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The 2005 Christmas Issue

CHRISTMAS IS IN THE AIR IN THIS SPECIAL HOLIDAY FRIDAY EDITION

WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

THE RING-TUM PHIL

FRIDAY, DEC 9, 2005

BY THE STUDENTS AND

CE 1897 VOLUME CIX, NUMBER 10

FROM THE EDITOR



Changes in the mix

Next term brings many changes: all new classes, a few new friends, a colder forecast, and a new editor-in-chief for the Phi. Managing Editor Katherine Greene has accepted the position, active as of next term, when I will stay on as Art Director to pursue my first love - newspaper design. I know Katherine has some exciting changes and refreshing innovations in store, and I can't wait to see the Phi flourish under her leadership.

Thanks for reading, and merry Christmas!

Emily Hulen
Editor-in-chief

WHAT'S INSIDE

Holiday fashion

Just in time for the first snow, the Phi judged which frats decorated best. Check out which houses are ready for the season on page 4.

Santa's secrets

Is giving gifts giving you a headache? Page 4 features our unique gift favorites.

Taking the Christ out of Christmas

Tim Livingston and Justin McKeen give us their take on the political correctness of Christmas on pages 5 and 6.

By Sarah Klientz
REPORTER

Television, newspapers, magazines, radio, the Internet. Today there are more ways than ever to receive the most up-to-date information on current events, and W&L students have access to all these sources and more. Yet there seems to be a common consensus that these students are "living in a bubble," sheltered from the world outside Lexington.

So are students sheltered from life beyond Lexington, or do they keep up with current events? Both professors and students seemed to agree that most students only keep up with those issues that interest them, which may not be the most important issues on the whole, business professor Amanda Bower said.

Bower said that current events cover a lot of issues, some of which may not be the most pertinent stories.

"Current events are relative," Bower said. "You can make a 'Tom Cruise is crazy' joke, and they all know what you are talking about. When the DC sniper thing was happening, W&L students saw white panel vans everywhere and knew it. And there are current events about which 21-year-old college students will be more familiar than their ... professor[s]."

Bower said that overall, her students seem informed on many issues, but that may be attributed to more widespread sources, such as advertising.

"Many of my examples in class are marketing [and] advertising based, and students frequently



Breaking into the bubble

Campus questions student awareness of current events

seem familiar with many of them but to a large extent that credit goes more towards the advertisers and marketers than to individuals in a class," Bower said. "In terms of strategic business issues, I'm not sure how widespread the trend is for students to keep up with that information ... but there are certainly students in each class who frequently know what I'm talking about. Others may just not pipe up."

While Bower believes her students are generally informed on current events, journalism professor Brian Richardson said he finds W&L students to be unaware of newsworthy issues. When asked if he believed students to be informed on off-campus issues, Richardson replied, "On the whole, no."

"There are some shining exceptions among the student body, but most seem to have formed concrete opinions already and don't seek out news that could either inform or challenge those opinions," Richardson said. "In their defense, it is true that news media often don't make clear what young adults' stake in an issue or story might be."

Richardson said that although students may be up-to-date on national issues, it is important to become more aware of local stories.

"Student ignorance of sub-national government in particular is profound and frightening," Richardson said. "Few can name

See 'STUDENTS' on page 2

Tri-chairs announced

Trustees announce leaders for 2008 Mock Con

By Jacob Gelger
NEWS EDITOR

The 2004 Mock Convention Trustees recently selected the new tri-chairs for the 2008 convention. Richard Friedman will be the General Chair, Sara Mueller the Personnel Chair, and Wes Little the Political Chair.

Charlie Yates, one of the convention's trustees, explained that "the selection process involved applications last spring and this fall, followed by [several] rounds of interviews." Thomas Worthy '05 and Anne Idsal '05 joined Yates and former General Chair Noah Rhodes on the selection committee. Professor William Connelly, faculty advisor to the Mock Convention, mentioned that Worthy and Idsal "both work this year on Capitol Hill," and that Rhodes "gave generously of his time as well."

When asked how large his role is in the planning process, Connelly stated that most of the planning is done by the student tri-chairs. "Mock Convention is part of a proud tradition of student self-government at Wash-

ington and Lee," he reported. "Faculty play a largely passive role. I give advice when asked. Bob De Maria has been a tremendous help to the Mock Con students over the years with his technical expertise and with promoting media coverage."

Friedman, the General Chair, said the new tri-chairs will first focus on committee appointments. "The primary concern is setting up the steering committee ... which is made up of sixteen people. We also hope to make State Chair appointments next spring," he announced.

When asked about national and local media coverage, Friedman said the team "would like to see C-Span do gavel-to-gavel coverage like they did either in 1996 or 2000." He also hopes the convention "will get standard AP wire coverage and even a blurb on CNN or MSNBC. Since not too many people watch C-Span we'd like to see the other cable networks give us some coverage." Friedman went on to mention that the convention "provides great

See 'MOCK' on page 2

First strike for frats

IFC issues strikes to five fraternities

By Sarah Murray
REPORTER

The Inter-Fraternity Council punished five houses last week for alcohol-related recruitment violations, the first blot on a recruitment season characterized by well-behaved fraternities.

An IFC press release stated that the fraternities had sent e-mails to freshmen inviting them to consume alcohol, "sometimes in a manner of over consumption." Kappa Alpha, Lambda Chi Alpha, Phi Delta Theta, Phi Gamma Delta, and Pi Kappa Alpha face two weeks of social probation for the offense.

All the sanctioned fraternities received first strikes except Phi Delta Theta, which is already under probation for a first strike received last spring term. According to Chad Thomas, senior IFC justice, the violation

was not serious enough to warrant a second strike. In addition to probation, every house will pay a fine and attend an alcohol education program.

The investigations were based on information submitted to the office of the dean of students and the office of student activities. In keeping with the Standards for Fraternities and Sororities outlined in the student handbook, the IFC prohibits any recruitment effort that focuses around alcohol rather than other "positive pursuits," the release said.

The probation periods will include the first weekend in January, which is the last recruitment opportunity before the IFC enforces closed contact between freshmen and fraternity men. IFC President Vishal Sapra said that the punishments were arranged so as to avoid affecting Christmas Weekend. "In effect, we would be pun-

ishing the wrong people," Sapra said. "[Christmas] Weekend is a meaningful event to the women on campus as well as the freshmen and we don't want to ruin it for them."

Sapra said the IFC has repeatedly warned against sending invitations to freshmen via e-mail.

"There are some issues in the Greek system that need to be worked out," said Jason Rodocker, IFC adviser and director of student activities. But he and Sapra agree that the cooperation of the fraternities helped the situation come to a resolution.

Sutton Ansley, president of Phi Gamma Delta, said the IFC is succeeding in penalizing the houses rather than the entire system.

"There are rules governing the behavior of fraternities and sometimes you need to shock certain members of the fraternity into following those rules," Ansley said.

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SUTTON ANSLEY, PHI GAMMA DELTA PRESIDENT

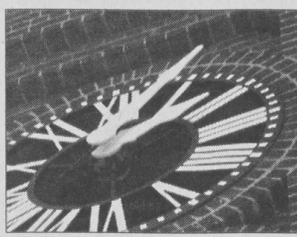
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news



On the Rhodes again

Jon Philipson on competing for Oxford scholarship

By Kate Shellnutt
REPORTER

On the Friday before Thanksgiving Break, senior Jon Philipson found himself in Birmingham, Alabama. Despite being nine hours away from his Florida home and days away from the turkey-filled holiday, Philipson was feeling extremely thankful.

He spent Friday and Saturday, November 19th and 20th competing in the district finals for the Rhodes Scholarship, a fellowship which provides two years of study at Oxford University in England.

"The whole weekend was like an interview—the dinner, the reception, and then your own little twenty minute slot," said Philipson. "People were nervous, pacing and stuff, but I was just happy to get that far."

Philipson first became interested in the fellowship in March, after politics professor William Connelly suggested he apply.

Connelly called Philipson "a natural for a Rhodes Scholarship" as he cited Philipson's academic achievements, community involvement, and personable nature.

Well-roundedness is the standard for Rhodes Scholars. Selection of recipients follows the specifications set by the scholarships' namesake, British pioneer Cecil Rhodes: intellectual ability, moral character, and service. Initiated at his death in 1902, they are the oldest international fellowships.

Each year, regional selection committees choose 32 American Rhodes Scholars. Fifteen past scholars have come from Washington and Lee.

"Rhodes always seeks the brightest and most socially engaged students in America," said Dean George Bent, Associate Dean of the College. "Many W&L students embrace the ideals sought after by the Rhodes Trust, and their academic abilities frequently put their applications at the top of the pile."

This year, the University endorsed 12 students to apply, and Philipson advanced to compete in District 7, according to his home state, Florida, but was not selected for the fellowship.

"At first, it was overwhelming. I mean, you never picture yourself going for this kind of thing," said Philipson.

He said all of his professors helped him apply, practice for the interviews, and advance in the competition, while his fraternity brothers were "extremely supportive."

"They were even sending me emails and text messages the night before, wishing me good luck," said Philipson. "It ended up being the best interview I'd ever had. I was myself the whole weekend."

For Philipson, being himself means balancing hard work with humor and relaxation.

"Jon's ready humor, coupled with his insight, wit, and frequent flashes of insight make him an ideal student," said Professor

Connelly.

Philipson doesn't take himself too seriously, but remains concerned about others. His résumé evidences his selflessness: starting a peer-tutoring program for at-risk youth in high school, volunteering with Head Start at Waddell Elementary, coordinating the Volunteer Venture pre-orientation trips, serving as Hillel vice president, working with pro-bono student consulting, and participating in many other organizations.

While he could easily boast of his extensive involvement, Philipson doesn't. He focuses on the progress of the different organizations and the ways they benefit others.

"He doesn't just do community service projects to bulk up his resume: he gives of his time and his energy because he recognizes the obligations those of us who have been born into good fortune have to our society at large. He doesn't start programs because he thinks it will earn him praise: he starts them because he knows people need them," said Dean Bent.

"He doesn't just do community service projects to bulk up his resume: he gives of his time and his energy because he recognizes the obligations those of us who have been born into good fortune have to our society at large."

DEAN GEORGE BENT

Philipson translates this passion for service into political ambitions.

"Working with people at W&L... has given me the understanding that politics is more than the issues, it's the people behind them," said Philipson.

Philipson remains unsure of his plans after graduation, but all options focus around his interest in social change through politics.

"I'm applying to some law schools. I've also talked with Jim Davis—he's a W&L alum—about working with his campaign for governor in Florida," said Philipson.

A self-proclaimed "future public servant," he hopes to promote education and social policy as a Florida congressman or governor in the future.

"I fully expect to see Jon in Congress someday. I'll be happy to help him advance his healthy ambition. Jon understands that politics is a good thing," said Professor Connelly, who has helped him secure his past two summer internships in Washington, D.C.

In the meantime, for his experiences at W&L and his opportunities in the future, Jon Philipson remains thankful.

Students tune in to news

Continued from page 1

any local elected officials, for example, yet most of the governmental decisions that affect us most are made at the local level."

Richardson attributes media sources for one reason why students do not keep up with current events.

"Local and campus media do not take the time to show young adults why particular issues matter to them. That happens in both story approach and in story selection," Richardson said.

Bower agreed that making students aware of the impact that current events have on them is the most important aspect of news reporting.

"I think it's important for people, college students or otherwise, to realize that the world affects them, regardless of whether they are familiar with those events or not," Bower said. "College is sort of a cocoon for people to transition from being their parents' children to being their own adults. On the other hand, it doesn't mean the events don't affect you. The effects may just be in less obvious, and less motivating, ways."

While the professors agreed that students should make more of an effort to keep up with current events, junior Joel Katz said he feels W&L students are more connected to off-campus issues than other students.

"It's important to be informed with what is going on in the world. It gives you stuff to talk about," Katz said. "W&L students are generally very well informed [about] current events and can carry on a conversation about them, at least more so than other schools."

Senior Maria Ignatova, a journalism major and international student, said that although she feels W&L students know of national and interna-

tional issues, they may not understand why those events are happening.

"Kids here may know that something is going on in Europe or the Middle East but don't really understand what it is or how it affects them," Ignatova said. "It's such a small community, and people usually talk more about parties and school and exams than what's going on in Baghdad."

Ignatova said that one way for students to become more connected to the world outside Lexington is to take advantage of the diversity at W&L.

"News isn't the most important aspect of staying connected," Ignatova said. "Once you're out in the world it's so different, and it's not always going to be your Kappa friends or SAE pledge brothers. Don't get me wrong, those are important friends to have, but you also need to make more diverse friendships in order to understand different points of view."

Although some W&L students may keep up with current events, recent research suggests that college students are not making the effort to connect themselves with off-campus news. Research shows that only 26% of college students feel that it is necessary to keep up with current events, and an equally staggering figure of only 14% had discussed a current event in the past year (apsanet.org).

However, both Katz and Ignatova said they read the news online daily, as well as discussing current events in some of their classes, such as marketing and journalism.

Ignatova added that her awareness of current events increased once she began taking journalism classes. She said that it is not only the friends students make, but also the classes they choose that will enhance students' understanding of the world outside W&L's campus.

"Local and campus media do not take the time to show young adults why particular issues matter to them. That happens in both story approach and in story selection."

BRIAN RICHARDSON, JOURNALISM

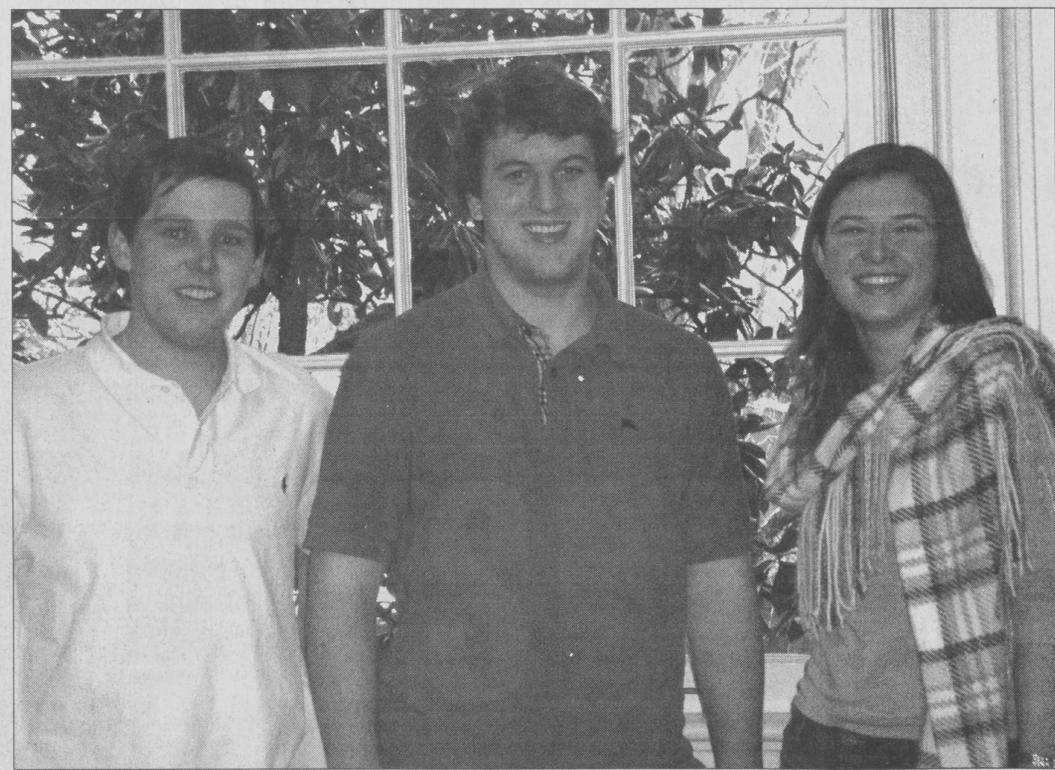


PHOTO: MALLORY RUYMANN

Political Chair Wes Little, General Chair Richard Friedman, and Personnel Chair Sara Mueller become the first of what will be more than 1500 students to participate in Mock Con 2008.

Mock Con planning underway

Continued from page 1

publicity for the school, and it also lets candidates reach out to the younger generation of voters."

Mueller pointed out that one person on the steering committee is entirely responsible for public relations.

"In the past a journalism major has often held that job," she added. Little and Friedman said newspapers from across Virginia and even the Washington D.C.

area would probably send reporters down to cover the convention.

When asked how the quadrennial convention continues to attract high profile speakers and candidate, Connelly pointed to the strong media coverage.

"The W & L Mock Convention is the most successful such college student exercise in the nation. Prominent speakers spawn media attention, and in turn media attention attracts prominent speakers. Politicians

love television cameras."

While the other two chairs handle logistical and personnel issues, Wes Little gets to focus on the political side of the convention.

"This is the nation's most accurate mock convention," he announced, "so we work hard to make sure we get our prediction right."

Little will work closely with the 5 regional chairs as well as the state chairs, "focusing on all the political aspects. We'll do a

lot of research in the field and on the ground to make a correct prediction, starting with Iowa and New Hampshire."

As the tri-chairs begin planning out Washington and Lee's most famous event, they'll continue to draw on the assistance of more and more students.

"Usually about 90% of the students are involved with the convention in some way," Mueller added, "so this is really something everyone can participate in."

"Usually about 90% of the students are involved with the convention in some way, so this is really something everyone can participate in."

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sports



Season off to familiar start

Men's Basketball 1-8 after two weeks

By Rosemary Boyle
STAFF WRITER

With Sunday's game against Virginia Wesleyan resulting in a score of 50-72, the Men's Basketball team increased their number of losses to three in the ODAC conference.

Aside from the addition of seven players this year, the numbers seem to be going down a similar path as last season when the team posted a dismal record of 2-23. However, the numbers are deceiving.

When asked about this year's team, freshman guard Isaiah Goodman, leader in 3-pointers with .727% accuracy, cited Vince Lombardi's thoughts on winning, "Winning is not a sometime thing, it is an all the time thing. You do not win once in a while, you do not do things right once in a while, you do them right all the time. Winning is habit. Unfortunately, so is losing."

The Generals have not had a winning season in at least fifteen years according to Goodman. With a streak like that, it is easy to see why losing became a habit.

According to junior captain forward Alex White, it is a habit that is soon to change. Change starts in the mindset of the players, a change Alex White believes the team is going through.

Alex said that "our strength is our team mentality, we are going to turn the losing around because we have a strong sense of team commitment and camaraderie, something we didn't have as much of in the past."

Along with the new found team fellowship too, is urgency for a winning conviction.

Goodman observes, "I think that our biggest weakness is that

we don't have the winning mindset...we have to believe we can win."

In the ODAC conference, the Generals lost a close game to Bridgewater, holding a 29-28 lead early in the second half after being behind fourteen points at halftime.

Sophomore forward Greg Bienemann scored a game-high 18 points and had 5 rebounds. They fell hard to Randolph-Macon, ending with a 42-71 loss.

Though the three ODAC losses may suggest the habit of losing is here to stay, fans and players know differently. Change occurs slowly, over time.

"I think that our biggest weakness is that we don't have the winning mindset..."

ISAIAH GOODMAN, FRESHMAN

The Generals earned their first win on Wednesday when they defeated Guilford 98-92.

Bienemann led the Generals again with a career-high 33 points, one of five Generals to score at least 10 points on the night.

Goodman said, "Our greatest strength this year is our ability to learn. We have improved bits and pieces each game and practice, learning new things and executing what we learned. The challenge is putting all of the pieces together."

The Generals do not play again until after Winter Break when they host Roanoke College on Saturday, January 7 at 7:00 p.m.

Fresh legs add to hype

Wrestlers grapple with young team, tough competition in the ODAC

By Jessica Shaw
STAFF WRITER

Just before the dining hall staff lowers the metal gates, the wrestling team, exhausted from its recent practice, quickly grabs a bite to eat. Though the pizza may appear tempting and the frozen yogurt heavenly, the wrestlers discipline themselves to small portions and lots of fluids.

Practicing every weekday afternoon, wrestlers must maintain a certain body weight to be eligible for competition. According to team members, this means one can actually lose between five and seven pounds in a single practice.

"I didn't realize how quickly you can lose weight," freshman wrestling manager Ali Smith said. "I didn't even know you could lose [ten pounds] in a week."

The weight classes in NCAA range from 125 pounds to 285 pounds, and each athlete must remain at or under their specific

"We should be doing much better this year.

We're rebuilding... Last year, we went just over .500. This year, we hope to place top in the league."

SOPHOMORE ERIC GAGNE (149 LBS.)

standard when they weigh in at dual meets and Invitationals.

So far this season, the Generals have competed in both the Southern Virginia Invitational and the Ursinus Invitational. According to sophomore Peter Lawrence (149 lbs.), the team performed worse than expected at the Southern Virginia Invitational.

At the Scranton Invitational this past weekend, W&L finished 7th out of 9 teams. Sophomore Jesse Satalof (174 lbs.) and Junior Max Courtney (184 lbs.) finished fourth in each of their weight classes to lead the Generals.

However, the team is growing with 14 wrestlers this year and

hopes to improve on last year's dual meet record of 5-4.

"We should be doing much better this year," sophomore Eric Gagne (149 lbs.) said. "We're rebuilding. We've got nine sophomores, four freshmen, and one junior. Last year, we went just over .500. This year, we hope to place top in the league."

Due to the lack of wrestling programs in the ODAC conference, W&L wrestlers compete in the Centennial conference, which is extremely competitive.

"Two teams in the league are in the top 20 in the country," Gagne said. "We're hoping to finish in right with them."

According to freshman Rob

Terrin (141 lbs.), the workouts are both intense and unique, incorporating shorter sets that are more strenuous. He said that they require a lot of self-motivation.

"Here, it's up to you to get the work done instead of falling back on the coach," he said.

Coach Gary Franke has been in charge of wrestling at W&L for 33 years. Prior to wrestling, Franke led the tennis team to the first national championship in W&L history.

"He's very laid back [and] very trusting," Lawrence said. "He's not in your face. He expects you to do stuff on your own."

With the addition of freshmen Tom Hosford (125 lbs.), Terrin, Nick Fox (197 lbs.) and John Christopher (285 lbs.), the team hopes to use this depth to perform well at home at the W&L Quadrangular on January 7. At this tournament, they will face opponents from Gettysburg, Waynesburg and Wilkes.

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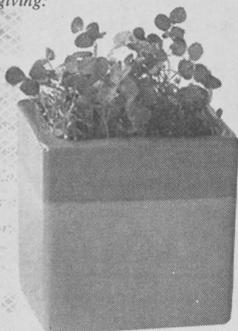
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arts & life

Shop talk

In this hectic time of year, it's tough to get yourself through exams, much less find the perfect gifts for your friends. Managing editor Katherine Greene offers some trendy ideas for this season's gift-giving:



Plant the luck of the Irish under your tree this Christmas with this luck garden growing kit. It comes complete with a two-tone green pot, seeds, and accessories.

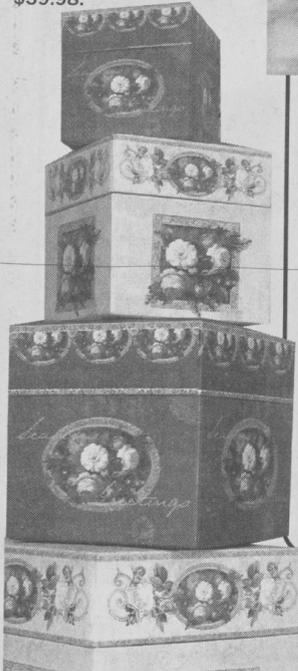


If you're willing to splurge, get your best friends items from the Kate Spade office collection, provided by Hamilton-Robbins. Though definitely on the pricey side (this wallet runs around \$110), the sleek design says professional while the designer name says trendy.



The ultimate gift for any gamer this season is Quake IV by ID Software, available for PC or Xbox. Continuing from its earlier version, Quake features marines fighting off an alien invasion and can be found on Amazon.com for \$39.99.

These nesting boxes make a unique gift for creating more storage space. Though also popular at stores like IKEA, these boxes were found at The Shenandoah Attic for \$39.98.



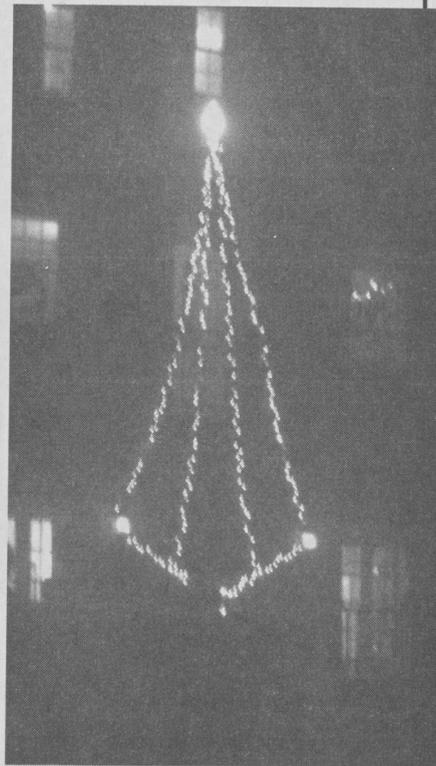
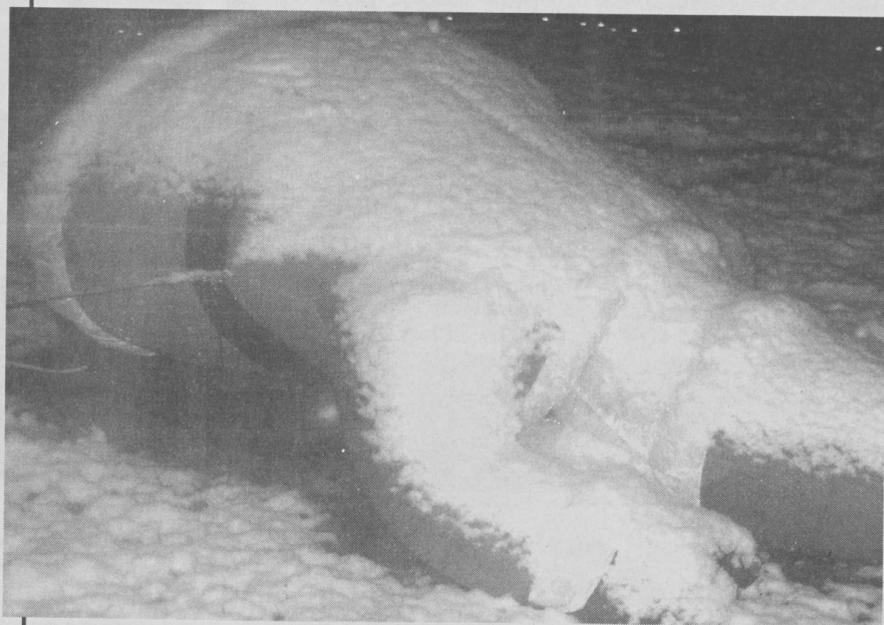
Lambda Chi really takes the cake this year, with their eclectic mix of lights. They use a coordinated variety of color and dimension, and we especially love the arch. Our favorite, though, was the polar bear, of which brother Andy McEnroe is very proud.

Festive frats

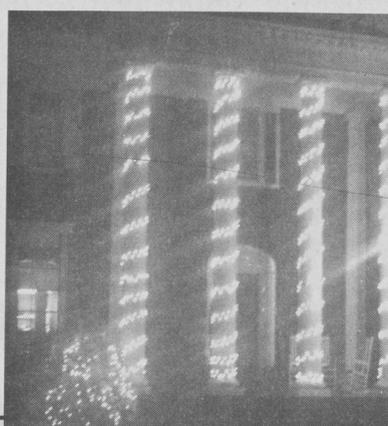
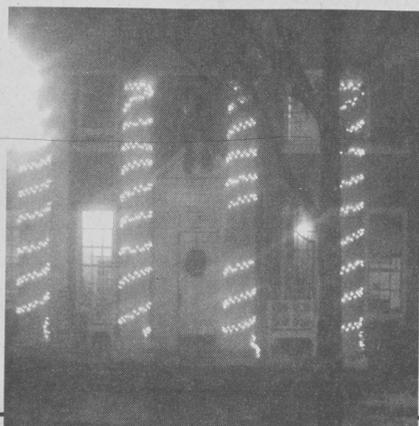
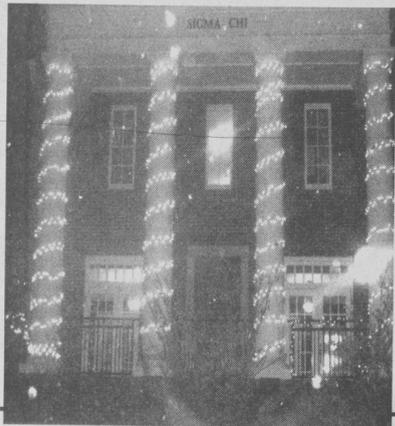
The boys show off their design skills in holiday spirit

While slapping holiday lights on the outside of a home may seem simple, these guys really found a way to express the spirit of the season in many electronically complex ways. Some were successful in creating a winter wonderland, while others fell by the wayside in the friendly neighborhood competition.

Photography and text by Kat Greene
MANAGING EDITOR



SAE not only used 4 un-Christmas-like colors on their columns, but also apparently had problems getting their Santa up. Maybe Santa was just under too much holiday pressure (or maybe it was the eggnog). Sigma Nu featured Santa going down the chimney and a great Christmas tree.



Popular design? Rumor has it that these frats were decorated by B&G, instead of the brothers themselves. Sigma Chi, KA, and Kappa Sig all dressed alike for this holiday party, making it difficult to tell them apart. Though the simple designs are nice, we find them lacking in creativity.

Battle of the parties

The Commons competes for the Wednesday night social scene

By Abri Nelson
STAFF WRITER

Christmas is in the air – the first snow has dusted our campus, the Commons is decked in red and green, and organizations are packing all kinds of events into these last two weeks. Despite all the decorations, the regular activities on campus continue. We still have papers to write, exams to take, parties to go to – and we still have Wednesday Night Live.

I can see all of your blank faces – Wednesday Night Live? You mean those bands that play in the Commons? Yes, those bands. But also the comedy acts put on by students, the laser tag on Cannan Green, and the poker tournaments.

Jason Rodocker, the Director of Student Activities, continued the tradition of Uncommon Grounds from last year, but changed the name to Wednesday Night Live to “emphasize the regular occurrence of having something every Wednesday night.” The purpose of the night is to give students the chance to plan and execute their idea for a fun event – such as the laser tag and comedy nights.

The problem comes in the form of students not understanding what Wednesday

Night Live is. Freshman Julie Petersen commented, “I’ve never been – I don’t know much about it.” Sophomore Will Chamberlain agreed, adding that he has too much to do during the week anyway to go to anything.

Nevertheless, Rodocker says that he has been quite pleased with the turnout. Some 200 students showed up at the comedy night, which featured sophomores Kate Shellnutt and Kelly Harvey, and senior Cody Gabbard. The laser tag night was also a huge success.

When asked about the draw of off campus events, such as Christmas in the Country, Rodocker commented that he believes that they draw no more students away from Wednesday Night Live than studying or other organization commitments do.

Rodocker hopes students are able to experience all parts of the college experience, but in a balanced manner.

He hopes that more students will continue to plan their own events because that is the purpose of Wednesday Night Live and those are the events that draw the most students. Events are always free to students and convenient for those on campus. Junior Meghan Joss said, “I try to go when possible...it’s easy to stop by as a study break.”

Rodocker hopes students are able to experience all parts of the college experience, but in a balanced manner.

What do you want for Christmas?

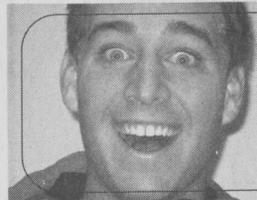
This week's Talkbacks was conducted by Greg Zimmerman.



Will Waller, sophomore:
“I want the Braves to win a World Series Championship.”



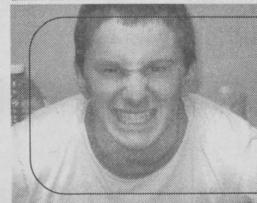
Ashlee Metcalf, senior:
“A new car, 1 million dollars... that’s it.”



John Lindsay, freshman:
“Seven minutes in heaven with Piggy.”



Isca King, staff:
“For all my students to come back and work at Cafe 77.”



Tommy Pignatelli, freshman:
“I want to know the identity of ‘nip/tuck’s’ The Carver.”

Merry holidays

Other winter celebrations should take a back seat to Christmas

By Tim Livingston
STAFF WRITER

As a Jewish student, I demand an explanation as to the lack of Hanukkah ornaments on campus.

Also, my African American friends would appreciate some more Kwanzaa decorations. Lastly, a few Ramadan pamphlets would also be prudent.

How can people make these claims with a straight face? The transformation from the “Christmas” season of my youth to the current “Holiday” season has been an arduous road.

Actually the conversion hasn’t encountered many roadblocks because the desire to constantly conform to the laws of political correctness has torn down all barriers in the way of ostracizing any holidays during the month of December.

Perhaps this overwhelming personal statistic will help people comprehend the humor within

America’s latest trend of not leaving out any religions during this present-filled month.

When I graduated from elementary school in 1997, four out of the six songs we sang at the Holiday show were Christmas songs.

When my brother graduated from grade school only six years later, they sang four songs and only one was about Christmas. This is undeniably startling.

When asked a family member in the audience commented, “The Ramadan song was quite interesting.”

Ah yes, who would ever forget those beautiful Ramadan songs playing on the radio when the Holiday season rolled around?

I mean no offense to Muslim readers, in fact I would argue that Ramadan (although I know little about it) deserves more decorations than Hanukkah or Kwanzaa.

Well maybe that’s an overstatement, but considering Hanukkah is probably the third most impor-

tant holiday in the Jewish religion, and Kwanzaa was created in California in the 1960’s, I would argue that neither one of these celebrations deserve a song at elementary school concerts.

On second thought, I’m always game for a little “Dreidel Dreidel.” But that’s it.

Considering that most people in this country deem themselves Christians, and Christmas is the paramount holiday in the religion, it should be understood why the festivity is entitled to more attention.

There is nothing to explain the distraught of people in the country who strive to see a Menorah for every Christmas tree or a Ramadan song for every Christmas song.

These ideas attempt to equalize, but the audience is primarily Christian.

What ever happened to attempting to appeal to the majority audience?

There is a reason why

Milwaukee’s Best doesn’t advertise on the Home Shopping Network.

The need to be perceived as politically correct is not always detrimental, but this time of the year should be dedicated to only one holiday.

Although every religion’s holiday has its validity, people need to realize Christmas’ dominance in December.

Whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim or other, let’s all join hands, celebrate the holidays, and not fret about Holiday trimmings.

It’s vital to remember that some point long after Jesus’ death, somebody made-up that Christ was born on December 25th.

Although there is only a 1/364.25 chance this is correct, I refuse to question details at this time.

Instead, I ask all religions to simply forget about your holiday because Christmas is definitely better.

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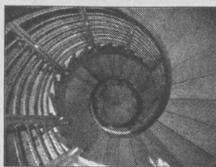
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opinions



Alito's politics please

Bush's newest pick for Supreme Court should please both the right and the left

By Caley Anderson
COLUMNIST

My more liberal friends doth protest too much the nomination of Samuel Alito, who is quite probably the next Supreme Court Associate Justice.

While I personally side with the social liberalism espoused by many opponent's of Alito's nomination on issues such as abortion, gun control, what have you, I differ from them in thinking that Alito will interfere with precedent on such issues.

Both sides rightly condemn judicial "activism," the concept of the judiciary establishing law through creative interpretations of legislative acts, often in defiance

of precedent and of existing interpretations of law.

The problem with radically reinterpreted law is that it creates, in one Justice's words, a "jurisprudence of doubt," a situation where the law shifts so rapidly that it's hard to determine just what is or is not legal or illegal.

There is, of course, some room to read the law and the Constitution through a particular lens, as hardcore constructionist readings of law are (despite what Antonin Scalia says) impossible. Nevertheless, out and out Reconstructions of the law are unacceptable.

Usually this gets turned into a conservative argument. Republicans very often argue that the majority-liberal judiciary attempts to circumvent America's "true val-

ues" by reinterpreting the law to their own ends. They give as examples the ideas expressed by the 9th Circuit Court, along with other courts that have handed down liberal opinions.

There is some merit to their arguments, though they often overextend their criticisms—most of the decisions they point to are quite well-decided. Often conserva-

tives are criticizing the politics of decisions rather than their legal foundations, which are invariably quite strong.

Similarly, some liberals are overextending their criticisms of Alito. Their evidence for his potential activism (principally, they fear, against abortion), are memos and other documents he wrote for the Reagan administration which

showed vehemence on behalf of very conservative positions on social issues, including abortion. They believe that he still carries these beliefs and will use his spot on the Court's bench to legislate against abortion, et. al.

Whether or not he even does still carry these beliefs is in question. People, especially conservatives, tended to get very, very carried away during the Reagan era, and I have a feeling that Alito was one of the individuals swept away in the nonsense tide of extreme conservatism. He is likely far more moderate today.

And more importantly, even if he is still socially reactionary, he is not going to let his positions interfere with his jurisprudence. Like Scalia, and like Roberts, he is a good judge who takes the law as the basis of his decisions. He

may not be, as I had hoped, as politically moderate as O'Connor, but he is fair and as partial a nominee as one could possibly hope for from President Bush.

Instead of criticizing Alito, moderates ought to be thanking their lucky stars that some of the REALLY activist conservatives weren't nominated. Some of the names on the short list weren't even real judges—Orrin Hatch was mentioned as a name, and (shudder) John Ashcroft was also rumored to be a possibility. And we all know what happened to Harriet Miers.

Alito may be conservative, but that doesn't matter because he's a good judge. Politics plays a fringe role on the bench, what really matters is one's understanding of the law, and Alito has a very good one indeed.

UPS & DOWNS

Caley Anderson gives his take on the good, the bad, and the ugly.

▲ Vault.

Definitely the new Mountain Dew for late studiers who aren't coffee cultists.

▲ Driving Traveller.

I've been informed that there was a good reason that everyone who was at Hobes smelled very powerfully of Christmas tree last Friday night.

▲ The Dead 60s.

Cool British band sounds like scary, haunted mansion music mixed with surf rock, with a bit of reggae thrown in.

▼ Power outage.

It seemed like EVERYONE had something critically important that was due the Wednesday after, and they managed to turn the power on just AFTER most of the desperate people gave up and went to bed.

Christmas for the politically correct

This December the battle over Christmas heats up between the politically correct and traditionalist Americans

By Justin McKeen
COLUMNIST

It's just about that time of year again, and people are getting excited.

In fact, some people have been getting excited since Halloween, skipping right over Thanksgiving and heading right into the frenzy that is Christmas.

People are waking up before dawn to go shopping, little kids (and sometimes frat brothers) are going to see Santa at the mall, and parents are selling themselves into bondage to buy a new X-box 360 off Ebay.

All this holiday cheer is well and good (nothing boosts a sagging economy like the most materialist, consumer-driven holiday of the year), but it's easy to forget that not everyone celebrates Christmas.

Or perhaps it's not, considering the profusion of political correctness that's springing up everywhere from Target to Congress.

Speaking in broad generali-

ties (because that never gets you in trouble), most people celebrate Christmas as a time to gather with family and friends, to exchange gifts and discuss the year and to just generally reconnect with loved ones.

The religious connotations are obviously there, but in many, and perhaps even most cases, are secondary.

It's this aspect of Christmas that seems to cause most of the trouble in terms of political correctness. It is a simple issue of how the holiday is viewed.

For many people who celebrate Christmas, there doesn't seem to be much to object too. For those looking on from other traditions though, the disconnect between the religious and social aspects of the holiday probably aren't as apparent.

Many towns and cities are changing the names of what were previously Christmas celebrations to more generic, politically correct titles like Winter Celebrations.

This has caused backlash

You could call Christmas Kalamazoo Time or Tupac Celebration Day and Christians could still celebrate the birth of Christ, or not, as they choose.

from some communities wanting to keep their traditional titles, because they don't see anything wrong with celebrating Christmas in what is, after all, a predominantly Protestant, and certainly Christian, nation.

What people on both side of the issue need to realize is that the name or title being applied is utterly unimportant.

You could call Christmas Kalamazoo Time or Tupac Celebration Day and Christians could still celebrate the birth of Christ, or not, as they choose.

In the same vein, calling it a Christmas tree as opposed to a Holiday tree, unless its being done in some invasive or derogatory way (and I'm not really sure how you could do that), really shouldn't be trampling on anyone's rights to freedom of religion.

I would guess that the majority of campus participated in some form or another in Christmas Weekend this past week, and as ridiculous as it sounds, I would hold that out as an example that should be emulated.

Sure, there were lights and decorations, a tree or two, and at least one really annoying singing Santa, but I don't think anything was present that would cause offense.

I went out with friends, some religious and some not, and ev-

eryone, no exceptions, had a good time.

I think the biggest effect Christmas had on my weekend was the color of some of the beverages.

What it all comes down to, in the end, is that everyone needs to be willing to compromise a little bit.

It's a big world out there, but it's getting smaller all the time, and if the past five years have shown us anything, they've shown us a need for understanding between the multitudes of diverse peoples out there.

If there's ever a time when civility and patience between people is at a premium, its now, as the days grow shorter and the temperature drops.

This is an important time in many cultures, and I wish all of you joy in celebrating however you see fit.

And remember, next time you're in Walmart, watch your back. Those soccer moms are vicious.



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Abortion is ugly

Abortion is a stain on America's history and integrity

By Jack Staunton
COLUMNIST

When one is convinced that a massive injustice is at hand, when one is convinced that an inherent wrong currently occupies a comfortable spot in our society, inaction is never an excuse, and apathy is the worst of all evils. Such is the case with the place of abortion in our present-day society.

America is the great nation that she is today not because she is perfect. No, rather she is the great country that she is today because of the voice and the conscience of the American people. When a flaw is present in the fabric of American justice, her citizens have a duty to make sure that it is corrected. And when so moved, there is nothing that shall stand in the way of the will of the American people.

Such was the case during the times of slavery, and such was the case during the times of the Civil Rights Era. The stain upon the integrity of America is apparent enough from the fact that these human rights abuses were allowed to happen at all. This stain is made even worse by the length of time that it took Americans to raise their heads and lift their voices to cry out that bigotry will not be the status quo, and that hate in any form, but especially when protected by law, is something entirely unacceptable to our sense of justice.

Let the cry of Malcolm X carry through to the present-day. "It is not a fight for civil rights, it is a fight for human rights." When has this been more true than when seven out of nine lawyers sitting

on a bench in Washington D.C. in 1973 decided that a small human looking object with fingers and toes, with an independent heart that begins to beat by day twenty-four after its conception, with an organ system in place by week eight, and with the ability to feel pain as it is ripped apart limb from limb in the dilation and extraction procedure, could not possibly

Abortion is the greatest and most horrific abuse of human rights in the history of our nation.

resemble a human and is therefore afforded no protection? For even if one does not believe that small human-looking object to be in fact human, it is undeniable that one day that "fetus" will take its first breath upon emerging from the womb, that it will let loose its first cry, and that it will giggle its first giggle.

This ability, this fundamental right that is something we refer to as life, has been denied to forty-six million human beings, and is being denied to one and a half million more as each year passes. This is an absolute atrocity and it is far past time that we do something about it.

Forty-six million. Do not let that number just pass you by. Do not let yourself become

desensitized to it. A fourth of our generation has been killed by abortion. As Dr. Ely, the author of "Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom from the 1790s Through the Civil War," stated, "If the horrors of the 20th century taught any lesson, it is that depersonalization is usually the precondition for cruelty." Picture their faces. Think of who they would have been: teachers, policeman, firemen, the doctor who finds the cure for AIDS, the first woman President, the first African-American President, your husband, your wife, your best friend. Regardless of who they might have been or what they might have done, it is undeniable that they deserved the same right that we have claimed to grow up and to live life.

Abortion is the greatest and most horrific abuse of human rights in the history of our nation. Why is it that we now seem to be moving backwards in our fight for human rights? Instead of fighting to further define the meaning of human equality, we are now fighting to define the value of human life.

We have let our voices lay silent for far too long. May God have mercy on us that we have let this horror go on for so long with so little protest in return. We speak of integrity, we speak of dignity, we speak of honor. Well then let us show that these virtues actually mean something to us by speaking out in defense of that most intrinsic of all human rights, the right to live. When speaking out in defense of life, your voice shall be forty-six million strong. Let it be heard.

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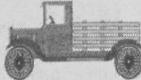
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