Dear Readers,

We at The Spectator are proud to present to you our Winter Issue for 2014. Inside, you will find stories of fact, opinion, and even mystery. We hope you will find them interesting, entertaining, and enlightening.

We release this issue in the interim between two major holidays: Thanksgiving and Christmas. Thanksgiving, of course, is a time to be thankful for the many blessings we enjoy, while Christmas is a time for giving, not just of gifts, but of ourselves: in our time, thoughts, and words. We encourage you to remember the reason for the season as you celebrate with your family and friends.

We at The Spectator are thankful for all who have supported us over the last couple of years, without whom, this magazine would truly not be possible. We are excited to give to you our sixth print issue since restarting the magazine in the Fall of 2013.

We look forward to many more.

“Remember, George: no man is a failure who has friends.” -It’s a Wonderful Life

Merry Christmas,

The Editorial Staff of The Spectator

This past month, The Spectator was officially granted 501(c)(3) non-profit status from the IRS. This completes a five-month incorporation process that involved filing The Spectator as a non-profit organization with both the State of Virginia and the Federal government. This non-profit certification makes The Spectator eligible for grants given to student publications such as ours. Furthermore, 501(c)(3) status means that all donations given to The Spectator are tax-deductible, and that funds received can never be used for personal uses outside of The Spectator. Most importantly, by incorporating as a non-profit, we have created The Spectator as a separate legal entity from any one individual. This will ensure that The Spectator can be passed down to each new generation of students, who may use it as a tool for preserving the traditions of our School as they see fit.

-Russell Schmidt, Business Manager
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W&L Campus Tours: A Blend of Character and Half-truths

By R. Johnson Lykes

As most students learn shortly after arriving on campus, Washington and Lee University is a school steeped in history and tradition; in general, the current culture of our student body has largely been shaped by individuals who preceded us. Freshman quickly assimilate to the behavioral customs introduced during the orientation process – the Speaking Tradition, the Honor System, even superstitiously avoiding walking through the center columns of the Graham-Lees tunnel. These traditions are rooted in anecdotal legends that seem to grow as each year passes. To a great extent, the stories help strengthen the sense of community shared by W&L students: alums and students enjoy exchanging varying versions of stories with one another, and prospective students are enamored by the folklore as early as their first tour of campus. The tales lend credence toward the historical allure surrounding W&L, providing concrete proof of how our school’s rich traditions are still strongly correlated with student comportment and campus climate.

The Office of Admissions is not shy about broadcasting these stories, as campus tour guides are instructed to ‘jazz up’ their tours with tales that though entertaining, may be light on factual verification. But stretched truths are characteristic of all storytelling. After all, the point of the stories is really just to create a unique sense of culture, and given that hundred-year-old oral histories are nearly impossible to verify, attempting to check validity for all of these tales would be a lost cause. Problems emerge, however, when the school selectively intertwines specific stories with statistics aimed at advancing an agenda: this rich history provides administrators and admissions employees with powerful recruitment tools that can be slightly adjusted to suit an incomplete narrative that appears more attractive to prospective students, thereby misleading some about what a W&L experience entails. For example, we know that Robert E. Lee adapted W&L’s current Honor System from his formative years at West Point, and that the Honor System is a staple of Washington and Lee. Fewer people know that Lee favored students living off campus because he felt it was important for them to engage the local community and for each student to develop a sense of independence by living as an adult. Coincidentally, our administration recently had its third-year housing initiative approved by the Board; it seems Lee’s comments on off-campus living, therefore, are not as widely promoted because they do not support an administrative agenda.

Additionally, statistics for Greek life participation are hard to find on tours, and as tour guide Jack Koch ’16 recalled from one of his tours earlier this year, many, especially alumni, notice stark discrepancies between the portrayals and realities of W&L social life. Koch detailed these discrepancies, saying, “Several alums have come on tours and been really thrown off when tour guides emphasize that Greek life isn’t a big part of the student experience. One even pulled me aside to privately ask if Greek life no longer played a role on campus. Because my experience has been influenced by my participation in Greek life, I told him that it really depends on whether you make fraternity or sorority life a priority. But for myself, and most people I know, it has been.” Instead, Koch claims that tour guides are instructed to emphasize diversity amongst the student body. Ironically however, the University does not provide tour guides with statistics that support this claim of diversity.

W&L students: alums and students enjoy exchanging varying versions of stories with one another, and prospective students are enamored by the folklore as early as their first tour of campus. The tales lend credence toward the historical allure surrounding W&L, providing concrete proof of how our school’s rich traditions are still strongly correlated with student comportment and campus climate.

These gaps in factual accuracies may not be important with regard to the oral histories that are passed down to students and prospective students, but when these half-truths carry over into other areas, they can genuinely mislead students and impact their college choice.
W&L Professor From Sierra Leone Speaks on Ebola

By David Zekan

From the American perspective, the response to Ebola appeared prompt and necessary to some, while excessive to others. Many accused the media and healthcare professionals of fear mongering with their responses to the various cases of Ebola in the United States. However, W&L’s own Mohamed Kamara views the international response to Ebola in West Africa differently.

Professor Kamara grew up and was educated in Sierra Leone before coming to the United States to pursue graduate studies in French. Kamara described Sierra Leone as “far from Ebola free” and emphasized that it, along with the surrounding countries of Guinea and Liberia, was simply not prepared for the Ebola outbreak. Sierra Leone is still in the beginning stages of recovery from the civil war that plagued the country from 1991 to 2001. Although it has been almost fourteen years since the end of the civil war, Kamara stated that the country has made only one or two years of progress.

Ebola has both social and economic consequences for Sierra Leone. The movement of goods both within and into the country has slowed due to the government quarantine of the northern, southern, and eastern regions of the nation in order to prevent Ebola spreading to the western capital of Freeport. Despite these efforts, Freeport has become the epicenter of the disease due to the influx of people searching for resources. Professor Kamara explained that the quarantine has led to a scarcity of commodities, resulting in exponential price increases.

Ebola’s social consequences often go unnoticed by the western world, but in a majority-Muslim country such as Sierra Leone, relationships are strained. Professor Kamara noted that the inability to physically contact others when greeting and praying leads most people to stay at home. Families are also unable to touch their deceased loved ones for fear of contracting Ebola, and the lack of infrastructure often leads to the inability to remove bodies promptly.

The dilapidated healthcare system in Sierra Leone also has not helped the country’s response to and treatment of Ebola. Kamara mentioned an alarming statistic: there is only one doctor for every 50,000 people in Sierra Leone, and four doctors have already died after contracting Ebola. Sierra Leone was obviously not prepared for an outbreak of this magnitude, as shown by the slow responses of both their government and the international community.

Professor Kamara’s comments bring a very important question to the table: what role should international forces play in responding to an epidemic outbreak? Both the British and American governments responded to Ebola, but not quickly enough. Action was not initiated until cases showed up in the United States. Some missionary groups and the World Health Organization have also stepped in, but the WHO admits that its efforts have not gotten the job done. Although all responses were initially slow, the U.S. and Great Britain have now begun efforts to build hospitals to expedite Ebola testing, the treatment of affected patients, and the removal of bodies of those who have perished. However, Kamara placed central blame for the outbreak on the West African governments who were not equipped to control an outbreak of this magnitude. Responsibility for controlling the spread of epidemics lies mainly on the governments of the affected countries and non-governmental organizations, such as the WHO, which must move away from its bureaucratic interests and instead put the interests of those affected first, because, as Kamara affirmed, “we have important lessons to learn.”
The Promise Committee, a student-run organization, was created after last December's fatal drunk-driving accident, which took the life of senior Kelsey Durkin and devastated the W&L community. As our campus continues to heal from last year's loss, the Promise Committee has helped the W&L community move forward with a safer and more conscious mindset. The committee was responsible for last year's Generals Week, which featured events like a 5K race, a speech given by alum Eloise Southard, a concert, and a video presentation. The powerful video, which features friends of Kelsey Durkin and students involved in the accident, details Washington and Lee's history with drunk driving. It not only brought us to tears, but also brought us to terms with the fact that we, as students, must take action to ensure that this past pattern of drunk driving at W&L doesn't continue into the future.

As the one-year anniversary of last year's tragedy approaches, the committee has been working with fraternities and other social organizations directly to improve the sober driving system for off-campus parties.

“The purpose of the yellow flags is to clearly mark and make available cars that can safely take students home from a party, which the committee hopes will discourage students from getting into a car driven by anyone other than a guaranteed sober driver”

On Saturday, November 15th, a caravan of cars marked with yellow flags made its way to and from the Freshmen Quad and Windfall Hill to provide transportation for that afternoon's Thanksgiving party. As is customary before any party, students were sent via email a list naming the sober drivers for Saturday's event complete with each driver's cell phone number. Students were also informed that they would be able to recognize their sober drivers by the yellow flags on their cars, a new addition to the fraternity driving system thanks to the Promise Committee.

The purpose of the yellow flags is to clearly mark and make available cars that can safely take students home from a party, which the committee hopes will discourage students from getting into a car driven by anyone other than a guaranteed sober driver. While the Traveller program does an impeccable job of keeping students safe on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday nights, these yellow flags could make a huge difference on days that Traveller buses don't run or any time a party is held outside of Traveller's route. Additionally, though it goes without saying that no designated driver should need cautioning, the yellow flag affixed to any driver's car will serve as a constant reminder of his or her promise to stay sober.

Though Saturday was somewhat of a trial run for the new yellow flags, it seems they made a good start. Saturday's sober drivers commented that most students looking for a ride still called the numbers sent via email, but that the yellow flags definitely distinguished their vehicles and ensured that passengers easily found their sober driver. The Executive Committee is working with the Promise Committee to facilitate the distribution of flags to W&L's social organizations and has gotten confirmation from local police that cars marked with yellow flags will not be targeted. Once the flags have been distributed, recipients are to keep the flags for their next event. Though small, these yellow car flags are slated to make a big difference for students in Lexington. We hope to see this small change go a long way.

If you are unable to get a ride home from a student driver, you can always call Traveller Dispatch at 540-458-8900.

Additionally, you can also call E’S-Y Rider Cab Company at 540-461-2467, which is open 24 hours a day.
Spring Term: An Exercise in Creativity
By Marshall Woodward

Washington and Lee Spring Term gives students a four week opportunity to dive into their field of passions, explore an industry or career path more intensely, or test out their interests away from their majors. This opportunity for academic and intrinsic exploration is not only a time for study, but a chance for students to reflect on what their post-grad lives could look like. Professor Hess’ BUS 383 travelled to San Francisco for 10 days to receive an “overview of business cycles, disruption, innovation, and technology’s role in entrepreneurship,” as Worth Smith ’16 describes. While the syllabus predicted a course on the changing world of entrepreneurship on the West Coast, Smith believes the class was more for the stories, for the chance to hear firsthand accounts of failure leading to success, to see that the world offers many lucrative and stimulating paths outside of the traditional W&L finance route.

Alumni involved in the instruction of the course include Ted Elliot ’94, Linsly Donnelly ’91, Gabrey Means ’92, and Mike Harden ’97. These daring and innovative alumni did not graduate from the Williams School, and they did not meet immediate financial success, yet they are nonetheless emblematic of both a dynamic market and the dynamic W&L alumni base. These alumni defied the conventional wisdom of a defined career path. Instead, they faced the threat of failure, reaped the melancholic gifts of misfortune, and rode the roller coaster of the dynamic world of entrepreneurship.

While the trip to San Francisco focused on risk and uncertainty, Professor Smitka’s Spring Term class on the automotive industry features the past and possibility. An industry expert, Professor Smitka sought to study the fall of the American automotive industry and its recent renaissance through the lens of the industry’s headquarters, Detroit. The course was a period of intensive reflection on the history of cars in America—from Henry Ford’s invention of the Model T in the early 1900s to the boom and bust of traditional manufacturers. Visiting Ford’s headquarters in Detroit, the group met with the Head of Human Resources, along with Bill Cosgrove, who was instrumental in the acquisition of Volvo and Land Rover for Ford. Additionally, the course studied the changing socio economic nature of Detroit, as the city falters and is slowly salvaged by Chinese investors and immigrants.

After the drive to Detroit, students met with industry executives and listened to Tom Wolfe ’51 lecture on streamlining and the customization/hot rod movement of the 1970s and 1980s. The class was also able to visit parts manufacturers in Roanoke and get a rare glimpse into the production side of the regional economy. Though many students are reticent to miss beautiful spring days in Lexington, Peter Wittwer ’16 encourages students to relish in the opportunities W&L provides, saying, “I got to experience a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to Detroit to meet with executives and really get a lot of insider information/forecast on the auto industry.”

Other rewarding domestic travelling courses include Civil War Battlefield Studies in the Shenandoah, Accounting in Las Vegas, and even a class focused on visiting prisons around Virginia. With many captivating courses to choose from, The Spectator holds steadfast to Spring Term as a Washington and Lee institution, a core part of the curriculum that gives students a chance to dive out of their area of study and into a new world of creative learning.
Letters to the Editor

The Greek system is a subject of frequent ridicule at W&L. The University primarily complains about fraternities and how they foster a destructive and irresponsible party culture; however, seldom does anyone discuss the problems with the sorority system, which are quite different.

With a strong fraternity system already in place upon W&L’s admission of the first co-ed undergraduate class, introducing sororities was the logical move at the time. Women needed the same social outlet that men had in order to make the co-ed transition smoother. The system works, sure. Just like men, W&L women have the option to join a social fraternity so they can form lifelong relationships, yet the sorority system is indeed flawed, but in a different way than its fraternity counterpart.

Few liberal arts colleges comparable in size to W&L have a national sorority system on campus. Because all six sororities at W&L are affiliated with national organizations, we must abide by certain rules. National rules prohibit the presence of alcohol in Greek housing and also prohibit men being on the third floor. No one seeks out the sorority house as a place to hang out with friends except the sophomores who live there. Instead, we gather at off campus houses, which essentially divide the sorority into groups based on pledge class. Needless to say, sorority houses are not much of a social center and the rules we are required to follow essentially preclude fun of any kind on the premises. We cannot host our own parties on campus, and aside from the occasional off campus band party when funds are available, we do very little to contribute to the W&L social scene. How are W&L women expected to feel equal if our social lives are almost entirely dependent upon a male dominated Greek system?

Additionally, the rush process is truly ridiculous. While fraternities take freshmen out drinking every night of the week, sorority members must rely on superficial interactions with potential new members. The process induces an unnecessary amount of anxiety for both groups not to mention creates unnecessary rivalries between sororities.

A few other questions arise in my mind as well: Why don’t sororities have chefs on staff and get three hot meals a day like fraternities do? I also wonder what kind of message the University intends to send by providing double beds in the fraternity houses and only singles in the sorority houses, but these are just few of many mysteries of the sorority system.

Although some of these issues seem inconsequential, W&L women’s dependency on fraternities is ultimately a safety issue. Because of the Honor System, we choose to put in our trust in W&L men who are sober driving and trust that there’s nothing suspicious in the grain alcohol mixture at an off campus party. Ideally, a W&L student’s word can be taken at face value, but there is always the possibility of something going wrong. Perhaps W&L would be safer for everyone if sorority women contributed to things such as sober driving for off campus parties or hosted parties at all. Because of our strict adherence to national mandates involving hazing, we are not allowed to institute a driving list. If we were to require pledges or sophomores to drive once every three months for an off campus party, we risk losing our national charter on the grounds of hazing. This seems like a pretty absurd consequence for implementing a safety measure. Perhaps if sororities could host on campus parties, there would be less of a need for off campus parties in the first place.

I am aware that many of the questions I have raised are not the fault of the University. W&L has no control over rules implemented by national organizations, but we do have control over some of the smaller issues, such as dining and furnishings of the houses. Perhaps W&L students and the administration could simply start a dialogue about the possibly instituting local chapters, such as those that exist at Sewanee and Dartmouth. Local sorority chapters operate primarily under the jurisdiction of its own members and certain University rules. As is, the sorority system does not provide the same type of experience that fraternities do. We ought to discuss in depth the place of national sororities at W&L so that we might find a way to eliminate the bigotry of the Greek system, which is ironically fostered by the national organizations themselves and their archaic standards for 21st century college students which have no place at Washington and Lee.
It has come to my attention that the Washington and Lee administration has implemented another frightening new policy upon our beloved campus. Freshman girls and boys are now living literally right across the hallway from each other in several (if not all) freshman dorms. To make matters worse, I hear many girls and guys, while wearing nothing but a towel and slippers, have to walk past dorm rooms housing the opposite gender in order to get to the restroom to take a shower. I find this new first-year housing policy to be extremely disturbing and upsetting.

I KNOW Robert Edward Lee would be rolling in his grave right now if he found out about the dire situation at hand. The current freshman dormitories are absolutely not the living quarters of a lady or a gentleman. If this university administration is serious about curbing possible sexual violence on campus, why are they allowing a situation like this to exist? Now that I think about it, what good did they think could possibly come from this when THEY CREATED AND IMPLEMENTED THIS HIGHLY DISTURBING NEW POLICY?

I also am forced to wonder just how many years it has been since the freshman girls and guys were originally forced to live like this. I could not imagine the feeling of dropping off one of my daughters on move-in day and seeing a couple of freshman guys setting up shop just across the hallway. On top of that, I honestly think I would seriously consider pulling my daughter out of the school if I saw that these same guys were going to be living in between my daughter’s room and the restroom that my daughter would be planning on using to bathe each day. Ultimately, I can think of little else that would create a more perfect environment for sexual assault than one that consists of hundreds of possibly highly inebriated 18-year-old boys and girls coming back every night to dorm rooms located just across the hallway from possibly equally inebriated members of the opposite gender.

If the current administration ever decides it wants to become a little more serious about curbing possible sexual assault on campus, I think a fantastic first step for them to take would be to completely separate the first-year girls and boys living quarters. I hear the administration has decided to tear down Gilliam and Davis in the coming years and plans to house freshman students in only two dorms – Gaines and Graham Lees. Why not put all the freshman girls in one dorm and place all the freshman boys in the other? As liberal as most public universities are these days, even they still have the decency and common sense to house their first-year boys and girls in different buildings during their freshman years before they allow them to live off-campus (of course W&L upperclassman off-campus housing is another story, but after seeing how the administration has utterly botched first-year housing, who knows what kind of mischief they will get themselves into with upper-classman housing). I’ve heard both female and male first-year students, parents, and grandparents express their sharp disapproval of the situation as it currently stands. This new plan would undoubtedly be welcomed with open arms by the vast majority, if not all, of the first-year students as well as the extended Washington and Lee community.

At this point in my dealings with the university, I highly doubt the current administration has even thought to consider the enormous liability they are heaping upon themselves by creating an environment in which sexual assault is most likely destined to occur. I am no attorney, but I do know a legal liability when I see one if it is JUMPING OUT OF THE PAGE AND SCREAMING at me. I also know that I will ABSOLUTELY NOT be donating a dime to the university this year or in the years to come as long as this cringe-worthy policy still stands. I strongly urge all others reading this piece to do the same until this foolish administration ceases these reckless operations and begins to take possible sexual assault on campus a little more seriously.

-An extremely concerned and disturbed lover of Washington and Lee
Lost But Not Forgotten: A Look at the Closure of One of W&L’s Most Notorious Fraternities

By Libby Sutherland & Tim Lindsay

In many ways, fraternities at W&L used to embrace a philosophy of drunken debauchery and rowdiness not necessarily unfamiliar to current fraternities, but certainly different. For instance, a 1978 article in the Ring-Tum Phi reported that the Judicial Council once fined Sigma Chi $100 for kidnapping a freshman pledge and abandoning him on “Route 60 near the Blue Ridge Parkway.” However, Sigma Chi was seemingly punished not for hazing, but rather, for pledging “outside the city limits.”

Delta Tau Delta's departure reflected the similar departures of the handful of other fraternities disbanded at W&L in the twentieth century. In May of 1981, according to the Phi, the IFC put the Delts, who consistently assumed a large presence on campus, on two weeks social probation - not an uncommon punishment - due to a noise infraction, and later that year, on a one week probation for failing a house inspection. In 1983, police discovered a small amount of cocaine in the fraternity house which was then located on Lee Avenue; this occurred at the same time the school considered characterizing drug-dealing as an honor violation. According to Burr Datz, the director of the Catholic Campus Ministry for Washington and Lee, the Delts also had a string of honor trials in the late ’80s. “There were two public honor trials in ’87 and ’88 (I think) involving two brothers: one was drunk, and he stole a bunch of wine, then invited his buddies over to finish the wine, and he somehow was found not guilty,” he said. “And then a year later, one was accused of cheating on a homework/accounting assignment, and his defense was that it was a used textbook and the answers were already in the book. He was found not guilty.” Eventually, after other instances of debauchery, the Student Affairs Committee disbanded the chapter in 1992. According to Datz, the final straw “occurred when the Ring-Tum Phi published a photo of kicked out drywall in the house with empty beer cans in it, and the caption said how the chapter was getting head start on renovating the house during the fraternity renovation program in early 90s.” The cause for a fraternity's dissolution at W&L has more or less resembled that of Delta Tau Delta. It is ATO's exile from W&L, however, which remains unquestionably the most infamous, unique, and prone to exaggeration.

ATO's Rumored Train Scandal:

While the details may vary from person to person, the overall story remains the same. W&L alumni are always excited to pass along the wild account of how Alpha Tau Omega ceased to exist at the University. As the story goes, ATO hijacked a train and redirected it from its original destination to Roanoke so they could pick up their dates from Hollins College before a big formal. As a result, they were supposedly kicked off campus and not given the possibility of reactivation until the death of the last member. Some versions include the use of Tommy guns, and the estimated date ranges from the late ‘20s to the late ‘40s. Despite the varied details, the popularity, frequency and outrageous nature of the story makes the notion of its falsity seemingly impossible—you just can’t make something like that up. However, there is no record of the incident in the W&L archives. ATO was seen often throughout the Ring-Tum Phi in 1946—there were mentions of formals, ATOs in leadership positions, and intramural results. In 1948, the Ring-Tum Phi stopped mentioning ATO completely. There was never any article discussing the closure of the chapter.

Bobby Grainger, the director of expansion for the national Alpha Tau Omega foundation, said that there was nothing in their records about the closure of ATO at W&L, which would have been the Beta chapter. The lack of records at the national foundation is strange since almost every other chapter closure from around that time was...
documented. Grainger also stated that their archives include letters from the foundation to W&L in the late ’70s about potentially re-activating the chapter, but no record of a response letter from the school.

The fact that the story has been around for such a long time leads us to believe that there is some truth to it. A. Fletcher Sisk, an alumnus from 1950, remembers hearing about the story when he arrived on campus but never knew for sure whether or not it was true. Although we were unable to find definitive evidence of the incident in the W&L Archives, the national ATO archives, or from the alumni we interviewed, our research did lead us to a few promising theories.

Theory 1: “The Last Robbery On The B&O Railroad”

On March 10, 1949, the Ambassador, a train on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, was robbed shortly after it left a stop in Martinsburg, West Virginia—about two and a half hours away from Lexington. Two young men who had been riding on the train as passengers began robbing other passengers and forced the engineer to take the train back to a crossing where they got off. The Ambassador had been scheduled to make a stop in Roanoke, which is where Hollins college is located. The story made national headlines and the two men were sentenced to twenty years in federal prison. The robbery marked the last robbery on the B&O railroad which is interesting since some versions of the ATO story describe the event as “the last large scale train hijacking.” The idea that ATO was somehow involved in this may be farfetched but if the story of the train scandal is simply just a rumor perhaps it was this train robbery that inspired it.

Theory 2: W&L’s Private Rail Car

Back in the day, Washington and Lee owned a private rail car that could be attached to trains. It was often used to transport students to and from sporting events and parties. It is possible that perhaps this rail car could have been attached to a commercial train without permission in order to pick up girls for a formal. Such an incident would likely be handled by the university instead of local law authorities possibly explaining the sealed nature of the story and the lack of information in public records.

Theory 3: Lack of members

The third and least exciting theory involves ATO being shut down for a lack of members. There is a mention in a 1953 Ring-Tum Phi of the old Alpha Tau Omega house being taken over since the fraternity had lost it due to financial issues. The article reads, “Due to circumstances beyond its control, the thirteenth chapter member, ATO, went inactive on the campus after WWII.” In the same year, a different issue reported, “World War II found the ATOs unable to meet financial obligations.” Moreover, many ATOs were observed to eat at the Pi Phi house around 1947 while Pi Phi also experienced a rapid growth in membership in that same period. Likely, many remaining ATOs, having been disbanded, “socially joined” another fraternity. While this story seems the most realistic, we can’t seem to ignore the story of the train scandal. Additionally, the Ring-Tum Phi issues that do mention Alpha Tau Omega before 1948 discuss many of them in leadership positions on the Interfraternity Council, the Cotillion Club, and other popular organizations. Their parties and formals were mentioned frequently. It did not appear that they were an unpopular organization that would have trouble getting members. The prevalence and enduring nature of the story makes us think that something along those lines definitely occurred. How close to the original story is unclear.

We wish to continue to explore the story in our next issue and ask that anyone who would like to share information, whether it be stories that were passed down or a definitive account, please contact sutherlande15@mail.wlu.edu or lindsayt17@mail.wlu.edu
W&L Law Students Suffer Massive Textbook Theft

By Christian von Hassell

In the early morning hours of October 4th, an unidentified individual, or possibly a group, enacted a massive textbook theft at the Law School Library. Students have reported a total of 98 textbooks that went missing after the incident. Furthermore, the perpetrators also took up to 175 textbooks from the library’s reserve.

Many of these textbooks can sell for several hundred dollars in the used book market, making the heist possibly worth tens of thousands of dollars. According to law students, the thieves only stole the more expensive books, leaving behind ones that hold less value among resellers. Students told The Spectator that the thieves did not touch any tax law textbooks, as they are updated every year as protocol changes, and therefore, aren't particularly valuable used.

Out of convenience, many law students leave their heavy textbooks in the library carrels, trusting in the Honor System to protect them. Issues of course arise when people from outside the community try to take advantage of the immense confidence students have in the Honor System. Kipnes stated that the University is taking a number of steps to review the situation, including a full comprehensive assessment of the Law School’s security profile. He also noted that the school is heavily weighing whether to implement security cameras in multiple areas of campus, including the Law School.

Law students have at least found accommodation in the professors. Some – like Professor Russell Miller – have been successfully negotiating with textbook publishers to get students free textbook replacements. Nonetheless, the incident has certainly bruised students’ willingness to leave books behind, with many carrels now empty.
The Uncertain Future of the Local Real Estate Market

By Kuangdi Zhao and Victoria Coates

Real estate sales, both nationally and locally, have experienced a steady increase since 2011, with 2014 on track to be the most successful year yet.

“We’ve gotten more steady in our sales,” said local real estate agent Scott Baker of JF Brown Real Estate, with the average price of a home sold being $225,000 this year.

The S&P Case-Schiller Composite 20 index has recovered slowly since 2009, suggesting that the average performance of twenty major U.S. cities is gently improving (see chart on next page).

However, it is possible the upward climb may not be tenable.

A major cause for local uncertainty is the new on-campus living requirement for Washington & Lee students in their third year, who make up a huge portion of lessees in Rockbridge county. This change will affect not only rental property, but home sales as well.

Scott Hoover, a professor at the Williams School, expects this new policy to have a major affect on the local real estate market. Starting in 2016, around 425 fewer students per year will require rented housing. This will cause a 50-53% drop in local rental demand. This, in theory, will cause the sale prices of local real estate to drop, while also lowering rental prices.

Hoover suggested that the drop in rental price will have a ripple effect on the values of all houses in town. Once there are not enough lessees to fill all the houses, some houses that are currently filled with students will become empty. Landlords of the empty houses will then consider selling their houses, rather than having the homes sit empty without any return. This could cause an increase in the amount of “For Sale” signs popping up around town.

Virginia Quarterly Home Sales Report 2014-Q3

Virginia Median Residential Sales Price

Source: The Virginia Association of REALTORS

The Uncertain Future of the Local Real Estate Market

By Kuangdi Zhao and Victoria Coates

Real estate sales, both nationally and locally, have experienced a steady increase since 2011, with 2014 on track to be the most successful year yet.

“We’ve gotten more steady in our sales,” said local real estate agent Scott Baker of JF Brown Real Estate, with the average price of a home sold being $225,000 this year.

The S&P Case-Schiller Composite 20 index has recovered slowly since 2009, suggesting that the average performance of twenty major U.S. cities is gently improving (see chart on next page).

However, it is possible the upward climb may not be tenable.

A major cause for local uncertainty is the new on-campus living requirement for Washington & Lee students in their third year, who make up a huge portion of lessees in Rockbridge county. This change will affect not only rental property, but home sales as well.

Scott Hoover, a professor at the Williams School, expects this new policy to have a major affect on the local real estate market. Starting in 2016, around 425 fewer students per year will require rented housing. This will cause a 50-53% drop in local rental demand. This, in theory, will cause the sale prices of local real estate to drop, while also lowering rental prices.

Hoover suggested that the drop in rental price will have a ripple effect on the values of all houses in town. Once there are not enough lessees to fill all the houses, some houses that are currently filled with students will become empty. Landlords of the empty houses will then consider selling their houses, rather than having the homes sit empty without any return. This could cause an increase in the amount of “For Sale” signs popping up around town.
Hoover also noted that the performance of the local real estate market depends on the performance of the local economy. The performance of the real estate market can be viewed as a key barometer of the economy. If the economy is strong, the real estate market will perform well, regardless of hikes in interest rates.

Despite the fact that the rise of interest rates costs more money for homebuyers, a stronger economy creates higher demand for houses, which subsequently boosts the real estate market. Without the presence of large corporations, the Lexington economy primarily relies on higher education and tourism. Rockbridge County has a median household income of $45,859, below the national median household income of $51,939, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Hoover stated that the buyers of local houses are chiefly retirees and college professors, not a huge number when added together. Weak demand, combined with the impact of W&L’s third-year housing program, could eventually result in a drop in housing prices. “The thing we don’t know,” Hoover added, “is how far.”

Recent transactions suggest that the local real estate market seems to have performed in a stable manner since 2008. Nonetheless, Hoover noted that only a few transactions of real estate have been made since the downturn. Conclusions drawn from insufficient data can be inaccurate, thus it is unclear how the local real estate market is performing compared to the S&P Case-Shiller Composite 20 index.

The end of the third quantitative easing adds more uncertainty to the future of the local real estate market, alongside the national market. The Federal Reserve ended QE3 on Oct 29th 2014, putting an end to the Zero Interest Rate policy. Conventional wisdom suggests that the end of QE3 will result in a rise in interest rates and negatively affect the real estate market. However, it is still uncertain whether the interest rate is going to rise or not. According to the World Bank, in 2012, the U.S. had an average lending interest rate of 3.3%. Bankrate.com states that the Virginia mortgage rate ranged from 2.98% to 3.54% in the past 12 months.

“Weak demand, combined with the impact of W&L’s third-year housing program, could eventually result in a drop in housing prices. ‘The thing we don’t know,’ Hoover added, ‘is how far.’”
Questions Lie Beneath the Surface of Junior Housing Site
Geology Department Searches for Answers

By Paul Lagarde

For much of the past semester, Geology department head Chris Connors, with the help of his Geophysics students, has been studying the land where the new third-year housing will be built. The land in question, specifically the southeastern corner of the rugby field, had been previously filled and leveled after multiple University modifications to the hill’s shape, and Connors and the Geophysics students want to find out what lies underneath.

“The students are more motivated when it is something real, and not just some canned, didactic experience,” Connors told The Spectator.

University archeologist Don Gaylord, who has been working on the project with Connors and the class, told The Spectator that they decided to study this particular area after he was notified by an archeology company that overhead photos of the area from the early 1930s depicted a copse of trees surrounded by an open agricultural field.

“It’s uncommon to have an entire field being used for agriculture and just one area unused, and so there are some common possibilities that you find in an agricultural field where that kind of thing is going on,” Gaylord said. “It could be an old derelict building that was once standing in this area and they weren’t plowing here because of the collapsed building. There could be an outcrop of bedrock. On a hilltop like this, the presence of bedrock outcrop is not uncommon. Cemeteries are also common in fields like that where you see a copse of trees.”

While both Connors and Gaylord stated that the evidence gathered so far did not suggest that it was a cemetery, they stated that they could not rule out the possibility entirely. “There always is the possibility of a family cemetery associated with the house. You see that throughout the eastern United States with small family plots near farmhouses,” Gaylord said.

When The Spectator asked Gaylord about a rumor that the third-year housing site had possibly been a slave cemetery, he stated that it was one possible theory, due to the fact that the land had previously been a farm owned by the Alexander family. He stated that William Alexander had been one of the inaugural trustees of the University in 1782, and that his son Andrew had swapped the front campus for the back campus in 1804, establishing his farm on the Liberty Hall property.

“Tax records show that he owned enslaved people throughout the period until 1841,” he said. “So there were enslaved people farming here for Andrew Alexander, but that’s the only possible connection.”

He stated that at this point in the tests, he did not think that there was a cemetery in the area, stating that the pattern of a cemetery should be “pretty striking.” For most houses, he said, you would expect to see a sizable anomaly in the form of a basement.

All testing done to this point has been conducted using the resistivity method, which sends electric currents down into the soil. This method is useful because it is less expensive and time-consuming than digging into the ground to find out what is underneath. Connors told The Spectator that he may conduct further testing using the seismic refraction method, which uses sound waves instead of electricity.

Ultimately, both Connors and Gaylord stressed that no method, short of digging into the earth, could answer any question with 100 percent certainty. It will be interesting to see the results of future testing on the site, as well as the impact they will have on our understanding of the university’s history.
Minks and Rats, Revisited

By Mason Grist

Lexington is a town steeped in tradition. W&L and VMI, founded in 1749 and 1839, respectively, have added to a rich Rockbridge heritage that can claim influence from George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson. The relationship between the two schools has evolved since the devastating effects of the Civil War. Both schools were affected by the War. VMI commemorates its cadets’ march to Newmarket and subsequent battle every year, while W&L, then Washington College, sent students to fight for the Confederacy as the Liberty Hall Volunteers. These volunteers were trained by then-VMI professor Thomas J. Jackson, who later became Lee’s right hand man.

When Robert E. Lee accepted the call of the Board of Trustees to become President of Washington College, he did so knowing that Lexington was the home of General Jackson. Since his presidency, W&L has tried to connect with VMI, and vice-versa. A student exchange program exists between the schools, and some students at W&L apply to enter VMI’s prestigious Arabic program. Another positive about having a military institution next door to campus is that W&L students can participate in VMI’s Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and, if they choose, can be commissioned as officers in the U.S. Army upon graduation.

Despite the many differences that result from inherently different schools, W&L and VMI have a lot in common. We at W&L often find it hard to imagine that VMI cadets do anything but march around all day and get yelled at. While I am sure any cadet would tell you that this is a regular occurrence, the cadets do occasionally get free weekends. As a native of Lexington, I know several cadets who could have easily fit the W&L lifestyle, but were offered scholarships or other opportunities that made VMI more appealing.

The schools have been connected since those days training under Jackson. On its athletic website, W&L claims that W&L and VMI played the first ever collegiate football game in the South in 1873, with W&L winning by a score of 4-2. Currently, W&L and VMI clash annually in the Lee-Jackson Lacrosse Classic, a fall game that marks the culmination of offseason workouts and preparation for both teams.

Service has also been ingrained in the tradition of each school. VMI houses a Center for Leadership and Ethics while W&L’s Shepherd Program provides many opportunities for student volunteerism. Students from both schools are involved in many facets of the community. I participated in Nabors’ Fall Service Day this year and served at Heritage Nursing Home with a few other students and several VMI cadets. Once we got past the differences in clothing, it was easy to talk to them as we worked, and both sides were interested in how the other side lived. This cooperation between students and cadets extends to regular tutoring and volunteer work in the Lexington community.

Today, there are many interactions between W&L students and VMI cadets, which goes to show that though we may live in different worlds, we share the same town and have many opportunities to learn from each other in the classroom, on the field, in the Lexington community, and in the nation.
A Fresh View for Campus Dining

By Chuck Dodge and Jimmy Dugan

A new set of smells has graced the university’s dining facilities this semester, a result of a fresh approach to our dining experience. This year, Dining Services has undergone a rebirth of sorts, under the new leadership of visionary director Michael Zanie. His view of a more natural cooking process has already manifested itself throughout the hill and surely will continue to transform the way that all students, freshmen through seniors, enjoy their food.

You may have already enjoyed a hand-breaded chicken sandwich at Café 77 (the co-op) this semester, or perhaps a just-chopped wedge of lettuce in the Dining Hall. Dining Services’ new approach, which was implemented at the beginning of the academic year, pivots around a more natural process: quality ingredients, in-house preparation, and scratch cooking, as Mr. Zanie described it. The staff has even been encouraged to showcase their new style to the dining audience, slicing vegetables and tossing pizza dough just behind the glass screens of the Marketplace for all to see. Mr. Zanie explained that what matters is not the variety of soups available, for example, but that the soups offered are diligently prepared with freshness and savory flavors in mind. This new outlook requires a greater effort on the part of the staff, with time and quantity constraints that didn’t exist before. Although entirely in-house preparations and cooking have replaced facile bag-opening and baking, the acquisition of raw ingredients and foods has significantly decreased the amount of storage space for the variety of alternative meals. In this sense, a tradeoff has been made.

Café 77 has adopted a change in ordering style, along with a new emphasis on fresher food. Stumbling up to the counter to order whatever delicious concoction you can imagine now takes on a different form. Slips of paper lying on the countertop entail options of numerous ingredients. In marking off your favorites, you are now able to easily create a sandwich, salad, or snack that satisfies your cravings. Even if you aren’t much of a sandwich person and would rather grab something quick to go, you can take advantage of the sushi now offered. In fact, around seventy boxes of sushi are sold each day, not surprising considering that they are delivered daily from Matsumoto, a popular sushi bar downtown. Though pricey, sushi of that caliber is difficult to find elsewhere in little Lexington.

Just as in previous years, the co-op continues to provide a social dining experience for the late night crowd.

The biggest change in this regard, Zanie indicates, is efficiency. To everyone’s joy, the long lines and wait times have decreased dramatically. Along with the typical late night crowd, athletes who often miss Dining Hall dinner have flocked to the co-op in greater crowds this athletic season. With sushi and more nutritious, protein-rich options available, these athletes benefit immensely from the increased dinner-time stock that is brought in largely with them in mind.

Looking down the road, we should expect to see some of the focus shifting towards dining in the imminent third-year housing structure. Though these plans remain theoretical and are open to suggestion, Mr. Zanie expressed that what we may see is a combo of cafeteria and pub. Building a campus bar to serve alcoholic drinks to students of age is certainly something to look forward to, but so is the prospect of a cafeteria based on a rotational eating experience. It may, for instance, pose as an Italian kitchen for one semester, a Mexican grill for another, and a Western tavern for the last. Such a concept comes as a consequence of another space constraint, with only a certain amount of room available for a dining area. This new setup would of course have the largest impact on the juniors of the given year, but students of all ages would be able to take advantage of it, with Mr. Zanie keen to note that the room may well overlook Wilson Field.

Another important future goal for Dining Services is to simplify the array of meal plans currently offered, most of which are ambiguously named and make actually selecting a meal plan difficult. The proposed alternative is to offer only a few meal plans, all of which would simply be described by a number: the amount of meals you plan to eat on campus each week. This modification could reward fraternity members the most, as they would be able to easily integrate a meal plan into their diet as a supplement to fraternity cooking.

In light of a recent rumor that W&L aims eventually to replace our beloved fraternity chefs with a school-run dining plan, we asked Mr. Zanie to comment on its validity, to which he replied, “There is no plan, and there have been no discussions between dining services and any of the fraternities to create one.” He did note, however, that he would remain open to such a discussion, but that individual fraternities would have to strike up the conversation themselves.
Is Masculinity the Real Killer? A New Look at Ferguson  

By Ben Gee

The Mudd Center’s object of ethical investigation this year, Race and Justice in America, has taken place under the shadow of one of America’s largest racial controversies of the 21st century: the shooting of Michael Brown Jr. and the subsequent protests in Ferguson. It is only fitting that its lecture series address this event. This November 6th, W&L welcomed Professor Phillip Atiba Goff to examine Ferguson’s disconcerting aura as it relates to bias in policing. Professor Goff’s research focuses on some of the root psychological causes of law enforcement confrontations that lead to situations like Michael Brown’s death.

Goff began his remarks by explaining that American concepts of race have improved significantly in the last half-century. Ostensible bigotry and its subversive companion, subconscious discrimination, have both decreased, with studies showing that percentages of Americans who agree with common racial stereotypes have dropped precipitously in the last few decades.

“Could not a fear for one’s safety, rather than subconscious feelings of masculine insecurity, play a greater role in life-or-death decisions by embattled cops? Professor Goff’s research sheds important new light on this issue, but it remains clear that attributing a single cause to any event in isolation does not paint the full picture”

However, even if someone is not a racist, they can still become racially charged in a high-stress situation, Goff argued. Goff’s goal is to find alternate reasons for racial conflicts between citizens and police, through the application of psychology and sociology.

Professor Goff related an experiment to the audience in which police officers were shown a video in order to examine their reactions. This video placed the officer in a dark city street, with an aggressive black man holding a metal pipe menacingly advancing on the camera. Goff shared two central examples to identify the trend he saw from the experiment. The first officer, an older man who identified himself as an unabashed racist, reacted calmly and reasoned with the aggressor. Because he was older and therefore less likely to view the young, pipe-wielding man as a threat to his masculinity, the racist officer acted in the interest of preventing an escalation of conflict. Another officer, a young man with African-American siblings and girlfriend, got in a shouting match with the aggressor and finally pressed the trigger several times on his dummy firearm - hypothetically ending the pipe-wielding man's life. How could it be that these two officers acted so differently to the same situation - and with the non-racist, cosmopolitan, “modern” officer committing the fatal action?

Goff posited that this difference in reaction stems from the psychological notion of a masculinity threat. Masculinity threat occurs when a male feels his manhood is threatened by another individual, which then leads to uncharacteristically aggressive behavior. Goff argued that the common factor in shootings like the Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown cases is the insidious workings of masculinity threat, which leads to unnecessary escalation and eventual tragedy. Black men are perceived as “hyper-macho,” he said, and this often triggers masculinity threat and irrational aggression from both the officer and noncompliant individual. In this way, an entirely non-racist, tolerant officer can be very vulnerable to participating in a shooting as things begin to spiral out of control, Goff argued.

Masculinity threat may have contributed to the tragic deaths of Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin, as Goff postulates, but both situations involve more than just macho insecurity. Though at the time of this article, nothing has been decided in court, Darren Wilson’s bruises suggest that Michael Brown attacked him and provoked him to act in self-defense. It was proven in court that George Zimmerman suffered serious trauma from his head being repeatedly smashed into the pavement by an enraged Martin – surely the immediate cause of the fatal gunshot that took the young man’s life. In both of these cases, Zimmerman and Wilson were spurred to rash action by threats to their life. Could not a fear for one’s safety, rather than subconscious feelings of masculine insecurity, play a greater role in life-or-death decisions by embattled cops? Professor Goff’s research sheds important new light on this issue, but it remains clear that attributing a single cause to any event in isolation does not paint the full picture. There is still more work to be done, but Goff’s work represents a step in the right direction.
How the Other Side Lives: Commentary on the Law School from a Double General

By Alex Eichenbaum

Returning to W&L as a law student, I was anxious and excited to return to a school full of time-honored traditions. The many things that set W&L apart from other undergraduate institutions—the collegial environment, relationships between students and professors, student self-governance, the Honor System—can also be said of the law school.

But these traditions take on a different feel across the bridge. As an undergrad, I was always in awe of the support and engagement of the administration and faculty with students whether in the classroom or outside. At the law school, the students, administration, and faculty are much more independent. The law school community is not as constantly engaged as the undergrad, and therefore, those special kinds of relationships that are often seen at the undergrad are fewer and far between. That’s not to say there is a lack of engaged and supportive W&L law faculty—but with the abundance of visiting, or short-term, professors and lack of out-of-classroom interaction with students, it’s harder to foster those relationships.

Another remarkable difference is the tradition of student self-governance. The Student Bar Association (SBA) oversees most of the student activities at the law school and works with the administration on student-related issues. The SBA consists of 10 members—1L, 2L, 3L class presidents and vice presidents, along with four executive officers. Additionally, each class elects representatives to the SJC and EC. These are great opportunities to get involved on campus and interact with faculty and the administration. However, these are some of the only opportunities. A constant complaint I heard my first year of law school was the lack of extracurricular opportunities for students who are used to filling their resume with all sorts of positions. There are a number of law student-only organizations, but their scope and interactions are limited. This is partly because law school is incredibly difficult without the added burdens of extracurricular obligations (17 credits your first semester as opposed to the standard 12 in undergrad). But as can be seen on the undergrad side, students who are more engaged and active on campus have a lot more stake in what goes on than those who do not.

The Honor System is another revered tradition that is ever-present on the undergraduate side, but not often seen at the law school. As one undergrad and law school alumnus recently remarked, “It always seemed to me that the law students loved the benefits of the Honor System but never took any responsibility for it.” It’s true—students enjoy leaving their things out at the library (still true, despite the recent thefts), and enjoy the ability to schedule their own exams and take them in their carrels. Another purely pedagogical difference between the law school and the undergrad, however, is the lack of opportunity to cheat or see the Honor System come into play. Law students typically only have one graded exam or assignment per class. When your entire semester comes down to a four-hour test, you are understandably preoccupied with the importance of the exam as opposed to the pledge that only some professors remind you to note at the end.

Although these longstanding traditions take a different form at the law school, the essence of community is still the same. In the wake of two tragic student losses last year, I saw the entire campus come together. The law school never felt more a part of the community than after the loss of 3L Lara Gass, when all of W&L reached out and made us feel at home. Though we have our trying times on the other side of the bridge, we are still proud to be a part of this community and take part in all that makes W&L special.
My Experience Abroad

By Wyn Ponder

I always knew that I wanted to study abroad. After all—my parents did meet in Austria. Once my friends and I made the decision to go to Madrid, it seemed like all we did was talk about what we were going to do once we got there. Now my time here is almost up, and when you’re literally living for the weekend and planning different trips throughout Europe, the weeks just seem to fly by.

Living in Madrid, and studying abroad in general, has been an absolutely incredible experience. I live with a host family and all my classes are in Spanish, so I’m forced to speak the language all the time, a situation which seems difficult, but that has actually helped me so much. At first I was absolutely terrified to move in with a host family. I couldn’t help imagining the worst-case scenario: my host family would be an absolute nightmare and I would be stuck there—it would be like all the random roommate gone wrong stories you’ve heard. Fortunately, that is far from the case. I live with a single mom and her daughter, and while the daughter is kind of insane, she does provide me with some good stories to tell. They treat me as if I was part of the family and they have known me my whole life.

There was definitely a serious period of culture shock though. When I first arrived, I quickly realized that EVERYTHING here moves at a much slower pace than in the United States. Teachers will show up 15 minutes late to class, stores close from 2-5 in the middle of the day so that employees can eat lunch, and then dinner is not served until 9 P.M., usually at the earliest. For some reason, everyone here wears Franklin and Marshall clothing (as in the tiny D3 school we play in sports), and public affection is not only accepted, but encouraged (it would be a weird day if I didn’t see at least six couples making out in public). Also, it is very culturally acceptable to stare at everyone and everything. They’re not necessarily staring at you because you’re American or different looking, but they’re just staring. Everyone checks everyone out, and it is totally normal. Now I hardly notice any of it, but when my parents came to visit, they could not stop talking about how weird it was.

It definitely is strange being away from Lexington for a full semester, but it’s nice to have a ton of W&L friends with me in Madrid so we can all sit down at dinner and talk about what’s going on back home. We always talk about how much fun it’s going to be to get back to Lex and pick back up where we left off, but I wouldn’t trade this semester for the world. It truly is an experience unlike any other. When else can you fly to Rome for the weekend with six of your best friends to see the Coliseum? When else can you take a two-hour train ride and be on the beach? I can definitely foresee a bit of a reverse culture shock when we all get back because the schoolwork will probably be a little bit harder and we’ll stay in one place during the weekends. After being able to do and see such cool things during the week, it might seem a little tame when we return, but then again, there’s not much in the world that can beat Lexington, Virginia.
Change in TMC Hours Needed

By Catherine Ahmad

It’s 9 P.M. on a Sunday night and you’re beginning to debate that third cup of coffee. You are still working on your history reading, but you’ve got a test to take. Sleeping in on Saturday left you with limited options today. You choose to head over to TMC at 10 once you’ve completed the rest of your homework. As you sit down to begin your exam at 10 o’clock, you realize that your brain is dead after a long day of work. If only you had the ability to come earlier that day to take the exam.

In an attempt to provide students more flexibility while taking foreign language based tests, professors have turned to the technology of the Tucker Multimedia Center. On the surface, TMC helps both pupils and faculty by giving students more time to take exams, while consequently avoiding taking up precious class time. In theory, the concept sounds helpful, but in practice, there are issues with this system.

The weekday hours on Monday through Thursday are fairly flexible, offering hours from 8 A.M. to midnight for students to take their exams. However, it is the weekend hours that have been causing the student body unneeded stress and aggravation. On Saturday, TMC opens its doors from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. On the following day, Sunday, the TMC has availability from 7 P.M. to midnight. These hours are not very suitable for most college students, who often like to sleep in on Saturday and, as a result, are unable (or unwilling) to complete their graded assignments on that day. This leaves them with only the option of taking their test late on a Sunday evening. Furthermore, since weekend time slots are so limited, there is often a large influx of students all trying to take their exams on Sunday night in a computer lab with limited seats. Students, consequently, have to plan their weekend around these set times, causing unnecessary anxiety.

Amberly Wang ’18, who currently takes Japanese, wishes that the TMC offered more flexible weekend hours so that she can work around her schedule more. Maren Lundgren ’18 echoes these same sentiments stating, “The problem is that no one is willing to take the test on Saturday between 10 and 1 because people are either sleeping, or if they are not sleeping, they are just getting up. If they are just getting up, then they still want to study a little bit before the test.”

Considering all of these factors, extending the TMC Saturday and Sunday hours would make a significant difference for students. If this strategy is not possible due to the need for additional employees at the center, move the Saturday hours to later in the day or move the Sunday hours to earlier in the day. By doing so, students would gain increased flexibility and would not have to wait until 7 P.M. on a Sunday to begin an assessment. If this were to happen, the TMC would function in a manner that is more suitable to all parties involved.
During his time as president, Ronald Reagan faced a tumultuous Middle East along with a belligerent Soviet Union. Thirty years later, America continues to face similar issues. Because these issues are inherited – their roots trace back even before the 1980s – we must continually consider the past when examining our contemporary foreign policy.

Several weeks ago, VMI hosted a conference on this exact topic. The event, called “The Enduring Legacy: Leadership and National Security Affairs During the Ronald Reagan Era,” boasted a variety of highly distinguished speakers. Ambassadors, military officers, national security staff, and academics alike spoke on a wide range of topics. Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack Matlock and former NATO commander Admiral James Stavridis delivered keynote addresses over the course of the two-day event. All speakers provided insightful knowledge on the foreign policy of the 1980s ranging from discussion of nuclear weapons to that of Reagan’s speaking abilities. Each speaker advocated a different aspect of the American leadership at the time as having the most important role in end of the Cold War. Frankly, the factors that culminated in that end are numerous. But the most compelling of these arguments came from Ambassador Matlock. As U.S. Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, then Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and later U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Matlock acted as a key player in the final decade of the USSR. Throughout his talk, Ambassador Matlock argued the importance of personal relationships in international affairs. Specifically, he pointed to the close friendship between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev as the most crucial aspect to American diplomacy. Matlock participated in this old school manner of global politics – and he saw great success. Such personal diplomacy between Reagan and Gorbachev heavily contributed to the peaceful end of the Cold War. Unfortunately, this type of activity proves hard to measure and evaluate since so much of it is never recorded. We thus must trust the accounts from people who were there. And Ambassador Matlock certainly was there.

I spoke with Brigadier General Charles Brower, a Professor at VMI and panel speaker at the conference, who summed up Matlock’s point eloquently. Brower said, “It was a human chemistry that they clearly nurtured and which facilitated their joint resolution of a Cold War that few people ever thought would end.” Truly this is the most valuable lesson we can glean from the final years of the Cold War. Overwhelming force was never used, and indeed, it was never required. Rather, Gorbachev and Reagan were able to guide the failing communist system to a soft crash landing with respect and trust for each other.

The conference provided excellent historical and technical accounts of specific details of the Cold War. One panelist focused solely on nuclear weapons. Others restricted their topics to single countries of interest. But this idea of Ambassador Matlock’s remained woven through nearly all discussions. Personal relationships are the real heart of diplomacy. Matlock stressed the importance of learning and appreciating your allies’ (and enemies’) language and culture. At the risk of sounding too idealistic, I believe many international conflicts would dissolve if only leaders would learn some appreciation for their neighbors’ cultures. This is what President Reagan did, and it is something we should try to emulate. We cannot expect all national leaders to do this, but we can hold our own leaders to this standard. Perhaps it is time to give old school diplomacy another try.
Washington and Lee Administration Addresses Confederate Flag Protesters “Go Ahead, Make My Day”

Washington and Lee’s administration broke its silence on the matter of the ongoing protests outside Lee Chapel issuing a direct response to the press. “Go ahead, make my day,” remarked the University when confronted with the prospect that protests decrying the removal of Confederate flags from Lee Chapel may persist well into the school year. “You think we’re afraid of a bunch of grassroots picket lines?! Please, we’ve seen stinkbugs that were bigger threats,” noted the W&L administration, adding, ”We kept this ship running through Hurricane Sandy for cryin’ out loud!” Indeed compared to the plethora of issues that confront Washington and Lee’s administration, the notion that a motley crew of people demonstrating outside Lee Chapel in infrequent increments seems all too insignificant. When asked how much time and effort has gone into handling the flag protest situation one W&L administrator offered this insight, ”Let me walk you through a day in my life. I wake up, go downstairs, fix myself some breakfast, then proceed to answer some twenty-odd phone calls from alums where I have to explain either what third year housing is, how sex week isn’t a real thing, or why a magazine that calls itself an Observer or something keeps sending them godforsaken emails. Then after about three hours of that I go back upstairs, a pair of bellows in hand, and smoke out the Washington Post reporter that I know for a FACT is hiding in my chimney waiting to ask me how come our campus fails to adequately observe Groundhog day or why we fall well below the national average with regards to our acceptance rates of middle children with a mild strawberry allergy suffering from a fear of fingerprints.”

Mock Con Looking to Sign Lil Jon as Keynote Speaker, Means One Thing: “Turn Out for What!”

After the dismissal of Chief Keef and Flavor Flav, W&L Mock Convention is now in pursuit of a true hype man, specifically rapper, “actor,” and inspirer of parody, Lil Jon. Indeed Lil Jon, the self-appointed King of Crunk and mastermind behind such timeless tunes as “Get Low” and “Yeah,” seems a perfect fit. Fresh off a campaign to encourage young adult voter turnout for the 2014 midterm elections centered around the phrase “Turn Out for What!”, Lil Jon appears to have taken up the cause for civic engagement, and hopefully Washington and Lee University’s historic Mock Convention becomes his next destination. The bid to add Lil Jon as a speaker for Mock Con should come as no surprise since the rapper’s recent campaign to eliminate apathy in young voters falls in line with W&L Mock Con’s own goal of inspiring political engagement and participation across the entire campus through a cohesive effort. In the arduous search for a speaker to incite political engagement across campus, officials concluded that nothing captured W&L Mock Con’s mission of inclusion and enthusiasm more effectively than the affirmative and unflagging “Yeahhh” so often uttered by Lil Jon. (NOTE: Lil Jon is not to be confused with Little John, the trusted sidekick of Robin Hood. Little John is a fictional character, hiring him would be absurd.)
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