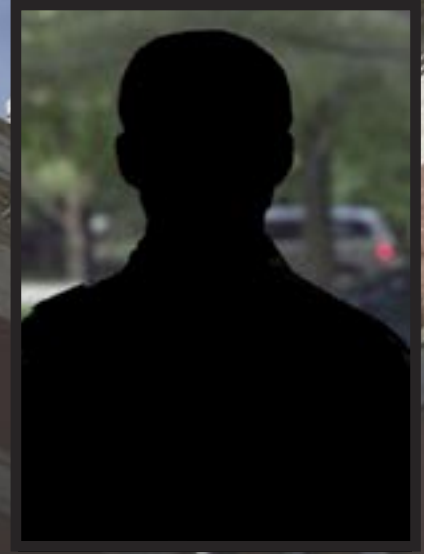
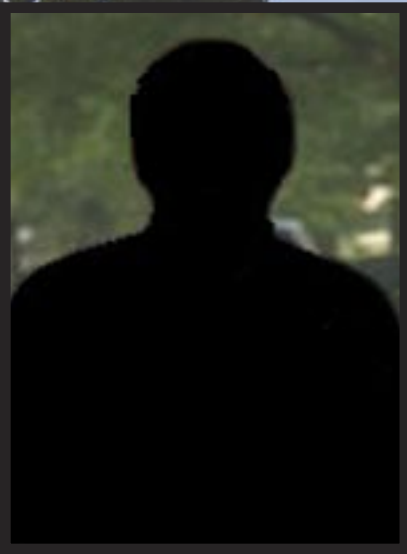




VERSUS
the student magazine

VU Motorsports
Stencil Graffiti
Ice Ice Baby: A Trip To Iceland



THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Three candidates are already preparing for their SGA Presidential bids. But who are they and why are some SGA officials working on the side in the offices of the most powerful administrators on campus?

18 VU Motorsports



VU Motorsports has been burning up the race track for the last eight years. Obinna Obabukah reports on the trials that go into building a competitive race car and the bright future of our university's racing program.

4 The Vanderbubble

Find out what is really going on inside the gates of Vandy.

6 Music and Restaurant Reviews

Nada Surf is coming to the Exit/In in February, while the coffee is brewing at Fido's.

9 Cover Story: The Politics of SGA

Who is running for SGA President? What have they been doing for students so far? Is it a conflict of interest that several high-ranking SGA officials work in the Office of the Chancellor? Robert Proudfoot answers these questions and offers insight into the upcoming SGA elections.

cover photo of Kirkland Hall by Casey Artz

12 Princeton Revenge

Student X gives Princeton their rightful retribution.

13 New Years Resolutions

Vandy student's resolutions as well as some thought upon the subject by Tian Song

14 Stencil Graffiti

A look at local graffiti: its commentary and artistic value.

22 Where the hell is my train?

A tale of Andrew Levine's misadventures while traveling through Europe.

24 Life is Where You Are...

Sarah Brooks' travels through France and Morocco

26 Too Cool for Ibiza?

Adventures in Iceland, where the sun never sets.

30 Rush

A guideline to the mysterious and complicated Rush process

31 Cash Cows and Dead Horses

The re-hashing and reworking of books in today's cinema

32 Photo of the Month

The Editor's Note

Michael Ward [versus@vanderbilt.edu]

photo by Robert Proudfoot



Power. Who has it and who wants it? The candidates for SGA President are already preparing for the elections that will take place in February, but who are these mysterious figures? Why should the student body even care about the elections? For one, the students are the ones that are affected by the good and bad decisions made by SGA, so its important to get out there and make your voice heard so that you aren't stuck wanting to address a bad policy decision on campus. Its better to just be able to sit back and read an enjoyable issue of Versus than have to go out and fight to fix something that someone else missed the boat on.

How can you ensure that you will be able to continue on with your peaceful life as a Vandy student without the pesky detail of having to crusade for actually doing what is right? Find out where the candidates stand for and, more importantly, if they are telling you the truth. Don't vote for someone just because they are Greek (or non-Greek), you have seen their name in the paper the most, or they claim to have a brilliant plan for the year. See if what they claim to be able to do is actually possible or if they are just playing the political game.

Versus takes a look in this issue at a potential conflict of interest that has been overlooked for some time. Many of our higher-ranking members of SGA work in the Chancellor's office, but is this a conflict of interest as the leaders of student government? Should SGA executive board members have a paid job working for the administration, when they are trusted with representing student interests that are often contrary to the desires emanating from the halls of Kirkland (such as eliminating the men's soccer team overnight)? Read Robert Proudfoot's findings starting on page 9 and determine if you think it's a conflict of interest, as well as learn who has been on the payroll in the Chancellor's Office.

Don't overlook in this issue the creative "ads" created by Jenny Bai on pages 8, 21, and 29. Some are funny, some disturbing, but all creative. I would also like to personally thank Jennifer Bennett and Adam Setren; their assistance was vital in the timely completion of this issue.

The beginning of this semester brings new leadership to Versus and new experiences for the entire Versus family. This constitutes my first issue as the new editor and I am looking forward to the challenges and the successes that will go into putting together the quality of magazine that Vandy students have come to know and expect this year.

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photo by Matt Walker

Exhibit Features Student Art

by Ellen Tremaine

The Studio Art Exhibit, held at the new Studio Art Center on Sunday, December 4th, showcased a collection of art by Vanderbilt students. This end-of-semester event features work students create throughout the semester in a variety of Studio Art classes, with everything from photography to ceramics to multimedia. Brian Hoffman, a junior enrolled in the Drawing & Composition class, sketched a charcoal drawing entitled "Priorities." The assignment was to unite two unrelated images together into one drawing. Hoffman's drawing featured the glitzy "Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas" sign superimposed with a picture of a young orphan in Sudan. Hoffman chose the two juxtaposing images to highlight the disparity between the wealth and poverty that the two represent. "It compares how people waste so much money in Las Vegas every day to the poverty and turmoil that continues in Africa," Hoffman said. Sophomore Matt Walker's photo entitled "Mallard, portal view" taken for his Alternative Photography class, featured a duck photographed through a drainage pipe. Students experimented with taking pictures through a variety of objects to achieve an original framing for a photo subject. "It's like a spotlight in reverse," Walker said. "Instead of casting light on an object, you're cutting out everything else. It draws attention to what you want the viewer to see." The class, taught by Prof. Libby Rowe, offered "a different way of approaching subjects, instead of the traditional point-and-shoot method," Walker stated.

Most of us are guilty of it. Don't deny it. I know you've done it at least once in your Vanderbilt career. If you hadn't, how come the Rec Center is always packed when I go? Usually the same mob comes every day, but there are definite new arrivals.

Yes, I admit it; I'm guilty too! I suffer from Rec Center addiction, but I combat that I suffer to a much lesser extent. So far, I have not bought an iPod so I can strap it to my bicep as I run myself crazy on a looming metal device. I also do not own my personal towel or antiseptic spray so I can mop up my own sweat (or more importantly someone else's) off the machines!

I agree that it's wonderful to have this facility here, so we can go in and count just the number of carbs and calories we are burning per minute and rotate from machine to machine while we affix a zombie stare on everyone we pass. But, honestly, isn't it a little stupid that we walk all the way across campus (especially those in Peabody) just to get on a machine so we can walk or run? Seems a little pointless doesn't it, especially since our campus has the distinction of being a gorgeous national arboretum. There is definitely more justification now that winter weather has set in, but I can honestly say that during the autumn months there were significantly more people cooped up in the Rec than there were enjoying the outside.

What I'm asking for is a New Year's resolution. Yes, I know this includes me, too. This year, when spring comes, go outside once or twice a week to work out. Go walk by the Parthenon, jog under Peabody's Magnolia trees, or just go for a stroll downtown. You might find it relaxes you, and the added benefit is that it might just save you some money on tanning beds! Just a suggestion.

Escape the Rec: Get Some Fresh Air

by Elizabeth Claydon



photo by Adam Setren

Mommy, I Want My Own Room Back!

by Jule Managan

—A small random thought flits through the back of my head. Something, somewhere in the abyss is making a noise. beep. Beep. BEEP. BEEEEEEEP!!!!!!!!!!!! Oh please someone make it stop! I lean over and starting hitting at my alarm clock trying to make the noise go away. It keeps going and going no matter what button I push, and after about forty-five long, excruciating seconds I realize that it doesn't make a difference which button I press – the noise will not stop. This is because it is my roommate's alarm that is ringing. Go figure. Eventually she rolls out of bed and turns it off. (But first she has to climb ALL the way down from the lofted bed...). I am left with the task of falling back asleep in the one short hour before my own alarm goes off. Such is life with a Vanderbilt roommate.

I love my roommate I really do. She is very fun and we totally get along. But something about Vanderbilt kids makes the roommate idea a little weird. I mean, your average Vandy student came from a home that had the same number of bedrooms as there were people in the household (yes this sometimes means a guest room as well). That means many people here don't have a history of room-sharing.

Room-sharing ethics can be a little weird for first-timers. The big one: you are not identical people. If you were, you would drive each other mad. I know this from experience. This means that your roommate will not agree with you on key things such as: food, room temperature, hygiene, wet towels, acceptable behavior when both you and their boyfriend are in the room, etc. I realize that you think people who disagree with your views on these important tenets are stark raving lunatics, but here is the thing: they think the same thing about you. So deal. You had a nice little break at home in your own personal king-sized bed, you are ready to return to the hardships of cohabitation. My roommate woke me up the day before break with a big bright smile and a shout – "It's cleaning day!" I made it through that, and now I know I can make it through anything. So can you.

LUI: Littering Under the Influence

by Ali Harrington

Sunday morning: the hall is strewn with paper and the walls are in various states of disarray; there may even be furniture blocking the doorway or adorning the hall. The scene in Branscomb lobby is not any more pleasant. Students stumble to the bathroom, carefully picking their way around paper and furniture without bothering to pick it up. Then, as if by magic, Sunday afternoon the residue from the weekend is all gone; the hall and the lobby are once again clean. The only problem with this scenario is that magic doesn't keep the building clean, Vanderbilt housekeeping employees do.

There is a common misconception fostered here at Vanderbilt: the idea that whatever trash students "happen" to drop or whatever damage is done to the dorms doesn't matter because someone will always come after us to pick it up. Nobody suffers any consequences for tearing posters off the wall in a drunken romp or for tossing Branscomb breakfast all over the floor; these things merely disappear by the next afternoon. However, the damage is at the expense of the housekeeping staff; they are paid to keep the dorms clean, not to have to deal with the leftovers from jaunts of inebriated malefactors.

Every student on campus is more than capable of picking up his or her own garbage and refraining from destroying/creatively arranging school property, yet by choosing not to do so we are blatantly showing contempt for those who do have to pick up after us. So, while pulling message boards and flyers off the wall might seem like a fairly amusing idea at the time, try to remember that somebody is going to have to deal with the mess later. What seems like a really funny idea at 4 o'clock in the morning usually loses its hilarity by noon the next day, and no one has, as of yet, praised the ingenuity of the hallways' weekend ornamentation.

NADA SURF

New York-based indie hopefuls Nada Surf have been a mainstay on the alternative music scene for quite some time. Longtime school friends Matthew Caws, lead guitarist and vocalist, and bassist Daniel Lorca finally teamed up after a plethora of failed musical ventures and formed Because Because Because, a prototype band that eventually evolved into Nada Surf in 1993. After some difficulty replacing their longtime drummer, the burgeoning trio signed to Elektra and released their first LP, *High/Low*, in 1996. The band returned two years later and recorded their second full-length, *The Proximity Effect*. After a four-year hiatus, Nada Surf returned in full force with their highly-acclaimed third album, *Let Go*, which is arguably their best studio effort to date. The band's playful, energetic melodies and quirky lyrics sparked the interest of Chris Walla, guitarist for largely successful indie darlings Death Cab For Cutie. Walla produced their fourth album, *The Weight*

is a Gift, and landed them a spot on the roster of up and coming independent label, Barsuk Records, which showcases such talent as Rilo Kiley, They Might Be Giants, and The Long Winters. With their most recent album, Caws demonstrates a remarkable amount of musical virtuosity, composing more thoughtful, intimate songs that effortlessly draw upon a number of influences, including Beck, Air, and Simon and Garfunkel. Songs like "In the Mirror" and "My Legs Grow" are teeming with a refreshing honesty that provides a stark contrast to the boyish charm of their more juvenile 1996 MTV hit "Popular." As Caws and his band mates carry on into their 30s, their music continually matures and seems only to improve with age, unlike many of their contemporary musical counterparts. Nada Surf is developing stylistically while still highlighting the whimsical quality of their music that has appealed to audiences for over a decade.

Nada Surf rolls into Nashville on Sunday, February 12th, playing at the Exit/In at 8:00 p.m. with Rogue Wave and the Kings of France.



photo courtesy of nadasurf.com

It's a fact: Vandy students love coffee, and they especially love studying in coffee shops so that they are in close proximity to various forms and flavors of caffeine. Vandy kids also enjoy being in places that are cozy and comfortable, yet distinctive. As seniors, my friends and I have had four years worth of studying at various local-flavor coffee shops, and when we are in need of an upbeat, brightly-lit venue, we usually hit up Fido's, located in Hillsboro village. Light music from local contemporary radio stations (no main-stream pop music here!) or some tracks from an indie-music CD will enchant your ears while you study, giving you the chance to relax and discover some cool new tunes. There is always plenty of seating, free wireless internet, lots of opportunities to people-watch (when you need to lift your eyes away from your reading materials), and a breakfast menu that runs until 9pm when the kitchen closes for the night.

Dog lovers will definitely embrace Fido's charm, with its canine-themed coffee beverages, with house specialties such as The Pink Poodle, Irish Setter, and the Milk-Bone. Refills on house blends are only a mere 50 cents. Teas, lattes, cappuccinos, and sodas are sold at Fido as well, if you desire a slightly more tame drink. Other doggie nuances include assorted t-shirts and mugs, and frosted doggie treats for customers' pet pooches. Fido also sells chocolate covered coffee beans, decadent cookies (I highly recommend the Kitchen Sink cookie, if you happen to have an affinity for coconut and cranberries), rich, flavorful muffins and other baked goods. The food menu includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner fare, available at almost anytime, helping you stay fueled up for your studies. If it is warm outside, feel free to take advantage of the sidewalk; in the true spirit of *le café*, there is black patio furniture available. No smoking inside either; there's a porch out back for that. Fido hours are as follows: Monday – Thursday 7am – 11pm; Friday 7am – 12 am; Saturday 8am – 12am; Sunday 8am – 11pm. Go pull up a chair, select your favorite doggie drink, and get some work done; you'll be coming back for more of the hospitality found at Fido. It's definitely one of Nashville's finest coffee experiences—one no Vandy student should be without.

FIDO'S



photos by Ellen remaine

FIDO'S

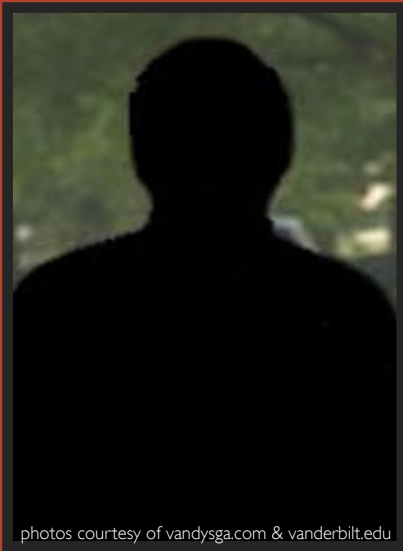


FIDO'S

Dear Vanderbilt Freshman Drinker:

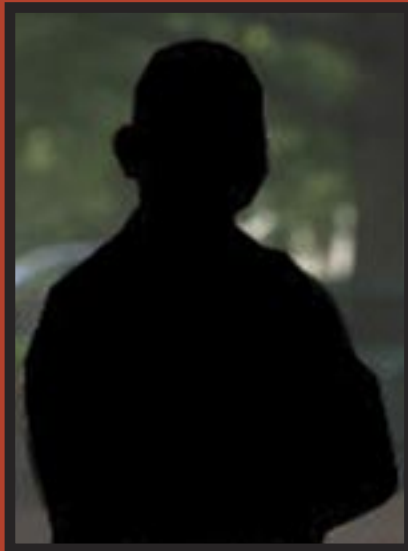
If you do not stop drinking copious amounts of Alcohol, you will die. Drop the shots, rock the Natty.

LET THE RACE BEGIN



photos courtesy of vandysga.com & vanderbilt.edu

Bill Weimar
Junior A&S Senator



Jamie Frazier
SGA Vice-President



Boone Lancaster
Junior A&S Senator

Rumor has that these three men will be running for SGA President. Versus looks at the politics of the future SGA election and the fall semester in review.

One Man's Musing on SGA Politics

Everybody knows that Jamie Frazier and Bill Weimar are going to run for SGA president, so that might as well be out in the open. Both have been striving for the position since they started getting involved with SGA in their freshmen year. With Jamie Frazier having his ambitious firstblkprez2038 AIM screen name (interestingly, 2038 isn't an election year) and Bill Weimar working his angles behind the scenes, this year's SGA elections promises to be one of interest. Boone Lancaster's late addition to the mix can only raise the pomp and circumstance.

Hopefully, the rat race conducted this year behind that scenes to find running mates

for SGA President will be less complicated than last year. In last year's campaign, the search for SGA Vice-Presidential running mates turned sour last November. At the beginning of the year, Jamie Frazier and David Darwin spoke loosely about combining to become a ticket to run against the incumbent Vice-President Kate Morgan. As what often happens with politics, Jamie Frazier made the rather astute calculation to disengage with David Darwin's presidential hopes in order to jump the fence and become Kate Morgan's running mate. Looking back on it, it was a cool calculation made by an intelligent politician that understood his

demographics well. Obviously, one could also understand why Jamie Frazier's decision could leave David Darwin with a bad taste in his mouth (not to mention scrambling for a running mate). To the knowledge of Versus, there was no foul play involved with Jamie Frazier's decision, just a calculation of the odds.

It is here where Bill Weimar enters into the story. Being another burgeoning politician looking for avenues to grow, Bill Weimar called David Darwin as soon as he heard about Jamie Frazier's changing of sides. Weimar was instrumental in helping pull together David Darwin's new team and was



Jamie Frazier
SGA Vice President
2005-2006

Jamie Frazier this year has worked as a Resident Advisor for the Office of Housing and Residential Education. He did not respond to requests for comment.



Samar Ali
SGA President
2002-2003

Worked in the Chancellor's Office while involved with SGA.



Boone Lancaster
Junior A&S Senator
2005-2006

Presidential hopeful does not work in the offices of the Vanderbilt administration.



Andrew Maxwell
SGA President
2004-2005

Worked in the Chancellor's Office while President of SGA.



Chancellor E. Gordon

Bill Weimar
Junior A&S Senator
2005-2006



Last year as Sophomore Arts & Science Senator for SGA, Bill Weimar worked ten hours in the Chancellor's Office. This semester, because of time commitments, he works four hours a week in the office (two of which are downstairs filing papers). "I really don't see it as a conflict of interest. When I walk into the Chancellor's Office, I'm just another student assistant working," Weimar said. Weimar also feels that his job doesn't restrict his ability to go "against and disagree" with the administration.

one of the key coordinators of his campaign by bringing issues such as increased student parking to the fore.

When Bill Weimar and Jamie Frazier start campaigning, watch for whisper campaigns on both sides to discredit the other. One of the first and obvious blows to Bill Weimar will be his involvement with his fraternity, Kappa Alpha Order. The rumors of current KA racism will surely surface, especially considering one of his competitors is a black candidate. However, Versus Magazine conducted a study last September to see if KA discriminates at their parties in comparison to other fraternities. Versus found no evidence of that claim, just

that women get in and men don't; certainly nothing surprising there. Bill Weimar, if he is smart, will attack Jamie Frazier's SGA record and involvement in the Security Task Force.

The secret weapon in this race is always the third party candidate. This year, rumor has it that Boone Lancaster will be filling out the field to split the race. Lancaster is the sleeper candidate whose main weakness is under exposure in comparison to the over exposure of the other two candidates. Not only is it hard to calculate his odds for success, but which main candidates votes he will cut away from. Strangely, even though Boone Lancaster is a sleeper candidate with the student body, he is no stranger to SGA.

He has submitted five resolutions to the SGA Senate as Junior Arts and Science Senator. His penchant for working behind the scenes in a low-key profile has made him a continuous force within SGA. Keep a look out him slowly gaining momentum taking away votes from Jamie Frazier and Bill Weimar, at least if the student body remembers who Lancaster is on Election Day.

Kate Morgan's presidency has had its problems, but put within the context of the other SGA Presidents, Morgan has by far surpassed the others in working for the students' needs. No student president is perfect, or for that matter, no one is perfect. But one gets the feeling that Kate Morgan is

Who is Working in Kirkland?



Vice-Chancellor David Williams



Kate Morgan

SGA President
2005-2006

Kate Morgan worked in Vice-Chancellor's office while she was SGA vice-president. She did not work in his office this year because she "hasn't had time." She explained that her interactions with Vice-Chancellor Williams were extremely limited and that it was job just like any other. Any meeting she has with Williams she schedules and never conducts SGA business while working in his office. Her job deals mostly with answering the phones and opening mail. Morgan said, "It isn't a conflict of interest. We want to find a way to give back and get involved. The relationship is just like a student becoming a TA for their favorite professor."

For the past three

years, SGA student leaders along with other students have been paid to work within the Vanderbilt administration offices. These jobs are minimal and marginal compared to other potential conflicts of interest in America, but they nonetheless present some ethical quandaries.

All SGA and Interhall representatives responded to Versus to comment about their jobs, except for Jamie Frazier. He is currently an RA working within OHARE. Sumar Ali, Andrew Maxwell and Kate Morgan have all held the dual roles of Student Body President while also working as a student worker within the offices of Vanderbilt's administration. Kate Morgan worked ten hours a week within Vice-Chancellor Williams office while she was SGA Vice-President. Andrew Maxwell worked as a student aide as he was President of SGA in 2004-2005. While student leaders speak of no conflict of interest by their working in administrator offices, student aides talked of an improved relationship of trust with Vanderbilt's administration. What is more interesting, probably, is how students learn about open positions within the Vice-Chancellor Williams and Chancellor Gee's student aid positions. While the job listings are posted on the hireadore.com website, most workers learn about the positions through word of mouth from graduating workers.

Versus asked students about their roles within the administration and how it effects their representation of students.

someone who is trying to help the students. She may not do it aggressively enough or loudly enough, but one can see the slow push towards better reforms. This especially deals with her championing of Vandy Vans, a notably effective reform.

In all honesty, to say that anything was completed under one's watch as SGA president is a monumental task. An SGA president doesn't really control as much as conduct dialogue in order to slowly push the students and administration in new directions (or to tried and true arguments about parking and safety. Honestly, who doesn't want safety and parking?). The monthly emails have been a 100% improvement from our past SGA President, Andrew Maxwell. At least

we know about the meetings we will never attend. Morgan in the past semester has been reacting to the Morgan Shootings, You Greek Me Greek fiasco, and Hog's Head incident. Instead being able to push an agenda, she has been forced to play catch up the entire semester.

To throw the bulk of the work in writing the Security Task Force on the SGA President was unfair and far too easy on the Vanderbilt Administration. Not only is it Morgan's responsibility to represent the students needs by responding to emails, holding meetings and launching initiatives, Morgan was thrown the responsibility of writing the security task force report. Oh, and she was taking 12 hours like the rest

of us seniors. All too often it becomes easy to put the bulk of the work on students and disguise it as student involvement. Yes, students should have input. Yes, students should help write the security task force. Yes, the SGA president is a good representative to tap for the student's voice. But, the security task force should have been written by the administration with the help of the students, not the other way around.

When the SGA elections come around, be sure to sit back and enjoy the fun. And for the majority of students that could give a rat's ass, just remember to click the link on your email to submit your vote based on something more than glamour photo.

Striking Back For the Alma Mater

by "Student X"

Children of Vanderbilt, all you Commodores and 'Dettes, I hope that by relating the story of my Winter Break, I can inspire you toward the same epiphany that gripped me the night of December 22, when I entered my house from the cold outside and picked up the Vanderbilt Magazine in the mail pile, rifling through it, and finding the unassuming article that would shake my life.

The epiphany came in two parts: first, we as college students assume too often, sequestered in this incubator of a university, that we can exact no real change in the world until our diplomas grant us the right to do so. Second, that this assertion is nonsense. Our muscles contract like anyone's, and our brains tick with equal constitution. The world, I suddenly knew as both elation and anger stirred my marrow, is ours to shape.

This isn't an article about ASB, Alpha Phi Omega, Vanderbuddies or the Manna Project, although those are all vehicles for the transformative energy I felt after reading that critical article. This article is about my own personal quest.

You see, I have always wanted to go to a college with a bell tower. Nothing symbolizes academic snobbery and the spirit of the ivory "tower" as well as a defiant, phallic thrust at the sky, singing its own peculiar alma mater on the hour. So imagine my satisfaction with our stately, solid prince of a tower, audible at football games and visible from the plane I took home.

And imagine my shocked anger when, in an article about Vanderbilt myths in the university magazine, I read that a visitor to the bell inside the tower found "Princeton" painted across its surface, a blatant act of unforgivable vandalism. I wasn't even aware that Vanderbilt and Princeton were rivals in any way: the news reeked of northern prejudice. (Speaking of this, where is our natural counterpart



to the north's Ivy League? The Kudzu League, they'd call it – Vandy, Duke, UVA, Davidson, Wake Forest, Emory, Chapel Hill and William and Mary?) There was not even a decision to be made. At that moment, I simply knew that I was to do something about this outrage. But what? Chemical wash the bell? No; revenge!

So I called up a friend and quickly arranged the covert road trip that was to occur. I told my parents I was visiting friends in NYC, and on January 6 we left on our quest. However, I made the mistake of making a girl my partner and during the course of that almost endless car ride, she made shameful appeals to my morality until she had scaled down my hotheaded lust for vengeance: instead of grand destruction, I would simply leave a token of Vanderbilt's presence, no more than Princeton had done to us.

By nightfall, we had arrived at the town of Princeton and found a hotel. Immediately upon stepping into our room, my partner decided she was too comfortable to drive out again that night. Thusly she wimped out, leaving me to wake up alone at 3 AM, crawl in her car and drive it the five miles to the university.

Princeton's campus is a little like Vanderbilt's: a forest inside a fence. No one was about at that late hour, but the threat of campus security loomed heavily in my head. I scurried past the admissions office,

down a gravel path, past a sculpture which moved (why don't we have one of those?) and into the first dark corner I could find, all the while increasingly bitter about how much better looking Princeton was than Vanderbilt, even in the drowsy depth of early morning. Nervous, sweating, I pulled the spray paint from my backpack and hastily did the deed beneath a large window of one "Jones Hall". I snapped a picture as evidence and was gone, dashing back to the car which I fumbled to unlock while the world's longest red light kept a policeman in his cruiser eyeing me (sweatshirt, gloves, backpack, 4AM) from the street. I drove back to the hotel with the most satisfied feeling of my entire life.

I'm not only writing to spread the news of my glorious victory for all of you, but to provide an example for the hopeless. Princeton's endowment is probably eleven times as large as ours, its alumni forty times more illustrious and its name actually recognized on both sides of the Mason-Dixon (kidding, haha), but none of that could save it from the will of one angry Commodore. Find something you want changed, and change it, for Gee's sake!

So, here it is. It's not the giant "V" spelled out in flaming kerosene on the front lawn that I wanted, but it's a thorn sunk in Princeton's side. Vanderbilt, vengeance is yours.

*Editor's Note:

The story above was submitted to Versus Magazine by an anonymous Vanderbilt student who claimed this story to be true. Versus Magazine attempted to contact Princeton University for to determine the validity of the details of this story. Cass Cliatt, Princeton's Media Relations Manager,

investigated the matter and informed Versus that there had not been any cases of graffiti on Jones Hall or any other buildings on campus in the last month. Therefore, Versus regards this piece to be a work of fiction created for the entertainment and enjoyment of the Vanderbilt community.

Everyone Loves a Fresh Start...or so it Seems

by Tian Song

"This year is going to be different."

"This year I am going to change this and that and whatnot."

"This year I will be more [fill in the blank]."

As the ball starts to drop and the masses are counting down to that elusive yet reassuring "1," does a warm, fuzzy feeling encompass you to start anew? Does your gut compel you to reexamine your current disposition and change something that you have wanted to change for so long? Are you feeling motivated to finally jumpstart your life in the direction you would like? After all, the New Year represents a new beginning—a renewal and awakening. But as January 1 seems the appropriate time to make self-promises, I sometimes wonder if we really need a calendar day to motivate us to accomplish our goals and meet our objectives.

The tradition of making New Year's resolutions is credited to the Babylonians. In early Christian times, people felt that the first day of the new year should be spent on reflection of past mistakes in order to improve their lives in the coming year. Sounds familiar, no? I surveyed about 40 Vanderbilt students to obtain their views and opinions on how effective a New Year's resolution is and whether or not they find the notion worthy enough to make one of their own.

Only about 30% of those questioned had made a resolution, and about 68% of those questioned did *not* believe that New Year's Resolutions worked. So maybe New Year's resolutions aren't for everyone. I do think, however, that having motivation to improve oneself in any aspect is truly honorable; it is something we can all emulate. Whether or not the improvement starts on New Year's Day depends on the person, but having an attainable goal should be the main focus. So what are you waiting for?

New Years Resolutions:

"My new year's resolution is to not make any new years' resolutions."

"I commit myself in making everybody including myself happy."

"to run more and to worry about things more."

"I do believe that resolutions work, because of the timing mostly. We're starting off a new year and the idea that 'anything' can happen can be pretty alluring for anyone, so why not just set out these goals? Sometimes they are 'far-fetched' but I think that just to have some kind of end in mind drives our attitude. A lot of times, people look back on the year before and they do something like, I won't do this again because in retrospect, I wasted a lot of time on it etc. and I think those types of resolutions often do work, because we have a very vivid memory of how it may have detracted from our happiness/goals/life before. Ultimately I think that new years' resolutions are successful when they help to re-adjust our attitude for the better (even if it's only a little adjustment), then we have made some progress from the year before."

"It works if you're really committed to it... but you really have to be committed to it... you can't be doing it just b/c it's new years... it has to be something you really want to do for yourself regardless of the timing."

"I don't do new year's resolutions because I don't believe in waiting till the end of the year to decide what to do for the next. Got to do everything to your best whenever you can."

"controlling my temper."

"Not be so crack addicted to facebook, lj, or aim."

"to quit smoking."

"Resolutions can be done the whole year, for life improvement anytime."

"New Year's resolutions work depending on the person, their commitment, external forces, and the nature of the resolution."

"to keep our common room clean."

"They don't work. People give them up after a week or just plain forget about them."

"to eat healthier and exercise more."

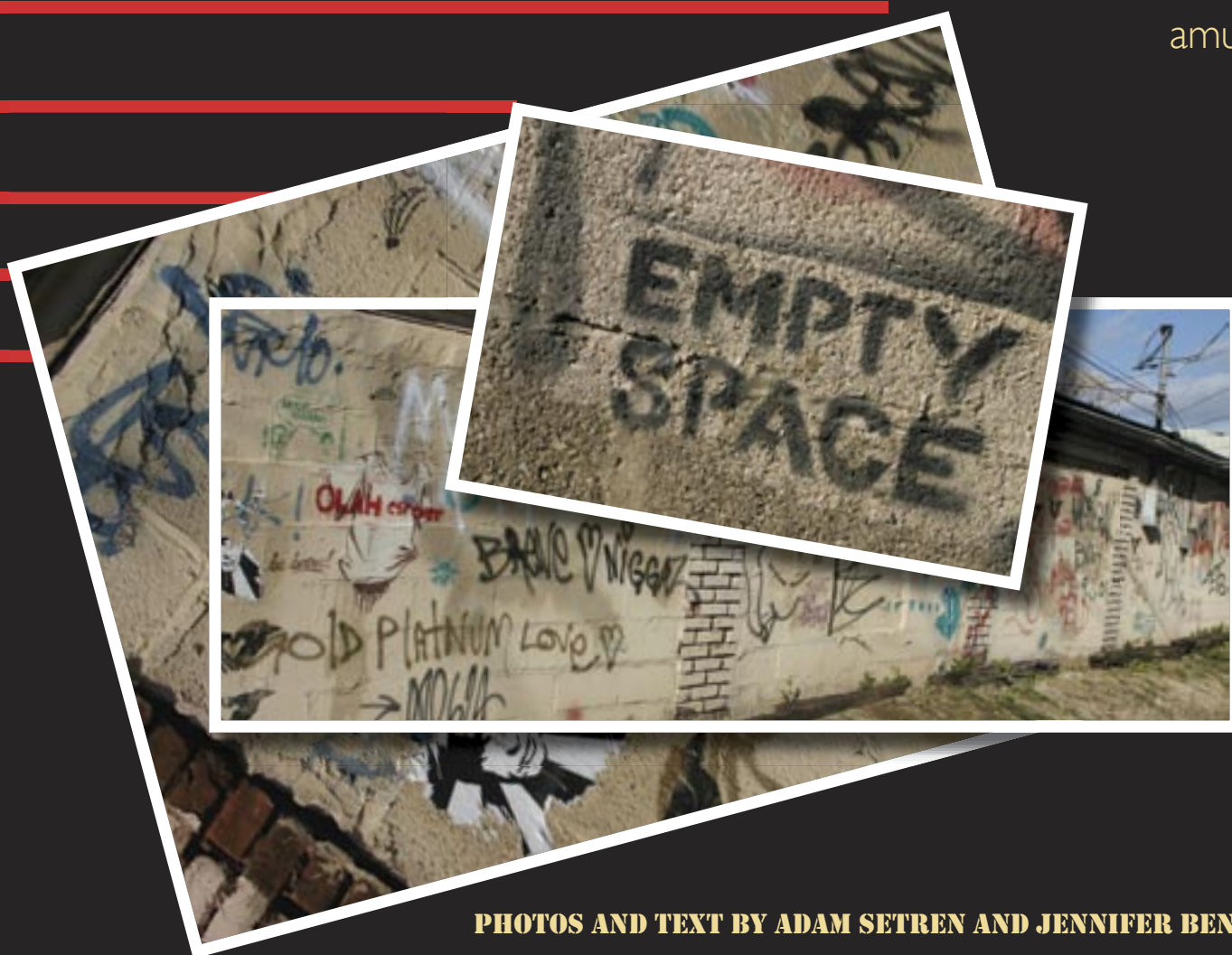
"get a job."

"I don't have any new year's resolutions (and I've never made any new year's resolutions), mainly because I don't understand why people make these commitments only at the start of the new year. For me, resolutions are an ongoing commitment that I think people should be practicing throughout the whole year!"

"my new years resolutions would be to make good grades ...but my resolutions usually don't work even though I hope this one will."

STENCIL GRAFFITI

The graffiti featured here isn't just the typical "Bubba Wuz Here" tag, but stencil tags, carefully designed to evoke thought, commentary, or maybe just a smile. As you're walking down the street look around they're everywhere, and often times quite amusing.



PHOTOS AND TEXT BY ADAM SETREN AND JENNIFER BENNETT

Stencils can have almost any sort of topic. These below are an assortment of random things people chose to create.

A trench coated figure with claw-like hands



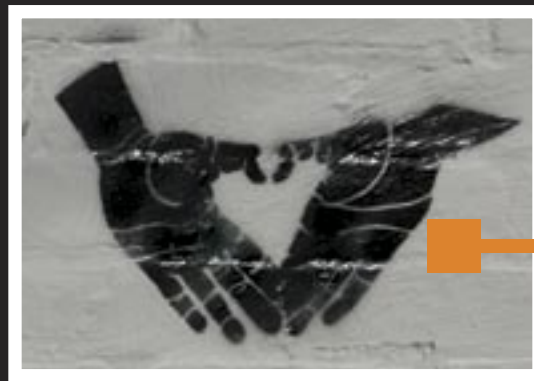
Shadowed faces on a paint encrusted brick wall give an eerie impression.



Manatee.

There's a whole herd of these on the back of The End.





Tanks and democracy: a demand for political action

I saw this stencil done in person at 3am one night. The artist was leaving for LA the next morning and wanted to let people know how much he loved Dragon Park.



Other Stencils try to convey a deeper message, be it a political one or a more universal message of peace and love..



Heart-shaped hands present a simple, affectionate gift

“Reverse Halo” covers this wrinkled t-shirt

These stencils are just for fun. Pop-culture references immortalized on concrete.



Alfred Newman of Mad Magazine peers out of the wall from between several newer tags.

A street-sign stylized skateboarder



This polo player's different colors require three separate stencils



Master Shake from Aqua Teen Hunger Force chills on the wall of Fiesta Asteca



Setting the Pace: Keeping



Featheringill Hall serves Vanderbilt's most innovative thinkers and designers in the fields of engineering and computer science. However, perhaps its most impressive synthesis of these concepts sits past the glass windows of the machine shop, visible to all, yet largely unknown by the Vanderbilt community. With four wheels, a black fiberglass body, and the ability of reaching speeds of up to 120 mph, many familiar with Featheringill will quickly recognize the race car constructed by Vanderbilt University's Motorsports club. Yet, as it awaits final modifications until its road test, the car gives no impression of speed as it lies silent in the corner of the shop, stark naked without its body. However, the moment when the ignition is turned and the car roars to life will bring a tremendous feeling of vindication and joy in the hearts of the club's members for their hard work.

VU Motorsports has come to represent not only the intellectual capabilities of Vanderbilt students, but also their resourcefulness, innovation, and passion. Perhaps more than any other organization on campus, its members combine their academic knowledge with other skills not only to build a vehicle, but to challenge themselves and prepare for future careers.

The group was founded in 1998 by Phil Davis, a resident research engineer and shop manager at Vanderbilt who had seen similar projects implemented in other schools. However, students were key to its inception. Davis admits that it was his seniors who approached him about building a Mini-Baja car like other schools. From there, VU Motorsports would eventually compete with other programs internationally constructing and racing Formula style cars. The club's membership has grown over the last seven years and its efforts paid off last summer in England, where Vanderbilt was able

to hold its own among the world's top teams and gain an invaluable experience.

Like with many organizations however, there were some growing pains. The current team leaders found difficulties in just about every aspect of the group. To team captains John "Jake" Ware and Walter Thorn, as well as project leaders Rob Carter and Colin Roper, it is clear that "trial and error" applied not only to building the car, but running the new club as well.

Roper and Carter, both juniors majoring in mechanical engineering, joined the club on advice from Phil Davis. However, what they found did not initially match their expectations. Roper recalls not being able to find his niche in the club due to its structure: "Honestly, when I first came to the shop it didn't work out too well. This was due to two reasons: VUM is not a traditional club and it was very unorganized at the time."

Roper expected to "wait for the email to arrive and mark the dates on my calendar." He quickly learned that VUM was "a full time organization" with a high emphasis on commitment. It is almost entirely student run; they do all of the design for the car and most of the fabrication. Thus, "members can't just get by through simply attending meetings when they arise. They must show up and be ready to invest sweat equity," stated Roper.

The demands of labor and dedication are essential to the club. It fits their ethos, as senior Jake Ware explained the reason for turnover; "a lot of people are turned off by it because it's not all fun and games." He does not mind because he feels the club needs "dedicated members who are willing to put some effort into it."

Carter, the current captain of the Brake and Drive teams, remembers his initial experience at VUM as initially limited. "When

up with VU Motorsports

by Obinna Obabukoh



I became more familiar with the machinery, they gave me bigger projects to work on,” remarked Carter. However, this model proved less efficient given the club’s small size. Without a guaranteed regular attendance, the decision was made to minimize tasks in an attempt to give people responsibility and give participants the feeling that that they “had a part of the car that was their own.”

This sense of ownership has been really unique for VUM, a fact highlighted by their experience in competition. Unlike some other student organizations on campus, VU Motorsports is completely financially independent of the university, raising its own funds in addition to doing its own work. Some may consider this task too challenging considering what the team undertakes, but in the eyes of its leaders, it provides them with invaluable real world experience, especially going into competition where other schools vary in nationality, traditions and resources. “There’s a huge range of quality and team diversity when you go to those competitions. Two of the biggest things that separate groups is how the school treats the program and the funding the program receives. Some schools are vocational and make racing an integral part of their curriculum,” Ware says. He recognizes the natural advantages of those colleges, yet did not rule downplay VUM’s ability to stay competitive. He spoke of a German team that was the clear favorite for last summer’s competition in London, boasting an annual project budget of 1.5 million euros. “The amazing thing about that,” related Jake, “is that you can compete with teams like that - they didn’t even win. The Canadian team, Toronto, stepped up and smoked them and I don’t think their budget was particularly huge.”

Vanderbilt finished a very respectable 35th out of 70 teams that entered the London competition, with only a technical glitch

preventing them from placing higher. Despite this, finances remain both a concern and catalyst. The team admits that the budget is tight; it cost approximately \$25,000 to build the car and pay for the transport of the car and team to London. When they arrived in England, the team became very acquainted with each other by having to travel by RV and sleep two guys to a bed for over ten days without the initial comfort of showers. Certainly it was a unique experience. However, they feel that operating on a tight budget has been an invaluable real world experience. “If we were entirely funded by the school, then I don’t think we would be learning what we needed to learn,” stated Roper. Ware agreed, stating that “It forces us to make pretty intense engineering decisions in terms of what we can and can’t afford and how do we cut corners and save money. That’s part of engineering too. If you have a 1.5 million euro budget, I don’t think you’re forced to make any of those decisions, which is going to be a tough spot for those guys when they get in the real world in a company and just say ‘Oh, buy it all.’”

While some of VUM’s capital did come from “several helpful parents,” the team, in true entrepreneurial fashion, acquired the sponsorship of companies such as Futaba, Fedex and Tenneco Automotive. This required them to branch out and exercise other skills pertinent to the industry such as marketing. Roper recounted that he found his niche in this area by integrating his knowledge of business with the project. “I felt like I was able to help and add value in a unique way. Once members feel like they fit it becomes hard for them to leave.”

Its real world applications apparent, the club has truly become a synthesis of the research, academic, and vocational goals Vanderbilt desires. Each member realizes the employment value



of what they are doing and its academic value. Ware's senior project is integrated into VU Motorsports, a first definitive link between academics and extra-curricular in the club's history, making it comparable to the doctor-shadowing sessions available to pre-med students. "I'm a special case, because I want my career to be this. I want to work on racecars, so clearly, doing something like this helps me quite a bit...I had no idea how to fabricate anything, how to design high tolerance stuff. So it [VUM] has defined the way I can get a career, it is the way I get a career. I'm still waiting for that to come through but I think it will," Ware said. Team advisor Phil Davis concurred: "It's not uncommon for people in the industry to recruit students from these competitions because they can walk around and see what they've actually done. It's really a whole lot better than a résumé. They hire them on the spot."

In the future, the members of VUM would like to get to the point where they are fabricating a car within a year and testing it the next. They are also looking to expand and diversify the club so that people with different experiences and skills can make meaningful contributions. David Owens, of the Owens School of Business, is also an admirer of the group and expressed interest in collaborating with it by having some of his students work on marketing for VUM. All things considered, VU Motorsports is primed to set the pace whether on the track or in the classroom.

Brad Jaeger talks shop

Versus sat down with semi-professional racecar driver Brad Jaeger of to see what impact the club has had on his passion and future.

Vs: Can you give us a little background on how you got into racing? What was your inspiration?

B: I grew up seeing my dad race. He did club racing in SCCA, which is the Sports Car Club of America. Just being around it at a young age and seeing your dad, who is one of your earliest role models do it – just hooked me. Ever since I was in first grade it was something I wanted to do but I never thought I'd do it professionally. When I started, I had the talent, and now I'm doing it at an entry professional level.

Vs: Going on from that, how did you hear about VUM? Did you know that you wanted to drive for them immediately or did you just want to help out?

B: Actually, it's one of the reasons that I came to Vanderbilt. When I was looking for colleges I printed out the entry sheet for the 2001 Formula S competition and Vanderbilt was on it. Then I went down a list of all the schools that competed and I said 'which schools of these do I want to go to for other reasons, you know, location, academics. Vanderbilt entered a car, was close to where I'm from, and is a great academic institution. You put all three of those together and it was a perfect fit.

Vs: So how was your initial experience there?

B: I came freshman year and I felt lost. I didn't feel like it was organized and I guess I didn't talk to the right people, I didn't talk to Jake [Ware]. He was the only member who really had his heart in the project. So I didn't really do it all freshman year. I came back sophomore year with two semesters of engineering under my belt and an understanding of what engineering really is. Then I met Jake, and Ben Morris and Walter and got the ball rolling and were able to go to competition, which was amazing.

Vs: Where would think the program is heading?

B: [laughs] Did you look at the club last year? If you compare where the club is



right now to where it was at the beginning of this past year, its improved an amazing amount. When we came in we didn't even have a team, the only person who came back to school was Jake, and one person can't design, build and compete in a Formula S competition.

Now we've come back after the competition last summer knowing what we want to do. We have a group of members motivated and willing to make this a club instead of a past time activity. We really had to go out and get freshman involved, to motivate them to come work on the car. I think too much of our time this past semester got devoted to making it a club – making it a real organization within Vanderbilt. That's hurt us with the car, but on the other hand, that's something that had to happen. When we come back for 2006, we'll have the organization laid out, we'll have the club ready to go, get new members, and put together an organization that will be competing with the top runners around the world.

i'm
comfortable
with my
body.

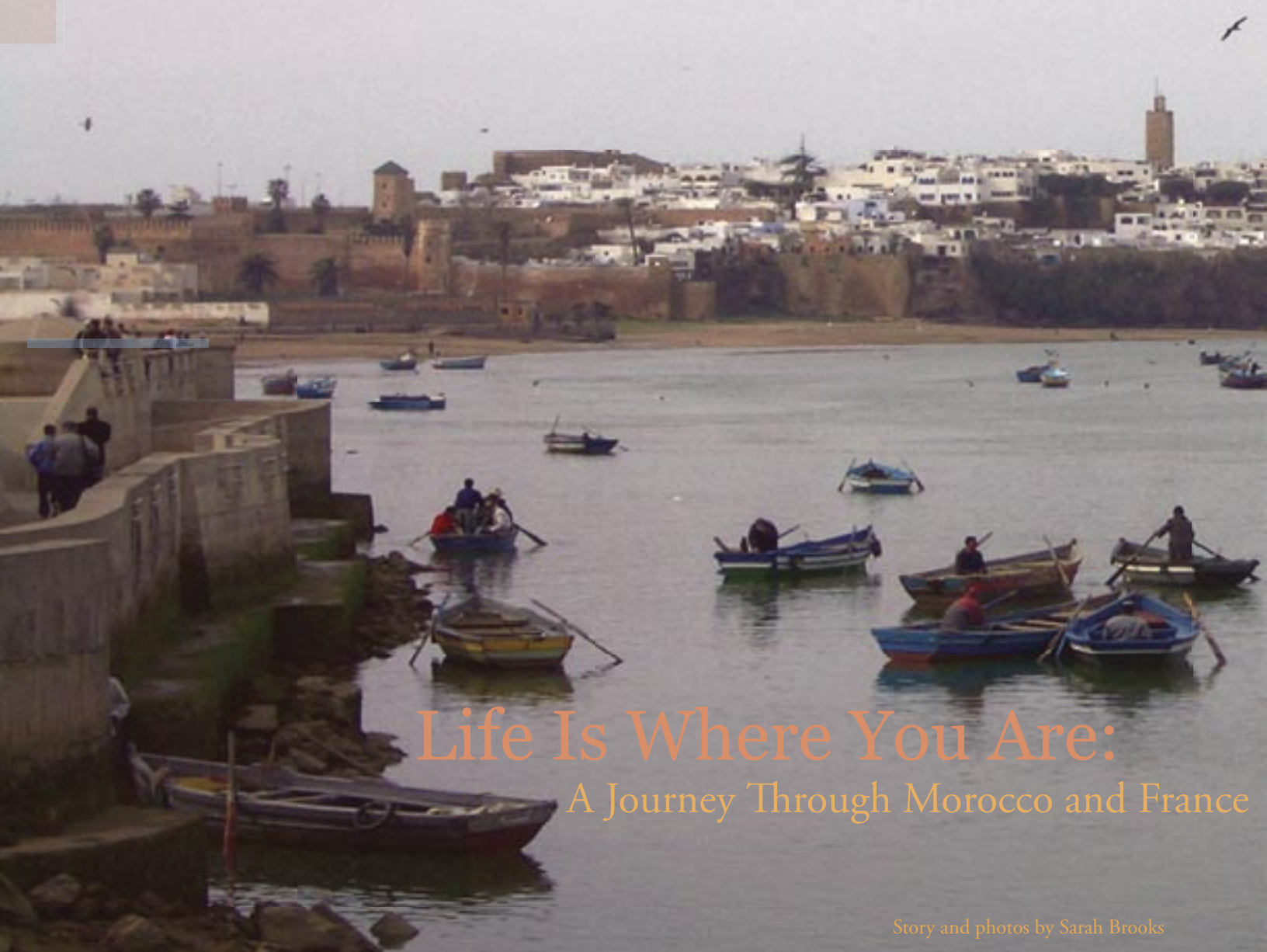
are you?

[When] I was asked to write a piece on travel for this edition of *Versus* my first thought was of what a wonderful experience I had while traveling during my semester abroad. Each time a picture from my trips come up on my little computer's slide show, I think how lucky I was to have had the opportunity to travel so widely and so well. However, a question I am asked much more frequently is, "How did you like study abroad?" Each time I respond, I realize that it is not enough—in fact, it is not accurate—simply to recount how much fun I had, the places I saw in France, and the experiences I had that shaped my stay. Frankly,

I don't remember very many of the specifics anyway.

Now, this is not to imply that this loss of memory is a direct effect of my alcohol intake, though I must admit, it was fairly high during the semester as I sampled fine wines from the corner convenience store and reveled in being older than the nonexistent drinking age. Rather, I realized during the experience and afterwards in retrospective contemplation, that living and studying somewhere is an experience of a very different quality than simply traveling there. A comparison of my memories from my time spent in Aix-en-Provence and those of my briefer stay Morocco last February prove this.

The town of Aix is small, and lends itself quite easily to the development of routines. The area of the old town is small enough that it was possible to familiarize myself with the streets and shops fairly quickly. Even where the layout of streets is a bit convoluted, landmarks are never far away and the alleys will nearly always lead you back to some larger thoroughfare. The best fruits and vegetables could be found at the local market, which was held every morning near the Hotel de Ville on my way to theater class at the Institut d'Etudes Étrangères. Just around the corner from the fountain of the wild boar was the neighborhood corner bar, where we would



Life Is Where You Are: A Journey Through Morocco and France

Story and photos by Sarah Brooks

drink a Blanche de Bruges, watch football or rugby, and discuss (or disparage) politics and politicians with real live young French people(!)

The trips organized by Vanderbilt-in-France and Mme. Monchal, who was incredibly capable and tolerant, were held nearly every other weekend and took us all over southern France; viewing sites and activities of cultural and historical importance while we were free—and encouraged—to explore further on our own. I could not have asked for a kinder or gentler introduction to living in a foreign country, adapting to cultural and linguistic constraints, or studying the French language. But the fact of the matter is this: I lived there; there is a distinct qualitative difference between this kind of memory and the transient, *carpe diem* emotion linked to travel.

For specific memories, down to the last train schedule or glimpsed vignette of real life, I think of Morocco. Though we [the three of us from the Vanderbilt program] spent an entire week there, I can remember each day in vivid detail - from where we stayed, to what we ate, to the people we saw. Each excursion outside our hotel room was a new and exotic experience made more so by the fact that the trip was to last such a brief period of time. All my senses were open to this new culture that I was lucky enough to have a peek at, but into which I would never truly blend. Perhaps some of this stems from the fact that we, as idealistic college students, attempted to find the “true” Morocco.

We wandered through open-air markets on the streets that sold everyday objects: cheap plastic toys made in China, different sized cooking pots, house shoes. We tried on our own to find the tanneries, eschewing the entrenched system of pay-offs and tours, meeting Person X who leads you to Person Y who introduces you to his “brother” Z (who then takes you to a shop to sit down, drink mint tea, and buy things).

We searched out the hole-in-the-wall restaurants recommended in our handy Lonely Planet... only to find other groups of twos or threes from all over Europe with the same guidebook, sitting behind us, planning their next day's sightseeing. We even tried going to the hammam, the local bathhouse, where our complete lack of Arabic made for a very awkward social predicament. Some actions we took certainly reinforced this, such as our insistence at frequenting cafes for an excellent café crême; in Morocco, cafes are strictly the domain of men, a problem exacerbated by our smoking in them, which is an even more a male-oriented public practice. My point is, all of our attempts to get at something deeper than the veneer of travel left us with only the deeper certainty that we were foreign. While it was frustrating to understand this sense of exclusion, it lent the experience an otherworldly aspect of “foreignness” that I don't think I'd ever had before. The transition to a Muslim country from a Western one is invariably more complex, more tentative, and more intriguing than that between two occidental countries that (loath as some on both sides are to admit it) have very similar characteristics and religious ties.

I not only have episodic memories of that week, little instances that stuck in my head, but surprisingly strong sensory memory of minute daily details:

The taste of flatbread and fresh oranges.

Waking up to prayer calls from the mosques in the medina in Rabat.

The orange, cracked leather seats of the rickety trains leftover from the colonial era that smelled of old cigarette smoke and dust.

Buying toilet paper at small stands along the street in single rolls, with our Sidi Ali filtered water and a cheap pack of Camel Bleus.

The disappointment of cutting open three avocados, all of which were shot through on the inside with black veins, too numerous to pick out.

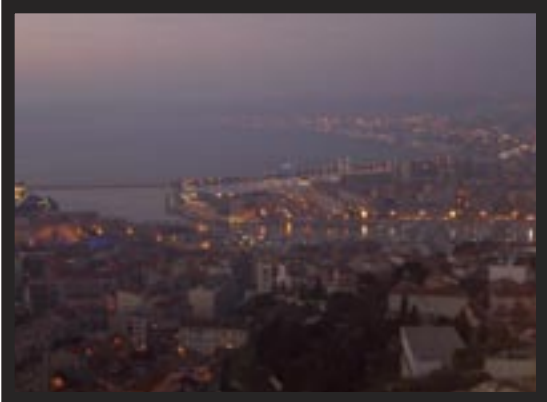
The warmth of the sun at Volubilis on my birthday.

The wind on my face from the open window as we drove home with a friendly cab driver as evening fell.

Throwing my bags onto a moving bus, then jumping on myself, and my first experience with whole fried fish—eyes, teeth, and all.

In France, I knew my way around the city, and knew particularly well the people who passed by the streets near my apartment. There were a great many parties, all of them thoroughly enjoyable, and many trips to the twenty-four hour patisserie at the end of the Cours Mirabeau. But these memories don't seem to define discrete instances; they rather seem to coalesce and blend together into an impression of my time in France that lacks the definite borders of date or location. Looking back, it seems unbelievable that I was ever actually there engaged in a life in France; but remembering a fling through the large cities of Morocco is a perfect, encapsulated instance that I can hold and prove through pictures. You don't take pictures of the place you live, really; you simply live there, and it seems at the time to be sufficient unto itself.

Though I felt obligated from the beginning to conclude this piece with some lesson I've learned from this examination, the fact is that I did learn something. It is possible for every day to carry the same quality as those days spent traveling another country; it is only necessary to valorize those everyday experiences as something unique to a time, which you'll look back on someday and remember with a smile. Keep a journal; take obsessive pictures; do whatever works for you. Just don't take it for granted.



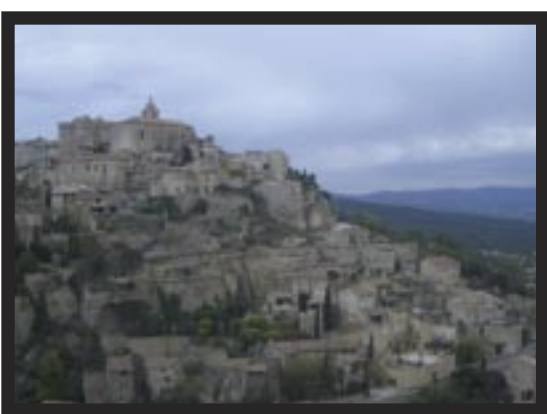
From an early age, I've been taught to vacation on the go. My family does not *do* vacations at the beach; we would not know what to do with ourselves after the second day. Instead, vacationing for the Levine family means packing up the ol' station wagon (we've had 3 in my lifetime) and hitting the pavement. We've all seen it done *a la* "the Griswalds" in their various "Vacation" movies. And thanks to Mr. Eisenhower and his interstate system, it's really rather easy. So my childhood was punctuated by yearly vacations — traveling out West (7500 miles) *by car*; England & Ireland, *by car*; New England, *by car*; and when we were thin on ideas, Tennessee, *by car*. Year after year, we'd head out to some unexplored region of the country for a couple of weeks full of bed and breakfasts, Fodor's dining suggestions, and enough museums, battlefields, and national parks to stretch the attention span of any 10-year-old kid.

So you see, this traveling thing is in my blood. Given the choice between a week at the beach and a week of traveling to unknown destinations, I would choose the latter 9 times out of 10. And I got to do just that last spring when I spent a semester in France. Only this time, traveling took on a new dimension — the train. Now when it comes to public transportation, I'm afraid I'm rather inexperienced — growing up in cities without a subway and where cars dominated the roadway, I've only had to use buses and subways on vacations to large cities. Like most Americans, I do not quite comprehend the benefits of the modern passenger rail system. Looking back on my semester in Europe, however, I've learned to appreciate the efficiency of long-distance public transportation systems. Except, perhaps, when I consider my travel mishaps...

Now I'll admit, I was a bit nervous the first time I took the train from the Charles de Gaulle airport to the cheery southern city of Aix-en-Provence. After all, this was my first time on my own in a foreign country, with total responsibility for myself. Unfortunately, this trip began with a hitch. When I got to the baggage claim, my bags were nowhere in

Where the hell is the train?

story and photos by Andrew Levine



One student's mishaps with public transportation while abroad

sight. I waited for what seemed like an eternity before heading to "Lost Baggage" to report my missing bags. All I had on me at that point was a backpack, some books, the "essentials," and the clothes on my back. After filing a report, I frantically scooted to the train station, at this point slightly panicking that I had no clothes, on my first day, by myself, in a foreign country. In the anxious rush to the train station, I was relieved to see some familiar faces heading south to Aix but totally ignored having my ticket stamped before I got on the train. In all the rush to find my bags and get to the train, I had neglected to heed the proper procedure for using my Eurail pass on board the train. So I decided if worst came to worst, I'd reluctantly play the ignorant American and hope for the best. In the end, the agent checking my tickets either simply overlooked my mistake or he pitied me as the ignorant traveler that I was; either way, he let me go without having my pass stamped, much to my relief.

Thus began my semester abroad. I should have known right away that this experience would be the first of many travel mishaps. And it didn't help that I had to spend the next four days without any additional clothes (don't worry, I bought some boxers), and coincidentally, without heat or hot water in my host family's apartment. Of course, taken as a whole, the semester was filled with a myriad of cultural experiences that certainly outweighed any unfortunate experiences, but they make for a much less interesting narrative of my time in Europe. So for now I'll stick to my travel woes.

Day one aside, public transportation treated me well for the first few months of my semester, so let's fast forward to April when travel trouble became more of a constant theme. Spring break was upon us and I headed to Spain to meet a friend in Madrid—from there we traveled to the south of Spain to see

Seville, Cordoba, and Granada, among others. The week was filled with late Spanish dinners, beautiful Moorish architecture, and a glass or two of sangria; before I knew it, it was time to return to France. I was scheduled to leave Granada at 10 p.m., get into Barcelona the next morning and make the last leg of the journey back to France a few hours later in the afternoon. The departure time on my ticket read 22.10 (10 p.m. for those unaccustomed to 24 hour time), which I mistakenly read as 11 p.m. (I'd like to say, in my defense, that I was confused perhaps by the fact that 2×11 is 22...) Either way, I showed up at the train station what I thought would be 30 minutes early, only to discover that the train had already left. After a few savage exclamations and frantic hair-pulling, my friend and I decided to check the bus station for possible alternatives. Dead end. Finally, we headed back to my friend's hostel, the true definition of sketchy — think mattresses set on tables, no sheets, and an old, muttering Spanish man who must have smoked a pack an hour. Did I mention there was no free breakfast?

After a miserable night's sleep, said friend and I headed to the airport to explore further travel alternatives and to see him off. Much to my dismay, no flights were available to France and flights to London where I could possibly catch a flight home were upwards of 200 €. I was left with the sole option of spending another day in Granada by myself before boarding the train I should have taken the night before. Now at this point, I was all but despairing. I was a bit sad to see my friend go and not exactly looking forward to spending the day alone. I did have some reading material and if nothing else, maybe I could catch a movie. Happily, my despair came to an end, however, when I met a couple of American guys on the bus back into town with whom I spent the day in somewhat awkward but nevertheless accompanied fashion. The night train finally came and I made my way back to France with one more travel mishap under my belt.

So the semester came to an end and I traveled for a few weeks before returning home. Yet I'm afraid that the end of my studies did not spell the end of my travel woes. The first week was spent with my family, visiting Provence and the Côte d'Azur, the Cinquetera and Milan, before heading for Eastern Europe. After saying my goodbyes to my parents at the hotel, I headed for the train station to hop a train to Trieste where I visited my French sister. When I got to the train, I scampered to find an open seat in a non-smoking car; by the time I finally got on board, however, there wasn't even a compartment available, and I was forced to ride, or should I say stand, for the first portion of the journey in between train cars. At last, relief came as departed passengers left open seats, and a conversation with an Italian man and a Togoan man, in French, meant my travel woes were soon forgotten...

...For a couple of weeks, that is. At that point I was in Prague about to return to Regensburg, Germany. In the meantime, I had visited Ljubljana (Slovenia), Budapest and

Győr (Hungary), Vienna and Salzburg (Austria), and Munich. Going to Prague, myself and two friends traveled by bus on a round trip ticket that we intended to use for our return to Germany. Our bus was scheduled to leave Prague at 3 p.m. Now I know what you're thinking — he probably mixed up the 24 hour time again, mistaking 15h for 5 p.m. The good news is that I learned my lesson in Spain and didn't make that mistake again; the bad news, we were running late after lunch and even after running to catch trams and subways, we got to the bus station at 3:09. Hot, sweaty, and tired, we decided to head over to the train station to try our luck there. Perhaps our travel woes had to be balanced out by good fortune at some point, but somehow we found a train back to Regensburg that would arrive at the same time for the dirt-cheap price of 8 €.

All's well, right? So it seemed, until our train

came to a stop somewhere in the Czech countryside. As we were pushing an hour waiting at a standstill on the tracks, I finally ducked out for some fresh air and a stroll along the tracks.

I was by no means alone — some were tossing a frisbee in a field alongside the rails, others just glad to escape the cramped compartments. Speaking the same language or not, we were all anxious to get going, and shrugs and sighs sufficed for our communication. Finally we were all told to get back to our seats and the train started moving again to the cheers of all aboard. At last, we ground to a halt in Regensburg an hour later than expected, merely glad to be at our journey's end.

I'm happy to say that the longest leg of my journey home, Munich to Atlanta, went off without a hitch. After a solid five months abroad, and much of it on the go, I was ready to be home again, confined to my corner of the world and surrounded by familiar faces and languages. And though in the meantime my desire to go abroad has resumed, I think this time I could go for fewer travel mishaps...

Too Cool for Ibiza?

I arrived at a tiny, microscopic airport after landing on what appeared to be a surface that I had seen in a photograph on the cover of my Astronomy textbook from freshmen year. I had come safely to Keflavik airport on a distant volcanic island country called Iceland. It was late June of 2005 and I had already experienced an action-packed excursion through Europe with my crazy Hungarian friend. The entire summer up until that point had become a hard adventure to follow up with any activity, and I was initially skeptical that our experiences to be had in this remote place on the rim of the Arctic Circle would be even an ounce of excitement in comparison. If only I knew how wrong that assumption was.....

We began the afternoon driving a rented miniature Toyota Yaris, a stark white toaster with 18" wheels cruising down a deserted 2-lane highway (the "ring highway" number 1) bound for the Icelandic capital city 2 hours away. I have never felt more foreign to a place in my life... It was like being on the moon of a faraway planet in another galaxy, black and gray boulders of volcanic rock called pumice scattered about among dark crevasses and sedimentary designs spiraling out from the road. Upon arriving at Reykjavik, the first thing I noticed was the white phallic shaped building protruding toward the sky from the highest point in the city. I found out later that this tall, beveled white stone tower was a steeple to one of the only churches in town, and one of the few places reserved for worship in the country. When looking down at the sprawling village of Reykjavik around me, I did not have any indication that I was about to meet some of the most interesting and talented people I have ever met, in the most stylish creative atmosphere that I have ever encountered. To make it even better, since the longest day in the Northern hemisphere's calendar year was upon us- there would be absolutely no darkness or down time! If you are planning to travel to Iceland, there are 5 primary Quirks that you should know about Iceland:

Quirk #1: The reason that there are not many places for organized worship is because Icelandic people are more superstitious rather than religious- they believe in "ELVES" or little people who are appear to a select few people known as "elf-seers." The elf-seers often aid in construction of highways where they will detect if a route will pass through an elfin territory- in which case, the road must make a seemingly arbitrary diversion in another direction for a short distance. *I was told of fantastical

beliefs by my good Icelandic friend Frosti Gunnarsson who has grown up in the city of Reykjavik with his elf-seer mother.

Quirk #2: Björk, arguably the most famous Icelandic musician, has the last name "Gudmundsdottir" out of the Icelandic continuation of Viking tradition because she is the daughter or "dottir" of Gudmund. The reason that Frosti is Frosti Gunnarsson is because he is son of Gunnar. A bit more about Frosti, he comes from a family that exemplifies high Icelandic style and celebrity. His father is the Icelandic equivalent to David Letterman with his own popular nighttime talk show that is quite a smart and funny program. His mother is not only an elf-seer, she is also Björk's booking agent/best friend, as well as an adept socialite who is the most celebrated party thrower among the well-to-do citizens of Reykjavik. There are quite a few as Iceland has one of the highest standards of living and quality of life in the Western World. Frosti himself is a well-known street artist who also does mixed media art for New Yorkers with excess wall space. His website is <<http://ofstarsiam.deviantart.com/gallery>> - worth checking out if you are interested in alternative postmodern art and the creative braincandy of that genre.

Quirk #3: The sun NEVER descends below the horizon in summer, which means that the sun barely comes up above the horizon in winter. This recipe creates for a hodge-podge comic and crafty culture that exists in the city of Reykjavik and small Icelandic towns alike. When these people have time on their hands, they use it wisely- learning languages, an activity indicated by the average number of languages spoken by an Icelandic citizen being between 5 and 6 (many of these languages are similar tongues such as Icelandic, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, in addition to

... *Try Iceland!*

story and photos by Tim Weiland

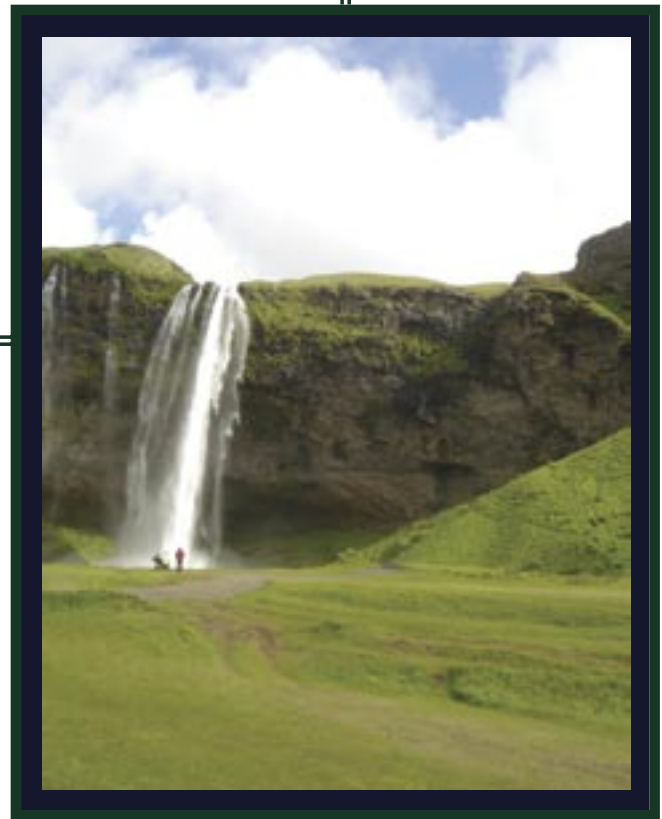


German, French, and English which are taught to them in all schools). The music groups such as “Sigur Ros” (which happens to be one of my favorite groups of all time) and “the Bang Gang” have come out of the country and played effortlessly, harmonic sequences that put listeners into a lucid dreamlike state. Aside from this music, many Icelanders are fans of retro-American music, especially of the Duran Duran persuasion- my friends and I went to the Duran Duran mega-concert while I was there and the officials notified us that one-quarter of the country’s population was in attendance that evening. How decadent!

Quirk #4: They love their volcanic HOT pools. And you will too! Try the mammoth-sized one that is on the ring highway between Reykjavik and Keflavik. There will all sorts of beautiful Scandinavians having a jolly time with plenty of sediment massage caverns, etc. It is a luxurious experience that can be free-of-charge to you if you time it right during the day when all gates are open.

Quirk #5: Did I mention that it is required that every Icelandic person know how to THROW DOWN until 10am during the summer? We did not stop the evening festivities until way past brunch-time each day and this was apparently quite un-extraordinary even though we were proud of how well we were holding up. If you go to Iceland and make an effort to get to know the locals, they will bend over backwards to get to know you and show you around. If you take Iceland’s 5 main quirks into consideration and listen to the following 10 pieces of advice, I guarantee that you will be in for a treat!

- 1) Rent a car at the Keflavik airport and drive as much as you can of the “ring highway” it is always drawn on roadmaps as road #1 highlighted in red.
- 2) Upon arriving in Reykjavik, eat your first meal at a local café and hotspot called “Vegemot” - you will not regret it as it was probably the most delectable food I consumed this summer.
- 3) Walk up and down the ‘main drag’ a hip street called Laugavegur- walk into the shops and the coffee houses, there is also a small maritime museum on the street with some Viking history.
- 4) Go to dinner at a smooth new restaurant called “b5” for its address Bankastræti 5 (“bankastræti” means “bank street”) just off of Laugavegur.
- 5) After your food settles, go running at MIDNIGHT (only in summer obviously) on the footpath that takes you out of Reykjavik and to the South along the coast.



- 6) Go to “Sirkus” - a dive bar: for a memorable wild night of raw, rowdy locals that may- if you are cheeky to them- rough you up a bit.
- 7) Go to “Kaffibarrin” for a chill bar with multiple rooms and a hipster scene with lots of live music. It is across the street from Vegemot and attracts an almost identical beautiful crowd. My aforementioned pal Frosti works the door as a bouncer. He will let you in if you tell him you dig his aviator shades...
- 8) For the best place to cure a hangover by taking in the most amazing view in town, go to the summit of the hill and climb to the top of the Church Tower.
- 9) For you adventure seekers, there are plenty of coastal glaciers, or “jökulls” (pronounced “yokels”) within driving or hiking distance of the ring highway.
- 10) For you NorCal surfers, there was a pretty fun wave down by a small beach village named Vík to the Southeast of Reykjavik on the ring highway, and FYI the water was in the 50s Fahrenheit so bring your wettie. (so I lied, here is some more advice!)
- 11) Rent a moped while you are there, I kinda wish I did!
- 12) Flights are usually cheapest if you fly IcelandAir because you get a free stopover in Iceland for up to two weeks while you are en route to Europe (*for those of you who are planning to travel or study abroad this summer in Europe).

To wrap this up, I just want to encourage you to check out the glorious country of Iceland. In the words of Danó Kaali, “this place is sooo SIIIIICK” (which equals RAD).

*Contact Tim at timmythatooth@aol.com if you wish to obtain any additional information or want to contact his local friends so they can be your pseudo-tour guides.

Upcoming Icelandic event in Nashville:
SIGUR ROS @ the Ryman Auditorium on Valentine’s Day, February 14th!

Lucinda says it's
about time we stopped
looking at chicks as a
piece of meat.



Spring into...RUSH

by Hart Hagarty

Greek organizations have been prominent on Vanderbilt's campus for nearly 150 years, and today, with forty-four percent of undergraduate students associated with thirty-four chapters, it is evident that "going Greek" still remains a very popular option for students. Even though the chapters make themselves apparent on campus through parties, scholarship, fundraisers, and t-shirts (or by nasty rumors), for some outsiders the details of Recruitment seem as obscure as the Greek alphabet. Revealing what goes on behind the closed doors of sorority houses during Recruitment may be breaking some primordial, Panhellenic pinky promise, but my stimulating experience at Vanderbilt has left me all but hush-hush about Rush. Initially, the word "Rush" does not seem like a fitting term for Recruitment, but after first-hand experience it became evident that the word is a helpful mnemonic to aid the Panhellenic-impaired.



Ready. Be prepared for some of the manic mingling to occur while sitting on the floor; so it is best to keep Victoria's Secret a secret and do not allow a thong to hang out of low-rise jeans. The handbook also advises a girl to dress "relaxed" (yes, the handbook instructs girls exactly "what to wear") during the Display Round. Comfortable does not, however, mean scuffed-up, smelly Nikes (this is *Recruitment*, not the Recl). Just before being beckoned into each house, whether smacking their lips with freshly applied gloss, combing their highlighted bangs, or feverishly chewing gum to ensure good breath, potential members exhibit nervous vanity at its zenith. A personal pocket mirror is not the only useful aid during rush; beyond personal maintenance, a Greek Ambassador guides girls through the labyrinth of hectic Recruitment. They give valuable advice such as, "Get a good night's sleep!" which translates into, "If you have bags under your eyes, it better be because you were up all night stifling over what to wear instead of suffering from a hangover." However, readying yourself for Rush begins way before the advent of recruitment on January 8th; it also entails that a girl behave herself to some extent during the first semester. Do not get belligerently inebriated at a frat party, dance on a bar, or hook up with a sorority girl's boyfriend. Simple!

Unique. Be yourself! Just remove your black nail polish. Prove to your future sisters you can afford the crème de la crème of the unofficial uniform of the elite – wear Citizens, Sevens, or True Religion jeans and a top with a polo or alligator on it, swathe yourself in David Yurman jewels, pearls, and Burberry plaid. Do not be left out in the cold without a North Face jacket. A Greek Ambassador, conversely, warns not to carry a purse, especially one sporting a designer logo, because "it's annoying when a girl looks like she's trying too hard." Ultimately however, getting a bid is determined less by the clothes and more about character. The trendiest, most expensive threads can never conceal a girl's inability to exude the charisma, scholarship, and values in which sororities take pride. Furthermore, conveying oneself sincerely is important in order to make sure she ends up in the house that accepts her for who she is, not just the labels she wears.

Smile! A lot. A potential member needs to smile so much she rivals Vanna White. Even though her feet are screaming in excruciating pain from those four-inch high BCBG pumps, she charismatically flashes her pearly whites because she is *excited* to chat animatedly about how a sorority girl's fourth cousin once-removed is from her hometown. Actually, for the personable outgoing type, smiling will come naturally, because it is genuinely fun to talk about oneself all day long (although her cheeks may begin to hurt a little).

Herd. After lining up in alphabetical order on a sorority's front lawn with a nametag complete with a serial number around the neck, it is hard not to imagine the girls as cattle (super-cute cattle, mind you). Even the Vandy cowboys of Kappa Alpha check out the flock of freshmen fledglings anxiously waiting to be summoned into a house. Within the herd of hopeful, heavily made-up girls ready to be judged, the similarities between Recruitment and a beauty pageant become evident. The potential members are talented, gorgeous and anxious and subject themselves to the scrutiny of their judges, the sorority women. Just as in pageants, there is an extensive interviewing process and even an opportunity (first semester) to showcase a variety of talents, such as contributing to volunteer programs and student publications or hooking up with a sorority girl's boyfriend (points may be deducted for this talent). But while a Bid Day t-shirt does not scintillate like a Swarovski crown, it symbolizes some things even more precious: lifelong sisterhood, fun times, and a sigh of relief that chaotic recruitment is finally over. In fact, on Bid Day, maybe girls should be given tiaras instead of t-shirts.

All kidding aside, Rush has been a wild ride for me. A spectrum of emotions ebbed and flowed through me like a swift current of confusion, doubt, joy, fear or in the end complete merriment. If it is not called Rush because of the surges of varying sentiments, maybe it is named Rush because of the hurried chaos of evaluating oneself in determining what she wants from a sorority. Although I talked to dozens of strangers each day, possibly the hardest person to face was the one most familiar: myself. I admit I tried to cram myself into the "perfect" mold one sorority portrays, only to realize that I was fooling myself trying to be someone I am not. Ultimately, I found a house that is a perfect fit for me. As exhausting as the experience was, I gained in Rush a wonderful sorority and the realization that in this quasi-beauty pageant process, it is more important to be as I am than to win Miss Congeniality.

CASH COWS AND DEAD HORSES:

A Perspective on the Lack of Originality in Current Cinema



There was a time when enjoyment was derived from books; from the written word splashed inkily on fresh white pages. The stories told awoke imaginations, created inspiration, and aged with time as treasured keepsakes. Yet now, the trend is to bring them into the main stream, fast-action media of television and movies; to popularize plots by seeping in

romance and nudity to make the stories appeal to mass consumers. In doing this, I feel for the most part that we have compromised the whole nature of the stories and adulterated the meaning that the authors actually meant to put forth. Especially since most authors of classical pieces (which are rapidly becoming main-stream blockbuster hits) are dead. How can we accurately represent stories when we have no immediate reference as to how they were meant to be portrayed?

Don't mistake me, though, quick to judge as an audience always is. I've seen some beautiful renditions of Les Miserables, Pride and Prejudice, To Kill A Mockingbird, and countless others. But, my question is why we just can't let the books stand alone. We seemingly need to put every story into live action and color, and dress it up with special effects that mask the true depth of the story.

In my opinion, it appears that we have run out of movie plots, so instead of trying to create mind-numbingly similar new movies, we have decided to do variations of old stories. Yet we adapt them all to appeal; nothing can be left to its formal simplistic glory, where the imagination alone ruled the tale. Instead of creating the characters in our heads and seeing their worlds the way we decide, everything is laid out for us. All the thought is done for us right on the screen, so that it is almost an indoctrination of what movie producers want us to see. For example, try reading Harry Potter again once you have seen the movie. Can you even picture Harry Potter the way you used to? I know all I see is Daniel Radcliffe now. Before the movie, I pictured Draco as having raven black hair; the only way I see him now is with blonde.

The saddest part, though, is when an author's style is compromised. I know

many of you ladies have seen the new Pride and Prejudice and have quite appropriately drooled over the hunky Mr. Darcy and secretly wished you had someone as good. Honestly, though, I have studied Austen's literature extensively, and as much as I liked the movie, parts did not hold true to Austen. The Wickam incident, for example, was brushed over like oils on a canvas; it could hold no light to Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship, although in the book it is a central cause for their eventual matrimony. The last 5 minutes of the movie (which, I might add, are cut out in the British airing) have to be as un-Austen as you can get. The Mrs. Darcy rant was definitely more emotional than Austen would have ever let her

"We seemingly need to put every story into
live action and color,
and dress it up with special effects that
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novel be. The producers just had to glamorize it to make it more appealing.

I know, though, that these movies are just based on books, and that they always note that at the end. Yet how many people actually go into a movie that is based on a book without expecting that it will be like the book? I know I don't. No matter what, I think I will always expect that. Hollywood, however, has a different plan.



Photo of the Month

by Lara Bratcher

