

## Best Editorial Cartoon

“On the Fence”

Tim Vandevall

*The Messenger*, Northview High School

### ON THE FENCE COMIC 1

BY TIM VAN DE VALL



#### Judge's Comments:

Excellent story telling, a charming and unique style -- this is great work! I was impressed with the command of the subject matter, the pacing from one panel to the next and the artwork itself. I hope Tim continues to draw and make comics/cartoons/illustrations.

## **Best Feature Photo**

“B.B King Makes Atlanta Blue”

Becky Fluke

*The Central Post*, Central High School



### **Judge's Comments:**

A very strong category. The winning photo has an excellent combination of facial expression, composition, moment, beautiful lighting and a totally clean background with zero distracting elements. Ms. Fluke had three photos in the top five of this category.

# Best Feature Story

## “Get Crunked Up”

Jeremy Nodine

*Carpe Diem*, Decatur High School

# ‘Get Crunked Up’

## Musician spills on life, music

BY JEREMY NODINE

**B**illy Christian Walls moved to Decatur with his family in 1975 – 12 years after his birth, four years after he picked up his first guitar, six years before he toured the world with Chuck Berry and 23 years before he became Guitar Red.

The street musician is quite popular around Decatur. Even students who do not know him by name probably have seen him performing in front of Starbucks or elsewhere around the square.

Walls’s outgoing personality and crazy stories have made him popular with many Decatur students. “He’s crunk ‘cause he plays ‘Get Crunked Up’ all the time,” said junior Ginny Newman.

Though he seems that he could be somewhat of a burden on business, most Decatur corporations do not seem to mind him at all. In fact, the employees at Starbucks Coffee, his most popular performing spot, think he is crunk too. “I think Guitar Red is a pretty cool guy. We all like to listen to his music, and we give him ice water from time to time,” said Starbucks employee Julia Richardson.

Despite his relative popularity, however, most Decatur students don’t know much more about him than his catchy trademark. Who is this mystery man?

Billy Christian Walls is his real name, “like a Christian Bible,” he said.

He grew up in Morristown, NJ, in a family of four: him, his brother Duke, his sister Shela and his mother.

Music came naturally to Walls. “I came from a musical family – everybody played or did something.... I grew up playin’ music,” said Walls, who began playing the guitar at age eight.

“I guess I was ‘bout twelve when we got here to Atlanta.... I grew up right there in Kirkwood. You could buy a house back then for \$10,000,” he said. “I can’t

afford a house over there now.”

For his first Christmas in Decatur, Walls got his first electric guitar. “I had a ‘Tasco,” he said. He remembers that because he did not see it under the tree on Christmas Eve, “I didn’t think they got it for me. I cried like a baby.... [But] I woke up the next morning and it was right there under the tree. That Tasco was tight too, yeah I jammed that. That’s when I got into that Rock n’ Roll bit – Van Halen, Stevie Ray Vaughn and all those cats,” he said.

A few years later he was in Okinawa, Japan, doing a USO tour with Chuck Berry. “I remember I was ‘bout 16 ‘cause I couldn’t drink nothing. Yep, the Chuck Berry Show took me all around the world,” he said.

When Walls returned to Decatur, his aunt invited him to play at a party she was having. “[My aunt] never said I did nothing good my whole life, I swear, until that night there. She said she was so proud of me,” he said. “She said she loved me and that she would always remember the song I played for her that night. I’ll never forget how her face lit up.”

Walls became Guitar Red one day about six years ago outside of Johnny’s Pizza. He and his wife Veronica were going through a divorce at the time, and his bills were stacking up. “I was out there playing the guitar right [outside of Johnny’s] and this little boy in this little stroller he asked me what my name was. I had on some

red shoes so I said, ‘My name’s Guitar Red.’ Ya know I was just [making it up]. Three weeks later I came back and that same little boy [expletive] near broke his neck tryin’ to get out that stroller and he said ‘That’s Guitar Red mommy,’ and I said, [expletive] he’s right, I am Guitar Red.”

Some people call Walls a hustler. “One time this dude put some money in my hat and he says, ‘Man, you got a good hustle.’ I gave him his money back, and I said, ‘Look here, this is not no hustle. I do this cause I love it.’

“I play all original music out there – I got this song called ‘No Matter What I Do Babe, You Got Your Lips Poked Out.’ I love that song. I got another song called ‘Look Up, Tell Me What You See, That’s How Far You Can Go If You Follow Your Dream.’”

Walls’s love for performing comes from the energy he gets from the audience. “It creates a fire inside me,” he said. “When you playing that guitar, you ain’t got to worry ‘bout nothing else but the sound you want to express. When you playing ... it’s a part of you. It’s like something that God is transmitting through you, and you need to express it to somebody. Music is universal.”

Walls says he loves the students from Decatur. “I love kids.... You’re kids so you’re gonna do kid things – I did.”

Although Walls was once a kid doing kid things, he now has a new appreciation for life. “I understand life now, [I am] 40 years old, folk. I understand that if you be yourself and press on the things that is you, you’ll find that universe inside yourself.

That’s what I’ve been trying to do man.

“If I could be anything in the whole wide world it would be something that I’ve been trying to do my whole life. Be Billy Christian, Billy Christian W-a-l-l-s, Walls.” ■



Billy Christian Walls, a.k.a. “Guitar Red”

### Judge’s Comments:

GREAT lead! Solid writing and quotes a great thorough feature on a wonderful subject. Good job!

## Best Headline Writing

Claire Campbell

*The Prowler*, Starr's Mill High School

### Covel's students bring wave of aid to tsunami victims



Sophomore Megan Waples (left) and junior Michelle Wright make waffles to help raise money for tsunami victims.

By Claire Campbell '07  
and Tricia Price '07  
STAFF WRITERS

Sophomore Megan Waples was enjoying her Christmas break until she turned on the television.

Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> marked the date of possibly the most destructive tsunami in history, according to *National Geographic*.

"I saw all the destruction from the tsunami, and I realized how we could make a difference if we helped the victims."

Waples contacted English teacher Dr. Bob Covel about starting a school-wide fundraiser for the tsunami victims in Southeast Asia.

Although Covel usually helps with the Heifer Project International, a group that collects funds to send animals to Third World countries, he thought Waples' idea was a great alternative.

Student response was overwhelming, Covel said. Within the first two days, Covel's English classes raised almost \$500, and within the first week, that figure reached \$1,000.

"Students have been donating all the money in their wallets," Covel said.

The tsunami relief fundraiser raised \$2,351.30, Covel said.

"I feel it is our duty as Americans to help these people in their time of need," sophomore Jenny Newton, who is on one of Covel's classes, said.

Covel and his students sent the money they collected to the American Red Cross, who in turn will use it to help the tsunami victims.

Students came up with some creative ideas to raise funds.

"Some juniors baked cookies and then sold them," Covel said. "Another idea was to sell waffles before school."

The waffle sale was a lucrative fundraiser, bringing in more than \$130 in just one morning, junior Laura Dietmeyer said.

The waffle fundraiser was such a hit that some students will sell waffles once a month to support other charities. Last Friday students sold pink waffles to raise money for breast cancer.

The fundraising has even drawn attention from the community. The Studio, a local dance school, has donated \$100 to the cause, Covel said.

Several other businesses were contacted to match the funds collected, Covel said.

#### Judge's Comments:

Clever play on words/names ("Appel ripens. . . wave of aid. . ."). Very exciting headlines that effectively summarize stories and draw in readers. One suggestion -- avoid using articles (a, an, the) in heads.

# Best House Editorials

The Staff

*The Oracle*, North Springs High School

## Staff Editorial: Mandatory Mayhem

### Mandatory classes force focus away from academics

The art of scheduling is a delicate process at North Springs. Block scheduling can be a circus act within itself, and trying to balance all of the mandatory classes onto the fragile system often causes fractures. In order to graduate, a student must earn four literature and math credits, three science, two language, one personal fitness, one health, and three social studies. These last three subjects are those that have given rise to much discontent within the student populace.

Until 2003-2004, when AP World History was offered, there were only two mandatory social studies courses at an above 'average' level: AP US History and AP Government. In addition, a student must complete half a semester of economics, and in most cases, half a semester of political science, neither of which is offered at an honors nor an AP level.

In theory, these classes are of noble intentions. Mandated by the state curriculum, they demonstrate "democratization in education," as explained by Mrs. Elliott, head of the North Springs Social Studies Department. In her words, social

studies is a "microcosm of the world outside of the classroom", and the haphazard grouping of individuals allows for exposure to all aspects of the "democratic process."

However, by exposing one to

While trying to gain control of the more rambunctious, the calmer are neglected, or sometimes even subjected to the threats and punishments issued for the former. Those that hold interest for the topic are undermined

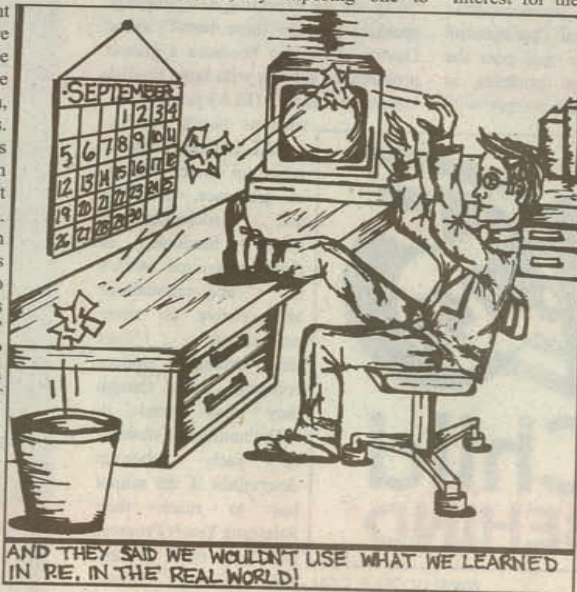
by those who refuse to work. The teacher lowers the level of the class to that of the lower students, thus deciding that the higher students will not significantly advance their knowledge. Though this class is diverse and reflective, the subject is inept.

Meanwhile, students are also struggling to fit in their required personal fitness class. Though they may be stars of the varsity basketball team or medalists in track and field, it does not excuse them from their Fulton County mandated course. They must have their physical activity monitored and graded by a certified instructor, so as to satisfy the mass hysteria over childhood obesity.

The key dilemma in all of this is

that these courses do more than just expose one to feelings of antipathy for the environment. Every year, North Springs is faced with the same dilemma of making all of the mandatory classes fit. The double magnet students are, by far, the hardest hit. In addition to their extra magnet classes, they still must satisfy the county requirements. Thus, every summer, the school track is filled with these students, walking in circles for three weeks of their vacation so as to create adequate room. This is the true injustice cast upon the student body. Going the extra mile, literally, should be in order to pursue a greater educational goal. Instead, these actions are ultimately worthless.

These situations illustrate the sacrifices made in order to satisfy the county and the state. It is easy to look at a concept and say that it is well intended, but it is entirely different to experience it. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the royal crown sought to rule the American colonies from afar. Ultimately, a revolution resulted. Likewise the county, with their lack of personal involvement in the system, made poor decisions out of conceptual speculation. The educational targeting of North Springs High School is far from its necessary mark, and if requirements are not adjusted, this microcosm of the real world may ultimately end in revolution.



such broad environments within the classroom, the educational gain is ultimately depreciated. Tethering a teacher to so many varying abilities and interests ultimately results in conflicts.

### Judge's Comments:

North Springs' editorials were consistently well reported and written. The editorials also tackled challenging and compelling topics. My only suggestion for improvement would be to tighten the writing a little. Some of the editorials were pretty long.