Psycho?Logical?Bulletin!

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“All the departmental news that’s fit to print, and other stuff”

Thiessen Reign of Terror Ends, Department Begins Healing

This month the PLB begins a new era. I will be taking the reigns as editor, printing all the news that’s fit to print. As you might suspect, I envision the PLB rivaling the NY Times in coverage and investigative reporting. Just like the Times, the PLB will report all of the dirty gossip, include opinion pieces that cover the breaking department stories, pictorial coverage of local animals, and of course, include a coupon section.

I want to acknowledge the wonderful work of the previous PLB editor, Erik Thiessen (ET). As a remembrance, this issue is largely devoted to memorializing his “glory days”—I hope you enjoy it. I caution you in getting overly excited about ET’s reign though, there are some dark corners if you look closely. For example, the impact factor of the PLB has plummeted during ET’s tenure.

I blame this on his tendency to write an excessive number of watered down articles, confusing/rambling writing style, and his pathological tendency for telling lies.

Things are going to change at the PLB. There will be shorter articles, more pictures (is that possible?), coverage of animals besides squirrels, and sensationalized articles covering topics we care about (gossip, sex, drugs). My hope is that we’ll have more coverage across the department, with regularly appearing articles from grad students, staff members, and post-docs.

With the end of the Thiessen era comes the end of the faculty abuse of power. Please submit articles (and article ideas) to me, I’ll take just about anything (creswell@cmu.edu).

- David Creswell
When Dr. Thiessen negotiated soundproof testing rooms as a part of his start-up package nobody considered this request suspicious. After all, Dr. Thiessen conducts research on language acquisition. I, like many of my colleagues, assumed that Dr. Thiessen is concerned about outside noise interfering with his studies. Sadly, we have all been mistaken. The real reason Dr. Thiessen needs soundproof testing rooms became apparent to me only when I visited his lab as a parent rather than as a colleague. Here is the ugly truth: Dr. Thiessen’s experiments are excruciatingly mind-numbingly boring. Therefore, soundproof testing rooms are intended to prevent bone chilling baby cries escaping the walls of Dr. Thiessen’s lab torture chamber. On behalf of dozens of babies who have suffered through Dr. Thiessen’s experiments, I am asking you to contact Dr. Thiessen and demand that he makes his experiments less boring (or at least less lengthy). As you can see in the picture, Eric tries to placate babies using a throat-grab maneuver he learned as a wrestler.

This article was submitted by Dr. Anna Fisher, a concerned parent of a 14-month-old baby girl who was traumatized by Thiessen’s questionable research practices.

"...soundproof testing rooms are intended to prevent bone chilling baby cries escaping the walls of Dr. Thiessen's lab..."
Erik Thiessen: A Retrospective

Great men are meteors, consuming themselves to light the world.
- Napoleon Bonaparte

Until you're ready to look foolish, you'll never have the possibility of being great.
- Cher

For the last 3 years, Erik Thiessen has worked tirelessly, fearlessly, and sometimes childishly to bring the CMU Psychology department the quality publication we know as the PLB. As the Editor-in-chief, his job was to report the news – both research, personal, and squirrel related – to the ever gossip-hungry mob that roams the 3rd floor halls of Baker Hall. During this time, he made us laugh, he made us cry, he made us cheer, and he made us laugh again. But what is Erik’s legacy? How will future generations of CMU graduates, undergraduates, staff, and faculty remember his time as PLB editor? And what does the future hold in store for the rag-mag that gives us all an excuse to take off our pants - maybe that’s just me - and not work for 10 minutes as we run our eyes over the tittle-tattle of the previous month. Here I list, in no particular order, the top 3 contributions of Erik’s glorious and ignoble reign.

1) What’s in a name? One of Erik’s longest running and greatest gifts to the department is to make us realize that names are not written in stone. I, for example, always thought my name was David because, well, it’s on my birth certificate and that is what everyone calls me (to my face at least). But I was wrong. Now it’s Davey. Like Davey Jones of Davey Jones’ locker. Or Davey Jones from the 60s pop-group The Monkeys. You may think I’m joking here but I’m not. Soon after the article declaring my new name was published two undergraduates who I had never before laid eyes on started singing “Daydream Believer” as I walked past them. And before Charles Kemp had even arrived Erik had renamed him….well, I won’t get into that. Anyhow, in the spirit of Dr. Thiessen’s change-the-name storyline I suggest that from now on we call him Rik, or Dr. T, or ET. Anything that’s even close to these will do. It’s payback time.

2) It’s ok to tell porky’s. No, this isn’t a reference to the 1980s film about Florida high schoolers searching for sex in all the wrong places. It’s cockney rhyming slang for lies! Unlike the previous editor, Lori Holt, who combined cutting edge investigative reporting with a strong love of gerbils, Rik Thiessen has never been shy about, well, making up stuff. Brooke Feeney as a drug-added psychopath? False! John Anderson has a fake leg? False! Dr. T as a burly man? False! Ken Kotovsky cooking squirrels for Friday night dinner? Well, that one is true but I can’t write about it because of the PETA lawsuit. The point here is whenever it was a slow news month – meaning that Sheldon didn’t win an award or Marcel wasn’t on TV – ET simply created his own stories out of thin air (aka, the stuff between his ears). This is all well and good if you want to read a publication that’s fun and gives you a good laugh. But who among us wants that? All I can pray is that incoming Editor, J.D. “hot stuff” Creswell, takes the PLB back to its roots: Course rosters and department birthdays.

3) The walls have eyes. It used to be the case that you could get up to all sorts of shenanigans and nobody would ever know. Yet ever since Rikki took over as PLB editor it seems as if around every corner there is a digital camera charged and ready to shoot. It is almost as if ET is a one man group of paparazzi. When Mike’s tenure as department head was renewed – there was Rik with a camera. When I tried Dance-Dance revolution for the first (and last) time – there he was again. When Emilie, Erin, and Theresa decided that happy hour should start at 2 pm on a Friday – guess who was on the case with a camera and helping them to finish the Chardonnay. The bottom-line here is that once again the citizens of the psychology department can go about their business without fear of being captured in digital hi-resolution. Whether this means there will be an upsurge in, shall we say compromis- ing behavior, remains to be seen. But I, for one, am willing to use the men’s room by the soda machine for the first time in 3 years. This will bring me relief on many counts.

So, there you have it. Erik Thiessen, editor, psychologist, and man-child. We have him to thank for looking forward to the first of each month with genuine anticipation – though most of us would like to thank Kathy Majors too for making sure our paycheck goes through. Few appreciate how much work is involved in compiling each issue of the PLB - what with making up names, taking pictures, and creating fibs – but ET went over and above (and sometimes through) the call of duty. Erik, you will be sorely missed and I, for one, salute you for sacrificing on our behalf your time, your energy, and your dignity.

- David Rakison
I know that the challenges in life are really getting to me when I lose my humor and can't laugh at my pathetic situation. More than once, the PLB and Erik have saved the day, bringing a smile to my face even in the darkest of hours (say before a faculty meeting or a meeting of College Council). I thank Erik for his effort and special unique perspective that he brought to the task.

**Most memorable article:** The piece on anal sex.

**What I learned best from prior PLB issues:** That squirrels are absolutely despicable creators and cannot under any circumstances be trusted.

**Biggest let down or regret:** That there were not more squirrel recipes.
Investigative Reporter Brooke Feeney breaks this story.

Associate Professor Erik Thiessen has been campaign- ing to have the field of sociology obliterated as a major field of study. He began his overt campaign last year by speaking out against research projects, presented at the annual Meeting of the Minds, that remotely resembled sociology. During a subsequent interview, Dr. Thiessen was quoted as saying, "I would rather die than be a sociologist." When asked to elaborate, Thiessen responded, "Sociology is the most unscientific discipline there is. I refused to take sociology classes as a student, and I will not condone this behavior in my students."

In fact, Thiessen devotes a full three weeks of his Research Methods course to teaching students why sociology is non-scientific. Counter-initiatives have been put in place, however. For example, as part of CMU's appreciation of diversity initiative, Dr. Thiessen has been encouraged to enroll in a sociology course of his choosing in the fall of 2009. In addition, Thiessen has been asked to lead a Big Questions discussion on "What can sociology teach us?" This discussion will be open to the public, and sociologists are especially encouraged to attend.

- Brooke Feeney

Brooke Feeney and Bob Siegler Remember Erik Thiessen's Pranks and Shenanigans

Brooke Feeney:

Erik was a very funny editor who took the PLB to new levels. What I will remember the most about Erik’s era as PLB editor is how he covered every aspect of his colleagues’ lives without letting anything, especially the truth, get in his way. My only issue is that he neglected to focus similar attention on himself. I look forward to this being remedied in future issues of the PLB under a more democratic editor.

Bob Siegler:

My favorite was when Erik returned from Qatar and told the lunch group some of the hilarious jokes he'd heard there. "A man and a camel walk into a bar..." "An imam, a rabbi, and a priest are on an airplane that's about to crash..." "How come no one ever starves in the desert?" Erik deserves all the credit for there now being a 10 year waiting list of psychology faculty wanting to teach in Qatar.
Grad Talk Presents: 
Considered Reflections on Erik Thiessen

WELCOME to the graduate student of the PLB! That’s right, from now on, a few pages of this world-renowned peer-reviewed journal will include a voice for the graduate students. Or rather, the voice of Bryan and Blair.

As our first decree as joint PLB/Editors we would like to wish a fond farewell to Erik Thiessen – the exiting PLB editor whose benevolent humor, on-cue sarcasm, and inescapable temper (most notably on the kickball field) has touched our lives in ways we will never forget. Hard though we may try sometimes.

To try to understand the man behind the bulletin, the graduate wing of the PLB conducted an informal poll to see what kind of impact Erik has had on department life.¹

Surprisingly, in response to the first question over 95% of grad students polled by the PLB grad editors agree: Erik Thiessen is a person.²

But not just any person. Critically, he was the PLB editor - and over 99% of students agree, the PLB has been a good way to track the pulse of the department in a relaxed, light-hearted way. How else would we know what is happening across the department from our offices-in-the-ceiling? Fortunately, Erik Thiessen has allowed us to avoid ruminating over such distressing thoughts.

But now he has decided to retire. Toss in the towel, so to speak.³ Interestingly, the polls relating to why he has decided to retire did not lead to a clear answer with equal numbers of votes split across:

1) He became habituated to his own humor - much like the infants in his studies

b) He was fired by Mike Scheier out of fear that the PLB editor’s power was overshadowing that of the department head.

c) He needed more time to work out - rumors have it he’s been consistently beaten in racquetball by various faculty of late

d) He is still the PLB editor - Creswell is the puppet editor.

As with Leno’s Departure from the Tonight Show, the PLB has scrambled to find a replacement. Will Conan and Creswell be able to fill the shoes of these greats? More importantly, will Creswell be able to top the fantastic outfit Conan wore during his superbowl commercial?

Keeping things fresh is a challenging task, especially when full of hoarded quesadillas. No, we did not forget.

¹ Polls really are a great way for uninformed contributors to say what they want without taking any personal responsibility. It certainly is not their fault that people hold these opinions, even if the opinions are made up in the first place.
² Other popular answers: 1) Threw squirrel from the Ken Kotovsky articles; 2) A treat from Lord of the Rings.
³ So sad. A single tear runs down each editor’s cheek.
The PLB will certainly not be the same without him. However, if imitation truly is the highest form of compliment, his late-career addition of a graduate-run page to the plb is the highest form of praise. Or a sign that there is further humor to overturn in some of the lesser explored crevasses of the department.

So Adios Erik, we tip our caps (and EEG caps, etc) to you for a job well done. I’m sure that the new editors of the plb will have a tough time living up to your legacy. Fortunately, your self-imposed constraints on Erik related humor can now gleefully be lifted, which should make for a much easier transition.

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Erik Thiessen Tribute Run

As a final tribute to Erik, BRYAN MATLENS and STEPHANIE NOELLE MANCHIN would like to invite ERIK to be an honorary member of their Psycho?logical? Marathon team, running in tribute to our former PLB editor this May. What else could possibly be a better use of all of the extra time retirement brings? For additional details, see:

http://www.pittsburghmarathon.com/Home_6774.htm

Note the 14th by Bryan’s name. This is to signify Bryan’s intentions to support the team physically through a quarter of the marathon race and in spirit for the remainder.

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Which US President did Erik Thiessen resemble most while serving as PLB Editor?

Calvin Coolidge. Who’s he?

Barak Obama. Hope for the masses

George Bush. Won’t win another popularity contest.

Teddy Roosevelt. Ruled with iron demeanor, letting nothing slide (pun intended).

Contest: Best Superhero Name

Day in - day out of processing consent forms getting to you? Long for a secret life where you make a difference fighting crime and villainy rather than poorly formulated theory? Here’s your chance: submit your alter ego’s name to the PLB, and next month we will select the best one for official PLB endorsement! At last, some recognition for the Caped Connectionists, Masked Analogizers, and Conceptual Crusaders unknowingly in our midst. Are you a truly selfless superhero without the need for such gratification? Submit an entertaining name for another member of the department [faculty names encouraged!] and they may be featured instead!

Submissions can be e-mailed to Blair or Bryan or deposited anonymously in our mailboxes.
South Side Beat: Thiessen Arrested for Dancing Naked with Squirrels

On one of the regular drunken nights on the South Side, former PLB editor Erik Theissen was arrested for dancing in the nude with a grey squirrel. The dancing wasn’t so bad, but the festivities were blocking traffic making it difficult to get the beer truck to the South Side residents. The squirrel, identified as Lola, was a refuge from Squirrel Hill. She was captured in one of Dr. Ken Kotovsky’s raids on Murray Avenue and driven (in a fuel efficient vehicle) to the South Side. She has been walking the streets on that side of the river since her forced immigration. Thiessen said he did nothing wrong. He had not urinated on Carson Street but always used a side street, and claimed to be the squirrel’s brother. CMU has asked Thiessen not to interact with squirrels on campus until a committee can evaluate his behavior.

- Sheldon Cohen
Much of the January meeting was spent brainstorming ways to increase communication of Staff Council, its offerings and its events, on campus. There continues to be concern that some staff don’t know SC exists, or if they do know, they aren’t sure what SC does.

If you’re interested in graphic art and design and would like to participate in an SC effort, please consider contacting Audrey Portis to lend your talents to the CMU SC Tagline Contest. Prizes are involved (TBA). Only CMU staff are eligible to participate. Your idea should reflect Staff Council’s mission statement or constitution. For the mission statement, see the SC website [http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/] and for a copy of the constitution, email Alan Becer at ab8g@andrew.cmu.edu. You may contact Ms. Portis at aportis@andrew.cmu.edu.

The smoking policy committee at CMU is currently trying to finalize which campus locations will be posted for smoking. 2 SC reps are on this committee.

While accommodations were made to have a live video- and audio link to the Qatar campus, the Qatar reps were no-shows at the January meeting; it was not announced why. A recent concern expressed by Qatar reps is that for them, Thursday is the equivalent of their Friday so people would rather not be on campus after work. Also, while our meeting is at noon, theirs is at 8pm due to the time zone difference. SC reps on Main Campus seem to be in general agreement that shifting the time or day of the main meeting (which has been the same for many years) to better accommodate 2 Qatar reps is not in the best interests of Staff Council as a whole and would set a precedent for CMU satellite campuses in other time zones (California, Australia etc.) who would also request alternative meeting times for their future elected reps. (Other satellite campuses have expressed interest in being represented by SC, and this may be introduced in future elections). The concern is that if the main meeting is shifted around to accommodate one region of the world, the next satellite campus admitted to representation in Staff Council will request a time or day in conflict with the adjusted meeting time. And so on, as new satellite campuses around the world come onboard.

Links
--Staff Council Quarterly newsletter, The Scoop, Feb. 2009 issue [http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/](http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/) (Click on ‘The Scoop’)

- Ellen Conser

**Staff News: Save the Date**

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<tr>
<td>President’s Forum</td>
<td>Mon. March 23, McConomy Auditorium, UC</td>
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<td>Take Your Sons &amp; Daughters to Work day</td>
<td>Thurs. April 23, 2009</td>
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 ALERT! The PLB wants stories and news from the staff and post-docs.

Look how much fun Erin, Ginger, and Emilie are having! Look how much wine Ginger is drinking. The PLB wants to know about it.

“Much of the January meeting was spent brainstorming ways to increase communication of Staff Council, its offerings and events, on campus”
Sheldon Cohen Speaks Out Publicly About Thiessen

Thiessen was an overbearing, egotistic, and inarticulate editor. He dared to edit some of my best work, and turned down several articles I then had to submit to leading physics journals. He generally showed a lack of respect for the great grey squirrel, as well as for the artistic writings of the senior faculty. There was a clear bias for the rodent positions of Dr Kotovsky and little coverage of the elected squirrel leader—poor Nutty (who is thought to be living in an alley behind Thiessen's house on the S. Side).

During his tenure there was a total lack of coverage of department gerbils, of the quality of candy provided by the department head instead of raises, and of professional surf boarding; not to mention an insufficient number of baby pictures.

In all seriousness, Thiessen might be an OK guy, a decent PLB Editor, maybe.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this Erik Thiessen PLB-special. It’s been fun putting together all of the informative stories about Erik. I’m glad that truth has finally been published.

In all seriousness, Erik, you’ve done a great job with the PLB the last couple of years, and I’ll do my best to put out a more inflammatory publication. Speaking of, I thought everyone would appreciate what the PLB editorship did to Erik’s hair—look at all that grey!

We’ll return to more “normal” reporting next month. Please send me your articles, I love anything that is less than 300 words!

If you have pictures, stories, happenings, announcements, gossip, mishaps, information about topics relating to sociology, squirrels, want a regularly appearing column, or if you simply want to rat out your friends and colleagues—the PLB wants to know about it. All things serious and trivial will be accepted. Please send them to me:

creswell@cmu.edu

- Your New PLB Editor,
  David “The Puppet” Creswell

The red circle indicates where the PLB-editorship inflicts the most damage

Thiessen’s PLB editorial work has caused untold damage in the Department