



The zombies were halfway across the living room when they noticed that "Friends" was on.

As for an on-the-record interview, de Chalvorn is still trying, but Kerry's campaign has not responded. He did, however, recently land an interview with Pat Robertson, who told him, "Jean François Kerry will never be elected."

—Joshua Kurlantzick

CAMPUS POSTCARD A PILE OF PAPER



One evening in February, two Stanford University seniors, Steve Yelderman and Ian Spiro, were presiding over the weekly staff meeting of *The Stanford Chaparral*, the college's humor magazine. Spiro, a thin and gangly computer-science major with a mop of brown hair, thick sideburns, and metal-frame glasses, was about to unveil his radical idea for the annual *Chaparral* parody issue.

Typical *Chaparral* issues are glossy compendiums of cartoons, lists, dialogues, photo journals, and short articles, but once each year, in the grand collegiate-humorist tradition, the editors produce a parody of a national magazine. In its hundred-and-five-year history, *The Chaparral* has targeted such publications as

Fortune, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Playboy*. Yelderman and Spiro, however, felt that the genre had been exhausted. At the meeting, Yelderman, an athletic-looking electrical-engineering major who wears hip-nerd plastic glasses, announced the solution: "This year, rather than parodying *National Geographic* or *Saturday Morning Cartoon* magazine, we're going to be parodying an unbound pile of paper."

Spiro broke in. "Most magazines come bound, with a staple," he said. "We're trying to do something that's never been done. We've already got a pretty good Chinese menu going."

Staffers began tossing out story ideas—scratch-off lottery tickets, rejection letters, instructional manuals, cult solicitation pamphlets. "There's been a lot of talk of applications, or rejection letters," Yelderman said. "Maybe a pre-rejection from Harvard Law School?"

"How about a PowerPoint presentation?" someone called out.

"How about a *were-wolf* PowerPoint presentation?" someone else countered. "It could have silver bullet points."

A few people brought up distribution questions: what would distinguish the Pile of Paper issue from, say, a pile of garbage? Before long, a list of story ideas had been generated, and the concept had evolved from a random collection of papers to one found on a particular per-

son's desk. "We started to see a character emerge," Yelderman said.

A couple of weeks after the first meeting, Spiro and Yelderman held a marathon writing session; the plan called for *Chaparral* staffers to work all weekend and to complete the Pile of Paper issue by Monday morning. They had given the presumptive owner of the Pile of Paper a name—Ronald Rembrandt DeLa Duffy—and filled out much of his profile. He was something of a loser, as suggested by job-rejection letters from AeroMexico, a disciplinary letter from the Federal Communications Commission (for using profanity on his cell phone), and pathetic to-do lists. He had received a variety of odd pamphlets and advertisements, including one offering the "Power of Inconvenience™" and another for "Feria, Mild Neural Toxin" (the product's slogan: "Is he too talkative?"). He had come into possession of the bizarre Chinese menu and the WolfCo PowerPoint presentation.

The parody, however, seemed to move further from completion as Sunday wore on. "Normally, we have the content a little more under control at this point," Spiro said. The problem was that almost anything lying around the office offered a potential story. Just after 6 P.M., Yelderman decided to make a mockup of a printer test page, the document that prints to show that a printer is working properly.

"Just because we can print a printer test page, that doesn't mean we should," a staffer complained.

"I don't know if anyone has ever published one in the history of publications," Spiro replied.

"No one has ever printed a picture of my ass before, either."

The editors agreed to table the idea, and everyone went back to work. Spiro and another student spent several hours trying to find the right tone for a pro-smoking advertisement, titled "When History Happens . . . Smoking Is There."

By 8 A.M., nearly all the stories were completed. Spiro and Yelderman decided to call it a night. As the staff wandered out, someone asked if anyone still thought the Pile of Paper idea was funny. "I think it's hilarious," Spiro said. He picked up the finished stack of stories and flipped through it. "In some sense, we have succeeded in our rudimentary goal. I mean, this is a pile of paper."

—Evan Ratliff