

Remembering yesterday

Generation X's battle should be not to forget heritage



One hundred and thirty-six years ago, a couple hundred thousand guys got together for a mammoth concert in a big field near the little town of Gettysburg, Pa., and it was for war and death.

They called it a battle, but they had these cool cannons like Peter Frampton. But instead of inflatable farm animals, they shot these things called shells that made a wah-wah noise, later to be reintroduced in singing and on the guitar 100 years later.

Some of these 19th-century concert-goers, the ones dressed in gray, even sang along to the beat and harmony of the explosions in a high falsetto. They called it the Rebel Yell, and it was all the rage, frightening parents and even some of the other members of the crowd, who were dressed in blue.

Then, to close it all out, one guy ended the whole thing in a blaze of fire and noise and death.

When it was all over, it was judged a horrible success by some, a

horrible failure by others. There was a total of over 51,000 men killed, wounded or missing after the three-day binge.

The president of the United States even came up to Gettysburg to herald it as a new chapter in American history.

Soon the very mention of the word Gettysburg would evoke strong emotions from Americans who would remember it as a great and terrible day.

Coasting forward to 30 years ago — another concert, another big field, this time in upstate New York, hundreds of thousands of people, explosions and flashes of light. They called this thing Woodstock, and it was for peace and love.

It scared parents and children and even some of the people who went to it.

This time, another guy used all his wah-wahs and the noise and the screaming masses to close the concert.

Once again, some judged it a success, some a failure. Some were just plain appalled at the destruction and lack of decorum and respect for authority that the concert-goers declared as the benchmark of what was indeed a new chapter in American history.

And now it is 1999. And some interesting things have happened. You can visit those places at Gettysburg and Woodstock as tourist attractions now.

Some people, for posterity's sake, remember both events. Some remember the historical context of Gettysburg but forget or dismiss the significance of Woodstock.

Some remember Woodstock and forget Gettysburg.

Of course, even some people who were at Woodstock don't remember it so well. Maybe they can't recall learning about Gettysburg either.

Some people get dressed up in blue and gray uniforms and re-enact Gettysburg. Other people get nose rings and tattoos and get naked and try to re-enact Woodstock, which, as we saw, turned out to be a most unwise manner of remembrance.

However we choose to remember or forget, there will always be those who dedicate themselves to the conservation of memories and of the actual physical realm in which historic events took place.

Such people are called preservationists. Thank heavens for them.

Yeah, maybe they get a little bunged up about the past, but hey, that's their life. They live in the past. After all, somebody has to.

Last week, the preservationists were working fast and furious to

keep up Civil War battlefields like Gettysburg and other, smaller arenas where the American tragedy was played out. They usually are.

But this time, it was in reaction to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt's statement that 1 acre of Civil War battleground is lost every 10 minutes. It becomes a parking lot or a supermarket or some other temple to urban sprawl.

The preservationists are even getting together: the Civil War Preservation Trust has merged with the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites to form the first mass conglomeration of such groups of people who really care.

The fields at Gettysburg will last long after I'm gone, thanks in part to people who care about what the past holds as much as who to bestow it upon in the future.

And recently, Generation X has tried to take on that role, specifically with Woodstock. But as usual, we mucked it up.

The problem with Generation X is that we have no sense of history, and nobody cares to get one. We'll forget Woodstock and turn it into a wash of capitalist venture and fires and riots, and pretty soon we'll let them pave right over Gettysburg.

Gen-X needs some preservationists, and we need them now, because even as we grow into our role in the world, the past continues to be our heritage. You can't scream it back

loud enough now: nobody cares.

Right now, in Seattle, they're building a memorial to Jimi Hendrix. It'll probably get vandalized and fall into disrepair, and everyone will say, "What a horrible waste, but it's not my problem. I never even knew the man." And thus will the cycle be perpetuated.

But then again, maybe one person or two or three people will get together and say, "What a shame. Jimi was a legend, a true voice of the late 20th century and beyond ...," and that's how preservation will get started. Because the history of all generations is important, as we have learned in the preservation of Civil War battlefields and remembrance days for events gone by.

As much as Gettysburg, Woodstock is an important part of American people's heritage. It may be a long time before we ever realize it, but it is our chance to bask in the glow of other generations that opened doors for us.

What Civil War preservationists did last week, what Hendrix family and fans are doing — it is imperative that we recognize what they are striving for.

Because someday, if we stop caring altogether, Gettysburg will be a McDonald's and a Safeway, and Max Yasgur's farm will be a high-rise apartment building.

And we forget. And then where do we progress?

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Cartoon violence

Sunday comics are nothing to be thankful for

Theatre 2000."

One thing (or one band, I should say) that is truly a gift from the heavens is Earth, Wind and Fire. Without its catchy lyrics and feisty melodies, I would never have seen Corrina dancing on top of popcorn and shaking her rump.

And I'm thankful Jen accidentally left my Christmas present under the couch, so I can start to rebuild my stolen CD collection.

With all this love and happy feelings floating around, there is one thing that churns my stomach to no end. I mean, this thing makes my bowels clench up at the same moment that bile fills my nostrils.

I can honestly say I hate the Sunday comics.

No foolin'. I hate all those creepy, idiotic panels of moppishness that incorrectly portray the misguided, naïve, sickening reflections of life.

Let's start with "Luann" — the blonde chick who keeps changing her hair.

This high school gal is nothing but a retarded tramp.

Contrary to popular belief, "Luann" is not God's answer to high school hell. In fact, her teen-age "angst" and drizzle is mild compared to what most high school students go through.

The never-funny Luann is shallow and, at best, a C student (which is cause for praise in the cartoon when she gets anything better than her usual D).

"Zits" is another cartoon very similar to "Luann." In fact, it may be even worse. Luann sometimes gets her brother or family involved, and they can be a real riot, but the main high school punk in "Zits" is a joke.

The two men who write this cartoon definitely know the science behind gossip in school halls, but somehow each week they forget the most important aspect of real life — mainly thoughts, feelings and actions.

But hey, the fact that Chelsea told

Suzy to tell Bart to tell Lisa that "The Simpsons" are on tonight at 5 sure brings much laughter to people over 80 years old.

I just have a couple of words for those of you who want to write comic strips that involve pets as the main character (i.e. "Marmaduke" and "Garfield") — actions do not speak louder than words, especially when your only actions are wagging your tail and licking your crotch.

With "Marmaduke," it's a never-ending tale about whether it's OK to sit on the furniture or not. Usually it's not, and this is funny only once, maybe twice. Somehow, for like 15 years, this abomination has been getting valuable writing space.

It must be stopped.

As should "Cathy" and her incessant whining about how fat she looks and how her mother runs her life.

I've got a suggestion for you, Cathy. Why don't you not hang out with your stupid mother if she bugs you so much?

Or you could try to focus your reasoning skills on things that aren't so frivolous, such as how to put on clothes.

If she would quit being so selfish she would realize that everyone, man and woman alike, is better off without her around.

I must say the comic strip that actually gags me with a friggin' spoon is "The Family Circus."

This is the biggest waste of space known to man, and I think even those of you who are extremely religious find this family's wacky antics so unbearably nonrealistic that you

can't help but slobber on yourselves.

It's not cute when Billy sees his dead grandmother floating in his window at night because Billy forgot to say his prayers.

It's just downright creepy.

What would be cute is if Bil Keane (the creator) would realize that believing in the existence of ghosts can be detrimental to a 5-year-old's health and mental stability.

The only comics I have loved have been "Calvin and Hobbes" and "The Far Side." I could relate to Calvin, and I appreciated the humor of "The Far Side." They were true classics.

Instead of comic space there could be a nude picture section, or perhaps a place to get the lowdown on how to build your own bomb out of

household appliances.

Or, they could just fire all those lame-ass writers who have been around for 500 years and let the new generation take over.

The writers of "Gasoline Alley," "Mary Worth," "Blondie" and "Dennis the Menace" need to be shot up with morphine because they're too old to keep writing their crap.

I know that I will never let my kids read the Sunday comics. It will rot their brain and probably shut it off for good.

I will encourage them to watch TV or play Nintendo games instead. At least these mind-altering forms of fun are entertaining, unlike how extremely dull it is when "Ziggy" learns (literally) how to make a mountain out of a molehill.



K.B.
Masterpiece
with
Karen Brown

Certainly this past holiday was a time to give thanks. I think that's why they call it Thanksgiving and not, like, Rockgiving, or Indianguiving, which usually breaks friends rather than makes them.

I'm thankful for my family, even though I was glad I spent the holiday without them. I have a nasty penchant for wine and Trivial Pursuit that would break my mother's soul in two if she saw my transformation from sweet and innocent to fiery and disobedient.

(Katie Swoboda and Leatha Swinehart are dirty rotten cheats, and I urge everyone never to speak to them again — I knew that crappy song from "Ghost" was "Unchained Melody!")

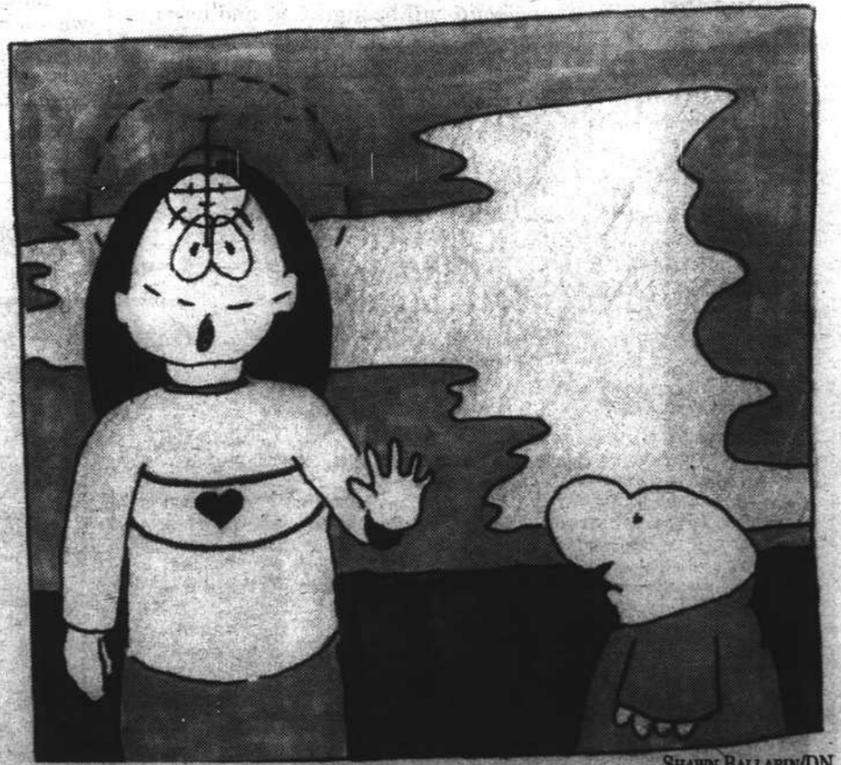
Forgive me. Anyhow, I'm also thankful for Holly and Amy, who have let me come over the past couple of years and partake in Amy's horrible cooking and Holly's repellent company.

They're great friends, however, because they just smile and nod at my unbridled enthusiasm for talking about nothing.

This ability to talk about nothing is a definite reflection of my low IQ, but hey, it got me free turkey and stuffing.

I'm also thankful for learning from my friend Jenny that every sentence sounds much better when you put the phrase "2000" after it in a wispy voice.

For example, "I ate chicken pot pie 2000." Or, "I drive a clunker 2000." Or, "I saw 'Mystery Science



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