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ALUMNI RECORDS

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STUDENT INTERNS

Holly Charron '96, Danielle Epstein '96,
Heather A. O'Connor '96

CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Bartok '91, Laurie Harrington '83,
Kristen Jordan '96, George Lowery,
Andrea C. Marsh '87, Paula Meseroll,
William Preston, Michael Prinzo '86

SU PHOTO CENTER

Steve Sartori, David Broda '74,
Richard "Buzz" Pitzeruse,
Karey Anne Provost '96

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Frank Cammuso '87

ADVERTISING

University Magazine Network
15 East 10th St., Suite 2F
New York, New York 10003
(212) 228-1688; FAX (212) 228-3897

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O P E N I N G R E M A R K S

Snow Days

Schools are palaces. Education is magic.

Every fall a local television station broadcasts a deplorable ad promoting its expert winter-weather forecasting. The spot opens with a boy asleep and dreaming of a heavy snowfall that cancels school for the day. In the final scene he is awakened by the crooning voice of the station's "crack meteorologist" announcing that the storm is not a dream but a reality—nay, a *miracle*—and all area schools are closed. The boy thrusts his arms in the air in a gesture of victory. No school! What more glorious gift could he possibly have hoped for?

I'm sure you have already deduced that my problem with this ad has little to do with jovial weathermen. Rather, it is with the television station's decision to exploit for market gain the notion that children must, and should, detest school.

I shudder at a message like this—delivered to kids by adults—that school is agony and worth missing. And media, sadly, are far from the only culprits. Too often we as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or even passersby fail to realize the message we deliver to youngsters when we trivialize the rewards of time spent in school and the value of education.

I am reminded of a party I attended last winter, when my hosts' two daughters popped in before bedtime to say goodnight. One of the guests immediately swept the children to the nearest window to view a new snowfall outside.

"Look!" he beamed. "If it keeps coming down like that, maybe there won't be any school tomorrow!"

The little ones began to hop up and down and clap their hands. "No school, no school," they chanted, and everyone

in the room responded with laughter and applause. How I dearly wanted to deliver to each and every guest a personal holiday poke in the nose.

One of the pleasures of working at Syracuse University is experiencing firsthand the perpetual enthusiasm of students and faculty as they go about the daily business of learning.

We have several students helping out at *Syracuse University Magazine* each semester, and it is clear they genuinely love being at SU. Their attitudes are positive, forward-thinking, career centered. The questions they ask are thoughtful, their hunger for knowledge genuine and deep.

Of course, every now and then I'll catch them grumbling about a reading assignment or rolling their eyes at news of another exam.

Hey, nobody ever said college was going to be easy.

But beyond these passing tribulations what I see most in these students is the understanding that education is the path to great things. This idea was planted early and nurtured over time until now, in their college days, these buds are on the verge of riotous bloom.

Maybe there is nothing wrong with the occasional snow day, the unexpected opportunity to take a break, recharge the batteries, watch a few cartoons. But never should kids be led to believe that a snow day is an escape from the tortures of education, a death-row reprieve. What we should do is pedestal our schools every chance we get, for the sake of our children as well as ourselves.

Schools are palaces. Education is magic. Snow days are just a fluke.



JEFFREY CHARBONEAU, EDITOR