

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY SIDELINES

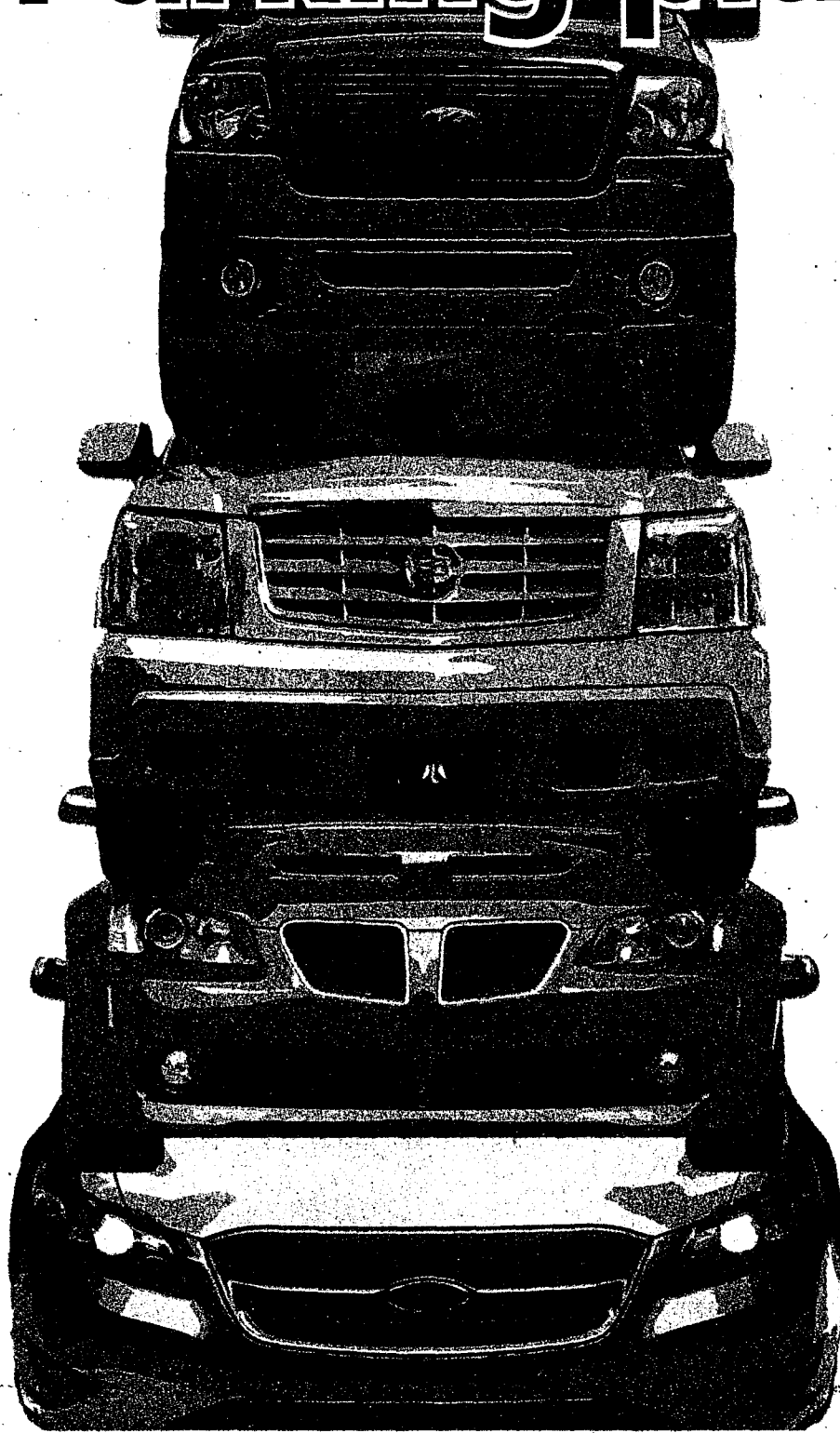
EDITORIALLY INDEPENDENT

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2010

VOL. 87 NO. 04

Parking plagues campus

Second altercation over parking calls for reevaluation by officials



By CHRISTOPHER MERCHANT
Assistant News Editor

A female student was allegedly assaulted over a parking spot— this report coming just days before administration began the first preliminary meetings for the new parking garage slated for next year— leaving some administrators worried that parking is becoming worse on campus.

Elizabeth Vanover, a senior in the College of Mass Communication, was approached in the Greenland Drive parking lot by an unknown suspect who threatened to kill her if she ever saw her off campus, according to an incident report from the MTSU Office of Public Safety.

"Students are dealing with a lot of anxiety and stress over parking," said Debra Sells, vice president of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services.

On Aug. 27, 2008, former MTSU student Starlet Custer assaulted fellow student Ashley Ramsey after an altercation took place over a parking spot in the Bell Street parking lot. The altercation left Ramsey with lacerations to her face, arm and hands.

MTSU police have offered advice to students walking to and from their cars, in a previous in-

terview with *Sidelines*.

"Be aware of your surroundings," Sgt. Broede Stucky said. "Walk with confidence, with your head up—look around."

In light of such incidents, and with students' complaints about parking in mind, university officials have begun working on the plans for the new parking garage on campus, Sells said.

"We had our kickoff meeting for the parking garage last week," Sells said. "We are concerned about how tight parking is for students."

Ron Malone, assistant vice president for events with Parking and Transportation Services, said the new parking garage should have somewhere between 800 and 1,000 parking spots for students, with a few for guests. None of the spots will be for faculty or staff, Malone said.

"Students' fees will pay for this garage, so they will be the ones to park there," Malone said.

The committee responsible for planning the construction of the garage has also taken into account factors affecting students' safety, Malone said.

"We want to make sure that the lighting levels are very high,

[and] we will have a 24-hour camera system in the garage," Malone said. "Those were things we promised the Student Government [Association] when we first proposed this thing."

Safety was also the motivation behind installing "so much lighting" at the parking lot on Rutherford Boulevard, Malone said.

"If you're going to ask people to park in a perimeter lot, you have to make it as user friendly and as comfortable as possible," Malone said.

Parking and Transportation Services officials do not have any current plans to install cameras in the perimeter parking lots, Malone said. However, he said that the security system infrastructure is in place to allow for future expansion.

"Who knows, maybe later on we will look at installing cameras on those lots," Malone said. "The first thing we are trying to look at is the interior of campus."

Students attempting to park on interior lots, especially in the morning through the afternoon, actually back up traffic on campus and usually don't find a parking place, Malone said.

online

To read more, visit us online.
www.mtsusidelines.com

RIM offers pickin' good time

Edison wax recording provides students unique opportunity

By CHRISTOPHER MERCHANT
Assistant News Editor

A crowd of students stood silently inside of the department of recording industry's Studio A on Tuesday night as they waited to see a process invented more than a century ago — an acoustic Edison wax recording of "I'm Head Over Heels in Love," by Flatt and Scruggs.



Fisher



Photo by Ray Ingram, staff photographer
Martin Fisher, the manager for the Center for Popular Music, loads a new wax cylinder onto his phonograph to demonstrate how to record a band using an antique process.

erful and so sensitive, to record sound so well, is impressive," said Michael Fleming, an associate professor of audio production. "It's so intuitive, it speaks for itself — it's a powerful message."

After the band finished playing three takes of the track, they were played back through the other phonograph. While the recordings were intended to make a powerful statement about how far technology has come, the actual audio was quiet.

"Lots of early recordings were pretty quiet," Fisher said.

American inventor Thomas Edison created the original solid-core wax cylinders in 1888, the same man who invented the electric light bulb. This wax cylinder medium coexisted with audio discs until 1929.

"It wasn't easy to mold a cylinder back in the day, especially with grooves on it," Fisher said.

To record a vocal track, three recording

EDISON, PAGE 2



Photo by Jay Bailey, photo editor

Brandon Gaither (Left), JoshJuan Jones (Middle) and Joey J. Johnson (Right) stand in front of Judge McFarlin during Wednesday's court hearing on fraud charges.

Students plead guilty

Suspects required to pay restitution in fraud case

By MARIE KEMPH
News Editor

Two MTSU male students and a Rutherford County man pleaded guilty Wednesday to fraudulently using another student's credit card.

MTSU students Joey J. Johnson, 20, of Nashville, and JoshJuan B. Jones, 19, of Murfreesboro, pleaded guilty to four counts of fraudulent use of a credit card owned by fellow student Taylor Hudson, 18. The third co-defendant in the case was Brandon D. Gaither, 23. Gaither told the court he now lives in the Murfreesboro area, but when he was arrested he had a New York state driver's license.

All of the defendants appeared together during the hearing in the General Sessions Court of Rutherford County and were represented by separate lawyers. None of the defendants or their lawyers would comment about the case.

According to court documents, more than \$790 was charged on Hudson's credit card at various restaurants and shopping centers, of which the bank recovered more than \$700.

Johnson and Jones, who are sophomores at MTSU, originally faced seven counts of fraud, while Gaither had been charged with eight counts of fraud

and one count of criminal conspiracy, according to court documents.

Three of the fraud counts against Johnson and Jones, and four of the fraud counts and the conspiracy count against Gaither were dismissed as part of a guilty plea between Rutherford County prosecutors and the men's lawyers.

As part of the pleas, each defendant received a suspended sentence of 23 months and 28 days, which includes supervised probation, and were ordered to pay a \$25 fine for each count of fraud, and all were ordered to jointly pay \$113.73 in restitution.

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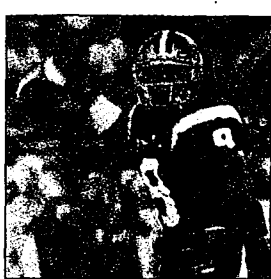
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"Harry Potter" and "Lord of the Rings" English class offers fantastical academic adventure
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IN TODAY'S ISSUE



Upcoming game against Memphis leaves more questions about QB Dasher

ONLINE @
MTSUSIDELINES.COM

THURSDAY FORECAST

SUNNY
20% CHANCE OF RAIN
HIGH 91, LOW 66

Hoop Troupe offers 'hula' good time

New organization encourages exercise, gives students fun option

By MARIE KEMPH
News Editor

If all goes as planned, students will have the opportunity to join a group that offers a fun and healthy way to become more physically active — Hoop Troupe.

"It's a great way to get involved with other students on campus, and on average, you burn 100 calories for every 10 minutes you hula hoop," said President Courtney Johnson, a senior majoring in English. "We're just waiting on approval from the school so that we can be recognized as a student group."

Even though Johnson founded the group only a few weeks before the fall semester began, more than 40 people showed up Tuesday night to hula-hoop to music on the Quad, located outside of the John Bragg Mass Communication Building and James E. Walker Library.

"I haven't advertised anything about Hoop Troupe," Johnson said. "Instead, people have just spread word about

the group."

Johnson said students are likely to see her hula hooping in between classes and outside of the Quad several times a week. She said the idea to form Hoop Troupe was more of a "spontaneous thing than anything else," but admits she was originally inspired to learn how to hula hoop after watching some

"It's a great way to get involved with other students on campus."

**COURTNEY JOHNSON
PRESIDENT OF HOOP TROUPE**

talented people doing tricks last year.

"I became obsessed with hula hooping and spent most of this past spring in my apartment learning how to do hula hoop tricks," Johnson said. "It's a great form of self-expression, but it's also a way to do something good for children in need."

Johnson said as soon as the university approves the group's application to be considered an on-campus,

student-led organization, she hopes to start holding events for charity drives.

"On Oct. 10, people from all over the world are going to be hula hooping in partnership with World Hoop Day to promote peace and provide funds for children in poverty," Johnson said. "I'm hoping we can secure a place on campus, like the Murphy Center, to host our own MTSU Hoop Day event."

World Hoop Day is a charity organization dedicated to bringing dance, exercise and toy hoops to underprivileged children living in extreme poverty and underdeveloped neighborhoods around the world, according to the group's website.

World Hoop Day is sponsoring "10/10/10" in more than 35 countries next month, and so far, people from more than 25 states around the country are participating in the global hula-hooping event.

"People can feel good about hula hooping for several reasons, but doing something positive for others feels the best," Johnson said.

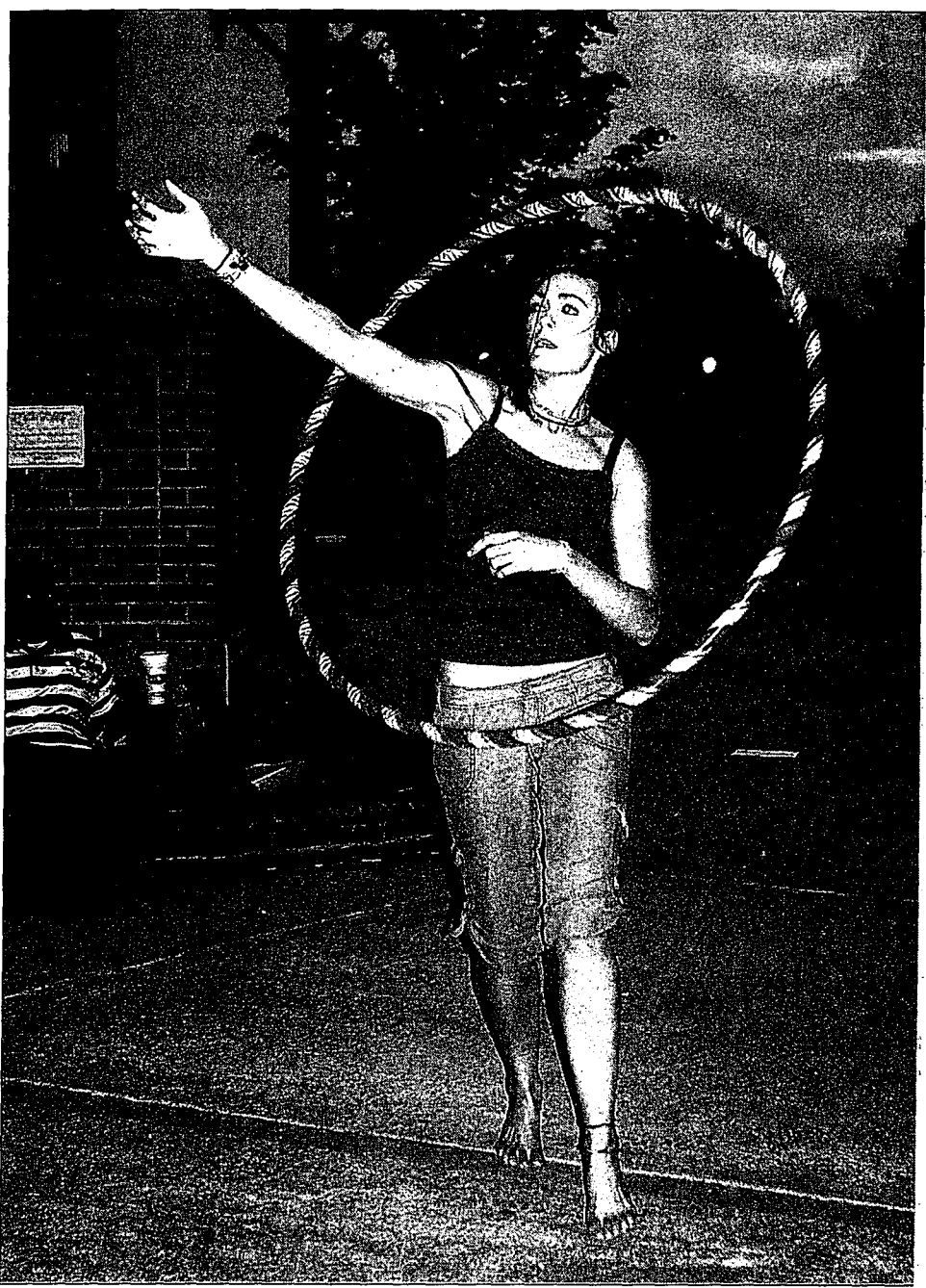


Photo by Ray Ingram, staff photographer
Courtney Johnson, president of Hoop Troupe and a senior majoring in English, shows off her hula-hooping skills Tuesday, during an official gathering on the Quad.

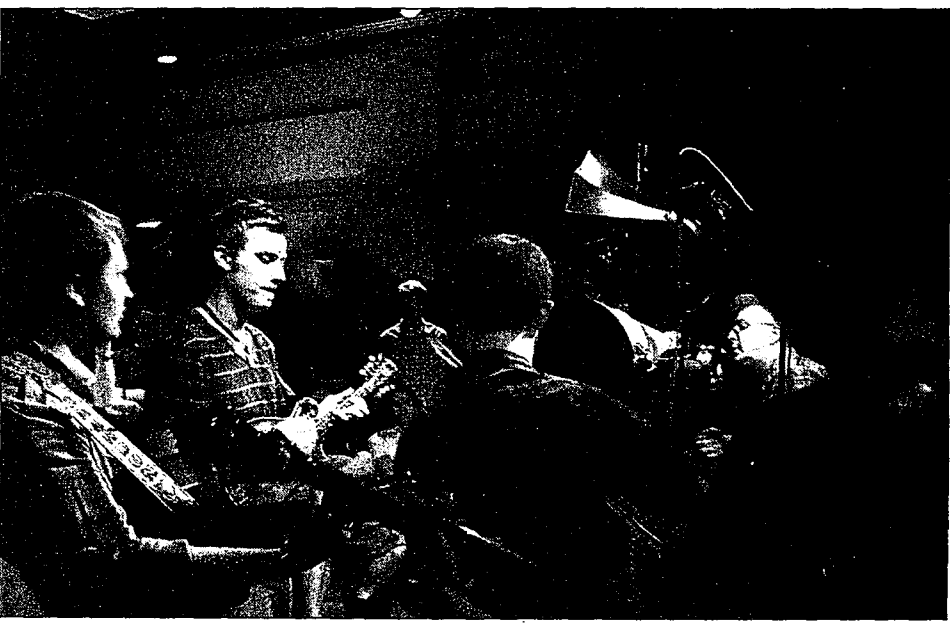


Photo by Ray Ingram, staff photographer
Students gathered inside an on-campus recording studio Tuesday night to watch a presentation of bluegrass musicians record using an antique acoustic Edison wax recorder.

Antique process engages students

**EDISON
FROM PAGE 1**

To record a vocal track, three recording machines were often used at once, Fisher said. For a full band, producers and musicians often chose to use a bank of 30 recorders.

The phonograph works by pulling a sharp stylus across the wax cylinders, Fisher said. The stylus is vibrated by the sounds that are projected into the phonograph horn, and the grooves it makes form an acoustic recording that can be played back.

Today, there are a few producers in the U.S. and England who manufacture wax cylinders for cylinder-recording enthusiasts, Fisher said. On average, these recordings can be played from 25-to-50 times before they are worn out.

The five-member band, which consisted of members from various bluegrass groups, said that they felt comfortable playing and singing into a phonograph horn.

"I am used to it," said guitarist Brandon Bostic, a junior majoring in marketing. "It's like using a single-microphone setup."

In order to be heard singing or playing instrument solos, the band members had to physically move around each other to be di-

rectly in front of the horn.

"We are from a traditional bluegrass background, so we are use to the dynamics of knowing when to step in," said banjoist Robert Trapp, a senior majoring in recording industry.

The other band members were fiddle player Preston Schmidt, a junior majoring in recording industry, mandolin player Matthew Mursey, and Jackie Case who played upright bass.

"We just thought it would be interesting to do something that celebrated the early recording industry," Fleming said. "This is our kick-off for the semester."

Crabtree used the studio's recording equipment to make a digital recording of the phonograph playback. The department may give a copy to the Audio Engineering Society, a national organization that specializes in sound technology, Fleming said.

"We have some of the most advanced technology in 2010 recording something that is about 100 years old," Crabtree said.

The department also hopes to post a copy of the recording on its MTSU website, Fleming said.

"To see how physical sound is captured and produced using no electricity is amazing," Fleming said.

MT football player pleads guilty to reckless driving

By MARIE KEMPH
News Editor

Juno Prudhomm, a safety on the MTSU football team and a sophomore in the College of Business, pleaded guilty to reckless driving Tuesday, a reduction of the original charge.



Prudhomm

According to the MTSU Office of Public Safety's Crime Log, campus police arrested Prudhomm on suspicion of driving under the influence at 2:49 a.m. on Feb. 13. The charge was lessened to reckless driving as part of a diversion plea between Rutherford County prosecutors and Attorney Howard W. Wilson, who represented Prudhomm in the matter.

"I don't normally comment on any of my clients' cases," Wilson said, following the General Court Sessions court hearing. "But, it is important to understand that my client entered into a diversion plea — he was not guilty."

However, Wilson said he would discuss general matters involving DUI cases.

"A diversion is a once in a lifetime opportunity intended for young people, [so that] a mistake in your youth — a DUI for instance — won't stay on your record, as long as you stay out of trouble while still under the court's supervision," Wilson said, referring to stipulations associated with probation and other conditional releases.

It is not uncommon for someone who has been charged with a DUI for the

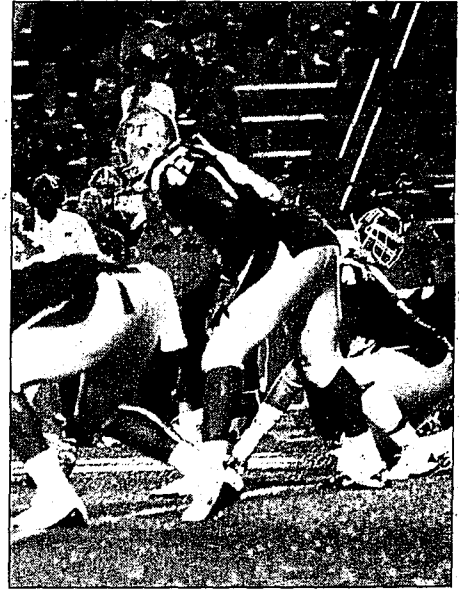


Photo by Jay Bailey, photo editor
Juno Prudhomm, a sophomore safety for the Blue Raiders, anticipates the snap during Saturday's game against Austin Peay University.

first time to have it reduced to reckless driving, as long as that person meets the requirements of obtaining a diversion, Wilson said.

Prior to the court appearance, Prudhomm completed a DUI victims' im-

pact panel and drivers' safety course, and he also served two days at the Swaim Center in Smyrna, an alcoholism awareness and treatment center, according to

court documents.

Wilson, who is a Murfreesboro lawyer, said none of his comments regarding DUI generalities should be inferred as anything having to do with Prudhomm, but he did defend his client's character.

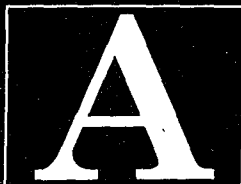
"He's a good kid, and he's never been in trouble before," Wilson said.

"It is important to understand that my client entered into a diversion plea — he was not guilty."

**HOWARD W. WILSON
DEFENSE ATTORNEY**

SIDELINES

AND THE SEARCH FOR NEW CONTRIBUTING STAFF



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College of Education partners with arts for summer academy

STAFF REPORT

The College of Education will partner with the Tennessee Arts Commission and state Department of Education to develop the first annual Creativity in Education Academy, according to an MTSU press release.

"MTSU is pleased to partner with the Tennessee State Department of Education and the Arts Commission and play host to the first annual Creativity in Education Academy next summer," President Sidney McPhee said in a press release Monday. "We are committed to developing well-rounded individuals who will become productive citizens in their communities."

The new academy, which will be held in July 2011, is designed as a professional development opportunity for educators to strengthen the practice of teaching, improve student achievement, and impact school performance.

This will be the first academy of its kind in Tennessee, and MTSU, with its roots as a teacher-training institution, will be the ideal setting for the weeklong event, according to the press release. The academy will offer sessions for K-12 teachers, art specialists, special education and resource teachers, as well as for principals

and superintendents.

"Our college welcomes the opportunity to work with our partners to provide professional development for educators from across the state," said Lana Seivers, dean of the College of Education.

The partnership is an extension of Create2011, a program jointly sponsored by the DOE and Arts Commission that was initially implemented to foster creativity and innovation in Tennessee public schools.

"Create2011 emerged out of the arts commission's highly successful Value Plus Schools initiative, an art-integration model funded by a \$906,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education," said Rich Boyd, the commission's executive director. "We are thrilled to be a partner in this statewide opportunity."

According to the press release, the academy will be held in the new College of Education Building that is slated for completion this spring. The new 87,000-square-foot building will play host for the academy from July 10 through July 14.

"It is only fitting that this partnership between higher education and K-12 will be the first event hosted in our new building, [and] we're extremely pleased to be a part of this effort," Seivers said.

THROUGH THE SIDELINES LENS

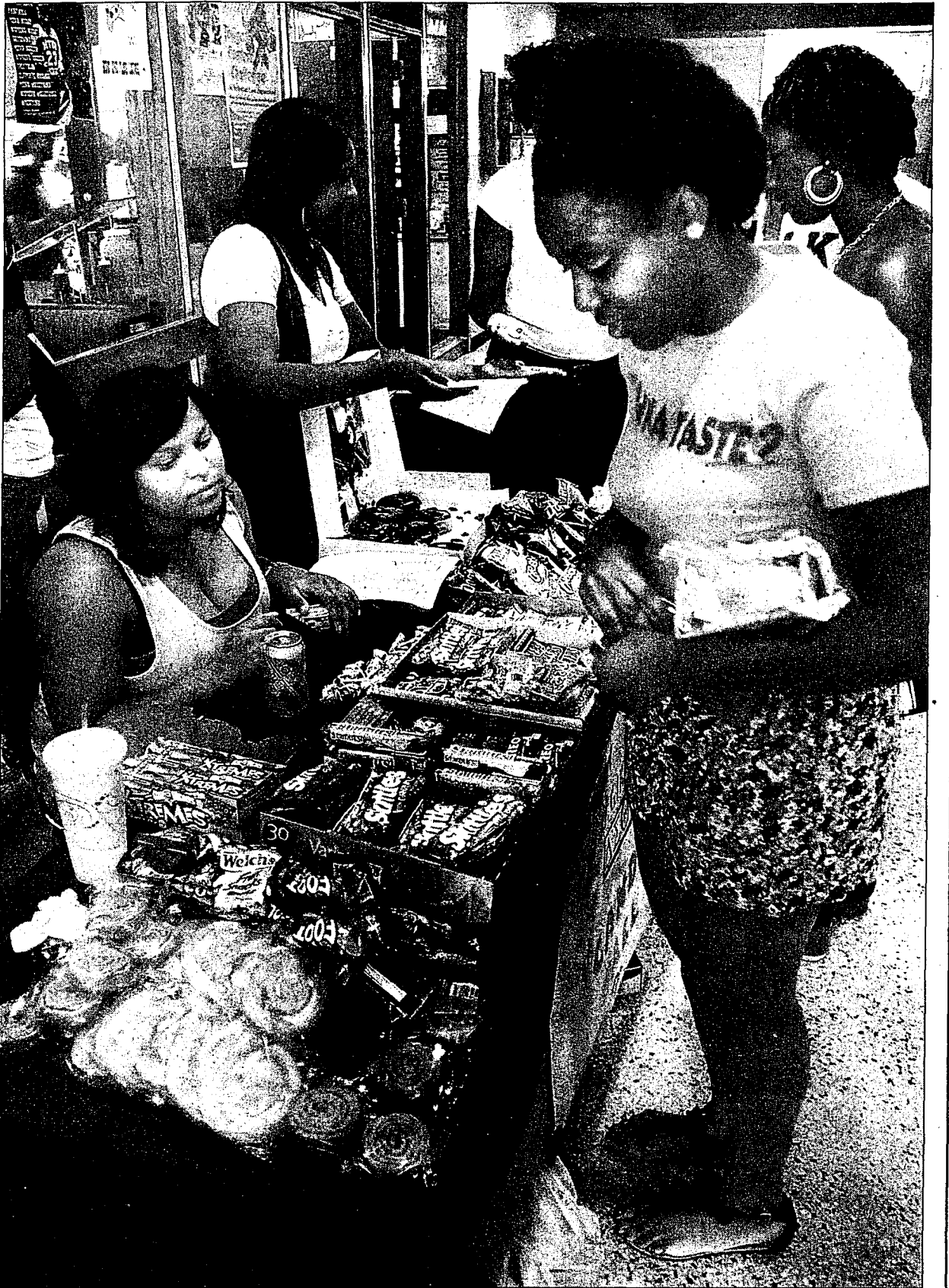


Photo by J.P. Cowden, contributing photographer

Raven Adair, a sophomore in the College of Liberal Arts, purchases candy from April Buggs, a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, on Tuesday, as part of a fundraiser for the I.T. Girls of Delta Sigma Theta. The event lasted from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. on the 2nd floor of the Keathley University Center.

CRIME BRIEFS

Traffic
Sept. 10, 8:04 p.m.
Greenhouse Services parking lot
A complainant reported a hit-and-run accident involving a black Honda Prelude in the Greenhouse Services parking lot.

Drunkenness
Sept. 11, 12:57 a.m.
Campus Recreation Center parking lot
A suspect

DUI
Sept. 11, 2:15 a.m.
Rutherford Boulevard
Jacob Paul Carter, 23, was arrested for a

first offense of driving under the influence, for unlawful drug paraphernalia, and simple possession of marijuana.

Burglary
Sept. 11, 3:58 p.m.
Alpha Gamma Rho House - Greek Row
A subject reported that his wallet was stolen.

Motor Vehicle Theft
Sept. 11, 7:47 a.m.
Miller Coliseum
A motorized scooter was reported stolen.

Theft
Sept. 11, 10:46 a.m.
Campus Recreation Center

A complainant reported that his student ID was lost or stolen.

Drug Abuse
Sept. 11, 11:14 p.m.
Scarlett Commons Apartment 8
Small amounts of possible drugs were found in the apartment.

Drunkenness
Sept. 12, 3:35 a.m.
Off Campus
Jerome R. Logan, 22, was arrested for public intoxication, disorderly conduct, assault of a police officer, resisting stop, frisk, haul, arrest, and search.

CORRECTIONS

In Christopher Merchant's article "Phi Mu spoils Band of Blue," about the Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia music fraternity's band camp cookout, they should have been called by their full name in the headline. Phi Mu Vibrant is actually a sorority, which could have mislead readers.

Sidelines regrets these errors.

Local Events

On Campus

Film: "Toy Story 3"
Thursday, 7 p.m. and 10 p.m.
Friday, 10 p.m.
Sunday at dusk
Thursday and Friday
KUC Theatre
Sunday at KUC Knoll
\$2 for students, free on Sunday

Video Game Night
Friday, 4 p.m. until 7 p.m.
KUC 2nd floor Lounge
Free for students

Karaoke Night
Sunday, 10 p.m.
Cyber Café
Free for students

Open House: MTSU Student Programming
Monday and Tuesday, 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.
KUC Room 308

Printer's Proof T-shirt Screen Printing
Thursday, 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.
Friday, 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.
Buy a T-shirt or bring your own

Public Reading: U.S. Constitution
Friday, 10 a.m.
Keathley University Center Knoll

Video Game Night
Friday, 4 p.m. until 7 p.m.
KUC 2nd floor Lounge
Free for students

Karaoke Night
Sunday, 10 p.m.
Cyber Café
Free for students

Open House: MTSU Student Programming
Monday and Tuesday, 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.
KUC Room 308

Art Opening: Dr. Robert Night Exhibit
Sept. 20, 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.
City Hall Rotunda
Free and open to the public

Guest Lecture: Nina Totenberg "Establishing Justice: The New Supreme Court"
Sept. 22, 4:30 p.m.
Tucker Theater
Free and open to the public

Events Policy

Sidelines welcomes current campus and community events submitted by all readers. Please e-mail events to slcampus@mtsu.edu or slnews@mtsu.edu, and include the name, date, time and location of the event, as well as your name and a phone number for verification. We reserve the right to refuse events at our discretion as our space is limited.

Sidelines is the editorially independent, non profit, student-produced newspaper of Middle Tennessee State University. Sidelines publishes Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters and online during June and July. The events listed are not necessarily associated with Sidelines or MTSU.

Off Campus

Opera: "Art and Opera: From Monarchy to Modernity"
Thursday, 6:30 p.m.
Reception 7 p.m. and Sunday 8 p.m.
Frist Center for the Visual Arts
Free and open to the public

Grand Ole Opry with Carrie Underwood and more
Thursday, 7 p.m.
Ryman Auditorium
\$42 to \$54 per person

Concert: Ghostland Observatory
Thursday, 9 p.m.
The Cannery Ballroom
\$22 per person in advance, \$25 per person at the doors

Concert: My So-Called Band
Thursday, 9:30 p.m.
Mercy Lounge
\$7 per person in advance, \$10 per person day of show, \$15 All Access

Concert: Guilty Pleasures
Thursday, 9:30 p.m.
Cannery Ballroom
\$12 per person, \$15 All Access with My So-Called Band

Play: "The Sound of Music"
Friday, 6:30 p.m.
Lampighter's Theater, Smyrna
\$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, \$5 for children.

Grand Ole Opry with Mark Wills,

Sawyer Brown and more
Friday, 7 p.m.
Ryman Auditorium
\$42 to \$54 per person

Concert: Yacht Rock Revue
Friday, 9 p.m.
Cannery Ballroom
\$10 per person

Grand Ole Opry with Chuck Mead and more
Saturday, 7 p.m.
\$42 to \$54 per person

Concert: Felice Brothers with Cary Ann Hearst
Saturday, 9 p.m.
Cannery Ballroom
\$12 per person in advance, \$15 day of show

Trivia: Rock and Roll Team Trivia
Sunday, 7 p.m.
Mercy Lounge
Free for 21+

Concert: 8 off 8th
Sunday, 8 p.m.
Mercy Lounge
Free for 21+

Concert: Campfire Starter Kit
Friday, 6 p.m.
Frist Center for the Visual Arts
Free and open to the public.

Concert: Mean Mary
Thursday, 6 p.m.
Frist Center for the Visual Arts
Free and open to the public.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Pixies 'Doolittle' tour success in Nashville

Ryman sets aside country music roots to host alternative rock band

By JO-JO JACKSON
Staff Writer

Ever heard of the Pixies? No, not the fairies – the band. It's okay if the name doesn't ring a bell, the band formed in 1986, and after four full-length albums, it broke up in 1993. But, the infamous indie rock group's legacy is so strong

that the band regrouped in 2004. The band came to the historic Ryman Auditorium in Nashville Friday and Saturday night for its "Doolittle" tour, named after the band's second full-length album.

Pixies' Friday performance was accompanied by videos for each song, which

kept things interesting, and compensated for the band's nontraditional, static stage presence. Bassist Kim Deal, dressed in a rather motherly black sweater and black slacks, and spent her time between songs talking and flashing her great smile, which made the audience yell out "marry me."

The Ryman, with its roots running deep in country music as the former home of the Grand Ole Opry, didn't feel like the best venue to house the Pixies. The narrowly spaced pew-style seats were stiff and didn't offer much room for dancing.

Opening act, F*** Buttons, hailing from Britain, is a seemingly odd choice for the Pixies' supporting band. The Buttons' brand of electronic, techno beats were almost offensive to the

ears of spectators who had paid good money to see a great show.

Still, F*** Buttons is good at what it does, with a Paul Van Dyk meets Prodigy feel. However, that brand of music didn't seem to mesh with the likes of Pixies' fans, which could be heard in the crowd's seemingly bewildered comments. F*** Buttons' set was paired with a very cool and intense light show, but the best thing about them – how quickly

the set was over and broken down to make way for the headliners.

The Pixies opened its set with a provocative video, a silent, black-and-white film with stark, disturbing imagery at times.

The band took the stage to a mass of applause and started with a few B-side songs, including: "Do the Manta Ray" and "Bail's Walk."

PIXIE, PAGE 5

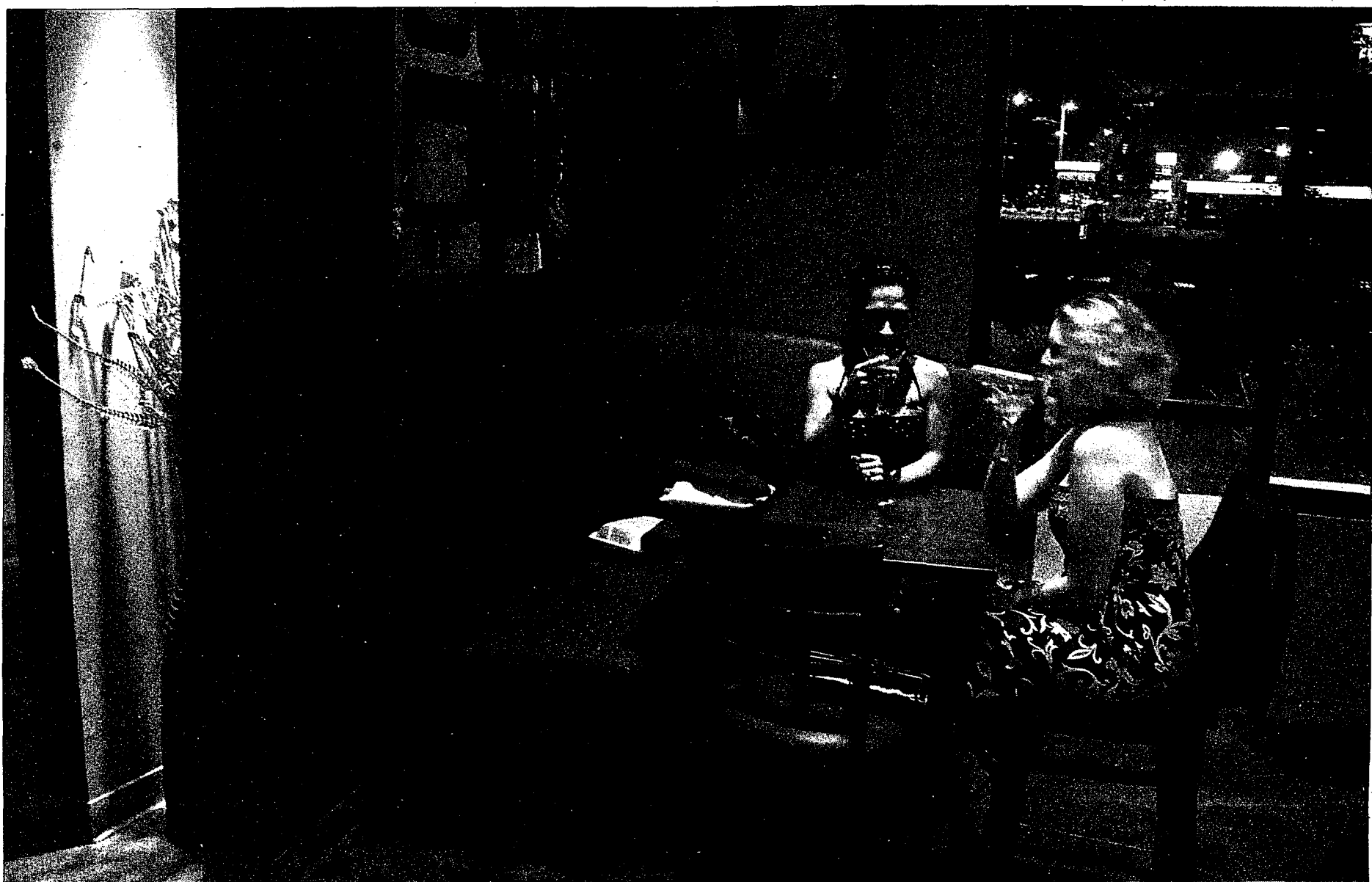


Photo by Chris Donahue, staff photographer

Patrons of the Parthenon Grille enjoy cocktails while admiring the establishment's modern appeal and urban-style atmosphere.

Parthenon Grille — still a culinary pillar

food4thought

By JIMMY SUDEKUM
Contributing Writer

The Parthenon Restaurant has been a community favorite for decades, providing a classy and strictly traditional approach to Mediterranean cuisine. Its founder was Tula Darsinos, whose quiet entrepreneurship put the tiny restaurant on the local map. But in February, the recently renovated hideaway reopened as the urban-inspired, chic Parthenon Grille.

I shamelessly devoured the feast before me, forgetting for a moment that I am, by ethical conviction, a vegetarian. But this is journalism, after all; there's no room for ego when mass media integrity is at stake.

How could I resist such beautifully prepared food? The rack of lamb was something to behold, a delicate work of marinated art with a side of sautéed broccoli. The broiled chicken topped with the Oscar, béarnaise sauce with snow crab and asparagus, left me in an eu-

phoric haze.

But nothing compared to the delicious - and guiltlessly vegetarian - Parthenon Dip appetizer. Made of tomato cream, mushrooms, onions and grated feta cheese served with crunchy pita chips, it's no surprise why this \$5 starter dish is so popular among loyal customers, of whom the Parthenon Grille has many.

Renovated is certainly an understatement, because the new location was built from the ground up, along with the menu. Current owner Kathy Darsinos, daughter of the founder, is using contemporary style for younger appeal. However, the change has been greeted with some negative reviews.

As made evident by passionate critiques on multiple rating websites, customers loyal to The Parthenon Restaurant are not happy with its new selection, disappointed that favorites like the "Parthenon King" are no longer listed. But the new menu still retains the Parthenon Dip, rack of lamb and other dishes loved by patrons for years, as well as an eager invitation for customers to request unlisted ones, which they will make if the ingredients are available.

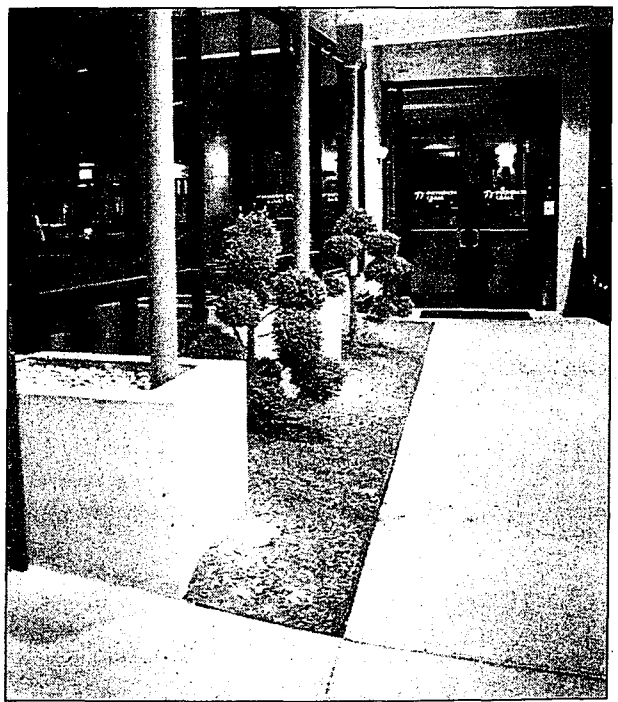


Photo by Chris Donahue, staff photographer

Parthenon Grille reopened in February following construction of a new restaurant

PARTHENON, PAGE 5

Characters make 'Freedom' engaging, relatable

Jonathan Franzen's fourth novel captures familial strife

By MATTHEW HAMMITT
Staff Writer

Novels are about many things, but a really great novel is never quite what it seems to be on the surface. That is to say, what happens in such a novel is never as important as what the events and characters of it represent on a larger scale.

"Freedom," the fourth novel from Jonathan Franzen, is about the complicated relationships married couple Walter & Patty Berglund has with each other,

their children Jessica and Joey, and their vagabond friend Richard Katz.

A lot happens to these characters over the novel's 562 pages but not one tangible event or series of events, resonates as strongly and honestly as the characters themselves. Every major character in the novel is you or me. We as humans have the capacity to become, and perhaps already are, any of these characters.

The novel opens with a narrative exploration of the lives of the Berglund fam-

ily throughout the two decades spent in the Ramsey Hill neighborhood of St. Paul, Minn. A neighborhood – in disarray when the Berglunds arrived – endures as a thriving domestic oasis upon their departure. The family is credited with making this possible. Unfortunately, the most dire period for the neighborhood might well have been the most pleasant for the family. As the environment thrives, the family decays.

The opening section depicts the process of divergence from the point of view of the neighbors that knew the Berglund family best, or at least thought they knew

them. The facts that led to unrest in the Berglund household as related by their regional cohorts are indisputable, but they fail to arrive at the truth of the matter.

Novelist William Faulkner famously said, "facts and truth really don't have much to do with each other."

This is a lesson well learned by Franzen. He uses facts to alienate the reader from Walter and Patty Berglund, the only characters who employ the truth to bring us closer to them. By the end of the novel, the Berglund family is fully realized to be impervious to the snap judgments of character tossed off by nosy neighbors

at the novel's beginning.

"Freedom" treads on familiar thematic territory for Franzen.

His last novel, the 2001 National Book Award winner "The Corrections," is an epic story about family and the inherent difficulties in belonging to one. It explores the regrets and restlessness of growing up and how taxing the process is on those that try to help. It analyzes the idea that children are never quite as far away from where they grew up as they think. "Freedom" strikes a number of similar chords.

Where "The Corrections" was a good novel,

"Freedom" is a better one.

Characterization is what makes "Freedom" the most successful piece of fiction in Franzen's career. While the satirical tone representative of his previous efforts reveals itself numerous times throughout "Freedom," often through the thoughts and actions of Richard Katz, the character most similar to the author, it never presents as harshly as Franzen has allowed it to in the past. It is almost as though Franzen has succeeded in creating characters so convoluted and convincing that even he himself is unsure what to make of them.

FREEDOM, PAGE 5

Editor's Spotlight

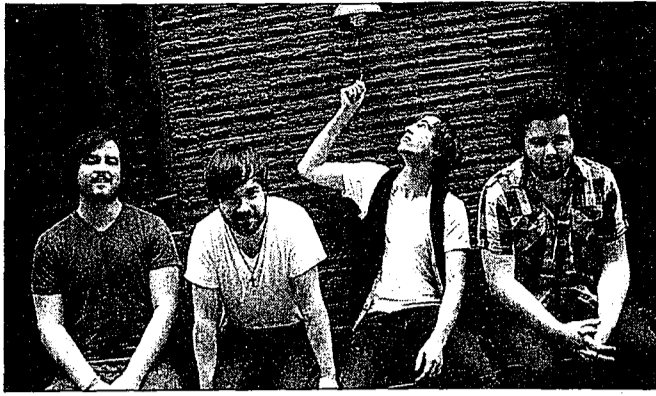


Photo courtesy of The Compromise

Held in Motion
Sept. 16
Bonhoeffer's
Featuring Cliff
Moore, Eric Burtron

Barefoot Renegades
Sept. 17
Blue Rooster

Boo Boo Bunny
Sept. 17
The Boro Bar & Grill

Dirty D and Him and Me
Sept. 21
Liquid Smoke

David Broomhead
Sept. 17
Aura Lounge

Rachel Pearl
Sept. 17
Hatcher Family
Dairy Store

The Corbitt Brothers
Sept. 18
Handlebar

T.H.B.
Sept. 24
Gilligan's

Dueling Pianos with Justin and Danny
Sept. 19
Bobby McKee's

Open Mic Night
Sept. 21
The Grind

Dirty Cherry
Sept. 21
Bunganut Pig

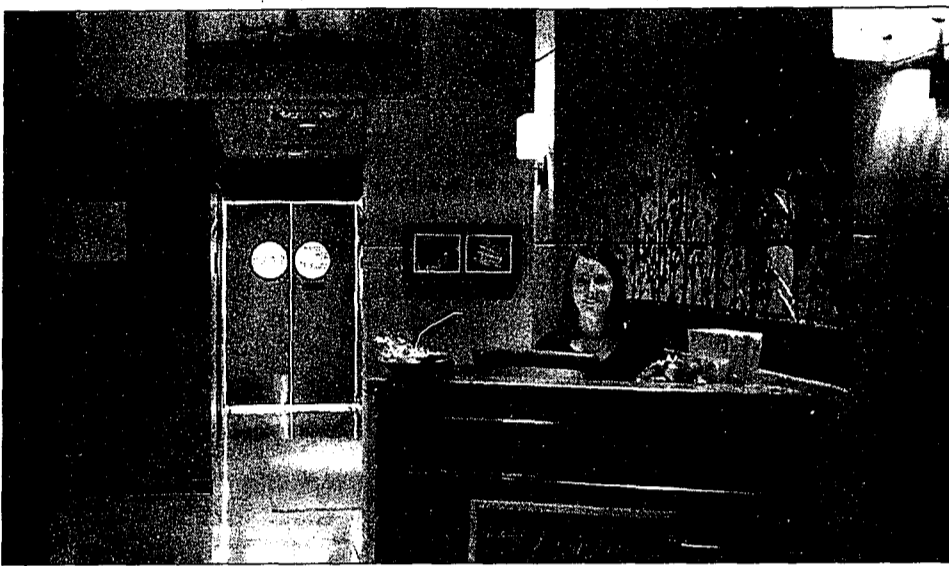


Photo by Chris Donahue, staff photographer
Despite the newly updated look, the Parthenon remains reasonably priced.

Parthenon Grille retains class, familiarity of previous location

PARTHENON FROM PAGE 5

The food was exquisite, and the atmosphere was undeniably hip. The music was relaxing too, with Jack Johnson playing literally every other song, which is great, if you like Jack Johnson.

As I was waiting for my dessert, which was an absolutely decadent Tiramisu with Amaretto, Kahlúa liqueur and Mascarpone, a creamysweet cheese, I asked a couple of the employees where the restaurant ordered its food. My hope was to absolve myself of some vegetarian sins by discover-

ing that all of the meat was from local, organic and certified humane farms. However, this was not the case. But I was still impressed with the food knowledge of the employees, a minimal expectation of any fine dining customer.

One thing I wanted to know when I arrived was whether or not a college student, whose diet generally consists of Taco Bell and ramen noodles, would even be able to afford a meal here. But, I found the prices to be quite reasonable and no more expensive than chain restaurants like Demos' Restaurant or Olive Garden. In fact, two could

eat lunch with an appetizer included for less than \$20. A popular lunch entree is the gyro sandwich, priced at \$7, which comes with a side of French fries, broccoli or pasta salad.

"We cost just as much as everyone else does," says Josh Lantz, who is the general manager. "We just taste better."

And for totally fresh, original food, I'd say you can't argue with that.

Parthenon Grille is located on 1962 South Church St. and is open Mondays through Saturdays, 11 a.m. until 10 p.m., and 11 a.m. until 9 p.m. on Sundays.



Photo courtesy of Pixies
Pixies played The Ryman Auditorium on Friday and Saturday in Nashville.

Pixies rock out Ryman, despite technical difficulties

PIXIES FROM PAGE 4

After the B-side songs, the legendary group immediately began playing the entire "Doolittle" album, with particular favorites of the album, "I Bleed," "Monkey Gone to Heaven," "Hey," and "Silver." A chorus of voices from the audience could be heard singing along to every song.

The cryptic, surreal, and sometimes violent, lyrics of singer, songwriter and guitarist Frank Black were contrasted by the heavily melodic, sing-and-dance-along musical rhythm.

With the conclusion of the "Doolittle" segment, the crowd went mad for an encore, and the Pixies obliged with more songs, like the B-side version of "Wave of Mutilation."

Midway through "Into the White," the Ryman's sound system malfunctioned lead-

ing to, what felt like an eternity, waiting for the crew to fix it so the show could go on. It was amazing to see how long the fans could last, banging the pews, and stopping their feet in the dark before giving up. Finally, Deal calmed the crowd by proclaiming the show would go on.

The lights came on, and the Pixies finished its encore with the popular tunes "Vamos," "Gigantic," and "Where is My Mind?"—all tracks from the band's first full-length album, "Surfer Rosa." When the crowd was finally appeased, the show was over.

Overall, the Pixies' performance was great. However, there were a few guitar mishaps here and there, and the vocals came in late a couple of times, but other than those few mistakes, the band was solid.

It was an amazing experience to see the Pixies perform, and I can't wait for them to come back to Nashville — if some mystical power allows it to be so.

Book examines political ideology

FREEDOM FROM PAGE 4

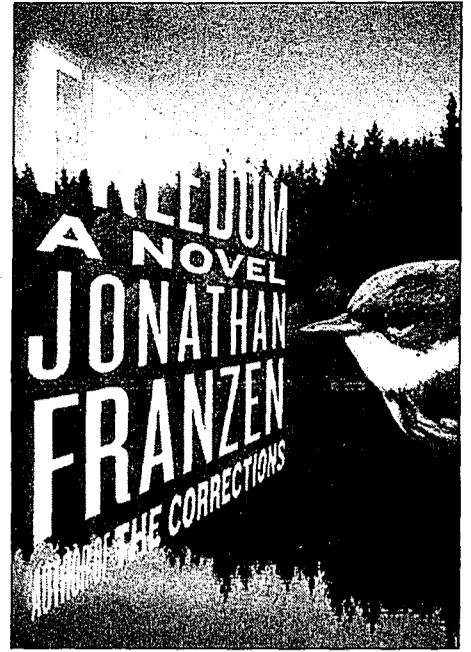
Part of the reason for Franzen's success in these portrayals is that the main characters are all, in terms of age, his contemporaries or younger. These people live in the same world the author does, their motivations, although complicated, feel familiar in his hands. Their worries and concerns seem to faintly echo some of his own, and he is thus endeavored to handle them with care.

Patty, a former college basketball star, is a mechanically agreeable homemaker and neighbor. While she never regrets her marriage to Walter, she struggles with latent desires that he is unable to fill. These unfilled passions manifest themselves into a torrid, very brief affair with Richard, a vagabond musician, who roomed with Walter in college and became his best friend. Although her infidelity is lamentable, and no one laments the affair more earnestly and despairingly than Patty herself, it is hard to react to her behavior with contempt.

Likewise, Richard partakes in the affair so feebly and reluctantly, his weakness so perfectly measure and explained, that the anticipated results of this infidelity are rendered all the more tragic. He finds more success artistically and romantically the less inclined he is to pursue both, and he allows himself to covet his best friend's wife without his usual laconic sense of detachment, and so doing, reveals his fundamental sadness.

Walter may be an undeserving victim of the affair, but he is not without his own culpability in the matter. His guileless, nearly delusional idealization of his wife renders him unable to cope with the reality of her behavior. His reaction to her infidelity is intensified by his own feelings of inadequacy. It is perhaps this weakness of character that leads Walter into a job managing a trust for a Texas oil tycoon. By working alongside coal companies and defense contractors with whom he is ideologically opposed, he compromises his principle of doing service that will make some small positive environmental impact.

Although "Freedom's" characters are structurally sound, its plot devices are frequently less so. The novel is littered with popular culture references employed to establish a foothold of narrative time and place. Some of these references feel awkward and belabored. Sections of the novel focused on Joey Berglund's shady experiences with wartime military con-



tracts seem far-fetched and disjointed in comparison to the rest of the book.

There are times when Franzen's clumsy sense of humor could leave a reader wondering if certain happenings and lines of dialogue are intentionally humorous.

So, why "Freedom?"

In the end, however, the biggest triumph of the novel is the appropriateness of its title. The word freedom appears repeatedly throughout the book — subtly and blatantly.

Politically, Americans' entitlement to freedom is portrayed as counterintuitive to progress. Personally, it is presented as a notion we cling to out of desperation; to convince ourselves of our deprivations.

"Freedom" is a novel about betrayal and dedication, sexual repressions and awakenings, and the intricate distinctions of good and evil, as applied to political ideologies.

It is about the complexity of friendship, and the careless and soulless commodification of art in the 21st century, the dangers of suburban sprawl and war profiteering. It is about the important distinctions between action and intention. It is about mountaintop removal, and the perilous modern existence of birds smaller than your finger — but which of these occurrences and ponderings explain the novel's portentous title?

The answer is all of them and none of them.

Franzen is sure to communicate how each aspect of the novel relates to the concept of freedom. The author explores how something can liberate us conceptually, while caging us emotionally.

Ultimately, "Freedom" is a novel about our lives and how much freedom we have — invariably more than we know what to do with and often less than we think.

SIDEWORDS

The weekly *Sidelines* crossword puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
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17				18						19			
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63					64					65			66
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70					71					72			

Crossword courtesy of bestcrosswords.com

ACROSS

1 — DEA agent; 5 — Smell; 10 — Dry watercourse; 14 — _____ boy!; 15 — Adjust, modify; 16 — Islamic call to prayer; 17 — Collective word for intellectual pursuits; 18 — Temporary stop; 19 — Campus mil. group; 20 — Official; 23 — River in central Switzerland; 24 — "_____ the cows come home"; 25 — Give; 28 — Big bang cause; 31 — Thick sweet liquid; 35 — Perform major surgery; 37 — Admiration; 39 — Clean air org.; 40 — Eye doctor; 44 — 100 square meters; 45 — Fair-hiring abbr.; 46 — Cease to remember; 47 — Shades; 50 — Radical '60s org.; 52 — Like some gum; 53 — Direct a gun; 55 — Cookbook amts.; 57 — Nonsense; 63 — Indication; 64 — Small hand drum; 65 — Trompe l'_____; 67 — To _____ (perfectly); 68 — Bellowing; 69 — Annapolis sch.; 70 — Belgian river; 71 — Rope used to guide a horse; 72 — Bouillabaisse, e.g.;

DOWN

1 — Actress Peeples; 2 — Gillette brand; 3 — Queue after Q; 4 — Percussion instrument; 5 — Flavor; 6 — Dry red table wine; 7 — Sewing case; 8 — Hotbed; 9 — Pay for; 10 — Gingerly; 11 — Northern arm of the Black Sea; 12 — Go out with; 13 — Business abbr.; 21 — Bring forth from the egg; 22 — _____ the season...; 25 — Old English coin; 26 — Dupe; 27 — Gray; 29 — Titled; 30 — Snake eyes; 32 — Preval; 33 — Overturn; 34 — Little pie; 36 — _____ kwon do; 38 — Mischievous person; 41 — Acapulco article; 42 — Pizazz; 43 — Gray; 48 — Breadwinner; 49 — Bro's counterpart; 51 — "Hogan's Heroes" setting; 54 — Dense element; 56 — Blank look; 57 — Strikes; 58 — Arch type; 59 — Casino game; 60 — Black, in poetry; 61 — Breather; 62 — Cosecant's reciprocal; 63 — Express; 66 — Legal science;

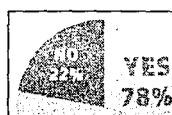
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A	N	T	S	A	M	O	S	W	A	T	E	R	
P	E	R	T	U	R	B	A	W	A	R	E		
S	W	O	O	N	L	A	B	O	R				
P	E	N	E	A	N	E	D	U	C	A	T	O	N
A	L	E	R	T	L	A	D	S	R	A	D	S	
E	X	C	E	P	T	A	B	R	A	D	E		
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C	A	R	G	O	L	A	B	R	M	O	I	R	E
A	L	E	R	T	L	A	D	S	R	A	D	S	
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S	E	D	G	E	G	E	N	U	A	R	Y		

September 9 Solution

WOULD YOU EVER TAKE A CLASS ON HARRY P. OR "LORD OF THE RINGS?"

online TELL US ONLINE AT MTSUSIDELINES.COM

FEATURE



DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE?

BASED ON VOTES FROM MTSUSIDELINES.COM.

ONCE UPON A SEMESTER...



English professor serves as MTSU's 'Father of Fantasy'

By LAURA AIKEN
Features Editor

When he was young, Ted Sherman daydreamed about comets, stars and heavenly bodies. He aspired to study astronomy or forestry maybe. But, he wasn't fond of math, and he loved nonfiction.

If you walk to the third floor of Peck Hall and peer inside Room 352, you'll think you've made a mistake, you took a wrong turn, and ended up in the library accidentally. Cramped and overflowing, books line the small, dimly lit office with no apparent beginning or end — tattered books, creased books, stout books, thin books, used books, new books.

Surrounded by his classics, Sherman will scratch his gray beard methodically, and then tell you, humbly, he's read a few.

In the "Lord of the Rings" and "Harry

Potter" English class you'll escape into a perilous realm, dare to attempt rash ventures, and plunge into an enchanting world where truth and meaning are revealed. Hoary oak trees in the Old Forest cast sleeping spells on unsuspecting hobbits, potions make seemingly honest witches blurt out their innermost secrets, and courage is found among the most unlikely of characters.

Many pairs of glassy eyes and distant expressions come out of that room. It's obvious after the first five minutes in class — English professor Ted Sherman has read them all.

He doesn't stand on a soapbox — no preaching whatsoever. There aren't any broomsticks, cauldrons or talking paintings in his classroom. There isn't a gold ring that has the potential to cripple all of humanity with inborn evil — granted, J.R.R. Tolkien did caution everyone about things that "glitter." However, Sherman's lectures over "Harry Potter" and "Lord of the Rings" seem to gleam like the light emanating from the Elven folk of Middle-earth.

His wise eyes evoke a true understanding of the "Harry Potter" and "Lord of the Rings" novels, which is evidenced by the packed classroom full of students craning their necks, edging further and further off their seats to cling onto every word.

J.R.R. Tolkien, known as the father of modern fantasy, coined the term "fairy story"

in an attempt to redefine the qualities of such stories, and identify the subliminal messages that readers interpret.

"A 'fairy-story' is one which touches

on or uses Faerie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy," Tolkien continues. "Faerie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by magic—but it is magic of a peculiar mood and power, at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician."

Sherman wants his students to appreciate the authors' representation of deep-seeded topics, displayed in the novels by pivotal characters' confrontation with death.

"I think the older you are, the more life you've had, the more experiences you've had, the more you will put into the reading, and the more you will get out of it," Sherman explains. "You will identify more with the experience of characters in those novels."

He says even though "Lord of the Rings" requires more intellectual skill and facility than reading "Harry Potter," both novels have striking similarities — young people who are orphaned and have to make their way in the world by renouncing some form of power.

In his class Sherman suggests that most fantasy arises out of the Middle Ages and is historically significant, and more often than not, symbolic. J.K. Rowling continues to weave social and political issues into the fabric of her stories, allowing the reader to "see real life as if it were in a mirror," Sherman says.

While working on his Ph.D. at the University of Southern Mississippi, he fell in love with Old English and "Beowulf," which, in Tolkien's case, tie harmoniously with fantasy literature. At one point he wrote his senior thesis on C.S. Lewis' "Perelandra," a modern retelling of Milton's "Paradise Lost," and studied Tolkien's "The Silmarillion," a collection of narrative tales describing Middle-earth.

When he began teaching at MTSU, he taught a fantasy literature course that provided a historical overview of "Beowulf," among other classics. To this day, he makes numerous references to other significant literary works in his "Lord of the Rings" and "Harry Potter" class.

Besides sharing his wealth of literary comprehension with students, he con-



tinues to expand the study of fantasy literature by teaching a "Harry Potter" class in London every other year. In the past he has taken students to see the sites where the movies' scenes are filmed. In "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," the place where Harry first learns to fly actually exists as more than a movie set — Alnwick Castle in Northumberland.

Sherman says he is amazed with the sheer inventiveness of these two authors, which is why he gives such passionate lectures.

What Rowling and Tolkien strongly suggest, through the main characters, is that humility is greatest power of all. Rowling tends to fill her novels with all kinds of medieval religious symbolism, he tells the class.

"Harry must die in order for others to live," he claims. "That is not wizardry, and that is not sorcery."

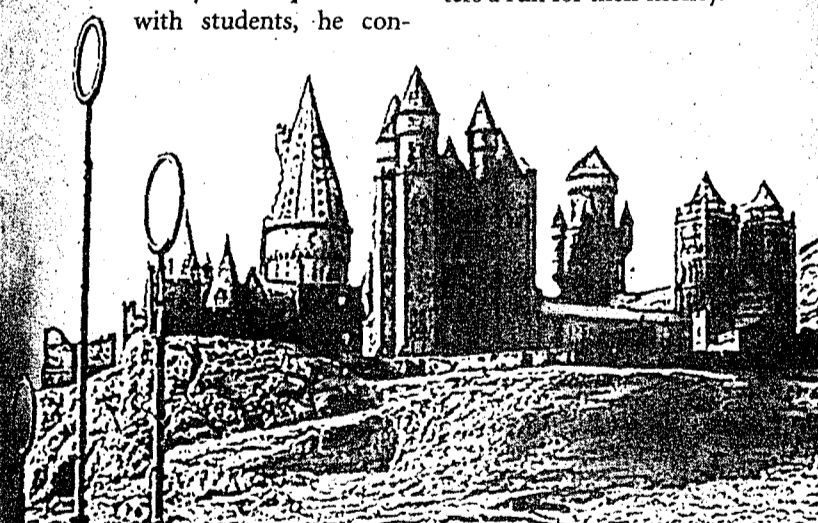
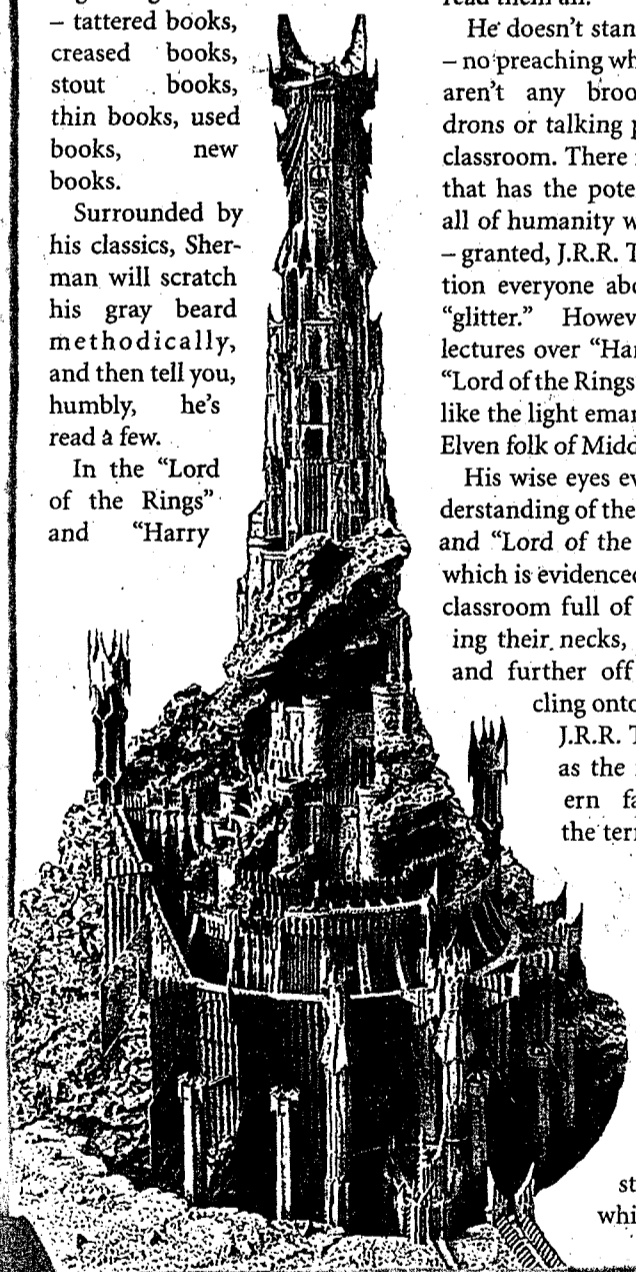
If anything, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends," he says quoting the New Testament. "That is the heart of the Christian message."

Sherman underlines many symbolic references in Rowling and Tolkien's novels. For example, King's Cross is not just the name of a train station in London. When Harry is at Kings Cross in "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," he's in a limbo-like place where he can go forward to a better place or go back.

For those of you who have read book seven, you know ultimately which path Harry chooses.

"Harry Potter is throughout all seven books, willing to sacrifice himself for the good of someone else," Sherman says, stroking his beard. "The real magic is what lies in the individuals."

Although this realm has wise, magical beings like Gandalf and Dumbledore, many students would probably agree that Ted Sherman could give those characters a run for their money.



Graphic by Andy Harper, production manager

Movie spotlights controversial love story

By JOLINA ST. PIERRE
Contributing Writer

In Hollywood, rumor has it that directors shouldn't work with kids, and directors shouldn't work with animals. Apparently, Bob Pondillo, a professor in the department of electronic media communications, didn't get that memo.

In his upcoming short film, "The Miracles on Honey Bee Hill," Pondillo does anything but play by the rules. In fact, with the exception of one adult, the entire cast com-

prises several children and one dog.

"It was the story that decided I should use kids," Pondillo said. "I was home, and I thought, 'Oh, have kids play the adults! That's it! It has to be kids!'"

Pondillo is no stranger to making movies, though. "The Miracles on Honey Bee Hill" is the fifth movie he has written, directed and produced while at MTSU.

With an ambitious script in hand and very limited resources, Pondillo enlisted the help of the MTSU Film Guild,

several students, children and businesses who all volunteered their time. Needless to say, the film wasn't short on challenges, but production was finished in a week.

Although controversial in nature, "The Miracles on Honey Bee Hill" is a story about a lonesome, young woman who miraculously finds true love and wants to get married, but her church angrily disapproves.

"I wanted to say something about what I consider the civil rights issue of our time, but I wanted to do it in

a fresh, funny way." Pondillo said. "That's why I went with an all-kids cast to tell this tale of love, tolerance, forgiveness and acceptance."

Pondillo said he thought the movie could be seen as too heavy-handed if he used adult actors. Instead, he created a childlike fairytale with colorful costumes and sets.

"With kids, you're throwing these codes at people, and they're seeing one thing and thinking one way," Pondillo said. "They're going down the old fairytale route, and then suddenly, there's this hard left

turn that nobody sees coming...at least I hope!"

No spoiler alert here. You'll have to wait for the movie.

Pondillo had hoped for a December release date, but problems with transcoding and editing have caused delays, so it should be ready for release sometime in the spring of 2011.

Pondillo said he plans to enter "The Miracles on Honey Bee Hill" in hundreds of film festivals as soon as it's ready.

"Ultimately, I just wanted to make an entertaining movie, nothing more." Pon-

dillo said. "[With] that said, I know there's a clear political point of view to this film, but my intention isn't to shock people as much as it is to make them search their own hearts and think deeply and critically about the issue of gay marriage."

Pondillo said he believes "The Miracles on Honey Bee Hill" may be his best film yet, regardless of the controversial nature, and he believes entertaining people and making them laugh is just icing on the cake.

Letters Policy

Sidelines welcomes letters to the editor from all readers. Please e-mail letters to slopinio@mtsu.edu and include your name and phone number for verification. *Sidelines* will not publish anonymous letters. We reserve the right to edit grammar, length and content.

OPINIONS

Sidelines is the editorially independent, non-profit, student-produced newspaper of Middle Tennessee State University. *Sidelines* publishes Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters and online during June and July. The opinions expressed herein are those of individual writers and not necessarily *Sidelines* or MTSU.

Traffic, traffic and more traffic

By JOHN THOMAS
Contributing Columnist

To drive is one of the most dangerous things humans do, statistically speaking. We travel at high speeds, tempting fate at every turn. We trust our fellow man to be kind, courteous and not to kill or maim us by his or her actions.

Regardless of how some drivers feel, everyday driving is not NASCAR. You are not Dale Earnhardt Jr. You cannot defy the laws of physics by tailgating and expecting the person in front of you to dematerialize so that you can get to work on time.

Soccer moms: Traffic laws also apply to you, even if little Billy will be late for practice. The stop sign means stop. Kabul, Afghanistan might be a safer place to drive than Rutherford County.

Yellow lights do not mean speed up; they mean slow down. It seems that many drivers feel that the yellow light is an invitation to "floor it." Maybe these drivers were traumatized by a yellow light when they were

younger and now fear the yellow light's reprisal. We must resist this compulsion to flee from this yellow demon.

A red traffic light signifies that the driver must stop. The definition of stop is no forward progress at all – none.

Some drivers must have seen too many "COPS" episodes. Some need to feel the thrill of a near-death experience. They run red lights. It's possible that they are all rushing to the local hospital because they were injured by a car that ran the previous red light and now they are hurrying to seek treatment. Otherwise, there is no good reason to run a red light.

Tailgating: Please don't drive so close. We don't know each other that well. Are drivers who tailgate trying to read someone else's bumper stickers? On the other hand, is it just an obsessive need to be close enough to the person in front of you to smell their aftershave? NASCAR is to blame for tailgating. Imagine how different racecar driving would be if drivers had to

stay two car lengths away from each other at all times and avoid shopping carts and pedestrians. That would require real skill. Imagine hearing an announcer say, "Jeff Gordon, just hit a pedestrian and will be penalized one lap."

Another road hazard is aggressive drivers. They drive as if they have had one too many mocha lattes. These juggernauts of careening steel, weave in and out of traffic committing crimes against humanity. They should have a specially padded lane and crash helmet. Slow down and live another day.

The dreaded four-way stop is a problem that has plagued mankind since Henry Ford made his first million automobiles. What happens when all four drivers arrive at the stop sign at the exact same time? For some, this problem is more difficult than a trigonometric equation. Who goes first? After a 10-minute stalemate, all the drivers will attempt to leave at once, and then all screech to a halt. Whoever yells the loudest expletive wins

and gets to go first. The rest are left to fight it out in a cage match. Courtesy should be the right way.

What does yield have to do with it? Does anyone really know what yield means? Most drivers ignore yield signs in favor of the more thrilling "ram the driver in the door" school of thought. Yield to the right of way. It will significantly lower your chance of severe injury or death.

Texting: Okay, this is a relatively new phenomenon, but it's gaining in popularity. The game is played via cell phone sending or reading text messages while driving. This game is especially fun in traffic while tailgaters and aggressive drivers increase the fear factor.

John Thomas is a senior nontraditional student in the College of Mass Communication. He can be reached at ajfmd@comcast.net.



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www.mtsusidelines.com

The basics of good budgeting

By RACHEL CRUZE
Guest Columnist

Now that school is back in session, you probably find yourself doing a lot of planning – planning your schedule to make sure you graduate on time, planning your assignments, planning for club meetings, and of course, planning for lots of fun. But, one area that you must make sure to plan is your money. I know it may sound nerdy or old fashioned, but it isn't. It really is helpful for everyone. A simple, written plan can actually give you more money to enjoy!

I know doing a budget or cash flow plan doesn't sound like much fun. But, I bet going out on a date, to Cancun for Spring Break, or on a shopping spree at the mall sounds like fun. You can do all of those without coming home to face debt or credit card bills. That is what a proper plan will do for you because you can begin planning that debt-free fun as a part of your plan today. If you don't write down your money and have a plan, you will look up one day and realize that it is all gone and you don't even know what you spent it on.

So how do you get started? First, figure out how much money you have to work with for the month. This amount should include

anything your parents give you to live on as well as your income from a job. You should be setting up a new budget EVERY month. If your parents pay for everything for you except when you go out with your friends, then you just need to budget for about how often you go out to eat, or to the movies, or to concerts.

Don't try to have the perfect budget for the perfect month because we never have those. Spend every dollar on paper before the month begins. Give every dollar you'll have a name before the month begins. This is called a zero-based budget. Income minus outgo equals zero every month. Look at this month's income and what you'll be putting your money towards, like food, entertainment, savings and debts, and match them up until you have given every income dollar an outgo name. You shouldn't have any money left over.

Rachel Cruze, the daughter of financial author Dave Ramsey, is a student at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and offers financial advice to students across the country.

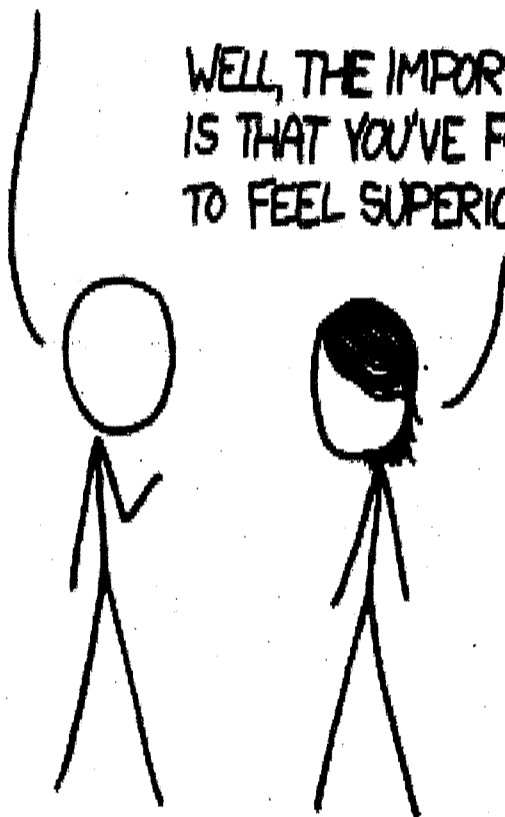


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COMICS

PERSONALLY, I FIND ATHEISTS JUST AS ANNOYING AS FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANS.

WELL, THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU'VE FOUND A WAY TO FEEL SUPERIOR TO BOTH.



"xkcd"

www.xkcd.com

Randal Munroe

The power of the US Constitution

On Sept. 17, the U.S. Constitution turns 223 years old. Our Constitution is the oldest continuously used constitution in the world. It is also the shortest, taking just four large pages to lay out the structure of the federal government and the principles of individual freedom that government should respect.

While many Americans tend to take the strength and simplicity of our Constitution for granted, its survival has never been guaranteed. As President George Washington wrote at the time, its completion after months of negotiation was "little short of a miracle." Even as they were signing it, many of the delegates had doubts that it would hold together a collection of states with diverse needs and fierce



Bart Gordon
Congressman
D-Tenn.

independent streaks.

The America our founders knew looked very different from the country we live in today. The population of the United States was just around 4 million, or two-thirds the size of Tennessee today. Philadelphia, the country's largest city, had just about as many residents within its city

limits as modern day Gallatin. The majority of Americans were farmers, compared with 1 percent of Americans today. The second most common language was German – so common in fact that the Constitution was quickly translated and circulated in both languages.

Reflecting on the vast differences between the United States then and now, it is remarkable that the same few pages of text still resonates today as it did then. But the Constitution's strength is a tribute to the strength of certain values in our culture – freedom, opportunity, respect for individual rights, and equality before the law. It is also a tribute to the genius of the founders who designed it so it could evolve as the country did.

The Constitution has depended on many people to uphold and protect it. Millions of American veterans have made great sacrifices in its defense throughout the past two centuries. Today, thousands of Tennessee's National Guardsmen are fighting alongside other members of our Armed Forces to defend the same freedoms and rights established in our Constitution 223 years ago.

The Constitution also depends on the respect and understanding of each new generation of citizens. Constitutional principles don't just lay out what our government can and can't do, they have also become the defining values of our country's identity, the respect for liberty that sets us apart from the rest of the world.

Our democracy depends on each generation being able to appreciate the principles set down in the Constitution and brings their own understanding of it to the table when they vote and participate in their communities.

This week, we should take some time to read over this powerful document with our children and acquaint ourselves with its history. I am cosponsoring a resolution in Congress honoring Sept. 17 as Constitution Day. It is my hope that we can all use the occasion to reflect on the power of these four pages to inspire Americans through the generations.

Congressman Bart Gordon represents Tennessee's 6th District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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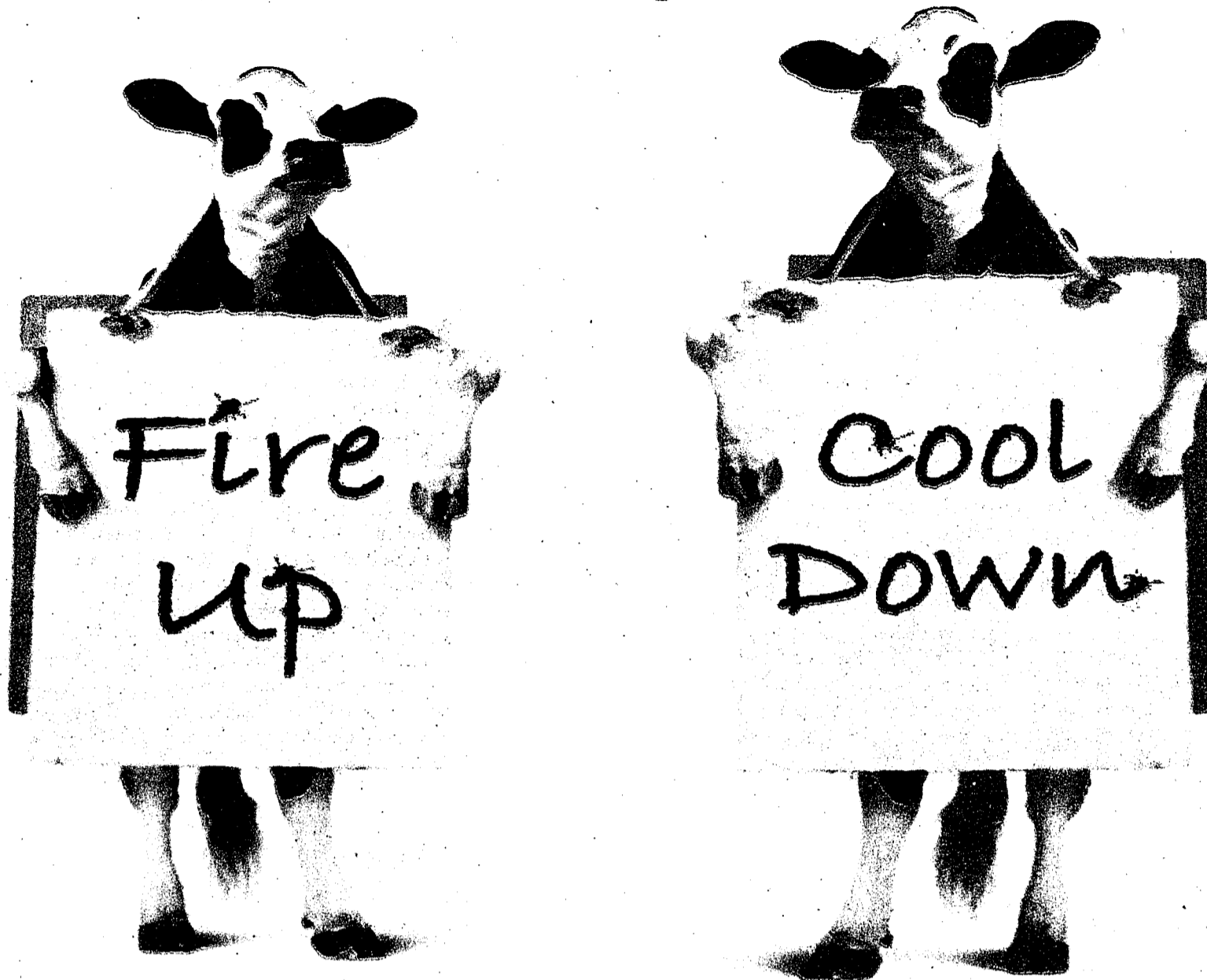


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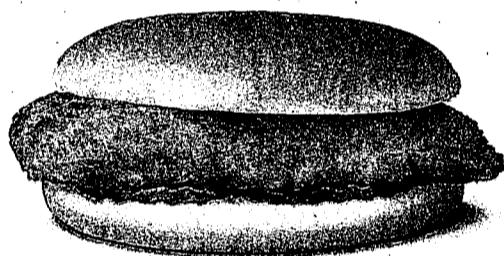


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