

Our schools are a construction zone

Friday, Sept. 18, 1998

High school, the best four years of my life! Well, that rumor is coming to an end, and pretty quickly for that matter. How am I supposed to enjoy my high school career when I can't even find my way to my classes?

This renovation project is completely throwing me off track. Try to imagine yourself as a frightened 14-year-old trying to overcome puberty while being shoved into a school filled with adults with fully grown beards. I mean that's horrifying already, isn't it?

Now on top of all that I have to worry about finding my way around the school. They should just send us to boot camp. And not only that, but by the time we catch the drift of things we are shipped out and moved off to different classes!

Not only is the renovation making me get lost, but it is also annoying me during class. Just the other day I had to complete a test in all this racket because of the renovation. And in my math class we always have to repeat ourselves 4 or 5 times because the teacher can't hear us over the construction.

Overall, I despise the construction work. I highly doubt that the results are going to be worth the three years of havoc that the students have to put up with. But then again, there is nothing I can do about it so I guess I am just going to have to deal with it like everyone else for now.

— Irene Sitalides, freshman, Bristol Central

Friday, Sept. 18, 1998

I was poking at something on my lunch tray with a little plastic fork and just beginning to worry about the Italian test next period.

A friend of mine turned to me slowly and said: "Has it occurred to you yet that we could very well be breathing the asbestos they're removing in the renovation?"

I said: "I have reflexive verbs and this artificial steak sandwich to contend with just now. No health issues, please."

She said: "Think about it, it just can't be safe."

I said: "I have. It can't. You're right."

She said: "So what do you think of it?"

I said: "I think that if I breathe deeply near the English hall I may escape a foreign language quiz."

She said: "Oh."

And then she moved to another table.

— Joe Wilbur, junior, Bristol Eastern

Friday, Sept. 18, 1998

I am in study hall trying to read a short story for lit class. I have read and reread the same line about six times. I sigh, slam my book shut and realize that there is no way I can concentrate. Being on the lower level, the classrooms don't have ceilings, just metal roofs that magnify the sound of everything. The rustling of chairs and books on concrete only increases the noise level, and because of all this noise there is no way anyone can concentrate or do any homework. Teachers try to yell above the noise but it is no use, it just adds to it. Although I know that the construction will only last for a few years, it won't be soon enough.

— Bethany Raffanello, freshman, Bristol Eastern

Friday, Sept. 18, 1998

It's 1:30, and it's the end of another steamy September afternoon at good old B.C. The heat is intensified by the fact that this construction nonsense has segregated the hall I'm in, stagnating the already humid air. I drift into an uncomfortable doze, but, unfortunately, wake up seconds later.

Now to worsen the situation, I have yet another so-called "asbestos headache." It feels as though two men in hard hats are standing on either side of me, taking turns bashing my skull deeper and deeper into my desk...

Then, just as suddenly as it appeared, my headache vanishes, and two construction workers pass by my classroom, with their hard hats and hammers, off to give some other poor kid their headache. And I wonder if I'm not dreaming all this, too.

— Amanda Lehmert, senior, Bristol Central

Tuesday, Sept. 22, 1998

While you are walking down the hallways you can't help but notice the depressing mood that you are forced into. The dark hallway engulfs you and saddens your soul. You are pushed into a dim room waiting to work, yet anticipating the sound of the bell at the end of class. Perhaps you can't wait until you get out of the dreary room to see the light of day. As you work, you may be disturbed by the rustle of desks being moved around in the classroom above you. You may find it hard to concentrate because of the noise.

As the freshman class stepped into the polished floor of a Bristol Eastern High School hallway they could not help but notice the renovations. The cement floors and the rooms without ceilings. It may not effect you individually, but I'm sure that there are some students who are feeling the effects. Many students believe that the renovations are an inconvenience now, but they will help the school in the long run.

— Shaunte Miller-Ligon, freshman, Bristol Eastern

Wed., Sept. 23, 1998

STUDENT: "So...when exactly are we going to use this?"

TEACHER: "Well, actually, geometry is used in a lot of everyday occupations."

STUDENT: "So, 'engineer' is an everyday occupation these days?"

TEACHER: "You see, it's a common misconception that only engineers use geometry. Why, the men working at the school renovations need a strong grounding in geometry to go about their jobs."

STUDENT: "So what you're trying to tell me is that you can use geometry to do things loudly and over budget, inconveniencing everyone?"

TEACHER: "Um...not exactly. Okay, let's try this again..."

— Joe Wilbur, junior, Bristol Eastern

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 1998

Bristol Eastern's High School construction has made achieving an education impossible. Two halls have been blocked off, and signs are posted everywhere informing staff and students of the inherent dangers. Of course, this is just a waste of paper since the noise level is enough of a declaration in itself. For instance, I was walking my friend to class this morning and the workers were so disruptive that we couldn't even hear each others' conversations. Trying to get around teachers strolling shopping carts along is also an ever-increasing hassle as well as embarrassment for the teacher and student alike.

— Merissa Mastropiero, junior, Bristol Eastern

All about *The Tattoo*

The Tattoo is a page written by local high school students and published occasional Mondays in *The Bristol Press*. Our group of student journalists work under the direction of volunteer advisors Steve Collins and Jackie Majerus, veteran reporters at the *Press*.

If you have a question or comment about this page, or would like to find out about joining our group, please contact Majerus or Collins at 589-5316. We welcome your responses. We're on the web at: http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Majerus_Collins

We also invite readers who are students, teachers or staff at either city high school to contribute to our running journal about life under construction. Give yours to a *Tattoo* member, mail them to us: c/o Reporters Jackie Majerus and Steve Collins, *The Bristol Press*, 99 Main St., Bristol, CT 06010, or, best of all, e-mail them to us at: SteveJackie@prodigy.net

Rocky road leads to license

By COLLIN SEGUIN

The Tattoo

My story starts at Bill's Driving School on West Street in Bristol. Last year, I signed up for driver's ed there.

It was the start of a journey that every teenager takes, something they look forward to their whole life. It is the journey necessary to receive that all-important piece of plastic that means freedom.

Two years ago, the state of Connecticut took it upon itself to make freedom a bit tougher to come by. According to the new law, it is now necessary to obtain a permit, and wait four to six months (depending on whether or not you take driver's education classes) to take the license test.

I lived to tell my story, and would like to share it with you.

A few days after my first class at the driving school, I took the test for my learner's permit.

Getting a learner's permit is like getting a fruitcake for Christmas. It is *something*, but not what you want.

That little piece of cardboard gave me the right to drive — as long as I had a licensed driver 21-years of age or older alongside. Since I was taking driver's ed through a certified school, my permit lasted four months. This is where things got interesting.

One good thing about Bill's Driving School is that, while you still must attend 15 classes and eight hours of driving, you can take these requirements at your leisure. Because of playing baseball, I couldn't show up at too many classes — so it seemed like I'd be in driver's ed forever.

The material isn't exactly riveting, and the videos that are shown look like they were made by my little sister, with acting straight from a bad sitcom.

You could understand why I didn't feel like I would ever get my license.

As August rolled around, I started to pile on the classes. Now, I was ready to drive. (In other words, the real fun was starting.)

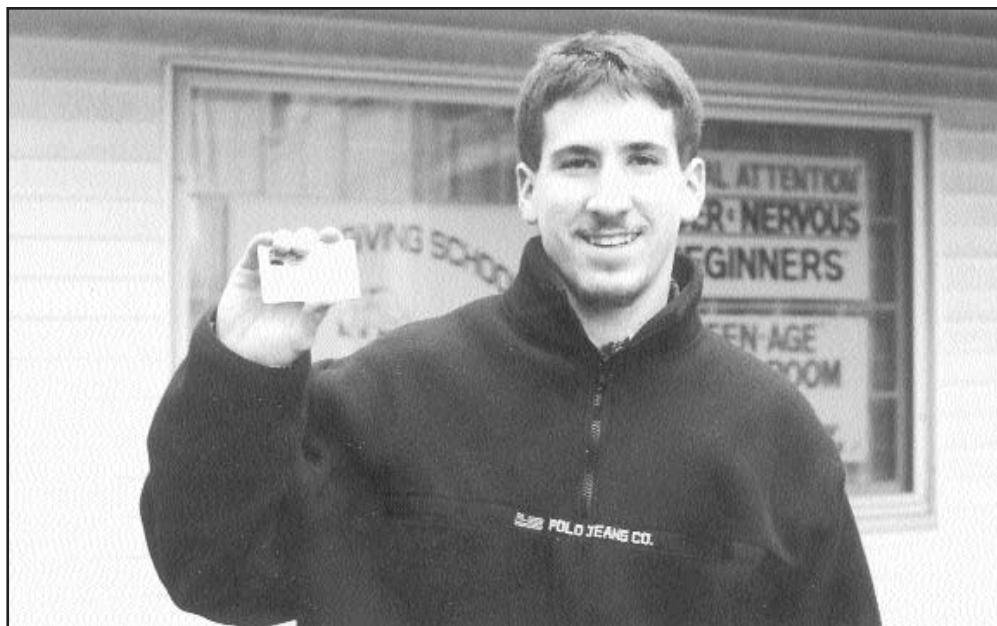
Every teen feels that he's ready to get behind the wheel. I know that's how I felt.

However, my mind changed quickly. Really, you would not believe how mad an instructor gets when you slam on the brakes.

The driving portion of the course is where you learn such intricacies as left-hand turns and 80-year-old drivers. Guess which one was harder to deal with.

After the classes and driving hours are done, and the permit period is over, it is time to take the license test.

This can be done one of two ways. You can either take it through the driving school, which is more convenient but also costs more, or take it at the Department of Motor Vehicles, where it's less expensive, but it's harder to make an appointment — probably



The Tattoo

Collin Seguin, a senior at Bristol Central High School, proudly shows off his hard-won ticket to freedom.

because they actually work what must amount to three hours a week.

I showed up to the driving school for the driving test, where a few others I knew awaited the nerve-wracking event. I was the first to go out for the road test.

Before you go out, you get a check-point sheet so that you can look it over. There are three areas of grading. In two of the areas, three wrong moves means that you are making another appointment with the DMV. In the last part, the critical driving skills section, one wrong move means the same thing.

I stepped into the car, greeted by one of those great DMV instructors. This nice fellow had the personality of a wet rug, and the kindness of an executioner (which is probably perfect for the job).

"How are you?" I asked him.

He responded, "Well, my coffee is cold, it took them too long to serve it to me, and I had to show up here this early. Now get into the car and start."

Oh, boy.

I stepped into the car, turned on the engine, and was off. I thought I did pretty good.

However, when I pulled into a parking space to end the test, there was a long silence.

Breaking the ice, I finally asked, "Well, how did I do?"

He then gave me that look, the one someone gives you when you either asked a stupid question or said something really dumb.

The instructor reached over the wheel, picked up his red pen, and circled the "FAIL" box over and over and over.

When the ink finally bled through the

pad, he dismissed me to go across the street to the driver's school and report the news.

Well, if I ever wanted to step in front of a speeding car, that was the time. Of course, the instructor probably would have marked me down for that too, so I just waited to cross the street.

The next time I took the driving test, it went better than expected until the end, when I had to pull into a parking space. I misunderstood the instructor's orders, and almost turned into the wrong space.

"Hey, I don't mean for you to get creative," the instructor said. "Just pull into the space I said to."

With an icy cold dread, I pulled in, turned off the engine, and again prepared for the worst.

After telling me my mistake, the instructor circled the "pass" box on my test.

I shook his hand repeatedly, until he said, "Glad to be of service, but let go of my hand."

I went into the driving school to share the good news in my humble way. (Actually, I shouted "Yes!" and jumped up in the air before I walked in.)

Two days later, I went to the New Britain DMV to get my license.

Now was the easy part. I was going to go up there, smile, and get a good picture taken.

I sat down in the chair, and got ready to pose. The cameraman interrupted me, saying, "There's a problem with the camera. Just sit tight."

OK, no problem. I could wait. I just want to be ready when....

FLASH!!!!!!

New clock exhibit is worth the time

By KATE MAJERUS

The Tattoo

Got time on your hands? Check out the new exhibit at the American Clock and Watch Museum and learn how the American industrial revolution began.

This exhibit grabs your interest right away. When you walk in, the first thing you see is an original sign for Daniel Burnap's clock shop. By pressing a button, you can hear a monologue done by an actor representing Eli Terry when he was 14 and working under Burnap.

Behind the sign it shows you what a clock shop would have looked like, somewhere around 1800. In the monologue Terry says, "Someday my dreams will come true."

Indeed, Terry's dream for interchangeable parts did come true. The rest of the exhibit tells how that dream changed the face of American manufacturing forever.

Eli Terry is a huge name in the history books because he came up with the idea of interchangeable parts, and thus started the American industrial revolution.

He figured out that if parts were made uniformly, then unskilled workers could each produce a single part of a clock. Those pieces were interchangeable — they would fit together easily — and made it possible for clocks to be made cheaply and quickly.

Instead of trained craftsmen making each one by hand, the new factory line needed just one knowledgeable overseer.

In the 1800s hardly anything was mass produced, but by the 1900's almost everything came off a factory assembly line. That meant that clocks and other former luxuries could be purchased by any regular Joe, when before only rich folks could buy such things.

Walk around the corner from Burnap's clock shop, see how the clocks were transported, push another button and hear a Yankee peddler "talk" about his life selling clocks. Though the audio wasn't yet set up when I visited, I'm sure it adds life to the scene.

Back then, four to eight clocks would typically be shipped in a box. Sometimes peddlers tossed in a comb or other trinket to entice people to buy their clocks.

Terry's breakthrough came when he landed a contract for 4,000 clocks. They were expected within four years. At that time it normally took one man a month to make a single clock.

Terry got to work on his plan for interchangeable parts and presto — mass production.

Next, visitors see an original clock gear assembly station, from the old Sessions factory in Forestville, which I found to be a fascinating display.

It wasn't ready when I toured the exhibit in August, but there were plans for a recorded dialog between two teenage factory workers, a boy and a girl at this station.

Their discussion gives a taste of the social life of the times, the meager pay and the lure of a city job over farm work.

Next to that is a TV that shows a three minute video clip showing workers at their machines in the Ingraham factory in Bristol. Turn around and you'll see a huge photo of the old Sessions factory, which once dominated Forestville.

The last section shows a history of clocks, where you see how timepieces improved and differed over the years.

So take some time and go learn your history.

The American Clock and Watch Museum, at 100 Maple St., is open every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. through early December. Admission is \$3.50 for adults and \$1.50 for children.

Majerus is a sophomore at Century High School in Rochester, Minnesota.

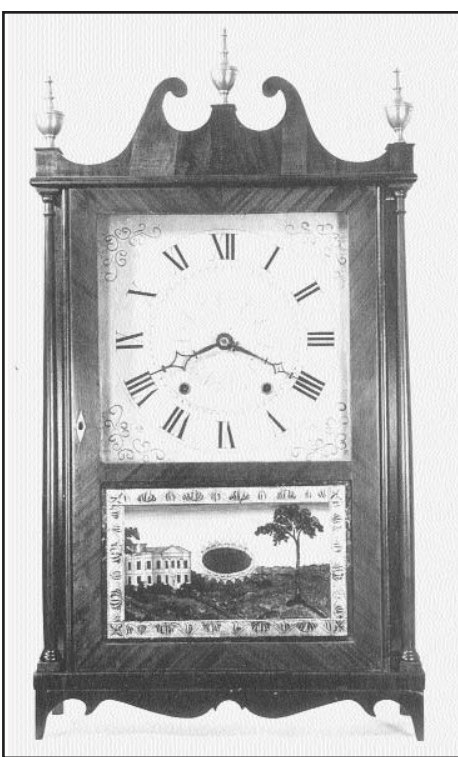


Photo courtesy of the American Clock and Watch Museum

Pillar & scroll shelf clock designed by Eli Terry and manufactured in Bristol, Connecticut about 1825.

Pumpkin solo effort sweet, but lacks depth

By SHAINA ZURA

The Tattoo

Let It Come Down by James Iha, guitarist of Smashing Pumpkins is his first solo attempt, and has been anticipated by fans for some time.

The album proved unique from Iha's work on *Mellon Collie and The Infinite Sadness*, the most recent album of the Pumpkins.

Though this is a solo album, Iha having written and co-produced it, three-quarters of the Smashing Pumpkins surface in this album.

Bass player D'Arcy sings harmony vocals on "One and Two,"

the 10th track. Pumpkins' temporary fill-in drummer Matt Walker plays drums and percussion throughout.

But front man Billy Corgan is nowhere to be found.

This album, spanning 40 minutes and 11 seconds, is a medley of fairly upbeat love songs in Iha's sweet voice. It is generally high pitched, but hits an occasional lower note.

Unlike typical Pumpkins tunes, this release offers mostly short songs. There are 11 songs, ranging from two minutes and 50 seconds to four minutes and 25 seconds.

A surprisingly wide variety of instruments are included: multi-

ple guitars, bass, drums and percussion, pedal and lapsteel, Hammond organ, piano, cello, violin, viola, saxophone, and trumpet.

Music Review

The lyrics — inane repetitive — aren't strong and often proved more sappy than profound.

The use of the word 'love' was excessive, emerging approximately 46 times in this album — more than once a minute.

Based on the depth of Iha's lyrical contributions to

Smashing Pumpkins, these were a disappointment.

For example, the first 30 seconds of "Jealousy" sound like something that would spurt out of Hanson. And others were just lame.

But it wasn't all bad.

"Be Strong Now," "See The Sun," "One and Two," and "No One's Gonna Hurt You" stayed away from the sappy pep of the rest of the album, bringing some much-needed mellow moments.

If in search of soft, sweet music, *Let It Come Down* is a good choice. But be prepared that it doesn't carry the depth of Iha's previous work.