

TUFTS OBSERVER

TUFTS' STUDENT MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 15, 2008

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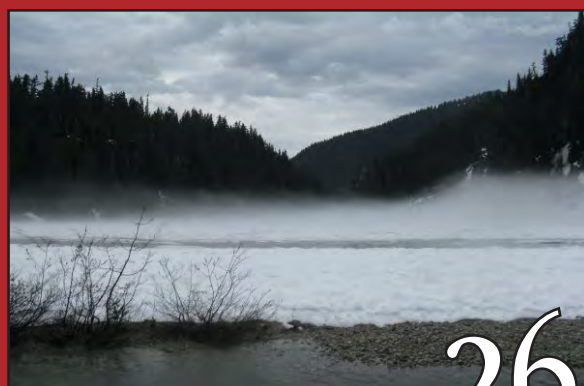
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The Observer has been Tufts' weekly publication of record since 1895. Our dedication to in-depth reporting, journalistic innovation, and honest dialogue has remained intact for over a century. Today, we offer insightful news analysis, cogent and diverse opinion pieces, and lively reviews of current arts, entertainment, and sports. Through poignant writing and artistic elegance, we aim to entertain, inform, and above all challenge the Tufts community to effect positive change.



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Since
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The Cost of Victory

BY PATRICK ROATH
AND DANIEL ROSEN

What is the cost of victory? That question may have been answered last spring during the 2008 TCU presidential elections. For the first time in Tufts' history, the Tufts University Elections Commission (ECOM) allowed Senate elections to more closely mirror their national counterparts. Instead of restricting candidate spending to the \$250 allocated by the Senate through the Student Activities Fee, candidates were allowed to fundraise another \$50 for their campaigns from anonymous donors.

The results of the election mirrored the results of the fundraising campaign. Elton Sykes finished third, with 26% of the vote. Sykes spent \$449.21, nearly 21% of the total money raised by all in candidates in the election. CJ Mourning came in second, with 32%. Mourning raised \$675.92, roughly 32% of the total. Ultimately, Duncan Pickard led the pack with 42% of the total vote. The \$997.77 spent on the election amounts to about 21% of the total for all candidates. A total of \$122.90 was spent on the election.

None of the three candidates for the TCU presidency violated the campaign finance rules laid out by the TCU Elections Commission, the organization charged with running student elections. These rules, however, are hardly set in stone. Up until this last election, presidential candidates were only allowed to use the \$250 provided to them by the Senate. Candidates were free to spend their own money without keeping records, but were barred from a number of campaign activities, such as operating websites. These regulations were largely removed for the 2008 election.

For this past presidential election, candidates were allowed to privately raise up to \$750 in addition to the \$250 provided by the university, and most of the barriers to aggressive campaigning were lifted.

"The campaign financing was changed from before because there had been indications that this was going to be a very competitive election, so it would be a benefit for everyone if more money could be spent total," explained Anjali Nirmalan, the chair of ECOM. The possibility of a competitive election that would energize the student body helped convince the elections body to fuel the debate by allowing candidates to spend more and campaign harder. One of ECOM's roles is to get out the vote and increase voter turnout. Ultimately, voter turnout in April's election was 39% of the undergraduate population, a small drop from the previous year, but many attributed this drop to a computer glitch that held up voting.

The new rules were also put in place to make Tufts elections more closely resemble elections in the real world. Under the new rules, candidates were free to campaign as they saw fit, leading to a number of costly, creative merchandizing efforts such as personalized bottled water, t-shirts, interactive websites, and door hangers. "These are people who realistically plan to get involved with politics in the future and fundraising is a big part of that. We were making this more realistic, more feasible, more real-world applicable," Nirmalan explains.

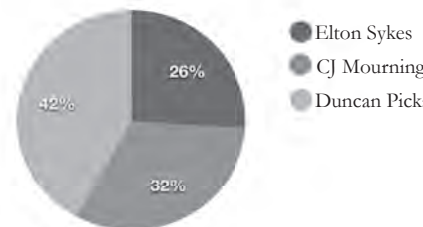
The election commission understood the risks of less regulation so the introduction of the new rule system was a debated, if not contentious, decision within the organization. "That was always the worry: that Daddy was going to write the check and that was our big

thing, which was why it ever had happened before," says Nirmalan of the decision to allow low fundraising. To discourage "Daddy," the new election rules placed a \$50 ceiling on how much money one donor could give a candidate. ECOM also placed a renewed emphasis on transparency and record keeping. Each candidate was required to keep meticulous records of their spending and a spreadsheet of the candidates' financial information was eventually released to the public through the ECOM website.

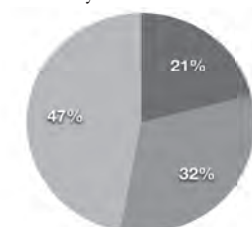
Hanging chads?

Election regulation has been an issue at Tufts for many years. Before online voting, allegations of voter fraud were endemic, and nearly every TCU presidential election was overshadowed by some sort of voting irregu-

Percentage of votes per candidate



Percentage of total funds used by each candidate



its own: in April the online voting system crashed for nine hours on Election Day. In 2006, the Elections Board was renamed the Elections Commission and completely overhauled to avoid the mistakes of the past. But the election bylaws remain fluid and are often changed from year to year, without oversight from the TCU Senate.

To assuage concerns about the electoral fairness in the future, election regulators are open to a number of possible reforms. These may include limiting fundraising to within the Tufts community and making donor information public—a move that candidates have resisted in the past. Regulators are prepared to do whatever it takes to gain the trust of the electorate, Nirmalan says, “If students can’t trust their elections then they can’t trust their representatives so if they don’t feel it’s fair then it’s definitely something we have to address.”

Issues of fairness and equality that arise in the student body are referred to the Tufts Community Union Judiciary, the TCUJ, often just “the J.” The J technically has no jurisdiction over elections at Tufts but has stepped in several times in the past to resolve disputed elections. Veda

Shastri is a member of the judiciary sensitive to

the debate over campaign finances. Though sympathetic to charges of unfairness, she is outspoken about the inherent head start that well-connected candidates have. “I think there is something to be said that there could be a candidate who has more relatives. That’s the opportunity that you already have,” she says.

Speaking as a representative of the student judiciary, Shastri hesitates to say that the election was unfair. Weighing the merits of both sides of the argument, she echoes a number of the concerns aired since Pickard’s

be some adjustments to the systems. There are some loopholes here in terms of complete equality of opportunity.”

Is complete equality of opportunity desirable in such a competitive race? When does fairness outweigh competition? Should elections at undergraduate colleges be shielded from the economic pressures of a real political campaign? These are compelling questions for any member of the Tufts community, but ultimately the judiciary can only act in response to a rare formal petition for adjudication. “If there is an appeal then there will be a huge discussion. Until there’s a complaint we can’t take action,” says Shastri. Think of the J as Tufts’ Supreme Court: they can only step in if there’s a violation of the constitution or if ECOM asks for their help. If—and it’s a big if—the judiciary found that

He felt that this was necessary in order to reach out to students because “every person will respond different to different kinds of campaign tactics so we wanted to make sure that our message was able to reach as many students as possible,” adding that the Pickard team did not enter the presidential race with a mindset or goal of spending up to the highest limit.

Pickard adamantly maintained that he doesn’t believe his spending on the campaign significantly contributed to his success and that “the winner of the election isn’t determined by the candidate who spends the most money,” according to Pickard. “It’s the candidate whose message resonates best with the student body” that ultimately wins an election and while “campaign materials of course are essential in spreading the message...it really

comes down to the message more than the frills.”

Pickard continued to explain that since each campaign had ample opportunity to vocalize complaints or request new fundraising rules and a consensus was reached, the regulations were not overly understood by the parties but they were also agreed upon. According to Pickard, the amount of fundraising to be allowed was “very clear and for debate” before the campaigning even began. Since every team had the ability to raise objections, Pickard believes that the election was “absolutely fair in the truest sense of the world because everyone had the same playing ground.” To Pickard, the amount of money candidates were allowed to raise was not exorbitant or impossible to obtain and he insisted that “if you work hard enough you can get five hundred \$1 donations” rather than larger dollar amounts.



Election posters for the current 2008 campaigns. Photo by Ian Mac Lellan

the election was unfair, they could technically nullify the results of last year's election.

After the fact

As both the winner of the election and its biggest spender, Pickard and his campaign have become central to the financing debate. Pickard credits his campaign team with generating a list of ideas and goals to help him spread his presidential message. “We wanted to make the campaigning as creative and extensive as possible and that’s really what the budget’s for,” Pickard explained, saying that

Mourning and Sykes, the second and third place candidates respectively, disagree. Both felt that the limits placed on campaign spending were too high. Sykes, a senior and

Executive Board. “The whole point of Senate is to represent the student body,” Sykes said. “If you’re going to capture these important decisions in the hands of very few people,

the students of Tufts such a chance increases the specter of inequality on campus that strives to provide equal opportunity for all. ☺

“The whole point of senate is to **represent** the student body. If you’re going to capture these important decisions in the hands of the very few people, then that is **utterly undemocratic.**”

former TCU senator, advocated an amount between \$250-500 as a campaign limit, pointing to the fact that Tufts continues to become a more economically diverse school. Keeping with this goal of the University, Sykes finds it inconceivable that the Senate could so blatantly favor students from more affluent backgrounds. “The new system favors those who have money and those whose friends have money,” Sykes said. Sykes stressed that he continually felt at a disadvantage to Pickard because he lacked the level of donations enjoyed by Pickard. “It wasn’t that I didn’t have people willing to contribute, it was that they couldn’t afford to donate large sums,” the former senator said. Mourning supports the old campaign guidelines, under which each student is given \$1,000 by ECOM, then allowed to raise an additional \$250 through fundraising. Mourning believes “it would allow for a much better and fairer process. Besides the fact that it presents a disadvantage to some students the way it has done this past year, but \$1,000 is way too much for anyone to spend on a campaign.”

Another issue Sykes raised with the current system was the lack of oversight provided by the Senate. The former senator pointed out that if candidates are going to be dealing with larger donations, there needs to be more stringent follow-up on where that money is coming from and how its being spent. The TCU Constitution currently includes no consequences for overspending above the limit, and Sykes insists that none of its contributors were contacted by the TCU Senate to confirm the accuracy of donation amounts.

Sykes also insists that as a senator, he never voted on the decision to increase campaign spending limits, but that rather

then that is utterly undemocratic.” Sykes hopes that the system changes back to the limits imposed in the past, stating that the current budget limits are “unnecessary.” He supports fundraising by candidates, citing it as an important life tool that has always worked in past elections.

Allowing candidates to raise money for their campaigns opened the elections to a considerable amount of criticism. Did the fundraising efforts of the candidates strongly influence the outcome of the election? If so, is that fair in a university that strides for economic equality on the hill? Especially as a heated election plays out on the national stage, perhaps elections at Tufts should not be made to resemble the flawed policies of national campaigns. In few places is there a realistic opportunity

Contributing reporters include Crystal B. Marysa Lin, Brendan Johannsen, and M. Snyder.



'Buckets of Warm Piss'

A History of Vice Presidential Picks

BY DANIEL ROSEN

Throughout history, the Vice Presidency has often been defined by corruption, incompetence, and irrelevance. John Adams, who served as vice president from 1789 to 1797, called it "the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived." Over a hundred years later, Woodrow Wilson's VP, Thomas Marshall was similarly disenchanted with the role, claiming that most of the "nameless, unremembered" jobs assigned to him had been concocted essentially to keep vice presidents from doing any harm to their administrations."

If anything, more Vice Presidents can be defined as "infamous" than "famous," and many are remembered primarily for their ineptitude. In 1823, Vice President Richard Johnson proposed funding an expedition to the center of the Earth, believing that the planet was hollow. More recently, in 1992, Dan Quayle asked a bewildered sixth grader to correct his spelling of potato by adding an "e" to the end. Dishonesty marred the Vice Presidency of Spiro Agnew, who, under Richard Nixon, resigned after being convicted of tax fraud and accepting bribes.

From a constitutional standpoint, Vice Presidents have few duties. The Vice President serves as the President of the Senate, charged with voting in the event of a tie and certifying the Electoral College. A Vice President's only significant constitutionally-based power derives from his or her position as second in the line of succession for the Presidency if the President becomes incapacitated, dies, is removed from office, or resigns.

More recently, this limited role has expanded informally to include a stronger presence in administration affairs. Vice Presidents now routinely attend cabinet level meetings, receive foreign dignitaries, and preside over presidential committees and task forces. Vice President Walter Mondale (1977-1981) is often credited with paving the way for a more powerful vice president. He was the first VP to have an office in the White House and was actively involved in policy-making. The current vice presidency of Richard "Dick" Cheney is another major increase in the VP's

influence. Under President George W. Bush, Vice President Cheney has wielded significant influence in administration policy. According to National Public Radio's All Things Considered, "Cheney remains in the background most of the time, but his influence remains undiminished in the White House and on the Hill. He not only influences policy but makes key decisions." A 2007 PBS Frontline special asserted, among other conclusions, that Cheney was the "chief architect of the war on terror," and largely responsible for the conflict in Iraq.

This election season, America faces two Vice Presidential prospects, Republican Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska and Democratic Senator Joe Biden of Delaware. Prior to their nomination, both candidates were generally unknown or ignored by most American voters. Yet shortly after being named, a media circus erupted around both, particularly Governor Palin.

As with most Vice Presidential candidates, Governor Palin and Senator Biden were apparently selected for their political influence—what they added to the ticket. "The traditional rule is that Vice Presidential candidates balance a ticket in some way," explains Professor Jeffrey Berry of the Political Science department. "It may be a regional balance—a southerner with a northerner, a religious balance—a catholic with a protestant, or a moderate with a conservative or liberal. Or it may be because the Vice Presidential has some other strength, like experience."

With Governor Palin, the McCain campaign hopes to ease the fears of the Republican Party's longtime stronghold—Christian evangelicals, who worry that McCain is too liberal on social issues. Governor Palin is a

strong social conservative and has achieved the hoped-for praise from the Evangelical Right. Palin's selection is also meant to appeal to disgruntled supporters of Hillary Clinton's campaign, in the hope that some of her supporters will vote for a ticket with a female Vice Presidential nominee, albeit Republican. Republicans also hope that Governor Palin's reputation for battling corruption in the Alaskan government will strengthen the message of change central to the McCain campaign.

Senator Obama's selection of Joe Biden as his running mate attempts to remedy what many view as his biggest problem—a lack of foreign policy experience. Biden, who has served in the Senate since being elected at age 29, is the chair of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Unlike Senator Obama, Senator Biden has been in Washington for over thirty years; this however, may pose a problem for a campaign that has placed great emphasis on bringing in fresh blood to the Washington power structure.

For all the media attention and campaign emphasis that is being placed on the Vice Presidential candidates, there is little reason to assume that Senator Biden or Governor Palin will make much of a difference in the election result or, if elected, administration policy. "Vice Presidential candidates have little impact on the election, and in any administration, it is still the President that calls the shots" Berry notes. "The American electorate generally understands this." It remains to be seen whether the next VP will truly be a partner for change or will merely inhabit an office described by VP John Nance Garner (1933-1941) as being "not worth a bucket of warm piss." ☪



MICHAEL S. S. S.

Library Roof to be Transformed

University Envisions Modern, Artistic Memorial Garden

BY MARYSA LIN

By now, most people at Tufts have noticed the large tarp-enclosed construction site that has overtaken the iconic library roof. As the 2008-2009 school year kicks off, students, employees, and visitors on the hill are probably wondering about when they can once again enjoy the beautiful view of Boston and what to expect when the roof reopens. *The Observer* caught up with Vice President of University Operations John Roberto and Director of Construction Management Mitch Bodnarchuk, to talk about the new library roof and construction at Tufts.

Bodnarchuk said that “basically what we’re doing there is a kind of memorial garden for the Mendell family” on behalf of their son Alex Mendell, a former Tufts student. According to him, plans for the new roof include creating meeting spaces, installing stone benches, creating a large gathering area with auditorium seating, installing a metal trellis, and incorporating trees and greenery throughout the space.

“The library roof is being renovated into a much more usable space,” explained Roberto. It’s going to be “a form of urban art in a garden” that better utilizes the space available. “We know it’s a very popular spot on campus...but the roof was a very tired, unattractive space,” he continued.

Bodnarchuk explained that the project involved Amy Schlegel and the Tufts Art Department, who helped select the final artists. The two artists, both from New York, are Jackie Ferrara, a sculptor and public artist, and M. Paul Friedberg, a landscape architect. According to Bodnarchuk, Larry and Adele Bacow were also heavily involved in the planning and execution of this memorial project that will transform one of the most popular spots on campus.

In addition to the artistic elements being added to the roof, renovations include plans to raise the patio between Eaton Hall and Goddard Chapel in order to make the library roof fully accessible. Prior to construction, the steps leading up to the rooftop area made it inaccessible to those members of the community that need a ramp.

By elevating the area at the top of the library steps, the new rooftop patio will be updated to ADA (American with Disabilities Act) slope requirements without installing an unattractive, difficult ramp. Come December, people will be able to walk directly from the Academic Quad onto the library roof without climbing any steps.

A less visible but significant structural

various details, both Roberto and Bodnarchuk are confident that the construction will be completed around November or December of this year.

“The design was finalized over the summer,” said Roberto, and now that the new roof has been installed and necessary preparatory construction has been completed, the construction teams are just awaiting the arrival of



PHOTOS BY CAMPBELL KLIEFOTH

change was the installation of a new library roof altogether because according to Bodnarchuk, the existing roof was reaching the end of its life and this was the perfect opportunity to update that infrastructure.

Since the end of last semester, there has been ongoing construction to excavate the site and make the structural renovations before installing the rest of the roof. While the ultimate design took some time to finalize due to

materials to begin the final stage.

According to Bodnarchuk, the renovations took longer than usual to finalize because “this is really an artistic creation,” so details such as the type of lights, shrubbery, and bricks are more important than they are for a normal renovation. Now that plans are set, construction will move forward as the necessary final materials arrive.

Construction projects are highly vis-

ible on the Tufts Medford campus and even surface renovations are costly in financial resources and time. Bodnarchuk explained that one distinction at Tufts that sometimes does not exist at larger universities with very active construction departments is that “we’re very landlocked.”

“We don’t do a lot of new building construction simply because we just don’t have the land,” said Bodnarchuk. Since the physical limitations of the hill are a “fact of life of our setting,” the focus of construction projects at Tufts are different than some other schools.

When asked about how construction projects are decided on and initiated, Roberto explained that there are multiple ways for those to be advanced. Both Roberto and

Bodnarchuk said that most often, it is either the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Engineering, the Fletcher School, or the central administration that reevaluates its needs and decides on necessary construction initiatives. In these situations, there is often either construction of a new facility or more commonly there is an effort to “repurpose” existing infrastructure to match new academic or administrative needs.

Bodnarchuk cited the recent updates in Lane Hall as an example of how a room or set of rooms can be repurposed to both fulfill school needs as well as to incrementally modernize older parts of the university. The School of Arts and Sciences felt that there was “a need to create more current teaching space” so the large, outdated room in Lane was renovated and “freshened up” with new AV equipment, walls, and ceilings to make it a “contemporary, up-to-date classroom.”


Roberto explained that another way for university construction projects to advance is through the Deferred Maintenance Program, which is a yearly undertaking to maintain the physical integrity of a building on campus. Construction planned through this program include the “facelift” that Eaton Hall was given this past summer in order to repair and maintain its exterior. According to Roberto, these projects are planned far ahead of time

and after identifying which buildings are most in need of updates, the plans are drawn up and funding is available through the annual school budget. This makes projects through the Deferred Maintenance Program (DMP) unique because there is an allotted amount of financial resources reserved for it whereas much of the construction initiated through alternative pathways are put on hold until special sources of funding are established.

The four main groups on the Medford Campus (the three schools and Central Administration) work to identify their own priorities, whether it is to pursue a major interior demolition and renovation project, such as the current construction in Packard Hall, or minor changes and facility upgrades. “Projects happen because of academic and school priorities in response to the fact that the facilities are old and worn out...or a major change in use,” Roberto said. Once the schools or administration decides on a plan, Roberto explained that the next step is finding a source of funding through a variety of pathways such as the annual budgets, donations, or university reserves.

College spending on construction has soared in the last decade, so chances are anyone wandering a college or university campus encounters noticeable if not significant construction. According to the 34th Annual Official Education Construction Report, college spending on construction grew from a total of \$7.33 billion in 1998 to over \$12 billion in 2007, with spending peaking in 2003 at almost \$20 billion. The median estimated cost of a new college or university construction projects completed by 2010 is \$18.3 million, which is staggering when considered along with the fact that 73% of colleges and universities are planning such construction.

Roberto anticipates that construction and renovation will continue to be a significant presence at all colleges and universities because of the need to stay competitive and meet new academic and research needs. He expects Tufts to continue its increased commitment to maintaining existing facilities since new construction is limited by space and financial concerns.

A final concern regarding building new facilities rather than upgrading or updating older buildings involves the surrounding Medford/Somerville community, said Roberto. “We don’t just plunk a building down,” he said, explaining that there is an extensive process involving the community to assess the impact that a new building or facility would have. 



Russia Crosses the Rubicon

BY BRENDAN JOHANSEN

On the morning of August 8th, citizens of Tskhinvali, South Ossetia, awoke to the sound of Georgian military bombardment. Following several days of intermittent skirmishes along the border of the two countries, President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia vowed to restore Georgian control over South Ossetia, a relatively autonomous region of Georgia with strong ties to Russia. What followed was a weeklong war that has left politicians, academics, and the general world population unsure of Russia's future in the international community.

Conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia has existed since the late 1980s, when Georgian leaders first began to agitate for freedom from the Soviet Union. The Ossetian population rejected the idea of Georgian independence, advocating for greater autonomy and unification with Russia's North Ossetia. Following the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the international community recognized Georgia as including the South Ossetian region.

In the face of rising ethnic tensions, war broke out when Georgian forces entered Tskhinvali. Georgian forces failed to silence the rebels there, and the Ossetians successfully broke away from the Georgian government with the support of Russian forces. Since the end of the Cold War Russia has maintained an active interest in the Ossetian cause, funding and arming pro-secessionist movements and advocating for full reunification of South Ossetia with North Ossetia, which

remains a territory of Russia. In 2006, the South Ossetian separatist authority sponsored a referendum on independence, which found over ninety-nine percent of the South Ossetian population supportive of independence. The Georgian government of Mr. Saakashvili has rejected these calls for independence, accusing Russia of interfering in internationally recognized Georgian territory while reiterating his determination to restore South Ossetia to Georgian control.

Tensions increased in the region, erupting on August 8th with the arrival of Georgian forces in Tskhinvali. In response to this attack, Russia sent troops to protect the city, citing the large number of Russian citizens currently living within South Ossetia, a responsibility of the Russian government under its constitution. According to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, some 90% of the South Ossetian population holds a Russian passport. The BBC has suggested that these numbers were skewed by the fact that the Russian foreign office has been distributing passports to virtually all South Ossetians. BBC analysts have suggested that Russia was setting the stage for a justification of future intervention.

What exactly took place during the brief war in August remains unclear. Russia claims that it merely responded to the Georgian attack against the South Ossetian capital, which Russia contends took place with genocidal intentions. The Georgian government maintains that their march on Tskhinvali was prompted by news of Russian movements across the border.

On August 9th the Russian Navy sank one Georgian missile boat in the Black Sea off the coast of Abkhazia. Abkhazia is a region of Georgia similar to South Ossetia in that it contains a history of hostility with the government of Georgia and recently witnessed a large influx of Russian passports. Although the war has ostensibly ended, Russian troops remain on Georgian soil, and show little indication of leaving.

Throughout the past month, the international community has attempted to unite in opposition to what many consider to be a resurgent Russia. The European Union announced on September 1st that it considers itself to be at crossroads on its Russia policy, threatening not to renew trade agreements with Moscow until all Russian troops have pulled back to their positions before the start of fighting on August 7th. The United States has similarly condemned Russia's actions, canceling military exercises between the two nations and continuing to support the Georgian government.

Significantly, the US has pledged over \$1 billion in aid to Georgia, in addition to the \$30 million dollars of humanitarian aid already provided during the conflict. Regardless, however, there remains little the international community can do to pressure Russia out of Georgia, and many commentators continue to fear that only the removal of Mr. Saakashvili will entice the former superpower out. What remains clear is that the future holds many questions, and the answers almost certainly lie in Moscow. ☐



Breakdown of the Crisis

August 1st: Fighting breaks out between Georgian and South Ossetians

August 5: Russia warns it will intervene if conflict erupts

‘Which Values Will Prevail?’

Georgian Native Gives Perspective

BY MIKE SNYDER

While the crisis in Georgia may have seemed distant to many Americans, some members of the Tufts community found themselves holding a stake in the conflict. Tamara Sartania, a second year student at the Fletcher School, is Georgian by birth and moved to the capital city of Tbilisi following the 1993 war in Abkhazia (at the time a part of Georgia). She was in Kazakhstan when the recent war began to unfold. Before entering Fletcher, Sartania was actively involved in her homeland where she did NGO capacity building and refugee related work. Her most recent job was with the Georgian Ministry of Justice.

Tufts Observer: What were your initial reactions when you heard that the Georgian army had launched an attack against the South Ossetian capital?

Tamara Sartania: Frankly speaking, I was surprised. My first reaction was, “What are they doing? Don’t [the Georgians] know there will be an immediate response from the Russian side and this response will be very disproportionate?” I mean, I was sure that the events would unfold as swiftly as they did, and then the news broke that the Russian army is moving in.

O: So you were not surprised when you heard that the Russian army had moved into South Ossetia to retaliate against the Georgians?

TS: I was rather surprised by the reaction of Russia because [Russia] did not respond the first day. They responded, like, the next day. [Russian President Vladimir] Putin did not

even cancel his Olympic trip to Beijing, and the South Ossetian president even made a statement that Russia had abandoned him, and he appealed to his people to protect him. Now looking at it in retrospect, I think it was part of a trap to involve Georgia as deeply as possible into South Ossetia.



Tamara Sartania is a second year student at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. She was in Kazakhstan when the events transpired.

O: What can you tell us about the scale of looting and violence and destruction? How well has the American media captured it?

TS: I was in Kazakhstan when the events started, but I moved to Georgia as soon as I could. At that time there was no bombing any-

more, but Russian so-called “peacekeepers” were in the center of Georgia, and they were just a few miles away from Tbilisi, burning and looting everything...I haven’t seen that much of the American media, actually. Yeah, there were some pictures of all the looting that was going on, and I’m pretty sure there will be more to see because once Georgians gather all the information they can give it to the international media, but I think the American media covered it pretty well.

O: Do you think the reaction by the US and Europe was appropriate?

TS: I would really like to thank the United States for the support and Europe for brokering the cease-fire. I think that they did what they could do. On the other hand, I think that it’s more than a war between Georgia and Russia. It’s a war about values. Which values will prevail? Will it be Soviet-style Russian authoritarian regimes or western-style liberal democracies? That’s what I think this war is about...Will Georgia be part of the Western world or will it be part of the Russian authoritarian system? Russia has stated numerous times that the real objective is to remove [Georgian President Mikheil] Saakashvili. The [Russian] foreign minister said that they don’t want to talk to him anymore. The thing is they totally hate Saakashvili, and they hate him because he’s bringing the country closer to western values and western democracies.

O: Do you think that it’s a good thing that Georgia is attempting to join the EU and NATO?

Article continued on page 18...

August 7: Georgia vows to regain control over “criminal regime” in South Ossetia

August 8: Russia moves into South Ossetia, claiming genocidal tactics by Georgia

August 13: Georgian Forces retreat to Georgia proper

September 9: Russia agrees to withdraw from Georgia proper by end of October

August 8: Georgia mounts military offensive against South Ossetia

August 12: Russia approved 6-Point Peace Plan brokered by France

August 23: Russia retreats to lines it claims conform to 6 Point Plan

EDITOR'S NOTE

BY PATRICK ROATH

It's the *Observer's* eighth year as a magazine, its one-hundred-and-thirteenth year as Tufts' publication of record, and things are looking up. I am proud to take over as editor in chief of the magazine this semester and excited to hit the ground running with our first issue of the fall. We've been working all summer to ensure that we improve what has made us strong in the past and keep building onto our solid foundation.

With the new semester come a few changes. By far the most exciting development this semester is the *Observer's* new all-glossy publishing format. We are experimenting with this new format as we continually search for new ways to fulfill our mission of "challenging the Tufts community to effect positive change." The change to our pages is superficial, but it underscores our serious commitment to the visual arts and the importance of non-written student work in the magazine. Content comes first at the *Observer*, but we're a lot happier if it looks nice too. Over the summer, the *Observer* also contracted a case of the Mondays.

Up until now our issues have lazily trickled out into a dozen or so spots around campus on Friday afternoons.

We've retooled our on-campus distribution scheme so we will now appear early Monday mornings. Based on a readership audit we conducted in the spring, we are now precisely attuned to where our magazine is read and are able to adapt to changes in on-campus traffic and meet need accordingly.

None of these changes or the content that makes the *Observer* so consistently unique would happen without our devoted staff of editors, writers, and artists. Behind the scenes, we are constantly tweaking our formula for delivering the best content every issue. Much of the team from the spring has returned with fresh ideas and veteran status. Complementing the old guard are many fresh faces that will keep us on our toes and drive the dynamism that keeps us going. The members of the *Observer* staff are my trusted friends and constant late-night layout companions: every page of the magazine is a testament to their dedication and hard work.

Though each issue looks different and our editorial board is always growing, our priorities haven't changed much in the past three years or three decades. We want to be a vibrant media outlet that is a stakeholder in the community: a thought-provoking, informed voice that students can trust. We are obsessed with relevance and consistency: producing what our

readers want to read about as well as what they need to. This means having great art, in-depth news, and powerful poetry, but mostly working as a team and having a ton of fun while we're at it.

As a student magazine, our goal has always been to be as representative of the student body as possible and we interpret this charge very seriously. At our first meeting I gave our editorial board a strange objective: to work themselves out of a job. Though much of the magazine's layout will continue to be produced by a core team, we want the magazine to be a product of the student body more than ever. Our goal is not to have a single byline from a member of the editorial board appear in the magazine by the last issue. The *Observer* is a product for the Tufts community by the Tufts community and we won't let you forget it. Ever wanted to share that drawing you did in your art class? How about the poem you wrote in English 1? Got a feisty opinion or an itch to report on something? Submit your work via email to observer@tufts.edu. Our editors are standing by.

My excitement for the new semester is tempered by the knowledge that it is also my last with magazine. Looking back at the issues I've worked on, it's easy to identify my effect on the magazine — articles I wrote, layouts I labored over — but I

rarely stop to think about the effect those issues have had on me. Being in charge of a student magazine isn't a very important job: the hours aren't great and the pay's not much to speak of. Well, there is no pay. But thankfully the moment has not yet come when I think of my position as a job. Coming into layout and working with our fantastic staff is often the highlight of my week and I've enjoyed every single assignment I've taken on. As editor, I want to share this unique commitment with everyone who works at the magazine and parcel out the rewarding experience that the *Observer* has been for me into each and every issue. Enjoy the magazine! ☺



CAMPBELL KLIEFOTH



and Taxi Nightlife

BY JENNIFER DAVID

It's back to school and for Tufts students that means back to Boston. Sadly, however, we are hard pressed to find the free time during the semester to visit the famed Beantown, even if it's only a short T ride away. Meanwhile, the city supplies a wealth of museums, architecture and historical landmarks, many of which are available at a discount rate to college students. There is also a nightlife heated with live music and upbeat bars. In discovering all the fun facets of this town, keep in mind that you're probably part of a select group. It seems as if public transportation service has the unintended side effect of excluding certain groups from traveling into the city.

Boston is often considered the quintessential college town [with over 50 educational institutions that consider it home.] With students from all over the world converging here, it's safe to say that not everyone has a car. In fact, many universities prohibit first year students from keeping a car on campus. Many rely on public transportation to get around. While the sub-way system is extensive, bus connections remain necessary. In addition, the amount of buses per route is limited, often resulting in staggered service. Thus, some residents are penalized for not having a car and are forced to wait—sometimes 45 minutes or more—for a bus. Weekends are perfect for a stroll around the city considering most people don't work or have class, but Saturday and Sunday bus service crawls in comparison to the daily schedule and severely impedes weekend excursions.

While the subway is, for the most

part, reliable, the entire system closes at 12:30 in the morning, even while many businesses choose to remain open well past this imposed curfew. Some may argue that in a city full of college students, this curfew is an effective way of keeping underage teens out of bars and clubs. However, most bars, lounges, and nightclubs in Boston are accessible only to patrons ages 21 and over, effectively excluding most college students. Plenty of other businesses also stay open past "T time." The iconic Loews movie theater on Boston Commons routinely shows movies which finish past the last train. There are also hundreds of restaurants that lose potential customers due to the time restrictions. Therefore the subway curfew primarily affects middle- and low-income Bostonians who either don't own vehicles or can't afford a cab back home.

In addition to affecting student life, the subway curfew also impinges on middle and low income Bostonians who either don't own vehicles or can't afford a cab back home. While newer cities in the south and midwest that grew in the 20th

you cannot afford to have a car or pay for a taxi then you shouldn't be out late drinking, movie watching, visiting restaurants, or the theater. Much of the resistance against keeping the Boston T open later comes from the various livery companies. At night the traffic gives way to roaming hordes of enterprising taxis. Where would those cabbies and cab companies be if the T were open in the wee hours? It's true that they would lose a considerable amount of business if the T were to stay open later, but then again, who is the Boston government representing, the people or the cab companies?

Some attempts to provide cheap, alternative modes of transportation do exist however. Zipcar is a new company that allows subscribers to rent cars by the hour. There are Zipcar parking lots all over the Boston area which makes the service all the more convenient. In addition to being relatively inexpensive, the program takes an eco-friendly stance. Still, this program is primarily Internet based and excludes those without access to a computer.

At Tufts we are lucky enough to have

Who is the Boston government representing...
The People Or
The Cab Companies?

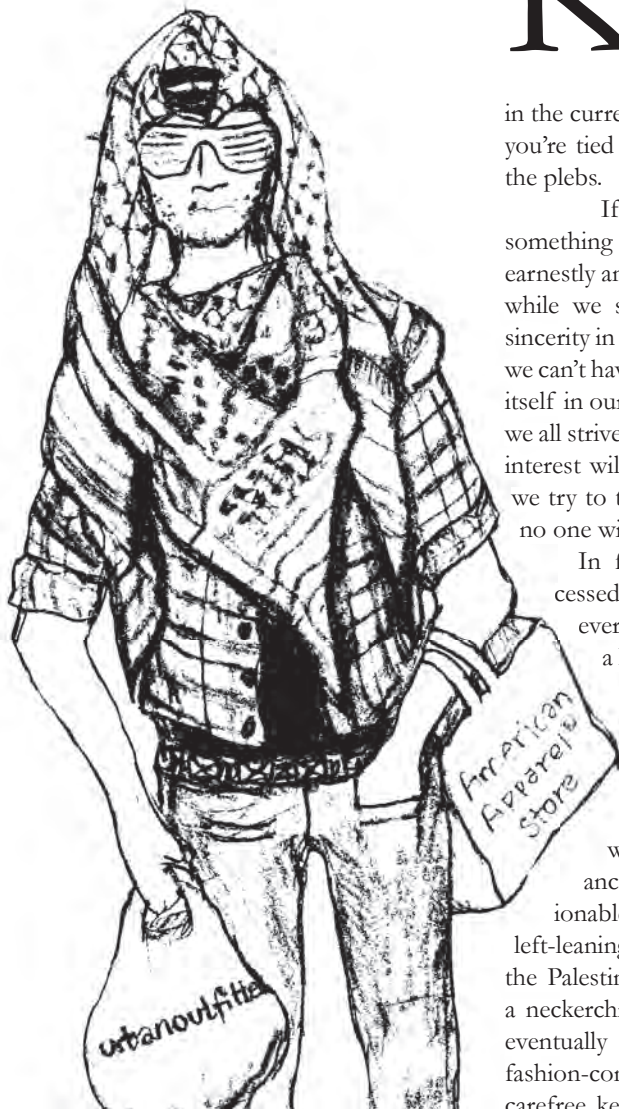
century were designed around car ownership, Boston predates almost every city in the U.S. and was initially designed to be a walkable metropolis. Thus, there should be no reason for any automobile favoritism. So why does this auto-elitism persist?

Some argue that this is a subtle measure of social guardianship. A tacit expression by the Boston authorities that if

an administration that encourages its students to become more socially conscious about the world around them. Any given week you'll be able to find some group on campus championing the rights of the underdog. Maybe as Bostonians we should try and help ourselves? ☺

Jennifer David is a senior majoring in International Relations.

Keffiyeh Kinder ©



BY LAUREN HERSTIK

Causes are so hip right now. Whether it's preventable blindness in the Himalayas or microfinance in Africa, if you're young and you have opinions, there's a good chance that they lean towards humanitarianism. The twenty-something voice is self-appointedly loud and proud, and these days it seems to be getting behind just about anything.

But as for our pop culture, we are a generation defined by snark and irony. We're known for seeking out an obsession or trend, adopting it as our own, then spitting it out in some unrecognizable form that's easy to digest. The key with the hipsters of today is the perfect sense of ironic detachment, embracing a trend only to a certain extent. If you're cool enough, you definitely don't care enough. At most, you care enough to demonstrate your awareness of and interest

in the current craze, but never so much that you're tied up in it. True attachment is for the plebs.

If we're going for consistency, something clearly doesn't fit. We claim to be earnestly and genuinely behind these causes, while we simultaneously scoff at general sincerity in our collective consciousness. But we can't have both. If our "coolness" asserts itself in our general disinterest in things and we all strive to be "cool," then that same disinterest will be a general assumption when we try to take on real endeavors. Basically, no one will take us seriously.

In fashion, for instance, that processed obsession manifests itself in the ever-ambiguous keffiyeh scarf. Now a hipster must-have item, the piece has auspicious roots. The keffiyeh became a symbol of Palestinian solidarity, especially when the late Yasser Arafat began wearing in a black and white one in all his public appearances. Eventually it became fashionable for college students, especially left-leaning Jews who sympathized with the Palestinian cause to sport the scarf as a neckerchief. These "keffiyeh kinderlach" eventually gave way to the uninformed, fashion-conscious crowd of today, whose carefree keffiyeh purchases at Urban Outfitters are influenced by nothing other than access to a debit card. While Urban Outfitters confirmed that the keffiyeh was the best selling scarf at the time of its availability, it has been on and off the shelves a number of times in the past year and a half after more than a few voices were raised.

We are a generation defined by what we wear, where fashion is the ultimate statement. And yet some barely give any thought to the obvious connotations of something as simple as a scarf. And as the connection between the scarf and what it stood for dissolves, the Palestinian cause becomes passé. Now it's just an accessory.

This kind of ignorance runs rampant as we discover and subsequently assimilate causes into our popular consciousness. Suffrage is now a celebrity campaign to "Rock the Vote." Cambodian refugees are extras in pictures of Angelina Jolie. Global warming is totally from a movie. South America

is trending up, and in a humanitarian way. Is it any surprise then, that the vaguely ethnic aesthetic was hailed as "the next big thing" in the editorial spreads of *Teen Vogue*? That the traditional and painstakingly beautiful Guatemalan embroidery is nothing more than a summer accessories trend, and that elaborate Kenyan beading is a passing fad on the necks of our Forever 21 party tops? Our global cause obsession is colliding with our fashion world, and it's diluting both.

Campaigns like Rock the Vote exist with the best of intentions. Voter registration and attendance at the polls is expected to break all previous records in the upcoming election. But as for what the average young voter has gotten out of this campaign, it's more likely he or she'd mention Heidi and LC than McCain and Obama. And when E! News focuses almost exclusively on what Lauren Conrad wore on the red carpet rather than her opinions on the importance of voting, who can really blame us?

It's hard to say whether our superficial interests in taste inform our more serious interests in causes, or vice versa. Are we seeking to sport the handmade-in-Argentina look because we spent a semester abroad there, or do we go on a semester abroad to Argentina because we really like all the cool stuff that's made there? Whatever the actual answer is, it may be perceived that our trivial obsessions overshadow what might be a sincere and serious pursuit. While you might be genuinely concerned about urban sprawl in South American megacities, the fact that the first thing you talk about upon your return is the ass-kicking nightlife and availability of cheap textiles, implies otherwise.

Maybe we're not so jaded or uninformed. Maybe it's our attitudes and not our academic pursuits that need the adjustments. Maybe we just haven't quite grown out of the adolescent need for "cool" and haven't yet grown into the ability to embrace our work in earnest. But if we're going to be the generation that's socially conscious on a global scale, we should start by being socially conscientious personally. ☺

Lauren Herstik is a junior majoring in Peace and Justice Studies.



Erin Baldassari



Daniel Rosen



Daniel Rosen







Bhavani Orphanage, India, Will Ramsdell

Wonderful World

BY WILLIAM RAMSDELL

Hi. Please open your book bags and binders to the place where you keep your syllabi for all of your new and exciting classes. What you may see is a list of tasks, deadlines, and cups of coffee by function of proscribed late nights. But you can also look at this sheet of compressed pulp as a list of things you do not know.

Not knowing things is both good and bad. On the one hand, you lack knowledge of something—potentially a piece of information which could dramatically alter your perception of the world around you. Who knows what not knowing something is keeping you from knowing? On the other hand, you still have it to learn, and until such time as it is assimilated, you still have it to wonder about.

Wonder is the best of emotions; a cocktail of awe-inspired curiosity and misty-eyed fascination. Wonder is at the beginning of journeys, at the end, after the thing discovered opens new insights and demands new questions, and hopefully somewhere on the path in between. Wonder causes you to pause and think, and pausing is usually a good thing in this fast-paced world, as is thinking. Wonder makes us remember that we do not know everything. It is the emotion of children and, rightly, the beginning of “wonderful.”

Wonder is instilled, in me, by things that I do not understand. The more foreign and complicated, the better. For example, I may know that bosons are one of 2 groups of particles, the other being fermions, and that it has an integer spin, as opposed to the half-integer spin of its fermion counterpart. I know, from Wikipedia mostly, that bosons obey the Bose-Einstein statistics while fermions obey those of Fermi-Dirac, and I know that bosons carry the forces while fermions are those which are endowed with the forces. Standard thinking says photons are the bosons of electromagnetism, W and Z bosons

handle the weak nuclear force, and gluons the strong. The Higgs Boson for gravity is up in the air, but stay tuned, the Large Hadron Collider is slated to have its first high energy run on Oct. 21st, barring any further trips back and fourth between near-absolute zero.

Anyway, I know these things because I was struck with wonder when I read it on Wikipedia. But to be honest, I haven’t a clue why spin is a characteristic of subatomic particles and what the difference between $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 spin is, nor do I know one iota about either of those hyphenated statistics. It is those unresolved questions that keep me coming back to read it again, wondering how bosons hold forces without mass, and the extent to which spin is only an appellation used to describe an intrinsic property of a particle that has nothing to do with spin as we understand it on this plane of magnitude. Now, turn the (wiki) page and learn what the Chandrasekhar Limit is. It’s cool.

Now, the Buddha Gotama told the not-yet-buddha, Siddhartha (Herman Hess’s that is), to beware of excessive cleverness, and the emptiness of excessive knowledge was one of Siddhartha’s first great dawns of understanding. But just like anything, polarizing proverbs should be taken with a grain of salt and in mind of their counter-proverbs. “Cu-

$$\frac{\omega_3^0 \sqrt{3\pi}}{2} \left(\frac{\hbar c}{G} \right)^{3/2} \frac{1}{(\mu_e m_H)^2}$$

riosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back.” So by that logic, and the use of the mathematical average, taking things in moderation sounds about right. I guess what I’m getting at is that neither of those Buddhas had Wikipedia and that there is probably a generation gap anyway. Wisdom is fabulous, and no doubt more hard-won and worthwhile than knowledge. I may not have even taken step number one on the eight-fold path, but for now anyway, I’ll stick to my firm belief in the power of knowledge, as well as my lack of it, to inspire wonder in everything from the fact that we are here today, to item #7 on this eco-psychology syllabus. ☺

William Ramsdell is a sophomore tentatively double majoring in Physics and Philosophy.

Freebase Facts

Orca (Killer) whales breath in unison when in packs.

The once poisonous almond was bred into edibility by the Romans

The universe is analagous to a Pac-Man screen, one may move off one side and arrive on the other, eventually reaching the original position by traveling in a straight line. One would simply have to move many times faster than the speed of light.

It has been said that Polar bears can consume 83 penguins in one sitting. Perhaps this is justified by their seemingly impending doom.

Large meteorites do not actually strike the earth. Instead, their immense kinetic energy is converted into heat moments before, creating temperatures that vaporize the metallic rock in mid air.

We exists at all, along with black holes, Red wood trees, the rings of Saturn and, probably, ball-lightening.

Article continued from page 9...

TS: Totally. I think that's the way we can survive. I lived during the communist era -- maybe not long enough -- but I got a sense of it, and I don't want to live in that kind of hate anymore.

O: What about oil?

TS: Well, oil has something to do with it because there is this transit route that goes through Georgia linking Azeri oil with European markets. And of course, Russia is totally opposed to it because Russia is happy to [be] the only supplier of energy because that will give it leverage against European states.

O: Can you speak to the history and tensions between Georgians and South Ossetians?

TS: Ossetian militia have been fighting Georgia for a long, long time. Ossetian villages fight Georgian villagers and Georgian villages fight Ossetian villages, but they usually are minor conflicts that stop in a day or so. In August the situation started aggravating. There was constant shelling from the Ossetian side, [despite] numerous talks by the Georgian governments...saying that, "Hey, they're shelling our villagers. They're killing our citizens." The Georgian forces had to move in to eliminate the shelling and killing of Georgian people who were living in Georgian villages of South Ossetia.

O: Is there any other information that students at Tufts should know about this conflict that you as an insider would like to make clear?

TS: I have heard some opinions saying that if South Ossetia and Abkhazia want to be independent, it means they have the right to self-determinations. But the thing is, what they did is they kicked out all ethnic Georgians... out of this region. Let's return all these displaced people to the region and then hold the referendum again and ask the people again if they want to be independent, and I'm sure [the answer] will be totally different. And what about Russian citizens in Ossetia? Basically they are Georgian citizens, but Russian peace-keepers started to give out Russian passports to anyone willing to help them. And what about Russia saying it's protecting its own citizens, and that it supports the right of self-determination of ethnic minorities? Well, remember what Russia did in Chechnya not so long ago...nobody cared about [the Chechens]. ☹

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Nicolas Cage

STEVE MONTGOMERY

Love him or hate him. He's here to stay.

BY THOMAS SUTHERLAND

Like many Tufts University students, my friends and I spent last Friday putting down substances and trembling with anticipation for a night of absurd quotes, awkward intimacy, and general mayhem at the expense of a few brain cells.

The difference was we weren't heading out for Fall Ball. No, in our case, when the final joint was extinguished, we were standing in the Fresh Pond Mall parking lot, stumbling towards 90 minutes of inadvertent hilarity at the expense of Nicolas Cage and his new full-throttle disaster *Bangkok Dangerous*.

Now, right off the bat, I'm sure a number of you are wondering why anyone would skip a college dance to go shake a tail feather with Mister Cage and his predictable forces of doom. There's no simple answer to a cutting question like that, because—let's get it straight—Nicolas Cage movies are not good. They're bad. Very bad.

Still, in the last twenty-five years, beginning with his auspicious start in '80s So-Cal teen comedy *Valley Girls*, Nicolas Cage and his movies have grossed more than 1.8 billion dollars in total box-office receipts. For a little perspective, that's just slightly less total gross than all the films Al Pacino, Marlon Brando, and Sean Penn have made, combined. That figure even rivals the entire Tufts University endowment (which still apparently wasn't enough to get them to drop for a bar at Fall Ball, and yes, that probably did help my decision to go see a Cage movie instead).

So what is it that makes people love Nicolas Cage?

Answer: I have not the slightest clue. Two billion dollars of Cage movie revenue doesn't materialize from just one reason, nor is there just one group of people that thought it was a fine idea to go see the Cage.

When it comes to Nicolas Cage, each

person must speak for himself. There can be no sweeping generalizations. I, personally, find the duality of Cage to be hilarious. The man is a walking contradiction, a thespian that performs so poorly it looks like he is acting well, a man who makes movies so unpleasant they somehow become enjoyable.

Here are the factors that make up my best argument for why Nicolas Cage movies are enjoyably terrible.

The foremost is predictability. It is absolutely essential to unintentional hilarity. For instance, whenever someone walks into any film rated NC (for Nick Cage), that person knows he or she is about to get an absurd amalgam of cliché characters rolled into one detestable lead played by him. In the past, these roles have been the eccentric detective who finds morality, the unusual criminal/merchant of death who finds morality, the unique heroic adventurer who finds himself, or just the outright weirdo helps others find themselves (and morality).

The predictability doesn't stop. It is even greater within the structure of the film. The spoon-fed outcomes of Cage plots are half the fun.

There is a scene in *Snake Eyes* in which Detective Rick Santorio, Cage's lead role, is faced with the critical decision to save a girl's life or to accept a bribe from a corrupt character and let her die. In the scene, the corrupt Admiral, played by Gary Sinise, is standing on one side of Cage (representing the bad side) and on the other side stands the innocent girl (representing the good side). As if such an upfront depiction of good versus evil had not already sullied the scene, Cage's character then looks down at his feet and, on the ground, sees a bloody dollar bill. His acting could not convey to the audience the concept of blood money—the director had to less-than-subtly, literally show a shot of bloody money. Therein lies the extent of Cage's acting ability. If forced to show some kind of internal conflict, it is best to resort to overtly obnoxious imagery instead of relying on his emotional projection.

As mentioned, Cage has shared the screen with Oscar-nominated Gary Sinise, which brings me to the second, amazing and confusing thing about Nicolas Cage and his body of work. He somehow gets extremely prolific, professional, and acclaimed actors and actresses to support him in the some of the worst movies ever made.

Do you know who starred across Nick Cage in *Wicker Man*? Ellen Burstyn, the actress who played Sara Goldfarb in *Requiem*

for a Dream. She has been nominated for six Oscars, and yet for some inexplicable reason she signed on to do a Cage movie. Whether or not she regrets it I cannot say. I can, however, say that the movie only got one star and that in the final scene her character was punched in the face by Nicolas Cage, who was incidentally riding a bicycle in a bear suit. I know it sounds like it doesn't make sense. That's because it doesn't. YouTube the scene for a laugh.

Actors are not the only ones who get pulled into the spinning vortex of Nicolas Cage. Neil Lebut, a highly respected American playwright, directed the *Wicker Man*. (The only positive reviews the movie received, which were still few and far apart, were for innovative direction).

Cinema legend Werner Herzog recently cast Nicolas Cage in his remake of *Bad Lieutenant*, co-starring Xosha Roquemore and Val Kilmer. In this writer's opinion, despite Herzog's hand in the film, the whole project has the potential to amount to one of the worst movies ever made. Am I going to be there opening night? Of course I am.

Finally, arguably the greatest aspect of

Cage's filmography is the bizarre twists and turns he has taken, along with his appearance and personality. Simply put, Nicolas Cage is really funny because Nicolas Cage is really weird.

Take a good look at that mug. There's a strange man living underneath that lurching forehead. Is he able to comprehend the absurdity of his film career? In his mind, does his Oscar for *Leaving Las Vegas*, one of his first substantial roles, cross-cancel a decade of his cinematic mud?

His voice and cadence are bizarre, although he claims to have molded them purposefully to be distinctive. He's got fake hair, and bad, scraggly fake hair at that. (I'm looking at you too, John Travolta — what's that? You can get them both in *Face-Off*).

There are still other oddities. Nicolas Cage is an avid glass collector, as in he collects shards of glass. He has vertigo, but insists that if he could have one superhero power it would be to fly. His 24-year-old wife, who he married four years ago after picking her up at a sushi restaurant where she worked, just gave birth to a son. Cage named his first and only child, and I'm not kidding here, Kal-El

(Superman's real name). Kal-El Coppola Cage. Amazing.

For all of his weird peccadilloes and shoddy on screen performances, Nicolas Cage still remains one of my favorite actors. His films and the characters he plays do something for me as a viewer that very few others can do — elicit real emotion. The gritting of my teeth as he tries to use his face to convey emotion, or the genuine grin that comes across my face when I know he took a role seriously but still had it fall flat, those are all real emotions. It matters not how he perceives his role, or how the general public perceives his movies, but how each of us perceive him. Love him or hate him; he's here to stay. ☺

Editor's Note: For many years I have wanted to express my feelings about Nicolas Cage, but was unable to find the words. I hope you, the reader, will agree that this piece does him justice. Are you looking to expand your Nicolas Cage filmography? Check out his directorial debut, Sonny, in which Cage plays a pimp of young boys named Acid Yellow. You get to hear him shout the line "I love coke cock!" Make it a Friday night.

8-bit Music

The Real Old School Sound

BY SAM SHERMAN

Your mother probably told you that nothing constructive could ever come from playing a video game. Well, she was wrong.

Now, knowing your way around a controller might make you more than just a gamer, it could make you a musician.

A new wave of electronic music is using the retro beeps and boops of early 80's and 90's video game soundtracks to produce



a new style of avant-garde electro-pop that is as catchy as it is nostalgic.

The concept is simple. Eight-bit videogame cartridges are programmed for consoles (like the original Nintendo NES, Sega, Gameboy, Atari, etc.), and it is this programming that makes the videogame run. It generates the graphics and the music.

There are now cartridges that are not programmed to produce graphics and music, but to allow the person using the controller to compose music using the controller's buttons.

Because the videogame console generates the notes, they have the genuine, early video game sound. Each is perfectly crisp, mechanical, and sounds console-generated.

This new style will win the hearts of those who already like electro-pop, fast-paced techno, synth-based music, or old school electronic like Kraftwerk. It could and should also make new fans amongst non-electronic listeners. To the right are some suggestions. Search MySpace for them. ☺

8-bit Bands

Crystal Castles
Home: Toronto, Canada
Song: Crimewave

Glomag
Home: Brooklyn, New York
Song: Pocket Calculator

Mike Bison
Home: Detroit, Michigan
Song: Bin Laden Bitch

Neotericz
Home: Buenos Aires, Argentina
Song: Hunt the Humans

Bacalao
Home: Berne, Switzerland
Song: Die Roboter

Covox
Home: Stockholm, Sweden
Song: Computer Love



BY MICHAEL TUCKER

It was the first week of the Fall semester and I was hungry. Not yet tired of the food, I went to Dewick.

I got my tray, then food, then drinks, then utensils, and continued into the seating area. It was a Sunday morning; hordes of gossip-mongering freshman jammed their chairs around the circular tables and dished out the stories of their first Saturday night at college.

I found an open seat and sat down at a table, alone, to eat quietly and leave. A bite or two into my sandwich, I heard her. She was the loudmouth, and every group of friends has one. (If a group of friends is made of girls, and those girls go to Tufts, then that group probably has more than one.)

Despite trying hard to focus on anything other than her voice, I couldn't help but overhear her gaggling. Then she made an enemy: Me.

"Oh my God, I was so wasted last night. Oh my God, did you see that girl with the broken stiletto? Oh my God, did you see that guy with the chest hair?" The shrill, bilious words vomited from her mouth, "It was so disgusting."

I had to restrain myself. I wanted to throw my drink in her face, and knowing that

the re-fills are free I had little incentive not to. My grip tightened around the plastic Dewick cup. My knuckles whitened and I took aim. She was one unknowingly about to be the recipient of a root beer facial.

Leaving my table, I walked towards the drink machines, got a cup, and filled it with root beer. Back at the table, I set my hurlin' cup next to the rest of my drinkin' cups, and began to plot out how I would do the deed. I thought about waiting for her to go to class, then throwing my drink in her face from a high window on the front side of the Tufts book depository, with a possible second drink thrower in the grassy knoll past the quad.

Then, when I least expected it, my Tufts education got the best of me. Violence was not the answer. A cup of soda tossed into a girl's face never solved anything (except for the question of what to do with an extra cup of soda).

What would have happened if Ghandi threw a cup into the kisser of his imperial colonizers? Where would the world be had Martin Luther King Jr. instead threw twelve fluid ounces of corn-syrup-based equality and justice into the face of those Alabaman racists? Clearly, the hurling of soda into faces has not, historically, solved problems.

I loosened my vice-like grip. She con-

tinued to prattle.

Finishing my lunch, I put everything back onto the tray and stood up. I looked at the table where the girl was sitting. She was faceless — a freshman I presume — and indistinguishable from the thousands of other New England princesses who descend on this campus each Fall.

She came close to a cup of root beer in the face. She would never know this fact, and was probably unable to even comprehend a flannel-clad 300lbs man tossing a cup of soda at her. It would have expanded her understanding of the world; she would've known that people get drinks thrown in their faces. She would have been one of those people. It could have been the beginning of an existential trip towards her self-discovery. Maybe she needed it to happen.

I walked past her and she looked at me. I gave her the over-exaggerated fish eye — a look saying, "You got no friend here, sweetie." Looking down at my half empty cup, I thought, "The time is not right."

For now, I will watch, and I will wait. 

*Have you ever had a drink thrown in your face?
Have you ever thrown a drink in someone's face?
Let us know at observer@tufts.edu; we'd love to
print your story.*



Music, movies, concerts, galleries... whatever you want to write about, you can. The Arts Section is looking for talented student writers who want to test their journalistic chops. No experience is necessary. All a writer needs is a want to express him or herself. Freshman are welcome to dive into the ink headfirst; a first year student can see his or her work in print this semester.

If you're interested, contact the editor at michael_c.tucker@tufts.edu.



Write for *The Observer* Arts Section!



Gonna build an airport. Gonna put my name on it.

Blue Shirt Café:

A “Best of Boston” Winner Just Steps From the Joey

BY LAUREN LEE

For those of us not quite accustomed to Boston's vast array of culinary delights, the nearby Blue Shirt Café is a great place to start. At first glance, Blue Shirt appears to be like any other corner café, serving up a selection of sandwiches and wraps, but linger for a moment and you'll notice that not only do they offer delicious American fare (roast beef and turkey sandwiches), but also several more “interesting” and creative items.

Located in the heart of Davis square (get off the Joey, turn right and look for the small sign next to the impossible-to-miss Mike's) Blue Shirt is probably the epitome of a “college town” sandwich joint if there ever was one. The options are seemingly endless and all meats can be replaced by grilled tofu for those so inclined. Most everything can be made vegan upon request as well. In the summer outdoor seating is available. I recommend opting for that if possible (it's a great spot for people-watching in Davis). However, if the weather doesn't permit, there's something quirkily endearing about the brightly colored walls and hand-painted table decorations inside.

For a foolproof approach at getting your food at Blue Shirt, make sure you know what you want before it's your turn in line. The line grows quickly during the lunchtime rush and split-second decisions are difficult to make among so many options. Some of my favorite basics are the Chicken Caesar Wrap (truly the best I have tried anywhere), and the Little Italy (provolone, pesto, and tomatoes between slices of focaccia). My favorite non-traditional items are the Thai Seared Peanut Chicken Wrap (mint-carrot slaw, cucumbers, Thai peanut sauce and chicken in a whole wheat wrap), and the Lili's Lunch sandwich (avocado, sprouts, sundried tomato spread, cucumbers, and Swiss cheese).

The breakfast sandwiches and omelettes (called “Scrambles”) are also

very tasty. The home-fried potatoes are to die for; they are perfectly crispy and flavorful. If I wasn't afraid of becoming obese from carbo-loading every single meal, this would be my side of choice with every meal for the rest of my life. The breakfast sandwiches come on bagels, toast, or English muffins with your choice of bacon, cheese, eggs, or tofu sausage and pretty much knock Dunkin' Donuts' breakfast sandwiches completely out of the ballpark. There's none of that pre-cooked, perfectly shaped square piece of egg that's probably stored in a back room in a vat of grease or anything of that sort. Everything is freshly made at Blue Shirt daily, and fresh produce is delivered daily. Plus, both breakfast and lunch cost around \$6, which certainly doesn't put too much of a strain on a college student's limited budget.

Aside from breakfast and lunch, there are the smoothies. Following with the standard of sandwiches and wraps, the smoothies are pretty darn amazing and even scored Blue Shirt a “Best of Boston” award this year. Once again, if I wasn't afraid of permanently being bed-ridden from excessive obesity I would drink the Peanut Butter Delight every day. It's the perfect mixture of chocolate, peanut butter, and frozen vanilla yogurt. Just writing about it makes my mouth water. The Chocolate Mocha Bliss follows in the Peanut Butter Delight's footsteps, but it replaces the PB with coffee concentrate (also quite delicious). But of course, for those of us that are more health and figure conscious there are the fruit based smoothies (my

top recommendations include the Eye Opener and the Hawaiian Song). Most smoothies run around \$4 each. For the even more health conscious, they can freshly squeeze any fruit or vegetable into a combination juice of your choice. And there's wheatgrass for the super healthy people, too!

In a nutshell, this delicious café is too close and too top-notch to pass up. Sure, too many Peanut Butter Delights and breakfast sandwiches may add inches to your waist, but for the majority of the fresh and healthy sandwiches and smoothies, it's a meal both you and your wallet can definitely feel good about. ☺

Located at the fork of Highland and Elm in Davis on the Highland side. Hours: 8:00 a.m.-10p.m. every day.



Escaping Dewick

A Guide to Nearby Grocers

BY KATIE CHRISTIANSEN

Face it: Carmichael and Dewick aren't Whole Foods. Or even Shaw's for that matter. I don't care how much some of you love Stir Fry night. Whole Foods wins.

While various dining halls and on-campus eateries provide Tufts students with a steady supply of meals and treats, we all sometimes need to have a little pantry stash under our beds. And for those of you living off-campus, preparing your own meals is a reality you may be struggling with. Don't worry, the Medford/Somerville area has you covered. Many grocery stores are sprinkled within a few-mile radius of campus, all it takes is a little free time and a Charlie card to whip



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up your favorite meal or snack or freshly stock your kitchen.

Whole Foods

While Whole Foods might be a little pricey for the average college student, it nonetheless offers countless organic products that might be harder to find at the average super chain. For the most part, all foods are free of artificial flavors, colorings, sweeteners, preservatives, and hydrogenated fats. Whole Foods also offers "sustainable seafood" which helps to keep our troubled oceans in balance and may be a bit fresher than what sits in Dewick. Keep an eye open when you shop because the kid's butter-free mini chocolate chip muffins are stellar as are many more of their "kid-friendly" products. Although there is a store located in Medford, the most T-accessible store is located in Cambridge and

can be easily reached by taking the Red Line to Central Square, which is an excellent option for the student who wants to cook fresh meals but doesn't have a car at Tufts. Located at 115 Prospect St. in Cambridge.

Shaw's

For those looking for a cheaper and closer alternative to Whole Foods, the always-consistent Shaw's offers everything a grocery store should, and buying produce and other such things in bulk can be healthier and cheaper than our dining halls. With a deli, bakery, and huge produce section, it does an excellent job of mimicking a smaller, more gourmet food shop. But, unlike Whole Foods, it does have quite a selection of junk food, so if you're shopping to cook your own meals, steer clear of those aisles—Jumbo Express has Doritos. Shaw's is conveniently located in Porter Square on the Red Line. For those more adventurous walkers or bikers, head down Massachusetts Avenue toward Harvard to land at the same spot. Plus, this store is open 24 hours! Too bad the T isn't. Located at 49 White Street in Cambridge.

Foodmaster

Ah, Somerville's finest. Foodmaster, while geographically convenient to Tufts, can be somewhat of a death wish for those shoppers who choose to travel by bike or on foot. With lots of traffic and few sidewalks, the Alewife Brook Parkway is terrifying at best for a pedestrian, but if you're looking for proximity, Foodmaster is your best bet. Foodmaster offers a perfectly acceptable selection of basic groceries but not much in the gourmet department. And although Foodmaster has a grungy appearance, the prices of Foodmaster goods don't quite follow. Be prepared to spend just as much, if not more, as you would at Shaw's. Plus, many of the boxes are dented in, have peeling labels, or just look plain old. It might not be as aesthetically appealing as Shaw's or Whole Foods, but it certainly gets the job done if you need to grab a few basic

things. And don't be turned off by its giant neon sign missing certain letters—it is actually open for business. Located at 105 Alewife Brook Parkway in Somerville.

Stop & Shop

Basically a Shaw's with a different name, Stop & Shop offers a vast selection of organic and



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standard grocery items at low prices. However, this is a store most easily accessible by car. With a full array of services such as a deli counter, bakery, and florist, you certainly won't need to look anywhere else. For you cheese lovers out there, the international cheese stand is a welcome and rather exciting prospect. Jarlsberg and Havarti aren't easy to find at Tufts (aside from in small cubes at Cheese Night in Carmichael, of course). Located at 30 Commercial Street in Medford.

Of course, all of these fine establishments don't accept JumboCash. Enter Jumbo Express. Our very own on-campus mini-mart can be quite a lifesaver, offering a surprising selection of beverages, sundries, snacks, and easy meals whose only requirement is some hot water. It is open from 9 am to midnight during the week and 1 pm to midnight on the weekends.

Whether you plan on cooking a full meal in your Latin Way kitchen or heating up some, uh, delicious canned items in your dorm room, there are more than enough options accessible and close to Tufts to stock your pantry, be it actual cabinets or a cardboard box shoved under your bed. ☺



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

Ray and Jo

On August 12, former Tufts officials Ray Rodriguez and Jodie Nealley were arraigned on charges of larceny, having allegedly stolen almost one million dollars from Tufts' Office of Student Activities budget. Nealley's lawyer, in opening remarks, laid the blame on Rodriguez, saying he has "a deep-seated hatred for Ms. Nealley, a jealousy." Both allegedly spent the stolen money lavishly, on luxury goods and expensive vacations.

Healthy Finances

In August, Tufts Health Plan announced it had earned \$25 million of income in the second quarter of the fiscal year, by far the best performing health plan in Massachusetts. This was announced soon after Tufts Health made public

its plans to begin to offer insurance in neighboring Rhode Island. Flush with cash, Tufts Health Plan also launched its own philanthropic foundation with a \$53 million endowment.

Torrents No More

Responding to a subpoena targeting Tufts students who illegally share music over the internet, the university drafted a polite "no," citing technical difficulties. University network officials do not preserve individual information about users' browsing history for more than a few days. In technical circles, many were surprised that Tufts held on to so little information about internet traffic on its network.

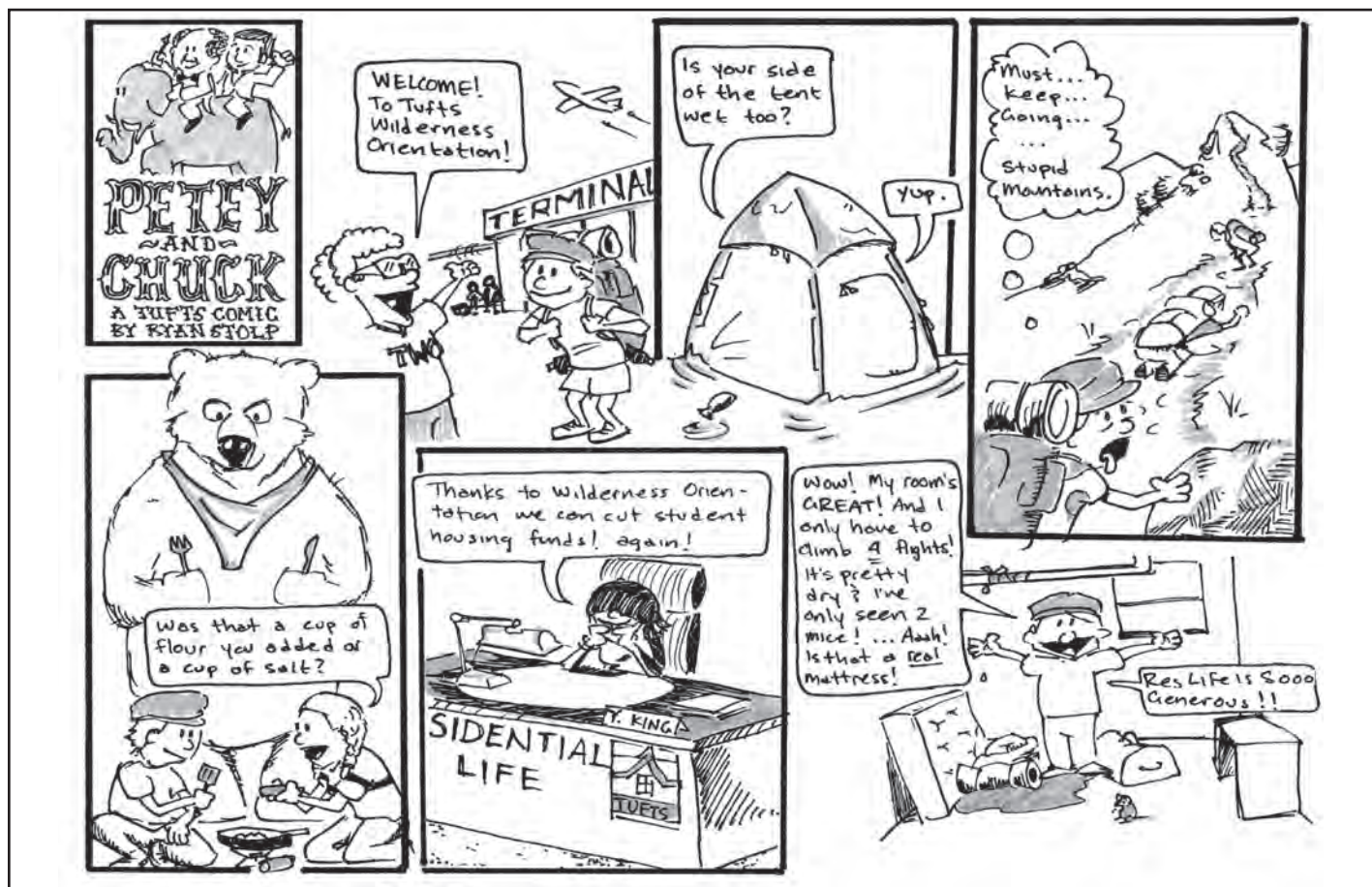
Squaring the CIRCLE

Over the summer, the Center for

Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) dumped the University of Maryland in favor of Tufts, settling at the Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. A research arm of the college, it will continue to study political trends among young people.

Bye, Bye MEFA

Thanks to a slowing economy, the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority (MEFA), a nonprofit student loan group, folded over the summer, leaving thousands of college students in the Bay State scrambling for tuition. Tufts students, few of whom were dependent on state loans, are unlikely to be overly effected. "It seems like more of an inconvenience than a crisis," says Patricia Reilly, director of financial aid, told the *Boston Phoenix*.



Immunity

If I could chalk everything up to pheromones,

(Once in a lab a scientist believed it could all be reduced to immunity—the smell of bacterial phages on skin, the sweat that leaks during mating calls, thick and wet. Females might choose who would fill their wombs by instinct. Major histocompatibility complex: the pieces of us that let us know when disease hits us hard, breaks us down, makes us weak in the knees.

Proven hypothesis: mice choose mates least like themselves, a safety net of legacy, offspring will grow strong. They select safety in dissonant proteins, carbons that vary and combine thick skin and sharp vision, a fortified system of defense.

The researchers have removed emotion from the equation, so everything can be broken down to principle. Unfamiliar scent is what draws us to someone, new bacterium an appeal when we breathe in while resting a cheek on their shoulders. Not the waking up next to his even breaths, not a hand Across the bed, not lengthy talks where words come up with the sun, not the lock of eyes across a crowded room, but the attraction of a fully functioning system of immunity)

I would presuppose that night as wholly the error of biology.

—MOLLY RUBIN



NICHOLAS DYNAN

Needless To Say

we've pressed the jauntings of your handshapes
the roads our cores where the sleep stays
but the place where the summit hits,
a sphere we can't

mouth, the clasp of its cape
your chords an open gallop
the chasms like fray:

nailbeds

icicles

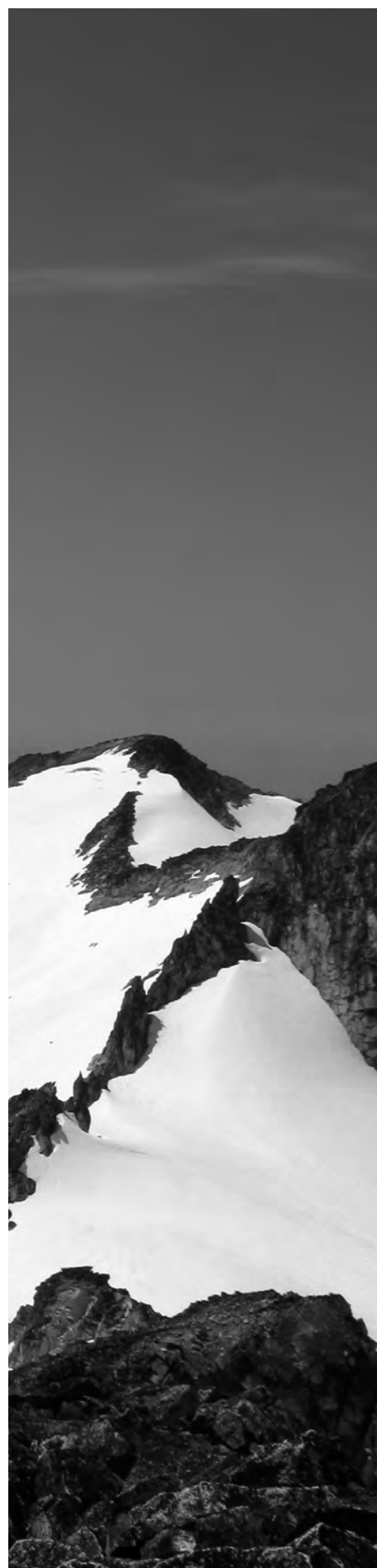
soak

say

—MOLLY RUBIN



RYAN STOLP



Lookin' Ahead

Doing Research?

Library Resources Workshop:

How to Use RefWorks

Friday, September 19, 1:30 Tisch 223

Study Abroad Fair

Wednesday, September 17

12:00 - 3:00 Dowling Hall 745

POLICE BROTHER

Thursday, August 28

At 12:30 a.m. police responded to a call from Bartol House on Sawyer Ave. regarding a suspicious male knocking on the doors. Officers found the clearly intoxicated suspect near Health Services

where he claimed he lived. The suspect displayed a Pennsylvania driver's license stating his age as 21. He soon displayed another ID from New Jersey listing his age as 20. He was returned to his fraternity to be supervised by his brothers.

Monday, September 1

Around 1:30 a.m. Somerville police issued a \$300 ticket to an off campus party on Ossipee road where 25 students were playing beer pong in the back yard. Police cited them in a violation of city ordinances.

Saturday, September 6

Tufts Police responded at 1:20 a.m. to a call from Zeta Psi regarding an unidentified person who had gained entry to the house and then left. A search found two males, one of whom matched the suspect's description. Both were non-Tufts students. A Zeta Psi brother positively identified the suspect as the intruder. Tufts Police arrested

him for breaking and entering with intent to commit a felony. During the arrest the suspect assaulted the police officer and was then additionally charged with assault and battery and resisting arrest and was transferred to Somerville Police Department.

—compiled by Ryan Stolp



RYAN STOLP



Talloires, France, by Campbell Kliefoth

Tufts Observer

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