit with punitive parking fees and/or hybrids given substantial discounts for any campus parking fees.

It's articles like this that make me worried that you guys in Billville may be totally cut off from the real world.

—Henry Richmond '61, Honolulu, Hawaii

I feel strongly compelled to respond to the letters about climate change by Bruce Entwisle '76 and Kenneth Settles '96 in the September issue. The truth is that the time for debating whether climate change is happening—and whether it is human-induced—is long past. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is composed of hundreds of the world's leading climate scientists; it is doubtful that there has ever been a comparable gathering of minds dedicated to any other issue. In contrast, the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, which Mr. Entwisle cites in his letter, has engaged in academic fraud and markets a home-schooling kit that

it's not easy being green

helps parents to teach their children like "in the days before socialism in education."

In its most recent report, the IPCC concluded that the Earth's climate is unequivocally warming and that most of the observed increase in the planet's average temperature since the 1950s is very likely (i.e., confidence level >90%) due to human-caused increases in greenhouse gas emissions. Even if one wishes to be skeptical of these conclusions, the precautionary principle should still encourage us to set policies that reduce emissions; the risk in doing nothing is simply too great.

Entwisle and Settles both emphasize that they fear that debate on the issue of climate change is being stifled, and I agree with them that debate is needed. But the debate should not be whether climate change is happening but rather how we can develop the best strategies to minimize it and mitigate its impacts. And it is this debate to which Williams must devote itself.

—Jordan Goldwarg '03, Montreal, Quebec

I was startled to see that you had published two letters from global-warming skeptics in the September 2007 issue. I think it was very irresponsible. By publishing such letters you are not fostering a healthy debate but helping to perpetuate a dangerous confusion.

—Vivien Shotwell '03, Iowa City, Iowa

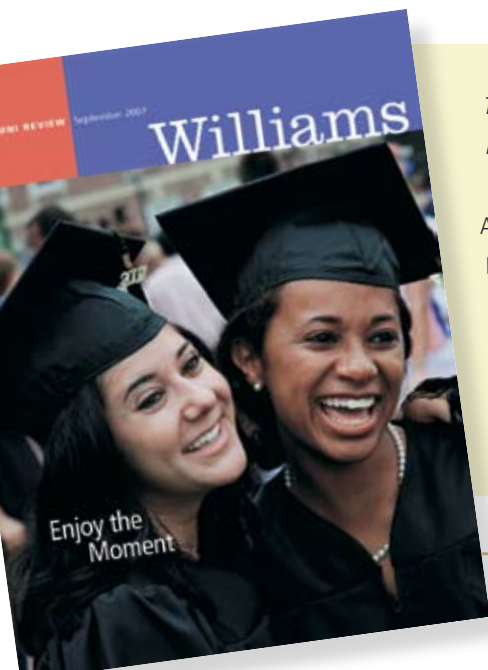
Earth is a fascinating record of cyclical climate change dating back 100 million years before man. It is unknown whether current climate change, including the imminent ice age scare of three decades ago, is influenced by the plausible impact of human activity, but there is no scientific "consensus." Furthermore, if there were, a show of hands is not science.

Regarding a response of "necessary change," as President Schapiro put it in his June 2007 column, how best to use resources remains debatable. In any case, reducing the cost of energy is an exciting and decades-long neglected challenge with enormous potential being addressed with creativity despite the considerable obstacle of Congress, a plethora of other disruptive, unscientific political influences, and a shallow media.

—Keith Martin '51, Tucson, Ariz.

LETTERS

The Alumni Review welcomes letters related to topics in the magazine. Send letters to: Alumni Review, P.O. Box 676, Williamstown, Mass., 01267-0676; fax: 413.597.4158; e-mail alumni.review@williams.edu. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.



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The Quiet Americans

by Thomas L. Friedman

I just spent the past week visiting several colleges—Auburn, the University of Mississippi, Lake Forest and Williams—and I can report that the more I am around this generation of college students, the more I am both baffled and impressed.

I am impressed because they are so much more optimistic and idealistic than they should be. I am baffled because they are so much less radical and politically engaged than they need to be.

One of the things I feared most after 9/11—that my daughters would not be able to travel the world with the same carefree attitude my wife and I did at their age—has not come to pass.

Whether it was at Ole Miss or Williams or my alma mater, Brandeis, college students today are not only going abroad to study in record numbers, but they are also going abroad to build homes for the poor in El Salvador or volunteering at AIDS clinics in record numbers. Not only has terrorism not deterred them from traveling, they are rolling up their sleeves and diving in deeper than ever.

It's for all these reasons that I've been calling them "Generation Q"—the Quiet Americans, in the best sense of that term, quietly pursuing their idealism, at home and abroad.

But Generation Q may be too quiet, too online, for its own good, and for the country's own good. When I think of the huge

budget deficit, Social Security deficit and ecological deficit that our generation is leaving this generation, if they are not spitting mad, well, then they're just not paying attention. And we'll just keep piling it on them.

When I was visiting my daughter at her college, she asked me about a terrifying story that ran in *The New York Times* on Oct. 2, reporting that the entire Arctic system appears to be "heading toward a new, more watery state."

"What happened to that Arctic story, Dad?" my daughter asked me. How could the news media just report one day that the Arctic ice was melting far faster than any models predicted "and then the story just disappeared?" Why weren't any of the candidates talking about it? Didn't they understand: This has become the big issue on campuses?

No, they don't seem to understand. They seem to be too busy raising money or buying votes with subsidies for ethanol farmers in Iowa. The candidates could actually use a good kick in the pants on this point. But where is it going to come from?

Generation Q would be doing itself a favor, and America a favor, if it demanded from every candidate who comes on campus answers to three questions: What is your plan for mitigating climate change? What is your plan for reforming Social Security? What is your plan for dealing with the deficit—so we all won't be working for China in 20 years?

America needs a jolt of the idealism, activism and outrage (it must be in there) of Generation Q. That's what twentysomethings are for—to light a fire under the country. But they can't e-mail it in, and an online petition or a mouse click for carbon neutrality won't cut it. They have to get organized in a way that will force politicians to pay attention rather than just patronize them. ■

Thomas L. Friedman is an award-winning author and columnist who received an honorary degree from the College in 2005, when he was the commencement speaker. His daughter is a Williams sophomore. This column is adapted from his essay "Generation Q," which appeared in the Oct. 10, 2007, New York Times. Reprinted with permission.



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