

The Commonwealth Times

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IN BRIEF

CALENDAR

FEB. 19 THROUGH FEB. 21

Thursday, Feb. 19

Interested in history? Visit the University of Richmond's Jepson Hall for a "Civil War Leadership" discussion where three historians will speak about the diverse leadership styles of Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass and Jefferson Davis during the Civil War. The speakers will be David Blight, William Cooper Jr. and Harold Holzer. The event begins at 7 p.m. For more information call (804) 287-6627.

Friday, Feb. 20

Graduates from VCU's MFA program read from their thesis projects during the "Moveable Feast" at 1708 Gallery. Starting at 6 p.m., Rosa Hornsby will read poetry and Becky Moon will read fiction. For more information call (804) 643-7829.

Saturday, Feb. 21

Because of their busy schedules, students might not have time for a healthy life style. If you are one of those students, the "Your Healthy Future Today" events will allow you to enjoy health screenings, exercise, fitness tips, massages, nutritional information and more. The events will be held from Feb. 20 to Feb. 22, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. The cover charge is \$3. For more information call (804) 778-4874.

CAMPUS FORECAST


**Thursday
60/33**

**Friday
58/44**

**Saturday
62/37**

**Sunday
59/32**

9-year-old boy creates testicle problems

The parents of a nine-year-old Atlanta boy have been fined because their child kicked a waiter in the testicles during a wedding reception. The unnamed 26-year-old waiter claimed the parents left their two children unsupervised and the nine-year-old and his younger brother ran around "wildly." He also said the oldest child threatened him and other catering staff members with a knife. When the waiter asked the child to put down the knife and return to the house, the boy headed that way but then turned around and kicked the waiter's left testicle. As a result of the kick, the waiter said he developed acute epididymitis and erectile dysfunction.

Horror-film teacher arrested

A Belgian teacher was arrested for making schoolgirls cut their hair and watch horror films. Koen Deca, head of Freinetschool in Haacht, said he was trying to build character in the 11- and 12-year-olds. Additionally, the girls were not allowed to look away from the screen when they were frightened. Deca said he wanted his students to cross their own borders and that could not happen without "pain or passion." He apologized if his actions were perceived as wrong.

Drinking buddies now online

There is a new way of avoiding loneliness. A new Web site, the

invention of Mark Payne, who runs a fast-food restaurant in Newbury, Berkshire, helps people find drinking buddies. Payne, 32, came up with the idea after moving to a new area where he had no one with whom to drink. Hundreds of people have already registered since Payne launched the service last month.

Record kiss brings man to hospital

An Italian man was rushed to a hospital for oxygen after he and his girlfriend reportedly broke the world kissing record. Andrea Sarti and Anna Chen kissed for 31 hours, 18 minutes and 33 seconds. Although the 37-year-old Sarti ended up in treatment, his 30-year-old girlfriend suffered no side effects. During the kiss, the couple — one of three who tried to set the record — were not allowed to eat, drink or go to the bathroom. One couple gave up within one hour, the second gave up nine hours later, but the winning couple just carried on. Three years ago, an American couple set the last record of 30 hours, 59 minutes and 24 seconds.

Nightclub dispute settled with 10 pizzas

A nightclub bouncer in Italy was found guilty of assaulting a customer and is now ordered to buy him 10 pizzas. A judge in Casalmaggiore's club Tam Tam ruled that the bouncer used unnecessary violence when dealing with the customer. The two men ended up fighting after the customer tried to regain access to the club's main hall past closing time. The customer ended up hospital-

ized in a state of shock and was diagnosed with minor injuries. After a two-year legal battle, the judge settled the dispute by ordering the bouncer to buy 10 pizzas for the customer and allow him free access to the club for one month.

Camping on banks could lead to police tip-offs

Two would-be bank robbers in the Irish Republic were arrested after spending two nights in a soundproof tent on the roof of a bank. After receiving a tip, police found the men in already advanced stages of breaking into the building through the air-conditioning system. Police said they believe the robbers planned to take staff members hostage before gaining access to the vault. Tools, including pneumatic drills for breaking through concrete as well as wire-cutting items, were found on the roof.

Correction

An article in the Feb. 16 issue of The Commonwealth Times stated that "Crossover Day," during which bills passed by the House go to the Senate and vice versa, is Feb. 22. "Crossover Day" was Wednesday, Feb. 18. The House and Senate will unveil their budgets Feb. 22.

Cover photo illustration by Candice Anderson.

Spectrum cover photo courtesy of Theatre VCU.

THE Commonwealth TIMES

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NEWS

'This is the building of the 21st century'

Student commons and activities director lauds University Student Commons Phase 3, but SGA members say some still concerned with dining services' quality

JULIAN BENBOW
Staff Writer

The grand opening of the University Student Commons' Phase III is scheduled for April 16, and the following day – "Future Friday" – will showcase the building and the programs that can be held in it, said Tim Reed, director of student commons and activities, at Monday's Student Government Association meeting.

A Grand Opening Gala and a Virginia Student Art Show April 18 will cap the weekend.

"This is all about really showcasing this building and what it can do," Reed said. "The whole thing is, we're looking to the future. This is the building of the 21st century."

The entire Phase III project includes the remodeling of the food court and the addition of a new ballroom to serve as a "multi-purpose space," Reed said. Space was also

created to bring student services and cultural offices together.

Earlier in the meeting, SGA President Zmarak Khan addressed some VCU students' concerns and also evaluated the SGA's performance thus far.

"I believe that there have been great accomplishments made this past year," Khan told senators, "and believe that the foundation has been set to move forward and begin providing the students with tangible results."

After talking with students about housing concerns, Khan said he established a committee to research some of the problems and compile a report, which he received the day of the meeting. The president said that after he shows the report to SGA members, he will deliver it to the University Council and the Board of Visitors.

Khan said that after meeting one-on-one with students, the SGA also formed committees to address students' dissatisfaction

with the university's dining services. People who eat at the university's dining halls on a regular basis have complained about the quality of the food.

First-year student Reagan Merriam had something to say on the issue while sitting in the Hibbs dining hall.

"Look at me – I'm eating a bowl of cereal for dinner," Merriam said. "If they didn't just find stuff in the kitchen and throw it in our food, it would taste better."

Hibbs offers premium meals, which for two swipes of a meal card allow students to eat a meal different from the typical selection.

"It's iffy," said first-year student Amanda Caffi of the food at Hibbs. "The premium's good. The food has good and bad days."

With some students discontented with tuition increases, Khan said he has begun efforts to lobby the General Assembly.

"We are currently working on sending letters to the parents of VCU students to encourage them to write to their representatives concerning issues related to higher

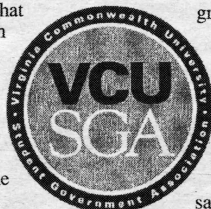
education," Khan said. "Our voices must be heard and I believe that as individuals and as a cohesive body the General Assembly must know how we all feel about this issue."

Khan also expressed pleasure with the General Assembly's delaying a vote on a that would increase tuition for students who take the equivalent of two full semesters longer to graduate than their degree programs require.

"Fortunately," Khan said, "the voice of the students was heard and their interests protected."

Senators Aaron Tenenbaum, Thomas Hanna and Daniel Plaugher, who represent the College of Humanities and Sciences, sponsored a request to the senators to investigate whether adopting a "living wage" bill at VCU would be feasible.

The bill calls for a pay increase to \$8.85 with benefits or \$10.55 without benefits for workers directly employed by VCU. The sponsors said they have started a petition that nearly 900 VCU employees, visitors and students have signed.



Former U.S. ambassador: U.S. dominance 'does not translate readily into leadership'

DANIEL PLANAS
News Writer

Under current U.S. foreign policy, prospects for a democratic future in the Middle East are doubtful, former U.S. Ambassador David Mack said recently.

Mack spoke at the Christian Children's Fund building as part of the "Great Discussions Series" lectures. He said that if the United States is to win the war on terrorism, peace between Arabs and Israelis as well as security in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula are vital.

"The U.S. demonstrated its overwhelming military dominance of the battlefield in Iraq," Mack said. "But this does not translate readily into leadership."

The power of the United States to deal with "military foes" is unquestionable, Mack said, because even a combination of military powers in the Middle East would not withstand U.S. military force.

However, he added, diplomacy is declining in U.S. foreign policy.

"We are widely viewed as callous, hypo-

critical and unable to persevere in trying to gain the trust and confidence of other governments," he said. "U.S. military power by itself will never make Americans safe."

In his criticism of U.S. foreign policy in Iraq, the former ambassador said the Bush administration has yet to develop a convincing strategy for dealing with the threats to American interests in the Middle East. Preemption is of little value if non-state actors with an unknown origin pose the threat, he said.

Additionally, Mack said, the Bush administration called for political, economic and social reforms in the Middle East.

"While (the reforms are) desirable from a theoretical point of view," he said, "it is less than obvious that the United States has the insights and political skill to engage in more than cautious encouragement for movements and individuals who seem to be committed to values that we prize."

When it comes to democracy in the Middle East, Mack said Iraq is not the most likely Arab country to adopt reforms. To that end, Palestine is the best prospect, he said.

Hostile governments in the Middle East would be more willing to comply with U.S.-supported democratic and free-market reforms if those governments perceived a sincere effort on the part of the United States to calm the dispute between the

Israelis and Arabs, which Mack said is "the highest moral calling for U.S. foreign policy."

"If the Bush administration had used one-tenth of the political influence and financial resources that it has devoted to the Iraq problem, I am confident they could have made a real difference regarding Palestine," he said.

However, Mack said he is skeptical that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat or Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon share President Bush's vision for peace. It is doubtful, he added, that Arafat would make peace with Israel if that means a civil war among the Palestinians.

"Arafat wants to be the Palestinian head of state, but he also wants to be the leader of all Palestinians," he said. "In aspiring both, he ends up being neither."

Sharon is averse to the peace process for political reasons because the demographic statistics in his country show that the Jewish population between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River will soon be a minority, Mack said. Additionally, the economies of the country are on the decline.

"But President Bush must show the prime minister of Israel that he risks his relationship with us by further delay (of the peace process)," Mack said.

Attention student organization members

Is your organization hosting a volunteer opportunity soon?

The Commonwealth Times wants to know about it.

We will start running a **special volunteer events** calendar. If you would like your event to be included, e-mail the following information to Matt Busse at bussemd@vcu.edu:

- Formal name of the event
- Date, time and location
- What volunteers will do
- Whom the event will benefit
- Who sponsors the event
- Sponsor contact information, preferably both a phone number and an e-mail address
- Any special notes (for example, if it's a canned food drive, do you need volunteers with vehicles to transport the goods?)

If you have any questions, please call (804) 828-1058 or e-mail bussemd@vcu.edu



Mack

NEWS

Senate panel delays vote on Monroe compensation

T.D. BROWN
Capital News Service

The Senate Finance Committee voted unanimously to wait until the 2005 legislative session to consider a compensation claim for Beverly Anne Monroe, a former Ashland resident convicted of first-degree murder in 1992.

Monroe was freed when a federal judge ruled in March 2002 that she had not received a fair trial. Prosecutors in Powhatan County decided not to retry Monroe in connection with the death of Roger de la Burde, her lover and a wealthy Powhatan resident.

In January, Sen. Benjamin Lambert III, D-Richmond, filed a bill seeking more than \$1.6 million to compensate Monroe for having suffered "severe physical, emotional and psychological damage as a result of her wrongful incarceration."

Last week, the Senate Finance Committee voted 15-0 to postpone considering the claim until next year.

The panel made that decision because Monroe does not qualify for compensation now, said Lorraine Waddill, legislative assistant to Sen. Walter Stosch, R-Glen Allen, who is on the Finance Com-

mittee.

To receive relief for wrongful incarceration, Monroe would have to be found innocent of the crime, and "technically, the courts haven't yet said she was innocent," Waddill said.

In recent years, the General Assembly approved compensation for three men who spent years in prison until they were exonerated by DNA evidence. This year, the Senate approved a \$1.5-million package for Julius Earl Ruffin, who spent 21 years in prison for a rape and then was exonerated.

"Usually in wrongful incarceration cases where DNA tests prove a person didn't commit the crime ... you see compensation," Waddill said.

Lambert seeks a lump-sum payment of \$400,000 for Monroe. In addition, under his bill she would receive more than \$1.2 million in monthly payments over 20 years.

De la Burde, 60, was found dead from a gunshot wound to the head on a couch in his Powhatan home. Authorities initially considered the death a suicide. A Powhatan County Circuit Court jury later convicted Monroe of murder and sentenced her to 20 years in prison.



How many drinks did most VCU students have when they partied in the last 2 weeks?

How many sexual partners have most VCU students had in the past year?

What percentage of VCU students have not smoked cigarettes in the past month?

If you know the answers to these questions, you could have a chance to win a \$5 gift certificate to the university's e2 Bookstore.

Linda Hancock, assistant director of health promotions, and four nursing students will hold raffles in select classes during the next few weeks. Students who write the correct answers on their entry forms could win.

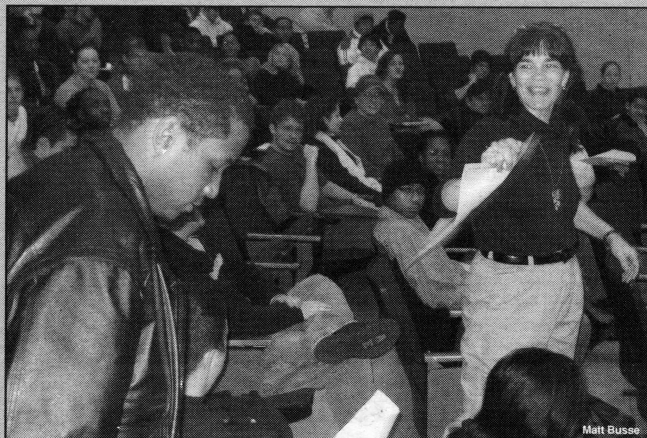
The raffles are part of a campaign to help students "know the true numbers" about students' smoking, drinking and sexual habits, Hancock said.

"People tend to underestimate healthy behavior and overestimate unhealthy behavior that sticks out," Hancock said. For example, she said, everyone notices the person at the party drinking a lot or the smokers standing outside between classes.

So what are the answers? Most VCU students had zero to four drinks when they partied in the last two weeks, zero to one sex partners in the past year and 72 percent of students have not smoked cigarettes in the past month. The numbers are based on a spring 2003 survey.

In George Hoffer's Principles of Microeconomics class Tuesday morning, four students won gift certificates - Tracy Johnson, David Boone, Tavarus Dore and Andre Clark.

-Matt Busse



Andre Clark (left) wins a \$5 gift certificate from Linda Hancock, assistant director for health promotions, for knowing "the true numbers."

RARR!!
TELL YOUR FRIENDS
TO READ THE
COMMONWEALTH TIMES!!



NEWS

AMBASSADOR continued from page 3

Mack predicted that if the United States does not help Israel and Palestine reach lasting peace, even democracy, human rights and the value of free markets would not abolish the tide of anti-Americanism in the Middle East. Additionally, he said the United States must welcome initiatives toward peace from its Arab allies.

"We must appreciate the need for encouraging the reform initiatives coming from the region – the ones that are not covered with Washington's fingerprints," Mack said.

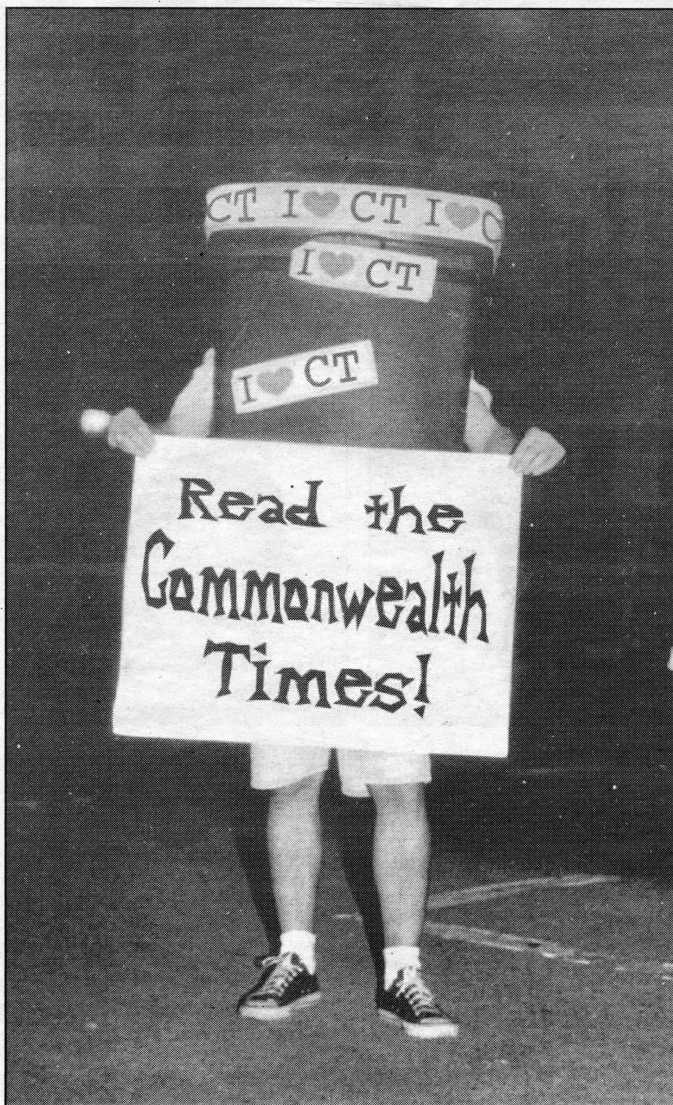
Although success in establishing democracy in Iraq is still possible, it will not necessarily lead to a wave of democracy throughout the region or halt international terrorism, Mack said. Recognizing that a hostile Middle East impairs the United States' ability to effectively fight the war on terrorism, Mack advocated cooperation

with unlikely partners such as Syria, Sudan and Libya.

"If former state supporters of terrorism demonstrate by concrete deeds that they have moved down a responsible path, this advances a long way to our goal of a world in which international terrorism might become almost as rare as piracy on the high seas," he said.

David Mack

- Vice president of the Middle East Institute
- 1990-1993, deputy assistant secretary of state affairs for Near Eastern affairs
- 1986-1989, U.S. ambassador to the United Arab Emirates



CRIME LOG



Feb. 11

Female student arrested at D Deck on North 13th Street for defrauding the keeper of a vehicle.

Franklin Street arrested for forgery/uttering and forgery (felony).

Male arrested on the 900 block of West Grace Street for possession of marijuana and possession of a concealed weapon.

Feb. 13

Male arrested at Gateway on East Marshall Street for reckless driving, hit and run, assault, driving while suspended with notice and expired license plates.

Male arrested on the 1700 block of East Broad Street for driving under the influence.

Male arrested on the 1000 block of West Grace Street for being drunk in public.

Male arrested on Harrison and West Leigh streets for possession of cocaine.

Female and male juvenile arrested at Gladding Residence Center on West Main Street for possession of marijuana.

Female patient at Main Hospital on East Marshall Street advised that between Feb. 12 and Feb. 13 an unknown person(s) removed personal property valued at \$16 from a location.

Female visitor student at Gladding Residence Center on West Main Street advised of a fraud incident.

Female employee at Virginia Treatment Center on North 10th Street advised that on Feb. 10 an unknown person(s) removed personal property valued at \$868 from a secure location.

Feb. 14

Male arrested at RR Lot on West Franklin Street for being drunk in public.

Feb. 17

Male arrested on the 900 block of West Grace Street for urinating in public.

Female student at Gladding Residence Center on West Main Street advised that on Jan. 25 a known person threatened her.

Female employee at Oliver Hall on West Main Street advised that between Jan. 30 and Feb. 13 an unknown person removed property valued at \$2,000 from an unsecured location.

Female employee at Main Hospital on East Marshall Street advised that on Feb. 16 an unknown male threatened her.

Feb. 15

Female arrested at Main Hospital on East Marshall Street for being drunk in public.

Female on the 900 block of West Broad Street advised that between Feb. 14 and Feb. 15 an unknown person(s) removed personal property from a secure location.

Male student at Gladding Residence Center on West Main Street advised that between Feb. 12 and Feb. 13 an unknown person(s) removed personal property valued at \$305 from a location.

Feb. 18

Female employee at Bowe Street Deck on Bowe Street advised that on Feb. 10 an unknown person(s) damaged state property.

Female student at Gladding Residence Center on West Main Street advised that on Feb. 17 an unknown subject threatened her.

Male student at Stuart C. Siegel Center on West Broad Street advised that on Feb. 17 an unknown person(s) removed personal property from an unsecured location.

Feb. 16

Male student at Gladding Residence Center on West Main Street arrested for possession of marijuana.

Female employee at Dance Center on North Brunswick Street advised that on Feb. 17 an unknown person damaged state property.

Female at Stokes House on West

NEWS

CT Hits the Streets

Q1: How often do you receive unsolicited e-mail to your VCU account?

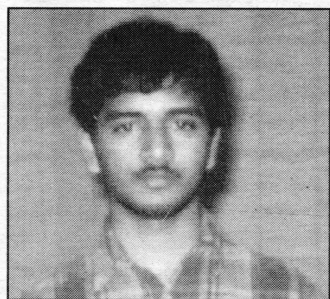
Q2: What type of unsolicited e-mail do you receive?

Q3: How do you respond to unsolicited e-mail (answer/reply, trash/delete, save)?

Q4: How effective do you think the newly enacted law to reduce spam has been (very, moderately, mildly, noneffective)?

KARA GLASCOE AND ELISA GLUSHEFSKI

Staff Writers



Amar Kalidindi
graduate student, chemistry

Q1: Two weeks ago I had 30 (accumulated) junk mail. Now I get two or three junk mail a day.

Q2: Some of them are VCU-related.

Q3: I just delete.

Q4: Mildly effective.

Q5: I just go through each and every mail and delete, delete, delete. Yeah, it's difficult.

Q1: Once a week.



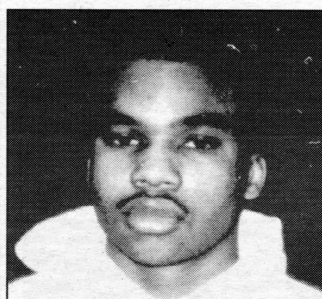
Gabriella Sherman
sophomore, biology

Q2: Any type of advertisements. Stuff trying to get me to register for something.

Q3: Delete.

Q4: Moderately.

Q5: Not difficult.



Eric Coleman
first-year student, sports management

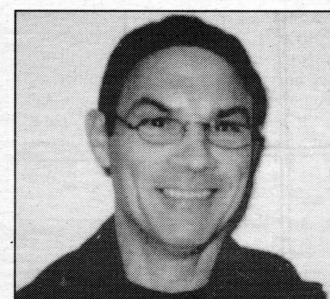
Q1: I think I got like 3 last week. ... But not too often.

Q2: Some job offers, survey Web sites - something like, get paid to take surveys and work opportunities.

Q3: Delete it.

Q4: Pretty effective.

Q5: Moderately.



Gardner Phillips
senior, crafts

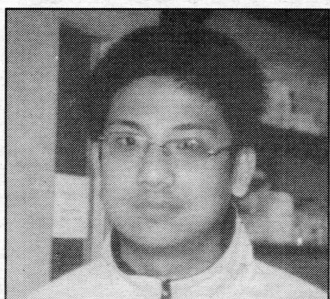
Q1: At least three to four times a week

Q2: Recently it's been political - Democrats and Republicans.

Q3: Delete.

Q4: I think its effective. I've noticed at least a 40 to 50 percent decrease in spam on AOL and my VCU account.

Q5: Very difficult.



Jihang Wang
graduate student, chemistry

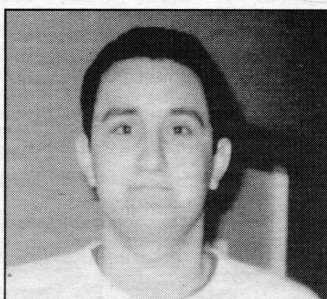
Q1: Everyday I receive it.

Q2: I receive stuff from maybe my department

Q3: All of them. I do all of them.

Q4: I think it's very effective.

Q5: No, it's not difficult.



Hulusi Zarpli
senior, economics

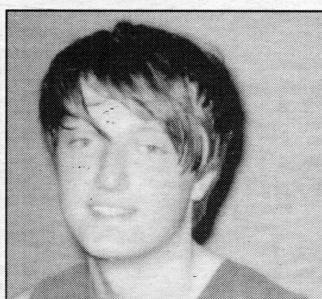
Q1: I get 10 or 15 about every week.

Q2: I don't open them.

Q3: I delete them.

Q4: It's not working, because I get lots of them.

Q5: As long as somebody is going to make a profit from it, they're going to find another way to send it to you. Even if you don't open it, somebody is going to open it, so they're going to keep on sending it.



Jordan Chrysler
first-year student, undeclared

Q1: No more than like three or four a week.

Q2: I don't ever look at what it is I just delete it so I wouldn't know.

Q3: I delete it.

Q4: Not very effective because I have other e-mail addresses that get a lot of spam.

Q5: Stopping it completely, like keeping it from being sent to people - it's impossible.



Rachel Black
first-year student, art foundation

Q1: Less often than like a Yahoo or other (e-mail accounts). I get a lot less. I don't have much.

Q2: I guess if you sign up for something. I signed up for Shockwave, and I get Shockwave e-mail now. So stuff I sign up for, I get their e-mail.

Q3: Trash.

Q4: I haven't noticed a difference, not yet.

Q5: I've never tried to block it. I guess not that difficult.

SPORTS

Upcoming Sports Events

Friday, Feb. 20

Women's basketball
vs. Hofstra, 7 p.m.
Alltel Pavilion at the Stuart C. Siegel Center

Men's hockey
vs. William & Mary
Williamsburg, Va.

Men's tennis
vs. Ohio State, 2 p.m.
Thalhimer Tennis Center

Saturday, Feb. 21

Men's rugby
vs. CNU
Newport News, Va

Men's basketball
vs. Old Dominion, 7 p.m.
Alltel Pavilion at the Stuart C. Siegel Center

Men's baseball
vs. Monmouth, 1 p.m.
The Diamond

Women's tennis
vs. N.C. State, TBA
Raleigh, N.C.

Men's indoor track
vs. George Mason
Fairfax, Va.

Sunday, Feb. 22

Men's baseball
vs. Monmouth, 1 p.m.
The Diamond

Men's tennis
vs. North Carolina, TBA
Chapel Hill, N.C.

Women's tennis
vs. Maryland, 1 p.m.
Thalhimer Tennis Center

Women's basketball
vs. Old Dominion, 2 p.m.
Norfolk, Va.

For more information contact the VCU sports line: 828-7000. VCU sporting events are free to students with a valid student ID.

'All the good things' Vigil helps Megaloudis rediscover daughter

JULIAN BENBOW
Associate Sports Editor

Dozens of varsity jackets filled the Stuart C. Siegel Center on Monday.

Student athletes listened as teammates of Nicole Megaloudis shared stories about what it was like to be around such a great person.

Nick Megaloudis enjoyed every word. When Nicole was growing up, Nick was there to see nearly all her soccer games. But he would get a divorce from his wife Gail when their daughter was just five years old, and Gail would remarry Thomas Rongen, coach of Major League Soccer's D.C. United, which meant Nicole, his son Chris and Gail would all be living in Northern Virginia among other places.

Living in Florida, thousands of miles away from what was once his family, Nick didn't get many opportunities to see his daughter play soccer at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Add that to a job change that ate up most of his time, and Nick lost something he was proud of doing for most of Nicole's life.

"I always tried to be there for my daughter," he said, "always wanted to be there, but couldn't."

Nick and Gail maintained a friendly relationship and Nick said "they both helped guide her and make life very easy for her."

Still, seeing his children 10 to 20 times a year didn't give Nick a chance to get to know everything about them.

When Nicole received an offer to play for the University of Florida, Nick was really looking forward to being closer to his daughter.

After turning down the Gators to join VCU's program, Nick admitted he was "a little upset."

"I would have loved to have my daughter Nicole back in Florida," he said, "but I wanted to see my daughter happy."

He never got a chance to see his daughter wear a Rams uniform, but after listening to his daughter's teammates tell stories about Nicole sleeping on a hotel floor on road trips, or wise-cracking during practice or just being the center of attention, Nick learned something.

"She was really kind of the same as me," he said. "She wanted to make people laugh and keep people happy."

Between Monday's vigil, a memorial three days before and a pep rally to retire Nicole's jersey number at Potomac Falls High school, Nick said he realized "a lot of people cared about her. I'll remember all the good things."



Nick Megaloudis

Navratilova, Seles to battle at Siegel Center

JULIAN BENBOW
Associate Sports Editor

The VCU athletic department scheduled a press conference for 1 p.m. today at the Stuart C. Siegel Center to announce an exhibition tennis match between two highly noted women tennis players.

Monica Seles will face Martina Navratilova on March 22 at the Siegel Center. The day will also feature other tennis and charity-related events, said VCU sports information director Phil Stanton.

The two stars battled in the early 90s. Seles beat Navratilova to win three major tournaments in 1991, but Navratilova beat Seles to win her final major title in the 1993 Paris Open.

Seles won 53 singles titles in her career,

including eight Grand Slams titles from 1990 to 1993. She was ranked No. 1 in the world before being stabbed in April 1993 by a deranged Steffi Graf fan.

Seles returned to tennis after a two-year hiatus and won another Australian Open in 1996. Since then she has dealt with several injuries — she missed the majority of last year with a career-threatening foot injury — and coped with the loss of her father in 1998.

Navratilova dominated the Women's Tennis Association from 1973 to 1994, winning 18 major tournaments and 167 of the 380 singles tournaments she played. She won nine Wimbledon titles, including six straight from 1982 to 1987.

No further event information was known at press time.

VCU athletics offers fans free tuition

JULIAN BENBOW
Associate Sports Editor

There's no better way to draw a crowd than to have a giveaway.

During halftime at this Saturday's game between Virginia Commonwealth University and Old Dominion University, the athletic department will give four students an opportunity to win in-state tuition for the fall semester.

Those students will draw straws to determine the winner of an award estimated at a \$1,800 value by B.J. Burton, associate athletic director for marketing and promotions. Money for books and other fees will not be included in the tuition prize.

Saturday's matchup will be Comcast Sports Net's Game of the Week. Both teams had 10-4 records in the Colonial Athletic Association going into last night's games and were tied along with Drexel for the lead in the conference.

The game will also be the last time seniors Troy Godwin, Domic Jones and Kevin Moore play at the Siegel Center.

"We want to attract students any time we can," Burton said. "We just want to have a really good crowd. It's our seniors' last game."

The Rams drew the second largest crowd in Siegel Center history in its last home game, a 49-41 win over UNC Wilmington, and Burton said the department would like to "capitalize on the attendance we got."

"The showing two weeks ago was tremendous," Burton said. "We would love to have the crowd we had for homecoming every night. It makes it difficult for teams coming in to win."

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SPORTS

Basketball's road ally

PAT KANE

Sports writer

A waiver form in triplicate required to watch a basketball game? It didn't seem to sway any of the 19 Rams fans huddled outside the Stuart C. Siegel Center on a brisk Wednesday afternoon. They wouldn't be staying at the Siegel Center long, as the action awaited them at George Mason University's Patriot Center later that evening. They signed their John Hancock as waiver-witnesses then loaded into the idling bus reserved by the Rowdy Rams.

Once rolling, the video monitors flickered "Remember the Titans" and conversations were sparked. The previous Saturday's Homecoming '04 win over UNC-Wilmington was a hot topic.

"You should've brought a tape from Saturday!" shouted Kevin Wyne, a sophomore from Midlothian studying urban planning. "UNCW makes everyone look bad," he said about the low 49-41 score.

Wyne heard about the Rowdy Rams "at the games, and from the fliers," he said, "I'm a hardcore fan, I've fallen in love with the team." In fact, he's only missed one game in the past year — blame his wisdom teeth. On the trip he's got a "pretty bad

cold," he explains, but is avoiding NyQuil "to have energy at the game."

Wyne's brother Brandon Kierson sported three layers of VCU-logoed clothes as he listened from across the aisle. Charles Karamer is also enthusiastic about the Rams.

"I elected to follow VCU's men's and women's basketball," Karamer said. "It's darned decent (of the school) to fund this. It's too bad it's not overflowing." Wyne agreed.

"This is amazing. I just wish more people knew about it, to fill up buses."

Wil Yow, a VCU senior studying music education, and president of the Rowdy Rams club, was impressed by the turnout Saturday, but less so with the empty seats on the bus.

"The crowd's better than usual," Yow said. "It's the best for a men's game, but we had a better crowd for a Sunday women's game." The Rowdy Rams used Student Government Association funding to provide buses and free tickets to several away games starting during the winter break.

The afternoon light had long faded as the bus pulled up to the Patriot Center. The dimly lit, tall arena lacked the energy of the Siegel Center, but the Rowdy Rams did their best to be seen and heard with black

and yellow garb and plenty of cheers.

"It's nice, but not college-like," Wyne felt about Patriot Center. "You get stuck in the nosebleeds and it takes away from the excitement."

Moving the venue to tiny Towson Center for Saturday's game made the Rowdy Rams — joining the Running Rams alumni group — even louder. The Rams poured onto the court to a more fervent welcome than the Tigers did from the rest of the 929 attendees. Chock it up to Towson's loudest fans having dates on Valentine's Day.

Despite the support, the Patriots won by 12 points in a 69-57 decision. The mood was decidedly more somber taking I-95 South. For one, it was the first loss during a Rowdy Rams road trip. But don't think the team didn't know they were there.

"Oh, yeah, our fans have done a great job," coach Capel explained. "The fans understand they're part of our team, and they feed us energy." As for Wyne and Kierson, it was a long ride home.

"This wasn't as tough as the Drexel loss," Wyne said.

"No," disagreed Kierson, "now we have to ride home and think about it."

"That's why I brought music," quipped Wyne.

Rams crush Dukes

After one possession, Virginia Commonwealth had a four-point lead over James Madison. It didn't get any better for the Dukes.

Nick George was fouled in the process of knocking down a three, and then nailed the ensuing free throw for a four-point play. The Rams (17-7, 11-4 CAA) then went on a 21-4 run before pounding JMU (3-12, 17-7) 92-61 in front of 5,039 fans at the Alltel Pavilion.

Since Old Dominion (10-5, 15-9) lost to Drexel 82-66 on the road, the Rams are now tied with the Dragons for the top spot in the Colonial Athletic Association.

Senior Domonic Jones finished with 15 points, but freshman Drew Johnson lead all scorers with 17 points off the bench.

"The kid can score," Rams head coach Jeff Capel said of Johnson. "If he has his feet set and he gets an open look, we're shocked when he misses."

Jesse Pellot-Rosa scored a career-high 16 points and grabbed six rebounds for VCU.

"You can't afford to have a guy like that have a career night," Dukes head coach Sherman Dillard said of Pellot-Rosa. "Unfortunately, we did that."

Cycling star found dead in hotel room

TYLER COOPER

Sports Editor

Before Lance Armstrong made his comeback from cancer and went on to win five consecutive Tour de France bicycle races, Marco Pantani was pedaling up the Alps and Pyrenees on his bicycle, faster than anyone else.

Pantani, a 34-year-old Italian cyclist and winner of the 1998 Tour de France and Giro d'Italia, was found dead in his hotel room on Sunday in Rimini, Italy.

Found near his bed were sedatives and writings on hotel stationary, but not considered a farewell note. Investigators ordered an autopsy on the former champion, who was known for battling depression and had secluded himself in his hotel room for five days before his death.

Preliminary tests indicate the cyclist died from a heart attack, possibly linked to cocaine found in his system.

Pantani, "The Pirate," as his fans remember him from his gold hoop earring, bald head and bandana, had a tumultuous career after his championship wins at the '98 Italy and France tours.

In 1999 Pantani was ejected from the Giro d'Italia when his blood hemat-

ocrit levels exceeded the Union Cycliste Internationale's maximum, an indicator, but not proof the star had used performance-enhancing drugs.

The star's 2001 season was also marred by doping allegation when a blood test came up positive for insulin. He was later banned from racing in the 2002 season.

Despite the allegations and controversies surrounding Pantani's cycling career, he was an inspiration to cyclists worldwide. During Miguel Indurain's five-year reign at the Tour de France, Pantani earned the respect of his peers by relentlessly attacking Indurain in the mountains during the 1995 tours.

After his 14th-place finish at the 2003 Giro d'Italia, Pantani withdrew from professional cycling and after fighting depression, checked himself into a clinic. Rumors suggested that he planned on creating and managing a international cycling team before his death.

Pantani left his mark in the cycling world with his dual win in 1998, and fans will always remember the small-framed, "Il Pirate" and his driving pedal power up the mountains, where he excelled most.



Marco Pantani during the 1998 Tour de France riders' strike. After the protest he went on to win the world's most famous bicycle race.

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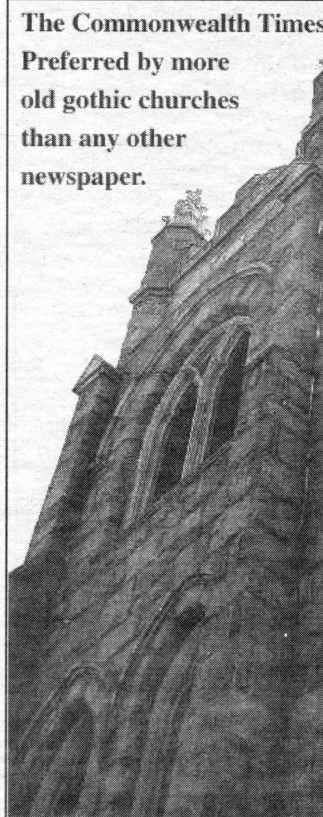
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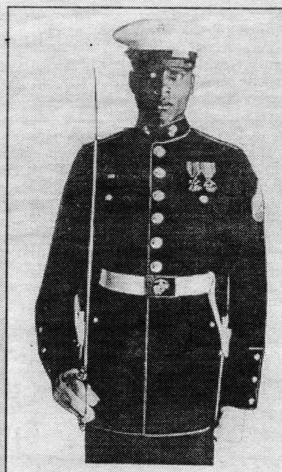
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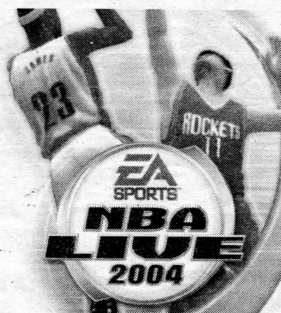
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Spectrum

'Boom' draws breath



Spectrum

Play depicts reality of women in jail

MELISSA LYNCH
Spectrum Editor

"It's basically a playwright's look at a part of society that's usually forgotten," Aimee Zygmanski, assistant director of VCU's "Breath, Boom," said.

"Breath, Boom" by Kia Cothron focuses on Prix (played by Letitia James), a 16-year-old black woman, and her life through her early 30s. Prix is in a gang and winds up in a juvenile detention center and, later in the play, jail. Jason Fitzgerald of www.artseditor.org called it "an insider's view of street gangs through the story of one girl."

An interesting aspect of Prix is her obsession with creating a fireworks display, which gives her an escape from her street-hardened life.

Zygmanski discussed the human aspects of the play. The cast went to a penitentiary during rehearsals to help them "get a feel for what prison life would be like and how people keep their sanity in a six-by-nine (foot) cell," she said.

The cast is doing well with tough issues, she said. They are making the characters three-dimensional, which she said was particularly important with this subject matter so that "we can see real people on stage instead of what we think women in prison would be like."

James is "doing an exceptional job finding the different layers in the character," Zygmanski said.

The cast is made up of mostly junior and senior theater majors. Zygmanski said because they know each other so well "it keeps the rehearsal environment safe."

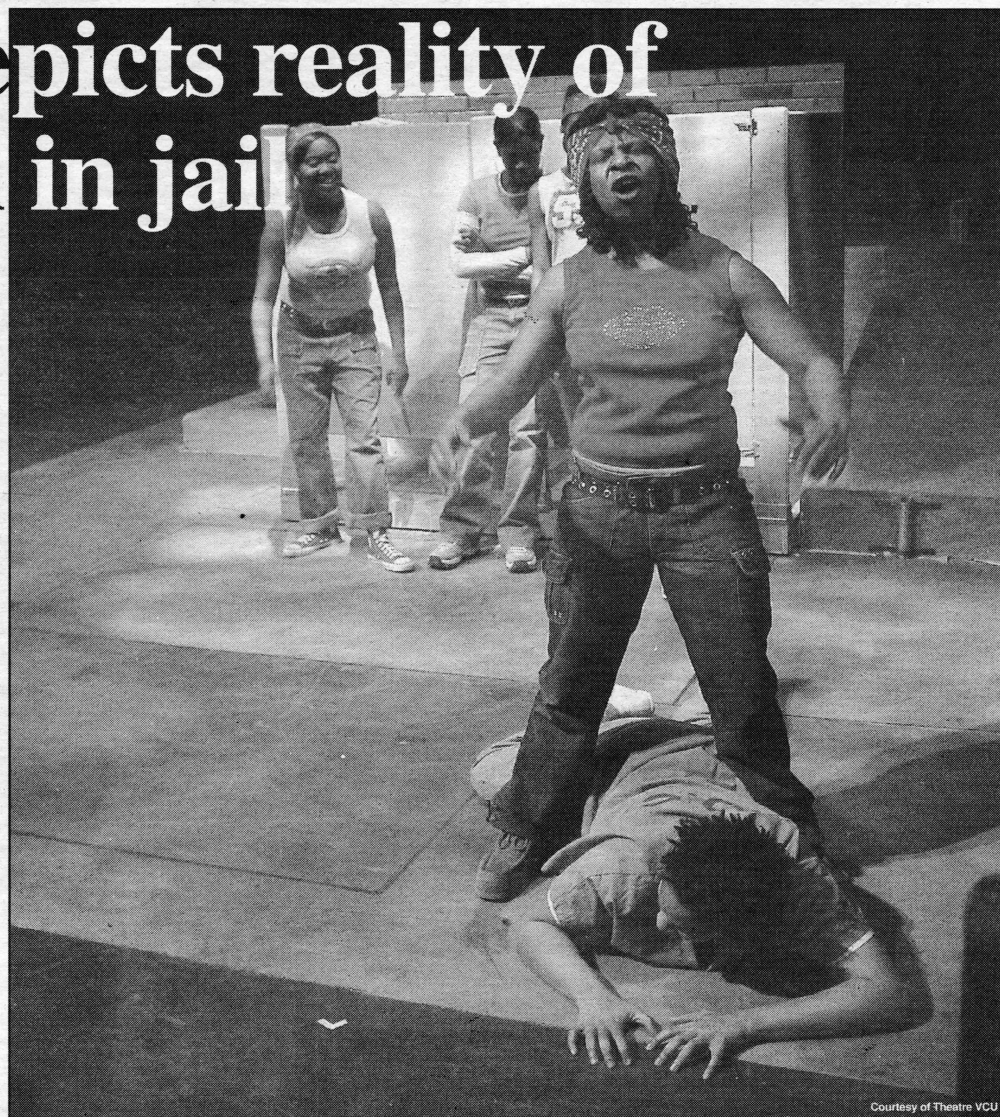
This was particularly important because in "Breath, Boom" there are two violent fights that Matthew Ellis, fight choreographer, staged.

She and the cast were very careful staging those scenes, Zygmanski said. They took time before most rehearsals to go through the fight once slowly and then at normal speed.

"We work with the feeling of the scene and where each character is coming from," she said. "The first few rehearsals it is very tough, emotional. We just try to take it slow."

Michele Shay, one of VCU's guest artists, directs "Breath, Boom." She is well known and has won awards for her acting. Shay was nominated for a Tony and received Outer Critics Circle and NAACP awards for her performance in "Seven Guitars."

Shay has acted in movies such as "He Got Game" and "One True Thing," as well



Courtesy of Theatre VCU

as television shows like "Judging Amy." She is also an established director, having worked on "The Woman with Orange Hands" at Actors Theater of Louisville and "Blues for an Alabama Sky" at North Carolina School of the Arts, as well as many other plays.

Zygmanski said Shay's acting background has been helpful for the actors. Although the rehearsals are taken seriously, "she's very sweet with (the actors)," she said.

"This is Prix's story," when it comes down to it, Zygmanski said. Adding that James, who is the 2003 recipient of the Kennedy Center's Irene Ryan National Acting Award, is doing an outstanding job.

"She is an example of how wonderful our department is," Zygmanski said.

"Breath, Boom" is playing at the W. E. Singleton Center, 922 Park Ave., Thursday Feb. 19 through Saturday Feb. 21 at 7:30 p.m., Thursday Feb. 25 through 28 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday Feb. 29 at 2:30 p.m.

Cast list

Letitia "Tia" James
Moquisha Brown
Resharma Coleman
LaTonya Dunaway
TJ Simmons
Grace Ross
Sabrina Gilbert
Jessica Orr

Lakesha Walker
Joy Newsome
Dione Updike
Teniesha Campbell
Janelle Mims
Melanie Mitchell
Toni Bradford
Nicholas Elliott

Prix
Angel
Malika
Comet
Jerome
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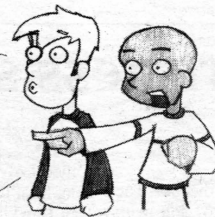
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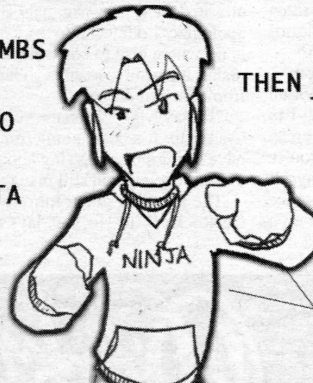
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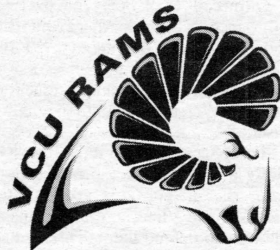
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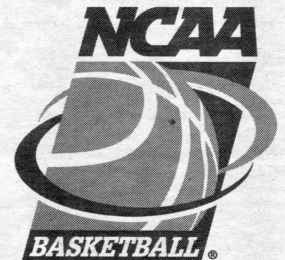
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Rams Women's Basketball

VCU vs. Hofstra

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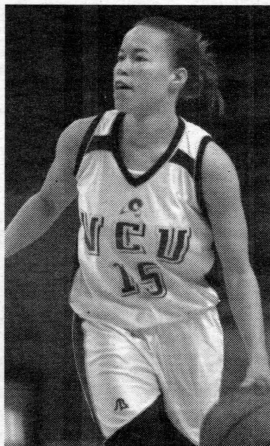
*Get fired up to beat the Pride as the Rams serve
notice to the rest of the CAA!*

Rams Men's Basketball

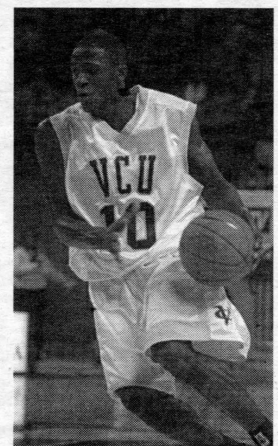
VCU vs. Old Dominion

Saturday, February 21, 7:00 p.m.

*Last chance to see your Rams at home! Pack the house
and support your Rams as they look to take down CAA rival
Old Dominion in their last home game of the season.*



Cyndy Wilks



Domonic Jones

Spectrum

The Darkness shines beyond 'love'

RYAN KENT
Spectrum Writer

Like a blast of hot water in the face, The Darkness opens "Permission to Land" with the sting and burn of a real metal band on "Black Shuck." The Freddie Mercury flamboyance of front man Justin Hawkins is almost absurd as he wails around the menacing rhythm with a shrill falsetto about the coming of a one-eyed beast.

You find yourself back in 1986 with "Growing on Me," which is unquestionably the most charming song ever written about venereal disease. Pounding drums and bass, climactic vocals and guitars — Jesus, it has to be a sin to be this good.

The lyrics "I'm being punished for all my offences/ I wanna touch you but I'm afraid of the consequences/ I wanna banish you from whence you came/ But you're part of me now/ And I've only got myself to blame" might make you think twice about who you're going home with on a

Friday night.

MTV is playing "I Believe in a Thing Called Love" to death but fortunately the song hasn't begun to lose any of its shine. Dan Hawkins really plays that guitar like someone is going to take it from him. He doesn't loosen his grip as his fingers run all over the fret board like a dog that's broken its chain. It's nice to hear a guitarist having fun.

The heroin bounce of the AC/DC-laden "Givin' Up" is particularly good. Justin Hawkins sings "My mama wants to know where I'm spending all my dough/ Honey, all she does is nag, nag, nag/ But I won't apologize/ I'd inject into my eyes/ If there is no where else to stick my skag." That makes me want to keep even farther away from that evil dragon.

"Friday Night" is on the verge of being hysterical. It's been a long time since we have heard musicians sing about badminton and cycling and still manage to rock.

The noodling guitar intro to "Love on the Rocks With No Ice" lays claim to a

monster of a guitar riff. Vocals like canon fire and machine gun guitars make this track an all out melee of rock 'n' roll splendor. With the Independence Day finale on this massive relationship dirge these Brits are given permission to land wherever they want.

Appearing on several best of the year lists, The Darkness is by far the best buy in recent memory. "Permission to Land" is the behemoth rock 'n' roll desperately needed.

The Darkness "Permission to Land"

★★★★★
(out of 5)



WWE Raw

Triple H demands to know against whom he will have to defend his title against at Wrestlemania. Chris Benoit interrupts a discussion of this between Triple H and Eric Bischoff, telling Triple H he has only one thing to say, then attacks Triple H. Evolution come to the ring to chase Benoit away.

Booker T and Rob Van Dam vs. Ric Flair and Batista, World Tag Title Match: Booker T wins by pin, making him and RVD the new champions.

Chris Jericho confides in Christian that he wants to be more than friends with Trish Stratus. Christian expresses his doubts, but Jericho leaves a single rose with Christian while he wrestles, with the intention of giving it to Stratus later.

Chris Jericho vs. Kane: Kane intentionally attacks Jericho's injured knee. The referee calls the match. Kane insists that the Undertaker is dead, but purple lighting and indoor rain on Kane suggest otherwise.

Orton calls Mick Foley into the ring for an unsanctioned match. After a while Batista and Flair come to the ring to help Orton.

Vince McMahon announces that next week, he'll make an announcement concerning Wrestlemania, then challenge Bischoff to a fight.

Trish Stratus and Victoria vs. Molly Holly and Jazz: Victoria wins by pin. After the match, Test attacks Steven Richards and Victoria, then Stratus after she tries to defend them. Christian stops Test from hurting Stratus, then gives her Jericho's rose, claiming it as his own.

Shawn Michaels vs. Chris Benoit: Triple H distracts Benoit, allowing Michaels to attack and pin him. After the match, Triple H attacks Michaels. Steve Austin announces that the Wrestlemania main event will be a Triple Threat match with Triple H, Michaels and Benoit for the World Heavyweight Title.

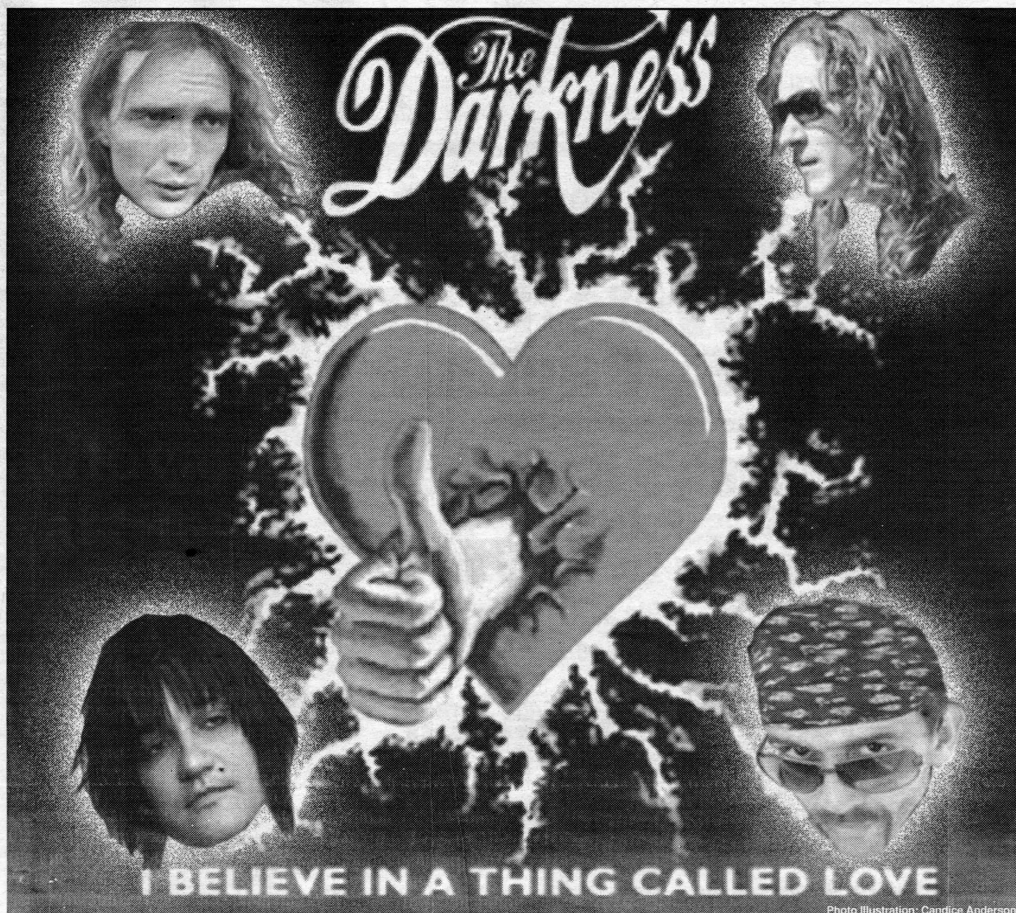
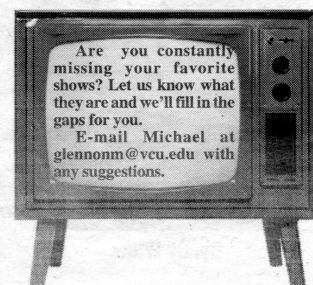


Photo Illustration: Candice Anderson

Clockwise from top left: Justin Hawkins (vocals/ guitar/ synthesizer), Dan Hawkins (guitar), Franky Poullain (bass), Ed Graham (drums).



Spectrum

Video Views: 'Being John Malkovich'

MIKE NG

Spectrum Writer

"Don't you see what a metaphysical can of worms this is?" John Cusack asks in the eclectic "Being John Malkovich."

Like Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole, those who watch the movie will be on an equally bizarre, yet entertaining and entirely funny adventure only hampered by the limits of imagination. It is a creative and energetic roller coaster that takes people to dizzying heights and then proceeds to throw them on endless loops. The movie clearly reaches a pinnacle of creative achievement and runs the gamut of emotions.

The basic — and I must stress basic as strictly the simple plot threads — premise of the movie is that Craig Schwartz (John Cusack), a married albeit lonely and confused puppeteer, finds a job on the seventh and a half floor of a Manhattan skyscraper, where he lusts after Maxine (Catherine Keener), a femme fatale co-worker. Craig is also dealing with his extremely eccentric boss, and he eventually finds a door that leads into the mind of real-life actor John Malkovich. Once in the mind of the actor, those who go through the doorway can feel what he feels and think what he thinks. After 15 minutes they are unceremoniously dropped near the New Jersey Turnpike.

Eventually Craig and Maxine hatch a scheme to charge \$200 to anyone who wants to enter the mind of John Malkovich. One of the first people to enter is Schwartz's wife Lotte (Cameron Diaz), who winds up falling in love with Maxine after Maxine seduces Malkovich while she is in his mind. Lotte immediately wishes to become a transsexual and spends the rest of the movie trying to find love.

This and the concept of Malkovich entering his mind himself, would be enough plot twists for a whole series. However, director Spike Jonze continues to throw more creative scenarios to further entrance the viewers. Jonze is quite capable of handling the intricacies of all these threads, primarily because he makes people instantly accept the strangeness. When Schwartz explains the absurd passageway to Maxine she pauses for a bit and then retaliates with the idea of charging people. Jonze wants the viewer to accept the ludicrous direction of the movie because the payoff is the fantasy.

Spending a lifetime as yourself would make anyone excited about the very prospect of living fifteen minutes as someone else. When a potential customer asks if he can pick who he wants to become, Maxine immediately deadpans "No, you get to be John Malkovich." The customer then thinks for a second and says Malkovich would have been his second choice.

The movie covers a myriad of issues and themes that one could spend hours deciphering. Issues such as the sexuality of the characters, identity, manipulation, celebrity status and immortality. Obviously pertinent is Craig as a failing yet fantastic

puppeteer who, once inside of Malkovich, slowly begins to exert his will on the actor thus creating an ultimate puppet.

The acting is absolutely superb. Cusack excellently plays the misguided puppeteer searching for something more. His slumped body language along with the way he presents himself evokes both sympathy and casual indifference.

Diaz is so dowdy that it is instantly believable these characters go well together. Their off the wall jobs — she is the owner of a pet store and also takes troubled animals into their apartment, seem to fit them

perfectly. Keener is spectacular as the bemused sex symbol who controls and manipulates all of them. Finally there is Malkovich, who is exceptional because of the many sides he must show. Malkovich's real-yet-fictional side of his life, Malkovich as being controlled by Cusack, Malkovich as eventually being controlled by others — all of this is done with reality in an otherwise fantastic plot. And of course, there is a hilarious cameo by Charlie Sheen.

"Being John Malkovich" is absolutely fantastic. The movie is most likely divided into the people who hate it and the people

who love it. The people who hate it will probably be the ones who can't get past the overall oddities of the movie and won't be content to let the fantasy take them in. However, if you do accept the creative inventiveness, be prepared to take an amusing and thought-provoking trip down the rabbit hole.

Being John Malkovich (1999)
Rated R for language and sexuality
★★★★★ (out of 5)

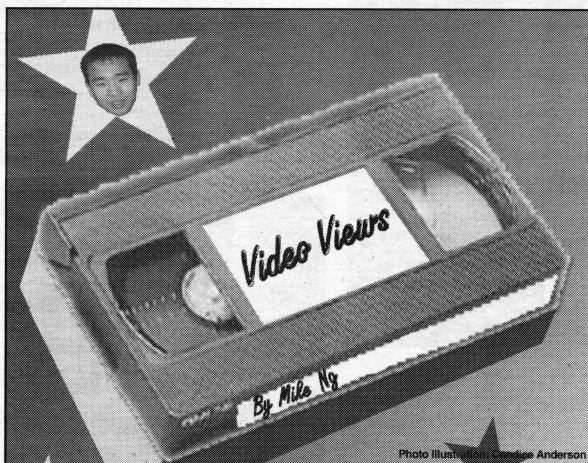


Photo illustration: Candice Anderson

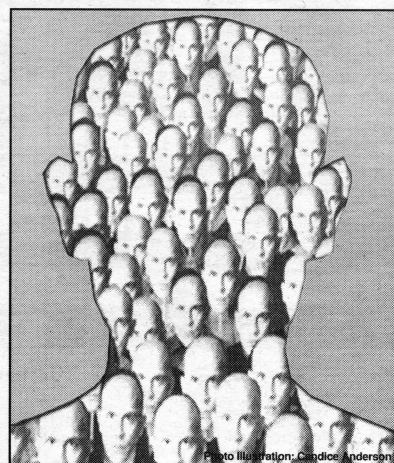


Photo illustration: Candice Anderson

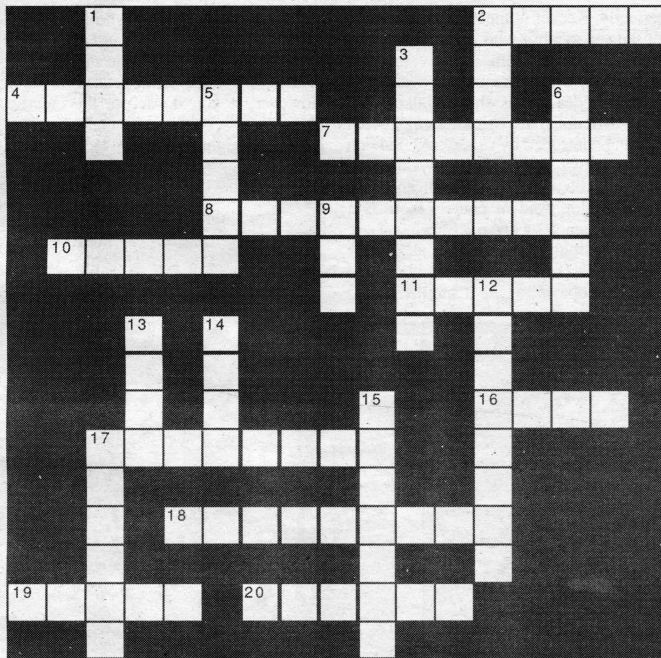


Pat Kane

The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs brought Charles Jones to speak about African art Monday night.

Spectrum

CT Crossword Presidential Pets Edition



Across

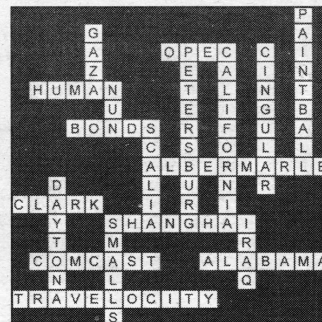
2. These first, then shoes
4. Eternally immature
7. Teddy Roosevelt's piebald rat
8. A pony of JFK's, named by his national heritage
10. System for two
11. Do you feel this way? Well, do you? Punk?

16. Jackie
17. It's the cheesiest
18. A scrooge of a donkey
19. Flo wants you to kiss them
20. Found the Trojan war a drag

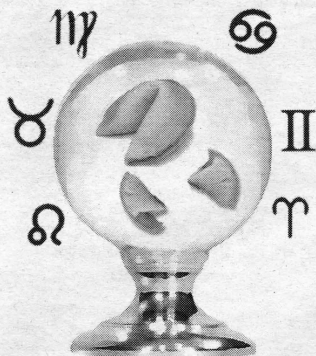
Down

1. Just say no, Mr. President
2. "Out, damned ...!"
3. Old, merry, smoked a pipe
5. Cracker aficionado
6. He loves you, you love him
9. Tyrannosaurus
12. Covers in squares
13. Two syllables after "boughs of holly"
14. Tomb raider
15. Life, this and the pursuit of happiness
17. Vanilli

Look for the solution next issue.

Solutions from Feb. 16
"Current Events"

Zodiac Cookies



Zodiac Cookies

- Aquarius:** The stars don't lie: you're ruled by Uranus.
Pisces: Take a shower. No, really.
Aries: Your instincts are clouded this week, try to avoid giving advice. Also, avoid carbohydrates.
Taurus: Love is in the air. Or is it snow? Either way, it's pretty, but cold and eventually melts away.
Gemini: In your car, you may feel safest of all, but you're not invisible. Watch where you put your finger.
Cancer: Your friends' laughter is infectious. So are their diseases.
Leo: Don't you have work you should be doing?
Virgo: If you've been contemplating an exotic pet, keep contemplating.
Libra: Focus. You look weird all fuzzy.
Scorpio: Sometimes you forget important things. Stockpile gifts.
Sagittarius: Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. Pick your losses carefully.
Capricorn: Sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you are a nut.

Happenings

Thursday, Feb. 19

Beloved poet and author **Maya Angelou**, who wrote **"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,"** speaks at 7:30 p.m. tonight at the Landmark Theater. Student tickets are \$14.95, full-priced tickets start at \$24.95. Call Ticketmaster at 262-8100 or go to www.ticketmaster.com. 6 N. Laurel St. 646-4213

Richmatic's monthly beat challenge, called **"The Producer's Cup,"** is a competition between local mix-masters. Come to see **Divine Profitz** or come early with your own beat on CD to sign up. The over-18, \$4 cover show starts at 10 p.m. at the Nanci Raygun. 929 W. Grace St. 353-4263

Friday, Feb. 20

Hank Williams III, **Assjack** and **Scott Biram** play **Alley Katz** tonight at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$15 at the door, \$12 in advance.

10 Walnut Alley 643-2816

Celebrate the release of **Fighting Gravity's** new album with the artists themselves at the Canal Club. 8:30 p.m. 1545 E. Cary St. 643-2582

Saturday, Feb. 21

Candice Bergen, of **"Murphy Brown"** will speak on her career as a photojournalist as a part of the Richmond Forum at the Landmark Theater. Bergen has taken photographs for *Life* and *Esquire* as well as other publications. The lecture is at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$25. For tickets call the Richmond Forum at 330-3993. 6 N. Laurel St.

Sunday, Feb. 22

"Buffalo Soldiers — Guardians of an Unknown Freedom" focuses on the men who fought for the freedom of the American frontier. The play is back by popular demand at The Carpenter Center for the Performing Arts at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$14. 600 E. Grace St. 225-9000

Got something going on? Have the inside track on some hot info? E-mail Melissa at lynchmd@vcu.edu

COMICS

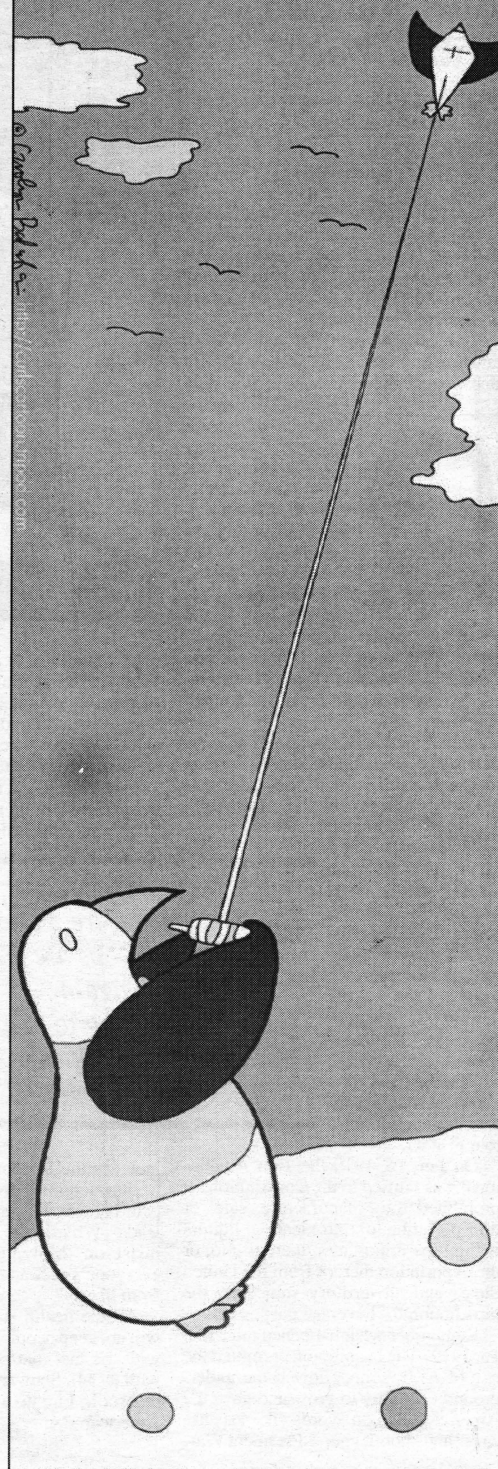
Post Modernity Now

Lyz Holder



Curls

Carolyn Belefski



Too Late To Run

Andrew Babb



EDITORIALS & LETTERS

Schwarzenegger burns cigars, anti-tobacco groups

PATRICK RYAN

Editor of the Editorial Pages

California's Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger wants to tear off part of the state Capitol's roof so people can smoke without breaking the state law, according to a Feb. 18 article on washingtontimes.com.

"To comply with the state's strict smoking laws, the cigar-loving Schwarzenegger is converting the state

Capitol's interior courtyard into an all-weather 'smoking plaza' where he can entertain lawmakers and other power brokers," according to a Feb. 16 article on The Scotsman Web site.

Plenty of people oppose

the governor's move. Jim Walker, the director and founder of Stop Tobacco Abuse of Minors Pronto said "That's very frightening that he would even think about smoking inside the heart of our state Capitol," the washingtontimes.com article states. Walker also said, according to The Scotsman article, that the governor is "a tough guy, but he's always got a cigar in his mouth."

The Tobacco Survivors United group also opposes the move, and group founder Laurie Comstock said it "sends the wrong signal, particularly to young fans of the screen star-turned-politician." The Scotsman article reports.

What's that saying about not knowing history and being doomed to repeat it?

On Jan. 16, 1919 the 18th Amendment was ratified to the Constitution. It prohibited the "manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction for beverage purposes..."

Remember what happened after Jan. 16, 1919? The Prohibition permitted the rise of Al Capone, allowed the underground economy to grow and gave the American lexicon words like "speakeasy" and "bootlegger." President War-

ren G. Harding, in office from 1921 to 1923, served alcohol in the White House. Apparently many citizens of the United States, including the president, didn't agree with the government taking away the people's favorite vice.

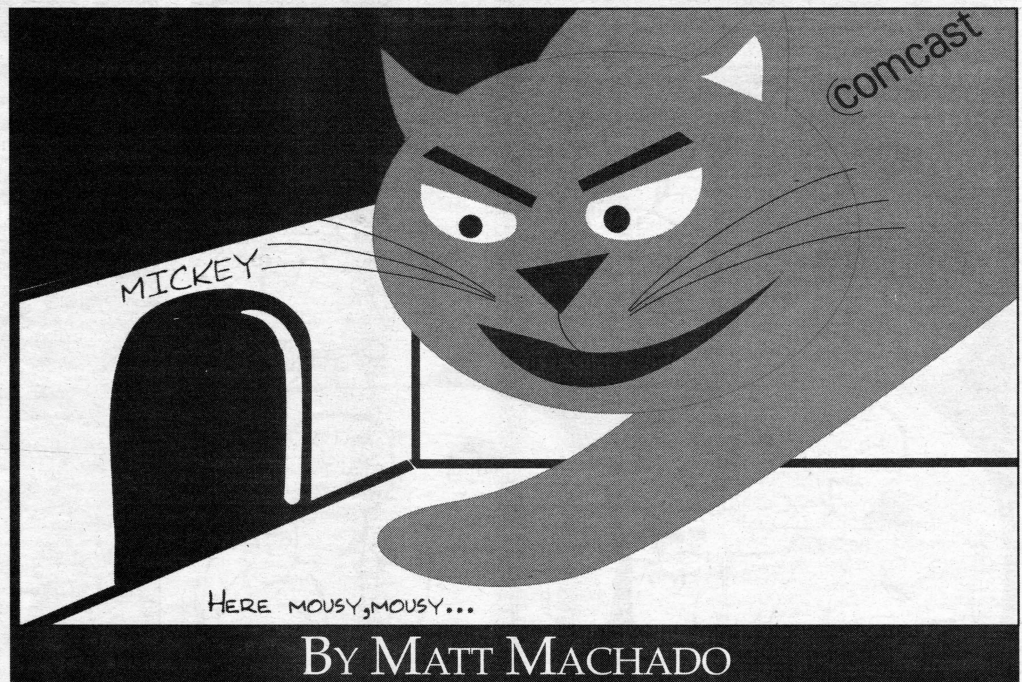
On Dec. 5, 1933, the 21st Amendment to the Constitution was ratified. It said, "The eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution is hereby repealed."

The noble experiment was an utter failure. Now the anti-vice troops are on the march again, ignorantly seeking to keep people from smoking. When will they learn?

The U.S. citizens love their freedom, which

includes the freedom to indulge in unhealthy activities. We've been down this path before. We know where this road leads. Why do the anti-tobacco groups insist on throwing the yoke around everyone's neck and dragging them away from liberty?

All the health statistics in the world will not keep people from smoking. Live with the fact that people smoke. Deal with it. Mr. Schwarzenegger, tear down that roof. Fire up a cigar and salute the American flag.



Want to reach the student body of VCU?



THE Commonwealth TIMES

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Op/Ed

Bush and Kerry box, the American people lose

ERIK NAIMON
Op/Ed Writer

Barring some sort of campaign disaster, Sen. John Kerry, Mass., will be the man the Democrats choose to face President George W. Bush in this year's presidential election. There are already signs that this presidential election will be one of the dirtiest in memory. Both sides have been attacking each other on just about everything. Not even personal issues are out of play. It's almost like this election is turning into a no-disqualification wrestling match.

In the left corner stands our tall challenger, Senator John F. Kerry from Massachusetts. His main attack on his opponent, Bush, is that he is a puppet of Washington special interests and big corporations such as Enron.

Kerry will point to all the corporate contributions to Bush's campaign, and argue that Bush is out of touch with the average American's problems. He may even try to paint Bush as a puppet of Vice President Cheney, who some of Kerry's fans argue is the devil himself!

Kerry is also trying to hit Bush where it hurts. Kerry and his supporters will try to convince voters that Bush is a cowardly deserter from the Texas Air National Guard. He'll let people know that while Bush was eager to go into Iraq with his army, he never went into Vietnam with the U.S. Army 30 years ago.

Kerry will also argue that President Bush is a photo-op president, making stops on an aircraft carrier and the Daytona 500 just to get some good press. And if Kerry

can dig up something damaging like a sex scandal against Bush, he'll be more than happy to use it on our champion. If things go slow in this match, expect Kerry to hit Bush with actual issues that matter to American voters.

And in the right corner stands our defending champion, President George W. Bush from Texas. His main attack on Kerry is that the senator is a Massachusetts tax-and-spend liberal, a man who's out of touch with core American values and will raise everyone's taxes.

Bush's supporters are already using Kerry's name in connection with the maligned "Hanoi" Jane Fonda, who vocally opposed the Vietnam War. Bush is trying to use Kerry's special-interest strategy against him as well. Bush will make sure voters know how much money Kerry took from special interests in his 15 years in the Senate.

The president will also likely use one of the latest stories from the Drudge Report to smear Kerry's character. This story tells of an extramarital affair that Kerry had in 2001 through 2002. Bush will definitely

attempt to show how Kerry has been an ineffective senator who often straddled both sides of important issues.

Finally, Bush's supporters may even point out that Kerry looks a bit French. And if things go slow in this match, expect Bush to join Kerry in a skirmish about issues that actually matter to Americans.

Oh boy, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to have a slobber knocker on our hands! Somebody ring the bell and let's get ready to rumble!

I don't really like either Kerry or Bush, but it also bothers me when I see these two guys digging into each other's closets, looking for skeletons. Sure, character is important when choosing a president, and to run a good campaign you need to attack elements of your opponent's record. But both parties always take it too far.

What Bush and Kerry did or didn't do 30 years ago doesn't matter in this election. Seasons change, people change. When character really matters is when people discuss what kind of campaigns candidates run, and if what the candidates say matches up with their past voting records. What also matters a lot is what these candidates will do for the environment, public education, the economy, post-war Iraq, etc. If this campaign turns into pure puke politics, the biggest losers will be the American people, who deserve a real debate on the issues.

Although it can be amusing, the American people should not have to see a no-disqualification wrestling match when they turn on their TVs to watch presidential debates or campaign ads.



Illustration: Husayn Raza

Can Sen. John Kerry survive the charge?

JEFFREY Z. QURESHI
Member of the Editorial Board

"Objects in your mirror may be closer than they appear," warned Democratic presidential nominee Sen. John Edwards, N.C., after finishing a close second in Tuesday's Wisconsin primary.

Receiving 34 percent of the vote, Edwards turned up the heat on rival Sen. John F. Kerry, Mass., who won with 40 percent. A Zogby poll released Monday strongly favored Kerry at 47 percent followed by Howard Dean of Vermont 23 percent and Edwards with 20 percent.

Edwards' strong surge is significant because it demonstrates that Kerry is vulnerable and voters are wary of recent accusations of infidelity. For the most part the media has ignored the scandalous charges in a vain effort to kill the messenger, reporter Matt Drudge.

Last Thursday Drudge broke the world exclusive report that Kerry had an affair with 24-year-old Alexandra Polier, a former writer for The Associated Press. According to the Drudge Report, the Kerry cam-

paign tried to thwart investigation of the allegations by news groups including ABC and The Washington Post.

Drudge, along with British journalists, continues to develop the story revealing that the Democratic hopeful and Polier were together until recently when she left the country at Kerry's request. She is currently in Kenya, supposedly with her fiancé. Polier recently denied the allegations in a state-

"Until Wisconsin, it appeared their political black operations had succeeded."

ment from her compound.

Meanwhile, Kerry's campaign seemed to perform a remarkable job of back-room bullying, suppressing the rumors. Until Wisconsin, it appeared their political black operations had succeeded.

Despite their covert efforts, a number of voters re-examined Kerry and cast their ballots for Edwards. This backfire effect

reflects the political truth that it is never an allegation that ruins a career. It is the cover-up.

Politicians have repeatedly failed to learn this fundamental rule despite numerous historical examples. President Richard M. Nixon paid the ultimate price for attempting to conceal his knowledge of a botched breaking and entering.

President William J. Clinton lost any credibility he may have had by trying to hide his tryst with a certain young Whitehouse intern: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman..."

Kerry should directly address the scandalous rumors. If there was nothing of substance then encouraging thoughtful investigation to end the matter is appropriate and needed, else voters sense impending danger.

What started out as a boring race for the Democratic presidential nomination has turned into a political epic. Once thought to be the next candidate, Dean has ceased campaigning. Kerry's coronation is in jeopardy and Edwards continues to close the gap. March madness is near.

We want to hear from you!



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ctvcu@hotmail.com.



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