



the clocktower



AN OPEN LETTER TO SANTA CLAUS

“Since the many letters I sent you as a child went unanswered, my hope is that a public message will catch your attention.”

STORY ON PAGE 4



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Jojo Dunlap, junior nursing major

“My senior year of high school I was supposed to be the lead in a play at my church and part of praise music on Christmas day . . . but when Christmas day came around, I got tonsillitis and the directors had to find another actor last minute. The praise group had to find another singer too.

“I couldn’t eat anything but jello for Christmas dinner, which was a struggle since my tonsils were so inflamed. I never would have thought jello would be hard to swallow. The Disney Christmas Parade couldn’t even make me feel better.”

“When I was a senior in high school, my church did an outreach called Backpacks for Christ at a local homeless shelter. I passed out milk cartons to people and talked with them. One lady in particular stood out. She told me about how she used to volunteer at a shelter before her husband suddenly lost his job, and now she was the one receiving help.

“I had never thought about how quickly that could happen, and it made me think about some family friends who were on the verge of the same situation. I gave her a scarf and told her to keep her head up, wishing I could do more.

“Later at home, when my family opened our presents, I didn’t feel fulfilled by anything I receive. But then I gave my friend her present and her gratitude changed my mood. I loved watching others open the gifts I had given them, not just getting stuff myself.

“It all made me wonder how Jesus would have spent Christmas. That Christmas put the whole holiday in perspective for me, and I’ve never looked at it the same way since.”



Katy LaCourt, senior elementary education major

*Humans of Union College is
compiled by Chelsea Aguilera.*



JORDAN ZY

For your consideration

How The Oscars shape the film industry

It's that time of year again, when families come together to celebrate the old tradition of going to the movies: 'tis Oscar season, my friends. Every year, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awards the best of the best in film.

"Oscar season" describes the sudden hype of amazing films released in November and December. Hollywood releases the films late in the year to keep them fresh in the minds of those who nominate films for awards, and also because movie-going rates rise during the holiday season. When The Oscars ceremony takes place in February, some movies are still in theaters and receive a huge spike in sales when they win.

Disregarding genre, I categorize good movies into two types: Blockbusters and Oscar bait. Blockbusters are those high-budget movies everyone wants to see, like Marvel films or side-splitting comedies. Oscar bait films are regarded as critically acclaimed, "good" movies.

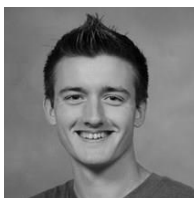
Blockbuster season is usually a summertime affair, while Oscar season begins late in the year. (Pro-tip: Avoid most movies released early in the year like the plague. No studios are fighting for those

slots. Wait to rent it.) If you've been to the movies recently, then you've probably seen some Oscar contenders already. Many critics online are already making predictions as to which movies and actors will get the Oscar nod this year.

"Interstellar" is a prime example of a movie destined for a Best Picture nomination. But if you're rooting for it to win, don't get your hopes up. I've been watching for nearly a decade, and I'm guessing "Interstellar" will go the way of "Gravity" and "Avatar": the movie everyone saw and loved won't get the big win. It never does.

If you want to go for safe bet, look to what I call "the obvious choices." Films that focus on heavy moments in history, feature dramatic monologues or focus on touchy issues are usually headed for these awards. In years past, these choices have been truly great, such as "The King's Speech" and "12 Years A Slave." This year the contenders could be "Selma" or "Boyhood."

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NIGEL SUMERLIN

An open letter to Santa Claus

A few words for Father Christmas

Dear Santa Claus,

Since the many letters I sent you as a child bearing the address of “Santa’s workshop” in “The North Pole” went unanswered, my hope is that a public message will catch your attention.

First off, thank you for all you do to make Christmas beautiful. Staying up until the wee hours of the morning hoping to catch a glimpse of your plump body defying the laws of physics to squeeze down their chimneys has brought excitement to countless children. Everyone should be grateful for your tireless non-profit work—children for the presents found under their trees, and parents for the respite they enjoy while their offspring work hard to earn a spot on your “nice” list. Sadly, your work goes mostly unthought of for 11 months of the year as you toil in the North pole to make us happy on one morning every December.

Mrs. Claus also deserves a shout out for her contribution to your annual escapade around the globe. In addition to sewing you larger and larger outfits through the years, she embellishes each gift with her

elegant handwriting designating which child will receive it. I know this is your wife’s work and not yours because I observed as a child that the tags on my gifts had a distinctly feminine touch, much like my mother’s. An unsung hero of Christmas, your wife should know that she is appreciated.

Your weight, unfortunately, needs to be discussed. In the early days, it was a charming feature, but as obesity has risen to dangerous levels around the planet, words like “jolly” and “plump” are now associated with “type 2 diabetes” and “heart disease.” I understand that we are part of the problem. Encountering a plate of fresh cookies in every house you enter must be a strong temptation. Nonetheless, I implore you to shed some pounds. Don’t just do it for yourself—do it for your reindeer.

I applaud you for remaining committed to green living, even as the world has upgraded to gas-guzzling weapons of environmental destruction. Aside from some natural methane production, reindeer are



a clean energy source bringing little to no harm to our planet. Congratulations on maintaining a small carbon footprint. You are a glimmering example to us all.

Unfortunately, I feel duty bound to point out blatant injustices in your “naughty or nice” policy. I’ve known too many people who deserved to find themselves buried in coal, but come Christmas morning somehow received an iPhone, a new car or a pony. On the other hand, some children who deserve anything they could wish for find only socks and t-shirts in their Christmas packages. I assume you’ve delegated this task, so I would suggest you work on personnel changes in the “judgment” department.

Finally, an apology is in order. As a people, we are more entitled and greedy than when you began visiting us every Christmas Eve. Our obsession with shinier, more expensive toys has strained your elves. We have twisted Christmas into a commercial tool, making it a season of taking rather than receiving.

Just know that some of us still appreciate you. Keep up the good work, and if you manage to find some time, try to answer a few of the letters you receive.

Sincerely,

Nigel Sumerlin



NAOMI PRASAD

Nearsighted Nebraska

Nebraska same-sex marriage couples still have a while to wait to say “I do”

In 2003, a video called “Kids React to Gay Marriage” was uploaded to YouTube. Kids from 5 to 13 were shown two proposal videos, one portraying a lady proposing to another lady and the other, a man proposing to another man. After watching, the kids were asked a series of questions, including “What do you think of gay marriage?”

“I don’t care,” Lucas, shrugging his shoulders, plainly put it.

“I’m just new to the concept,” seven-year-old Samira replied.

“If one person should be able to do it then another person should be able to do it,” Derek stated.

Another fact was presented to them: “In only 14 U.S. states are you allowed to get married if you’re gay.”

“That is just insane!” the astonished Dash responded, an incredulous look on his face.

“I need to talk to Mr. President,” Jayka said, raising her fist in the air.

“Some people want to live in one state and get married, but they have to move to another state, but I’m afraid there will be tornados. I don’t want to go there, but I have to because I want to marry someone I like, and that’s not right,” seven-year-old Maxim explained.

In the year since this video came out, a total of 35 states, including four states bordering Nebraska, have approved same-sex marriage laws. Nebraska is not one of them.

The Williams Institute’s analysis of the 2010 U.S. Census recorded that 2,356 same-sex couples are living in Nebraska, representing 3.3 same-sex couples per 1,000 households.

Nebraska’s governor Dave Heineman stands his ground, stating, “The people in Nebraska in 2000, voted overwhelmingly that marriage is between a man and a woman. That’s what Nebraska has believed.” Future governor Pete Ricketts also agrees with Heineman and declares he will defend what Nebraska put in the constitution a decade ago. But nearly a decade and a half has passed since Nebraska last spoke. But how does Nebraska feel right now, nearly 15 years later?

The Omaha Herald Poll stated in October 2012 that 54% of Nebraskans support some form of legal recognition for same-sex couples, 32% that support gay marriage laws and an additional 22% saying they support civil union.

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Nearly a decade and a half has passed since Nebraska last voted on same-sex marriage. But how do Nebraskans feel now?

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Jenni Glomb and her wife Mandi grew up in Nebraska. Their family and friends live in Nebraska. Yet the couple decided to move to Iowa because they saw that their home state was not budging to change the law, and they wanted their son to share their last name.

Brandi Jeffery, a Husker on the women's basketball team, has openly been a bisexual. She and her girlfriend Raven have enjoyed a great relationship for a year and a half. When asked if Raven sees herself marrying Brandi, she raved, "She has changed me for the better and I truly love her. It's the type of love that I've never had before in a relationship and it's amazing! I'm getting butterflies in my tummy just talking about it. All her teammates and coaches know about us and they are respectful about it," Raven said.

So why does this matter to us? Yes, most students at Union College are from

other states that may or may not have passed laws on same-sex marriage. But as of now we live in a state where people are discriminated based upon who they show their love to. Same-sex marriage isn't a topic that you can just brush off and push into the future. It is happening now. Educate yourself and do not be lukewarm about this situation. Don't support gay marriage just because you want to be a part of the movement but you don't know what the movement is about. If you are against it, stand next to your decision and be able to stand your ground.

For many of us, religion is a big part of our social views. We have been told that homosexuality is wrong and an abomination. The great part about being in college is that you get to study and ask questions about things yourself. It's foolish just to adopt a stance on something because of what the majority is saying.

If more people speak up about same-sex marriage, our governors and senators will have no choice but to address the issue. Many people aren't challenged by same-sex marriage until one of their family members or a friend comes out. "Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time," Barack Obama stated in a 2008 speech in Chicago. "We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

Avert your eyes, child

Blocked websites on campus: helpful or harmful?



KEVIN NIEDERMAN

So there I was, browsing the net, when out of nowhere, I'm blocked. I was trying to read an article about a woman who regretted waiting until marriage for sex. Perhaps that's a tad promiscuous. The filter told me that it was blocking the site because it contained adult themes. Perhaps we shouldn't be learning about things like this. Or not.

This event angered me. Why can't I, a grown man, read an article? An article, mind you, that was cited in the Clocktower. Why mention an article I'm forbidden from reading? That's what I set out to learn.

Through the Information Systems (IS) office, I learned the technical side of the filter. Union College employs OpenDNS, which functions primarily as a firewall to protect users on campus from malware and viruses. The company also offers categorical content filtering. There are more than 50 filtered categories, including nudity, weapons and alcohol.

OpenDNS categorizes websites by letting users vote on sites' content. After someone votes, OpenDNS either confirms or denies the categories. Some of

the sites have no votes and therefore are not categorized, remaining unblocked.

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Adult themes are topics not suitable for children. This is a college, and we are not children. We pay to come here and study adult themes.

.....

Some of these sites were categorized over six years ago. Things change. Take The Learning Channel, for instance. Founded by NASA and the Departments of Education, Health and Welfare, the channel originally showed educational programs. Now it sports shows like "I Didn't Know I Was Pregnant," "Toddlers in Tiaras" and "Here Comes Honey Boo Boo." The Internet changes at a pace much faster than television, and several websites have categories that no longer apply. This still didn't explain why these categories were blocked in the first place.

My hypothesis was bandwidth conser-

vation. However, my talk with Richard Henriques, director of IS, revealed that initially our school was told that by blocking the pornography, Internet usage would drop by up to forty percent. When we did initiate our filter, astonishingly, the usage went down by single digits. Apparently Adventists hold themselves to a higher moral code than the secular world, even without “big brother.”

Which is fine. All of this is fine and good. Sure, block the porn. It’s a temptation. Yeah, block the file sharing. We don’t need the FBI showing up here tomorrow to shut the school down. Union rules are law here, and an enforced moral code is fine by me. What I don’t understand is the banning of adult themes.

Adult themes often discuss sexuality, addiction and violence, but don’t show them explicitly. To put it simply, adult themes are topics not suitable for children. This is a college, and we are not

children. We pay to come here and study adult themes. Think about ethics class, human sexuality or history class, which is pretty much the story of how the white man killed and/or raped everything. How can we be expected to graduate from here and make decisions in an adult world if we aren’t allowed to explore adult themes? Without a comprehensive view of adult themes, then adulthood itself is just a word. I want to have the wherewithal to be able to talk about the rates of sexual assault in the military. I want to be informed about the genocide in Darfur. I want to read opinions about abstinence and sexual orientation. I want to have an opinion about struggles with addiction.

Currently, I can read about all these subjects online through news outlets, but when it comes to personal stories—the articles written by people, not professionals—they’re all too often blocked, and I don’t think they should be.

“For your consideration” continued from p. 2

Then there are the nominations that fit into the category I call “Jordan’s choice,” which also somehow never win. Whether this is because I pick poorly (there was no way “Juno” could have taken down “No Country for Old Men” and “There Will Be Blood” in 2007, but I rooted for the young adult comedy anyway) or because I tend to like hard-to-love films

like “Inglourious Basterds” and “Black Swan” is anyone’s prediction.

Now is a perfect time to see movies with your family or go on a date to a film that isn’t a flop. And once the Super Bowl hype ends, it’s time to pregame for the Oscars on February 22 with this year’s illustrious host, Neil Patrick Harris.

DECEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
7	8	9	10 Campus Store Holiday Sale	11 Campus Store Holiday Sale Dead Days (Last Day in Class) 5:30 p.m. UC Women BB vs Calvary Bible College (Home)	12 Campus Store Holiday Sale Dead Days (Last Day in Class) 7:30 p.m. Vespers: Fine Arts Christmas Concert	13 V2: 4:30 p.m. 6:00 p.m. UC Men BB vs Calvary Bible College (Home)
14	15 Campus Store Holiday Sale First Semester Exams Textbook Buyback: 9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.	16 Campus Store Holiday Sale First Semester Exams Textbook Buyback: 9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.	17 Campus Store Holiday Sale First Semester Exams Textbook Buyback: 9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.	18 Christmas Vacation Campus Store Holiday Sale Last Day to Complete December Grad Requirements	19 Christmas Vacation Campus Store Holiday Sale	20 Christmas Vacation

THUMBS UP/THUMBS DOWN



to goldfish crackers.
—Jeff Meador



to electricity bills.
—Natasha Breakey



to the Kentucky Wildcats.
—Grant Slavens



to a week of Netflix.
—Kyle Smith



to slow drivers.
—Brittany Driver

THE CLOCKTOWER (THAT'S US)

IS HIRING

A ~~MAGICIAN~~ COPY EDITOR



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EMAILING ~~CAT PICTURES TO~~
SDFOSTER10@GMAIL.COM**

WE CAN'T HEAR YOU.

Yeah, we're going to need you to speak up.

Like us, hate us or anywhere in between, we'd love to hear why. Have a story you'd like to pitch? We'd love to craft it. Did you just make a big breakfast? Tell us why your mother's German waffle recipe is better than Paula Deen's.

Basically, write us.

Voice your opinions by emailing cltower@gmail.com and add to the conversation by connecting with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ClocktowerASB and online at <http://clocktower.ucollege.edu>.



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"It must be Christmas!"
by Elena Cornwell

In this week's online issue, see seven YouTube channels you should check out, get the deets on net neutrality and discover the next great Christmas album from Lincoln-based band The Midgety Magic Pants.



Happy holidays from the Clocktower!