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briefs

Local and VCU

VCU's Rao requires unusual confidentiality agreement

VCU President Michael Rao asks employees who work in his office to sign an unusual confidentiality agreement that bars them from talking about what they observe about him or his family.

It bars disclosure not just to the news media, family or friends, but also to colleagues, "clergy and attorneys, or to any other person not otherwise identified."

Raymond D. Cotton, a Washington attorney who specializes in higher-education governance, said such a confidentiality agreement is highly unusual and goes against the culture of openness and transparency in higher education.

"There is this concept of academic freedom that is broader than the First Amendment," he said.

He advises presidents that "they are the personification of the university" when they accept the job.

Spokesmen for Virginia Tech, William and Mary, the University of Virginia, Radford University, the University of Mary Washington and George Mason University said their presidents require no such agreement.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Five Richmond parks employees face disciplinary hearings

Five employees of the Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities face disciplinary hearings after the release of two city auditor reports that coincided with the resignation of Director John R. Pope Jr.

Tammy D. Hawley, press secretary to Mayor Dwight C. Jones, disclosed Tuesday the number of workers facing hearings but would not identify them.

In its investigative reports, the office of the inspector general cited a litany of offenses by two parks maintenance employees, including unauthorized use of a city vehicle; conducting private business during work hours; sleeping on the job; and abuse of overtime.

Much of the overtime stemmed from work on a reception counter for the Pine Camp Community Center that has cost the city \$11,970 and still isn't usable.

One of the workers, who is not a trained carpenter, suffered a serious injury after mishandling an electrical saw. The bills and lost wages have cost the city an additional \$24,703, according to City Auditor Umesh V. Dalal.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Self-defense claimed in fatal beating of VSU student

A Petersburg man charged in last month's slaying of Virginia State University student Daron Jack told a detective after his arrest that he beat Jack in self-defense with a baseball bat after the victim pulled a gun, according to evidence presented Monday.

Deondray Daniel "Flip" Maddox, 24, told police that he picked up a wooden bat inside Jack's apartment after Jack pulled a gun during an argument that escalated into a physical confrontation inside the VSU student's apartment on the evening of Oct. 4, a Chesterfield County detective testified Monday during Maddox's preliminary hearing in Chesterfield General District Court.

Maddox's statement that Jack had a gun could not be corroborated by police, said Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Sangeeta J. Darji. No weapon was found in Jack's apartment or in the surrounding area, but investigators did recover a bullet from a wall of Jack's bedroom, where he was beaten, Darji said, summarizing evidence presented Monday.

Investigators haven't determined whether the bullet had been fired during the confrontation, Darji said.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

National and International

Australian twins shot at Colorado firing range

Authorities are trying to determine how twin sisters from Australia were both shot in the head at a Colorado shooting range – and which sister died and which is critically injured.

The 29-year-old women were shot at an outdoor shooting range at Cherry Creek State Park south of Denver Monday. Arapahoe County Sheriff's Capt. Louie Perea said Tuesday their family has been notified, but their names haven't been released because investigators don't know which sister died.

"They look very similar," Perea said.

Investigators haven't been able to talk to the survivor, who is in critical but stable condition in an area hospital.

The coroner is trying to identify the sister who died through fingerprints and dental records, Perea said.

Investigators are trying to determine how both women were shot in the head. They aren't looking for any suspects. They're trying to sort out whether the shootings were accidental or intentional.

"Everything's on the table," Perea said.

The women were in the United States on cultural exchange visas. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said one of the women was due to leave Tuesday.

Brief by The Associated Press

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Police: Idaho woman impersonated plastic surgeon

Police arrested a woman in Idaho's capital city after they say she impersonated a plastic surgeon and conducted breast exams on at least two women in local bars.

Kristina B. Ross was arrested Tuesday and jailed on accusations of unlicensed practice of medicine.

It all started earlier this month, when Boise police were called to a downtown medical office by employees of a licensed plastic surgeon.

Police say the office was getting calls from prospective patients who wanted to see a Dr. Berlyn Aussieahshowna. But no doctor by that name worked at the office.

Police got contact information for the women who had called, interviewed them – and then identified the 37-year-old Ross, who isn't licensed to practice medicine.

A phone listing for a Kristina Ross in Boise was disconnected.

Detectives say they fear there may be others who had fake exams.

Brief by The Associated Press

S. Korea rejects N. Korean offer of talks on tourism

South Korea on Wednesday rejected North Korea's proposal to hold talks on resuming a joint tourism project in the North, demanding that Pyongyang first give back South Korea-owned buildings it has seized at the resort.

North Korea has recently made a series of conciliatory gestures apparently aimed at winning outside aid and maintaining stability while leader Kim Jong Il transfers power to his youngest son. But the North's scenic Diamond Mountain resort project is still a sore spot between the rivals.

The two Koreas started tours to the mountain in 1998 as part of reconciliation efforts. Seoul stopped the program in 2008 following the shooting death of a South Korean tourist by a North Korean soldier near the resort. An angry North Korea shut down South Korean buildings at the complex in April, but the North proposed talks on the tours, which are a rare legitimate source of hard currency.

Unification Ministry spokeswoman Lee Jong-joo told reporters that holding talks now would be inappropriate. "The condition is not right," she said.

Lee said Wednesday that North Korea did not immediately respond to the South's demand for the return of its property at Diamond Mountain.

Brief by The Associated Press

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Thursday, November 18, 2010

COVER PHOTO BY KYLE LAFERRIERE



news

State police investigate VCU student death as apparent suicide

Fletcher Babb
News Editor

Virginia State Police say the death of 22-year-old VCU senior Allison Jones on Interstate 95 early Tuesday is being investigated as an apparent suicide.

Jones, a creative advertising senior, was struck by a tractor-trailer after she stopped her car on the right shoulder of the northbound lanes just after 2 a.m., according to state police Sgt. Thomas Molnar. Jones was standing in the right lane of traffic when she was hit.

A police report obtained by the Commonwealth Times said Jones died at the scene just south of the Atlee-Elmont interchange near Henrico County.

Sgt. Molnar wouldn't confirm Jones' involvement in the state police's investigation, stating, "I don't confirm names in these situations, but you can put two and two together."

He added, "You should be able to

make the connection between the e-mail that was sent out by VCU and the release I sent out to the media regarding that case."

In an e-mail sent to the Mass Communications faculty obtained by the Commonwealth Times, Jones was described as "a gifted writer, thoughtful colleague and dear friend to many here."

Will Sims, an associate professor in creative advertising, stated that "her poetry and art reflected a caring and pensive intellect. Her curiosity and friendship were a constant presence for her friends."

Bridget Camden, an assistant professor of advertising, stated that Jones was "extremely talented and full of creative insight and spirit. Her work stood out because of its originality and conviction." **CT**

Amid FDA warnings, maker of Four Loko to remove caffeine content

Nan Turner
Staff Writer

The Food and Drug Administration issued warning letters on Wednesday to four makers of alcoholic energy drinks, saying the mixture of caffeine with alcohol in their products is an "unsafe food additive."

The FDA said the government could seize the controversial beverages if the companies ignore warnings and continue to make them.

In a statement, Phusion Projects said that it planned to re-release its products "to remove caffeine, guarana and taurine Thursday, November 18, 2010

nationwide. ... Going forward Phusion will produce only non-caffeinated versions of Four Loko."

"We have repeatedly contended ... that the combination of alcohol and caffeine is safe. If it were unsafe, popular drinks like rum and colas or Irish coffees ... would face the same scrutiny that our products recently faced," the statement said. "We are taking this step after trying – unsuccessfully – to navigate a difficult and politically-charged regulatory environment at both the state and federal levels."

Despite the change in formula, Four Loko and several other caffeinated alcoholic drink brands like Tilt and Joose



PHOTO BY KYLE LAFERRIERE

On Wednesday, the Food and Drug Administration announced that caffeine added to alcoholic beverages is an "unsafe food additive."

could be on their way out in Virginia – or at least subject to harsher regulations.

Most recently, Four Loko was banned in Washington following a house party at a university where several students who had consumed the beverage ended up hospitalized. College campuses around the country are working to educate students on the dangers of consuming these drinks. The drinks have even spawned a website, fourlokestories.com, where individuals can share their often-fuzzy recollections of nights spent drinking Four Loko.

This Monday, the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control sent out a press release warning consumers to use caution when it comes to alcoholic energy drinks. The release cited the main hazards of drinking Four Loko and other similar products.

The release said that, according to a 2008 study published by the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine, people who mixed alcohol and energy drinks had a reduced ability to gauge their level of intoxication and were at a greater risk for driving under the influence of alcohol, becoming the victim of a sexual assault and a variety of other dangers. Also, people who mixed alcohol and energy drinks drank significantly more alcohol during a typical drinking session.

"Major concerns are the high alcohol content and the dangers associated with mixing high doses of stimulants and alcohol," Jennifer Farinholt, Public Relations Specialist for Virginia ABC, said. "They appeal to young people."

Thomas Novak, a VCU student, believes people are uninformed about the risks associated with alcoholic energy drinks.

"I don't like them because of the idea of alcohol being a depressant and energy drink being a stimulant doesn't mix well knowing they're opposite effects in one drink," Novak said. "It can't be good for you."

Novak has only had sips of the drinks, but said he has friends that enjoy them. He thinks another thing that makes the

drinks troublesome is the non-alcoholic flavor.

"One thing that probably makes them dangerous is that people like the way it tastes and people find it 'yummy' so they forget its alcohol," Novak said. "So that could be a major problem. I can't imagine it would be good for your heart."

Leah Kemp, another VCU student, has had the drinks on several occasions but tries now to avoid them since having a bad experience. She consumed two of the beverages in one night and did not like how shaky the caffeine intake made her feel.

"I've heard drinking more than one is like having 12 cups of coffee and I can't handle two cups," Kemp said. "While it makes me drunk, it makes me hyper at the same time, too."

Although she can see the appeal to students, Kemp thinks the drinks should be banned.

"It tastes good, but I feel like it's killing me slowly as I drink it," Kemp said. "And also, they've made me sick."

Another problem the state is having with the drinks revolves around product recognition while in store. There has been debate as to whether the drinks look to similar in appearance to, and are placed to closely to the non-alcoholic energy drinks in licensed retailers.

"Right now ABC is in the final stages of requiring inventory in the same area with wine and beer," Farinholt said.

In 2008, the Virginia ABC's Enforcement's Compliance, Education & Field Operations section and the Public Affairs Division designed the "Alcohol? Energy? Looks Can Be Deceiving" poster. The posters were then distributed to licensees, schools, parent groups and health educators. Additional information was distributed through the ABC's website.

Most recently, ABC mailed letters to all 17,000 licensees urging retailers to use caution when selling alcoholic energy drinks. ABC is also investigating the sale of the beverages through its Underage Buyer Program. **CT**



PHOTOS BY KYLE LAFERRIERE



At Monday's recycling event, students recovered recyclable materials from dumpsters.



Winter courses stir interest for some students

Alyx Duckett
Contributing Writer

While most students are relaxing over winter break, some students are taking the opportunity to get a class out of the way.

Brian Friedman, a VCU senior, says he is considering taking a management class over break because the class is covered in a shorter amount of time and relieves his workload next semester.

"By taking this class during the winter, it will make my class schedule easier next semester," Friedman said.

Winter intercession courses are offered from Dec. 27, 2010 through Jan. 8, 2011. There are a variety of 30, three-credit classes offered in different subject areas. Some of the classes offered are taught online. Each class is five hours long Monday through Saturday over an 11-day period.

For some students winter classes are appealing but not an option.

VCU junior Kristina Chappelle says she would like to be taking a class to gain more credits but will not be taking a course for the winter.

"I'm on a specific college plan that doesn't cover classes in the winter and summer," Chappelle said. "I don't really have the money at this point in time."

Students like VCU senior Ryan Hymes are taking a winter class to stay caught up.

"I'm taking a winter course to make up for a class I dropped so I don't fall behind," Hymes said. "Winter courses are a great idea because it can give students the time to focus on one course that can cause difficulty when taking a full load."

Since intercession courses are intensive learning, VCU only allows students to register for one class. Students now can register for winter courses, which are listed under the spring semester courses on eServices. **CT**

Thursday, November 18, 2010

At recycling event, students reconsider waste habits

Hillary Huber
Contributing Writer

America Recycles, a nationally-recognized annual event dedicated to promoting recycling efforts, was held at VCU on Monday.

The event was kicked off with a "dumpster dive" that showed how many recyclable items end up in trash cans, regardless of the close proximity of recycling bins. Bottles, cans and paper were among the majority of recyclable items found in the dive, all of which can be recycled in the designated bins, usually right next to trash cans.

"At VCU, we recycle about 35 percent of our waste stream right now, and we're always looking to increase that," Steven Heinitz, VCU's recycling coordinator said. "It's about education, awareness, getting people involved, and participation – which is key."

In order to educate students, particularly freshman, on exactly what VCU's role is in going green, students and facul-

ty in the Office of Sustainability traveled around campus with demonstrations like the dumpster dive, as well as information tables and movie showings.

Elle Chang, a former VCU student who now works for office of sustainability and is a former member of the Student Organization for Green Unity, said America Recycles is a great event that shows just how much students are interested in furthering green efforts at the university.

"We took a survey that showed that 80 percent of students were interested in paying a 'green fee' to go towards sustainable projects," Chang said. "I think students are really interested in (green initiatives)."

Chang said not only does she hope the green fee becomes included in tuition, she said she hopes that sustainability courses will be introduced into curriculum.

Jenny You, a graduate student in the Masters of Environmental Studies program and campus sustainability intern, said the goal of bringing America Re-

cycles to VCU, was not only to promote recycling, but to bring awareness to students about the green opportunities on campus.

It is important for students to know how they can help the university achieve their goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2050 and what types of things they can do to make their lives more eco-friendly, You said.

Heinitz also stressed the simplicity of recycling, especially on campus.

"We all have good and bad habits. Recycling is one of those things that's easy to do," Heinitz said. "We can all help by recycling, but at VCU, we're trying to take it a step further, not just recycling paper, plastic bottles and aluminum, but we're looking at composting food waste and leaves from the trees. We're trying to broaden the horizons with recycling, not just the typical things you think of every day. We're trying to think outside the box." **CT**





news

Colleges face funding decreases

Talisha Williams
Contributing Writer

Federal and state funding for colleges and universities has fallen dramatically in recent years, and some experts say that the quality of higher education is now in jeopardy.

They said that with state support dropping nearly 50 percent, VCU has been affected more than other institutions. The quality of programs at VCU has declined, in students' access to the university and in their ability to complete their degrees, according to a presentation at VCU last week.

The VCU Graduate Student Association invited Dr. Richard Morrill, president of the Teagle Foundation, a nonprofit group that supports higher education, to discuss these financial pressures last week.

Morrill said the financial model for funding higher education is defective – and that's the prime problem facing colleges and universities today.

"It has not to do specifically with the things we need to do to cope with a

crisis," Morrill said, "but rather with a deeper question of whether or not there is a sustainable financial future for higher education as we know it."

Higher education generated considerable wealth from the stock market 25 years ago, Morrill said. But that revenue stream evaporated when the market tumbled in 2008.

"What happened two years ago was traumatic. During that period, trillions of dollars in wealth were lost. From then until now, many of our citizens are living in fear in what the future will bring," Morrill said.

To offset the lost investment income and declining state support, schools raised tuition – particularly at private institutions and also at public ones. Last spring, for example, VCU increased tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates by 19 percent to \$8,817.

"Virginia has been in a period of two steps forward and two steps back," Morrill said. "A period of relative affluence followed by cuts in the past two years has been severe."

Tuition has been rising faster than the rate of inflation, he said.

"In 1984 until 2009, tuition for private colleges and institutions went up four times the rate of inflation. At public colleges and universities, tuition roughly doubled the rates of inflation," Morrill said.

At the same time, colleges and universities are making more of a commitment to increase the availability of financial aid funds. Even so, soaring tuition poses a barrier for families seeking to send their children to college.

Moreover, financial aid is not a certainty, Morrill said.

"It will be a very bitter pill to having

worked for opportunities for students from all backgrounds to attend universities if suddenly availability for financial aid starts closing off options," Morrill said.

Finances affect other challenges facing higher education – such as educational access and attainment.

In the U.S., Morrill said, not enough citizens complete college and receive degrees.

"Completion is a national problem," Morrill said. "There is an enormous focus on how do we provide opportunities for completion, so that students can be together at the starting line."

He read from the book "Crossing the Finish Line," about the correlation between family income and college completion.

"If the parents make less than \$35,000 a year, the odds of obtaining a bachelor's degree is in one in 17," Morrill read.

Morrill said there are a lot of exceptions – students from low-income families who are able to finish college through financial aid such as federal Pell Grants.

These students often find themselves working full time and maybe taking care of a family of their own. But if they do not stay full-time students, they will lose their financial support.

Morrill predicted that governments will continue to cut funding for higher education. What they don't realize is that higher education is vital to the future and the well-being of citizens, he said.

"The more the future moves towards the creation of new fields of knowledge and technology, the more it's clear that an educated populace is critical for a healthy democratic society," Morrill said. **CT**

Experts see leaks in "educational pipeline"

Talisha Williams
Contributing Writer

Unlike other countries, today's generation of young Americans might be less educated than their parents – and that is detrimental to society and the economy, Peter A. Blake, vice chancellor of the Virginia Community College System said.

"We face a situation where the Baby Boomer generation, which was the most well-educated generation in American history, is about to be replaced in the near future with a generation that is less well-educated," Blake said during a panel discussion on "Higher Education in the 21st Century" at VCU last week.

"In order to maintain the economy, to maintain the society at a level that citizens are accustomed to, they need to get more people into the game," Blake said.

Of every 100 ninth-graders today, only about 30 will end up with a college degree, Blake said. He calls this the educational pipeline. The "pipe leaks" especially in getting 12th-graders into college – and then in getting college students to graduate.

Dr. Richard Morrill, president of the Teagle Foundation, also was a panelist. He said many families have no clue how to get their children into college or how to apply for financial aid.

"Creating a network of opportunity for students is critical in cracking the information barrier for families," Morrill said. **CT**

International Thanksgiving



PHOTO BY KYLE LAFERRIERE

Ahmad Altarifi, an international student from Jordan, has spent the last two Thanksgiving holidays with the families of local students.

Alix Hines
Contributing Writer

Every year, VCU places international students in the homes of area residents, faculty and students for the holiday.

The program is called "Share Thanksgiving Day with an International Student."

"About 75 percent of the international students who study in the United States never enter an American home during their entire time of study here," Pam Haney, the global student services coordinator at VCU, said. "We want to give students opportunities to be in American homes to meet Americans in the community. Our hope is that they will develop friendships, learn more about American culture."

The program gives international students a chance not only to learn about American culture, but to share their own culture with their hosts as well.

"Most international students come here alone. They don't know anyone," Haney said. "They have left their family

and friends far behind, so it can be a lonely time for them being without those support networks they have in their home countries."

Ahmad Altarifi, an international grad student from Jordan, will spend his third Thanksgiving in an American home this year. He has attended Thanksgiving in two different households, and says he remains in close contact with the families he meets each year.

"The first time when I went, I didn't know the story or tradition behind this holiday. I was excited because it would be a totally new experience for me," he said.

Altarifi has not been back to Jordan in two years. He says that meeting with other families and sharing stories and problems has made it easier for him to live here without his family. By visiting an American home, he says that he is becoming more familiar with American culture, and he is able to teach his host families a little more about his own culture.

Last year, Altarifi said, Thanksgiving fell on the same day as an important holiday in Jordan called Eid al-Adha. This

is a time of celebration in Jordan where families visit one another bearing gifts. There is also a traditional slaughtering of sheep on that day, and the meat is then distributed to the poor as well as friends and family members. This year the holiday will fall on Nov. 16.

According to Altarifi the best part of the experience is, "You (have) found somebody to trust and people that trust you." He says he would encourage other international students to participate in this program to learn about American culture, form new relationships, and teach Americans about traditions in other countries.

"There is not that big of a difference," Altarifi said.

Taking a day to give thanks goes beyond American culture; it is deeply rooted in many cultures, and it is simply a matter of taking time to open our eyes to the world. **CT**

For more information regarding "Share Thanksgiving Day with an International Student," contact Pam Haney at pohaney@vcu.edu or call 828-8309 by Nov. 15.





sports

Win vs. Winthrop: women's basketball off to 2-0 start to the season

Adam Stern
Sports Editor

In VCU women's basketball's opening game of the season last Friday at High Point, the team did not secure a toughly fought victory until 1.4 seconds left in the game.

It was not nearly as nerve-racking Wednesday night.

Junior forward Courtney Hurt— the team's one and only player on any of the All-CAA Preseason Teams as a Second Team selection— scored 25 points with 12 rebounds and paced the way for the Rams as the team cruised past Big South Conference opponent Winthrop in the team's opening game on home court.

"It was great to be back in the Siegel Center," head coach Beth Cunningham said. "All in all I think it's a great way to start the season off here with a big win."

The big win came in no small part because of Hurt, the Conyers, Ga. native who recorded her second double-double of the season in as many tries with the performance; this after she posted a team-best 10 double-doubles last season. She also was the only player to score double digits against Winthrop. Indeed

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Hurt was so Herculean one could make a case of her having beaten the Eagles nearly single handedly.

"I was just trying to get my teammate involved," Hurt said of her performance. "I think I had a career high two assists this game, but I was looking for my teammates and letting the offense come to me."

The team lost its top three scorers last season through graduation and Hurt and junior guard Jennifer Lane were the only return players. But even with the loss of 47.3 points per game worth of production, the feeling around the team is so far, so good.

"I mean it's more of the same last year," Hurt said. "I'm having to be more of a leader of course ... I'm captain this year, so I'm just trying to lead and direct and make sure I do what I need to do because I'm still working on being a leader."

She led just fine versus the Eagles. Hurt opened up the game by swishing her first shot— and three-point attempt— of the game; she reached double digits in the point's column with 7:40 left in the first half.

Hurt's huge performance was joined in conjunction with the only other

returning player, Lane, who finished with eight points, two assists and two steals. This came after Lane finished with a career-best 14 points versus High Point to go along with five rebounds and six assists. She also showed a synergy with Hurt that could cause profound problems for opposing defenses all year long.

With VCU's record now standing at 2-0 in the young season, the squad now shifts their attention to Sunday's showdown at Virginia Tech. The Rams ran riot on the Hokies last season in the squad's opening game of the season, winning 72-58.

"We want to get better and improve on areas that (we need to work on) coming away from the first few games," Cunningham said of this weekend's matchup. "Every day is a work in progress trying to get better." **CT**



TOP LEFT: Junior guard Jennifer Lane had eight points and four assists against the Eagles.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Senior guard Jessica Taylor scored seven points and two assists vs. Winthrop.

Thursday, November 18, 2010



sports

Rams stomp Hampton on senior night; start postseason Saturday



PHOTOS BY CHRIS CONWAY

ABOVE: Seniors Mariel Frey and Kelsie Clegg along with redshirt junior Jessica Ojukwu were honored prior to Tuesday's match.
BELOW: Freshman Ciara Brown contributed 11 assists and three digs against Hampton.

Quinn Casteel
 Staff Writer

If VCU's seniors wanted to make their senior night last, it certainly didn't show because the Rams made quick work of Hampton on Tuesday night.

In a match that lasted barely over an hour in the team's regular-season finale at the Siegel Center, VCU dominated the visiting Pirates in straight sets, (25-9, 25-16, 25-17). The coaches and fans honored the three departing players and their families with a ceremony before the match, but after that it was nothing but business for the Rams.

"Tonight allowed us to re-focus after Friday's (loss to William & Mary) and figure things out," head coach James Finley said. "We had an incredible practice (on Monday), and now the girls are ready to come out and win."

Seniors Kelsie Clegg and Mariel Frey, as well redshirt junior Jessica Ojukwu were the three players recognized in the pregame ceremony, and they were all in the starting lineup. It was Clegg along with Courtney Hott off the bench

who led the way for VCU in the first set, dominating Hampton close to the net. Clegg had three emphatic kills, and would end the night with six. Hott had four of her seven total kills, and the Rams got off to the start they needed, reeling off 13 consecutive points after leading 7-6 early in the set. As a team they hit an absurd .609 in the first set as they set the tone for the evening.

Hampton was plagued throughout the night by ball handling and attacking errors, and VCU never gave them the opportunity to rebound from their mistakes; the Pirates committed 15 errors to VCU's 10. In the second set, they built a lead as large as nine points, sucking the life out of Hampton's game.

The senior duo of Frey and Clegg led the charge in the second while Kristen Boyd, one of the team's most productive players, got a crucial rest. Frey had a team-high nine kills and also matched Ojukwu's 18 total attacks for the team lead.

The third set was more of the same as VCU jumped out to yet another big lead early on and closed out the match with as much energy and enthusiasm as they

began with, communicating and making plays en route to a 25-17 closeout.

Tuesday night serves as a final tune up before postseason play for VCU, who will face top-seeded Delaware in the CAA semifinals on Saturday night.

"We've been talking a lot about trust and communication, and it's really helping us with our overall game," Clegg said. "This game gives us a lot of upward emotional momentum. Even though (Delaware) came out on top in our last two matches, we'll have a lot of opportunities and we match up well against them."

Delaware nearly swept conference play this season, going 13-1 with their only CAA loss coming in a five-set contest against Georgia State back on Oct. 1. After dropping their final match to William & Mary last Friday, VCU finished 9-5 in the conference but will look to build on their recent momentum heading into the tournament. **CT**

The Rams will travel to the higher-seeded Delaware for Saturday's playoff opener which starts at 7:30 p.m. Follow the match on Twitter @theCT_Sports.



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spectrum

Under new management, Break Point Games seeks higher score



PHOTO BY KYLE FERRIERE

Break Point Games, in the Commons' basement game room, wraps up a week of game tournaments with a spades tournament Thursday, Nov. 18 at 7 p.m.

Mechelle Hankerson
Assistant Spectrum Editor

New manager Jim Konecny calls Break Point Games in the Student Commons VCU's best-kept secret – but with this week's nightly tournaments, Konecny is trying to change that.

Break Point began its latest round of game tournaments on Monday, Nov. 15 with a Texas Hold 'Em tournament. The week continued with an air hockey tournament on Tuesday, pool tournament on Wednesday and wraps up Tuesday night, Nov. 18, with a spades tournament at 7 p.m.

Winners from the tournaments receive half of the evening's collected entry fees – \$10 each – but Konecny, who is a recent VCU hiree, said that “We’re going to be looking at bringing in sponsors to get students to come down and not just potentially win earnings, but also maybe a goodie bag.”

Though nothing is set in stone for the Break Point yet, Konecny plans on enacting a number of changes to the often-forgotten game room.

“For right now, it’s going to be (me) looking to see what’s worked in the past (when deciding on changes),” Konecny said. “I’ll also be looking to students and staff.”

Konecny hopes to bring in aspects from the Association of College Unions International (ACUI), which helps organize national tournaments in games like the ones featured in Break Point. ACUI tournaments typically begin at a school-wide level and move to regional and national levels, where winners get paid trips to other colleges to compete.

While Break Point already boasts 10 pool tables and recently added two arcade consoles that feature over 100 games, Konecny does hope to expand what the room offers to students.

“My biggest priority is to get more games down here,” he said. “If pool

isn’t their game, but they like to play video games, (we want to) get groups down here, relaxing and sitting on some couches.”

Konecny plans on relying on student surveys to see what kinds of games would be best-received by students, and hopes to eventually have a video game station as part of the space. He also wants to look into what kinds of consoles are most popular among students and take into account what games students would want to play.

Konecny has made hints as to offering “free” days in the game room during upcoming school breaks, but nothing as yet has been finalized. **CT**

Thursday, November 18, 2010

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Senior dance students collaborate on final project



PHOTO COURTESY OF VCUARTS

The full cast of “Pastiche,” a collection of original works choreographed and performed by VCU Dance seniors Andrew de Fiesta, Anneke Collins, Alyssa Gregory, Nadine Azoulay, Kyoko Ruch, Margaret Allen, Keonna Perkins, Jasmine Domfort and Kia Charmaine-Thomas.

Danielle Elliott
Contributing Writer

Nine senior dance majors will come together to present “Pastiche,” the capstone to their time in the VCU Department of Dance and Choreography, beginning this Thursday at Grace Street Theater.

In their individual pieces, the soon-to-be graduates will examine themes such as personal struggles, war, loss, and sensuality, as well as attempts to personify scientific concepts.

Eight of the nine seniors started off in the Creative Dance track of dance curriculum in their freshman year, while one - Kyoko Ruch - began on the Performance track.

“(Ruch) split her time between VCU and (being) a trainee at the Richmond Ballet,” co-professor of the Senior Project Lea Marshall said.

While Ruch will perform a piece choreographed specifically for her by Richmond Ballet’s Ballet Master Malcolm Burn, the other eight students are premiering their own original choreography.

Jasmine Domfort, for example, explores the ritualistic nature of obsessive-compulsive disorder in “Other Side Please!,” a piece based in intense, repetitive motion and anxiety-based rituals. In Alyssa Gregory’s “Medicinus-a-um,” accompanied by her own music, a group of friends progress through the five stages of grief after the sudden death of one of their own.

“The Small Bang Theory,” by Annke Collins, will feature Collins and a group of eight dancers enacting the movement of a molecule experiencing distillation and chromatography.

According to Marshall, the group of nine is a little larger compared to the normal class of four to six students - but more participating dancers allows for “a wider range of voices.”

Marshall said that “Pastiche” strives to showcase each student’s work in a way that somehow fits into the larger idea to which the class identifies.

“They’re each making an individual project, and sometimes it’s kind of hard to find a common thread other than they’re all working to find their own creative voice,” she said.

Preparation for the senior dance project begins as far back as freshman year with students taking several different types of classes, including music courses that help students relate music to movement. Actual planning for the project, however, begins in the students’ junior year, when they prepare a proposal for the piece they want to perform the next year.

“It’s a culmination of a project they began working on as a freshman,” Marshall said. **CT**



Purple Dog Lady: ‘You don’t bomb your preschool friends’

ELIE ELLIS (left) and **CHARM** (right)

On the other end of the Compass, a visiting preacher orates: “When you look at pornography, when you look in lust ... you are tempting the fires of hell.”

ELIE ELLIS: You know what “hell” meant for Shakespeare, right? In Shakespeare’s works?

CT: What did hell mean for Shakespeare?

Ellis: It meant c**t.

CT: Really.

Ellis: Yep.

CT note: A look at page 60 of Pauline Kiernan’s “Filthy Shakespeare” confirms such: “‘Hell’ is a term frequently used in Shakespeare’s time for female genitals. The playwright uses it ... in Sonnet 144 when the Poet imagines his female lover f**ing his friend: ‘Suspect I may, yet not directly tell ... / I guess one angel in another’s hell.’”

Ellis: I just love this place. And I just haven’t left, I mean I left to go and have a family, I have three kids – but I just love Richmond. It’s a great little city.

CT: Do you have any connection with the university?

Ellis: No, I dropped out.

CT: When was that?

Ellis: Um, a couple times. I think in ‘87, and in ‘99 I dropped out. Two times.

Two passing girls ask Ellis if they can photograph her dog.

Sure, sure. Charm likes attention, obviously.

CT: What kind of work are you doing right now?

Ellis: I’m an architect ... and I designed the World Preschool, it’s an eight-sided stainless steel building with glass interior, and I want VCU’s ... I guess they have a playground department, to design the playground. I want it to go all over the world to educate preschoolers to learn to love themselves, and develop a love of

learning. (I want them built in) the capital cities of all the world, to evolve the start of a one-world culture ... and everybody can watch them on the TV, and they’ll have yoga mats, they’ll do ... yoga ... and they’ll study one world. They’ll study one country a day, every day. And they’ll learn the alphabet, and the colors, and they’ll learn the names of all the children and when they’re four years old, they’ll go to Walt Disney World and they’ll all meet each other and there’ll be a club afterwards, and they’ll be friends for life and you don’t bomb your preschool friends. That’s my idea, and – they’ll send out the buildings prefabricated – that’s my idea for world peace, is that – if they’re friends for life, we won’t bomb our preschool friends.

CT: That’s a fascinating concept.

Ellis: It’s a conceptual piece, but it’s a visionary piece too. I’m a visionary artist.

CT: Is this something that’s still in the planning stages?

Ellis: I’m hoping to get a grant, and

then maybe go to National Endowment for the Arts, and then maybe Melinda Gates will give me a billion dollars to do it.

CT: It seems as though people see you walking through this part of town fairly often.

Ellis: I love the students, they just ... are invigorating to me. I love to talk to them. I always get new ideas, like I’d never thought of putting a t-shirt out — but someone said, why don’t you put your dog on a t-shirt, it would sell. They always come up with new ideas – new ideas come from the youth. I love the students, they teach me things. That’s why I wanna teach at VCU. I mean, I’d love to have a world peace class and see what their ideas are on world peace.

CT: Does Charm’s hair grow that way naturally?

Ellis: Well, no, I’ve never used a curling iron. And it’s a miracle she’s purple. It’s just a miracle, we can’t explain it. **CT**



Ellie Ellis — twice-former VCU student known commonly as the ‘Purple Dog Lady’ — with namesake purple dog and companion, Charm.

PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY



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Jeremy Clemmons
Staff Writer

The Pipettes, “Earth vs. The Pipettes”

There is a litany of ways to hypothesize why “Earth vs. The Pipettes” doesn’t live up to the extravagance of the group’s debut, “We Are The Pipettes.”

For one, there is the material reason, like the fact that only one of the original members from the retro-girl group is present this go-round, and the song-writing banks more heavily on the late ‘70s and ‘80s than the much friendlier Ronettes-styled ‘60s pop. Perhaps more Spektor and less Bananarama.

And there’s also the critical reason, namely that recent ‘80s nostalgic trend is kind of bankrupt musically, and that maybe we want our beautiful Pipettes slightly different than the predictable dishes of recent years.

Ostensibly a concept album (although, a track or two aside, you wouldn’t know it), “Earth vs. the Pipettes” is disappointing for both of these reasons and others – but, heck, it’s still The Pipettes. So it’s still fun and catchy, and on songs like “Ain’t No Talkin’,” “Thank You” and “From Today,” the mash-up isn’t so unbearable and distracting.



Music review: ‘Earth vs. The Pipettes,’ ‘Not Music,’ ‘Loud’

While fact and theory make this album anything but the first record, The Pipettes still keep it interesting most of the time.

Grade: B-

Stereolab, “Not Music”

While not quite “not music,” Stereolab has always toed impressively close to the edges of the music medium with their futuristic, krautrock-inspired sound.

They often sound like the brooding daughter of acts like Can and Kraftwerk, in spite of occasional efforts to push the aesthetic to even more avant-garde territory. “Not Music,” perplexingly, isn’t quite as bold, though maybe it was a fate already sealed because, as we all ruefully discovered by age six, everything’s been done before.

The albums centerpiece, for example – “Silver Sands,” a 10-minute long piece of strange matter – can be dissected part by part into specific genres and “soundscapes” the band has covered in album’s past. It’s unfair to ask Stereolab or any artist to accomplish such a task, of course, and confidently the album is mostly concerned



with all the familiar barometers we’ve used with their sound before.

The opener, “Everybody’s Weird Except Me,” is classic Stereolab: groovy and foreign, not just in voice (they *are* French), but sound and texture. In fact, most of the songs do this simple task in as a complex a manner as possible.

Highlights like “Leleklato Sugar” and “Laserblast” maintain this album as a worthy effort, right next to the towering foothills of Stereolab’s previous albums “Emperor Tomato Ketchup” and “Transient Random Noise-Burst with Announcement.”

Grade: B+

Rihanna, “Loud”

Pain and resolution. If last year’s “Rated R” was anything, it was certainly an album of pain and anger.

An abusive incident and relationship is traumatizing enough, but to bleed publicly – now that’s something humiliating.

It was Rihanna’s most personal album to date, with a naked, autobiographical vibe



unlike anything she had ever done. “Loud,” however, is a half-expected step back to her roots (literally – she tempts her Caribbean flavor on several of the tracks), though the result is hardly tragic and frustrating. After all, she’s been here before – her previous albums before “Rated R” were just as heavily singles-driven.

That’s not to say there aren’t traces of the “R-rated” Rihanna here. The album opens with an ode to S&M, and the inclusion of a new version of “Love the Way You Lie” shows that Rihanna isn’t completely ready to put her much-publicized bout with domestic abuse behind her.

The album’s biggest highlight is “Man Down,” a full-fledged reggae tune about a woman who shoots a man (Her abusive boyfriend? Her abusive pimp? Or maybe she is simply the abuser.) Either way, Rihanna sounds surprisingly agile in this genre, and it’s one of her finest, most confident vocal performances to date.

Even the album’s other standout single, “Raining Men,” (featuring the chameleon-like Nicki Minaj) banks in Rihanna’s commitment to “moving on.”

Not a perfect record by any means, but Rihanna’s always been okay with admitting she has flaws and made mistakes. She’ll be OK and tell you all about it. **CT**

Grade: A-

Film review: ‘Morning Glory,’ broadcast morning news at its grouchiest

Jordan Wilson
Staff Writer

In almost every morning news anchor’s delivery, it’s easy to detect a slightly sarcastic tone: They have to appear plucky and bounce banter back and forth with the co-anchor, while always maintaining energy and interest about whatever news is being discussed – most of which tends to be terribly uninteresting, i.e. cooking or outdoor gardening tips.

Eventually, you would think that one of these anchors would snap and throw their coffee cup straight at the camera.

After Becky Fuller (Rachel McAdams) is fired from her job as a morning news producer, she desperately clings to the first job offer she receives. The job: executive producer at “Daybreak,” the nation’s lowest-rated morning news show.

As her boss Jerry Barnes (Jeff Goldblum) tells her, the position is underpaid, the program is pure garbage and the studio is underfinanced to the point where it can’t even afford functional doorknobs.

She takes the job and immediately clashes with the station’s Emmy award-winning journalist/curmudgeon, Mike Pomeroy (Harrison Ford). Pomeroy

is living on the \$6 million contract he signed with the station, and because he never pitches a story light enough to air, he spends most of his time hunting and grimacing.

Becky fires a sleazy co-anchor (Ty Burrell) on her first day, and ends up having to convince Pomeroy to replace him and co-anchor a morning show for the first time in his long, accomplished career. He also has to work with co-anchor Colleen Peck (Diane Keaton), a morning anchor who is smiling on the outside, but on the inside, freaking out.

“Morning Glory” explores, to some extent, the battle going on today between hard news and junk news, and the unfortunate possibility that the former is steadily losing the attention spans of so many viewers. It is also a very entertaining and breezy film that is elevated by some terrific performances from McAdams and Harrison.

McAdams is a firecracker in this movie. She plays Becky as a jumpy, intelligent workaholic who constantly oversaturates her relationships with talk about her job, leaving her life nearly nonexistent. McAdams’ performance is so energized that it uplifts what could have been a dull experi-



“Eventually, you would think that one of these anchors would snap and throw their coffee cup straight at the camera.”

ence to something that is actually worth a look.

Ford creates a grouch whose gravelly voice and sour demeanor evoke Walt Kowalski, Clint Eastwood’s character in his own “Gran Torino.” Like Kowalski, Pomeroy has experienced a hell of a lot in his field, and despite his 16 Emmys and countless other awards, he is now forced to regress back to the most basic of news formats. There are some big laughs involving the pre-news banter that he is asked to share with his co-anchor, and his utter refusal to broadcast the word “fluffy.”

Keaton, as usual, is full of life and good comic timing. Her character is filled with frustration and self-awareness, and while she may be berating and arguing with her stubborn co-anchor moments before show time,

when that camera starts rolling, she puts on a happy face – she has to; it’s part of the job.

The screenplay by Aline Brosh McKenna (“The Devil Wears Prada” and “27 Dresses”) is very well-developed. Discussions of the curve that news is taking toward entertainment over information are very interesting, and McKenna all the while keeps things light-hearted and cheerful without losing its satirical edge.

Director Roger Michell handles the material very nicely, and although the story is somewhat derivative and familiar, it chooses not to insult the intelligence of the audience, but rather plays out at a fairly rhythmic pace, with a surprisingly moving climax that feels well earned and authentic enough. **CT**

Grade: C+

Thursday, November 18, 2010

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opinion



ILLUSTRATION BY MARLEIGH CULVER

Cutting the defense budget (not in our House)

John Richardson
Columnist

During Virginia's congressional midterm elections, candidates pledged to reduce the trillion dollar federal deficit, but none pledged with such predilection as the Republicans.

Now that they will hold a majority in the House of Representatives, as well as take eight of Virginia's congressional seats and six Senate seats, they propose to fulfill their pledge by making large cuts in discretionary spending and avoiding the largest problem with the federal budget: defense and military spending.

The Department of Defense accounts for more than 50 percent of discretionary expenditures, and takes in 36 percent of taxes. Defense cuts are justified.

However, a congressional representative has never suggested defense cuts. Granted, defense cuts will help America's economy, but they won't help Virginia's economy. The military is our state's sacred cash cow. Virginia receives more military contracts and the Defense Department employs more civilians here than in any other state in the union.

When on Nov. 10 the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform proposed a plan that

called for a \$100 billion reduction of the defense budget, every Virginia congressional candidate harshly criticized the plan.

"These shortsighted cuts will weaken us, and will also deal a significant blow to Virginia's economy, cutting over 3,000 civilian contractors and redeploying another 2,800 military personnel across the country," Republican Congressman-elect Morgan Griffith of Virginia's 9th congressional district said. "There is no virtue in weakness. If our children are to grow up in safety and freedom, we can trim the face, but we dare not cut the muscle from our military arms."

Unfortunately, candidates cannot resist the urge of veering off onto superficial patriotic rhetoric that baselessly claims the American people's safety is at risk. Out of the 10 countries with the highest military spending, the U.S. spends nearly twice as much as the next nine combined.

This year we budgeted \$663.8 billion for our military, and when you add the \$361 billion that we spent on defense-related expenditures outside the Defense Department, our national defense costs \$1.03 trillion this year.

Am I to believe that if we subdued

this spending, and slowed our stockpiling of planes, ships and weapons, we'll lose our freedoms? Which foreign power will invade us, China? They annually spend \$573 billion less than we do on a military complex. Sources calculate that the U.S. can match the defense budget of all its theoretical enemies combined for 37 percent less than it currently spends.

Virginia's politicians think all of this is necessary, and indeed, there is logic behind maintaining, and even increasing, defense spending – unemployment rates are high and the military is the largest jobs program we have.

Before the midterms Republican Congressman-elect Scott Rigell of Virginia's 2nd congressional district explained his opposition to defense cuts by stating that "one of the essential functions of our federal government is to protect its citizens." What my subliminal ears heard was a plea to gain votes because Rigell is a true patriot. Rigell would then defeat Democrat Glenn Nye.

At least there was some straight talk from Republican congressional candidate Keith Fimian who said, "I want federal contractors to know I will advocate for them in Congress. Federal contracting

powers Virginia's economy."

Fimian narrowly lost the election in Virginia's 11th congressional district to Democratic incumbent Gerry Connolly.

How lawmakers, particularly Republicans, can talk their way around the central fact that our current defense budget is the main root of our deficit is incomprehensible. I suppose they could play dumb. That's exactly what Rep. Eric Cantor of Virginia's 7th congressional district did.

On his recently launched website – republicanwhip.house.gov – which asks visitors to give him suggestions on how to reduce the deficit. Each week, the most popular suggestions are posted on a page titled "GOP Solutions for America." Being a new site, the only suggestions currently posted are the Republican defaults – small business job creation, sustainable energy and health care reform. Hopefully defense cuts will become a popular suggestion.

I wonder though, even if defense cuts become popular, will the site avoid posting them or will a Virginia Republican actually recognize defense cuts as a tool for economic recovery? For the party establishment, it would be a first. **CT**



Totally loco for Loko

Ashley Major
Columnist

While the popular caffeinated alcoholic beverage Four Loko is nothing new amongst party-going youth, the ethically charged drink has recently exploded in popular media, because of controversy pertaining to possible health and safety risks.

With attention-grabbing packaging, flavor disguised tastes, and the ability to fit a thrifty student's budget, drinks such as Four Loko are undoubtedly suitable for buzz-seeking college kids.

Government officials, colleges and parents are becoming increasingly concerned with the effects of combining alcohol, a depressant, caffeine, a stimulant and sugar into one large all-too-accessible canned party.

In response to recent scrutiny regarding their product, Phusion Projects LLC., manufacturer of Four Loko, surrendered to public demand and agreed to remove their controversial ingredient, caffeine, from the equation. While the change is sure to send a wave of response from college campuses, the change is undoubtedly for the better. There is a notion that the combination of caffeine and alcohol are harmless, but much can be said about recent media inquiry and related hospital visits by America's youth.

In December 2009, the FDA sent letters to 30 manufactures of the popular party-staples to prove the safety of their products. At the time, reps of Phusion

Projects LLC., stated to CBS News that their product is no different than "having coffee after a meal with a couple glasses of wine." While this claim is debatable, the reality is Four Loko and similar hybrids, are sending America's youth to emergency rooms while a responsible cup of coffee after dinner seems incomparable.

Unmentionable by the manufacturers, is the outrageous amounts of added sugar used to encourage consumption and returned customers. Since the investigation into the safety concerns surrounding the drinks, Michigan has banned Four Loko from their shelves. Others such as New York, Washington, Oregon, Kansas and the District of Columbia are likewise advocating for the matter in hopes of protecting future users.

While it is of objective concern that government officials take proactive steps to ensure the safety of an unsuspecting consumer, the notion that banning a product such as Four Loko from shelves is placing a bandage on a more serious wound.

While the commodity is proved dangerous in itself, the practice of binge drinking is another problem strung to the drink. Although I believe it is necessary to remove harmful products off of American shelves, public health officials owe their concern and attention to fighting binge drinking rather than a supply-demand product of its creation.

However, since controversy over the drug surrounds over-consumption, it appears this is not a product we can responsibly keep on our shelves.

While the availability of the drink at a 7-Eleven can be said to encourage binge drinking, Four Loko has developed a stigma that now goes hand in hand with overindulgence. A typical can of Four Loko is 23.5-ounces, 12 percent alcohol and the caffeine of approximately one cup of coffee. The alcohol percentage is proportionate to drinking five 12-ounce beers.

In relative terms, a can of Four Loko is equal to a night of binge drinking easily disguised in a trendy can with a fruity flavor.

The impacts of the canned drug are becoming desired amongst American youth who seek its obliterating effect, an even further frightening notion.

Alcohol undisputedly pertains to more societal damage than any other drug available. While illegal drugs pose a larger threat to its immediate consumers, the danger of alcohol consumption, more commonly than not, affects those surrounding the user most devastatingly.

Alcoholic beverages spiked with caffeine raise the stakes of this parallel drastically as the caffeine counteracts the depressant, making the user feel less drunk, sustaining the alcohol's effect and allowing them to stay awake, drinking more and carrying their high into the night.

The dangerous nature of this sequence and the potential for peril to personal health as well as communal safety is obvious to those weighing the concerns. Four Loko and comparable drinks are not products Virginia can responsibly support. **CT**

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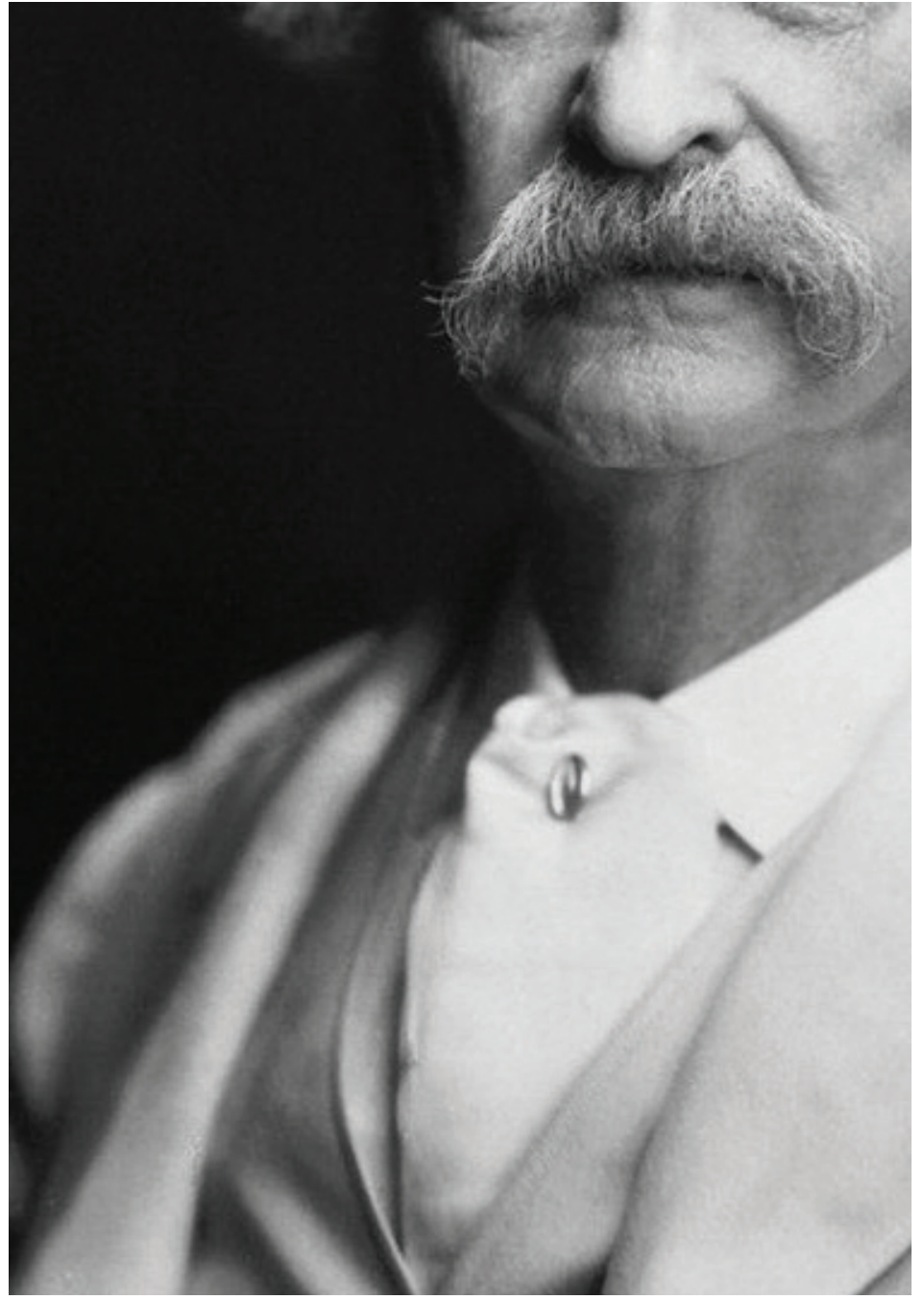
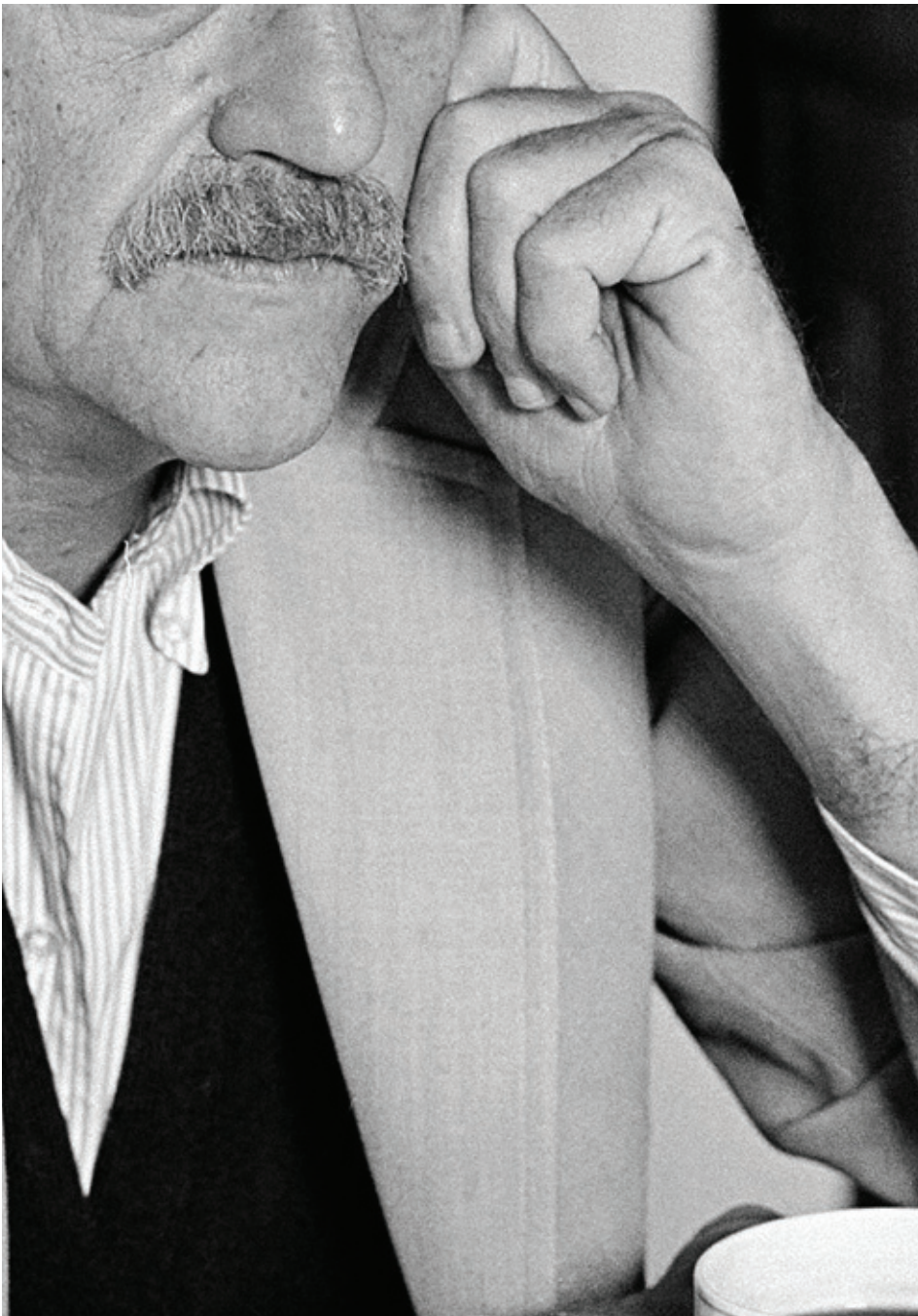
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