

TUFTS OBSERVER

TUFTS' STUDENT MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 6, 2008

READINGS

Tufts
Voices
on the
Economy



Editors

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Patrick Roath

MANAGING EDITORS

Daniel Rosen

Mike Snyder

NEWS EDITORS

Brendan Johannsen

Marysa Lin

OPINION EDITOR

William Ramsdell

ARTS EDITOR

Michael Tucker

EXCURSIONS EDITOR

Eliza Walters

CAMPUS EDITOR AND ART DIRECTOR

Ryan Stolp

POETRY AND PROSE EDITOR

Lauren Mazel

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITORS

Santiago Gasca

Campbell Kliefoth

WEBMASTER

Matthew Koulouris

COPY EDITOR

Jonathan Dinerstein

LAYOUT DIRECTOR

Joshua Aschheim

BUSINESS MANAGERS

Nathaniel Jonnes

Marcelo Norsworthy

Staff

Lily Berthold-Bond

Crystal Bui

Reggie Hubbard

Lauren Herstik

Lauren Lee

Ian MacLellan

Anna Majeski

Kasey Mitchell

Michael Schecht

Alexandra Siegel

Thomas Sutherland

Contents

October 6, 2008

Volume CXVII, Issue 3

The *Observer*, Since 1895

www.TuftsObserver.org

Features

- 2 Tufts Voices on the Economy, *Submissions by Prof. Marcelo Bianconi, Tyler Cooper, William Herbert, and Shana Hurley*

News

- 5 “Expanding Their Outlook on Life,” Drugs and Society, *by Brendan Johannsen*
6 Afghanistan: Eight Years On, *by Jennifer Dann-Fenwick*
8 How Goes the Guinea Pig? Mass. Healthcare, Revisited, *by John Peter Kaytrosh*
10 Billions, Bail-outs, Banks... and a Beleaguered Market, *by Marysa Lin*

Opinion

- 14 Drums for Alhaji Abubakari Lunna, *by Renee Orser*
21 Nothing Funnier than a Bitch, *by Crystal Bui and William Ramsdell*
22 Oneironautika: Exploring Lucid Dreams, *by Sophie Pack*

Arts

- 26 A Season of Multiplex Politics, *by Matthew Diamante*
27 Home, Home on the Homecoming, *by Thomas Sutherland*
28 Ratatat/Paradise, *by Katie Christiansen*
29 “You Cannot Destroy the Metal,” *by Sam Sherman*
22 The Feast of Flesh and Brains, *by Michael Tucker*

Excursions

- 17 Somerville Fluff Festival and Snappy’s Sushi: A Photo Essay, *by Ian MacLellan*
30 Farmers’ Markets: Try a Local Tomato, *by Renee Orser*
32 An Evening at Petite Robert Bistro, *by Lauren Lee*

Poetry and Prose

- 33 The Paper, *by Crystal Bui*
34 Inaction, *by Katherine Boland*
34 The Waiting Tree, *by Crystal Bui*

Extras

- 12 Editorial: The Money Crunch
16 The Adventures of Petey & Chuck: A Comic Strip, *by Ryan Stolp*
25 Ticker Tape, *by Anna Majeski*
36 Campus, *by Ryan Stolp*

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN STOLP, PHOTO BY CAMPBELL KLIEFOTH

Contributors

Erin Baldassari

Katherine Boland

Marcelo Bianconi

Katie Christiansen

Tyler Cooper

Jennifer Dann-Fenwick

Matthew Diamante

William Hebert

Shana Hurley

John Peter Kaytrosh

Renee Orser

Sophie Pack

Since
1895

Campus Voices

on the

Economy

To help understand the current financial crisis, the *Observer* asked several campus leaders for their thoughts on the economy. Associate Professor of Economics Marcelo Bianconi and Tufts Financial Group president William Herbert offer an explanation of the situation. Tufts Republican Tyler Cooper and the President of the Tufts Democrats Shana Hurley share their views on what needs to be done.

BY PROFESSOR MARCELO BIANCONI
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

The effective repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 with the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Financial Services Modernization Act of 1999 opened the gates for commercial banks to operate and underwrite in sophisticated securities instruments, such as mortgage-backed securities, collateralized debt obligations, and other derivatives. In practice, it meant that the traditional spread yielding borrowing and lending old practices of commercial banks were substituted by a complex net of financial derivatives; thus enabling commercial banks to engage in much higher leveraging. The ultimate exposure to housing collateral has led to the imbalance between assets and liabilities and the “plunge to the abyss” of insolvency.

The US has one of the most, if not the most, well-institutionalized framework for the frictionless operation of financial markets. However, in the last 25 years, enforcers, legislators, and policy-makers alike have lost track of the regulatory arrangements that

must embed the institutional framework. In lay terms, it is almost like relaxing the rules of a game to the point of no rules enforced.

The US Treasury is seen now as the “owner” of the last resort, in a wordplay of the lender of the last resort. The problem is a moral hazard: Treasury may insulate the guilty party from the ultimate cost of the dangerous risk-taking behavior. I believe the US Treasury should not take it all; the market should be able to sort out some of the dangerous risks and the bearer should take responsibility. Easier said than done.

Many are relating the current crisis to the one that followed the stock market crash of 1929. I don't think real estate in general, and housing in particular, is an asset class that moves very slowly relative to other assets in the system, i.e. it takes time to buy and/or sell real estate. The US situation is very much like the real estate bubble that plagued Japan in the late 1980s and burst in 1990. The point is that, as the Japanese experience has shown us, it takes more than a decade to only partially recover from a real estate bubble burst. Hang on because the ride isn't over!

BY WILLIAM HERBERT
TUFTS FINANCIAL GROUP

Much noise has been made over the past year about the now-toxic structured credit products that



were peddled to investors by Wall Street bankers. How could such complex and unproven securities become so widely held, and why did regulators and rating agencies fail to police their issuance or warn buyers of their risk? The whole mess has been painted as unprecedented and shocking; meanwhile, a few students of Wall Street's history have shaken their heads knowingly, having seen this folly unfold before. One of these old hands is Seth Klarman, founder of The Baupost Group, a Boston-based investment management firm.

In 1991, Klarman published *Margin of Safety: Risk-Averse Value Investing Strategies for the Thoughtful Investor*. Now out of print, copies of *Margin of Safety* commonly fetch more than \$1,000 at auction, and the book is one of the most stolen from libraries. It is easy to see why: throughout the text, Klarman seems to peer into a crystal ball, providing some uncanny foresight. He repeatedly warns readers to be wary of Wall Street's self-interest and to resist invest-

ment fads at all costs, lest their portfolios suffer dire consequences. The fourth chapter, which discusses the boom and bust of the 1980s junk bond market, warrants special attention.

In its final pages, Klarman writes, "One of the last junk-bond market innovations was the collateralized bond obligation (CBO). CBOs are diversified investment pools of junk bonds that issue their own securities with the underlying junk bonds as collateral. Several branches of securities with different seniorities are usually created, each with risk and return characteristics that differ from those of the underlying junk bonds themselves. [...] The existence of CBOs was predicated by the receipt of [an] investment-grade credit rating on the senior tranche. Greedy institutional buyers of the

senior tranche earned a handful of basis points above the yield available on other investment-grade securities. As usual, these yield pigs sacrificed credit quality for additional current return. The rating agencies performed studies showing that the investment-grade rating was warranted. Predictably these studies used a historical default rate analysis and neglected to consider the implications of either a prolonged economic downturn or a credit crunch that might virtually eliminate refinancings. Under such circumstances, a great many junk bonds would default; even the senior tranche of a CBO could experience significant capital

paying for without the generous assistance of the Tufts Office of Financial Aid. I worry now about the debts I will incur with my first apartment, a credit market that might dash my hopes for a first home, and the financial burden our government is passing along to my children-to-come. For the first time, thinking about my desire for a job in the public sector has not been accompanied by a joke about living in a cardboard box; at least I know I'll have a pension plan and will receive health benefits.

I'm no economist. I'm not even an econ major. To be perfectly honest, I didn't do so hot in EC05. But I did learn that when

the market fails, it's time for the government to step in. We've allowed this failure to occur because of lax regulation standards and it's affecting the guys on Main Street as well as the guys on Wall Street. While I have some objections to the \$700-billion bailout bill, I am pleased that our political leaders could work across the aisle and get something constructive done. I hope it will set the tone for a serious debate about reforming regulatory practices so we can

make sure that the market can do its job.

As a young Democrat, I encourage our party leaders to remember that this is a watershed moment in American history. After the horrors of World War I, many Americans wanted to turn inward instead of entering World War II. Like President Franklin Delano Roosevelt encouraged then, we must do what is difficult now because it will have benefits in the long-run. Looking forward, I enthusiastically anticipate Democratic gains in both the House and the Senate this November that could bring about a tremendous opportunity to make the investments that this country needs right now. Democrats in the House, led by the fiscal hawks of the Blue Dog Coalition, will want government to reduce our deficit by slashing spending. However, they must remem-



losses. In other words, a pile of junk is still junk no matter how you stack it."

Replace "CBOs" with "CMOs" and "junk bonds" with "sub-prime mortgages" in the above paragraph and it could have been written yesterday. The moral: those who bother to reach into Wall Street's past for guidance may find its present and future much easier to understand and predict.

BY SHANA HURLEY
TUFTS DEMOCRATS

Like most Americans, I have far more questions than answers about the economic crisis. I worry about my future. My college loans already loom on the horizon—and that's nothing compared to the cost of grad school, which I will be

ber FDR's words: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." In a time when many people will be closing their wallets and expecting our government to do the same, we must force ourselves to be prescient and not submit to fear. Although unsuccessful programs should be cut, we should not be tempted to reduce the budget with "an axe" when we should use a "scalpel," as Senator Obama proclaimed in the first debate. Despite the urge to close our purse strings, investments in infrastructure, education, and in ordinary Americans will be critical to ensure America's competitiveness in this increasingly uncertain market. Despite knowing that they will be expensive, we must take real leadership on the issues of healthcare, Social Security, alternative energy, and immigration reform after eight years of stagnation. In short, Americans must invest in order remain the world's beacon of innovation and hope. In that way, we can weather this storm together.

Finally, I have this little reminder to our policymakers about these investments: You won't be paying for them. We will. But our generation and our children will pay much more if we don't do what needs to be done now.

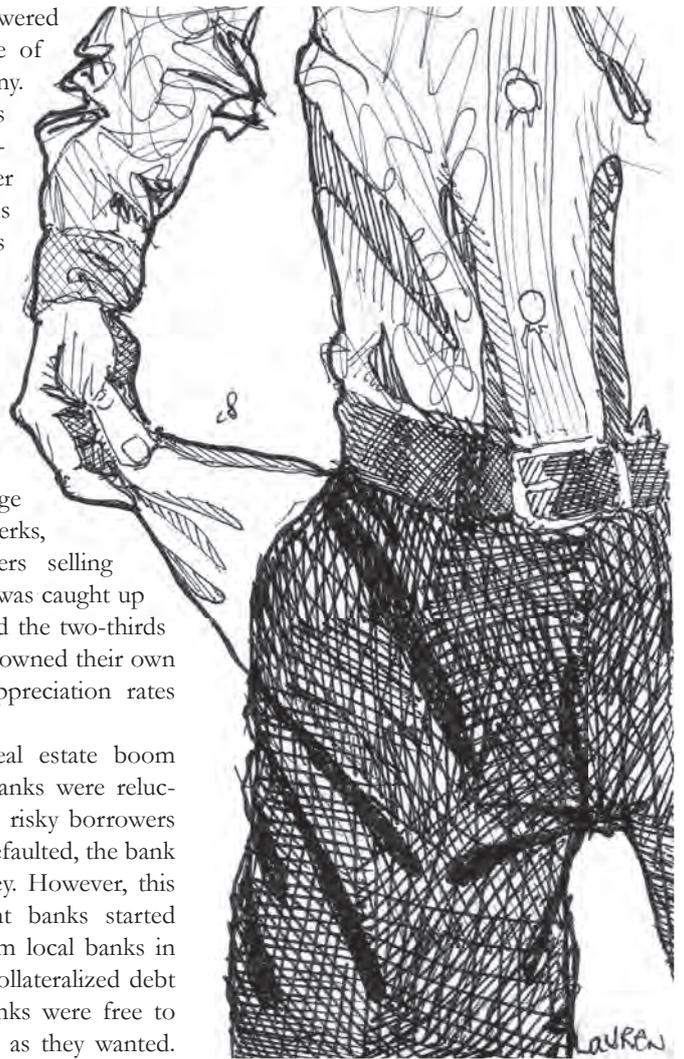
BY TYLER COOPER
TUFTS REPUBLICANS

Anyone who has picked up a newspaper, turned on a television, or visited Yahoo! in the past month knows that something scary is happening on Wall Street. The root cause of the problem is simple. The Federal

Reserve dramatically lowered interest rates in the wake of 9/11 to restart the economy. These low interest rates translated into low mortgage rates that made it easier for millions of Americans to buy a home. Politicians from both parties praised the housing boom and the housing industry rewarded them with campaign contributions. Millions of jobs were created for real estate agents, construction workers, mortgage brokers, Home Depot clerks, and Wall Street financiers selling mortgage debt. Everyone was caught up in the real estate game and the two-thirds of American families that owned their own homes enjoyed strong appreciation rates year after year.

Unfortunately, the real estate boom went bust. In the past, banks were reluctant to give large loans to risky borrowers because if the borrower defaulted, the bank would lose a lot of money. However, this changed when investment banks started purchasing mortgages from local banks in order to resell them as "collateralized debt obligations." Suddenly banks were free to make as many risky loans as they wanted. Some mortgage lenders allowed people to get mortgages without providing proof of employment or income verification. Real estate agents, whose interest used to line up with their clients, started selling houses to people that they knew could not afford them. In short, everyone got greedy.

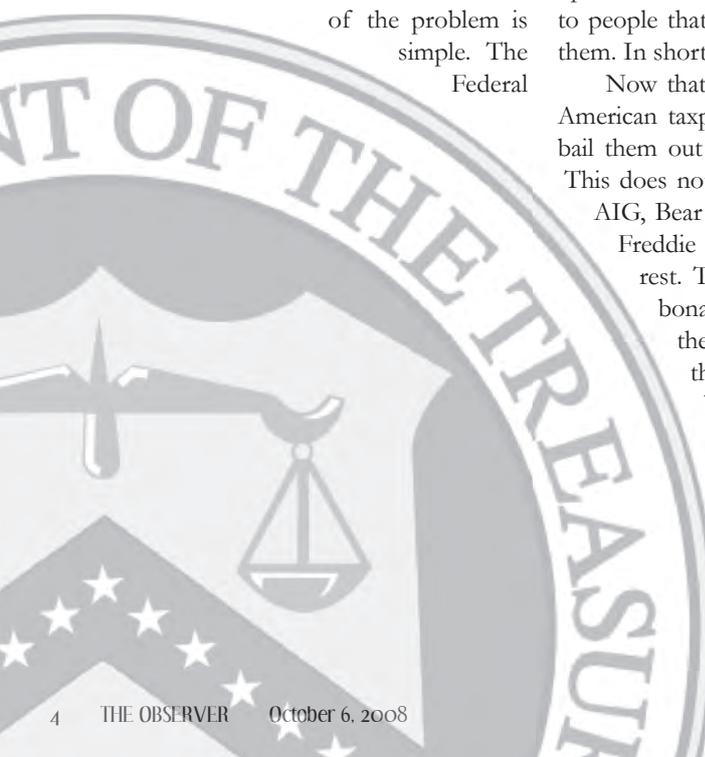
Now that banks are losing money, the American taxpayer is being called upon to bail them out to the tune of \$700 billion. This does not include the money given to AIG, Bear Stearns, the auto companies, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, and the rest. The final tally of this bailout bonanza will never be known, but the total will be sufficiently large that the next President might be forced to make some unpopular spending cuts or tax hikes. The real crisis comes if our foreign creditors decide that America isn't a good place to invest their money. Who could blame them for doubting our ability to pay? The famous



electronic debt clock in Time Square will soon be obsolete. The creators of the clock never envisioned that we would actually end up owing \$10 trillion. We have not had a balanced budget in a decade, and the near future does not look particularly promising either.

If we are looking for someone to blame for this mess, we can only point to ourselves. The culture of instant gratification has infected every aspect of America. We deluded ourselves into thinking we could have everything right now. Instead of paying for today's spending with today's income, we borrowed from the future. Well, folks, the future is today and it's time to face reality. We need to balance the budget as soon as possible and consumers need to stop using credit cards as a way to maintain lifestyles they cannot afford. In order for America to continue to be the world's superpower, we need to wean ourselves off our addiction to debt. ☐

All drawings by Lauren Herstik.



‘Expanding Their Outlook on Life’

A look at three drugs, and the roles that they play in society

BY BRENDAN JOHANSEN

On October 6, 1966, the United States outlawed the use of lysergic acid diethylamide, more appreciably known as LSD and Acid. First invented in 1938 by the Swiss chemist Albert Hoffmann, the drug was meant to serve as a psychiatric aid in the study of schizophrenia, but soon became popular within the free-love culture of the 1960s. On this historic day, the *Observer* takes a look at the history of this infamous drug, and a few others, too.

Prior to 1966, LSD was available legally in the United States as an experimental drug. The drug was actually distributed for free, because those who made it believed that the psychedelic experience was a source of good for humanity, expanding the mind and furthering an understanding of peace and love. Some users, most notably the author Aldous Huxley, claimed that the drug was too powerful for consumption by the mass population, favoring instead a more limited use by intellectuals who could harness its hallucinogenic powers. LSD also gained

popularity through Tom Wolfe’s work of literary journalism. “The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test,” which documented the cross-country, acid-heavy trip of Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, and his Merry Pranksters, a group of drug users who traveled with Kesey. In the book, the group travels in their bus “Further,” and the Pranksters participate in the “Acid Test,” a massive group use of LSD.

The federal government also took an early interest in LSD. In the 1950s the CIA began administering LSD to agency employees, military staff, doctors, prostitutes, the mentally ill, and the general public, usually without their knowledge. Code-named Project MKULTRA, the CIA’s experiments with LSD researched the drug as a potential interrogation and mind-control agent, as well as potential means of large-scale social engineering. While few records of the tests remain, the CIA apparently concluded

that LSD was of little use to the US government.

Salvia

This member of the mint family, legally available for purchase in most of the United States, has recently been the subject of heated controversy, as the media highlights the drug with poorly supported compar-

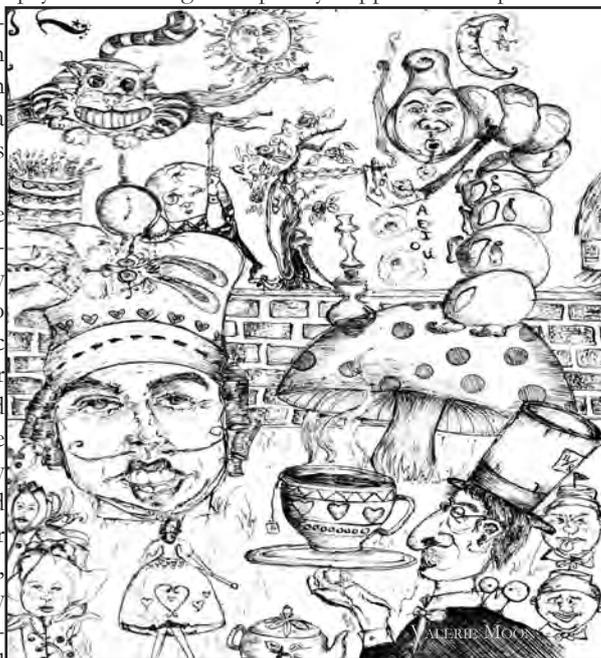
isons to LSD. The drug’s effects are short-term, the trips range from mild to incredibly potent and last only for about 20 minutes, according to most users. The effects of the drug are rumored to include sensations of motion, overlapping realities, and visions of various two-dimensional surfaces. Under potent circumstances, the effects, according to one user, are comparable to a powerful acid trip.

Amphetamines

While not a hallucinogen, amphetamine use is widely considered to be one of the most pressing issues on college campuses today, as high-achieving, success driven students use pharmaceutical forms of this drug, such as Adderall and Ritalin, to increase academic performance. Amphetamines are also used by the military during long missions, and several military accidents, most notably the gunning down of friendly soldiers by an F-16 fighter pilot, have been blamed on the drug.

According to several studies, addiction is highly likely with amphetamine use, therefore increasing the amount of drug dosages needed to satisfy an addiction. The drug lacks the ability to create long-term physical dependence, but users still report suffering from severe withdrawal when they are unable to satisfy their urge. Withdrawal is said to produce feelings of anxiety, depression, agitation, fatigue, and suicidal thoughts. Despite this, however, many students and athletes find that the positive impact on their performance is worth the risk.

Drug cultures are things that, despite many attempts to limit or understand them, remain largely clouded in mystery. The fact that many individuals-- even students on our own campus--will head home to something much stronger than the stereotypical marijuana makes one contemplate the effects of regulation on the productivity of society. Indeed, one wonders if by limiting our access to these substances, statutes actually decrease the role that they play in society. Is it possible that they just fan the flames? ☹



sons to LSD. The drug’s effects are short-term, the trips range from mild to incredibly potent and last only for about 20 minutes, according to most users. The effects of the drug are rumored to include sensations of motion, overlapping realities, and visions of various two-dimensional surfaces. Under potent circumstances, the effects, according to one user, are comparable to a powerful acid trip.

According to the *New York Times*, the drug is most popular among high school and college-aged students, with over 5,000 YouTube videos documenting the journeys of these haphazard youngsters. Indeed, the drug may not remain legal on the national level for long, as states such as Florida and California enact stronger statutes on the possession and sale on a drug that was long thought to be used exclusively by shamans in Mexico. Many older users say they enjoy the drug for its contemplative use, which

Afghanistan: Seven Years On

Mismanagement and Inadequate Resources Fuel Continuation of Conflict

BY JENNIFER DANN-FENWICK

Seven years after Operation Enduring Freedom began, the situation in Afghanistan looks increasingly dismal. The war in Afghanistan is often referred to as the “good war,” yet it receives significantly less funding, equipment, and attention than the war in Iraq. There are more US casualties in Afghanistan than in Iraq, and the number of Afghani civilian casualties has skyrocketed in the past few months. The Taliban increased in strength since mid-2006, with a 40% increase in terrorist attacks within the US-led Eastern sector in 2007.

This February, the number of suicide bombings within Afghanistan hit a post-Taliban high. Recent attacks, such as a high-profile prison break during which approximately 400 convicted militants escaped, and the bombing of the Indian embassy gates in Kabul, have been intended to increase fear and disorder among the Afghani population. Now, on the 8th anniversary of the United States’ entry into Afghanistan, and with less than a month until the presidential election, the

Observer considers what went wrong in Afghanistan, and how the situation must be addressed to cease the conflict.

The Taliban, an extremist Muslim group, seized control of Afghanistan in 1996 during a bloody civil war. After the September 11th terrorist attacks, the Taliban government refused to accept US demands to extradite Osama Bin Laden, who orchestrated the attacks, and the Bush administration intervened militarily in Afghanistan, overthrowing the Taliban as a counterterrorist action. Congress voted unanimously to authorize the war, and with Security Council Resolution 1368, the United Nations acknowledged its support of the invasion plan as well.

Operation Enduring Freedom commenced on October 7th, 2001, culminat-

ing in an easy victory for the United States military. On December 9th, 2001 the US announced the defeat of the Taliban regime, and on May 1st 2003, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced the end of “major combat operations.”

As America entered the next phase of the war, however, the administration arguably did not fully appreciate the difficulty of reconstructing Afghanistan as a functioning democracy. The Bush administration, particularly Rumsfeld, was averse to “nation-building” and planned to quickly hand most

billion in aid, 20% of the total money Congress has allocated for wars during this period. In comparison, Iraq received 76% of this money. Additionally, the \$172 billion dollars the Afghan government has received hardly compares to the reported \$300 billion the State Department gave to Afghan militants in the 1980s to fight the Soviet Army. Fellows at the Council on Foreign Relations conclude that aid is crucial to providing the Afghan government the legitimacy it requires to stop Taliban success. Additionally, it fuels a debilitating perception among Afghans that Afghanistan is not a top priority for the United States.

In addition to a lack of money, most critics say that Afghanistan did not receive enough troops, equipment, or government attention from the beginning. The Bush cabinet specifically intended that the war in Afghanistan be quick; a large sustained troop presence was strongly opposed. Even when Hamid Karzai, the administration’s handpicked President, called for more US troops the administration rejected the request. In an area accustomed to the rigidity of Taliban rule, the lack of a sustained military presence encouraged the Afghan

population’s suspicions that they were of little importance to the US and also fostered a sense of insecurity that the Taliban exploited when they regained strength following America’s occupation.

Currently, 53,000 NATO-led troops are deployed in Afghanistan. Recently, there was a controversy between NATO members over which would commit troops to the dangerous southern region of Afghanistan. Currently, only a handful of NATO countries are deployed in the South and thus bear the majority of the violence. Militant attacks dramatically escalated in early 2006 after the Taliban recovered in Pakistan and the American commitment in Afghanistan wavered. Higher troop levels became increasingly important, and NATO commanders pleaded for additional aid. Even so, troop



authority over to the Afghans and international bodies such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Big plans were announced but, due to lack of funds, little progress was seen on the ground.

Beatrice Manz, a professor in the Tufts history department and an expert on Middle Eastern history, cites both the lack and ineffectiveness of aid at the beginning and throughout the occupation as one of the most substantial mistakes made during the war. Indeed, the Council of Foreign Relations notes that “Afghanistan gets less aid per capita than any other state with a recent post-conflict rebuilding effort.” It is also the world’s poorest country outside of sub-Saharan Africa.

From 2001 through the beginning of 2009, Afghanistan will have received \$172

levels have arguably been too low since the beginning of the war. Despite President Bush's recent announcement that the US will send 8,000 extra troops at the beginning of 2009, General David McKiernan, the top American commander in Afghanistan, still says he needs 15,000 troops in addition to those promised by the administration.

Why did the US government and NATO countries dedicate minimal funds, too few soldiers, and little attention to the "good war?" As the situation in Iraq worsened, the US diverted attention, money, and troops away from fighting in Afghanistan. The *New York Times*

Times notes that during "critical moments in the fight for Afghanistan,

the Bush administration diverted scarce intelligence and reconstruction resources to Iraq." The administration disputes this statement. Several senior officials, however, such as diplomat Robert P. Finn, strongly contradict the administration's claim that they provided adequate resources.

The war in Afghanistan has also suffered due to the intense media coverage of the Iraq War. Iraq has consistently ranked the most important issue on for US voters and the media focus on Iraq reflects this. Indeed, even Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Mullen acknowledged the United States' preoccupation with Iraq in 2007, stating, "the US does what it must in Iraq, while it does what it can in Afghanistan."

The Afghanistan War is also unpopular in European countries, who are thus averse to committing more soldiers. Until recently, this hesitation by European leaders led the Bush administration to oppose increasing US troop levels as it would decrease pressure on Europeans to send more.

Under-funded and under-equipped, the Afghan government is "perceived as weak and rife with corruption" says a recent report for Congress. Afghan President Karzai, for example, is widely criticized for tolerating and protecting members of his government involved in the drug trade in return for their political support. The Afghan police force also remains in shambles, and this has had a negative impact on public approval of Karzai's government. A US report in December 2006, found that most Afghan National Police units have less than 50% of their authorized equipment.

There have been recent efforts to increase training and funding have recently occurred, but such efforts take place against a backdrop of eroding national control. In a February 2008 testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Director of National Intelligence stated "the Karzai government controls only 30% of the country, while the Taliban controls 10%, and tribes and local groups control the remainder." As Professor Manz notes, this lack of control is partly due to the fact that aid was given locally, undermining the central government.

Politically, however, the Afghan gov-

“Afghanistan gets **less** aid per capita than *any other state* with a recent post-conflict rebuilding effort.”

ernment is stable. Elections in 2004 went smoothly and the parliament is an excellent arena for opposing factions to resolve differences without warfare. The next elections are to be held in fall 2009, and President Karzai plans to seek reelection. A recent poll estimates a 63% approval rating, highlighting his support from Afghans as a whole, not just within his own ethnic group, the Pashtuns.

The Afghan economy is weak, with rising unemployment, a falling growth rate, a capital-starved government, a lack of electricity, and rising crime all fueling the conflict. The lack of progress on these issues undercuts central government authority and increases Taliban recruitment. The UN and the Afghan government reported in late 2007 that growth "is still not sufficient" to

“The *US* does what it **must** in *Iraq*, while it does what it **can** in *Afghanistan*.”

substantially reduce poverty or reduce popular dissatisfaction. The report continues to describe that in reality only limited progress has been achieved in increasing availability of energy, revitalizing agriculture (80% of the economy is agricultural), and attracting new investment. A drought this year has left farmers in central and northern Afghanistan with little food and aid officials have issued dire warnings on the situation. The British

charity Oxfam (which the Tufts' Oxfam café supports) is particularly worried that international assistance has been too weak to protect Afghans against the winter, and has recently said that "time is running out to avert a humanitarian crisis."

Opium is the only sector of the Afghan economy that is performing well. Taliban officials often coerce or force farmers to grow the crop, contributing to famines and high food prices in the regions poppies are farmed, which are usually areas lacking in federal oversight. Many critics identify opium as one of Afghanistan's most significant problems. Poppy growth is estimated to constitute about 7% of Afghanistan's total GDP and contributes about 25% to 40% of the Taliban's finances but there is disagreement over how to address this.

Curbing the strength of warlords and increasing government control is central to NATO's plans to reduce poppy farming. The Afghan government favors offering alternative crops to farmers who grow poppies. The Bush administration, however, believes that eradication (aerial spraying or manually chopping down crops) coupled with alternative lifestyle programs is a better strategy.

Congress seems to be siding with the Afghans, at least against aerial spraying, which would leave farmers with no money or livelihood after the destruction of their crops. Professor Manz believes that the US approach to countering narcotics is flawed and cites it as one of America's biggest mistakes. "We must accept that these people need to live," she says; in the effort to meet their basic needs, sometimes Afghans have little choice but to grow opium.

Despite Afghanistan's numerous problems there is still reason for hope. General Petraeus, the commander who oversaw recent US actions in Iraq, has visited Afghanistan and is scheduled to present an assessment of the situation soon. A comprehensive military strategy review is also in progress by the Department of Defense, and many expect the announcement of a new strategy in Afghanistan. Even Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, struck a note of optimism in Congress this month, remarking candidly: "I'm not convinced we're winning it in Afghanistan, but I am convinced we can." ☉

How Goes the Guinea Pig?

BY JOHN PETER KAYTROSH

One day, just a week and a half ago, I found myself quite sick. I was sick enough, in fact, that I broke down and forced myself to go to Tufts Health Service, where they sent me to Lawrence Memorial Hospital in Medford. Several times throughout my illness, I was asked for proof of insurance. Like most Tufts students, I carry around with me a card issued by my insurance provider. When I needed it, I was glad to have it. This simple card was my ticket to some of the best healthcare that money — a lot of it — can buy.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts now has a requirement that every resident of the state obtain a minimum level of health insurance— a requirement that has yet to affect most students since they continue to be covered by previously mandated student health insurance. But how did this new legislation, which has new implications for recent graduates, come to be?

The vote nearly unanimous, Mitt Romney had done the unthinkable. He had accomplished the political feat of passing his much-anticipated healthcare reform bill. Though Romney's governorship is over, the people of Massachusetts are still living with this 2006 healthcare bill. Almost two and a half years after its passage, the time has come to make an assessment. Is this plan working? Does it need to be updated to fix any loopholes, and perhaps more importantly, can the state afford it?

Like any other large-scale project (any Bostonian certainly recalls the Big Dig), healthcare reform in Massachusetts has proven to be an unexpectedly expensive proposition. The Massachusetts plan is based on the same model as auto insurance. Working under the assumption that those without insurance, including many who can easily afford it, cost the Commonwealth

money that could more efficiently be used to help them purchase private insurance, the plan demands that every Massachusetts state resident obtain health insurance. It also mandates the availability of low-cost, state-

care of uninsured patients has decreased by a corresponding amount in this time period. Employer-sponsored insurance accounts for 36% of the new coverage. 16% is through MassHealth, the state's implementation of



subsidized plans through private insurers, and imposes tax penalties upon those who fail to find insurance. The law also penalizes all employers of more than ten persons who neither provide insurance nor contribute to their employees' purchase of it.

According to Commonwealth Connec-

“Massachusetts has an extremely healthy population compared to the rest of the nation.”

tor, the agency responsible for helping Massachusetts residents find insurance, 439,000 persons (in a state with a population of about 6.5 million) have become newly insured since June 2006. Of these, 41% get their insurance through Commonwealth Care, the state-subsidized solution. Interestingly, the amount of money paid to hospitals statewide to reimburse them for the

the federal program Medicaid, which provides medical care to the Commonwealth's poorest citizens. A cornerstone of the Massachusetts policy has been to encourage those eligible for Medicaid to enroll in it, as it relieves some of the financial burden on the state. By and large, Massachusetts residents have supported their distinctive plan; according to a poll conducted in July 2008 by the Harvard School of Public Health, 69% of Massachusetts residents support the reform law.

Despite the great enrollment successes of this program, one wonders today how it is going to meet its new obligations. In fiscal year 2008, Commonwealth Care was originally granted a budget of \$472 million. However, it had to request an additional \$153 million to carry out its operations. Commonwealth Care expects to spend \$869 million in 2009, in comparison to the \$725 million originally budgeted back in 2006. Moreover, it is a misnomer to call the Massachusetts plan truly “universal.”

MA Healthcare, Revisited

Five percent of Massachusetts taxpayers still reported being without coverage on their tax returns. Previously, many of these individuals received healthcare at so-called “safety net” hospitals, which were reimbursed by the state. Much of the funding for this program was diverted, however, to the comprehensive healthcare plan. At this point, many individuals who are still uninsured receive care at safety net hospitals, which are no longer fully reimbursed by the state, and these facilities are now experiencing severe financial shortfalls that threaten their continued viability.

Gov. Deval Patrick has introduced regulations to eliminate part of a \$100 million shortfall. Set to go into effect on October 1, one of the new regulations changes a key provision of the original healthcare bill so that employers of more than ten workers are to both fund coverage for at least a fourth of their workforce and to pay for a percentage of the employees’

healthcare premiums. Previously, employers had been required to do only one of these things. Also part of the proposal is a request for money from the state’s hospitals in an effort to raise necessary funds. Finally, the Governor has proposed shifting money from a fund used to pay for insurance for the unemployed.

Needless to say, these plans have stirred

“Commonwealth Care had to be granted an additional \$153 million to carry out its operations.”

up controversy. The business community is concerned that the proposed regulations would diminish their competitiveness as well as their ability to hire new employees by imposing new costs. These fears are particularly acute in economic sectors with high employee turnover rates, most notably retail. With the important exception of Blue Cross

Blue Shield, Massachusetts’ largest insurer, the insurance industry has asserted that the proposed tax on reserve accounts would hinder their ability to make payments for care in the event of a widespread medical crisis. Interestingly, hospitals throughout Massachusetts have supported parts of the plan requesting \$28 million from hospitals themselves provided that another bill is passed to increase numbers of nurses hired.

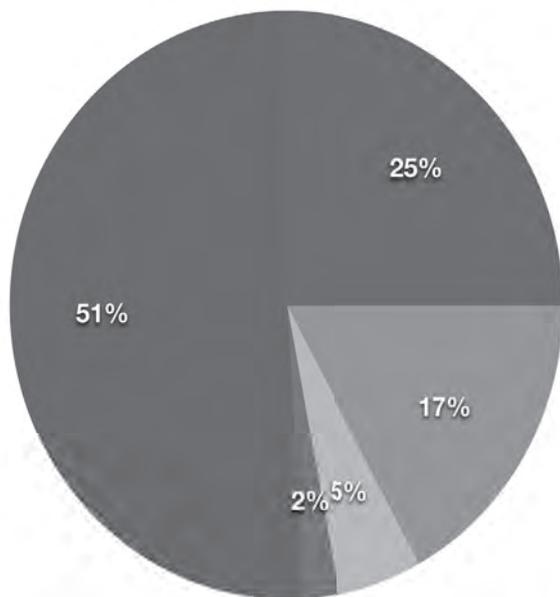
Healthcare will undoubtedly be an important issue on the agenda of the next President and Congress. Republican and Democratic rhetoric indicates that both sides of the aisle might push for an overhaul of the current healthcare system. However, it is quite possible that the next Congress and President will be unable to come together on a healthcare plan, try as they might. In

this case, the states will likely take up the issue, as California did in 2007 when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared “The Year of Healthcare.” While passed in the lower house of the

state’s legislature, the bill, which would have established a Massachusetts-style system, was thought by Senate Democrats to be too costly to implement and was subsequently killed in committee.

This goes to show why Massachusetts’ plan may not be the best one for every state. Massachusetts is in a unique political, social, and economic situation that allows it to pursue such policies. One of the richest states in the nation, Massachusetts also has an extremely healthy populace compared to the rest of the nation. Furthermore, Massachusetts has more physicians per capita than any other state. Interestingly, the result of this is that the people of Massachusetts spend more on healthcare per capita than those in any other state, as they choose to take advantage of the wide range of specialists, hospital beds, and medical equipment available to them.

We are all aware that Massachusetts is unique. Throughout history, it has led the way in public services by establishing the first public school, public library, public park, and public transportation system in our nation. Whether other states or the federal government adopt a Massachusetts style health plan or something completely different, Massachusetts was the first to try and the effects of universally-mandated health insurance will continue to unfold in the Bay State. ☺



Employer-based Coverage
 MassHealth
 Commonwealth Choice
 Individual Coverage
 Commonwealth Care

KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION

Billions...

BY MARYSA LIN

Bail-outs...

Banks...

Anyone moderately in touch with reality has found themselves bombarded with terms like “sub-prime,” “bailout,” “credit crunch,” and “mortgage crisis” in recent weeks. The Observer is here to provide some basics and essentials to the current financial crisis.

September’s headlines were set in motion over the last several years and today’s proposed solutions are unlikely to solve America’s financial woes for many more years to come. What happened to the premier financial power of the world? How are sub-prime mortgages that dominated news media last summer connected to the downfall of iconic institutions like Merrill Lynch and Lehman Brothers? What does all of this mean for America and her economy?

In the beginning: sub-prime mortgages

What do you call it when banks give out loans to people who, in all likelihood, won’t be able to pay it back? Economics refer to this as sub-prime lending. These loans are generally made to risky clients (i.e. people with poor credit or job history) at the price of high interest rates and less flexible terms than traditional loans. This may seem like a favor to the people who badly need loans in order to pay off, among other things, the mortgage on their new home. In reality, however, most of these clients have been unable to repay the loans. This has created a “meltdown” of sub-prime mortgage loans in the US.

When the high volume of bad loans made to people unable to meet their financial obligations was combined with falling housing prices and other factors, there was a drastic increase in mortgage defaults and foreclosures among sub-prime borrowers as well as declarations of bankruptcy by over a hundred sub-prime mortgage lenders, including New Century Financial Corporation. Borrowers couldn’t pay back lenders who subsequently went bankrupt.

When the housing bubble burst around 2005-2006, mortgage defaults and foreclo-

sure skyrocketed because those who had borrowed on poor or little credit found themselves unable to pay back loans. They didn’t have any valuable collateral since the properties they purchased had dropped in price below the amount they owed and they were unable to refinance or sell their homes as was possible before the drop.

Homeowners throughout the country, even conventional borrowers with good credit, found it difficult to make payments and foreclosures exceeded record highs throughout 2007 and into 2008, prompting government proposals to freeze foreclosures and help borrowers.

The collapse of the sub-prime mortgage sector sent a ripple effect through the rest of the economy: sub-prime loans had been heavily invested in by banks, traders, and hedge funds around the world but with the turmoil, confidence plummeted and panic ensued. The entire market crashed because investments people had expected to be profitable suddenly weren’t and mortgage defaults meant that people all the way up the banking chain were losing money. The average Joe was at the bottom of the American money ladder and iconic financial institutions like Lehman Brothers were all the way at the top.

Then, the big timers slip and some are “bailed-out”

Following the sub-prime mortgage crisis, big name firms and banks that had invested heavily in the booming housing market announced enormous losses because the investments they held crashed in value when prices dropped. Late in 2007, UBS announced \$3.4 billion in losses, Merrill Lynch posted \$7.9 billion in losses, and within six months of UBS’s announcement, Citigroup’s losses exceeded \$40 billion. Bear Stearns, one of the world’s largest investment banks, suffered heavy losses and was sold to JPMorgan Chase following its collapse in March 2008.

Conditions worsened in the summer of

2008 with the second biggest bank failure in US history: IndyMac’s crash precipitated panic that caused shares in Freddie Mac and Fannie May, two of America’s biggest lenders, to decline sharply. Worries over these two firms led to one of the biggest US government bailouts ever. Freddie Mac and Fannie May back almost half of the outstanding mortgages as of 2008 totaling, totaling nearly \$6 trillion. If they crashed, those \$6 trillion would have no backer and there would be no one to pay banks for nearly 50% of the nation’s mortgages.

So, a government bailout was proposed and approved. The two entities were placed under government conservatorship in what the Washington Post classified as one of the most “sweeping government interventions in private financial markets in decades.” The pricetag of \$200 billion, previously unimaginable, has become just one of many potential and real multi-billion dollar bailouts.

By September, previous difficulties in the financial market ultimately manifested itself in several firm failures and buyouts: Lehman Brothers became the first major bank to file for bankruptcy amidst this crisis, Merrill Lynch was bought by Bank of America, and Washington Mutual topped the charts as the largest bank failure in US history. Wachovia’s retail banking operations were absorbed by Citigroup and at the time the *Observer* went to press, Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase and Bank of America controlled almost one third of all deposits in the United States.

This shake up affected even the most stable, deep-rooted institutions of Wall Street. The modern era of high-powered investment banking and enormous profits resulting from little to no regulation and high-risk investments ended this amidst the financial turbulence this September. Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs have switched from investment banking to traditional banking, which is characterized

... and a Beleaguered Market

by tighter regulation, lower risk portfolios, and higher capital reserves.

By becoming traditional bank holding groups that combine investment banking with corporate and individual deposits like Bank of America, these firms now operate with a much more stable source of capital and tighter regulations as well as access to federal funds.

The credit crunch hits

It is difficult to see the links between these massive bailouts and the average consumer or homeowner. What difference does it make to the average American whether a boardroom in Manhattan gets their annual bonuses?

The turmoil in the financial market was precipitated by problems stemming from the average American's mortgage woes and it has deep consequences for the ability of American individuals and businesses to maintain financial stability. The "credit crunch" refers to the latest manifestation of financial woes: a tightening of the credit market caused by low investor (and consumer) confidence and an unwillingness of firms to release money into the market.

Because banks and firms are nervous about the financial environment, they refuse to lend money to each other. This has led to a dearth of funds usually used for mortgage loans, business loans, and other small-scale consumer borrowing.

An inability to obtain short term loans crucial to small businesses has serious implications for their ability to pay every day costs like administrative expenses and wages, which could worsen already high unemployment rates. Furthermore, a tightened credit market means that individuals won't have access to credit they use for common consumer purchases like cars and other items commonly bought on credit which could lead to even more drastic economic decline.

Is this the Great Depression... again?

The fallout from this financial downturn has shaken America's financial structure to its core, but according to a CNN Money report, it is unlikely for the economy to enter an era comparable to the Great Depression. During the Great Depression, the failure of the financial market wreaked havoc on the savings and resources of millions of individuals.

Today, lessons learned from the turn of the century manifest themselves in a preoccupation with the effects of econom-



ic destabilization on the American people. While bailout plans such as the \$700 billion plan currently being negotiated in Washington seem to focus on relieving big name firms, much of the rhetoric and contentious points involve how any solution will affect the individual.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) stated that Democrats want a plan to "insulate Main Street from Wall Street and keep people in their homes by reducing mortgage foreclosures" and Republicans criticize the current proposal for being a socialized solution that doesn't help individual homeowners pay mortgages.

It will get worse before it gets better.

Economic fluctuations are nothing

new to American people, politicians, or businessmen. The basic economic effects of the crash of an overvalued, inflated good will never change or disappear. Proponents of the free market believe that the market has the capability to fix itself and even pessimists can point to situations in the past demonstrating the ability of the American economy to recover from seemingly disastrous circumstances.

Nonetheless, the implications of this century's economic slip-ups thus far will likely yield profound effects beyond both Wall Street and Main Street. An analysis in the *Economist* predicts that even if the most obvious signs of economic distress subside, the drastic slowdown in borrowing and lending could perpetuate decline and recession.

According to the Department of Labor, financial institutions alone cut over 65,000 jobs in the United States between August 2007 and August 2008, which helped drive the overall unemployment rate from 5.7% to 6.1%. Unemployment will be aggravated by the shrinking of the credit pool, decreased consumer spending, and drastic decline in the value of many families' main asset: their house.

It remains to be seen whether the domestic and worldwide ramifications of an under-regulated Wall Street combined with the inevitable crash of an inflated housing market will be successfully reigned in. However, there is little objective evidence to suggest an economic apocalypse. Policy solutions and market mechanisms often take long periods of time to take effect and in the meantime, the US economy is unlikely to descend into a state of anarchy. Soothsayers, there is no need to make bank runs and hoard canned soup—perhaps coupon clipping would be more advisable. ☹

The Money Crunch

As the *Observer* went to press, a \$700 billion bailout plan for the failing financial sector had stalled in the Congress and progress on a government package to restore solvency to the financial sector was unclear. Stock markets, having tumbled after the Congress voted against a bailout, were beginning to recover. Media outlets, geared toward the 2008 Presidential campaign, have been abuzz with rumor, speculation, and analysis – frequently invoking the Great Depression of the 1930s. In times of acute national crisis, the voices we hear—on TV, in the newspaper, on blogs—provide a distant authority that can shed light on a complex situation, but does little to ground the realities of a meaningful event in a local context.

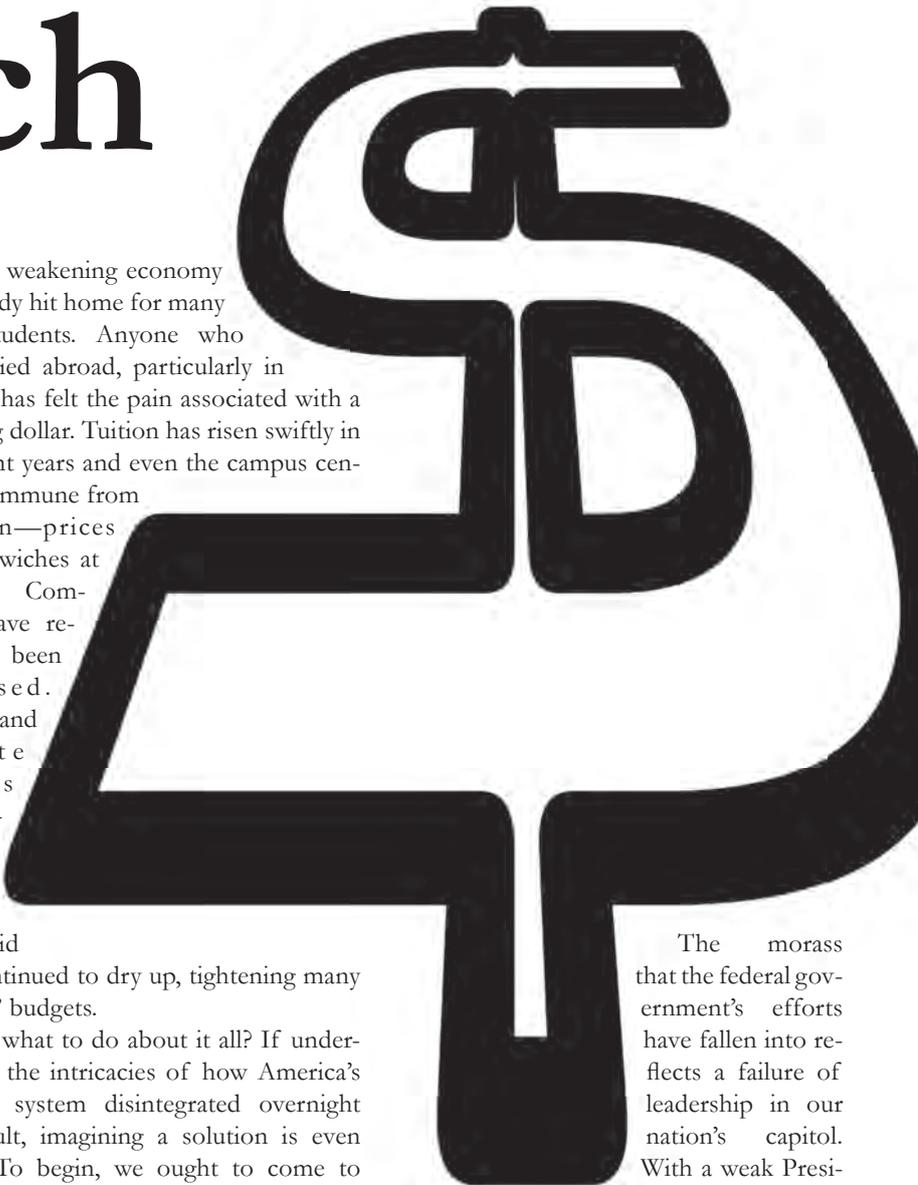
Focusing on the turmoil in the American economy this week, we wanted to approach the financial crisis through the lens of the Tufts community. What does the situation mean for college students? How will it affect current students and recent graduates? How do students and faculty members feel about the crisis on Wall Street?

Today's economy may be on the verge of failure, but college students, perhaps more than anyone else, have a stake in tomorrow's economy. Looking forward, the job prospects are unclear. Economists disagree on to what degree the problems in the financial markets will spread to other sectors of the economy. In any case, it seems unlikely that the American economy is robust enough to absorb the crisis without shedding some jobs.

Interestingly, when the economy goes south, universities usually win. In recent weeks, graduate schools across the country have reported huge spikes in admissions as recent graduates panic and opt to weather the storm safely ensconced in grad school, rather than brave a tumultuous job market. The bad news for seniors may end up being good news for the university.

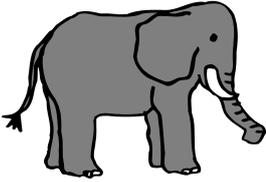
The weakening economy has already hit home for many Tufts students. Anyone who has studied abroad, particularly in Europe, has felt the pain associated with a declining dollar. Tuition has risen swiftly in the recent years and even the campus center isn't immune from inflation—prices for sandwiches at Campus Commons have recently been increased. Public and private sources for student loans and financial aid have continued to dry up, tightening many students' budgets.

But what to do about it all? If understanding the intricacies of how America's financial system disintegrated overnight is difficult, imagining a solution is even harder. To begin, we ought to come to terms with what the proposed solution is. "Bailout" is a media-friendly term for nationalization—a term that many people rightly associate with Cold War industrial socialism. The plan presented by the Treasury Department and heavily modified by the Congress would nationalize the non-performing assets poisoning Wall Street giants, and taxpayers would effectively subsidize their failure. As unsavory as this policy may sound, it is a necessary step toward a short term resolution of the current economic illness. Clearly, preventive steps need to be taken to ensure that the crisis does not occur again. Dramatically increased regulation should undoubtedly be part of any long-term solution.



The morass that the federal government's efforts have fallen into reflects a failure of leadership in our nation's capitol. With a weak President in the Oval Office, a fractured Congress, and two would-be-Presidents without any real power, there is no national figure capable of providing enough political leadership to forge a consensus without drawn-out negotiations.

The current financial crisis has had the immediate effect of cooling the market for jobs in the financial sector. It is too soon to predict how widespread the damage will be, and may already be too late for meaningful action to insulate job-seeking Americans from the economic turndown. For all those Economics majors planning to launch onto Wall Street after graduation, our advice is "don't quit your day job." We hear the Treasury Department is hiring. ☪



Late Night With TUPD

Will be in the lobby at the following residence halls 8:00pm-10:00pm

Mon. Oct. 6	Wren/Carpenter <u>at</u> Wren
Wed. Oct. 8	South
Wed. Oct. 15	Bush/Hodgdon <u>at</u> Hodgdon
Mon. Oct. 20	Hill/West <u>at</u> Hill
Wed. Oct. 22	Houston
Mon. Oct. 27	Lewis
Wed. Oct. 29	Metcalf/Richardson <u>at</u> Metcalf
Mon. Nov. 3	Miller
Wed. Nov. 5	Carmichael/Wilson <u>at</u> Carmichael
Wed. Nov. 12	Haskell/Tilton <u>at</u> Haskell

- ◆ Participate in Operation Identification and engrave your valuables
- ◆ Register your bicycle-REQUIRED if you live in University housing
- ◆ Find out about Rape Aggression Defense training
- ◆ Pick up a campus shuttle schedule
- ◆ Learn about Tufts Emergency Medical Services
- ◆ Public transportation information (the "T")
- ◆ Pick up a copy of the compliance document pursuant to the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1998
- ◆ ENTER THE FREE RAFFLE TO WIN A \$50 GIFT CERTIFICATE AT ANY BARNES AND NOBLE BOOKSTORE

Presented in conjunction with Residential Life as part of the ResCOP Program, (617) 627-3839

Remembering Alhaji Abubakar

BY RENEE ORSER

In January, 2007, the Tufts' Kiniwe African Music Ensemble stepped off a rickety propeller plane into the city of Dagbon, the musical heart of northern Ghana, where we were immediately whisked off to a funeral at a nearby home. Though morbid to most Americans, funerals are full-blown celebrations in Dagbon. We were pulled through hundreds of people and celebratory gunfire to the inside edge of a circle of onlookers. Inside the circle, a small group of drummers sweated away to intricate rhythms while pull-

ing important community members out of their seats to dance. It was here, at this festive occasion, that we received our first public introduction to one of Africa's greatest drummers, Alhaji Abubakar Lunna. Alhaji passed away this month surrounded by his many family members and his drums.

Dagbon is a community with a strong musical foundation. Like other communities, music is always an integral and shared experience. All members play instruments, sing, dance, clap, ululate, and actively watch music when it is played. Music and dance are woven into daily life

in the home, markets, and meetings, as well as playing a critical role in life ceremonies and community events. However, there are individuals and families within these communities who are considered to be specialists. Alhaji was one such specialist in the Dagomba community. He was a master, highly regarded, and thereby received a great amount of respect, admiration, and influence.

The culture in Dagbon has developed a specified type of drumming and dance, relying mainly upon two different drums — a “lunga” and a “gung gong.” Dagomba drums essentially speak the Dagbani language through their rhythms and pitch changes. “His sense

of phrasing was the thing that most astonished me. He shaped absolutely every single note that he played, which is not an easy feat on any instrument,” said Ian Gendreau, a Masters Student who accompanied our Ensemble. Alhaji's acute sense of linguistic nuances and rhythms, and his unusually extensive knowledge of Dagomba history, contributed to his mastery of Dagomba drumming. Using interwoven rhythms, he was able to creatively improvise and invent variations that were easily assimilated into traditional pieces.

Alhaji split his time between serving as a lead drummer in his drumming family, working on his family's farm, and crafting drums. In addition, Alhaji chose to spread his knowledge both to his family members and to students around the globe. He has served as a visiting artist to various other universities in addition to Tufts, and has taken in dozens of individual students to his home in Tamale, including the Tufts Kiniwe Ensemble's occasional music-study tours.

Tufts Professor David Locke has studied under Alhaji's instruction for the past 33 years. Their student-teacher relationship developed over these years into an intricate friendship bound by mutual respect for each other and a shared fascination with Dagomba music.

He said about Alhaji, “It was sort of like a master and apprentice relationship, so it's a slow transference of knowledge that's not like a private-lesson arrangement, but more like a life-long relationship. It became a relationship of mutual obligation and commitment. The obligation was that I would work hard to learn as well as I could learn and stay with it just to make the drum sound good. And it takes a really long time just to make the drum sound good.”

It was because of the efforts of Professor Locke that Tufts was able to invite Alhaji to serve as a guest lecturer and artist-in-residence each spring at



RENEE ORSER

Alhaji Lunna

Tufts since 1988. Between Spring Break and the end of the semester, Alhaji co-taught the Kiniwe African Music Ensemble and the West African Dance Class with Professor Locke. In doing so, he introduced the students in these two courses to the cultural particularities of the music and dance, and to Ghanaian methods of teaching. He brought a unique richness to the material because of his deep familiarity with the music, and he served as a link between the material and the Dagomba culture.

During class and ensemble sessions, students learned by watching his performances, listening to his demonstrations, and taking criticism at every opportunity. The Dagomba pieces that Alhaji shared with his students consisted of praise names for elders and chiefs, war invocations, and drum-dance compositions, so students learned the Dagomba history through this musical medium. Most importantly, Alhaji projected the reverence that the Dagomba hold for their music in his performances with the hope that students might develop a similar respect for the Dagomba musical culture.

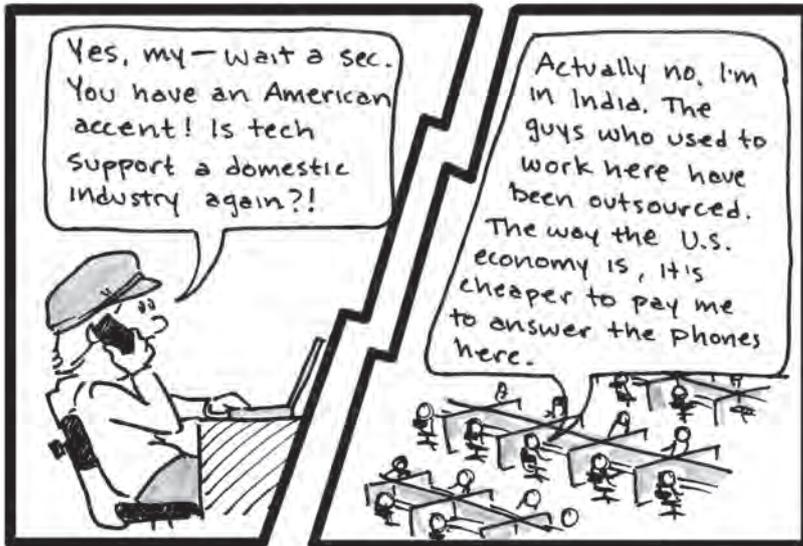
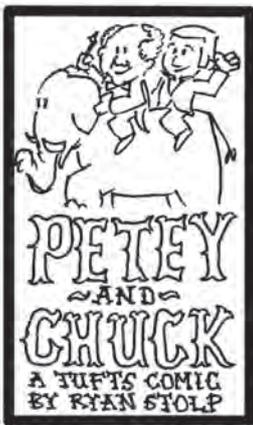
Alhaji's death is an acute loss to Dagbon, the Tufts Music Department, and the international African music scene. He perfected a balance between stern instructor, reverent performer, and compassionate friend that allowed those around him a rare opportunity to learn from a master. I hope that through his many students, his extended family, and his recordings and transcripts, his legacy will forever be preserved in the music that defined and colored his life.



Professor Locke has compiled his material from his years of study with Alhaji onto a website which he characterizes as “the legacy of our mutual study.” The site, intended to be accessed internationally by both music scholars and the Dagombas themselves, was a collaborative effort between Locke, students and faculty, and the Tufts University Academic Technology.

For more information on Alhaji, the Dagomba people, and their music visit <http://dagomba.uit.tufts.edu>. ©

Renee Orser is a senior majoring in International Relations.



Like to go out and
drink?

Write about it!

The *Observer's* looking for bar and nightclub reviews. 21+ only.

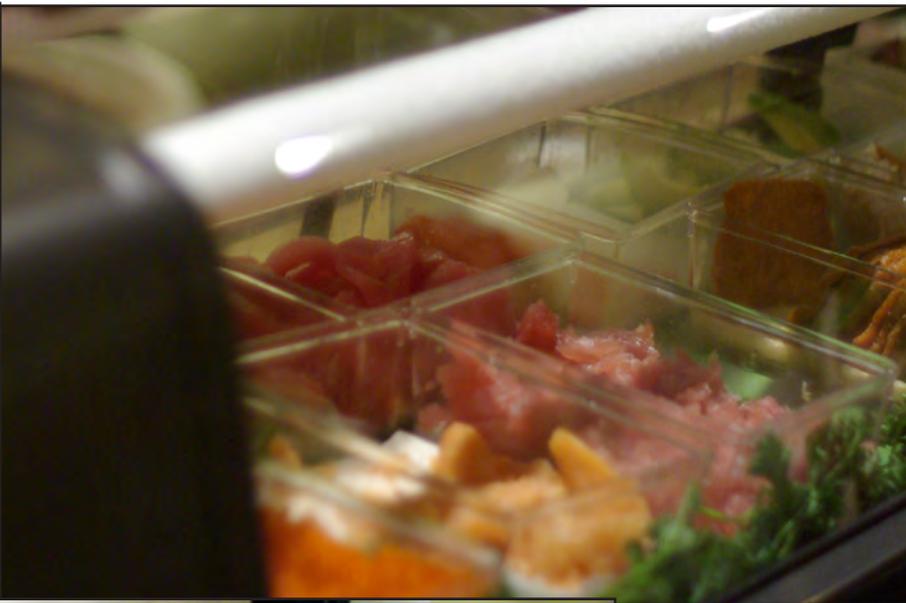
Email us: observer@tufts.edu



*Somerville Fluff Festival
Photos by Ian MacLellan
More on page 20*



*Snappy Sushi, Davis Square
Photos by Ian MacLellan*





Nothing Funnier Than A Bitch

BY CRYSTAL BUI AND
WILL RAMSDELL

From the Floor: Attention focuses on center stage. Curtains drawn. Noise fades. Go ahead, watch. Be captivated as he confidently strolls toward the spotlight. 200 pairs of eyes trace his mischievous smile. The audience holds its breath and waits. What justifies this smirk: a comedic genius, perhaps?

[From the Stage]: He leisurely inhales, shuffles his feet to the right, and nervously makes eye contact with the pretty girls sitting up front. He's ready.

"Want to hear a joke?"

Reeled in, the audience obediently nods. Some shout "Yes!" and he grins.

"Women's rights, bitch!"

A pause. Surely not, but oh yes, he did. Poor guy, he must have thought it was funny. He must have thought it was high school. Instead, it was just crude and pointless. Even the joke's intended brevity was muddled by the final exclamation of degradation. Original, too.

But his smirk stands, and others join. Maybe it's kind of funny, isn't it? To degrade 50.78% of the Tufts student population? That's hilarious. It must be; after all, everyone starts to laugh. Soon, it's a roar. They agree. And without hesitation, they clap. Come on, it is funny, and who can judge? Some cultures mutilate the clitorises of young girls so that they may never feel sexual pleasure. Who are we to judge? It's funny, like retards and faggots. Don't you think that bitches are funny too?

Well, sadly, the freshman FIT orientation group of 2008 did.

"Jokes" such as this should not happen at Tufts. Students quickly forget they attend a university which strives to "value a diverse community of women and men [...] - where differences are understood and respected" — as outlined explicitly on Tufts' website.

But look at where we are: the "More Liberal than thou" Northeast that fought against slavery and for freedom, in a school with an acceptance-rate-idiot-filter and a reputation for global justice and forward thinking. But that's all worth beans, because in the end, everyone laughed. This "comedian," soaring on the wing of his athletic scholarship, did not stand alone. We laughed with him. A clapping ovation in support of sexism and troglodytic joke telling. But the rabbit holes goes deeper.

Skim the Tufts Class of 2012 group and you will see the

B*@\$#!



dis-cussion entitled: MEN. Unlike a crowded auditorium, Facebook does not pressure one to post "lol" at that which is not funny. Nonetheless, this group has the distinction of hosting everything from potty jokes (no hate there), to machismo, to girls denouncing their belief in feminism. Sadly, in 18 years of life, these well-educated (Tufts accepted) ladies never learned that feminism means the belief that women are equal to men, nothing more.

Freshman women proclaim on the site: "I don't really sympathize with feminism," "I'm

not big into feminism," and "I'm actually not a feminist at all."

So, we pose once again:

"Want to hear a joke?"

"(Black, Gay, Asian, Hispanic) rights, (Nig, Fag, Chink, Wetback)!"

This time, how would we have reacted? Scowls and jeers? Definitely. Anger? Of course. Laughter? Never. The room would have felt uncomfortable and inflamed — not indifferent and unconcerned.

Jumbos, don't freak out. It's just a joke. Although, in any other form, being racist, prejudice, or homophobic, would be utterly unacceptable — especially at a socially conscious university such as Tufts. However, be sexist, and it's fine. No one will say a thing.

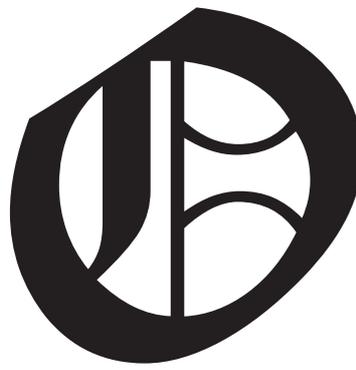
"Women's rights, bitch!"

How funny. Dave Chapelle makes fun of Whitey for a living, and it's hilarious. Besides, everyone gets his or her share of humorous prejudice. If we can't laugh at ourselves then life is no fun — except we're laughing at one another, and until we are devoid of racism and sexism in word as well as deed, it cannot be said that the jokes don't do any harm. It has gotten to the point where the effects of sexism are so insidiously entrenched in our everyday lives that we do not recognize it —

even as it is flaunted in our self-satisfied faces. From the black-white divide in Dewick to the nights of "Poon wrangling" on Professors Ave., we create our own prejudicial normalcies. We accept the status quo, and spit in our own sympathetically humanitarian faces.

So tell us that women's rights are a joke; tell us equality is a joke. But try harder, because you're not funny. And we're not laughing. ☹

Crystal Bui is a freshman and Will Ramsdell is a sophomore majoring in philosophy.



neiro

*Explore your mind through
the world of Lucid dreams*

BY SOPHIE PACK

What would you say if I offered you the most potent hallucinogen known to man that, when taken, could negate all physical boundaries and worldly laws and give you the ability to fly, walk through walls, morph into Angelina Jolie, and talk to any character—alive, dead or even made up? What if this magical substance was not only free but 100% safe?

The dream is an untapped goldmine of intrigue, wonder, and self-discovery. REM cycles pack in about three hours of dream exploration per night. Yet time is a construct that doesn't exist while you sleep. In the lucid dreaming documentary, *Waking Life* actor Ethan Hawke raises the issue that when you die, there are still six to twelve minutes of brain activity. Could life be one grand lucid dream?

Perhaps the greatest rush of my life occurred at age six when I discovered I could be awake when I slept. I'd close my eyes and after seeing a bit of hypnogogic imagery in my mind's eye, I would almost instantaneously drift into a vivid dream world where all my senses felt amped up a hundred fold. It was almost unfathomable. I could fly around and see intense and fiery sunsets that melted into oceans and sparkling cities. Whatever I imagined became reality.

My goal when I enter a lucid dream is usually either to discover something new about myself or to enjoy all the new sensations. The former yields self-awareness, the latter, pleasure. Since all the characters in my dreams are constructs of my imagination, I once asked a girl the meaning of life. She began confidently, but her speech soon became garbled as she melted into

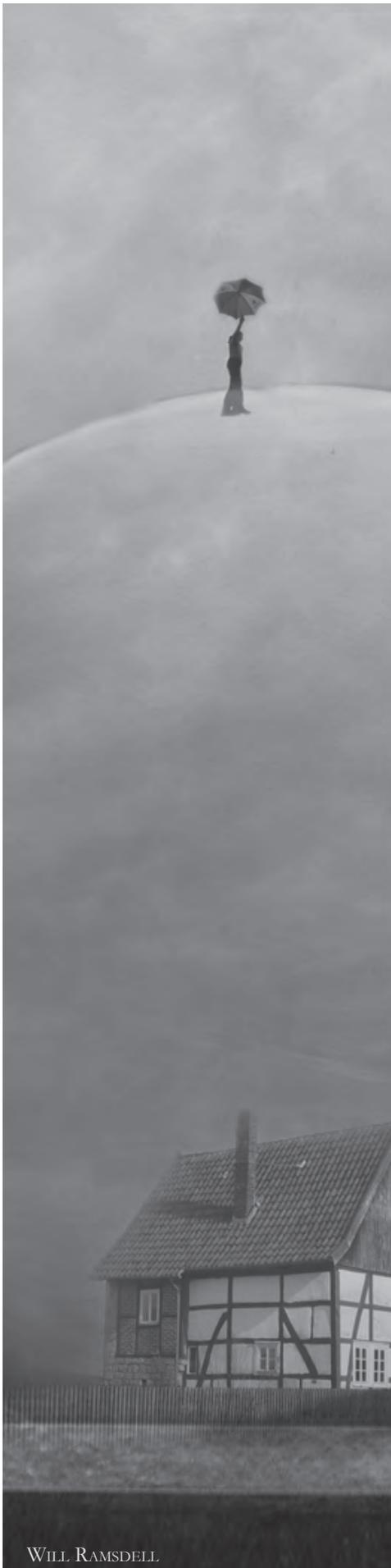
the ground.

Other oneironauts (those who explore dream worlds or realities) use lucid dreams as a practice world to play out scenarios they're grappling with



in real life. A doctor wrote to Stephen LaBerge, who has a PhD in psychophysiology and is author of the stupendous book, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*, that she practices surgeries in dreams before the operation. As a result, her efficiency rate is 40% higher than other doctors. Sports psychologists use this mental rehearsing tactic because it reduces anxiety and provides a blueprint for unconscious muscle memory.

Lucid dreaming is also a great opportunity to resolve pressing real-life issues, like confronting vertigo. The dreamer must



WILL RAMSDELL

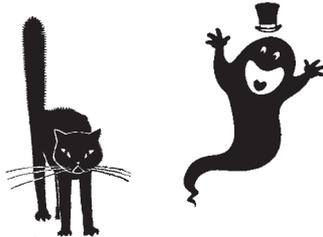


Celebrate Crime Prevention Month

October 2008

For a fun and safe Halloween, the TUFTS POLICE Crime Prevention Unit offers the following safety tips:

- Be aware of your surroundings at all times!
- Use common sense if you are attending a party! Don't put yourself in a situation you have no control over!
- When out at night, walk in well-lit areas of the campus! Go with a friend and use the safety shuttle.
- Remember your personal belongings! Do not provide an opportunity for someone to steal your property!
- Before leaving for a Halloween function, make sure your residence hall room door is locked! Windows and security screens should be secured. Be sure to tell someone where you are going, and what time you'll be back!
- Report suspicious persons and behavior to the Tufts Police!



Tufts University Police

**EMERGENCIES ON ANY CAMPUS X66911
OFF CAMPUS 617-627-6911**

Non-emergencies

**Boston Campus 617-636-6610 Off Campus
X66610 On Campus**

**Grafton Campus 508-839-5303 Off Campus
X84900 On Campus**

**Medford Campus 617-627-3030 Off Campus
X73030 On Campus**



Bite-sized news you might have missed since our last issue.

More Pell Grants

President George W. Bush recently signed into law a bill called the Higher Education Opportunity Act. The new law will attempt to ease some of the financial burdens of families sending their children to college. Among other provisions, the High Education Opportunity Act will open the possibility of financial aid up to more families, while at the same time reforming the student loan process and adding certain new regulations to guide the US colleges and universities.

Hillel Rocks the Vote

Hillel hosted a Rock the Vote event at the campus center on September 29. The goal of the event was to make sure that students who need absentee ballots for the upcoming presidential election have them. The goal of Hillel was to obtain at least 100 applications for absentee ballots in one hour. The event also enabled individuals who had not yet registered to vote to do so.

TCU ♥ Greeks

The Tufts Community Union (TCU) Senate passed a resolution that recognized the Greek community's role in promoting unity within the Tufts student body. The resolution listed the Greek community's role in "philanthropy and social events," as reasons for this official recognition of their importance to the campus as a whole. The TCU resolution also pointed to the fact that many members of the Greek community could be found in the TCU, and expressed a wish to recognize these individuals as well as signal their support for the leaders of the Greek community in general.

Senate Gets Paid

Duncan Pickard, President of Tufts Community Union Senate, announced Sep-

tember 21 that the university had given the Senate back the money purportedly embezzled by former Tufts employees Jodie Nealley and Ray Rodriguez. The university chose to repay the Senate before the insurance companies with which they had filed their claim had paid them back. Members of the TCU responded warmly to this gesture, and thanked the university for their support.

Tufts Gives Big to Medford

Tufts University has agreed to donate \$500,000 to help Medford reduce the city's \$2.4 million budget deficit; this promised donation enabled the city officials to sign a plan that would eradicate the town's debt. The donation will be split up into two chunks of \$250,000, and will be given to Medford over the next two years. The \$500,000 figure was agreed upon after Medford's Mayor, Barbara Rubel, calculated that certain areas would not break even in the new fiscal year.

Speech Task Force

The Task Force on Freedom of Expression, created a university-wide speech policy at the request of Tufts University President Lawrence Bacow. The policy was drafted largely in response to the *Primary Source* scandal, and its purpose is to outline a basic framework of principles, or guidelines that the university can look to during discussions about freedom of speech on campus. The draft was made public on September 15, and the Task Force on Freedom of Expression is requesting feedback from the student body.

Dorm Improvements

West and Metcalf Halls have undergone recent improvements, including new furniture, wireless Internet access, as well as repainted walls in dorm common rooms. The improvements are the result of an initiative brought forth last spring by two Tufts Community Union (TCU) senators, Chas Morrison and Shabazz Stuart. Morrison hopes renovations such as these will result in more frequent use of the common room spaces.

State of the Senate

Tufts Community Union (TCU) President Duncan Pickard's recent State of the Senate focused on the dynamic demographic of the Tufts community, and emphasized the need of the community as a whole to work to ensure the inclusion of every part of the Tufts student body. Pickard also encouraged the greater involvement of the student body in the TCU through new additions to their website, which allow for all students to track the progress of issues being discussed in the Senate.

Register to Vote!
Only 29 Days Until the Election!

Compiled from a number of sources, including the Tufts Daily, by Anna Majeski.

A SEASON OF

Multiplex Politics

BY MATTHEW DIAMANTE

Another summer has come and gone, and with it another spate of megabudget blockbuster films. As we prepare for the leaves to turn, the air to cool and explosion-free films to hit the Somerville Theater, let's take a look back at the season of tentpoles to remember the thrills, jeer the junk, and reflect on what we Americans have learned.

"Learned," you say? It wasn't a typo. In between the combusting engines and distressed damsels, I like to search top-grossing pictures for a hint of the country's ever-evolving soul. The movies may come from Hollywood elites, but they're burned into the retinas of not only our nation but those of the world also. Neither does this fail to have an effect; a 2004 *Newsweek* article noted a study in which participants held demonstrably higher opinions of gays after viewing ten episodes of HBO's *Six Feet Under*. So, to reprise my 2006 *Observer* duty of surveying blockbusters, I've stepped on the bubble gum, numbed my rear end and forked over a small fortune in tickets to bring you the following brief on the State of the Cinematic Nation.

The first hit of the season was *Iron Man*. In it, genius Tony Stark lives a seemingly effortless existence of one-night stands, designing fancy bombs and obstructing *Vanity Fair* articles (in short, a typical right-winger's dream) until he's forced to confront the ugly if obvious fact that fancy weaponry, despite being constructed for use by the "good guys," can just as well end up in the hands of undesirables. He then becomes a leftist crusader, vowing not only to destroy the wayward arms his company created but to halt their manufacture altogether. This all seems fairly innocuous, until Stark Industries' number-two man is revealed to be in cahoots with the Afghan Taliban look-alikes that tried to destroy him. Director Jon Favreau thus achieves what Johnathan

Demme, director of the 2004 remake of *The Manchurian Candidate*, failed to do: show an element of the US government (or, in our case, a Halliburton-like contractee thereof) to be not merely benefiting from but *partnered with* terrorists. The result is not only a slickly subversive popcorn comedy for the American left but, as *Slate's* Dana Stevens noted, "the first movie about the conflict in the Middle East and Afghanistan" to earn copious box-office returns.

Next up came *Indiana Jones and the*



Kingdom of the Crystal Skull. As *Sight and Sound Magazine* observed, the politics of this fourth outing are nebulous. The McCarthy-era FBI certainly looks absurd when it questions Indy's patriotism, but the world's most famous archaeologist growls (perhaps insincerely) "I like Ike!" to KGB agents about to kill him, and a collegiate anti-communist rally saves our protagonists' necks — albeit wholly unintentionally. The *Indy* franchise has always been suffused with nostalgia, which often drifts to the right where

historical fiction is concerned (in 1984's *The Temple of Doom*, the *deus ex machina* was none other than the British Empire), and *KotCS* is not much different, cheerfully celebrating the shinier parts of the 1950s and keeping nonwhite characters in the background. Still, in the opening shots which gradually reveal that something is rotten in a convoy of Yankee troops, a wonderfully spooky moment in which a placid nuclear family is revealed to be a doomed sham and the aforementioned Red Scare scenes, helmer Steven Spielberg rightly hints at a more ambiguous world than the WW2 era of the first and third *Jones* films.

The Incredible Hulk is much more straightforward. Army General "Thunderbolt" Ross is a twenty-first century Ahab determined to harvest the destructive potential of protagonist Bruce Banner's singular biology, and isn't remotely interested in the latter's rights. (Indeed, he calls Banner's body governmental property.) *Iron Man* portrayed the military as somewhat oafish, and this film, which is explicitly set in the same reality, is a vivid warning against unchecked power in the hands of professional warriors. The real Army uses doctors to prescribe its copious quantities of antidepressants, but Ross employs no such safeguards while administering a far riskier sixty-year-old serum to the film's villain.

I didn't see *Wanted*, the assassination-is-great flick that grossed more than 120 million domestically. Called "more juvenile than its sounds" by the *AV Club's* Keith Phillips, this budding anti-*Bourne* franchise reportedly insists that murdering select individuals can prevent future atrocities—because monstrous men, naturally, are irreplaceable. It all sounds like a walking ad for the Bush Doctrine, which not even its author takes seriously. Nor did I see *WALL-E*, Pixar's Wal-Mart-skewering environmentalist fable, though an unsigned post on the *Gawker* blog assures us that, in a departure from 2004's *The Incredibles*, "this time" the Disney-owned studio is "voting Democrat." *Hancock* also failed to net me in.

But one could neither run nor

hide from *The Dark Knight*. Christopher Nolan's Bat-sequel leans rightward in its foundations, which not only supposes a Gotham City plagued by far worse violence and civil unrest faced by any modern American city but also bases its plot entirely upon an ideology-free terrorist known only as The Joker. ("Some men just want to watch the world burn," Alfred the Butler says.) Right-wingers love to pretend that real terrorists such as Osama bin Laden are similarly bereft of political or "logical" goals, and that they target their victims because they loathe our civic freedom. This is poor policy, as it prevents us from discrediting our enemies amongst foreign masses on their own politically- and historically-steeped rhetoric, but it shields the likes of James Dobson and George Bush from seeing shades of themselves in the bomb-loving, viciously anti-gay and theologically absolutist criminals lurking in Afghan caves. Small wonder, then, that *The Wall Street Journal* had one Andrew Klavan bleat that *The*

Dark Knight "is at some level a paean of praise to the fortitude and moral courage that has been shown by George W. Bush in this time of terror and war."

Apart from arguing a similarity between the Bat symbol and the letter W, however, Klavan only cites one element of the film to make his case, and that halfheartedly. He's also thuddingly wrong. Bush famously delights in executions; Batman rejects them. Several characters torture antagonists to no benefit and indeed often worsen the situation at hand. Bruce Wayne develops a supersized wiretapping system, but only uses it once, in the midst of a ticking time-bomb scenario (which has never actually occurred), and places it under the control of a responsible third party. Most importantly, the climactic scenes hinge not on the traditional survival of the hero, or manner in which the villain will perish, but on whether ordinary American citizens are willing to uphold the law even if it kills them. Their revealed fortitude and decency, of the kind which the White House and its apologists flout time after time on matters both monumental (the writ of *habeas corpus*) and commonplace (the prohibition on party-based federal hiring), makes the film a ringing salute to the rule of

law and a stinging rebuke to right-wingers who fancy themselves above it.

Finally, Hollywood itself was the target of *Tropic Thunder*, the summer's last big-budget hurrah. Its satire was thus largely if indirectly aimed at liberals, skewering Tinseltown's smugness on matters from



inter-ethnic harmony to respect for the overweight and exploiting the mentally disadvantaged in the search of fame. Les Grossman, the villain played by a deliciously

obscene Tom Cruise, is a searing send-up of American Jews who embrace liberalism until their personal interests are threatened (in *Thunder*'s case, profits wrung from a brutal murder; in the larger sense, Israel); indeed, *The New York Times*' Manohla Dargis calls the performance "vulgar... Jewface".

One could easily associate Grossman's treachery with right-wing impulses of the Bush-Cheney stock. *Thunder* does, however, aim one explicit barb at the right, and it's a similarly bombastic one: the gung-ho, obviously right-wing disabled Vietnam veteran turns out to be a bigger fraud than anyone. Score one overall, then, for bipartisan entertainment.

The corporate media, and its entertainment divisions especially, are constantly lambasted by the right wing for bearing leftist sympathies. But why should they not? Reality, Steven Colbert reminds us, has a well-known liberal bias. The bulk of this year's blockbusters hew to this principle, and I'll always be the first to congratulate them for it.

This was a satisfying summer of hip, fresh flicks with big ideas and substantive themes, and I could say the same for a certain left-of-center presidential ticket. ☺

Home, Home on the Homecoming

Homecoming came and went this year, and if you didn't know any better you might've thought this was a real college campus filled with real college students.

The Tufts student body is cold and calculating; we live and die by our daily-planners and our future prospects. Fun is something largely foreign to us—instead, we find ourselves often settling for some relative perception of it.

But on Homecoming Saturday we set our career advancement and looming exams aside. We put down our books and picked up bottles. We decided that micromanaging everything sometimes won't work, and quickly learned to live with the fact that there was no way to stop the rain.

There were students on the peculiarly steep hill between the Sophia Gordon building sliding down a slip and slide. Girls and

"HE'S MAINLY A MACHINE."
An Arts & Culture Column
by Thomas Sutherland



guys alike in their underwear, wasted, sliding face first and not caring who joined. It was an odd sight to see on campus, students having what looked like a genuine good time while they still can.

One day we will forget about being young, and we will just assume that we were born from a briefcase at age 35. The fleeting fun of our collegiate youth will be completely gone, and we will cope by further altering our relative perception of it.

For most students, whether they realize it or like it now, will look back on their Tufts years and measure them in grades and internships. But some of us, the lucky ones, will remember the one day when we all threw our inhibitions and better judgment to the wind, when we all acted like college students. ☺



HANK DOLACKEY

Ratatat/Paradise

BY KATIE CHRISTIANSEN

As students in the Boston area, we are often spoiled for choice when it comes to concert selections. Every once in a while, however, one will call out to you from the bleak and empty pages of Ticketmaster, beckoning you with promises of a small venue and a great live show — this time, it was Ratatat.

Performing at the Paradise Rock Club September 28th and 29th, the Brooklyn-based duo provided many eager fans with a mix of new works and older classics. Although on tour promoting *LP3*, their latest release, guitarist Mike Stroud and multi-instrumentalist Evan Mast kept perspective on what made them a hit on the indie scene. Some of the band's more well-known tracks such as "Loud Pipes," "Wildcat," and "Lex" all made appearances at various times throughout the show.

Of course, to keep with the purpose of the tour, Mast and Stroud, accompanied by an unidentified, 'fro-ed out guy on synthesizer, whipped out "Mirando," "Shempi," and "Falcon Jab" off of *LP3*. Although this album keeps with the no-vocals, electronically-charged masterpieces that Ratatat are best known for, hints of more worldly influences permeate all thirteen tracks. While no one track can be directly related to, say, Middle Eastern nomadic tribes, there are definite hints of

South American, Indian, and East Asian musical standards. In this regard, *LP3* is less of a rock-electronica blowout and more of a chilled-out mélange of synth guitar riffs, keyboard, bass, and various percussion instruments.

Oh right. The show. As if the giant 'fro wasn't enough (and trust me, it was a show all its own), Ratatat provided a projection backdrop to visually entertain their sober fans and trip out their, well, tripping ones. During "Mirando," clips from *Predator* looped, ending with a grotesque mini-clip of Arnold Schwarzenegger that insisted on repeating itself as the song ended. During "Shempi" singing faces from Abba with eyes for mouths and noses for ears contributed to very appropriate Euro dance-pop beat.

During all these clips, however, Mast and Stroud's shadows were projected onto the screen, their imposing figures mixed in with the strange and often misshapen

graphics and clips. With a head of hair any Alpha Phi would be jealous of, Stroud looked, at times, like a Muppet on crack, head-banging and whipping it back and forth in time to his incredibly gripping and awesome guitar riffs.

And then it came. The sweet, sweet encore and with it, some of the only words uttered during the entire show: "I've been rapping for about seventeen years..." It was a moment of joy, elation and orgasm for almost everybody. "Seventeen Years," Ratatat's first single released in 2003, is perhaps one of their most melodic tracks with a sublime combination of guitar and synth that is at the same time electrifying and blissfully sedating. Everyone seemed to have been waiting until the encore to release all the manic energy they had stored up, and when those infamous opening words were spoken, it was released in a frenzy of thrashing and screaming.

I hate that my so-called Genius iTunes recommends Slightly Stoopid whenever I play *Classics*. Live Ratatat is twice the genius, twice the creativity, and twice the pure listening enjoyment that iTunes or Slightly Stoopid will ever be. 🎸

JOKE DRY LIKE DESERT

Two former soldiers return to the hallowed ground over which they once fought. It was their first time returning since the Great War, and memories flooded their wise and weathered minds. One soldier looked to the other, depressed and fighting back tears, "I don't know how to feel. We did a lot of bad things here." The other soldier looked back silently. He was too upset to speak—he forgot to put his clothes in the drier.



“You cannot destroy the Metal”

I DON'T PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS

A Music Column

by Sam Sherman



In his September 29 *Tufts Daily* article “Metal. Apply Directly to Face,” Grant Beighley wrote that the reception of Metallica’s newest album, “Death Magnetic,” would largely determine the future of the genre.

I could not disagree anymore.

This article is not meant to be an attack on Beighley. He wrote an article about metal, which makes him infinitely cooler than most of the other students who squawk about music. He also boldly and unapologetically stated that he thought Slipknot was “one of the most creative bands around” and that Fred Durst’s “Significant Other” was one of the “most diverse and innovative rock albums of the 90’s” and then told his readership to flat out deal with it. I can dig that.

But I must loudly disagree with his assessment of the state of metal.

First, Metallica is not the face of metal. It was, in the mid-80’s, but it is no longer. Sure, to those on the outside looking in, the band might be, but to, and pardon me for

using such a cliché term, the true fans, Metallica is representative of everything metal is not. To the true fans, Metallica is a band that peaked long ago, and will never again be complete without bassist Cliff Burton. They are the millionaires who killed Napster, the insecure and almost comedically fake rockers lambasted in 2004 documentary *Some Kind of Monster*.

If metal is going to move to the forefront of popular rock, Metallica will not be the band to lead the way. But metal doesn’t need to move anywhere, and certainly not into the spotlight of mainstream success.

If anything, metal is the antithesis of the mainstream. It is an angry offshoot, an entire genre of musicians who play the music they want to play and give a guttural “fuck you” to anyone who doesn’t like it.

Beighley writes that “without some form of popular support, [metal bands], in time, will fail. I can guarantee it.” This is simply not the case; there have been, and will continue to be, metal bands from every

subgenre that cater exclusively to a narrow niche of metalheads.

The closest metal has come to mainstream success was the late 80’s and early 90’s, when glam-metal (Poison, Whitesnake, Bon Jovi) was king of the hill. These bands packed tens of thousands into stadiums and sold millions of records. They also alienated the dedicated metal fan base, bastardized the sound of the music, and almost killed the genre.

Metal is a music that has no place in the mainstream. It’s fast, heavy, and chaotic sound will sear the souls of its small but dedicated fan base, and real metal musicians will never change that for a shot at being mainstream music’s flavor of the month.

As long as there are pissed off guys and girls with a penchant for speed and distortion, the genre will live on. Jack Black succinctly put it, “You cannot destroy the Metal.” I can guarantee it. ☺

The Feast of Flesh and Brains

BY MICHAEL TUCKER

There’s a certain strangeness residing in every city—in back alleys and bars, in subways and theatres, weird people doing weird things. They are a strange and odd bunch, but in a city where everyone has a story, theirs are the ones worth listening to. Most importantly, they are the people who remind us that when the going gets weird, the weird gets going.

With that in mind, I went with a friend to the 7th annual Feast of Flesh, a night of zombie inspired mayhem on Saturday, September 27, at The Coolidge Corner Theatre.

The night got off to a slow start. The roughly 500 people in attendance were forced to wait outside in the rain before being allowed to enter. Walking to the end of the line, my friend and I passed hundreds of fanatics dressed up in their finest zombie wear. From a decapitated teacher to a resurrected hippie zombie, fake blood was not in short supply.

Not surprisingly, everyone waiting in line not only shared a common interest in zombies, but in booze as well. It could

warm us up, but it couldn’t keep us dry. It could get us ready for some fun, but couldn’t prepare us for what we were about to witness.

Soaked, we made our way into the theatre. Allston power-trio Rock City Crimewave blasted out fast, distortion-heavy rock while the crowd packed into the room. After the band finished their set, a quick burlesque performance held the crowd’s attention.

The dancers finished and the crowd drew silent. From behind the dark, tall stage jumped the show’s host, undertaker turned local alt-culture celebrity J. Cannibal. He worked the already drunk, already dressed-like-zombies crowd into a frenzy, calling up the best dressed zombies and having them compete for the title of best costume. Finally, he played Peter Jackson’s cult-classic film *Dead/Alive*, the crowd cheering on each blood-soaked scene. After, I made it out alive, and didn’t have to use my sidearm—a pretty good night. ☺



RACHEL COBCROFT

Farmers' Markets: Go Try a Local Tomato

BY RENEE ORSER

I have a weakness for delicious, hearty, healthy food. Some people buy movies, some buy jeans. I buy food, and our local farmers' markets are my haven. The local food scene in Boston, and in greater Massachusetts, is booming. Presently, we have 164 farmer's markets in the state, and dozens of local bakeries, orchards, dairies, and farms. The Massachusetts farmers' markets have experienced their largest year yet. Interest in shopping locally has arisen out of both a greater awareness for energy costs and a movement to enjoy, understand, and appreciate the food on our tables. Whether traveled to by foot, bike, car, or T, these markets are at the disposal of Tufts students throughout the spring, summer, and early fall, and are eager for your interest and business.

Visiting the markets, particularly the Davis Square market, is an experience worth building into an afternoon each week. The enthusiasm for the food piled under the tents is contagious. The food looks fresh and diverse. You can find apricots with hints of purple in the orange fruit, fresh lybaked pepper bread, and cartons of dribbling raspberries with a sign saying "picked

actually excited about dinner.

Farmers' markets expose customers to food variety that they are unable to find at chain grocery stores. Kimball Fruit Farm is a prime example. Kimball, who participates in the Davis market each week, grows 38 varieties of apples and 52 different types of tomatoes. When you walk up to their tent, you hit two rows of tables of these tomatoes. Reds, purples, yellows, and oranges shine through the skin of all different sizes and shapes, and each has a description of its own flavor and cooking specialty – slices, salads, sauces, and beyond. It's a sensory overload in comparison to the identical red, round tomatoes stacked at supermarkets, and the taste and texture are unlike anything you can buy generically. It is because of options like these that Rebecca Busch (BA '09) believes that farmers' markets make it a lot easier for off-campus students to eat healthily and well. Unusual, seasonal choices are available for



on food. A dining hall meal is \$9. I was curious about what type of meal I could create for this price, so I went to the Davis Square market last Wednesday on a mission to find out. Because the fixings for a meal tend to come in larger quantities, I decided it made more sense to create a meal for my housemates instead of an individual meal, bringing the total allowed cost up to \$45 for the five of us. I started with the tomatoes. I bought four tomatoes, all different varieties, at \$2.50/lb for \$3.50. Next I moved onto two heads of lettuce for \$2.50 each and two large cucumbers for \$.50 each. The corn, picked fresh that morning, was \$.50 an ear, and I picked up two to add into the salad. A loaf of zucchini bread for \$6.00 and a roll of garlic-basil goat cheese for \$6.00 brought my total to \$22.50, exactly half of what we would have paid in the dining hall.

“ When we purchase the **food**, we meet the people who **planted**, grew, picked, **washed**, and packed the food. ”

at 6 am this morning.” The farmers want to help you by pointing out their favorites and making meal suggestions, and the shoppers show their kids new leafy vegetables or feed their dogs a scrap of what they have just purchased. People are smiling, and are

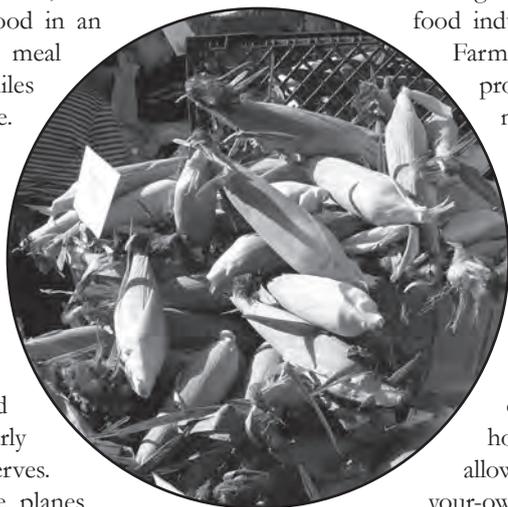
easy purchase, and give shoppers an opportunity to expand their normal meal choices, search for interesting recipes, and diversify their diets.

We are all on a student budget, and we all worry about spending too much money

If I wanted to add meat from the market into this meal, I could have bought a one pound package of lamb chops from Signal Rock Farm for \$15 and still have been under by enough to splurge on some homemade cinnamon chocolate.

Why is it important to create meals like this instead of swiping into the dining hall or buying its equivalent at Shaw's? First, we know where the food is coming from.

The farms that sell in Boston tend to be no more than 50 miles from the city. Some are even within ten. In contrast, when we buy produce at supermarkets, on average, each item of food in an American household meal has traveled 1,500 miles to be on the plate. Notice the stickers on those shiny red apples that say they're from Chile, or wonder how the avocados stayed fresh in transport from California? Those miles traveled were costly, particularly on our energy reserves.



Oil was used in the planes and trucks, in the refrigeration, and in the packaging, all part of a business designed to keep food fresh until it arrives, across country or globe, at your table. Steve L. Hopp in Barbara Kingsolver's newest book on eating locally states, "If every U.S. citizen ate just one meal a week (any meal) composed of locally and organically raised meats and produce, we would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 million barrels of oil *every week*." By buying local produce we avoid transporting some of our food the thousands of miles most of today's groceries require. It is a simple way to make a small dent in our own energy usage each week.

Second, we know whom the food is coming from. When we purchase the food, we meet the people who planted, grew, picked, washed, and packed the food. They are the individuals whose efforts, employees, and families we are supporting. "You get to talk to the farmers, and they always know what they're talking about. They have recipes for their food, but they want to hear your recipes too. It's a social scene," says Sarah Philips, a junior.



Hanson's Farm calls the Davis market "awesome and really supportive." Kimball describes its customers as "appreciative." When we shop from these farms we contribute to this give-and-take

relationship with local businesses and give them the means to continue supplying our markets.

Working as a farmer in today's food industry is challenging. Farmers who commit to producing for local markets must diversify their work in order to support themselves. In addition to traveling to multiple farmers' markets a week, farms run stands and shops on their property, hold cooking classes, allow individuals to pick-your-own, supply local restaurants, and provide other activities,

such as horseback riding and hay-rides, to farm visitors. They bring in much of their face-to-face business at farmer's markets though, and as Crystal Brook Farm states, visiting a farmer's market is a benefit to everyone. The farms get the financial support that they need in order to provide customers with the food that they enjoy and trust.

By traveling to the Davis market and other local markets we as Tufts students are able to connect with our community. We meet residents and farmers who share Somerville and Medford with us, and we contribute to the unique atmosphere that stems out of a love for great food. Together, we talk over recipes for kale, sample goat cheeses and marinades, drink

lavender lemonade, and plan out our meals for the next week. We support a collective effort to buy locally, support our farmers, and enjoy their products. It's a colorful, fun, and fresh opportunity to bring a piece of our community back home to our kitchens at Tufts, and it's a chance to step off campus in order to better our lifestyles.

On the right is a list of local farmers' markets' dates and times. Take an afternoon before winter hits to visit one, try a tomato, and shop locally. ☺

Weekly Markets

Monday

Cambridge/Central Square Farmers' Market
Bishop Allen Dr. & Norfolk St.
Cambridge, MA
May 19 - October:
11:30a.m. - 6:00p.m.
November 1 - November 24:
11:30a.m. - 5:00p.m.

Wednesday

Somerville/Davis Square Farmers' Market
Day St. & Herbert St., Davis Square
Somerville, MA
May - October: 12:00p.m. - 6:00p.m.
November: 12:00p.m. - 5:00p.m.

Thursday

Medford Farmers' Market
Riverside Ave. & River St., Medford
Square
Medford, MA
June 19 - October 23: 12p.m. - 7:00p.m.

Cambridge/Kendall Square Farmers' Market
500 Kendall Street, Kendall Square
Cambridge, MA
June 5 - November 6: 11:00a.m. - 2:30p.m.

Saturday

Somerville/Union Square Farmers Market
Union Square on the Plaza
Somerville, MA
June 7 - October 25: 9:00a.m. - 1:00p.m.

An Evening at Petite Robert Bistro

BY LAUREN LEE

When I want to splurge or if I know that someone is treating me to a nice dinner, there are a few spots that I absolutely love to go to. Petite Robert Bistro is my new favorite. It's quaint and cute. The French food is delicious. The prices are not outrageous. Located in Back Bay, it's not the most easily accessible for students at Tufts (but isn't that a great thing sometimes?). Petite Robert is a short walk from the Prudential T-stop.

The front room has a small (although seemingly well stocked) bar that appears to have a loyal following on weekend nights. A majority of the seating is located in a larger side room. It's a fairly small place, perhaps seating no more than 30 patrons at once. If you plan on going on a weekend night, definitely make a reservation. Due to its intimate size and candle-lit tables, the overall feel is warm and cozy. The chalkboard with the day's specials on the wall adds to its homey charm. It's definitely not one of those stuffy, holier-than-thou French eateries where you're afraid you might commit some tiny faux pas only to have the maitre'd reprimand you (*L'Espalier*, I'm looking at you).

Now on to my personal favorite part: the food. Everything was prepared with meticulous attention to detail, but once again, there was no pretentiousness seen. Everything tasted fresh, and the seasoning accented the flavors without overpowering or obscuring them.

We ordered two mussel appetizers and two more-than-generous bowls of mussels came in a white wine sauce (I recommend you dip the toasty house bread in the sauce). I went to Petite Robert with two other friends. The three of us ordered the pan seared trout on a bed of risotto, the steak-frites (fries) with poivre sauce, and the pan-seared scallops. The risotto was tender and creamy with the slightest bite to it; the steak was a beautiful medium rare. My scallops were seared to barely-caramelized

perfection. The portions were all generous without being sickeningly so, leaving me just enough room for more.

For dessert, the three of us shared the Giant Profiterole and *Il Flottante*. The Giant Profiterole was indeed giant—it consisted of a large orb of choux pastry (the outside of a cream puff) filled with vanilla ice cream and was drowned in hot fudge sauce. I imagine that this would be a bit too rich and sweet for one person to finish on his or her own, so if you order this, make sure that you have someone to share it with. The *Il Flottante* was quite beautifully made. The most delicate and tender meringue came floating in light custard sitting in a martini glass. This meringue was not an average meringue. Instead of being crisp and crunchy, it was sweet and soft. My friend summed it up by saying, "This must be what a perfect cloud tastes like."

The prices at Petite Robert were very reasonable for French food. The appetizers were all generally under \$10 and the entrees ranged from around \$15 to just under \$20. The desserts were \$7 and \$5.75, respectively. Our meal with two appetizers, three entrees, and two desserts barely topped \$100 before tip, so while certainly not cheap or budget-friendly, for a special occasion or nice meal, it was not ridiculous. I feel that the quality of the food made it worth the cost. Plus, you can save money by skipping desserts and appetizers—though they were quite delicious.

The one caveat I have with this establishment is that even though we had made reservations, it still took at least fifteen



COURTESY OF PETITE ROBERT BISTRO

minutes for us to be seated—though the hostess was very nice about it. The food was exceedingly good, but the wait between our appetizers and when our entrees came was a bit too long for my liking. We were on the verge of pounding our fists on the table, forks and knives in hand like children. There was also an odd moment right before we ordered dessert where it seemed as though every single member of the wait staff had simply vanished into thin air.

But these are merely minor complaints, and there is not a doubt that I will definitely return to Petite Robert Bistro for the amazing food and welcoming ambiance. It's perfect for dates, dinner with your parents, catching up with an old friend or just treating yourself to something nice. I would, however, consider going on a less popular weeknight or stop by for a lunch (the lunch entrees sounded delicious too—smoked salmon croissant, anyone?) instead of going on a Friday night.

Don't forget to look at the daily specials for entrees or appetizers not seen on the menu. And make reservations—you won't regret it. ☺

Petite Robert Bistro is located at 480 Columbus Avenue in Back Bay. There is a second location in Kenmore Square.

The Paper

To you, that single second
held momentary significance
as your eyes perused the paper
You processed the words?
You'll surely forget my words?

But, those words were all I knew.

It was all I could do
to soak in
the secrets of the stories,
to swim in
the tales of the interviews,
to sink in
the emotions of the peoples.

In those weeks leading up to your brief encounter,
My words were all I could see:
Carved in the walls of buildings;
Sprawled in the smiles of faces;
Lost in the dewdrops of petals.

You don't understand?
My words were everywhere.

I would have fought for these words,
just to hold them still,
just to keep them alive,
the same words which slipped from your eyes...

For you, they were only a thing
to read, to rehash, to exhale with a sigh,
followed by
an "Oh, that's quite sad",
"How did this happen?",
Then?

"Oh well".

But, for me, those words,
They were,
They are,
everything.

—CRYSTAL BUI

Inaction

The verb to be is sliding up your legs,
around your thighs, whispering with sheetless lust,
crawling towards the headboard.
I'm chain-smoking with to go,
who is painfully enthusiastic, whose naïve laugh
rattles restlessly around the room.
The moon glitters through the cracked window of
your backseat and now it's remember
that caresses your ears, arms, lips...
I'll always prefer shit, but beggars can't be choosers
So I'm with damn and it's "alright, man,"
but grinning, snarling, I know better
and look for the next hit.
Somewhere in the burning, meaningless night
You're fumbling gracefully with regret or even hope
or both - you always liked the kinky stuff -
And I'm here debating with good old forget,
who's stupid with winking charisma, filling my drink,
my voice hoarse with angry cliches
while he agrees, smiling.
Finally, when the keg's kicked,
when the music coughs,
when the night collapses into dawn,
(where are you now?)
the verb of seduction slips into my back pocket.
I sigh, Yeah, why not. I mean,
To know left a long time ago
And love was never a good fuck.

—KATHERINE BOLAND



*Become a published writer
in the Tufts Observer*

*WE WANT YOUR LITERARY SUBMISSIONS. THERE'S NO LIMIT TO
YOUR WORD COUNT OR POETIC LICENSE. SUBMISSIONS WILL BE
PUBLISHED THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER.*

SEND SUBMISSIONS TO OBSERVER@TUFTS.EDU TO SEE YOUR WORK IN PRINT

The Waiting Tree

It began today.

An insignificant, senseless seed,
dropped into soil without second thought
Invisible, innocent, and inconspicuous
for the beauty it may become?

It emerged today.

The succulent self-destructing tree,
flowering once every 100 years,
waiting alone on the island,
begging to bloom?

It happened today.

The persistent palm-tree's cycle,
bursting forth hundreds of white flowers
sapping with nectar,
calling, pleading for birds?

It left today.

The erroneous effort depleted and drained
the forsaken, exhausted tree
and within the month
it collapses and dies.

The wavering tree waits a lifetime

to serve its purpose:
Finally, after flowering,
crumbles to its demise.

The life-long search
lasts but only a moment
once found.

“100-year-old
palm flowers,

dies”

-CRYSTAL BUI

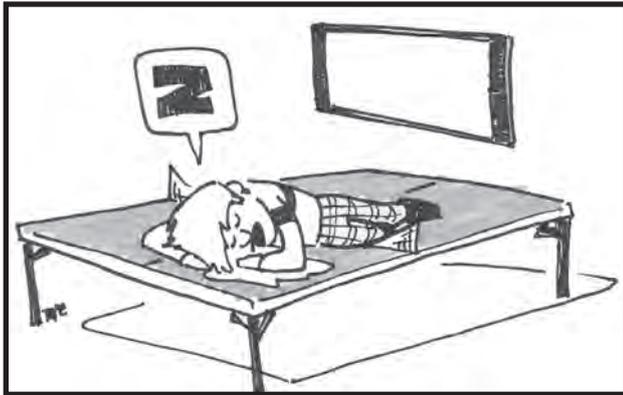
Lookin' Ahead

Spring Break

Volunteer in the Philippines!
 General Interest Meeting Thursday
 10:30 p.m. Eaton Hall, room 206

Election Chat

Come hear Simon Rosenberg, president of a leading political think tank talk about this year's elections. RSVP for the event by emailing douglas.foote@gmail.com. 12-1:15 p.m. Lincoln Filene Ctr., Rabb Room



POLICE

Friday, September 26th

At 2:18 a.m. a call was made to TUPD regarding a slumbering student who had found a most comfortable table in the Campus Center on which to nap. Police awakened and evaluated the instantly alert student as being intoxicated and firmly encouraged the squatter to do his sleeping at home.

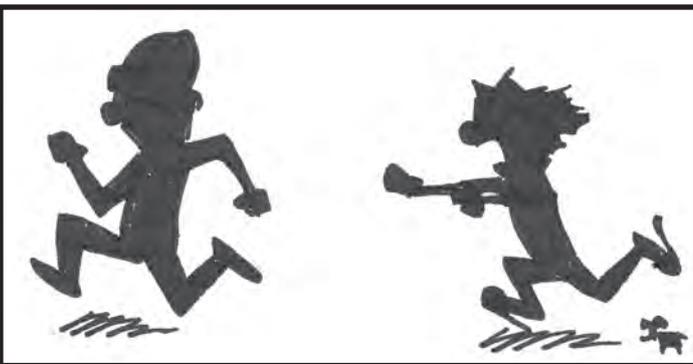
Saturday, September 27th

The Somerville Fire Department came to the rescue of a flaming stuffed animal who had found himself on the first floor roof of the Carmichael dining hall around 1:03 p.m. Speculations as to how the lone stuffed animal got on the roof, or became ignited, include the throwing of the cuddly victim from the ground or out of a window. He was quickly and efficiently extinguished, though he may never be cuddly again.

Sunday, September 28th

At 3:23 a.m. Tufts Police received a lively call about a breaking and entering in progress in a student's residence on Bromfield Rd. The suspect, clearly in imitation of Chuck Norris, kicked in the door on Bromfield Rd. to attempt a burglary, but accidentally awoke a resident who was dozing inside. Irritated, the resident chased the suspect outside and down the street towards College Ave, when the suspect abruptly entered another residence, presumably his hideout. Somerville Police soon arrested the suspect, also a Tufts student, was arrested for breaking and entering in the nighttime.

—compiled and illustrated by Ryan Stolp



BLOTTER



Elizabeth Herman

Tufts Observer

Since 1895

www.tuftsobserver.org

Tufts University
P.O. Box 92, Medford, MA, 02155