



The ORACLE

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West Springfield High School 6100 Rolling Road Springfield, Virginia 22152

Great balls of fire!

Bare walls, hallways brought on by enforced code

By Jennifer West
News Section Assistant

Walking down the halls, students may notice that banners and flyers that were once hung with pride have been torn down, decorations hung with precision by teachers are now missing, and all around the school there is a warmth that is gone. The vandals who took all of this away, was the county fire code.

When the safety inspector came to WS he found stuffed storage closets, objects within three feet of the electrical panels, a broken seat in the auditorium, classroom decorations right below the ceiling, and to top it off, an oxygen tank in the boiler room.

Although 90 percent of the problems have been corrected, many of the classrooms remained a problem.

"[Taking down decorations is] emotionally painful," said head librarian Stephanie Bynes. "Schools by nature are fairly sterile and I specifically selected the posters to enhance [the library]."

Both the staff and students haven't jumped for joy at the bare walls and many have their own opinions.

"I guess it's a stupid idea," said freshman David York. "This school isn't going to catch on fire and if it did we would know how to put it out."

Though it may not be understood, there is some reasoning behind all of this undecoration madness. Decorations are not to hang two feet from the ceiling and at least three feet from the doors because they may catch on fire and allow the flames to travel to the ceiling or to the door. Above the tiles in each classroom is free space through

which flames can mushroom, setting other rooms on fire through the common ceiling.

"I think it's stupid," said senior Amber Williams. "If you think about it, how many times do schools catch on fire?"

There are many students don't like the starkness of the rooms and halls. However, they are OK with it because of the reasoning.

"I think it's reasonable," said sophomore Aly Henry. "It's a little boring, but if a fire started, it's better to be boring."

Bare walls and cinder blocks are not exactly the thrilling decor that stimulates the mind and gets people motivated to learn, but students and faculty are learning to deal. The Career Center, which was once filled with college flags, is now bare.

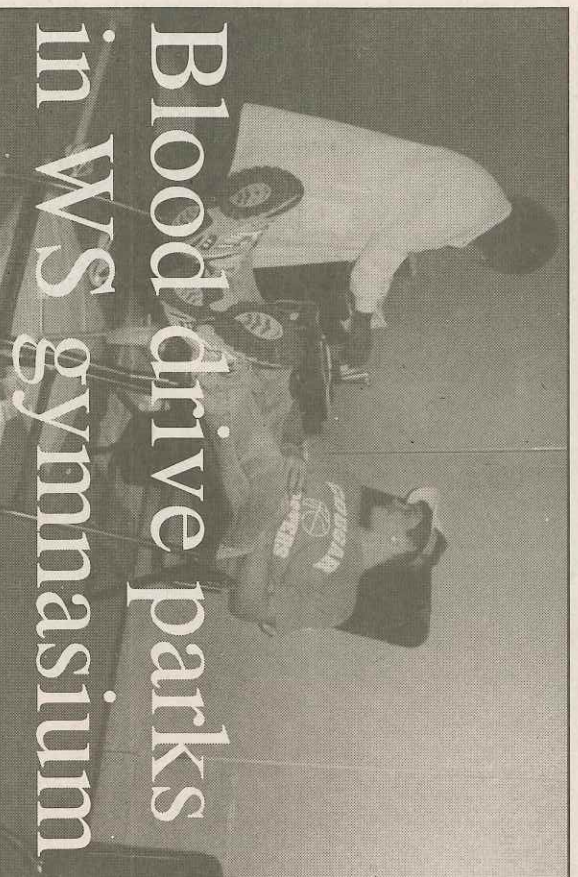
"I'm disappointed," said Career Center Specialist Sue Rexford. "But, I'm putting them back up during Spring Break."

After talking with the school safety inspector during his second visit, the inspector OK'd Rexford's new surprise display for the flags. On the second visit the inspector "noticed a big difference."

Although some of the fire codes were new, the decoration code has been around.

"I got ripped about it last year," said physics teacher Mark Bibbee. "So this year I didn't bother putting them up. So I've got a bare, stark, boring room...oh well."

Although the walls are bare and teachers had to take time to take down decorations, their work is much appreciated.



Susan Sommerfeldt

Senior Sean Andresen sits and waits to donate blood as an INOVA employee prepares the materials.

By Heidi Stillgoj
Oracle Editor

An unlikely combination of blood specialists, needles and upperclassmen filled the Auxiliary Gym with one main goal in mind: helping others.

On March 17, the Key Club held their annual blood drive in which teenagers could sign up to donate their time and their blood during school hours. INOVA Health Centers served WS faculty and students by taking their blood to transport to hospitals, mainly in Northern Virginia and southern

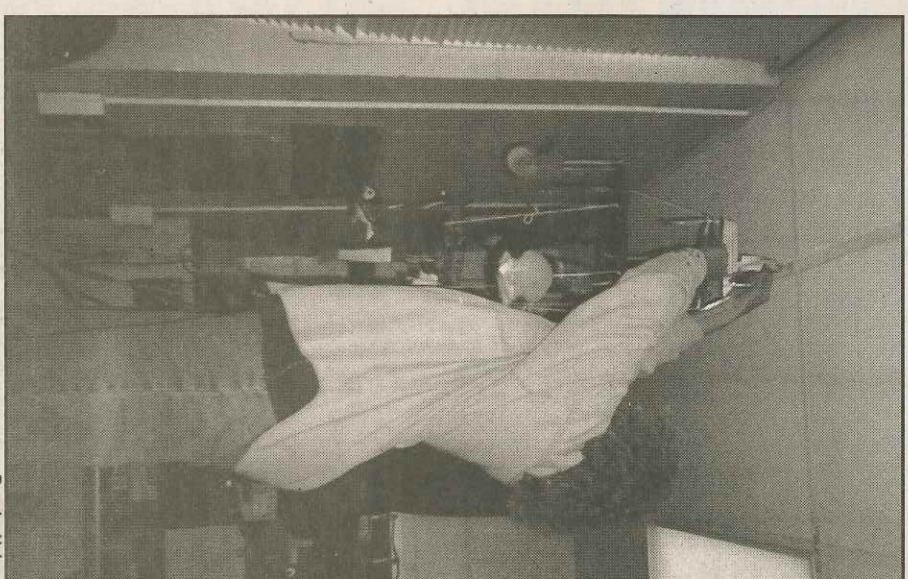
Maryland. The blood drawn reached hospitals two to three days after it was taken.

"Our goal is to get 200-300 people a day to donate blood," said Jim Dod, a driver for INOVA. "Surgeries are not done today because there's not enough blood."

Different motivations served as reasons for students to donate their blood.

"It made me happy to be helping people," said senior Andrea Yuzon. "Plus, I wanted to do it because the blood drop was cute."

See BLOOD on page 4.



Brooke Nelson

English teacher Carol Dandy removes the decorations in her classroom that violate the safety code. Dr. David Smith informed the teachers of this code much earlier this year, but it has not been enforced until now.

"I want to thank everyone for clearing the walls," said safety and security specialist Mike Ukele. "I really appreciated it and I know that it was a pain for the teachers."

Sophomores make history in competition

By Jen Siomacco
Oracle Editor

Sophomores Rachel Alba and Maggie Seegers know better than anyone that history can truly come in handy.

On March 22, their group showed off their well-developed research and won first place at the National History Day Regional Competition held at George Mason. Sophomores Elise Barth, Laura Yantz and Julia Wohlers also took home first place. WS, who did not have much standing in past competitions in which only a handful of students participated in, was a strong power at this year's competition under the theme "Exploration, Encounter and Exchange in History."

Yantz, Barth and Wohlers took first in the group exhibit category and Seegers and Alba won first for group performance. Three more groups of students will be moving onto the the States competition in Williamsburg in April, including sophomore Jennifer Bodholdt, who took second place for individual exhibit, sophomores Irene

Cao and Chelsea Weaver, who won second place for group exhibit, and sophomores Peter Kapuscinski and David Walsh, who placed second for group documentary.

"I got second here [at the WS competition]," said Kapuscinski whose documentary consisted of a powerpoint on music and its influence on culture. "I didn't think I'd get second [at Regionals]."

The majority of students who participated were required to do so for their World History II classes, taught by Cathleen Boivin, Ann Sauberman and Erik Lind. For many, the project was simply another grade, but for those who moved on to States proved that there was much more effort applied to the assignment.

"We were up until two the night before," said Wohlers who, with her other two partners, produced a display on the roles of women in the 1920s. "We thought we'd go on to the WS competition. We were really proud of it [our project]."

See HISTORY on page 4.



8 Administration
OKs open campus
lunch



8 Graduation date
changed from
June to May



9 LAST ISSUE!
The Oracle ceases
publication



Chris Shannon
The fire marshalls that have scrutinized WS in the past months have insisted that no posters or materials be hung within two feet of the ceiling. Although teachers have complied, there is still a problem about what to do about stationary clocks, TVs and flags.

Rules, laws must be enforced consistently

Everyone knows that person—the one for whom the rules bend. He doesn't have his assignment; the teacher gives him an extension. He gets caught leaving campus for lunch and gets nothing more than a warning.

There is the popular saying that rules exist for a reason, but what reason is that? Students aren't learning anything when the rules are changed for their benefit. There must be consistency in enforcing rules, otherwise they're frivolous.

A recent example of rule-bending was the tryout extension for baseball. Three

senior boys who played on Varsity last year were picked up for public intoxication at a home basketball game. They received the standard punishment of a five-day suspension from school and a 30-day suspension from school activities. This, however, interfered with baseball tryouts, so the coach extended tryouts to accommodate the three players.

The point of a punishment is to teach a lesson. If they were disqualified from baseball, they might think twice before drinking underage in public. But all this experience has taught them is that when they mess up, someone will cover them.

Students, however, are not the only ones for whom the rules bend. New fire safety codes have bent for the school, too. After an incident at Annandale, Fairfax County has implemented a new fire code that

requires that all decorations be at least two feet away from the ceiling, three feet away from the door frame, and completely removed from doors. Teachers have complied by removing their posters, but it is very obvious that the clocks and TVs (which were attached to the ceiling only a few years ago) do not meet these qualifications. Under the new code, teachers can be summoned to court for not removing their posters. It's a safety issue after all, but if it's

Editorial

i m p o r t a n t
s h o u l d n ' t
t h e
c l o c k s a n d T V s b e
c h a n g e d a s w e l l ?

If this new code is so important to bother teachers with removing their carefully placed decorations in the middle of the school year rather than implementing the new code next year after the posters were already removed for summer, then it should also be an important safety issue to remove the clocks and TVs. Apparently, the fire code only applies to inconveniencing the teachers, not the school.

Rules are meant to keep students in line, yet they still skip, smoke, drink, cheat and do other things that are against the rules. When the rules bend, which they do quite often, the only thing students learn is that they can get away with whatever they want. Without consistency in enforcement, they have no real reason to stop misbehaving.

Fans 'Aiken for Clay' 'American Idol' fans angered by results; claimed rigged

By Katherine Hutton

Inside Editor

I am a huge fan of "American Idol," but not of the way that the producers have been influencing the viewers.

I didn't really follow the first season, but I noticed a bias in the second with the winner, Ruben Studdard. The judges would continually praise Studdard for his vocals, while dismissing those of runner-up Clay Aiken.

When it was time for the eighth person to be voted off, Studdard was placed in the bottom two. Now, whether he really did receive that few votes or if it was just a ploy fixed by the producers to get him more votes, I don't know.

Studdard was also shown favor over Aiken with the choices of their singles. Studdard was given "Flying Without Wings," a lovely ballad. However, it had already gone straight to number one on the British charts when it was sung by the popular Irish boy band Westlife in 2000. Aiken got "This is the Night," a song that he made number one, not someone before him.

This year, the producers have decided that Leah LaBelle is the one to support before voters formed their own opinion; she was the first dismissed from the top

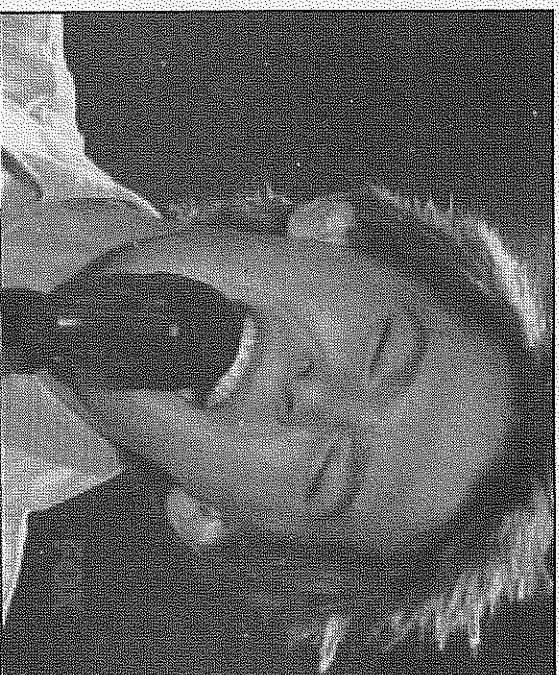
12. Studdard, I know, did have millions of fans. LaBelle, however, seems to be

disliked by many, considering she doesn't sing very well and likes to boast about her parents: her pop-star-from-the-seventies mother and member-of-the-first-rock-band-in-Bulgaria father.

Even though we all have our complaints about each of the judges, they do influence our voting. If Simon Cowell actually gives a compliment, viewers think that that person must therefore be talented. Any of the judges can do this in order to push their favorites ahead of the others.

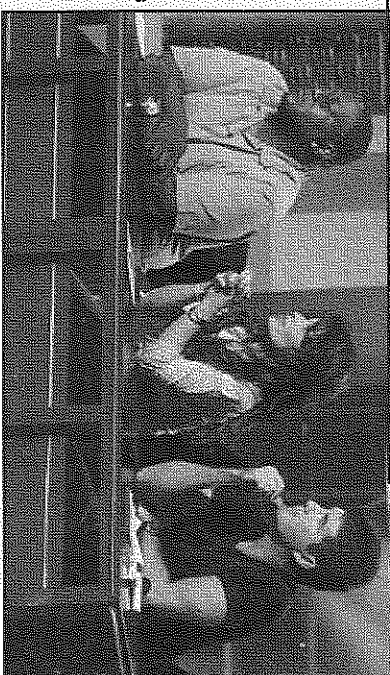
It's surprising that I don't like the producers. The creator and executive producer of the multiple "Idol" series, Simon Fuller, is the head of 19 Management and the manager behind of many of my favorite bands. He created Spice Girls, S Club 7 and the junior band, S Club 8. He even used some of the S Club songs for the "American Juniors" series, another topic that irks me. His staff for everything "Idol" is the same one that brought the S Club 7 TV series to life.

The producers for "American Idol" can unjustly sway the vote and determine who will be crowned American Idol. Or, maybe I'm just a crazy, obsessed "I'm Aiken for Clay!" fan who still feels dissatisfied.



(Left) Clay Aiken fanatics strongly believe that Aiken outperformed his opponent, Rubben Studdard, is more talent, and was more popular and therefore should deserve to win the title of the American Idol. That was not the outcome, however.

(Right) "Aiken for Clay fans" believe that the only possible explanation for Studdard's win and Aiken's runner-up finish is that the show's results were unjustifiably rigged by the three judges.



The

Oracle

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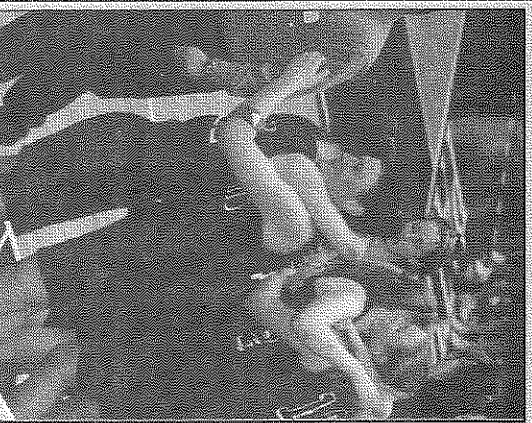
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History resembling basketball or basketball making history? History teacher's twist on Spartan history and Spartan basketball

By Leigh Shipman
Special to The Oracle

Hell's Gate is a narrow pass between the foothills of eastern Greece and the Aegean Sea. It was here in 480 B.C. that three hundred Spartan soldiers held off the Persian invasion and saved southern Greeks to fight another day. The Spartans were outnumbered 20 to one and one might assume, in view of this statistic that they grimly offered themselves up to a certain death. But history paints a different and far greater picture of the Spartan action in this pass. History shows these three hundred to have the qualities all Spartan citizens worked their entire lives to master.

The Spartan desire for distinction, for *kalos thanotos*, is well documented in history and implied a toughness, a humility, and a strength of purpose that is rarely duplicated. Spartans left home at an early age



Brogan Nelson
The Lady Spartans celebrate after the semifinals of the Northern Regional game.

and lived in a barrack in the company of those they would stand shoulder to shoulder with, advancing across many battlefields. They executed this advance with such precision and aplomb that it caused opponents to shake in their sandals. One of the many reasons these warriors could advance so unfailingly toward their enemies was their desire to sacrifice themselves to protect their mates; to bring glory to Sparta through victory on the battlefield.

But victory on the battlefield of Hell's Gate wasn't a consideration for any of the ancient Spartans. Having been granted the honor of fighting that battle, each and every Spartan and their beloved King Leonidas marched toward what they well knew was certain death. And while individuals departed, it wasn't for their own personal loss but for worry over not contributing enough to the Spartan cause.

If you were in Richmond on the evening of March 10 you were lucky enough to witness a more modern example of *kalos thanotos*. Our Lady Spartans maintained this quality during an incredibly tough game of basketball in the semifinal round of the state tournament. In stark contrast to their opponents, our girls maintained their composure and dignity, and while leading most of the game, didn't gloat, grab their jerseys, or roll around the court. They shouldered their burden together and when the game was over, demonstrated their knowledge of the fact that some things are far more valuable than victory. Thanks for another great season.

"Go tell the Spartans,
Stranger passing by,
That here, obedient to their laws,
We lie."

—epitah at Hell's Gate
Shipman teaches World History and Geography I.

No complaining without participating

By Christie Kim
Senior Staff Writer

As long as I have been in high school, I have noticed my fellow classmates in greater detail with each passing day. There are a wide variety of personalities, cliques and interests that I've come to respect, but not until recently have people's blatant ignorance bothered me so much.

As an officer of the Class of 2004, it is my job to represent and coordinate events and fund-raisers that will benefit my class. But with the recent voting for the class song, it seems there has been a sudden, unexpected interest in the senior class.

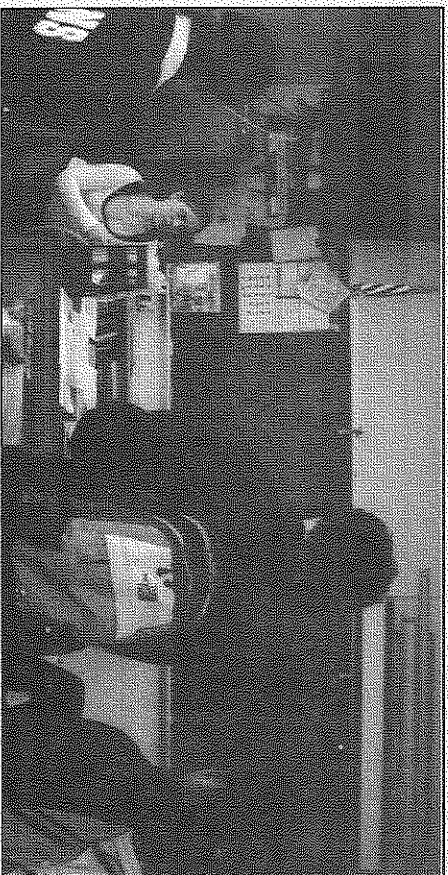
After many up-front accusations the other officers and I have received about "rigging" the votes with the selection of "I Believe In A Thing Called Love", the frustration we've felt for the past several months has reached its boiling point. It seems to be the cool thing to say these days because everywhere I go I hear that the senior class is not being well-informed of events or decisions. Since when have the majority of seniors cared so much about issues dealing with their class? I find it extremely aggravating that the only courses of action being taken for the senior class are negative ones. It is a rare circumstance, and a dream come true, to have people actually willing to take part in class functions. I am beyond grateful, however, for those seniors who have

consistently helped or supported the class.

The real point is that nine willing people, including the senior sponsors and senior administrator Richard Griffin, have ardously worked year long to make this year fun and productive. But it's disheartening to be chastised about things pertaining to the class when the officers and I have worked hard to coordinate events and make sure the school is fully aware of them.

To provide a few specific examples of the very many, the senior class held a car wash in the fall, but only a total of two seniors came out to volunteer their time.

To make the situation even better, we made a grand total of \$26 to nudge us on our way down that road to Prom. Not only was the volunteer's time wasted, but the officers' time was wasted as well. At the annual Spartan Games during homecoming week, a poor showing dampened our spirits for the night, along with the already bad weather. And with Faculty Follies, which recently took place, I was shocked at the vast array of empty seats in the auditorium that evening. I've received remarks about people not knowing about it, but it's hard for me to believe eight announcements and flyers around the school can be so inconspicuous. On the upside, there have been a few very successful events, such as car washes where we've earned several hundred dollars and the Talent Show where almost



A handful of seniors gather at a class meeting sponsor, Tara Ogden's classroom.

Chris Shannon

Senior communication needs improvement

By Sam Lee
Senior Staff Writer

Communications within the senior class has totally broken down. Officers declare that no one cares, but the class screams that the officers are the one who don't care about what everyone else wants. Through all this mayhem, decisions over the senior class song and the Prom theme have been decided without much input from the seniors, which is wrong.

The whole election wasn't well-publicized, with only a handful of announcements and maybe a flyer or two that never hung in the halls. The process took place at lunch, which of course is the perfect time for a vote, when the senior class is spread out across the school, with some still being in class. They couldn't possibly do it in government class, where seniors are actually together.

The votes were tallied and the winner was announced as "I Believe in a Thing Called Love," but The Darkness, I don't understand how it works into the whole graduation thing. Maybe it's the part about how "we could be rockin' till the sun goes

down."

After the song was proclaimed the winner, it was decided that it couldn't be played at graduation or be put on any graduation papers because of its explicit lyrics. Shouldn't someone have thought about that before it was on the ballot? It must be so in 10 years at our school reunion, then we are all gathered by the fruit punch, we can all think about our senior song: "I believe in something something" by the Caucus or something like that.

The class song is important to many seniors, and I don't understand why there was not more preparation for the vote. Some say that it's the class's fault for not participating more. I guess all the money I put in for senior class fund-raisers like Penny Wars isn't enough for a vote.

I'm proud of my class and I help as much as I can, and just because I don't have time for a class meeting, does not mean I'm not participating enough to have input for the class song. People have lives, and just because they don't revolve around being the most spirited senior doesn't give anyone the right to say that we don't have a voice.



Theresa Ohanian and John McFarland along with the other class officers danced to the senior class song, "I Believe In A Thing Called Love" at this year's talent show.

Danna Wiesenhan

the entire auditorium sold out. It's this kind of support we're looking for the most.

Even with the multiple upsetting turnouts of the year, the other officers and I have stayed optimistic because we never want to believe these events are a foreshadowing of future ones. If no one will help out with class functions, will anyone even come to Prom? Will it just be the six officers and their dates breaking it down in the ballroom with those select others who've contributed their time as well? I'm not saying that's going to happen, but I'm also not denying that it would be the honest, fair thing.

Now to end this with the topic that broke the final straw: the class song.

Announcements were made, flyers were put up, officers walked around during lunch handing seniors ballots to vote and a table was set up for people to come and vote outside the cafeteria. So, now let me review how the voting process works: The ballots are counted, and whichever song name obtains the most votes by the senior class is selected as the winner! Of course, some people will be upset with the turnout, but not everyone can be satisfied; it doesn't work that way.

The bottom line is that we provide the opportunities to make things happen, but they will never get done and no one will ever be happy unless it is realized that the reason you're upset is because of you.

News Bites

Musical mastery

—Congratulations to the WS orchestras for their great performances at the District XI Festival. Concert Strings received an overall grade of II and symphonic received straight I's and A's from the judges in all subcategories.

—Wind Ensemble also received excellent grades of straight A's in all subcategories at the District XI Festival. Overall, they received straight I's.

—Symphonic Band received a II overall.

—Congratulations to junior Emily Miller and senior Ben Foster for making the All State Orchestra and to sophomores Andrea Kopsstein and Justin Moore for making All State Band.

—Ladies Select in District XI Festival received all I's from each of the three judges, the top score possible. "We are very proud of our performance," said chorus director Mike Dombrow.

—Madrigals also received all I's. "In the grand scheme of things, the scores are insignificant," said Dombrow. "What is beneficial is what the professional judges have to say."

—Compiled by Grace Jo

Students take history knowledge to states

HISTORY from page 1

Virginia is divided into eight separate regions so students from several counties were present at George Mason. Only three other high schools from Fairfax County participated.

"This was the largest competition in several years in terms of the number of participants and high quality projects this year," said Boivin, who also serves as a judge for the junior high level. "I think several of them have a good chance of

going onto nationals."

Nationals will be held in June at the University of Maryland. If any of the groups win there they will be eligible for a number of scholarship opportunities. VA schools will also be able to apply for money from different interest groups that vary from year to year along with the theme.

"I think we all have a pretty good chance," said Seegers, "but you never know how good the other [groups] will be."

INOVA pays WS visit

BLOOD from page 1

Students donating for the first time overcame fears of needles and pain in order to help others.

"They give you a stress ball to hold," said senior Nathan Coffey. "It doesn't really hurt and it took less than five minutes."

The gym was not only filled with donors and specialists, but also friends who came along to support those who were nervous.

"High schools are our largest source of blood during the school year."

—Jim Dod, INOVA driver

"[A friend] held my hand so I felt better," said senior Theresa Ohaniam. "I didn't feel any pain."

Every year the drive proves to be a success, and the officers are confident that the numbers this year exceeded those of last.

"We had about 130 people [give blood]," said Key Club president senior Stephen Kalleeta. "That's a little more

than last year."

In order to give blood, students must be either 17 with parental permission or 18. They are immediately turned down if they have been ill in the past three days or weigh less than 110 pounds. There are other specific conditions that may keep students from giving blood such as high blood pressure, tattoos or recent surgery.

"People can get deferred for reasons like living in Europe, venereal diseases and using needles," said Kalleeta.

Prior to drawing blood, specialists sit down with the donor and ask them a series of questions to make sure they qualify and their blood is not diseased. Donors will be notified if a disease is found.

"When you give blood it's also like getting a free blood test," said Kalleeta.

INOVA was satisfied with the turnout of students who signed up to donate blood, but not necessarily surprised.

"High schools are our largest source of blood during the school year," said Dod. "It's nice to see [the large turnout] because if kids start [giving blood] at this age, they will continue to give blood in their later years. And nobody's kidding when they say there's a blood shortage."

Forsensics club talks way to successful year

Cutting up limbs, getting DNA samples is rumor

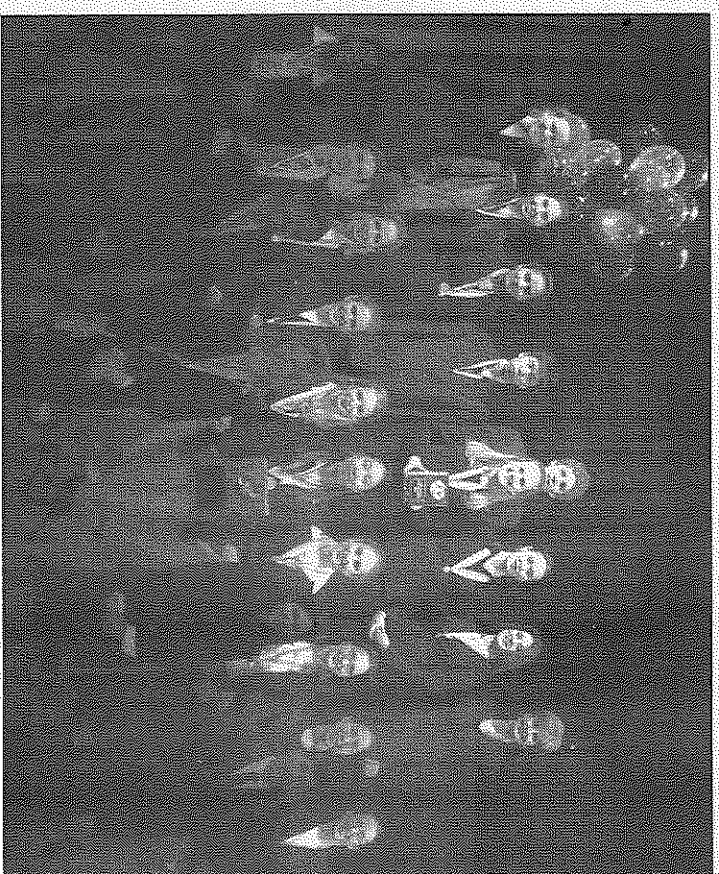
By Katie Bourget
Weekend Editor

The Forsensics club at WS cuts up limbs and swabs samples for DNA—at least in the minds of some confused announcement listeners. In reality, the Forsensics team is WS's successful speech and debate team.

During January and February, the

Serious dedication is required to compete at the top level. Besides after school practice and research, the weekly Wednesday tournaments can last up to eight hours. They are held at local high schools and individual events take place in classrooms.

"At the competition, it's very tense," said sophomore speech participant Aisha Toor. "There's like 30 kids competing for



MaryLove Wynne

The Speech and Debate team did well in their competitions this year, many students receiving first, second and third place awards.

team's busiest months of the year, the team competes in an average of two tournaments a week. There are four leagues for the Forsensics team to participate in.

In the Washington-Arlington Catholic Forsensics League (WACFL), six students qualified for national competition. In the Virginia High School League (VHSL), which is only for debaters, the team won districts.

In the Northern Virginia Forsensics League, where

the more novice team members can gain valuable experience in one of the 39 events, the team finished second in the league and second in the tournament.

Making with their medals after their win where they qualified for the team's the VHSL State Debate Competition.



MaryLove Wynne

record even more impressive is the fact they are able to win even on an uneven playing field.

"The other top two teams [Edison and Randolph-Macon Academy] have a Forsensics class," said the club's sponsor MaryLove Wynne.

WS hopes to also have a class next year, but in the meantime, most of the students in the club are former speech and debate class students.

"If you like acting or drama you do speech, if you like arguing you do debate," said sophomore Jamie Milloy who recently qualified for states in Lincoln-Douglas style debate.

Milloy is one of the few students who participates in both speech and debate.

first, second, and third place. It's hard to know where you stand."

One surprising aspect of the way speech and debate is judged is that all students competing in an event are in the room for their competitors' performances. Also in the room of course are judges, who are trained parent volunteers. While the goal is for the judges to be as objective as possible, sometimes students feel the judging can be biased. Milloy who has rather liberal political views and often refuses to follow Wynne's advice to be more conservative with her jewelry and eyeliner

has a experienced first hand that being passionate in debate can backfire.

"Judging is very subjective. You have to be careful and put your foot in your mouth," said Milloy. Still the team has experienced plenty of success during the winter season. Topping off the tournaments, the team was recently honored with the Sweepstakes Award, a cumulative prize awarded to a team for continually having a strong program.

Even with a better record that most of WS's sports teams, the misconception about the team's name is common.

"When I say I'm on the Forsensics team," said Milloy, "people say 'Ew you cut up dead people?' and I say, 'No, I give speeches.'"

‘Dave, do it for Rebecca. Or, at least for the free Cheez-Its.’

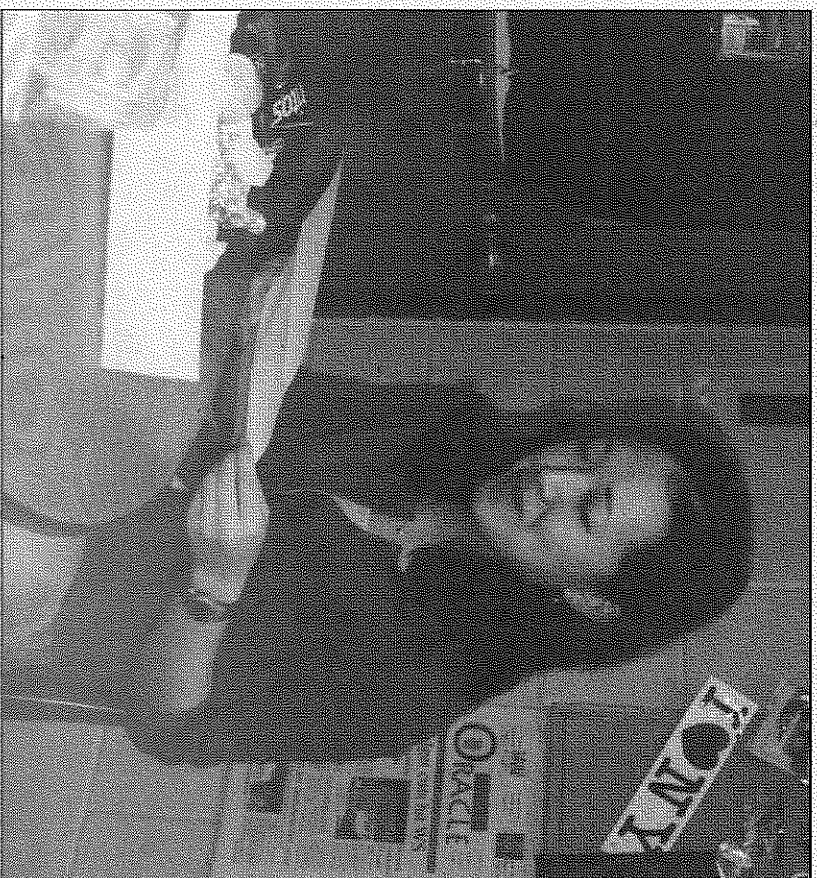
Dear Mr. Barry:

As an average teenage girl, my heart melts every time I see a picture of Ashton Kutcher, Colin Farrell or any other “wee-wee-obsessed boy figure in today’s media. Little did I know that I could actually feel more excitement from a picture of a 55-year-old writer than a 22-year-old actor with protruding pecs and over-gelled hair. Words cannot explain the surge of adrenaline that overcame me as my journalism teacher nonchalantly pulled out two signed photographs of the one person I look up to the most (that’s you, by the way) after sending you the article Liz [Weiderhold] and I wrote in the fall.

The tragedy that was my CVS “ordeal” stunted my excitement about our fateful encounter, since we had no proof of actually meeting you. As far as anyone was concerned, we were just two high school students freakishly obsessed with a man who is three times our age (not that there’s anything wrong with that, of course). Now that we both have a signed picture of you, we can show the world, meaning the confines of our school, that we are, *in fact*, best friends with Dave Barry.

Since we are now officially best friends, I would like to ask a dear favor of you. Since I, Christie Kim, am a senior this year at West Springfield High School as well as the Senior Class Secretary, I would absolutely love to have you speak at our graduation on June 16 — for free. Sadly, we can’t afford even to pay for your plane ticket, but we want you to come anyway! I think it’s ridiculous that I live in Fairfax County, the richest county in the nation, and we can’t afford to pay you a gazillion dollars to speak at our graduation. I mean, being a national bestseller, you must get awfully tired of receiving ludicrous amounts of money for being naturally brilliant. So, I feel I should be kind and offer you this free, and thoroughly satisfying, offer.

I know what you must be thinking. If she wants me to speak at her graduation, why hasn’t this girl asked me to stay at her humble abode yet? Well, Dave, I already have a bedroom ready for your arrival. You



Susan Sommerfeld didn’t think that his visit would inspire Rebecca and her fashion sense and declined Kim’s invitation to speak at graduation.

can even have the entire basement if you want. I will make sure there is always a full box of Cheez-Its (your favorite snack!) every three feet around the house in case you feel the need to munch. Also, if you need to explore the terribly exciting area that is Springfield, Virginia, you have permission to drive my Mercedes Benz. It may be an ‘86 with the pleather material cracked and has a diesel engine that, when it starts up, is loud enough to wake up a hibernating bear, but it will get you around. How anyone could pass up this opportunity is beyond me.

I cannot fully express the gratitude Liz and I feel because you took the time to read our article and sign pictures for us (I am not making this up!). I will also be very grateful if you don’t put a restraining order on a petite Korean-American (perhaps this description is redundant) seventeen-year-old girl in Springfield, Virginia after

reading this letter. In all honesty, if you spoke at my graduation it would be the biggest thing ever to happen in this town. Lifelong residents of the area recall a traffic light going out as the groundbreaking event of the century. We need you Mr. Barry — Davey.

The following information is factual and not just some ploy I’m using to get you to come to Springfield (well the first part is true). Last year, Madison High School, not too far from Springfield, was graced by the painstakingly high-pitched, funny Megan Mullally from the hit show “Will & Grace,” who spoke at the Class of 2003’s graduation. Now, you and I both know that West Springfield is definitely superior to Madison, therefore requiring a superior speaker (by the way, I’d appreciate it if this never got back to Ms. Mullally).

To end this letter, I have included some

New science elective offers chance to learn under stars

By Emily Miller

Managing Editor

Gazing at the stars, pondering cosmic questions, learning about the universe. No, this is not a philosophical, intellectual university, but WS’s new science elective: astronomy.

This class will be open to any rising sophomores and juniors who are interested in expanding their knowledge

“Why is there a planetarium in our school if there’s no class?”

—Dhruvad Bezboruah, junior

of what lies above, and who also have a prerequisite in chemistry and physics.

“It’s something that would be interesting rather than anatomy or environmental science,” said junior Stephany Loras. “It’s something different.”

WS is one of nine high schools with a planetarium but is the only high school not to have a class associated with it. The planetarium’s sole function is to serve as a field trip center for elementary and junior-high schools as part of their earth science unit. The county intended for it to help raise the 6th grade SOL science scores, and to also

excite kids about the world around them.

“It has no use currently at WS at all,” said physics teacher Dave Hinchler. “Period.”

Until recently, junior Dhruvad Bezboruah created a petition among students, pushing the issue all the way through the student body, guidance department and department head and even found a future teacher willing to teach the class.

“Why is there a planetarium in our school if there’s no class?” said Bezboruah.

Thanks to Bezboruah’s bold efforts, astronomy is officially on the course sign-up sheet for next school year. It still, however, faces more obstacles before the decision to reopen WS’s doorway to the galaxy and outside world is approved. Deadly factors in the decision, like the cost of textbooks and facilities, still dangerously lurk outside the doors of the planetarium.

“They start enrollment and determine the number of students interested,” said Hinchler.

If the astronomy class becomes part of the curriculum next year, Hinchler will teach the class, aside from his other four physics classes. The tentative itinerary consists of observations, projects, lectures and a possible field trip to see the Nike Missiles at the Great Falls Northern Virginia Astronomical Society observational site.

“The degree of science is going to be challenging,” said Hinchler.

very precious autographed photos of me writing to the one and only you — you — and another with my half-Asian. (but I figured I should still be friends with her) friend Rebecca. As you can tell, she has a slightly different sense of what good

“As you can tell, [Rebecca] has a slightly different sense of what good fashion is, but if you came to speak to us she would be thoroughly inspired. She might even be inspired enough to find a vest that fits.”

fashion is, but if you came to speak to us she would be thoroughly inspired. She might even be inspired enough to find a vest that fits.

Dave, do it Rebecca. Or, at least for the free Cheez-Its.

“B” to the “P” squared (that’s best friends forever).

Christie Kim
Student Journalist, Class Secretary,
and Stalker

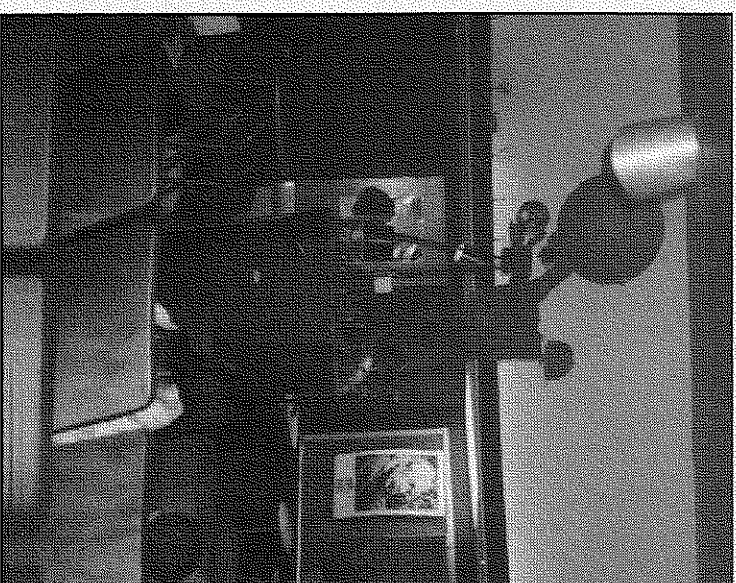
Dear Christie:

I’m flattered that you want me to speak at your commencement, but I can’t do it. This is probably good for you because if I did speak, and the school authorities heard me, and they found out that you invited me, they might now give you a diploma. So it’s all for the best.

But thanks for thinking of me, and please be sure to remind the graduates, in case no one else does, that the future lies ahead.

Sincerely,

Dave Barry



Sarah Draklin

The new astronomy class will be held in the school’s planetarium. Other than in-school field trips for some science classes, the planetarium’s equipment will be used for high schoolers for the first time.

Bezboruah is grateful that his quest to spark an astronomy class has come this far, and hopes that it will not fade away. He thinks it is a “fun elective to pursue” and hopes other students will continue to support it.

“Sometimes,” said Hinchler, “a voice of one in a populous of many can achieve results.”

Deadly disease strikes senior class

Senioritis rapidly claims scholastic lives of seniors

By Ashley Hughes

Photographer:

Ahh, senior year. The last year of high school. The finale. The end. The big finish. Sounds great, right?

So why is it so hard to get through? An unfortunate side effect, no *disease*, comes as part of the package deal with prom, college acceptance and senior skip days. Yes, my friends, the horrible virus *senioritis*.

Also diagnosed as "senior slump" or "senior slack," the ailment strikes even the most studious scholars, making it impossible to complete the most simple tasks.

"Is it Friday yet?" asks senior Kim Buckles, referring to one symptom of senioritis: the distorted feeling of time while in school. An hour to the rest of the Western world becomes five hours to senioritis sufferers.

As the disorder progresses, severe cases experience avid horror at the sight of pencils and lined paper, burning of assignment notebooks, and the formation of "anti-study" groups.

"Senioritis is contagious," said senior Dan Phan. "But I think it started freshman year." Talk about a severe case.

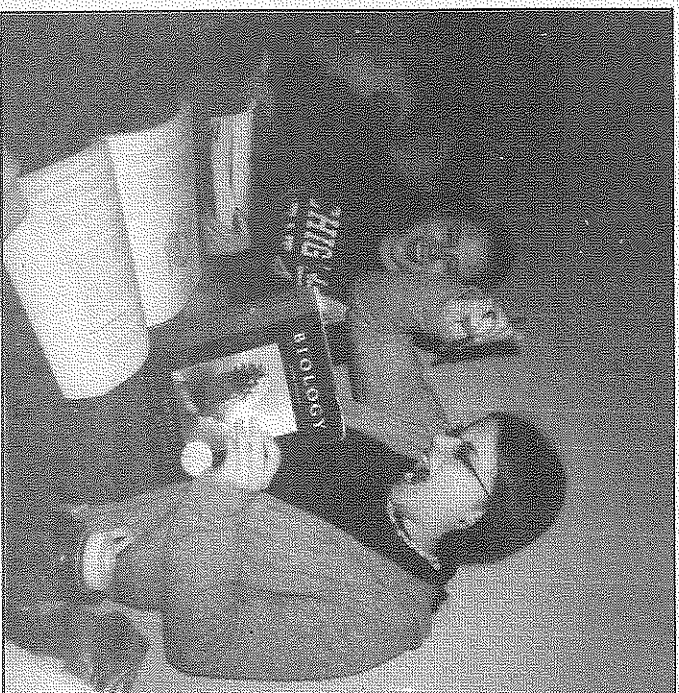
Believe it or not, the Department of Education has even set up a commission to study

the causes and effects of senioritis. This "Commission on the Senior Year" seeks to solve the problem, calling it a "lost opportunity during which time many students let one-quarter of their high school learning time slip through their fingers."

Learning may be slipping away, but life isn't passing us by just yet.

participating on the school track and field team. Like many other seniors Lang is also active in various clubs and tutoring, which demand time and commitment on a more irregular basis. By the time she finds a moment to take a break or relax, those textbooks start calling.

"It's gotten to the point where I can't make myself work anymore," said Lang. "It's become physically impossible." Instead of completing her anatomy or calculus homework



Seniors Megan Howard and Kim Buckles take out their anger and frustration from having to do work on their AP Biology book.

Senior Alex Vu experiences one symptom, drowsiness, and suffers the wrath of sociology teacher John McMenamin and his gavel. (her two least favorite subjects at the moment) Lang gazes longingly at her car and wishes she was somewhere else.

"It makes you resent school. You see the car in the driveway but can't take it out."

But College Board recommends otherwise. To suppress this desire to take it easy, they recommend that students maintain a challenging course load, remain active and involved in school, and try taking some college courses to get ready for the next four years.

Yeah. That sounds great. Sign



Senior Alex Vu experiences one symptom, drowsiness, and suffers the wrath of sociology teacher John McMenamin and his gavel.

me up. Now.

As Lang says, most seniors long to have more freedom to stretch their legs of independence. Our privileges are on an all-time high, but free time is on an all-time low.

Is there a cure for senioritis? Is there anything teachers can do to help us get back on track? Perhaps not. Maybe the answer will show up someday along with world peace and flying pigs.

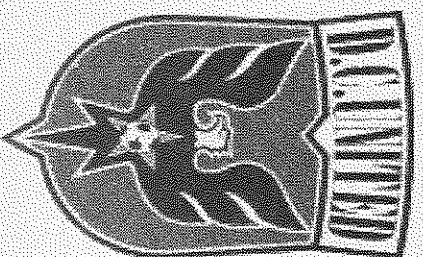
"There is no cure," said senior Larissa Rimm. "The only cure is the get the heck out of here and graduate!"

"A Night to Remite"

Brian Carroll and West Springfield

All faculty, staff, students & friends

April 24, 2004 5pm @ RFK



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For tickets call: 703-913-3924 or stop by room 277 or email: bill.gibson@fcps.edu

Teachers arrange and decorate their rooms for maximum results

The Chinese art of Feng Shui influences WS

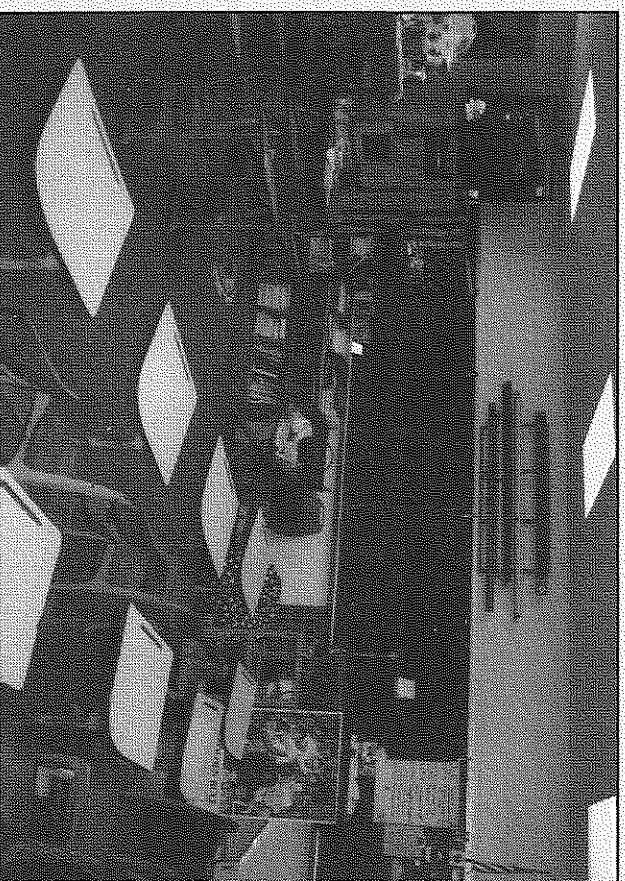
By **Katie Bourget**
Weekend Editor

It is a proven fact that room arrangement can have a positive effect on your attitude and mood. The ancient art of Feng Shui has emigrated from China to the US and is even evident in WS classrooms.

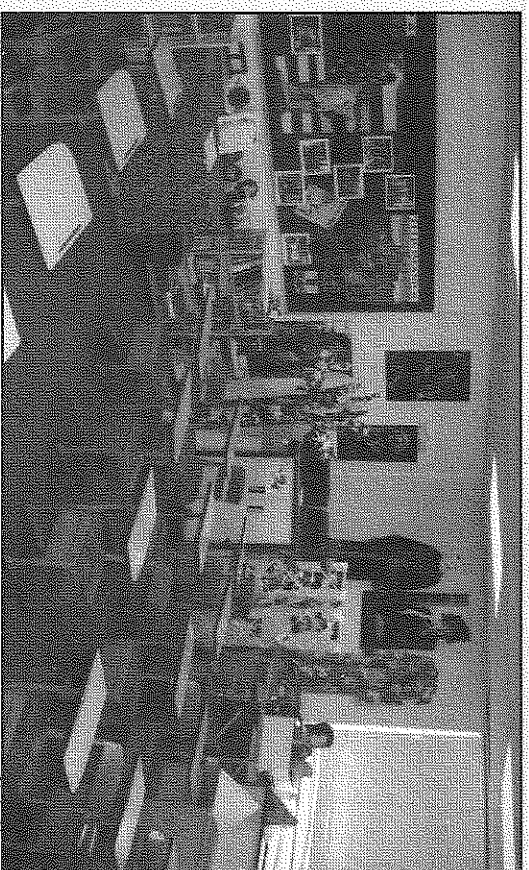
While in its most au-

thentic form, Feng Shui is so precise and particular, it is considered a metaphysical science, the classroom arrangement teachers adopt seek to reap the benefits of Feng Shui like prosperity, harmony, vitality and constructive changes. Factors that determine the setup of a classroom

differ from subject to subject, but there are few issues that all teachers must consider such as board visibility and the possibility that desk arrangement could promote cheating. History teachers are especially challenged because they must attempt to situate the room so that stu-



US history teacher Laurie Fischer's room is arranged for maximum visibility of the blackboard and overhead. *Chris Shannon*



US history teacher Laurie Fischer's room contains colorful visuals. It is divided into two halves, making the room efficient for class discussions and debates. *Chris Shannon*

dents can see the maps, overhead and television screen from movies or PowerPoint presentations.

"It's too institutionalized [to have all the rows facing forward. I want to be a relaxed atmosphere," said US history teacher Laurie Fischer who has her room in two halves facing each other, one group towards the windows, the other towards the door.

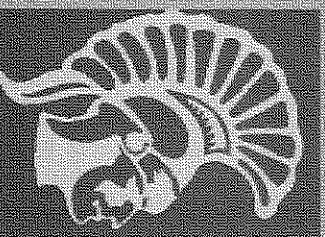
The layout has proven to be conducive to discussions and debates. Additionally, Fischer's beanbag chairs are popular among her students who race towards the comfy seats while watching videos or taking notes.

For teachers in mobile classrooms or trailer, space is extremely limited and designing a layout is a major challenge. While such classes are required for space reasons, the environment can be less pleasing to students.

"The trailers are so narrow. You can only look one way and you can't see the clock or the board for that matter," said sophomore Linnette Lam. "Also, it's not so great when the weather's bad. When it's raining or snowing or windy you can hear it all class."

Many colleges offer classes for teacher regarding arrangement of room and with plethora of factors like electrical cords, fire codes and lighting and glare issues, finding a balance is not a simple task. From the student point of view, a room that seems too tall or stressful can be detrimental to their perception of the class as well as their behavior and interest.

"I think the layout can at least subliminally affect a student's participation," said world history teacher Leigh Shipman. So while WS teachers may not be Feng Shui experts, some classes aesthetic and design properties make them more inviting and less stressful to students.



Nathanael Rhoden

By **Anna Sommerfeldt**
Inside Editor

Nathanael Rhoden seems like the average freshman playing video games and listening to music, but he is unique. While not a star athlete or an outstanding student, Rhoden stands out.

Rhoden claims to be a geek, referring to his interest in fantasy drawings, but by the stereotypical image with thick glasses and a textbook always in hand, he is nothing of the sort. In fact, Rhoden is frank about one of his not-so-nice (and not-so-geeky) defining characteristics.

"I am lazy," said Rhoden. "You can ask anyone who knows me."

But despite his slacking, Rhoden is in two Honors classes this year.

"I try not to be lazy," said Rhoden. "My parents think I'm capable of doing well." Rhoden also describes himself as hyper and says he might have Attention Deficit Disorder, a possible explanation for the variety of activities he is or has been involved in. He attempted to learn the guitar but claims failure in that area.

Another activity was doing teeth for the play this year, which he enjoyed.

"I got to be one of the people that gets to run back and forth in the dark," he said, "which was pretty cool."

Rhoden plans on teaching for the musical as well.

Rhoden has participated in Boy Scouts for about four years. This classic American



Freshman Nathanael Rhoden enjoys participating in many different activities. *Chris Shannon*

pastime means something else to Rhoden than moral values and outdoor skills. He's fun because we burn things," said Rhoden. "The things you can do with a can of bug spray and a match—you'd be amazed."

One of Rhoden's unusual enjoyments is to say hello to random people at school. "People are too uptight nowadays with their cliques and stuff and it's fun to see how they react," said Rhoden.

The responses he receives vary greatly. "If it's the older popular girls, they look down on me and scowl," said Rhoden. "Sophomores are usually friendly."

Rhoden is a unique character with varying interests and his quirky hobbies show this. "My style is unique I guess," said Rhoden. "I wore a skirt yesterday."

Spartan Profiles

Laura Fawcett

By **Camila Casillas**
Managing Editor

Junior Laura Fawcett was born September 9th at 2:22 pm and strangely her best friend, Sarah Pickford, was born exactly 24 hours later on September 10th at 2:22 pm at the exact same hospital. This was the beginning of a long friendship filled with a string of coincidences.

Fawcett and Pickford met when they were two years old when Pickford's mother became Fawcett's day care provider. Their families became very close, and now they spend every New Years together skiing at Deep Creek, Maryland. Not only are they both Virgos, but they both have younger brothers, love gunny bears and both play soccer.

"Our families are really similar," said Fawcett. "When we got a new car, hers got a new car a month later."

Despite their remarkable similarities, Fawcett and Pickford also have differences. Fawcett and Pickford don't look alike. Fawcett has blonde hair and Pickford has brown hair. They also have different interests. Pickford is the artistic one who is involved in theater and art classes while Fawcett is into music. She plays the flute and piccolo in the WS wind ensemble and



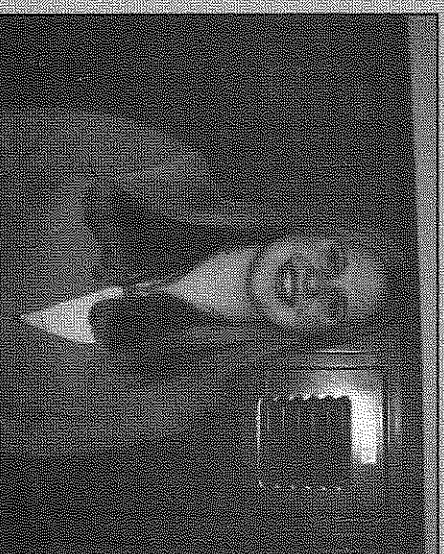
was a section leader for the Marching Spartans.

Pickford does not attend WS. She is actually home schooled by her mother, so she is not influenced by some of the negative aspects of high school.

"Through her, I've gotten to know a lot of other kids that I wouldn't have otherwise," said Fawcett. "She's really cool."

On their fifth birthday they accidentally gave each other the same present, and they had joint birthday parties for their sweet 16.

"There have just been all these freaky coincidences," said Fawcett. "I'm going to really miss her next year when she goes to school."



Junior Laura Fawcett shares many unique coincidences with her best friend Sarah Pickford. She also plays the flute and plays soccer. *Chris Shannon*

EXTRA

Administration gives in,

By Heidi Stilgoi
Oracle Controversy Editor

The students are celebrating in the streets. As of April 1, a new kind of lunch will be in effect. Students will officially be allowed to get in their cars and drive away and go anyplace they like; W/S will no longer be a closed campus.

Principal David Smith recently announced this new plan after complaining of the numerous food fights that have occurred in the cafeteria.

"I'm just sick of dealing with the flying food," said Smith, who was particularly bitter after being pegged with 29 packets of ketchup last week.

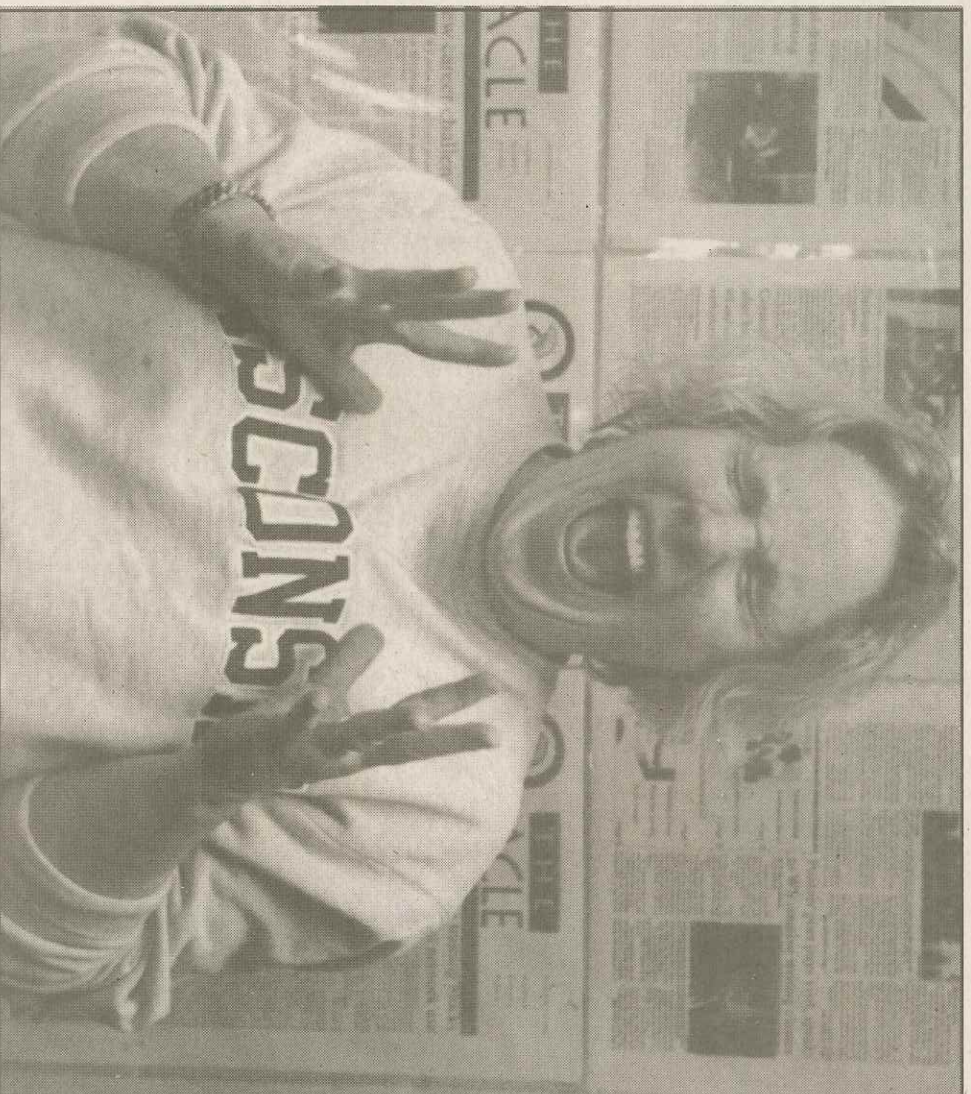
Since students will most likely embrace this new freedom now being offered to them, the cafeteria will be shut down. The space will not go to waste, however. It will be converted to a swimming pool. And although Smith will no longer have to deal with "flying food," the pool brings to light new concerns.

"There is just one problem I face with the pool," said Smith. "How do we avoid inappropriate clothing?"

Unfortunately, Smith security guards for help the dress code. The entire staff because there is no existence on campus. The was defined as "a man golf cart chasing down s would mainly fulfill the lunch periods, but now students to leave campus simply nothing left to do "I'm crushed," said (Imaouto Geyou. "Hiding skippers was the highlight those golf carts."

Teachers are more sup than the former security using it to benefit them.

"I have kids stop by S said English teacher Mar my order, they fail for th Students are also disp



Susan Sommerfeldt

Journalism teacher Brooke Nelson reacts with typical hysteria to recent incendiary incident.

FIRE!

Journalism room goes up in smoke

By Liz Barry
Harry Potter Fanatic

Allegedly flammable materials spontaneously combusted May 31, causing W/S' highly respected but often impugned Journalism rooms to go up in a metaphorical puff of smoke.

"Obscenely dense wall decorations" were not placed in accordance with fire code regulations, according to highly informed, but probably incorrect, sources. The fire broke out during the middle of the day, while *The Oracle* staff was working on its most recent issue. The fire alarm subsequently went off, for the 450th time that week.

"I grabbed all my McDonald's toys and just ran for it," said adviser Brooke Nelson. "I was in shock, complete shock."

The staff evacuated the building and watched the conflagration until authorities arrived. Rooms 215 and 218, located in the school's English wing, were the only ones to burn before the firefighters extinguished the fire. The fire safety inspector, Avery Thingsflamabletome, visited W/S only a few weeks before the incident to issue orders to remove all paper and posters within two feet of the ceiling.

"They failed to comply with the regulation and as a result, this happened. I can't say I didn't expect it," said Thingsflamabletome.

Every inch of space on the top of the walls in Room 215 hosted 10 years' worth of *Oracle* front pages. In addition, a bulletin board placed only two-and-a-half feet from the door, six inches less than required,

showcased materials such as decayed fruit, a picture of Howard Dean, and photos of members of both staffs, all of which are on the county's approved list of "highly flammable materials."

Other materials on this list total 78,352 items, including receipts, glue sticks, humans, computers, Webster's Dictionaries, French poodles, Yamaha grand pianos, toilet paper and Twinkies. Failure to obey the law may result in expulsion from the room, a \$550 fine, and up to 78 months in jail. Nelson was aware of these consequences and spent many class periods trying to move her newspapers to a "safe" location.

"I almost died from falling off my ladder while taking the papers down," she said. "*The Oracles* weren't even what caused the fire. Chris Shannon always gives his fries to Emily Sommerfeldt and I think she was stashing them in her cubby. Betsy Miller told me that, anyway. And you know what an accurate journalist she is."

Thingsflamabletome has looked into the destruction of Nelson's sanctuary and may be revising his 2004-2005 safety plans to include the areas in which Sommerfeldt stashed the fries, as well as adding peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to his list of "highly flammable materials."

"People have to understand that fire is a dangerous thing," said Thingsflamabletome. "All I can do in my power is to tell people that their rooms must be stripped clean of anything that is not in fact the wall. If they don't listen, then you might end up like *The Oracle*—burnt to a crisp."



Seniors in years past, like Kara Garbe and Katie Fontana of the Class of '97, had

Administration move

By Mrs. Johnny Depp
Official Pirate Editor

April showers bring May flowers, and May flowers will be just in time to congratulate the class of 2004 as they walk across the stage of George Mason's Patriot Center to receive their diplomas.

The band will be playing "Pomp and Circumstance" for the graduating class, but instead of the date being June 16, the seniors will forever be freed on May 20 from high school.

The Fairfax County School Board held an important emergency meeting on Monday, March 22 concerning the senior class. Prior to the meeting, the chaos caused by the students became increasingly worse.

"The seniors this year truly disappointed me," said Principal David Smith. "The only solution we could see for their behavior was to get rid of them as soon as possible."

During the meeting, board members discussed the issues brought up by the students' outrageous behavior. Seniors brought alcoholic beverages to class

cleverly concealed in wa chocolate or Gatorade. Th showing. Skipping becar to Starbucks and Chesap said the fact that studt trashcans and tied them class was the last straw.

"It's my senior year o looking for something to said senior Al Koholic.

Unfortunately, making Seniors are being force weeks earlier, cutting th month.

"We didn't mean to do Allthetime. "They may but summertime partying May 20 isn't here yet, a rule enforcement will be

"[Seniors] may think t us, but we won't alle administrator Richard Gr

BRAND NEW

OPEN BRAV?

opens campus for lunch

will not be able to ask the when it comes to enforcing team was cut from the WS longer a reason for their job of a WS security officer who occupies his time in a kipping students." The men one and only duty during that the school is allowing s during this time, there is

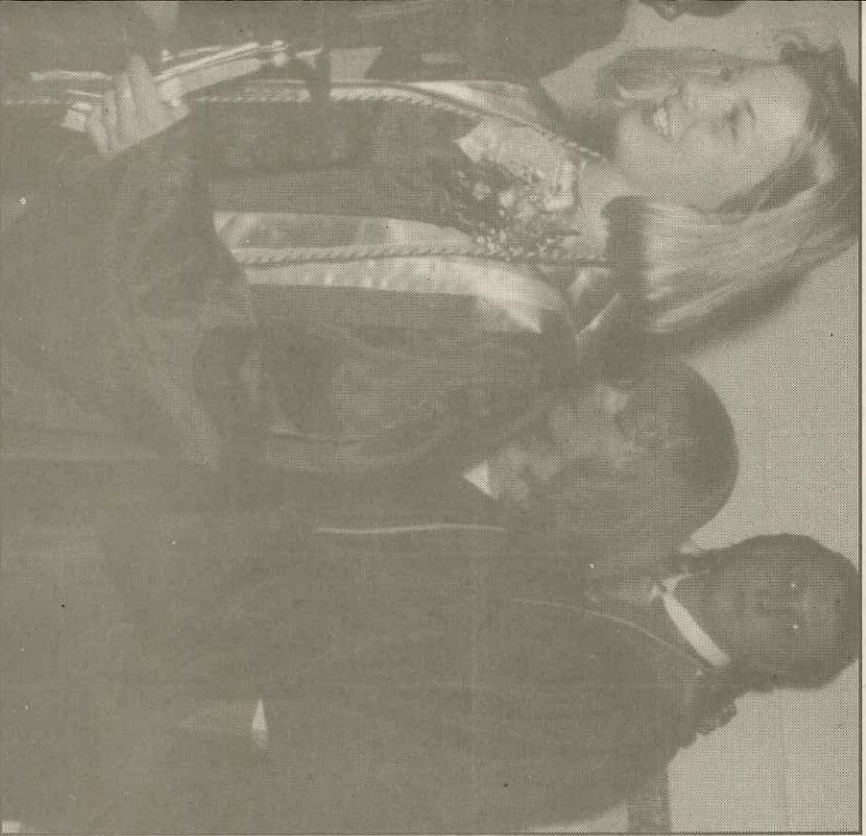
ne former security officer behind bushes and catching of my life. Plus, I just loved department, and some are

arbucks for me every day," y Moriarty. "If they mess up e quarter."

Since students will most likely embrace this new freedom, the cafeteria will be shut down and be converted to a swimming pool. And although Smith will no longer have to deal with "flying food," the pool brings to light new concerns.

have been seen celebrating in many different ways. The McDonald's flag has been seen on belt buckles, bumper stickers and T-shirts; the drill team has new uniforms with Burger King buns on the butt, and the baseball team toasted one another to a cup of freshly brewed ice tea.

"One of the swimmers called me and told me all about the switch to an open campus," said Varsity skinny dipping coach Ed Nake. "I'm just glad everyone's having fun."



Oracle File

SS graduation to May

to wait until June. With the new policy in place, seniors will say "adios" in May.

er bottles and mixed in hot e "four B's" were constantly ne more of a daily migration eake Bagel Bakery. Sources ters stuffed teachers into o chairs by the graduating

high school and I was just make it more memorable." memories comes at a price. d to take their finals three ir learning time by about a

any harm," said senior Skip g—here we come." hink they're punishing us, and until the seniors are gone, stricter than ever. hey can continue to control w it," said senior class iff. "They've gotten away

with using and abusing the system and it will not happen again. You have my word on it."

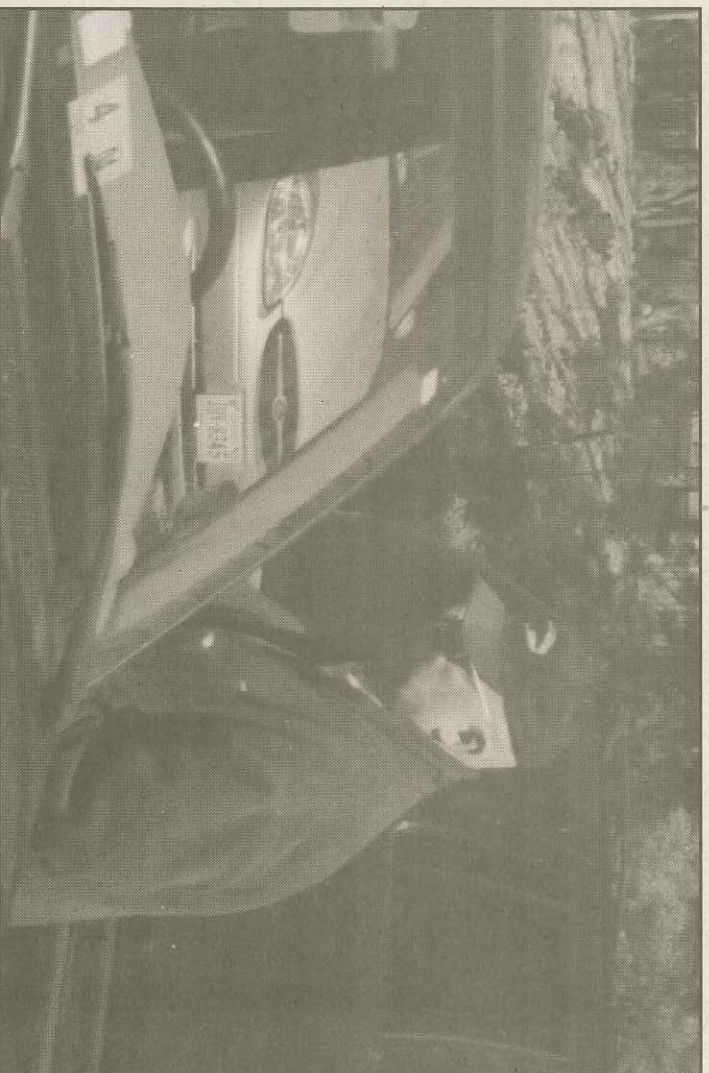
Skipping will not be tolerated, Griffin said, although the new open campus policy will make that hard to enforce. Ends of shorts and skirts must go past the fingertips. And any V-neck shirts must be measured and the V cannot be more than three inches deep. In addition, all cell phones will be collected by the first block teacher every morning. Seniors can pick up their phones at 2:10 p.m.

Despite the strict rule enforcement, the seniors are taking their punishment well. Other students, however, are distraught that the seniors will be "sprung" early because of bad behavior.

"I'm, like, super sad that the seniors are, like, leaving," said freshman Amanda Huggenkiss. "All my boyfriend's, I mean friends, will be gone."

In one month, when underclassmen and faculty wave goodbye to the troublemakers, some will let out a sigh of relief.

"At least I won't get stuffed into the freshman lockers anymore," freshman Ina Nerd said.



Sarah Drabkin

Frosh drowns in 3rd-floor pool

By Angelina Johnson
Quidditch Chaser and Captain

Mork and Mindy Tennyson continue to mourn the death of their freshman son, Alfred. Little Alfred was found floating face-down in the mysterious 3rd-Floor Pool last Friday.

Two of Alfred's chums, Tom and Jerry, dared him to venture up another flight of stairs and dip his toes into the forbidden pool. Little did he know that seniors of years past have put a curse upon the waters that will release the giant basilisk to any underclassmen who feigns senjoridom.

Tom and Jerry were understandably shaken when they heard the shrieks of terror from behind the closed door and at first they were to scared to find the source of these yelps of pain.

"I wasn't that scared, but Jerry peed his pants," said freshman Tom McScaredy. "I kept telling him that we had to go help Alf, but he just stood there like stone." It has been rumored for many years that there really isn't a secret pool, but officials hope that students will be more prudent in the future.

"Hopefully students will stop seeking out this danger zone in the wake of Alfred's death," said school principal Dr. David Smith.



A giant basilisk was the cause of one freshman's demise in WS' 3rd-Floor pool Friday night. Alfred Tennyson will be remembered fondly by one and all.

Up to this point, teachers have denied allegations that there is a pool one story above us, but the three boys felt that there was more to it than that. When the boys began to hear noises coming through the school's plumbing they decided that Alfred should seek out the source of the slithering.

"Alfred volunteered, really!" said Jerry I. Wannacy. "He said that his brother had told him it was there and he wanted to make sure he wasn't lying."

Alfred's parents have decided to sue the two boys and the school system over letting such a tragic accident occur. McScaredy-Pants and Wannacy could possibly be facing a life sentence if convicted and FCPS might have to close it if it loses the lawsuit.

students for misuse of weapons and overconsumption of mellowing substances, and fooling around on the 50-yard line. In addition, sources said, the Brazil Twins will probably have to resort to going to the post office and purchasing their own stamps in order to make their views widely known.

"We really pushed the envelope this year," Editor Jen Siomacco said. "And, you know, we did it on purpose. We never write anything down. We make it all up. We're just out to get you, plain and simple."

"Let's face it," Siomacco added. "It's just more fun that way!"

YELLOW JOURNALISM has been the norm for the past 10 years, since noted but much-maligned Journalism teacher Brooke Nelson took over the program.

"I think it's all for the best," fellow Editor Rachel Wohlers, who wasn't here to give the quote so we're going to concoct one for her, said. "We ticked a lot of people off."

Wohlers, whose family is moving to Macedonia this summer, has considered joining Mom and Dad because of all the flak she gets from angry readers.

"I thought Oracles were supposed to predict the future, not make up the present," said one reader. "But I guess it's OK for them to do it on April Fools Day!"

Oracle ceases publication

By Imaplaid Couch
Lunch Critic

The Oracle has officially ceased publication because of inappropriate content and unfounded skewering of sources, sources said recently.

"This will be our final issue," a disgruntled and terribly perturbed Heidi Sfigigoj said. "I've been editor for so long. I don't know what I'll do during lunch."

Sources said the WS administration, at the behest of complaining readers, will limit all other WS publications to Xeroxed copies of enthusiastic missives designed to boost **Spartan Spirit!** That would be the predominant reason this particular issue is printed in **Lake Braddock Colors**.

Those close to The Oracle said that the recent action banning subversive scholastic publication activity will result in more bare midrifts; increased bellies sporting Confederate Battle Flag belt buckles; permissive codding of misbehaving athletes; heightened signing up of too many unqualified doofuses for those oh-so-difficult-1-m-about-to-pec-my-pants Advanced Placement Courses; expelling of

ANNOUNTMENTS

Cherry Blossoms bloom

By Christie Kim

Senior Staff Writer

Springtime brings about the arrival of new life, warm weather, and those new, in style flip-flops from the Gap. It also offers people around the DC area an opportunity to enjoy its 92nd annual Cherry Blossom Festival.

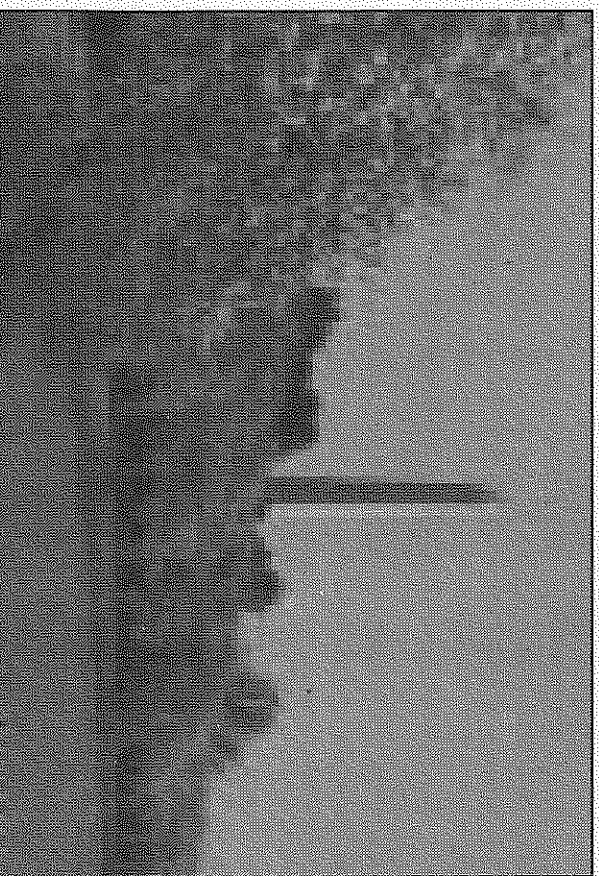
This yearly celebration started in 1912 when the mayor of Japan, Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo, presented the United States with 3000 cherry blossom trees as a symbol of the close relationship between the two countries. The trees are located around the Tidal Basin and are lined along the edge of the Potomac waterfront and represent the 150th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace between the two countries.

With a great view of the Jefferson Memorial, anyone can enjoy a pleasant walk alongside the grand Potomac and underneath the dozens and dozens of blooming trees. The pinkish white blooms of these famous trees draw tourists from around the nation every spring and capture the essence of springtime in the nation's capital. The peak bloom date is set for April 4 which will be the best day to witness the

rees in full bloom.

Not only is a walk along the riverside with the trees the most common way to enjoy the blooms, many other events take place in leiu with the blossom festival. A very popular attraction at the Tidal Basin during cherry blossom season are the paddle boats. Usually made for two or four people, these small, rental boats provide a more panoramic view of the row of blossoms with the background silhouette of DC's buildings from the river's perspective. It surely is breathtaking and something not experienced by many who have never visited. The banks of the river also provide enough green grass to enjoy an afternoon picnic under the shade and canopy of the blossoms. Many people bring their dogs, loved ones, or a nice book to accompany them as they bask in nature's peaceful beauty.

Mainly a tourist attraction and an excuse for a family outing, the Cherry Blossom Festival is something everyone should attend at least once since it's only a short drive away from Springfield. If you're a romantic, nature lover, outdoor person, or warm weather freak, this event could be just the thing to put the yin with that yang.



Blooming Cherry Blossoms attract throngs of tourists to observe the pink trees and partake in the festivities in and around the Tidal Basin.

Paddle, paddle, paddle your boat gently down the Basin

By Katie Bourget & Danny Tinsley

Oracle Staff Writers

A warm spring afternoon, cool breezes off the Potomac River, the cherry blossoms and paddleboats.

Every weekend seems to involve the same routine. If you journey down to DC this weekend, you'll not only catch the opening of the famed blossoms, but you'll probably get a good tan, too.

Paddling around the Tidal Basin on a lazy afternoon is a great alternative to hanging around this lovely town of Springfield.

You could even sit a spell, floating along, while you let your paddleboat partner do all the work.

The Tidal Basin, at the intersection of Independence and 15th streets NW in DC, is a great alternative for an anything-but-exciting weekend. But you have to know a few rules first.

Life on the open seas of DC is perilous to any paddleboating amateur. If you don't have the proper technique, then a pleasure cruise could turn into a Titanic-sized tragedy.

When first entering the vessel, make sure the plastic structure is securely tied to the dock. Next, step carefully into the captain's quarters and prepare yourself for a rough and rowdy ride. Once you have been released from the dock and let out into the open seas the world is at your command.

The turbulent waters may be alarming to first-time sailors, so don't let it get the

better of you. Always remember to keep your hands and feet inside the vessel at all times. This is a crucial part of proper safety in the paddle boating experience.

Paddleboats on the mighty Tidal Basin rent for \$8 an hour for a two-person boat, \$16 an hour for a four-person boat. If you want to really get down and party on the Tidal Basin, you get a 50-cent discount per boat for renting 10 boats or more. The one



FDR's memorial, one of the more recently constructed, is unique because of its water features. Large fountains mist and gallons of water splash down huge rock boulders.

Parading DC: a monumental event

By Hilary Heincer

Senior Staff Writer

People are always complaining about not having anything to do, or lack of funds with which to do it. However, they are forgetting about the wealth of free places to go in DC, open at all times: of the day memorials.

Spring is here and time to be outside before allergies and bugs come out is fast approaching. The cherry blossoms are blooming around the Tidal Basin, and the view is spectacular. There is no better way to spend a day than outdoors, walking and talking with friends.

Many memorials are located on and around the Mall, near the scenic Tidal Basin, Potomac River and Constitution Gardens. The Washington Monument and the Jefferson, Lincoln and FDR Memorials, are all in a relative circle that is sprinkled with smaller monuments and statues, as well as the Vietnam and Korean War memorials. Those just walking next to the Capitol will find two: one to Grant and the other to Garfield.

There are several Metro stops nearby,

including L'Enfant Plaza and the Smithsonian, and parking as well near the FDR memorial if a person does not wish to spend the money needed to ride Metro. By getting off at the Archives-Navy Memorial stop, visitors find their first memorial as soon as they come out of the station.

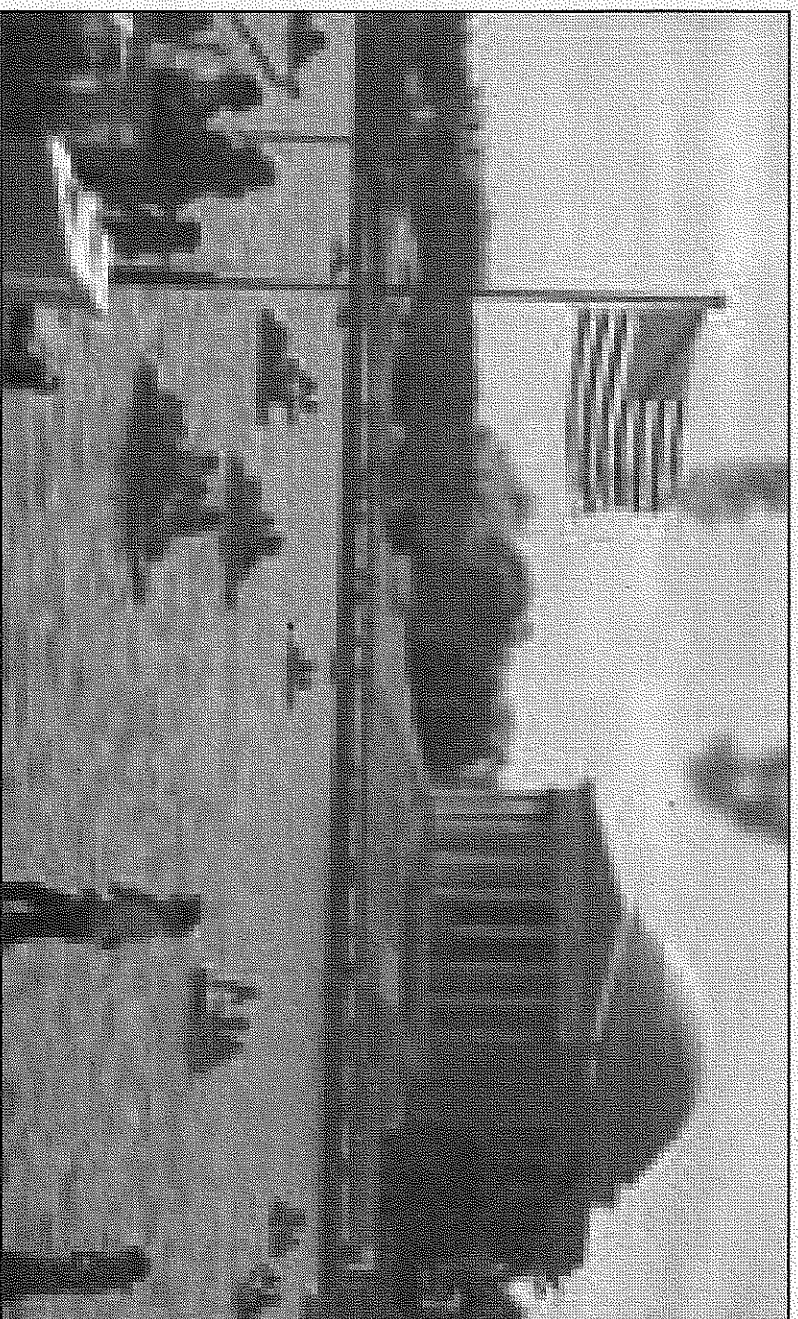
The memorials vary in size, theme, and structure and offer something for everyone. If a person is bored to tears with the big ones such as the Lincoln and FDR memorials, he can search for smaller ones to people he's rarely or barely heard about.

However, visitors should try re-visiting the ones they've seen, and see whether or not they can find a new found appreciation or recapture the enjoyment they've felt before. The FDR memorial is extremely park-like, and time can be spent just sitting next to the flowing water or playing around on or with the statues. Most memorials offer a chance to reflect on America's past, or to just relax.

For a cheap day with lots of fun, it's time to go to the places most people travel long distances to see, as well as enjoy a day with friends.

Basin Paddleboats is in the parking lot. Blue and orange line Metro trains run to the nearby Smithsonian station also.

If the boating gets dull, there are lots of other things to do in the area. Stroll around the Tidal Basin, visit Mr. Jefferson, reflect on the words of wisdom etched in the multidimensional FDR Memorial. Or play FDR's fountains. Paddleboating in DC is a splash.



Open seven days a week, paddleboating is a carefree and relaxing activity. At the Tidal Basin, renting a two-person boat like the happy rowers in the picture cost \$8. During the month of April, blooming Cherry Blossoms enhance the experience.

Teens dance up the night in DC, Chantilly

By Christina Araj

Viewpoint Editor

For the students tired of waiting for the school dances to satisfy their dance cravings, there are now new possibilities for quenching that rhythmic thirst.

Students have discovered dance hot spots located nearby where they are able to experience an exciting nightlife of dancing. Platinum in DC is one of those spots.

"[It's fun because] you get to dance and meet new people," said senior Margot Teutler.

The club, for ages 18 and older, consists of four floors, including three dance floors, each with a different type of music.

"[My favorite floor is the] Latin and trance," said Teutler.

If Latin and salsa music are not your particular craze, there is still two other floors with hip-hop, rap and funk, or house and techno.

"It's not fun at all anymore. It's turned into more of a little kids place."

—Seung Han, junior

The club is open from 10pm to 3a.m on Fridays and Saturdays and until two on Sunday. Empty pockets are not a problem if you get there before 11 p.m.

The scene is even better for those who are fortunate enough to carry a VIP title. They are able to enjoy the plush VIP lounge and other perks.

"You get free stuff and a really nice room," said Teutler. "[My favorite part] is dancing on the stage."

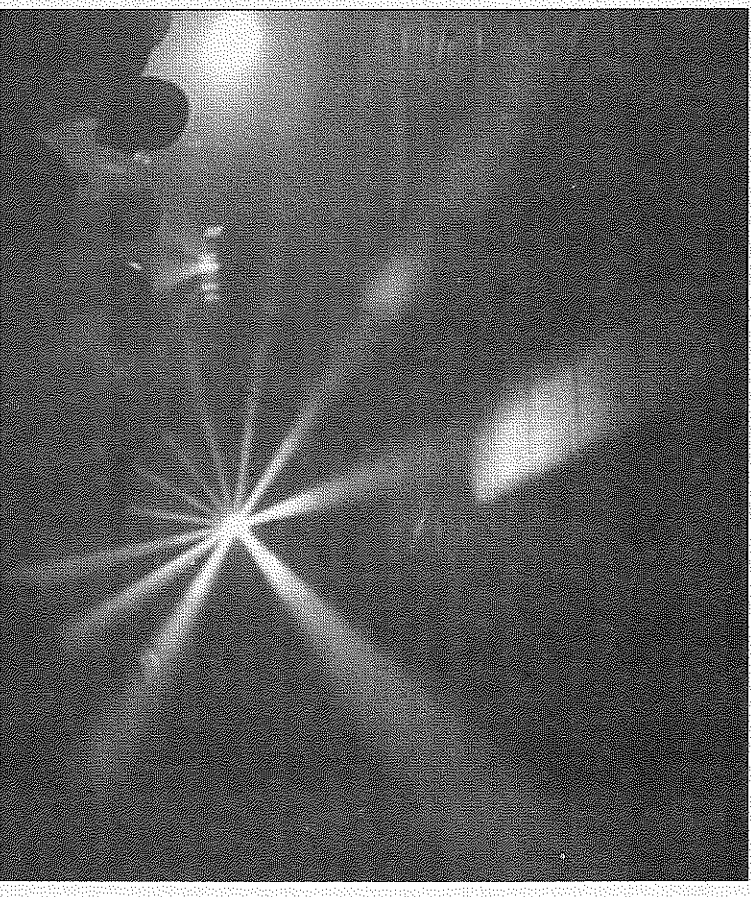
The Platinum scene may seem enjoyable enough for those who are able to experience it, but for those who are under 18, there are always other alternatives.

Planet Club, for only under-21 dancers, is like a mini Platinum. It is a part of the Planet Splash and Play amusement park in Chantilly and offers a downgraded nightlife, lasting only until 1 a.m.

The accessibility to pretens is seen as a negative aspect to some, however. "It's not fun at all anymore," said junior Seung Han. "It's turned into more of a little kids place."

The dance floor is open on Fridays and Saturdays depending on what age group you fall into. On Fridays it welcomes ages 11-15 and on Saturdays, ages 15-20.

A mix of hip-hop music and top 40 trance sounds hosted by Z104 blasts in a laser-light filled atmosphere. Planet Club



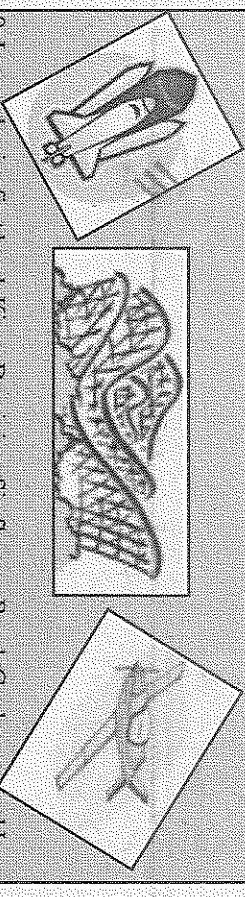
Platinum DC offers three separate dance floors with different types of music for teens, also offers a series of floors. There is a lower level that contains arcade games and an ice skating rink.

Just because its dark, however does not mean any misbehaving is tolerated. There are plenty of chaparones and police officers

"It's more restricted now," said Han. "You can't really be free and do your own thing."

Top Ten Things to Do During Spring Break

10. Go to the new Air & Space Museum, named after its biggest donor, Stephen E. Udvar-Hazy. It contains hundreds of exhibits and even the space shuttle Enterprise. It is conveniently located near Dulles airport. The only cost is parking, which is \$12.



9. Learn physics first hand. Kings Dominion, Six Flags or Busch Gardens—need I say more?

8. No Money? Spring Break is a great time to find a part-time job for the summer. Remember if you are under the age of 16 you need to get your work permit first. Many places are hiring, so start earning the money that is waiting for you.

7. Still can't figure out what to do? Scientists say that 88% of Americans do not get enough sleep. The recommended rest time is eight hours, but why not sleep for another eight?

6. Feel like gloating that you're on Spring Break? Since college friends came up and gossiped about their Spring Break, you can go visit them and call it a "college visit" to your parents.

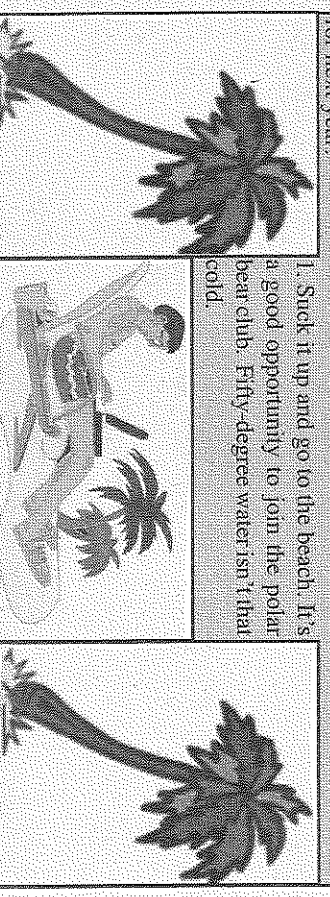
5. Sometimes don't you want to let your car fly around the corner or peel out of the intersection? Head out to Summit Point Raceway, 70 miles west of DC to let your car fly on a drag strip or around a road course for a few bucks. Tracks like these also offer courses that teach you how to get out of tricky situations, like skidding and avoiding hazardous objects on the road.

4. A clean car is a happy car. A couple of hours of hard work will get the winter grime off of your car. If your too lazy, then a few bucks can have your car clean at the automatic carwash.

3. Break out the tanning lotion! Who needs the tanning parlors? March brought 70-degree weather, maybe April will bring in the 80s.

2. Seniors, have you finally decided? May 1 is the deadline to look in your future. After hours of writing essays and filling out forms along with the long winter months of waiting for that acceptance letter in the mail, it is finally time to send in that deposit for next year!

1. Suck it up and go to the beach. It's a good opportunity to join the polar bear club. Fifty-degree water isn't that cold.



—Compiled by Jason Gillis

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Stage goes retro

Popular plays focus on the '70s

By Nina Moses

Senior Staff Writer

Now is the time for our generation to see what our parents find so appealing about their music. We have the chance to see the songs of their time performed live on stage.

"Mamma Mia, does it show again? My, my, just how much I've missed you," true words spoken by Donna, in the hit musical "Mamma Mia." The show is completely made up of songs by ABBA, a band popular in the '70s. In other words, your parents' music.

The story is about a mother and daughter who live in Greece. The daughter, Sophie, is getting ready to marry her boyfriend, Sky. Her one wish for the wedding is to have her father present. The only problem is she doesn't know who her father is and, after reading her mom's old diary, finds out that she has three options! She invites all three men and needless to say her mom, Donna, is shocked to find that three of her old lovers have flown to Greece for her daughter's wedding, especially since she doesn't know who the father is, either.

The show is highlighted by the crazy antics of Donna's two friends who are on the island and the distinctly different personalities of the three potential dads. Some of the songs are slightly altered to fit the show's storyline, but not enough so that they are unrecognizable. The show

would not be such a big hit had it not appealed to such a large audience.

"You can dance to it, and you know all the songs," said senior Sarah Fate.

Even though these songs were popular almost 30 years ago, all ages are present at the show. It does not target one age group, and with a show like "Mamma Mia" it is appropriate for all ages.

"At the end of the show everybody was up and dancing," said Tate.

Another show that is becoming more and more popular and will soon go on tour, is "Movin' Out," comprised of music by Billy Joel. The show is about what a group of couples go through in post-Vietnam America.

To train for the show, the cast talked to Joel and did research about what it was like to live through those times. The music was all written during that time period and for those who are familiar with the feelings of the time, it can be an emotional experience. Despite the strong connection to the period's turbulence, the audience is made up of all ages, and everyone feels some impact from the show's story.

"There are definitely Billy Joel fans, but there are also teenagers," said junior Emily Levin.

The music in the show has been slightly updated with a faster tempo, just to make the show move along more.

"I think it's fun to listen to and drive to," said senior Matt Tucker.



"Mamma Mia" actors keep the music of the '70s alive in proper '70s attire.

If ABBA and Billy Joel are not your style, just wait because there is a Beach Boys musical in the works by the creators of "Urinetown."

"It will be a new hybrid," said choreographer John Carrara to *Variety*. "Somewhere between 'Mamma Mia!' and 'Movin' Out.'"



'Everything Will Never Be Okay'

For a CD full of loud guitars and pop melodies, "Everything Will Never Be Okay" by Fiction Plane is just for you.

Fiction Plane, which was named after a poem by lead singer Joe Summer, began in England when the members were still in high school. Though they were named Santa's Boyfriend back then, their music hasn't changed much and sensitive lyrics are still blended with loud, glaring guitars.

"Everything Will Never Be Okay" is bursting with energetic songs that are easy to get stuck in your head. But with a closer listen, the true colors of the CD really shine through. The lyrics could move anybody, describing a teenage life of heartbreak and not fitting in. These aren't your average teeny-bopper lyrics, though, and the meaning is deep under layers of metaphors and irony.

Some songs that stick out on a CD full of rocking melodies are "Soldier Marchismo," which undermines the US and British war on Iraq, and "Cigarette," a song about a fake love between a man and a gold-digging woman.

For a band of Nirvana-loving rock stars, Fiction Plane delivers some soft songs masterfully mixed with some of the hardest hitting lyrics.

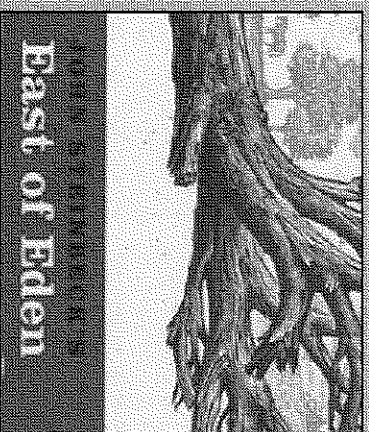
Oracle Picks

East of Eden

East of Eden tells the story of brothers who turn against brothers, wives who leave their husbands to become hookers and men who foolishly try to tempt fate.

John Steinbeck's book is based on the lives of two families over three decades who deal with the turmoil brought about by love, hope and despair. The story is set in Steinbeck's home, Salinas Valley. His goal for the book was to describe the valley in a way that would show his deep admiration for the land and illustrate it for all those who had never been there.

The first family we meet is the Trasks, a family that Steinbeck creates to showcase the struggle between brothers and the struggle between good and evil. We follow two sets of brothers who cannot live with or without each other, and slowly help in ruining each other. The other family is the Hamiltons who happen to be Steinbeck's mother's family. The



Hamiltons are a family that most can identify with. They are not rich nor poor. They have a gentle father and a stern mother, and the book shows the hardships a family endures even if they have a strong foundation.

The size of the book might scare some away, but at times the story is so engaging that pages are turned rapidly without stop. The story line has shocking twists and turns that have the reader enthralled throughout the duration of the book.

Steinbeck succeeds in painting a vivid picture of the Salinas Valley, complete with the sight of mountains, the smell of dirt and, most importantly, the faces of good and evil.



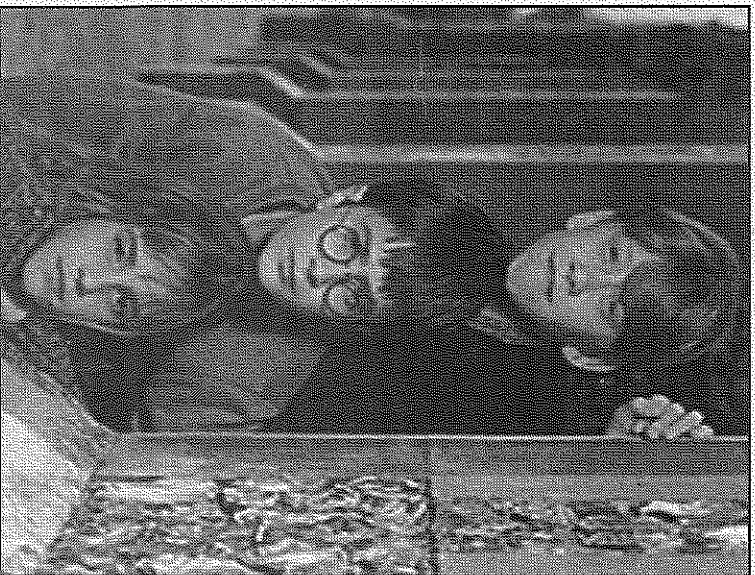
'Breakfast at Tiffany's'

"Breakfast at Tiffany's" is one of the most well-known movies in the world for many reasons. Audrey Hepburn establishes herself as a legend, and the music is amazing. Most importantly George Peppard is hot stuff!

"Breakfast" tells the story of Holly Golightly, a New York call girl who feels that life is wonderful and whenever something goes wrong all she has to do is go find another "super cat" to give her \$50 for the powder room. Things start to turn around when writer Paul Varjack moves into her apartment building and falls desparately in love with her. In fear of getting hurt, Holly tries to run away with her rich Brazilian lover, but he leaves her when he finds out she is tangled in a narcotics scheme with incarcerated mafia.

The movie is filled with wonderful scenes of New York social life, from extravagant parties gone sour to boats being raced on the lake in Central Park. The story line may seem weak to some but the great thing about this movie is how genuine the characters are. So next time you're at Blockbuster see what everyone is talking about by checking out "Breakfast at Tiffany's."

—Compiled by Nina Moses and Sam Lee



Two movies and six books make up the *Harry Potter* series. Ron, Harry and Hermione have fascinated adults and kids alike with their magical world of flying cars, three-headed monsters and quidditch.

Magic makes *Potter* popular

By Christina Araj
Viewpoint Editor

With the flick of a wand, a spell was cast on the readers of the *Harry Potter* series, instantly addicting them. Actually, that wand was in fact the pen of J.K. Rowling, the author.

The *Harry Potter* epidemic has swept the nation and the world ever since it first came out in 1998. Its translation into more languages than any book, except the *Bible*, is proof of that fact. Critics have been asking why this seemingly simple book has caught such widespread attention. That's just it however; it is not a mere simple children's book, but consists of a highly complex and twisted plot that keeps the loyal readers hooked. That barely scratches the surface, however.

"[The *Harry Potter* Series is so popular because] it is well written, has interesting characters [and] the plot gets more complex and dark," said librarian Stephanie Byrnes. The series has not only captured the hearts of millions of children, it has also lassoed millions of teens and adults. People have their own theories on why that is.

"Children like the fantasy part of it," said sophomore Kate Maginn, "and adults enjoy the deeper meaning of it."

Harry Potter is obviously not the only book that has

ever been widely loved, but there is a difference. The series is known for being read and reread excessive amounts of times. Every six seconds one of the five books is picked up and read.

"[I think people read them so much] because it has so

"It is well written, has interesting character, [and] the plot gets complex and dark."

—Stephanie Byrnes, librarian

much content and plot element that every time I read it I can see something I didn't see before," said Maginn.

But there are those few who prefer hard factual nonfiction books over the far fetched world of fantasy.

"I think if I want to read something not real it's going to be from my imagination not someone else's," said senior CJ Trautman.

Complex plot and creative literary devices are not the only reason for *Harry Potter's* success. Many simply enjoy the story and the experience of being swept into a magical, made up world that they can imagine they are apart of.

"Plus, they're fun," said Byrnes. "Wouldn't we all want to ride in a flying car?"

Executive powers laugh at fair play

Drew Carey exposes corrupt selection process in "Last Comic Standing"

By Hilary Heincer
Senior Staff Writer

Drew Carey, judge of the reality show "Last Comic Standing," recently claimed that, "surprise surprise, producers chose who they wanted to put in the competition. It turns out they didn't choose the funniest comics.

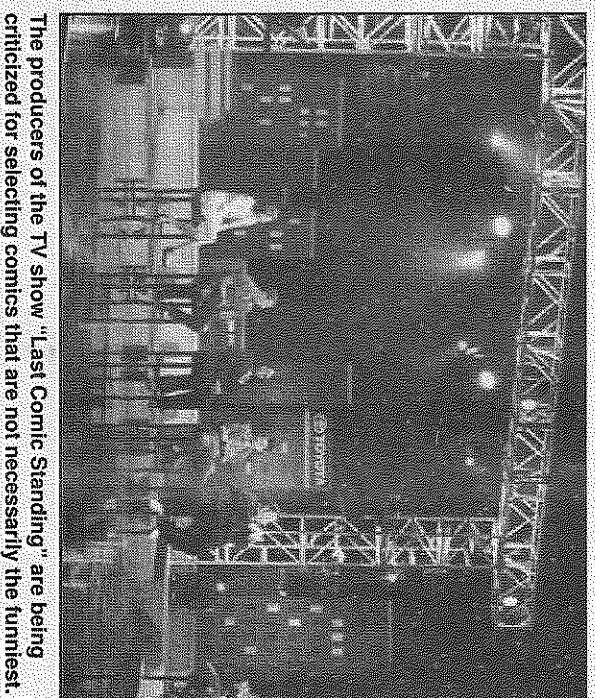
Carey is upset because the judges didn't have an initial say in who the contestants would be. The producers, rather than choosing those the judges thought were funny, picked people who would create drama in the household.

This has been going on for

years, dating back to "The Real World," where it is well-known that the most controversial people

will make it into the house. The only difference is there is a prize at the end of "Last Comic Standing" as well as other shows such as "Survivor." It's supposed to be a contest.

This may be wrong, but what more can be expected of reality television? A recent ABC Family movie, "Who wants to marry Ryan Banks?" mocked the "reality" of reality TV by showing the set up and the staging of various scenes, filmed to entice the audience and to create drama when there was none.



The producers of the TV show "Last Comic Standing" are being criticized for selecting comics that are not necessarily the funniest.



"Joe Millionaire" is notorious for creative editing techniques.

Occasionally, reality contestants admit that they reenact scenes for the camera or do something that the producers wanted them to do. Creative editing has also been blamed for several shocking scenes, such as "Joe Millionaire's" infamous makeover in the woods scene.

Nobody should be shocked or outraged, because the reality is that reality TV does not relate the

truth. It's impossible to act like oneself when cameras and cameramen surround someone every day. The intimate moments are not private, and the marvelous settings do not reflect what contestants lives are really like.

The big upset is that "Last Comic Standing" is supposed to be a contest based on talent, on ability to be funny. In truth, judging someone's ability to

tickle the funny bone is subjective. There is no right and wrong. The producers factored in other traits of the contestants when choosing the top 10. Personality is as much of a draw as comedic ability, and a much higher draw of ratings.

The top 10 was based on more than funniness, but the best comic won in the end and the network got the ratings it desired.

Retro TV shows own box office

By Sam Lee
Senior Staff Writer

For new movie ideas producers are now turning to TV Land. Classic TV shows such as "Charlie's Angels" and "Starsky and Hutch" have been springing up in the cinema and have made a splash in the box office.

"History always repeats itself. Why not in movies and TV?"

—Beth Roop, math teacher

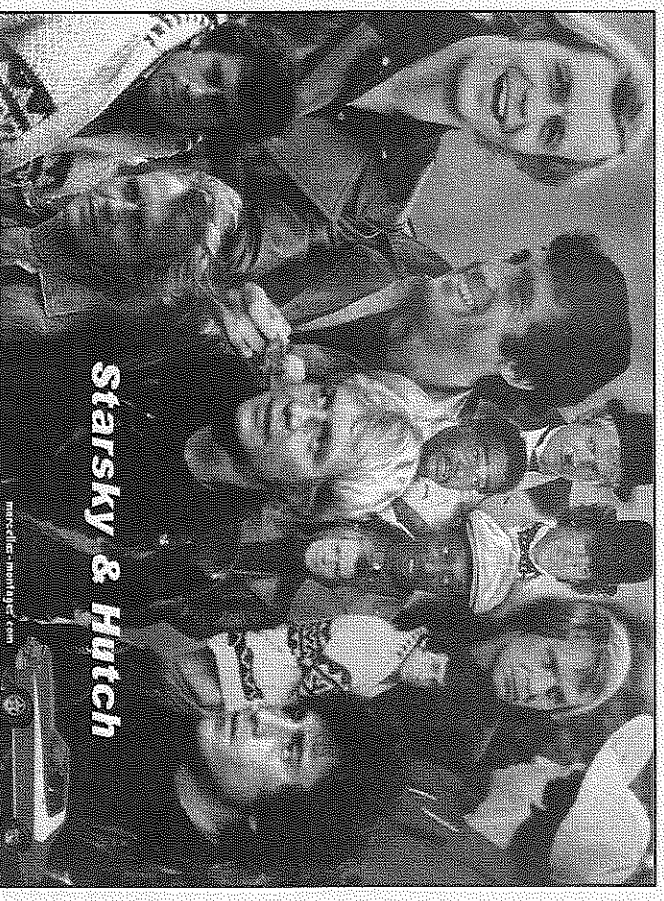
Stiller, Cameron Diaz and Owen Wilson. These hot actors are not the only reason to see these movies though. They often feed the nostalgia that is present in most older adults in America.

"Lots of people have good memories of the '70s," said band teacher Larry Einnis. "People want to relive that and that's what makes the movies so appealing."

Sometimes, the movies don't always do the originals justice and don't include some of the original spark of the show.

"Charlie's Angels" was a good movie, but I still prefer the original Angels," said junior Rachel Martin.

Occasionally, the movies go beyond just a simple remake of the show and create a mockery of the originals. "Starsky and Hutch" stars tried hard not to satirize the original show to the point of disrespect and even included the first "Starsky and Hutch" as a cameo. But other movies, such as



The newest trend in the movie industry is to convert old TV shows onto the big screen. "Starsky and Hutch" and "Charlie's Angels" are two recent examples.

"Charlie's Angels," appeared to be mocking the original, and to some it's beyond disrespectful.

"The movie was completely done to make fun of the TV show," said math teacher Beth Roop. "It was done in bad taste."

Though the movies sometimes lack the spirit of the original shows they are still becoming a growing force in America.

Who knows, maybe in a few years there will be a "Friends" or "OC" movie.

"History always repeats itself," said Roop. "Why not in movies and TV?"

Within the last five years, many shows that were famous in the '70s have made a reappearance on the big screen. These movies often star A-list actors, such as Ben

Five guys run for their lives

By Liz Weiderhold

Fig. Editor

Spring sports are gearing up and people are swinging their rackets, pulling their oars, and wacking their lacrosse sticks. Due to the immense success of five track athletes however, their winter season was still in session until mid-March due to the Nike indoor championships.

"It's been a really long season and we're really kind of tired," said sophomore Kris Benton, who is one of the athletes competing in nationals. "States is our big race and this is an extra icing on the cake."

Benton, alongside senior Italo Leva, sophomore Dean Christesen, and senior Steven Tobin, competed in the Distance Medley Relay. This race consisted a 1200 meter leg ran by Benton, a 400 meter sprint by Leva, an 800 meter leg ran by Christesen, and a 1600 meter leg ran by Tobin.

"States, emotionally, is what they train for. Nationals is a chance to showcase their talents to teams that they normally don't compete against," said track coach, Mark Campbell. "It's also an opportunity for

college coaches to get a look at the athletes on our team."

Leva also competed in the individual 200 meter sprint securing 4th place in his heat with a time of 23.55 seconds.

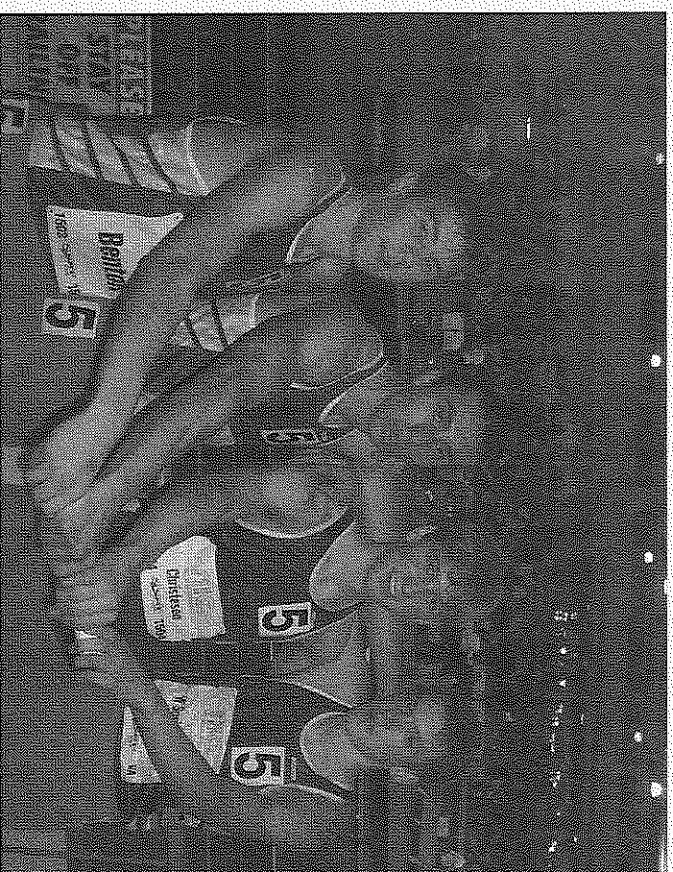
The other individual competitor was freshman Mike Spooner, who placed 8th in the individual mile with a time of 4:37. Spooner said that he hoped to get the time that his coach, Duke Baird, wanted him to get because it's Baird's final season coaching track for WS.

Additionally, Spooner looked at this competition as a chance to prove himself and let people know he wanted to do great things with running.

He believed that it was through the help of Benton, Christesen, and Tobin that he was able to do as well as he did throughout the season and prepare him for Nationals.

"Benton has helped me with controlling my emotions afterwards in a race and Christesen has helped me with what to eat," said Spooner. "Tobin has always helped me to push me to do better."

Despite the large size and importance of the individual in track, the teamwork and support was considerably strong,



Mark Campbell

Kris Benton, Italo Leva, Dean Christesen and Steven Tobin pose after a distance relay, which effused into the final races at Nationals.

"I feel that it is a really great honor for them to be going there, to compete with everyone in the nation that's also competing," said sophomore Richard

Walsh, who was a runner on the indoor track team.

"I really respect them for trying so long since the beginning of season while the rest of us are starting spring track. It's tough. I support them all the way."

Fans fail to paddle and swim out to events

By Emily Sommerfeldt

News Section Editor

The first sign that fan support is lacking is when more green is worn at school on St. Patrick's Day than orange and blue on game days.

Fan support, in general, isn't absent, but students tend to pick and choose which sports deserve the most attention, making the overall school pep decrease. Favoring a WS team doesn't stop with picking the sport. Students have also expressed an interest in which gender is playing, the Spartans or the Lady Spartans.

"There was a time when [the fan support] was equal," said coach Bill Gibson. "When I first started, girls basketball was a losing program, but as we gained more support as we got better. The other reason we get more support is we're better looking."

With the high number of sporting events all happening around the same time, the team with the most support will be the team doing the best because people will back a winner.

While fans, decked out in orange and blue, sat on the bleachers cheering on the



Jon Mylen

WS football and boys and girls basketball are two sports that get actually support.

Crew rocks the boat, baby

By Katie Bourget

Weekend Editor

While the WS crew team is not a school-sanctioned sport, its rigorous training schedule and time commitment parallel the more mainstream (no pun intended) school sponsored activities.

Anyone who visits the weight room during the winter months is witness, by both sight and smell of crew's high physical demand. Rowers quickly work up a sweat practicing their stroke on ergometers, rowing machines lovingly referred to as "ergs", and generally loud music plays to keep everyone motivated.

By spring season, rowers have someone else to keep up motivation levels, coxen. These individuals are people who use their voice rather than

an oar to help their team. They yell commands to

keep boatings heading straight and stokes in sync. "You sit on your butt a lot of times, but you deal with a lot of mental stress," said sophomore R.J. St. Thomas.

Although rowing could seem leisurely considering sitting is required for participating, the physical and mental aspects of races challenge rowers. "The rowers know they have to work if they want to win," said coach George Krushbaum. "There's never a breather or down time during a race. There is no defense in rowing...it's all offense."

This year, the team hopes to place as many boats into the finals of races as possible at all levels, the Varsity boats hope to place in the top three at the State Championships and also at

"Mostly it was just swim team and parents [supporting us]."

—Justin Leddon, senior

The screams, cheers, hurrahs, and dressing in orange and blue attire at the sporting events aren't just the fans enjoying themselves.

Senior CJ Trautman said, "[Fan support] is important to the morale of the team, but it's not necessary."

the Area Championships in May.

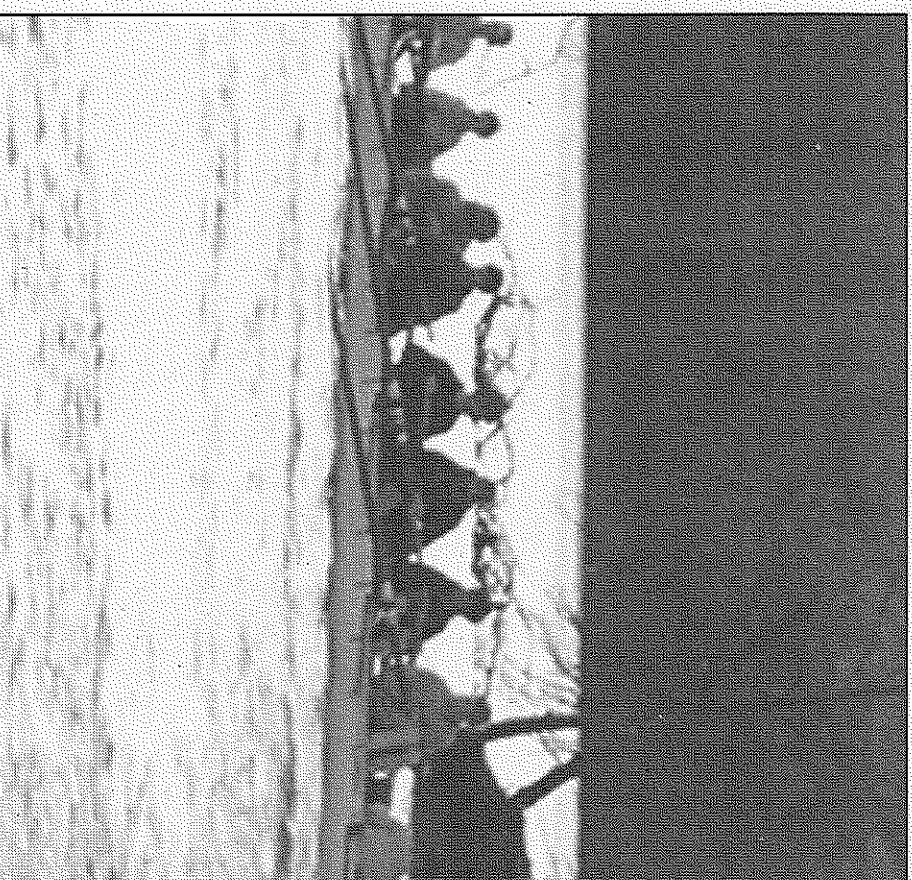
For athletes who play on land, crew may not be a team that commands instant respect.

"It's a lot more coordination and you have to focus on what everyone else is doing," said sophomore Jason Buchanan who rows on a Varsity boat.

Boat placement is determined by numerous factors. Attitude, fitness, skill and experience all play a role in deciding what boat an individual will be placed in.

After that, the coaches try to find a mix of rowers that have good chemistry to bring out the most speed.

Senior rower Emily Ransom said, "When you're friends and you're always around each other, you work better together in races."



Jon Mylen

The boys and girls crew team practices at Occoquan for another upcoming regatta.

Lady Spartans' outstanding season comes to an end

By Rachel Wohlers

Oracle Editor

After eight straight wins, the Lady Spartans watched their winning streak end in the Virginia AAA semifinals in a heartbreaking 73-67 loss to the Wilson-Portsmouth Presidents.

The 8th-ranked Lady Spartans went into the game knowing the Presidents would be a tough opponent.

"We knew it was going to be intense and physical," said senior Sam Drain. "It was a very competitive game."

After trailing by eight points early in the fourth quarter, Wilson went on a scoring streak, bringing the team to a two-point lead over the Spartans. Senior starters Sarah Flanagan and Kristin Kunzman and junior starter Laura Haskins all fouled out during this stretch, putting the Spartans at a disadvantage. Senior Sara Carey-Prock made a shot with four seconds remaining to tie the game at 63 and force overtime.

The Spartans jumped to an early one point lead in overtime but could not hold off the Presidents, who made 10 of 16 free throw attempts to pull away to victory. Although disappointed by the loss, the team has tried not to focus on what they could have done differently.

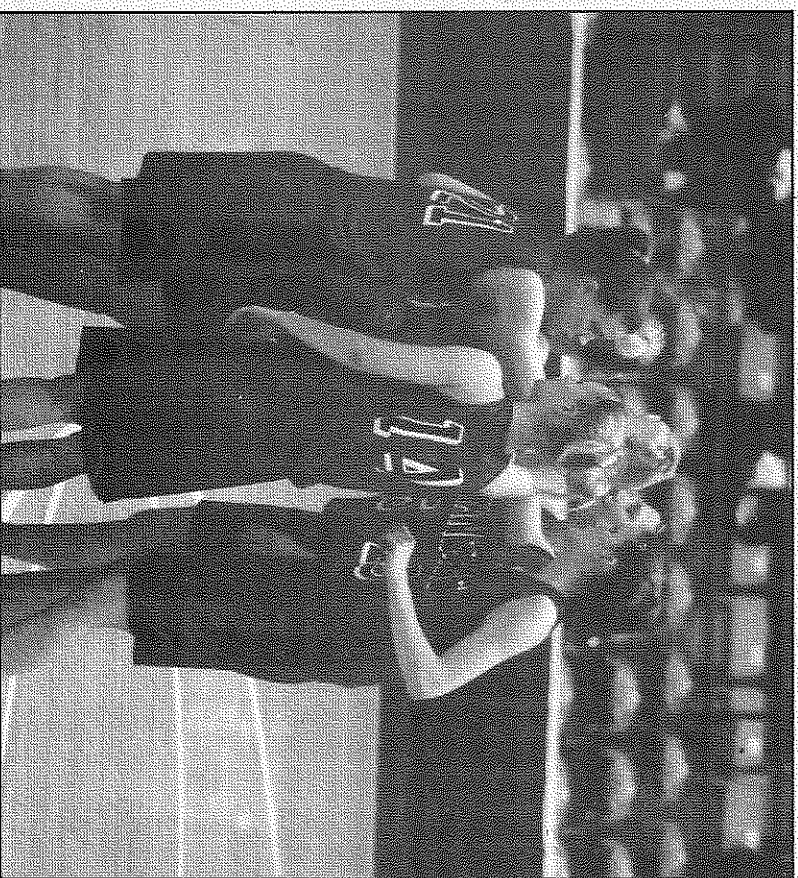
"We could sit here and go through so many 'what if's,'" said Flanagan, "but you can't analyze it that much."

Losing so close to the championship game was only part of the reason for the strong emotions after the game.

"We were all crying," said Flanagan. "A lot of us have played together since we were little and we lost and that was it; it's over."

Even though the Lady Spartans did not go as far as they would have liked, they have no regrets.

"We came very far for the season," said Drain. "We have nothing to be ashamed of."



Brooke Nasson
Laura Haskins, Katie Chelsey, Kristin Kunzman, Sara Carey-Prock and Megan Sheldon huddle up. The Lady Spartans lost to Wilson Portsmouth in the state semifinals.

Paintball brings color to WS events

By Jason Gillis
Managing Editor

With the pull of a trigger, a rush of compressed air explodes out of a tube containing a small paint capsule that blasts out into the open field. Splat, they're hit and a small sting lets the other player know they are done for the game. Paintball, though small in the area, has attracted some devoted WS players.

"It's fun to shoot people without killing them," said senior David Supola.

Paintball can be a game of strategy or just all out fun. Paintball needs a lot of open space, so players who wish to play on official fields and rules, must drive a distance to a number of fields which include, Virginia Adventure Game in Leesburg, Powerline Paintball in Stafford,

Soggie Bottom Paintball Field in Culpepper, AG Paintball Games in Leesburg and Pev's Paintball in Leesburg, but others stick to playing their own game in the neighboring forest.

"It's fun to shoot people without killing them."
—David Supola, Senior

"We go out in the woods and play," said freshman Jason Coffey.

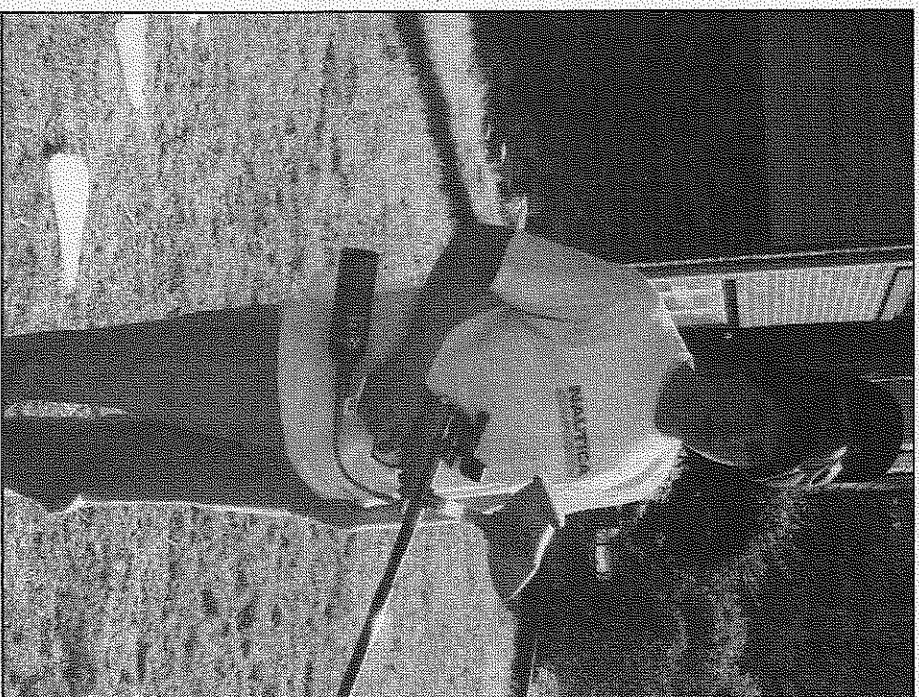
The fear of getting hit by a ball of paint turns off many prospective onlookers, but paintball is an extremely safe sport if everyone is following the rules and wearing the proper safety equipment. Special paintball goggles are worn to

protect people's eyes and face from the projectiles. Other than that players might leave with a few red welts, but it's not a health hazard.

"It only stings for like 30 seconds," said Supola. "Paintball is an adrenaline rush."

The sport began in New Hampshire in 1981, where a sports retailer, a writer and a stockbroker contemplated the game. A year later the first official field opened in New York and then the sport took off.

It can be an expensive sport with some goggles and guns prizing in the hundreds of dollars, but anyone can play for a day for about \$40. There are a variety of online forums that beginners can ask questions on and check out other people's reviews on the local fields of play such as www.ppreview.com.



Sarah Drabkin

Freshman Jason Coffey prepares for a paintball adventure in the woods. Official paintball fields are located in Leesburg and Stafford.

MLB, players under review for steroids

Big name players using legal substances may have influence on student athletes

By Tim O'Keefe
Sports Assistant

Over the last few years, professional athletes have been accused of taking illegal substances such as steroids. Leading the heated controversy is Major League Baseball, received the most of the bad wrap. Partly because of big names like Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire, and Sammy Sosa going from a physique of a toothpick, to a physique of an action figure. And the fact that McGwire and Bonds broke the single season home run record of 62 and 70 respectively, just fuels the fire. Bonds is under suspicion because BALCO admitted to providing performance

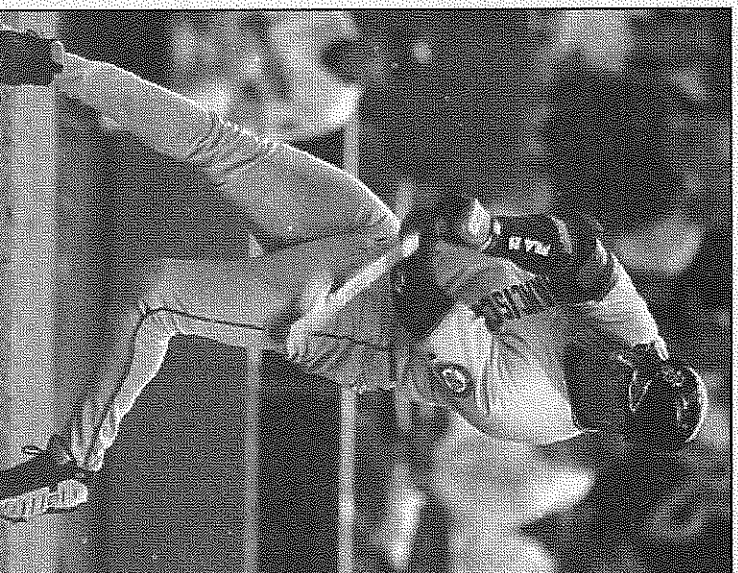
"There is no reason to take any kind of substance like steroids"

—Bill Renner, Varsity football coach

enhancing drugs to several professional athletes. BALCO founder Victor Conte also has a cloud over his head.

"I think those guys [Bonds, McGwire and Sosa] are probably juiced," said sophomore Wams Mojaddidi. "They did it to get the athletic edge they needed."

The other reason for suspicion of steroids in the MLB



Barry Bonds holds the single season HR record of 73. Bonds is under suspicion of taking steroids.

is the lack of random drug testing for steroids. The NFL has random drug testing and suspends players for four games. The MLB does not have any type of system in place. Neither does Fairfax county. Some students feel that they need to

"I think they should test for steroids," said sophomore Josh Czalkowski. "There needs to be something in place so that athletes don't abuse them."

Steroids can not only give an unfair edge to athletes, but they also can have serious side effects. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics some side effects may include: reduced sperm count, enlarged breast side (male), aggressive behavior, severe mood swings and hallucinations and depression.

"Steroids seems to be problem county wide," said junior Eric Davis. "I think they should test for football and baseball"

In 2003, the National Institution on Drug Abuse took a poll of more than 48,500 students in 392 schools nationwide. The poll stated that 3.5% of high school seniors have taken steroids in their lifetime. This was a 1.2% increase of the same study in 1995

"There is no reason to take any kind of substance like steroids," said Varsity football coach Bill Renner. "Anything you need to grow and develop, you can get from eating food."

When holiday bashing, don't forget the fools!

By Danny Tinsley & Adam Rosen
Oracle Staff Writers

Yes, it's time for some more holiday-bashing, and our next victim is April Fools Day. The last article on St. Patrick's Day was completely insensitive to the traditions of the people who celebrate that holiday.

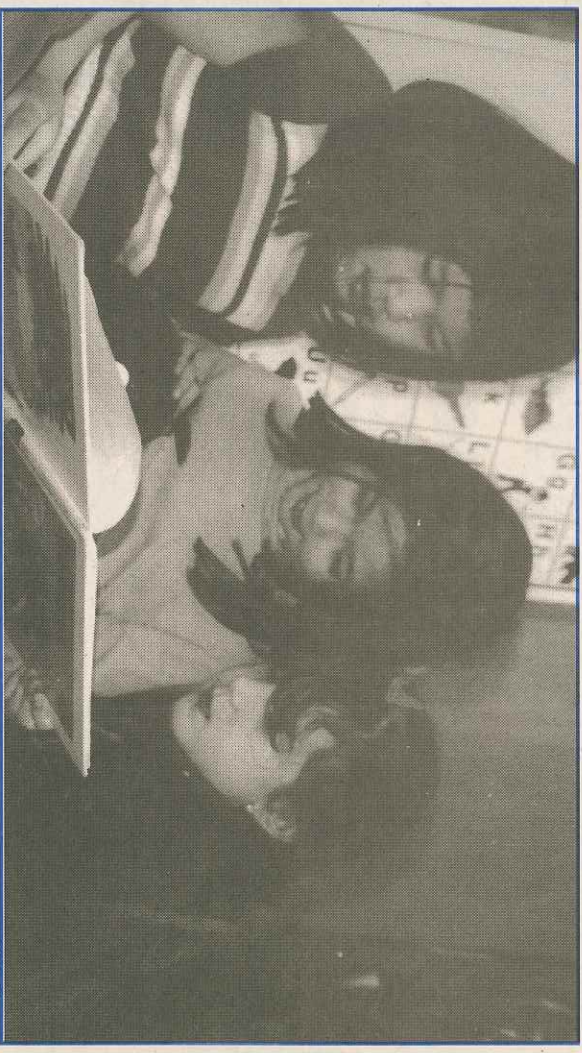
This time we have an Irish partner to help surface the completely pointless today's holiday known as April Fools Day.

Usually, when a holiday rolls around, it means presents, large

family gatherings and a free day away from the confinement of school. April Fools Day, however, delivers none of these lasting memories. Instead, we venture off to school for a day of pestering people who continuously shout the overused "April Fools" phrase.

April Fools Day started in France during the 16th Century. Thank you for nothing (yet again), France.

We're sure you readers are wondering why we are so bitter about this particular day. So let us take you back to the early days of elementary school, where the



Danny Tinsley and Adam Rosen enjoy reading Clifford the Big Red Dog during "reading time" in their first grade class.

hardest part of the school day was avoiding the temptation of consuming the glue being used during "craft time."

After a hard day of work, in the first grade during a stressful afternoon, of coloring inside the lines and reading Clifford, Adam

was tired. He desperately wanted a nap. But it wasn't nap time yet, it was "craft time." He hated craft time, because he would get glue over our clothes and was one of the worst artists in the class.

Adam was sat next to the class bully who convinced him that

glue tasted like ice cream. Foolishly, Adam took his advice and gobbled a mouthful of thick white Elmer's into his unsuspecting mouth.

That was the first and last time Adam listened to somebody on April Fool's Day.

Living, learning how to get our priorities straight

By Betsy Miller
Senior Staff Writer

The other day I was looking through my "special box" and I found a note that my best friend wrote on the second Tuesday of our sophomore year. Usually, I only keep correspondence of the utmost importance, and this note appeared to be quite trivial, merely detailing reasons to end my extended infatuation with my middle school sweetheart. I read through the note, completely unable to



distinguish what gave it monumental "special box" status, until I reached the very last sentence, which read, "P.S. Remember to pray for all of those people that were hurt at the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. I hope they're all okay."

On September 11, 2001, the nation as a whole, and I as an individual, was mourning. The nation grieved the lives of thousands of its noble sons and daughters, while I obsessed over a boy whom I hadn't even truly lost. At that time, September 11, in my eyes, was a postscript, a mere commercial break in the drama of my life. Needless to say, after I finished reading the note I felt



On September 11, most of us were mourning. A few, however, were preoccupied with other things.

Associated Press

April National Humor Month						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5 Boys soccer game vs. T.J., V only: 7 pm	6 Girls lacrosse game vs. Woodson, JV: 4 pm	7 George Mason College Fair 6-8:30 pm @Patriot Center	8 Tennis match vs. LB 4:30 pm	9 Softball and baseball vs. LB JV: 6/V: 7 pm	10 Crew regatta on Occoquan, 9 am	11 Crew regatta on Occoquan, 9 am
12 Boys soccer vs. Annandale, JV: 5:30/V: 7 pm	13 Girls lacrosse vs. W. Potomac JV: 5:30/V: 7 pm	14 Track meet vs. Annandale & W. Potomac, 5 pm	15 Boys soccer vs. Hayfield JV: 5:30/V: 7 pm	16 Softball and baseball vs. LB Williams, JV: 6/V: 7 pm	17 Crew regatta on Occoquan, 9 am	18 NFL draft in NYC
19 Girls soccer vs. Annandale, JV: 5:30/V: 7 pm	20 Boys lacrosse vs. W. Potomac JV: 5:30/V: 7 pm	21 Track meet vs. Annandale & W. Potomac, 5 pm	22 Girls lacrosse vs. LB, JV: 6/V: 7:15 pm	23 Softball and baseball vs. TC Williams, JV: 6/V: 7 pm	24 NFL draft in NYC	25 Boys lacrosse vs. Robinson, JV: 5:30/V: 7 pm
26 Boys lacrosse vs. Robinson, JV: 5:30/V: 7 pm	27 Girls soccer vs. LB, JV: 5:30/V: 7 pm	28 Softball and baseball vs. Hayfield JV: 6/V: 7 pm	29 Boys soccer vs. Robinson JV: 5:30/V: 7 pm	30 Tennis match vs. Robinson 4:30 pm		

disgusted with myself and was forced to contemplate whether now, more than two years later, my priorities remain as skewed as they were then. Relationships are important. They provide greater meaning as to who we are as individuals, but it's impossible to gain meaning from an individual who has no sense of what is truly important. Every time I've ever thought that my heart was broken, it turned out it was my sense of perception that was truly impaired.

I used to date this guy who wanted a more serious commitment. He thought he was in love but I "needed more time." One day he looked straight at me and said, "If you always wait for perfect timing, life will pass you by." We broke up, but a lot of things came together for me mentally because of the situation. I was so absorbed in all of the details being perfect that I missed out on the bigger picture. You can pass up on love, particularly in high school, but it's vitally important not to pass up on life.

I used to be so sure that I had fallen in and out of love so many times; that I was old and wise and mature. Now that I definitely am older, and debatably more mature, I am forced to question whether I have ever truly felt such an intensity of emotions, or simply experienced a lack of emotion regarding other, infinitely more serious, issues in my life. I've come to the conclusion that I'd rather be alone with a clear sense of the significance of all events in life than "in love" with an intense emphasis on a relationship that will have little ultimate meaning. Love is blind—we all should choose to see.