



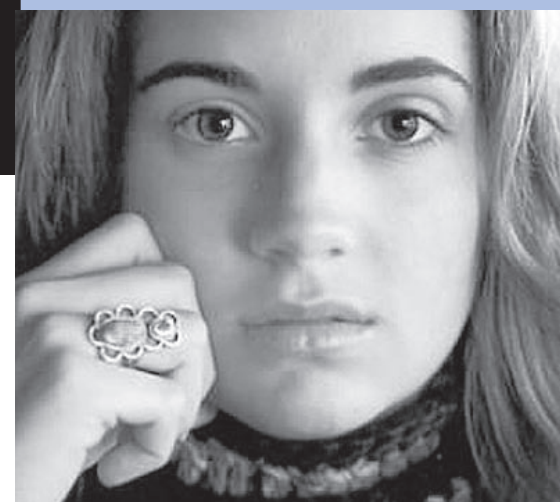
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FREE

THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 7, 2006
Vol. 45 No. 4

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The independent student press of Virginia Commonwealth University



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Looking ahead

In Monday's Issue

In News

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- VCU's new genocide journal

Cover photo by Pat Kane

IN THE NEWS

compiled from wire reports

WORLD

MEXICO CITY – Felipe Calderon was declared president-elect Tuesday after two months of uncertainty, but his ability to rule effectively remained in doubt with rival Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador vowing to lead a parallel leftist government from the streets.

The unanimous decision by the Federal Electoral Tribunal rejected allegations of systematic fraud and awarded Calderon the presidency by 233,831 votes out of 41.6 million cast in the July 2 elections—a margin of 0.56 percent. The ruling cannot

be appealed. Calderon now must win over millions of Mexicans angry that President Vicente Fox, who is from Calderon's party, didn't make good on promises of sweeping change—

and fend off thousands of radicalized leftists who say they will stop at nothing to undermine his presidency.

Lopez Obrador, whose support is dwindling but becoming more radical, said he will not recognize the new government. He has vowed to block Calderon from taking power Dec. 1.

NATIONAL

WASHINGTON—A trio of oil companies led by Chevron Corp. has tapped a petroleum pool deep beneath the Gulf of Mexico that could boost the nation's reserves by more than 50 percent.

A test well indicates it could be the biggest new domestic oil discovery since Alaska's Prudhoe Bay a generation ago. But the vast oil deposit roughly four miles beneath the ocean floor won't significantly reduce the country's dependence on foreign oil, and it won't help lower prices at the pump anytime soon, analysts said. Chevron on Tuesday estimated the 300-square-mile region where its test well sits could hold between 3 and 15 billion barrels of oil and natural gas liquids. The U.S. consumes roughly 5.7 billion barrels of crude oil in a year. It will take years and tens of billions of dollars to bring the newly tapped oil to market, but the discovery carries particular importance for the industry at a time when Western oil and gas companies are finding fewer opportunities in politically unstable parts of the world, including the Middle East, Africa and Russia.

WASHINGTON—President Bush on Wednesday acknowledged what many already knew: The United States has interrogated hardened terrorists in secret CIA jails around the world.

The disclosure came after months of protests by human rights groups and others who accused the administration of torturing terror suspects abroad.

Bush denied that detainees are tortured but said the CIA had used "tough" interrogation techniques to get them to divulge intelligence that had helped to foil Sept. 11-style attacks against the United States and its allies.

Bush said 14 suspects—including the mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks and architects of the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole and the U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania —had been turned over to the Defense Department and moved to the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for trial.

STATE

McLEAN – Some species of male fish are acquiring female sexual characteristics at unusually high frequencies in the Potomac River and its tributaries, prompting concerns about pollutants in a waterway that provides drinking water for millions of people.

In some Potomac tributaries, including the Shenandoah River in Virginia, nearly all of the male smallmouth bass caught in

a survey last year by the U.S. Geological Surveys were so-called "intersex fish," producing immature eggs in their testes. It is not exactly clear what is causing the changes, though it is likely a combination of pollutants. Certain chemicals and pesticides are believed to stimulate estrogen production. Also, estrogen from birth control pills and human waste can make its way from sewage treatment plants to the waterways.

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News *Ernesto* soaks



Pat Kane photo

Last Friday morning, tropical depression Ernesto swept through Richmond—and much of Virginia—catching students, faculty and staff off guard on campus. An estimated 150 million gallons of rain fell in the city, causing the evacuation of more than 240 buildings. In the North Side area of Battery Park, where some of the most significant damage occurred, 250 homes were evacuated after a sewer pipe collapsed, preventing the drainage of rainwater. The tropical depression left \$84 million in damages throughout the state, \$39 million of which is estimated for cleanup and public repair costs in Richmond.



Ryan Farr photo



Pat Kane photo



Ryan Farr photo



News



GAYLAND HETHCOAT
News Co-Editor

Taylor Behl:

“So I’ve been thinking a lot about you lately, and even now, it’s still hard to fully grasp what has happened. I often have dreams of us, dreams that are so vivid, when I awake, it takes me a moment to realize the reality.”

So reads a comment dated Aug. 30 on former VCU student Taylor Behl’s MySpace profile, which remains active a year after her murder. Behl’s own words, scribed in her online diary, are also still accessible at LiveJournal.com. The last entry is dated April 21, 2005, months before she moved into Gladding Residence Center to begin her freshman year at VCU.

As it played a role in the events leading up to her disappearance, the Internet appears to maintain a prominent role in Behl’s afterlife. An expansive collection of Web sites, blogs and message boards scrutinize her disappearance and murder, and others memorialize the 17-year-old, who would have turned 19 this October.

There is, for example, an entry highlighting the facts of Behl’s case on Wikipedia, “the free encyclopedia,” which has grown increasingly popular among students. The entry provides many references and links to other Behl-related material. Among them:

- A scanned copy of the search warrant for the apartment of Benjamin Fawley, Behl’s indicted killer.
- A Taylor Behl archive that William Drummond maintains, which features photo collages of Behl, an extensive chronology of developments in her case, a condolences message board and a photo gallery named “Fawley’s Fickle Faces.”
- Behl’s eulogy, “A Homily for Taylor Behl.”
- Behl’s entry on FindAGrave.com, which contains 180 notes and clip art, the most recent dated Sept. 6. On the Web site’s frequently asked questions page, its creators say they aim “to create a comprehensive

‘virtual cemetery’ where loved ones can visit graves, leave flowers, etc. when they cannot do so in real life due to geography, finances and other circumstances.”

The Wikipedia entry does not provide a link to it, but Behl also has a profile on the controversial MyDeathSpace.com. The Web site tallies individuals with MySpace accounts who have died since the creation of their accounts and provides links to them. The site has currently totaled 490 individuals, most of whom were in high school or college when they died. Behl is listed as the sixth death.

William Drummond, a 43-year-old resident of Enterprise, Ala., who has no ties to Behl or Fawley, said he created his Web site when he observed conflicting media coverage after Behl’s disappearance.

“At first, the media coverage seemed spotty with one source quoting facts not reported by another source,” said Drummond, who became interested in Behl’s case while he was volunteering as a chat room moderator as part of American Online’s Community Leader Program.

“I thought to myself that in 2005 that there should be a way to collect all of the facts in an orderly fashion and make those facts available to the public.”

Like many creators of Behl-themed Web sites, Drummond said Behl’s life story reminded him of aspects of his own. He mentioned his niece in North Carolina, who started college the same time as Behl, as the reason he involved himself in the case.

Drummond became so involved, he said, that his

Sept 4

Behl’s MySpace page records this date as the last time Behl logged on. **6:45 p.m.**- Behl calls her father to tell him she’s arrived safely at VCU. **7-9:45 p.m.**- Behl and former boyfriend have dinner at The Village Café. **10:20 p.m.**- Behl leaves Gladding Residence Center. She tells her roommate she will return in three hours.

Sept 7

Behl is reported missing.

Sept 17

Behl’s white 1997 Ford Escort is found.

Sept 21

Fawley officially becomes a “person of interest” by Richmond police.

Sept 6

Fawley files a report with police. He says he was robbed and abducted around 5 a.m.

Sept 15

A criminal investigation is opened. Richmond police takes over.

Sept 19

A vigil is held for Behl.

Sept 22

VCU offers \$20,000 to anyone with information regarding Behl.

Karen Sagun
illustration,
timeline with
Sheena Jeffers
contributing





One year later



Katy McDaniel photo

emotions took a negative toll on his health. But he added his investment in the case has not been in vain: he has received positive feedback from Behl's mother, Janet Pelasara, and her attorney, and other larger media have consulted him because of the wealth of information he has gathered.

Even though Behl's case has begun to reach closure with the recent 30-year prison sentencing of Fawley, Drummond will continue to update his Web site while he owns the domain of its address, he said.

As long as Pelasara approves, Drummond said, the Internet "is a great tool for many to express their feelings about such a tragic event."

Lisa Hendricks, a friend of Behl's who worked

with her at a Starbucks Coffee in Fairfax, agreed with Drummond. She called the Internet a "place where people can come together and connect."

"It's another way to express one's feelings into the world," added Hendricks, who posted the Aug. 30 comment on MySpace. "MySpace was the new way to write notes, and I just wanted to write her as though she's still here."

Hendricks said the difference between Behl and Fawley's ages is what attracts strangers to the case.

"Older men and very young women is a very captivating story, mostly because it's so disturbing,"

SAFETY TIPS

from Henry G. Rhone, vice provost for student affairs and enrollment services, and Willie B. Fuller, Chief of VCU Police.

- **Be aware** of your surroundings and others around you.
- **Don't take shortcuts** through poorly lit areas.
- **Walk with a friend** or in groups after dark. Do not go out alone late at night.
- **Don't assume** that "it won't happen to me."
- **Trust your "gut"** feelings. If something seems strange, it probably is.
- **Be aware that alcohol and drug use impairs** your ability to make good decisions about your safety.

BEHL continued to Page CT6

Sept 23

Fawley is arrested around 3 p.m. on 16 charges of child pornography.

Oct 6

Skeletal remains are identified as Taylor Behl's. Cause of death is not determined.

Oct 14

Fawley admits he accidentally killed Behl during a sexual encounter in her car in Mathew's County.

Aug 9

Fawley enters Alford plea to the murder of Taylor Behl. This means Fawley acknowledges the court has enough evidence to convict him, but he is not admitting guilt. Judges sentence Fawley to serve 30 years.

Oct 5

A decomposed body is found in Mathew's County.

Oct 13

Behl's 18th birthday is held in a funeral home in Vienna.

Jan 17

Fawley is indicted for first-degree murder.



News

BEHL continued from Page CT5

21-year-old Hendricks said. "Also, there was a mystery element to this story, and there still slightly is. No one will know the actual truth except for Ben, Taylor and God."

Fascination with the "mystery element" can be observed on courttv.com's message boards, for example, which include such threads as "In the end, what really happened that night?" and "Unanswered Questions" under the subject of Taylor Behl.

In the "Unanswered Questions" thread, message board members contemplated throughout last month the mental health of Fawley, speculating that he might suffer from schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder or even evil possession.

On Aug. 11, board member "protectkidz" wrote: "I ALWAYS knew Ben killed Taylor. ALWAYS. And I will never consider that okay, even if there was mental illness on his part. That he left her there and lied makes me CRAZY...But I figure that God makes the Hell decisions, not me."

Others have blamed the pervasive interest in the teenager on what is cynically referred to as "missing white woman syndrome." The term connotes that the public and media have preoccupation with young, pretty white women who are missing, like Alabama teenager Natalee Holloway, or have been murdered. Eighteen-year-old Holloway received extensive media coverage after officials declared her missing in Aruba in May 2005.

Jeff South, associate professor of mass communications at VCU, said he would not venture to label Behl's case an example of "missing white woman syndrome," but her "all-American look" has contributed to her case's appeal.

A litany of factors, rather, have stirred interest in the public, he added, citing the vulnerable persona Behl presented online and the vigorous campaign on behalf of her parents to keep her story in the media. These factors created a kind of narrative, he said.

South questioned the healthiness of Internet users' persistent fascination with Behl but described it as mostly uninhibited expression that people indulge in online but not in person.

A year from now, he predicted, the fascination will still exist.

"From the postings I saw, I do think there will be continuing interest in this story and her life," South said. "I think there will be a kind of radioactive half-life where we'll see it diminish over time, but I don't think the flame is going to go out anytime soon."

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VCU remembers the 'Crocodile Hunter'

SHEENA JEFFERS

News Co-Editor

Australia lost a native son. America lost a beloved television personality. Together, we lost the "Crocodile Hunter."

Steve Irwin, 44, died Monday after swimming too close to a stingray. The frightened stingray stabbed Irwin in the chest with its poisonous barbed tail. Irwin died not long after pulling the sword-like tail from his chest.

Taylor Baltimore, a university relations coordinator with Children, Inc., a worldwide organization assisting the world's neediest children in Richmond and abroad, said, "It's like Superman died."

Irwin was an active participant in animal awareness around the world. He was on the front line to bringing the lives of animals to television screens in

a high-tech world.

"I'm bummed," said Keith Long, a student organization coordinator who was disheartened by Irwin's death. "I will miss him. He was an advocate for animals."

Irwin was born Feb. 22, 1962, to Bob and Lyn Irwin, who founded the Australia Zoo. The zoo was home to over 100 crocodiles, some of which the Irwins caught and others the family bred. As a child, Irwin played with the animals and helped feed and maintain them. He practically had no fear of them.

Irwin developed a keen understanding of animals and in 1992 married Terri, who shared his sentiment toward animals. Together they put a face to animals' rights and environmental conversation. Irwin, often-times with Terri making a guest appearance, made several documentaries, hitting the prime time in

1992 with "The Crocodile Hunter."

The show's close shots of animal mouths with rows of razor-sharp teeth caught the attention of viewers around the world.

"If I was flipping through and he was on, I would watch him," said Student Government Association President Ali Faruk, calling Irwin's death a tragedy. "People started getting into animals because of him."

While people everywhere felt the loss, some celebrated his life.

"I think it's good he died doing something wild and crazy that he loved," said alumna Danielle Sims, who works at Shula's 2 in the Sheraton Hotel. "The day he passed we had discount shooters."

What kind of shooters?

"Sex with an alligator!"

'Trust your instincts' on safety

PAT KANE

Managing Editor

A year after the murder of freshman Taylor Behl, VCU students are more aware of online and physical safety issues.

"The whole situation made us more aware of all the tools and vehicles that students use to communicate and for us to think about our responsibility to educate people," said Henry Rhone, vice provost for student affairs and enrollment services.

He said former Student Government Association president Eddie O'Leary showed administrators the ins and outs of Facebook.com and MySpace.com, including the dangers of adding too much personal information.

Rhone said he hopes students are taking precautions.

"It really is the individual's responsibility. You can't monitor and control what people are doing, so you hope they are learning a bit from all that's happening and govern themselves accordingly," he said.

Tammy McKeown, who works with victims of sexual assault and domestic violence in the Office of Health Promotion, said millions of people can see what students post on the Internet. She encourages students to perform an "ego-search" by typing their own name into search engines to see what comes up. That way, they know what potential employers, family and others might see about them.

Recently, an ego-search turned up Thursday, September 7, 2006

a data leak in the School of Engineering. In August, a student Googling herself discovered a security leak that left the names, social security numbers and e-mail addresses of 2,100 students exposed. VCU has since removed the information and contacted affected students.

But, networking Web sites can be positive, Rhone said. Students got a jump on discussing a book assigned to all freshmen.

"I just heard this morning that a lot of students used Facebook or MySpace, developing social groups before they got here and discussing the book 'Freakonomics.' That's a good thing. You want those kind of things to happen," he said.

As for physical safety, McKeown said students should trust their gut instinct.

"Trust your instincts. Get out of any situation as soon as it makes you uncomfortable," she said.

Students need to take precautions, including moving in groups, keeping an eye on their drinks at parties and using the buddy system.

"Use the buddy system and follow through," she said. "Agree to leave together, which is probably the most



Cynthia K. Merchant photo

Annastasia Alexander sits in front of GRC's entrance. After the murder of then-freshman Taylor Behl, campus officials advise students to take extra caution both on campus and online.

important part of the buddy system."

Few sexual assaults are by strangers, McKeown said.

"There's this misperception about the stranger behind the bushes, when you're actually much likely to be assaulted by someone you know. Ninety percent of sexual assaults in Virginia are by someone known by the victim."

Behl had a months-long relationship with Benjamin Fawley, who told police he accidentally killed her during erotic asphyxiation.

Rhone said the University Police are aware of suspicious people.

"On campus, I think our VCU police are pretty alert to people floating in and out of the community that may be involved in illegal activities."

Police are balancing a presence that tells people they can get help but not that things are unsafe, Rhone said. He cited the T.I. and Yung Joc back-to-school concert as an event that went well.

"The police were there. The students had a great time from all I've heard. It wasn't as some students would say to 'harass people,' but just to be there to make sure nobody misbehaved," he said.

VCU's renewed focus on cutting down on student misbehavior led to an increase in reported crime.

"There were 630 violations of the rules and procedures over the last year, this from around 379 from the previous year," Board of Visitors member Michele Romano said at the group's meeting Aug. 24.

Romano, who has a doctorate from VCU School of Medicine, said it wasn't an increase in violent crime.

"They attribute that to more students on campus, everybody being a little bit more watchful. Most of the violations were for alcohol and drugs, and most were by freshmen."

Rhone agreed.

"A lot of it is underage drinking. Somebody with a can of beer or whatever it might be. That's what's pushed ours up," he said.

Rhone is optimistic, he said, because new students are bolder about seeking answers and resources.

"Students are not shy about seeking out things," he said. "That's a good thing. There's more of a feeling of community here, so people are asking each other questions."

commonwealthtimes.com • CT7

News

CRIME LOG

Aug. 29

A male was arrested on West Grace Street for two counts of peeping into an occupied dwelling and two counts of trespassing.

A male was arrested on North Lombardy Street for assault and battery of a police officer, possession of a controlled substance, resisting arrest and failure to appear on a concealed weapon charge.

Aug. 30

A female advised that an unknown person(s) removed \$1,500 of property from Lyons Dental Building.

A female advised between Aug. 30 and Aug. 31 that an unknown person(s) removed \$500 of state property from the Eugene P. and Lois E. Trani Life Sciences building.

Sept. 1

A female advised between Sept. 1 and Sept. 4 that an unknown person(s) removed \$230 of personal property from Brandt Hall.

Sept. 2

A male was arrested on West Grace Street for possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

Sept. 2

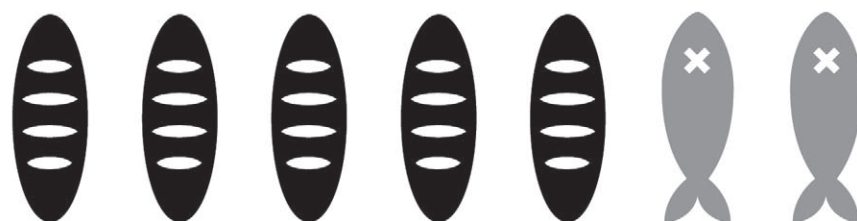
A male was arrested at the Broad and Belvidere apartments for possession of marijuana.

A male was arrested at Brandt Hall for underage possession of alcohol and purchase of alcohol for persons not allowed.

A male was arrested at the 7-Eleven

CRIME LOG continued on Page CT9

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Cynthia K. Merchant photo

Beyond the Wall sold posters the first week of classes outside of the University Student Commons, offering a wide selection featuring cult classic films, iconic musicians and historic art pieces. Browse their online selection at beyondthewall.com.

THIS JUST IN

Discover why you like music

SHEENA JEFFERS
News Co-Editor

Everyone has a favorite music artist—the artist that just gets you time and time again. They never grow old. But what is it about that artist or their style that has you mesmerized? Is it the minor key? Or maybe the use of electric guitar instead of acoustic? Now there is a way to identify what exactly you love about that particular artist and that style.

If you don't know music very well, Pandora Internet Radio can help you understand the technicalities of your likings. Pandora.com, created by the

Music Genome Project, has music analysts who, for 25 hours a week, listen more than closely to music: they analyze each song down to data points, labeling the singer's voice, the drums, guitars and hundreds of other factors within the song.

For example, upon typing in Alanis Morissette, Pandora



will give you a Morissette song explaining the key features analysts discovered in her style. Next, Pandora will choose a new song, explaining: "We will play 'Napoleon (live)' by Ani DiFranco because it features acoustic rock instrumentation, acoustic sonority, a dynamic female vocalist, acoustic rhythm guitars and many other similarities identified in the music genome project."

The free Internet radio allows you to give each song it presents a thumbs up or thumbs down. If the listener gives a thumbs down, the song is taken off the list. This allows listeners to find new artists with similar styles.

CRIME LOG

on West Main Street for the possession of a controlled substance, possession of marijuana and underage possession of alcohol.

A juvenile was arrested at the 7-Eleven on West Main Street for possession of marijuana with intent to distribute and intent to distribute within 1,000 feet of a post-secondary school.

Sept. 3

A male was arrested on West Grace Street for simple assault and being drunk in public.

A male was arrested at the 7-Eleven on West Grace Street for aggressive solicitation.

Sept. 4

A male was arrested at Brandt Hall for possession of marijuana.





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Sports

In Brief

Field hockey

Connecticut Huskies Classic

NEW HAVEN, Conn. – The VCU field hockey team concluded the Connecticut Huskies Classic last weekend with two losses.

On Friday, Sept. 1 the Rams went up against Yale, defeated 1-3. On Sunday they played Sacred Heart and lost 3-5.

Friday's game gave Rebecca Sullivan (Fredericksburg/Stafford) the first goal, assisted by Nikki Lloyd (Kent, England).

VCU out shot Yale 19-14, but Yale still managed to get 9 shots-on-goal compared to VCU's 8.

During Sunday's game, Sacred Heart out shot VCU 17-12 and got more shots-on-goal 12-8.

Rebecca Sullivan once again scored the premiere goal of the game in the first two minutes.

At one point, the Rams were ahead 3-1 after Nikki Lloyd and Emilie Osinga (Aerdenhout, Netherlands) each scored a goal, but after the 20-minute mark, the Pirates scored four more goals, securing their victory.

VCU's record stands at 1-3.

Volleyball

BYU Molten Classic

PROVO, Utah – The Rams volleyball team beat Texas A&M-Corpus Christ but lost to 4th-ranked Stanford and Brigham Young at the BYU Molten Classic last weekend.

On Friday, Sept. 1 the Rams led in kills 46-24 and won the game 3-0 (30-19, 30-15, 30-17).

See **BRIEFS**, next page

Men's soccer

Spartans' self-defeating spinout

JAMES K. GALLOWAY

Sports Editor

VCU tallied an unusual win Saturday night against seventh-ranked UNC Greensboro after having split the pair of games in the Nike/Alltel Classic over last weekend.

The score was 3-1, and the game ended almost 15 minutes early, but not because of inclement weather – in fact, the weather outside was perfect – but because five Spartans were removed from the game for losing their heads.

UNCG's Henning Jonasson exhibited violent behavior and had to be restrained by his teammates. He was ejected from the game within the last 2 minutes of the first half, right after his outburst toward the referee.

UNC Greensboro managed a strong start, shooting the first shot-on-goal, but suffered two scores from VCU in the first half.

Fred Owusu Sekyere (Suame-Kumasi, Ghana) scored the first shot of the game from 5 yards out, after converting a cross from Pat Viray (Reston/South Lakes HS) in the 13th minute.

He continued to move the ball with skill until a player kicked him, causing him to limp temporarily. Coach

O'Sullivan substituted in Thomas Waanders (Borculo, Netherlands) for him, but Owusu Sekyere re-entered the match after halftime.

Fred Owusu Sekyere commented saying UNC Greensboro "came to play rugby and wanted us to play it with them. We just did everything the coach said to do."

Matthijs Maruanaya (Alkmaar, Netherlands) scored VCU's second point with a 25-yard free kick at the 31-minute mark.

Two more goals were scored in the next half. UNC Greensboro's Scott Jones was fouled 35 yards out from the goal and scored on the free kick. The Spartans were two men down at the time of Jones's goal.

Pat Viray, named CAA co-player of the week picked up Adam Combs's (Winston-Salem, N.C.) assist from across the field and shot the goal from 5 yards out. That was the last goal anyone scored before the game prematurely ended 10 minutes later.

But even though the Spartans' points were low, it wasn't the scoring that held them back.

The Rams' Vitor Degani (Sao Paulo, Brazil) said, "They just didn't play by the rules."

Shortly after the start of the



VCU's Fred Owusu Sekyere scrambles for the ball during Saturday's game at SportsBackers Stadium. (Photo: Cynthia K. Merchant)

second half, Thomas Campbell slide-tackled Thomas Weingartner (Munich, Germany) out of bounds as the ball was already out. The refs detected the second hint of the Spartans' foul play and red carded Campbell immediately.

In the 75th minute of play, UNC Greensboro's David Worthen was red carded, sparking the flames of rage which shot from the mouths of Jokull Elisabetarson and

Randi Patterson. Elisabetarson was issued a yellow card for his outward objection, but then Patterson was ejected to join Worthen on the bus.

Finally, either Scott Jones failed to realize he was the last thread by which his team was hanging, or he did, and it angered him – whatever the case, he chose not to spend his last 22 seconds

See **SOCCER**, next page

Write for the sports section.

E-mail [sports@
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UPCOMING EVENTS

Men's soccer

Michigan Tournament
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Fri. Sept. 8
vs. Michigan St., 5 p.m.

Sun. Sept. 10
vs. Michigan, 2:30 p.m.

Wed. Sept. 13
Richmond, 7 p.m.

Women's soccer

VCU/Ewing Sports Invitational
SportsBackers Stadium

Fri. Sept. 8
vs. Colgate, 7 p.m.

Sun. Sept. 10
vs. La Salle, 3 p.m.

Field hockey

Sun. Sept. 10
vs. Rider, 1 p.m.

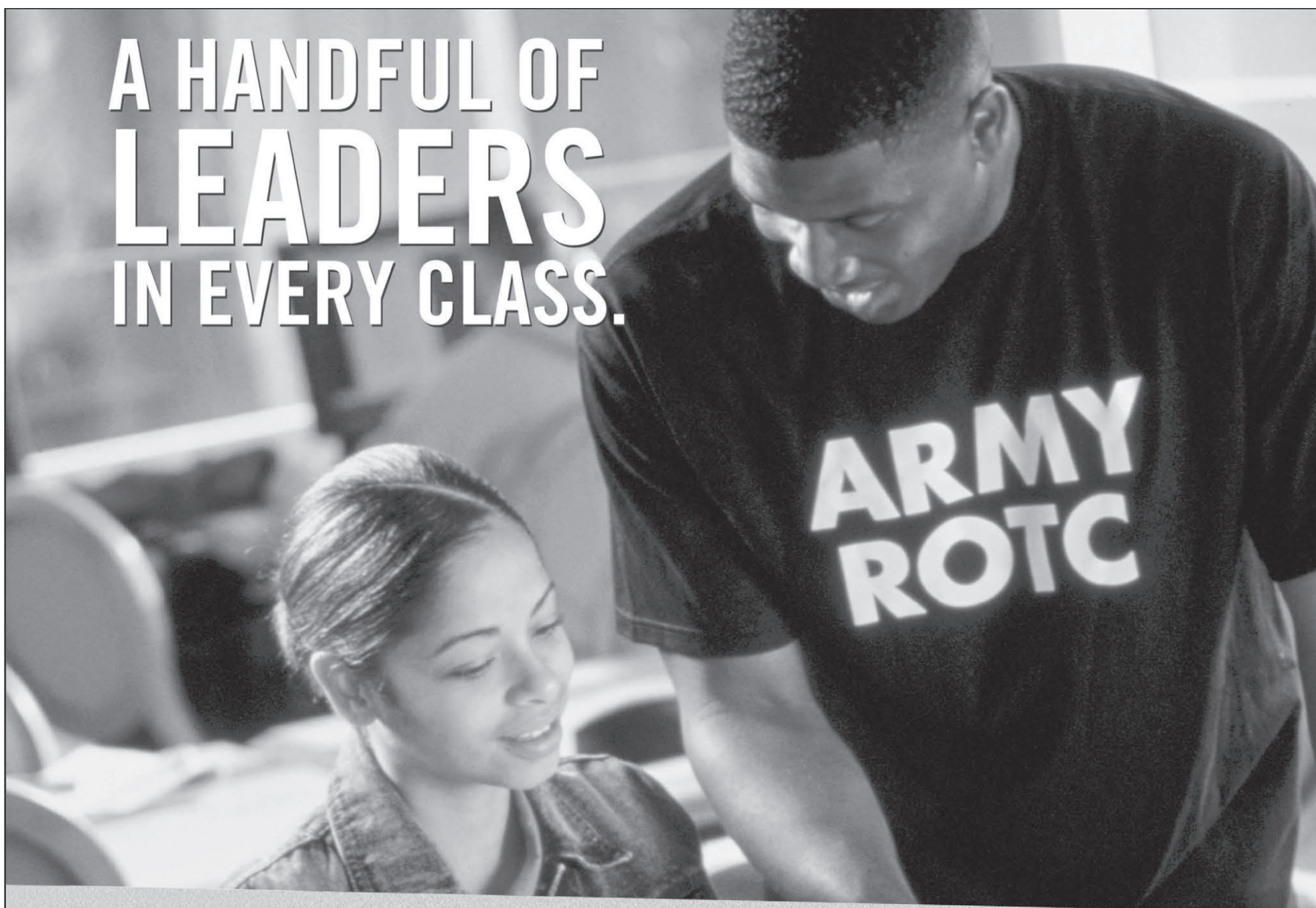
Volleyball

Fri. Sept. 8
at Northeastern, 7

Sun. Sept. 10
at Georgia State, 2 p.m.

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Volleyball

Francescato named CAA Athlete of the Week

JENN DARKAZALLI

Sports Writer

Senior outside hitter Ludmila Francescato was named volleyball Colonial Athletic Association Athlete of the Week last week.

Hailing from Fraiburgo, Brazil, Francescato has posted 88 kills, 57 digs, 13 blocks, and 6 service aces, hitting .299 for the Rams this season.

She took double-doubles in three matches and made 101.5 of the 355 points VCU has earned in the six games the lady Rams have played.

As a junior, Francescato made First-Team All CAA selection, which was a first for the Rams in six years.

After transferring from Arizona Western College, her first game playing for VCU ended with 20 kills, 17 digs, 5 aces, 3 blocks, and hitting .459.

Later in the season, she was the conference MVP in the CAA tournament, made the VCU Invitational All-tournament team, and raked in 417 kills, leading the team with 505 points, for the season.

She made the team-high and second in the CAA with 54 aces and an average of 3.10 digs per game.

She recorded 20 double-doubles for the season, including one set which was in the CAA championship game against Towson University where she took 26 kills, 15 digs, and hit at .407.

During her freshman and sophomore years at Arizona Western, Francescato was named Player of the year twice by the Arizona Community College Athletic Conference and tallied up numerous other conference awards.

Francescato transferred to the VCU molecular biology department "because the coach cares about our academics as much as our athletic abilities," she said in an interview.

As for her expecting to receive the CAA Athlete of the Week she said, "I didn't expect it. In this past pre-season, I worked very hard on improving my blocking."

She recorded eight blocks in her last



VCU's Ludmila Francescato

Photo: Pat Kane

game, showing improvement over her previous games.

Francescato said, "We are going to play our best this year. Last year everyone was new. Now this year, we know each other and know how each other play. We are improving with every game. We want to go further, to the Final Four if possible. We have set many goals for this year."

She describes her time at as a collegiate athlete as a lot of dedication and hard work. She said, "A lot of people shouldn't stereotype athletes, being an athlete while going to college takes a lot."

This will be the last year Francescato will be eligible to play but she will be graduating in the spring of 2008. She plans to remain on the team as an assistant coach next year, afterwards going on to get her masters in research biology.

SOCCER, from previous page

playing soccer.

If he had, perhaps the game would have played out for another 14 minutes, however painfully it might have been for the six players and goalkeeper.

Playing the game down two points with uneven players is a difficult thing for any team to take in stride, but there came a breaking point when passion overtook the Spartans' logical approach to the game.

Losing Thomas Campbell in the 52nd minute was that breaking point, after which much aggression was displayed and the outlook of the game became thick and hopeless, even as witnessed from the stands.

Head coach Tim O'Sullivan said, "Our guys played very well. I told them after the match that they represented themselves well and handled themselves well under difficult conditions."

A heated game of soccer was played on both ends, as VCU racked up more off sides than UNCG, 4-2 with a combined total of 30 fouls, 13-17 UNCG attaining more.

There was also a great deal of bandaging and nursing taking place on the sidelines after Saturday night's game.

O'Sullivan said a line that the Rams faithfully repeated: "We stuck to the game."

By a veteran coach's logic, the Spartans would have benefited greatly from "sticking to the game" but their loss was attributable to more than a series of fatal errors.

The refs would only say "rules of the game," and did not attempt to specify errors or justify any action they took during the game.

Matthijs Maruanaya says, "It was bad sportsmanship," adding, "We simply stuck to the game of soccer, they didn't, and the refs called them out on it."

By staying the course and not allowing the fervor of the Spartans to break their resolve, the team achieved its ends peacefully, and on this particular night, got their win early.

The Rams are ranked fourth in the CAA, and the Spartans ranked seventh. VCU now carries a record of 2-1-0.

BRIEFS, from previous page

Women's Soccer

Ana Luiza deBorja (Florianopolis, Brazil) merits attention during this game for standing out with 11 kills, nine digs, two aces and four blocks.

The following day, VCU lost both matches against Stanford 0-3 and BYU 0-3.

4th-ranked Stanford shut out VCU in the first part of the day 30-28, 30-17, 30-16.

During the host BYU match, the Cougars' Erica Lott led the match with 13 kills and 10 blocks, with Amy Schlauder giving 39 assists.

After the Molten Classic, VCU's record stands at 3-3.

The women's soccer team (2-2-1) beat University of Richmond (0-3-0) 1-0 at UR Stadium Sunday.

The entire first half of the game passed without a score.

It wasn't until the second half that Pernilla Jansson (Stockholm, Sweden) scored a shot into the upper right corner of the goal.

That's not to say the entire match was uneventful – VCU beat Richmond in shots 15-9 but Richmond still made more shots-on-goal 3-4, with four saves by Lauren Hardison (Midlothian/Clover Hill HS) for VCU and two saves by Richmond.

Seriously. Write for the sports section.

E-mail sports@commonwealthtimes.com

Spectrum

Lights, camera, **emotion!**

VCU Department of Dance shows its stuff in 'Dance on Camera'

OLIVIA BEATTY
Spectrum Writer

The mood was heavy inside and out of the Grace Street Theater Friday night, as the themes of the "Dance on Camera" films reflected the tropical depression. The pieces touched on issues such as murder, suicide, broken families, overcoming obstacles, internal struggles and being trapped.

The show kicked off the VCU Department of Dance's Fall 2006 season. It consisted of one documentary and six short films from the United States, Spain, Canada, Norway and Australia. "Video dance" combines the art forms dance, film and performance art.



"I'm thrilled that so many came out despite the weather. I hope that people will spread the word about video dance at VCU because of the presence of so many disciplines in the art," said Martha Curtis, chair of Department of Dance and Choreography.

"Phoenix Dance" chronicled dancer Homer Avila's battle with cancer that left him with only one leg. Avila saw his loss as merely one more obstacle and continued

to dance with as much fluidity, strength and passion as ever. He kept dancing up to the night before he died of cancer in 2004.

The piece "break" used a martial arts theme — complete with wire-work — to illustrate the passion and intensity of a family breaking down. The lighting and special effects were especially striking. However, its many different scenes — a

barn, field, kitchen, forest and country road — seemed to cause a lack of cohesion.

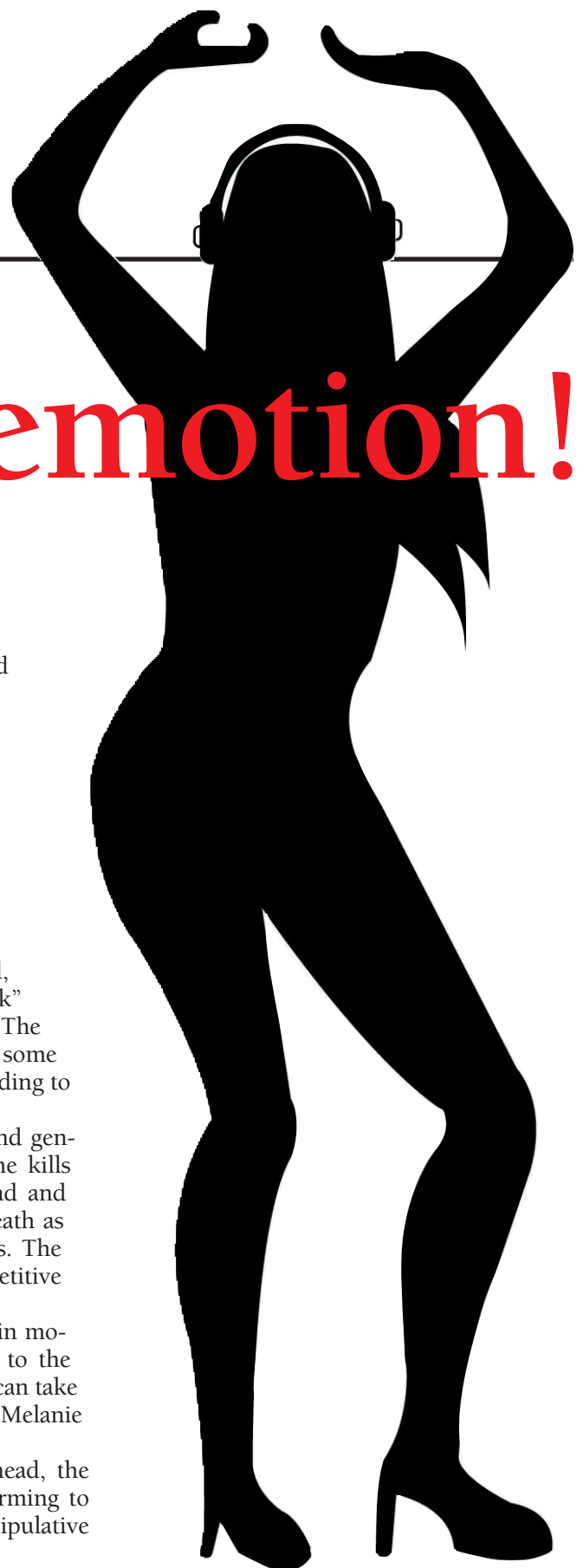
Another standout piece was "Waltzing Jessica," from VCU Dance alumnus Jason Akira Somma. It was a quirky and inventive rooftop look at a couple's relationship. The two dancers floated just above the roof, clasped in the classic ballroom dance pose. They languidly but sensually explored each other and their own space on couches and chairs.

The most disturbing pieces were "Astragalus" and "The Hunt." The first is of a scantily dressed, sweaty young woman recalling the "heroin sheik" look while writhing around on a dirty floor. The other piece is of a creepy, sniveling man having some sort of episodic standing seizure before pretending to shoot a bow and arrow.

"Bittersweet" took a violent look at race and gender in the stories of three black women. One kills her lesbian lover, the other kills her husband and the last kills herself. It is a morbid look at death as a glorious alternative to a life of unhappiness. The editing is choppy, and the movement is repetitive and bizarre.

"I love to see people take their experience in motion, apply it to a different medium and go to the limits of what's possible. Electronic mediums can take things so much further than on stage," said Melanie Richards, associate dance professor at VCU.

"It's almost like going inside someone's head, the way you can bend reality. They're not conforming to Hollywood expectations; it's not plastic, manipulative or expert but honest and passionate."



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Webcomics

come into their own

KATIE PUGH
Spectrum Editor

Webcomics have taken a stand as a new art form in and of themselves. Combining the freedom of the Internet with the imaginative minds of artists, comic creators no longer have to find a publishing company to get recognized. Instead, all they need is a pen and paper, a scanner, a bit of technology savvy and some free time.

A few webcomics, however, have gone from small-time hobbies to full-blown Internet legends. Whatever genre of comic is your fancy, there is sure to be something that you and yours can enjoy.

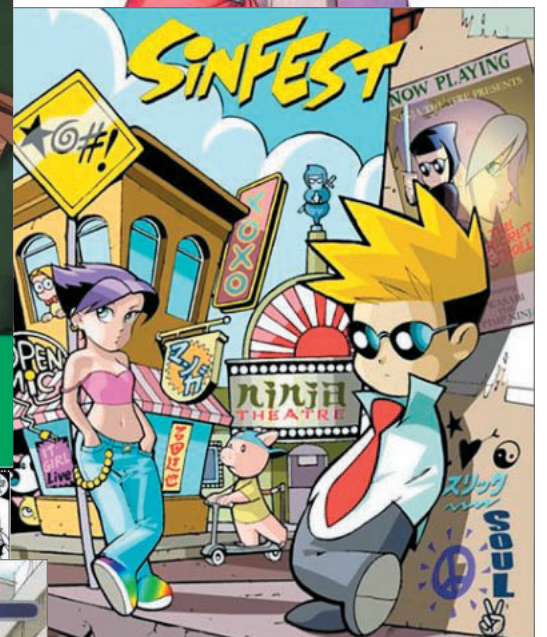
Sinfest: Tatsuya Ishida's comic strip first debuted in January 2000. Since then, it has been pushing the buttons of the public every day with its very stylish yet classical comic format. Ishida's main character, Slick, is a short womanizer who is constantly hanging around such archetypal characters as God – visualized by a giant hand in the sky and large calligraphy-style speech bubbles – and Satan. Taking cues from Calvin and Hobbes and other infamous comics, Ishida has created a comic that touches quite a bit on subjects of sexuality, religion, family values and other important aspects of society in a light, humorous, if somewhat crass manner.

Megatokyo: What happens when two dysfunctional friends find themselves lost in Tokyo after a video convention? Complete insanity

and romantic adventure. Piro, a fanboy of Japanese culture, and his eccentric, hacker friend, Largo, find themselves in the land of the rising sun with violent girls, young voice actors and all the explosions and drama they can take. Creators Fred Gallagher and Rodney Caston started their project in 2000 with a simple, gag-a-day format that eventually grew into a dramatic English-language manga (Japanese comic) from its style of art and storytelling.

PvP: Short for Player vs. Player, this webcomic by Scott Kurtz has been running faithfully since 1998. The comic follows the exploits of the staff at PvP Magazine, including a loveable if eccentric troll who carries "the heart of PvP Magazine." The comic began as streaming ongoing jokes about the world of gaming and technology, but eventually ebbed into more serious overtones about life and relationships.

Penny Arcade: There's really nothing that can be taken seriously in this webcomic. Since its beginning in November of 1998, creators and main characters Tycho and Gabe have been commenting on the newest games, game systems and technological breakthroughs that have hit mainstream media. Without any sort of continuity or real sense, it's easy for readers both into the gaming scene



WEBCOMICS continued on Page CT18

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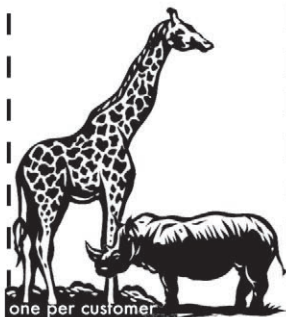
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Katy McDaniel photo

Senior Joseph McCorkle sits in his honors painting studio.

Art school confidential: The nitty gritty of AFO

VIRGINIA TA

Associate Spectrum Editor

Every incoming art student has heard about it. Every art student has to take it. It's a long, hard road to artistic realization.

AFO.

Every fall semester, an onslaught of incoming freshman art students begin the AFO, also known as The Art Foundation Program, which has long been the standard for entering the art major. Regardless of whether a student is looking to be a graphic designer or a future painter, every student is required to make it through an arduous year of AFO before they are accepted into the specific art program of their choice.

Remember the stories of your roommate's art friend who made an entire project out of macaroni? Or did you hear of your friend's homework of creating trading cards for their classmates? Well, they're all true. And while these seemingly off-the-wall art projects might sound a little kooky, they are often just your typical AFO assignment. But for the students concerned with eventually making a practical living out of art, how does the AFO program really measure up in their preparation?

For the average first-year art student, a typical

semester's workload consists of two labs, a studio or two, an art history class and two general education courses. This usually adds up to be between 13 to 16 credits every semester. Sounds like a piece of cake, right? Wrong.

AFO, which is described on their Web site as a program focused on "establishing a core for a complex whole," strives to continually bend students' minds through a series of assignments that often ask the student to conceptually create something. But even if macaroni gets students' creative juices flowing, does the program really help to develop their skill?

Among the pack that believes the AFO program does just what it promises, Tim Roger, a recent communication design major, is among the first to praise the program for helping him hone his skills.

"I think it helps. I grew up basically doing art, as a hobby and never thought of it as something I could pursue," Rodgers said. "The AFO program of course laid a foundation for me and directed me towards a certain area of interest."

Despite that, Rodgers admits that it wasn't easy and often times, he questioned the value of the program. "It was brutal," Rodgers says, "Some projects didn't seem as applicable to real world projects but

Stay Tuned

Best-selling author **Neil Gaiman**, writer of such classics as the Sandman comic series, American



Gods, Anansi Boys and Neverwhere, will be visiting Richmond sometime during the fall semester.

In the notes from a Library Advisor Committee Meeting on Nov. 18, 2005, an entry read that Gaiman had accepted the invitation from John Ulmschneider because of his ongoing interest in James Cabell, the writer after whom the library is named.

There has also been more circulated interest in the library after the donation of the archives from the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards.

Despite the little publicity the event has had thus far, workers at the Special Collections and Archives have made it clear that he is coming, but the dates are still in paperwork.

Stay tuned to The Commonwealth Times for more updates!

AFO continued to Page CT18



Spectrum

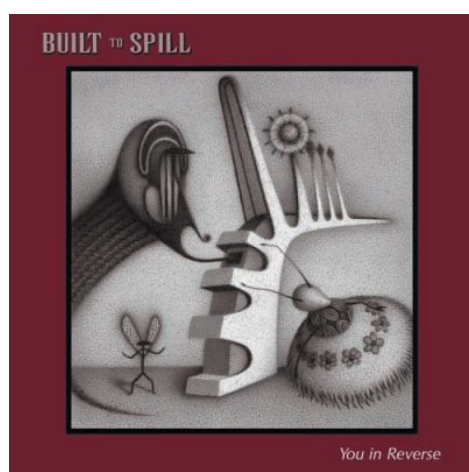


Thom Yorke 'The Eraser'

JAM WILLIAMS
Spectrum Writer

Despite Radiohead being my all-time favorite band, I decided to go into reviewing lead singer Thom Yorke's solo album, "The Eraser," completely unbiased. At times, the album sounds like a demo, as if they were an update of the way Pete Townshend used to do solo versions of all his songs for The Who. Despite penetrating lyrics on songs like "Harrowdown Hill" and "The Clock," the nonvocal music works best as a platform for Thom's political opinions. If you are a true fan of Radiohead, you will love it. Also, if you are looking for catchy tunes, check out "OK Computer."

Recommended if you like: Radiohead, Muse, Keane.



Built to Spill 'You in Reverse'

Built to Spill hasn't released an album for five years, and the time off seems to have re-energized the band. "You in Reverse" is one of Built to Spill's best efforts. Many of the songs on the album are mid-tempo ballads, while some are quiet and autumnal, like "Traces." However, most tracks are trippy and bursting with wild and dramatic guitar solos such as in "The Wait" and "Gone." Granted, the songs are a little long, but with repeated listens you hear parts and layers that you never heard before. Each song is quirky and fun.

Recommended if you like: Grandaddy, The Flaming Lips, Modest Mouse.

WEBCOMICS continued from Page CT15

and out to get wrapped up in the quips and jibes thrown between the characters.

Dominic

Deegan: For those more into a fantasy genre, Dominic Deegan offers a wide range of plots and subject matter as readers follow Dominic, a seer, through a medieval setting that often crosses into science fiction and drama. Serialized in several, long story arcs, the audience definitely feels the changes and growth of each character as the comic deals with the ongoing battles of good and evil and everything in between. Stories have often included war, corruption, magic and intense issues of loss, hatred and love.

AFO continued from Page CT17

some of those same projects did pull from you certain other skills (that) you would need in the real world. It did teach you how to think and process information."

Another recent communication design graduate, Brian Villalon, agrees. "A lot of the projects we did seemed like bull, but I got into my major and I actually applied a lot of that stuff."

"I learned how to take criticism. I learned how to think in different ways."

But with a program that harvests the growing skills of numerous creative minds, where does that leave the art itself? Though Villalon compares the assignments to a "dog show," saying that many of the courses are "kind of competitive," he also admits that it's very necessary in encouraging students to create their best work.

Also finding AFO mentally helpful as well as with skills, Patrick Benbow, a third-year illustration major, says, "There are also a lot of things taught that I kind of knew already,



A PAPR sophomore constructs a frame for a basic painting class.

but had never consciously thought about or understood until it was brought up in class.

"AFO helped me understand what I already knew but didn't know how to manipulate to my advantage."

Despite many students praising the program, there are just as many who have concerns with the program that encourages "thinking outside of the box," questioning how students from all arenas of the art world can be graded equally when they specialize in different types of art.

"Almost all of my projects had to be related to abstract, sculpture-esque things," Hannah Choi, a third-year illustration major, lamented, "But half of us weren't even there for fine arts."

Though Choi is quick to point out that professors never forbade assignments consisting of photographs or still life paintings, Choi hints towards the faculty's affinity for projects on the more abstract side.

"It felt like a lot of the abstract things were more liked," Choi said. "But you have to take everyone's interests into consideration."

Though incoming freshman students may be asking themselves these same questions as they go through AFO this year, it seems that the ultimate point of the program is to provide a solid introduction to art for prospective artists. So, does the program fulfill this?

Perhaps the answer to whether AFO succeeds in doing so is as subjective as the art itself.



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Spectrum Events

What's happening?

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Sept. 10, 8 p.m.



Loretta Ross: Reproductive Justice Lecture and Workshop

Founder and national coordinator of the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective speaks about reproductive health and rights.
Commonwealth Ballroom A, University Student Commons
Sept. 7, 7p.m.

The Future of the U.S.: Islamic World Relations

An Americans for Informed Democracy town hall meeting featuring several speakers from the university, government and Arab publications.
Richmond Salons, University Student Commons
Sept. 12, noon

Socrates Café: The Problem of Pain: Remembering 9/11 and Katrina

A monthly meeting of the minds in which students discuss topics that are important to them in an open, respectful environment.
The Common Cup at Harvie and Main
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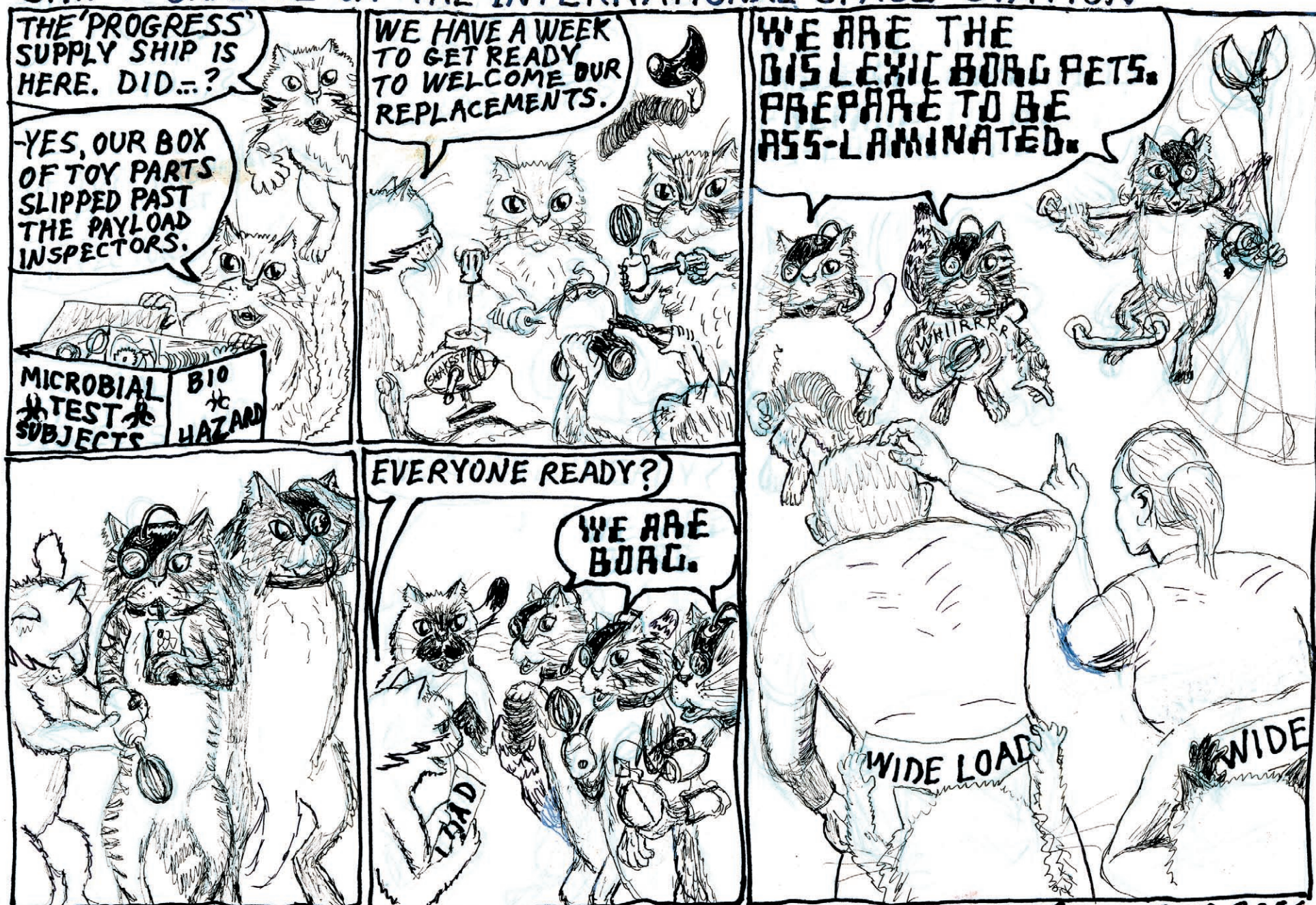
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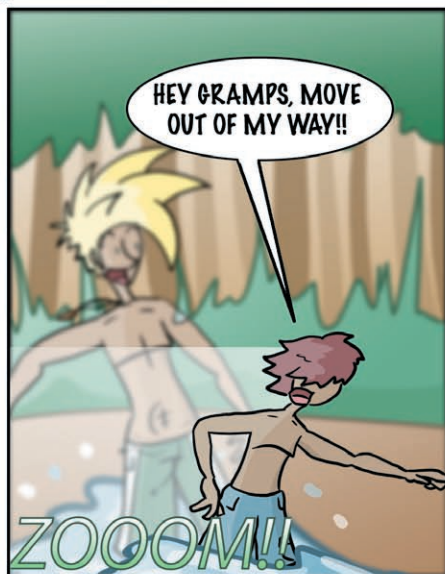
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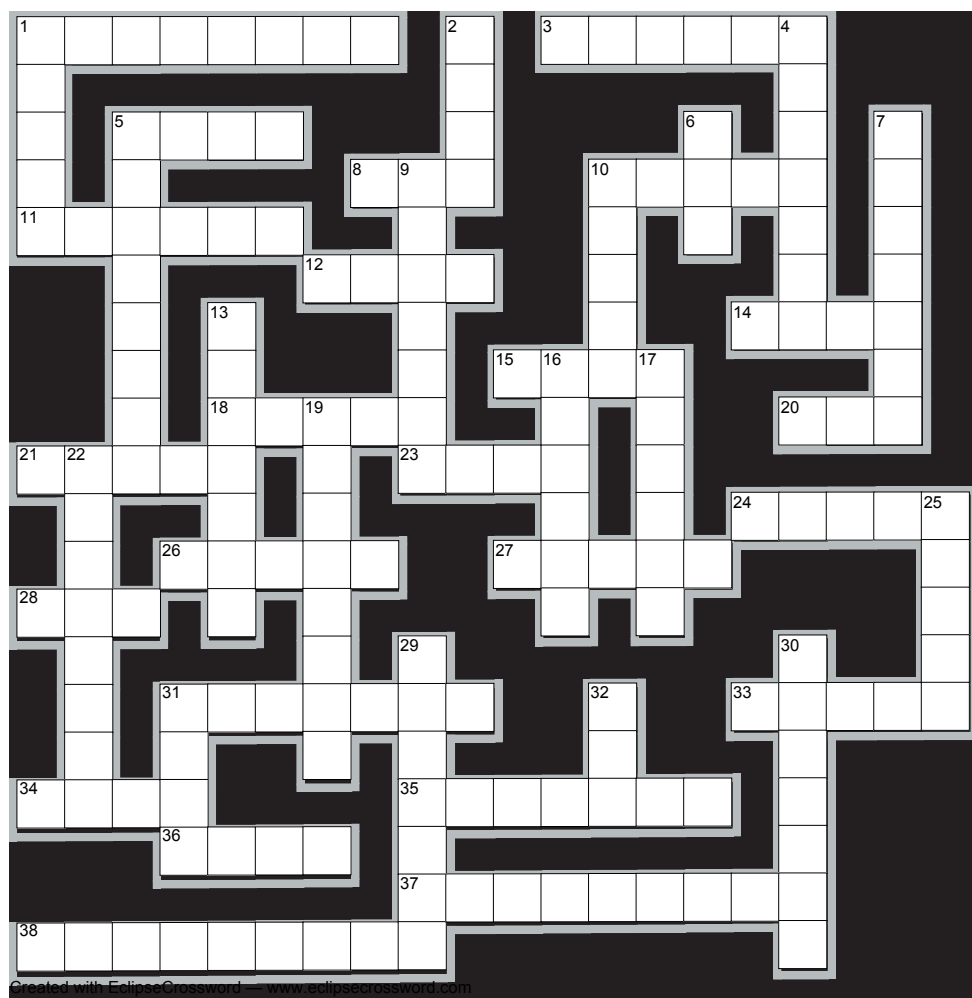
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Crossword

Across

1. Cox
3. Timberlake
5. Law
8. Thurman
10. Knightley
11. Bullock
12. Damon
14. Hatcher
15. Stefani
18. Witherspoon
20. Longoria
21. Hilton
23. Ferrell
24. Federline
26. Messing
27. Berry
28. Gibson
31. Spears
33. Elliot
34. Reid
35. Bloom
36. Barrymore
37. Aguilera
38. Zeta Jones



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Down

1. Rock
2. Banks
4. Portman
5. Lopez
6. Carrey
7. Simpson
9. McConaughey
10. Holmes
13. Dunst
16. Valderrama
17. Richie
19. Johansson
22. Jolie
25. Furtado
29. Knowles
30. Lohan
31. Pitt
32. Affleck

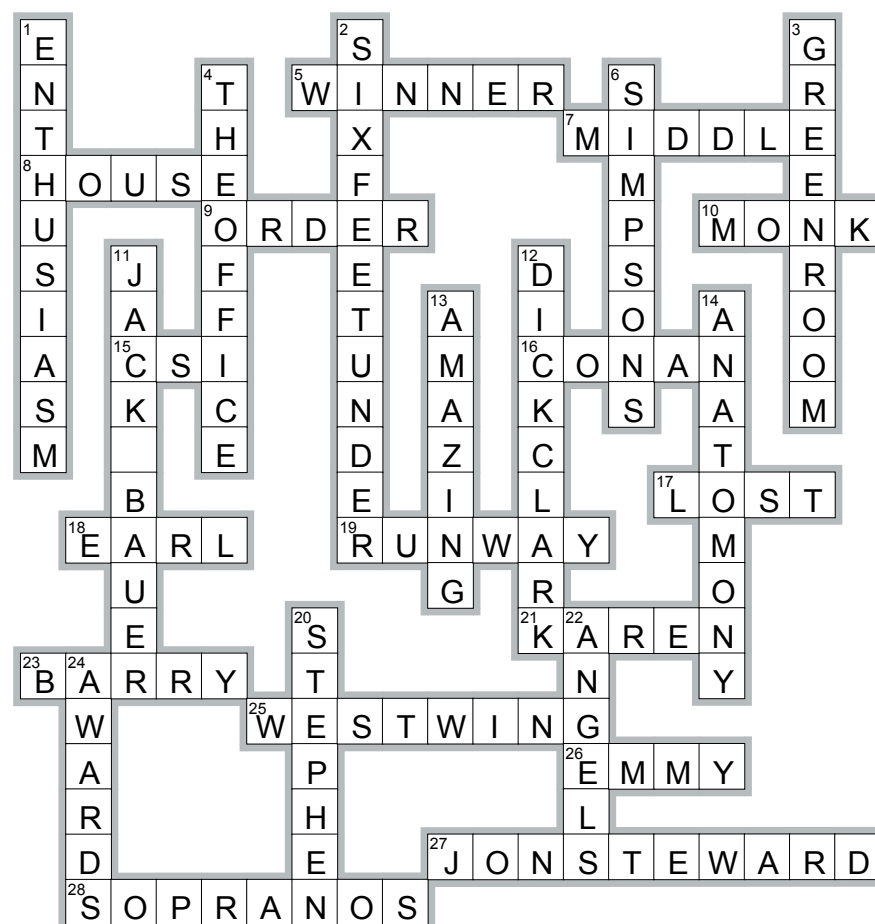


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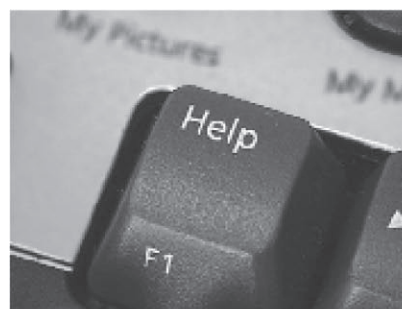
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Opinion

In Brief

All the new rage

In the latest twist in the Bush administrations' verbiage in the war on terror – or the war against radical extremists – a new term has emerged: Islamic fascism, sometimes referred to as "Islamofascism."

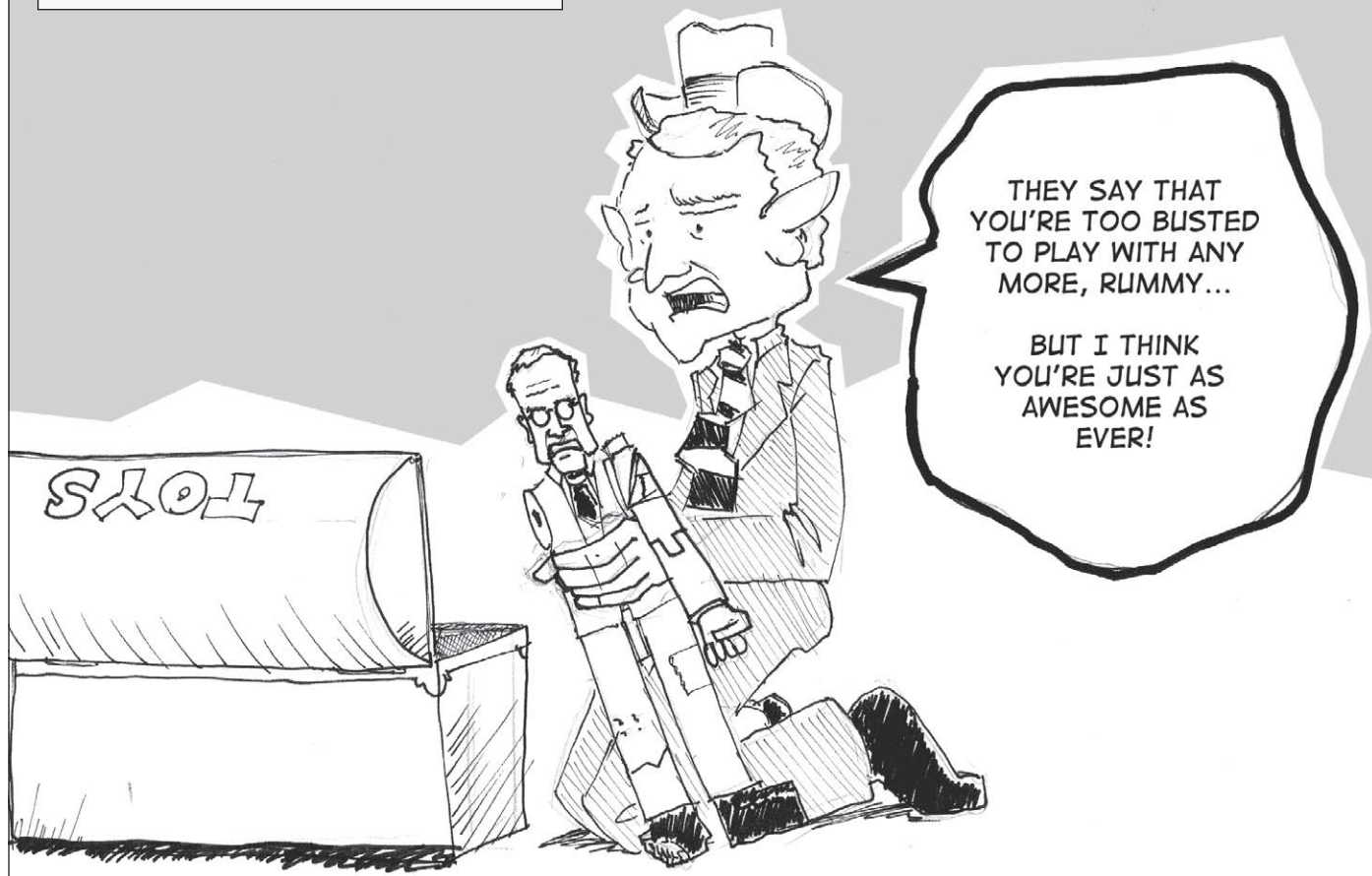
The term has been seized upon by some as accurate, by others as unfair. To equate a religion with a totalitarian ideology, the latter argues, is to ignore the vast majority of the religion that does not subscribe to extremist ideas.

Is the term accurate? Fascism is defined by a totalitarian government that emphasizes loyalty to the state. Terrorism, on the other hand, is a dispersed threat that exists outside of any state.

In a speech before the American Legion one week ago Tuesday, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld compared his critics with those who would have appeased Hitler before World War II, arguing that the world faces "a new type of facism."

Attempting to silence critics with such rhetoric does give one pause for thought.

Editorial Cartoon | Andrew Babb



Your Turn *Letters to the Editor*

More emphasis on community service at VCU

With the ongoing concerns over global warming and its relationship with the environment, Virginia Commonwealth University seems to have a relatively untapped opportunity in the form of community service.

One opportunity for service entails the ecosystem. The James River Park System is a 550-acre park that extends from the West End at the Huguenot flat-water landing all the way to Ancarrow's Landing, the latter of which is located at the far eastern end of Maury

Street. Being situated on the James River, the park represents one of the city's last extensive "wilderness" areas.

I always manage to carry a bag of some sort to the park whenever I visit and spend about 10 minutes taking care of litter. However, like all students, I am generally pressed for time and cannot dedicate a full day on a somewhat regular basis to keeping the park clean. That is why I am interested in getting students involved in community service.

There are a number ways that this task can be accomplished, each of which vary in degree of school support.

First, clubs and organizations can set aside an hour or two on any day during a weekend or an off day in which to complete community service. (For example, as president of the Pre-Law Society, I am working on including a small amount of community service per semester as part of membership).

Second, the school might consider setting up a requirement or elective for community service involvement. For instance, a senior may graduate if he or she has completed a certain amount of community service in the four years of enrollment at the university. Last but not least, the

Presidential Roundtable, a function of the Student Government Association, should shift a higher degree of focus on community service opportunities. At the same time, perhaps a part of the appropriations process for organizations can somehow be tied into community service participation (i.e. a merit-based system) on a small level, if at all possible.

Community service not only helps the community but also helps the student become familiarized with the areas around the university, not to mention that such service does not look bad on a resume or graduate school application. Whether or not you are in a student organization, please try to make a major difference in your surroundings.

– Robert J. Smith III

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Letters must be sent from a valid VCU e-mail address or signed with daytime and evening telephone contact. We reserve the right to edit for grammar, style and space.



Coming out: don't be afraid

JOSH HENRY

Special to the Commonwealth Times

My knees shaking and hands trembling, I walked out of the movie theater emotionally drained. I found myself with tunnel vision, walking briskly past the crowds out to my car. I inserted the key roughly fitting into the keyhole, turning the lock and opening my door. I leaned against the car briefly, taking a deep breathe then got in. My eyes began to welt as I drove down the road, and soon as I drove it all came out.

I remember seeing a woman across the parking lot at the time looking at me; I knew that she knew what was plaguing me. This was back in January of this year when I saw the now notoriously famous film "Brokeback Mountain." At the time I was in the closet, no...rather submerged and locked in the closet. The purpose of relaying this event to you is to give you an idea as to what myself and many others on this campus and around the world go through.

My message, and those of my amazing friends, is to not be afraid, though I realize that this is of little help to someone in the closet. I know precisely how one acts, thinks, and processes information when in the closet. Throughout the duration of my teenage years, I locked up my true feelings and emotions. At first when I realized that I may not have the same feelings toward girls as all the other guys, I tried to fool myself. I denied it over and over and just carried on as if I were "straight." This worked well for me until I was 16. It was around this age that it became extraordinarily hard.

Being raised Mormon and attending church six out of seven days a week embedded into my brain how "evil" and "sinful" it was to have these

feelings of same-sex attraction. After denying it for so long, I often lay awake at night crying and praying hours on end, asking God why I feel this way if it's so wrong. My ever-increasing spiral of depression continued all throughout my high school years as I often seriously contemplated suicide. I was miserable on the inside, all the time stricken with grief for my sin.

Finally I just shut off. When I came here to VCU, I just bottled it up again and told myself that I would meet new girls and things would fall into place. When it came to the topic of homosexuality, I became very homophobic. I could hardly even talk to a gay man; I seriously would not even be able to look them in the eye if I saw someone on campus. If someone mentioned the subject or in relation, I would often keep quiet or not say much.

Still, I soon realized that you cannot run away from your true self. My sophomore year I began to read things on the Internet about homosexuality, albeit very secretly. Now that I look back, I think that mentally this is when I kind of started to try to accept these feelings.

Finally, my second junior semester I saw Ang Lee's classic film – it shook me to my core. I took a couple of chances and reached out to some in the gay community, and as good fortune would have it, they took me in and allowed me to gain insight and vent my lifelong struggle. I told a couple of close friends of mine and made some amazing new friends in the gay community.

I along with many others know all too well the paralyzing effects of being in the closet and how hopeless life seems when you're trapped. But let me tell you: there is light! I can testify that it is an amazing feeling to be who you are and not worry about

other peoples prejudices. Yes, the path to coming out of the closet is harder than I could have imagined; we in the gay community have endured much mental turmoil and inner debate. We have religions that outcast us as sinners and families that turn their backs, but even so I would not change it for the world. None of us here would be the same without going through the struggle of coming out; it builds character and strength. It truly allows us to empathize with other people in life, and the struggles that they go through for being different, or not "normal."

If you are in the closet and you are reading this, first and foremost go at your own pace. It was the wise advice given to me by some close friends to me, and it is passed on here. Do not rush for anyone else but yourself, for only you can truly know when you are ready to take steps.

Also know that it does take time; you must first accept it within yourself. If you accept that these feelings are present, then you're making progress. Take a deep breath and tell a close friend, someone you trust and love. I thought my friends may abandon me if they knew (and some will and do, sadly) but to my amazement the vast majority have been extremely supportive and loving. In fact, many were upset that I did not come out sooner or tell them face to face. So do not discount or underestimate your friends or your family; they should love you for who you are.

We're all human beings living life as best we know how, hopefully learning and growing and maturing as time passes us over. Happiness will truly flow into your life when the door is broken down, so don't be afraid.

Josh Henry is a senior political science major at VCU.

From the president

ALI FARUK

*President, Monroe Park Campus SGA
Special to the Commonwealth Times*

The academic school year is off to a busy start, and so are the activities of the Student Government Association. Fall Senate elections are coming up soon. If you are interested in representing your fellow Rams as student senator, check out the VCU SGA Web site at www.vcusga.com for information on how to run. Applications are due by September 22, so don't delay.

If you see yourself as a senator or if you simply want to see how the Senate works, come check out the student Senate in action. Meetings are held every Monday at 4 p.m. in the forum room of the University Student Commons. All interested students are encouraged to attend and press your Senate representatives on issues that are important to you.

Speaking of important issues, I recently had the privilege of attending a staff retreat last weekend with other student body presidents from across the state. We discussed problems on our campuses such as academic advising, campus safety and parking. It was a very productive weekend, and we got a chance not only to discover common solutions to common problems, but also set our General Assembly lobbying agenda for this upcoming year.

An important agenda item for this year is absentee ballot reform. Our goal is to make the absentee ballot voting process easier for students. Another important project is the student poll worker program. We're going to encourage VCU students like you to apply to work at the voting polls. For just one day's work, you'll get around \$100! This is a great way to get young voters involved in public affairs.

In the coming weeks, you will learn more about opportunities to engage yourself as a student of the university and as an active citizen. These columns will be published weekly in The Commonwealth Times, and we will soon have radio addresses that will be podcasted online every week.

I am pleased to announce that the SGA book-trading website has been a success. Over 900 users have used the site, and we are quickly approaching the 1,000 mark. Please continue to use this money-saving resource, and encourage your classmates to do the same. You can visit the Web site at vcusga.com – click on "Book Trading."

Please do not hesitate to get involved. The SGA is, after all, your conduit into the affairs of the university. Our door is always open, so feel free to e-mail me at sgapresident@vcu.edu for any questions, comments or concerns.

Freaked out by the new Facebook

OMAR YACOUBI

Interim Opinion Editor

Wednesday morning untold numbers of college students logged in to Facebook only to find a new feature tracking their every move on the service, from comments to photos, events and groups.

It may seem Orwellian at first, but consider this: the only people who can see what you've done on Facebook, depending on your privacy settings, are your friends and your network.

And you have the ability to hide what you've done by clicking a small gray "x" to the right of the action on the mini-feed in your profile.

Before deciding to delete your Facebook account, keep in mind that you do have an enormous amount of control over who can see your profile, as well as what they see. By clicking on the "My Privacy" link on the left side of the Facebook page, you can find a wealth of options designed to limit your exposure to the outside world. The features are so strong that

no one has to know you exist unless you want them to.

In the end, the change comes down to this: choice. You can choose who becomes your friend; you choose what goes into your profile; and you choose who can see it.

Properly used, the new feeds feature will let people become better connected by seeing things they have in common, photos they've taken or places they're going. It would be a shame to have a perfectly useful feature ruined by a little fear.





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