TAP! YOU’RE IT
Meet the Nacoms and the Sachems, Columbia’s secret—ahem, senior—societies
by Josie Swindler

DORKS ON JOCKS
The B&W does fall sports

DEPARTMENT OF THE APES Fast times with Columbia primates

ALSO: PIMP MY FAITH, RUSSIAN BATHHOUSES, COACH NORRIES WILSON
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WWW.theblueandwhite.org    COVER: “Societies” by Julia Butareva
When the Columbia men’s hockey team posted unauthorized signs around campus exhorting “Stop Being A Pussy” and almost got their season cancelled, *The Blue and White* was ecstatic. Not because of any ill will toward the pucksters, but because we had just embarked on our first ever Fall Sports issue.

It was a confluence worthy of a middlebrow novelist: plucky, pretentious mag surveys the sporting scene while wannabe Canucks navigate the intricacies of Columbia bureaucracy and the First Amendment. And, gloriously, it seemed as if this year’s big incident would revolve around the use of the word “pussy.”

Sadly, common sense prevailed—the team apologized, and on October 4 Athletic Director M. Dianne Murphy gave them back their season. For a moment, there was peace.

But later that day, the founder of the Minuteman Militia, that embarrassing mascot of the anti-immigration right, came to Lerner Hall. Two students, expecting a quick and peaceful reaction by Columbia Public Safety, ran on stage during his speech to unfurl a protest banner. But competence—even at Columbia—should never be assumed. The Minutemen responded, the crowd rushed the stage, and chaos ensued. For at least a week, right-wingers around the country knew to blame Columbia for 9/11.

Yet there is still hope for unity. After watching Univision footage of an older white man viciously kicking a student, I think that both *The Blue and White* and the hockey team can agree that there’s only one thing to say to a man like that. Even if M. Dianne wouldn’t approve.

Avi Zvi Zenilman
Editor-in-Chief

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**TRANSACTIONS**

**DEPARTURES**

The hockey team’s season.

Loans for Columbia College and Engineering students whose families make less than $50,000 a year. Instead, they’ll receive grants.

President Bollinger’s authority, as Dean Anderson invited Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to speak at CU.

The Minutemen.

**ARRIVALS**

The hockey team’s season.

After a 3-1 record in its first four home games, hope that Columbia’s football team might post a winning season for the first time in a decade.

Nilda Mesa, a veteran of the Clinton Administration, as Columbia’s first environmental stewardship coordinator.

Exorbitant cotton prices, from the oddly placed American Apparel on Broadway at 109th.

The redesigned Bwog, and our shameless plug of it.

Civil disobedience!

*Illustrations by Jerone Hsu*
“As soon as you graduate, you’ll all be investment bankers. I’ve been where you’re at. I know you hate yourselves.”
—The few words Minutemen founder Jim Gilchrist got out in his October 4 appearance before students rushed the stage.

DIGIT TALES: PIGSKIN

Columbia has had one undefeated football season (5-0, 1915).

From 1983-1988, Columbia lost forty-four games in a row, at that time the Division I-AA record; now it is second-worst.

Columbia football hasn’t had back-to-back winning seasons in forty-four years.

Twenty-three CU football players have gone to the NFL.

In 1940, Columbia’s game against Princeton at Baker Field was the first televised sporting event.

In 1921, Columbia purchased the land for Baker Field for $700,000.

—Special thanks to Columbia’s sports historian Bill Steinman
Compiled by Ian Solsky

REVELATION OF THE MONTH

Schools with the most students who play World of Warcraft online:
1. University of Washington
4. Stanford
20. Harvard
22. Cornell
43. NYU
48. Columbia
77. Brown
79. Yale
86. Pennsylvania
98. Princeton
119. FIT
310. Dartmouth

CALENDAR

October 20, 7 p.m., President’s Room at Faculty House
Watch former New Jersey governor and current gay American James McGreevey spill his guts. Then get him to sign your copy of The Confession.

October 21, 12:30 p.m., Baker Field
Show the ‘rents it’s safe above 125th St. by taking them to Baker for the free Family Weekend barbeque, followed by a game against Dartmouth.

October 23-December 15, Harriman Institute, International Affairs Building, 12th Floor

October 25, 4:30 p.m., P&S Alumni Auditorium, Medical Center
Joan Didion will deliver the 30th Annual Alexander Ming Fisher Lecture. Catch the Med Center’s free shuttle on Amsterdam and 116th.
One of the men who plays chess outside Oren’s Daily Roast at 112th Street claims that he’s there as long as it’s sunny, so I imagine it’s safe to challenge him for the next day (forecast: clear in the morning, chance of rain in the afternoon). “I’m usually here by ten,” he says. I show up in the morning, he doesn’t, and I figure he has forgotten about our match.

Two days later, as I walk by his table on my way to Village Copier, he pokes me in the side with his bishop. “You’re late.”

One of his friends offers me his chair, so I reluctantly sit and look down at the endgame board, ignoring stares. My opponent wears an NYPD t-shirt, sips coffee painfully slowly, and refers to his twenty-something challenger as “professor.” There is a human skull model at the edge of the table labeled DONATIONS, which sits atop Alexander Alekhine’s My Best Games of Chess, 1908-1937. I watch a few matches: he wins the current match in just a few minutes, then he beats an ostensibly Russian man who had been leaning against the nearest parking meter.

“You gonna play or what?” he asks me. I’m terrified. I shake my head no and instead listen to them talk for the next hour: why Bob Dylan’s Modern Times is better than his Love and Theft, Hannibal’s invasion of Italy, the second season of Law & Order, and a memory a few of them share that involves office chair races down Broadway. After two more matches I realize it’s getting dark. “Come tomorrow and I’ll teach you some theory. It’s supposed to drizzle around four, so you better get here in the morning.”

—Jessica Cohen

In the September 2006 issue of Black Enterprise magazine, Columbia was ranked eighth in the “Top 50 Colleges for African Americans,” a position it has relished since 2003. Considering that spots one through six on the list are occupied by historically black universities and Stanford is seventh, Columbia can once again lay claim to its bragging rights as “the top Ivy League university for African American students” (as stated on the university’s admissions webpage).

But with Stop Hate on Columbia’s Campus’s crusade for reform last year and the racial protests on campus in 2004, one must raise an eyebrow at the merits of Black Enterprise’s methodology. A review of the magazine’s ranking criteria left me unsatisfied; measures seemed to be a mix of the benignly objective and ambiguously subjective. While BE considered each university’s percentage of African Americans and their graduation rate, and “surveyed 1,855 African American higher education professionals,” these assessments remain neb-
ulous. We never ever find out specifically whom the magazine surveyed or what questions were asked.

Tanya Lindsay, C’07, president of the Black Students Organization, worries that perceptions of Columbia’s diversity are too often drawn from its location rather than the university’s actions. She feels that the factors essential to an accurate assessment are whether black students and faculty feel comfortable on campus and in the classroom, as well as whether a university supports institutions that specifically address the grievances of students of color. Lindsay believes that the university has made substantial progress since the incidents of 2004 but also maintains that Columbia frequently does more to “get us here than to keep us here.” However, Lindsay is far from pessimistic. “As a student, I can’t say that I’m disappointed to be at Columbia. But I don’t feel that Columbia should get too comfortable in this ranking. There are many steps that should be taken and must be taken in order to ensure that we stay at number eight.”

—Josh Mathew

Each fall female juniors and seniors in Columbia College get an e-mail promising them the opportunity “to connect with alumnae mentors” who will “share their insight and experiences and offer advice.” This from a school with oft-maligned class advising centers and a Center for Career Education obsessed with i-banking.

The Columbia College Women’s Mentoring Program emerged soon after the formation, in 1993, of the alumnae group Columbia College Women. That group, according to program coordinator Sharen Medrano the assistant director of the Columbia College Office of Alumni Affairs and Development, aims to assist and recognize female students and alumnae. Last year, about 100 students enrolled, and 97 were paired with mentors. (CCW says it serves more than 2,000 alumnae in the metropolitan area.)

Students and mentors are paired up based on availability and compatibility after the student completes a preliminary questionnaire. Pairs are encouraged to meet at a November kickoff reception.

Noreen Whysel, C’90, chair of the CC Women Mentoring Program, says the mentorship has to be two-sided, with mentors making themselves available and students taking advantage of the resource. The mentors will talk with students about challenges women face in the classroom and the workplace, organizers say. But a caveat—“These women are not going to be getting you jobs,” Whysel said.

—Alberto Luperon

Illustrations by Sumaiya Ahmed
Coogan Brennan

In a short essay entitled “Borges and I,” the Argentine author begins, “The other one, the one called Borges, is the one things happen to.”

Coogan Brennan, C’08, despite his sunny, open manner, seems embroiled in the same existential crisis. He has had a hand in many of the more surreal events around campus, and in the same manner that Borges writes of the other Borges—“Little by little, I am giving over everything to him, though I am quite aware of his perverse custom of falsifying and magnifying things”—perhaps we can speak about two Coogans.

I had seen Coogan doing handstands by himself in one of the fields between Butler and Low Libraries. “It’s the most amazing feeling,” he gushed. This Coogan co-founded the Columbia Pirate Ninja Club; the pirates didn’t show up at the first meeting/battle for “scallywag reasons,” but the ninjas did manage to stage a kidnapping during a campus tour (the abductee was Coogan’s little brother).

Coogan, operating under the nom de guerre “Tha Pizzle Drizzle,” helped stage The Big Kiss, the sizeable make-out session in front of Low last spring. At an Art Extravaganza hosted by friends, he submitted a spiky metal ball about four inches in diameter covered in hair clipped from his own head; it was titled “Self-Portrait,” and it won first prize. He showed up at party on an F train wearing a Dalmatian suit. Coogan is also an avid stenciler and harmonica player; in short, he’s a busy man.

One friend said, “Coogan is so busy and popular and cool, right, that he’s always hopping from one thing to the next. He would show up, make a big deal about his entrance, maybe a lot of bows and shouting, and then suddenly he’s gone.” This, then, is the Coogan that stuff happens to.

The other Coogan is jovial but meditative, and wary of his doppelgänger. “I’m really trying to change that, all that running around, and lead a more sincere existence.”

Coogan’s serious passion—or at least the one relatively free of chicanery and scallywags—is his environmental activism. Holding leadership positions in several organizations on campus, he has helped bring organic and locally produced foods to Columbia. “We, just by definition, are functioning in an environment. We eat food, and we should figure out where it comes from.”

“Environmentalism encompasses all the things I’m interested in,” Coogan said, and he seems to be most interested in what we’re doing and how we’re living our lives. But even about this, Coogan was hesitant, fretful that no answer would really be right, that something distorted or slanted would end up on paper, which of course it will. A larger-than-life, whirlwind figure intimately concerned with conducting himself carefully and thoughtfully. But despite my literary conceit, of course these aren’t two separate Coogans. The mix is what’s exciting.

“Living a sincere existence is something I’m working on,” he recapitulated, “but I get a kick out of stuff, too.”

—Paul Barndt
Karen Fu, B'07, is just a speck in front of the bone-white façade of the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Wearing a thin polka-dot dress, she's a picture of summer sitting on the museum steps underneath the dusky purple sky. It's a warm September evening, but the gentle breeze hints that autumn is sneaking up quickly. Across the city, the grudging return of students has begun.

This year, Fu was not among them.

Until this semester, Fu had been a Barnard student struggling to find her academic footing. "It's been five-ish semesters with my head partially in the books," says Fu, flashing a broad smile perfected by six years of braces. "I need to get more focused, with more real-life experiences under my belt."

So, the twenty-two-year-old withdrew from Barnard and decamped to Brooklyn, to a small apartment on a tree-lined street not far from this museum. Even with this escape from academics, though, Fu finds herself with a full plate at the beginning of the semester —writing freelance reviews for The Independent, a progressive New York newspaper; babysitting to pay the bills; and planning a trip to Taiwan, where she hopes to teach English.

Visiting Taiwan would be a homecoming of sorts for Fu. She herself is from central New Jersey, but her parents grew up in Taiwan and still speak the language at home. Although she says she used to distance herself from her Taiwanese roots, the last two years have been a period of rediscovery. "I think it's always been slumbering in me," she says as she pulls the end of her long ponytail to her chin, "But it became invigorated in college." Fu had planned to graduate as an English major, but that changed once she took a Mandarin class. "I realized that even though I don't speak the language, I have the sense of mind and sensibilities instilled in me," she says. After traveling to Taiwan, Fu wants to enroll in Columbia's School of General Studies and possibly major in East Asian studies.

College, however, has been about more than academics for Fu. "I like having my hands in lots of baskets," she's prone to saying, and indeed during her time at Barnard she was a residential assistant and a counselor at the Barnard Rape Crisis Center. But she's best known around campus as the friendliest member of the Barnard College radio staff. She's been involved with WBAR since she hosted an underground hip-hop show her freshman year, an experience that jump-started her passion for Motown and soul. Since then she’s been the director of community affairs, the general manager, and an ardent defender of the station, which has earned a reputation as an impenetrable fortress of musical elitism.

"I don't think I'd classify myself as strictly a hipster," Fu insists, while admitting that her life is beginning to resemble a hipster cliché. She dates a scruffy rock musician, for example, and many nights she finds her way to unmarked Brooklyn warehouses for avant-garde art and music parties.

She says her life has in many ways been guided by her love for music, which began when she started playing the cello as a kid. She likes to play Bach on her cello (although it is out of tune at the moment), and tries to dedicate a couple of hours a day to listening to her favorite tunes. "It's good to sit still and let it soak in," she advises.

At the moment Fu is rocking out to a bass-heavy eighties jam that is blaring out of the boom box next to us. It belongs to a shirtless, fauxhawked man who looks not a little crazy as he stretches to the beat. Fu says it is experiences like this that make her love New York.

For all this, Fu says she's glad to have escaped the frenetic pace of life in Manhattan. "My world definitely opened up at Columbia and Barnard," she says, but a break was due. With her tiny hands she gestures to the marble-pillared museum and the scene of Classical tranquility around her. "I like Brooklyn," she says with a smile. "My life is definitely simpler here."

—Kate Linthicum
Meet the Nacoms and the Sachems, 
Columbia’s secret—ahem, senior—societies.

BY JOSIE SWINDLER

Autumn begins with a flood of first-years, flush with delusions of grandeur. If you polled them, you’d find more than a dozen future class presidents, several future editors-in-chief, some students looking for the next big cause (hint, kids: it’s still expansion), and another thousand or so who have yet to choose between the innumerable opportunities that will inevitably be laid at their feet. Few students, however, enter Columbia knowing that it’s wicked hard to win an election here. Even fewer know that should they become one of the handful to reach that coveted status of “student leader,” the reward is…a pinky ring. A secret one.

At Columbia, the Society of Nacoms (knockums) and the Society of Sachems (say-comes) each include fifteen members of the senior class, all selected, or “tapped,” in the spring of their junior year by the graduating members of the society. They can choose to mark themselves with a pinky ring, that tacky trinket of the early nineties, and throughout the year the members meet weekly to discuss projects and plans for improving the university.

These sound like many of Columbia’s traditions: anachronistic attempts at being “collegiate” that belong on campuses stuck in the woods, not at a place most students chose for its lack of a Greek scene.
SECRET SOCIETIES

Their accomplishments are meant to be anonymous; this is, of course, why their existence seems pointless to the rest of us. They peg traditional student leaders—class presidents, team captains, theater gods—along with the heads of racial solidarity groups and people who get routinely CAVAed. Their makeup is diverse in the way Columbia is, which is to say, sort of. The Nacoms and Sachems are organizations for people whose resumes are already full enough; members are in it for 14 influential new friends and some hearty self-congratulation. They will face secret rules (only the Nacoms tap Barnard students), secret goals (sometimes so ambitious that they go unaccomplished), a strong alumni base, and an ambivalent relationship with other students—at least, the ones who know about them.

To call them “secret societies” is misleading. Forget George W. Bush and John Kerry’s association with (and Hollywood’s terrible fictionalization of) Yale’s Skull and Bones. Too apocalyptic. Also other ominously titled college societies like Cornell and Dartmouth’s branches of Skull and Dagger, and the Sphinx of UPenn. Columbia’s Saint A’s isn’t a secret or a society; that is not the word for rich kids getting together to party. Maybe the most famous secret society of all is actually a former secret society—Phi Beta Kappa of the College of William and Mary, whose members now scream from rooftops if they get in for being really, really smart and spending lots of time in the library.

Though Columbia did once have its own society of doom, a nineteenth century relic called Ax and Coffin, the Nacoms and Sachems have never aspired to more than community service and camaraderie. “Nacom” comes from Mayan and “Sachem” from Algonquin: both mean, simply, “leader.” Their goals of “discrete service” aren’t surprising given the societies’ origins and current membership. Students selected for either society are expected to have epitomized commitment to the University in the three years they’ve been here. During senior year, the society is supposed to enable them to complete a large-scale service project with like-minded people. In the past, the Sachems have created an endowed scholarship and contributed to the Double Discovery Center, a tutoring organization. Most notably, the Nacoms bought and donated a CAVA ambulance. So far neither group has precisely pinned down their projects for the year.

According to legend, and off-the-record reports from society members, the Nacoms were founded in 1898 to help Columbia ease into its new uptown campus. The Sachems were founded later, in 1915; they like the rumor that the first Sachems were well-meaning gentiles offended by the Nacoms’ reticence toward Jewish students. The Society of Sachems invites, or taps, juniors by luring them to out-of-the-way places and “pieing” them. A few years ago a junior found a costumed FedEx employee on her doorstep; the package contained a cell phone which immediately began ringing. After following the directions of the mysterious voice, she was officially welcomed into the society with a paper plate of whipped cream to the face. The Nacoms are known for badgering potential members until they think they’re in trouble, and then springing the invitation. In between the tapping process and the actual initiation, the Nacoms obtain the resumes of some of their potential members for review. The Sachems initiate their members with a champagne party, compared to the Nacoms’ robed, candlelit obstacle course in the basement of Saint Paul’s Chapel. The best way to tell members apart, if they can be identified at all, is by those optional gold pinky rings ($150 for this year’s Nacoms ring). The Sachems wear one with black diamonds on the right pinky, while the Nacoms sport one with a green zigzag line on the left.

When a “double-tap” arises, the societies compete for the junior. Eleven of the last fourteen double-taps have become Sachems, though these trends fluctuate with generations. (Perhaps the Nacoms should rethink their resume policy.) Sometimes potential members turn down advances from both societies, to protest their elitism or to avoid being a token minority.

Members, now as always, are loath to be outed.
The only national media coverage of the societies was a 1984 New York Times article; that reporter somehow got permission to name names. (At the time, the Times’ editorial page editor was Max Frankel, C’52, a former editor-in-chief of the Spectator and a Sachem.) In the past couple decades, the Spectator has reported on the societies intermittently, rarely naming members. I can say that current members share commitments to the Multicultural Greek Council, Undergraduate Athletic Council, Muslim Students Association, Project Health, Hillel, Beta Theta Pi, the track team, and many other campus organizations. They lead and prove their commitment to Columbia in different ways. SHOCC (Stop Hate on Columbia’s Campus) members attend society meetings with class presidents and frat boys.

The selection process is unavoidably political. Current society members look for students with strong leadership and character, but often they see those traits in their friends first. Historically, and to some extent today, there are lineages within societies. The Blue & White masthead has been represented in the Sachems since its 1999 refounding; the Chicano Caucus also has a representative each year. At least one Spectator editor is tapped by at least one society every year. This year the Nacoms have a disproportionate number of Engineering Student Council veterans. And of course, thirty membership positions is not enough to include everyone with pull on this campus. For example, none of the last four presidents of the College Democrats—including current Columbia College Student Council President Seth Flaxman, C’07—or Republicans have joined either society. (“And that’s not the worst of it,” Flaxman said. “I was picked last for dodgeball in elementary school.”) Illinois Senator Barack Obama, C’83, and pundit George Stephanopoulos, C’82, weren’t in either society and they turned out all right.

Society procedures are rooted in tradition. Longtime Sachems advisor and former Columbia College Dean Roger Lehecka, C’67, said he was invited by a note under his door. Though in 1966 he co-founded the Double Discovery Center, he told me he was not a traditional campus leader and had never heard of the Sachems. He doesn’t remember the initiation, and he hasn’t presided over meetings, member selection, or initiation since he was a senior; the students fend for themselves, he said. But he’s the only one who is on the record.

One Nacom told me that the senior societies aren’t secret so much as “private”—a qualification that has been in use on this campus for at least fifty years. Each group listed its members in the yearbook and the Spectator until Frankel ended the practice as editor-in-chief. “We find the two organizations to be inconsistent with the high democratic ideal of publicity, public responsibility, free inquiry, and open discussions,” Frankel wrote in explanation at the time. Members and alumni are hush-hush about the societies and their benefits—a big accomplishment for student leaders used to giving sound bytes to campus reporters. Marcia Sells, the Nacoms’ long-time advisor and the University’s Assistant Vice President for Program Development & Initiatives, declined to be interviewed for this article. In an e-mail, she wrote, “Senior Society of Nacoms is a group of Seniors and alumni/ae who are dedicated to the well being of Columbia University. I do not have much more to say than that about Nacoms except it is 108 years old.”

The Nacoms require an oath of confidentiality about their activities that the Sachems do not. Oth-
er reasons given by members for secrecy include modesty and the desire to keep underclassmen from campaigning for a tap. And wouldn’t it be embarrassing for a boastful society member to hear, “What have you ever really gotten done?”

Societies’ desire to remain private, and their belief that they deserve their privacy, has historically irritated some members of the Columbia community. In April 1954 eight seniors (some members of societies) wrote “An Open Letter to the Deans of Columbia College” in the Spectator encouraging them to take control of the societies and to force them to end their secrecy. “It is our opinion that senior societies, or any other societies which have some connection with public determination of questions, have a perfect right to privacy….But, they do not and cannot retain the right to a veil of secrecy,” they wrote.

Whether they wrote out of genuine concern or out of spite, the writers raised valid points that resonate today. In May of that year, the Spectator sponsored a student-body wide referendum. In it, students voted 637 to 630 for the abolition of secrecy within the societies, 832 to 447 that the societies be required to register with the Committee on Student Organizations, and 663 to 599 that the societies be required to submit monthly reports to the dean’s office. In January of 1955, the Columbia College Dean’s Office took responsibility for the societies but didn’t adhere to any of the decisions of the referendum.

Currently, the societies remain unregulated, though they don’t request funding or space from the university. Over the past several decades, the Sachems and Nacoms have developed various recruiting pacts between themselves and broken them.

The critics of a half century ago raised concerns that could still rankle today. First, they accused the societies of supporting positions in secret—using the influence of their members to influence the “determination of questions,” thereby violating the trust of the student body in its leaders. Today the members do, at least, provide access to one another that other students might not get; some input in student council procedures, perhaps, or an exclusive interview with a campus news source. Second, the seniors’ statement noted, “There were inferences of graduate school admission, scholarships, fellowships, and job contacts as inducements irresponsibly connected with the names of faculty, administration, and prominent alumni who had been members of the Nacom Society since their undergraduate days.” Senior society alumni form quite a Rolodex. Famous Sachems alumni include New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft, C’63, New Yorker film critic David Denby, C’65, former NYT executive editor Frankel, and the monk Thomas Merton C’38. Nacoms alumni include several successful people you’ve never heard of. But be warned—their future luminaries are among us. 

Illustrated by Julia Butareva
Department of the Apes

The life and times of Columbia research animals.

By Anna Phillips

The New York State Psychiatric Institute is one of the few buildings on West 168th street without mildly deranged men loitering out front. But it does have monkeys.

They live in colonies on the ninth and tenth floors and I can’t see them, but I can smell them. There are three elevators in the building, two for Columbia researchers and one for Columbia research animals. Unwittingly, I walk into the large elevator; the walls are blue and padded and flaked with bleach spots. It smells like monkey shit. I’m on my way to watch a research assistant in the lab of Nobel Laureate Eric Kandel, Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics, perform brain surgery on a mouse charmingly drunk on anesthesia. This is the closest I get to seeing the monkeys.

It’s difficult to say who works with monkeys at Columbia because no one will talk to me. Psychology Professor Herb Terrace, a primate cognition specialist, is the most open of the animal researchers, mainly because his research is the least invasive. He works with rhesus macaques—the most commonly used primate in animal research. Rhesus macaques are not endangered, gestate quickly, and share ninety-six percent of their genes with humans. And, at $8,000 a monkey, they are among the cheapest monkeys you can legally buy. They’re also assholes.

Studies show that housing primates together is, socially, the healthiest living arrangement, but it doesn’t work for the rhesus macaques. Put two of these monkeys in a cage together and it’s like a bad case of sibling rivalry.

“One’s the bitch and they have to fight it out, then they’re peaceful,” said Amy Glick, C’07, who worked for a year in a rhesus monkey lab. “There’s no such thing as equals.” The road to peace is strewn with violence—Glick told me that there used to be group housing in the lab until one of the monkeys decided to bite off a roommate’s finger. Now, isolated, they’re unable to attack each other. But mankind is still fair game.

Oberon, for example, is a large, nasty monkey. Named for the fairy king in A Midsummer Night’s Dream (almost all of the thirteen rhesus macaques Glick worked with are named after Shakespearean characters, historical figures, or famous cognitive psychologists), he delights in mooning the researchers—a display that ostensibly signals comfort with a handler. Once he’s tricked you into coming near his cage, he will flip around.

Illustrated by Zoe Slutsky
and swat at you with his hands. Come even closer, and the last thing you’ll see is the flash of sharp, white monkey canines.

It doesn’t take much to threaten a monkey. On Glick’s first day in the lab, she made the rookie mistake of looking one of the less violent monkeys in the eye. He would exact his revenge later in the day. As Glick, an unassuming human primate who happens to be a vegetarian, bent over to feed Coltrane, she felt the light patter of urine falling on her back. Coltrane had waited, positioned himself, and done what even a highly evolved man considers a skill—he had aimed.

Not all are vengeful. Mozart likes to tilt his chin up to have it scratched. Chaplin, a smaller, hyperactive monkey, does repeated half back rolls in the testing chambers. Lashley (so named for behavioral psychologist Dr. Karl Lashley) habitually looks at his fingernails. The staff considers this effeminate, although I don’t know why because Lashley doesn’t stretch his fingers outward but instead curls them into a manly open-palmed fist. And then he stares at his nails.

Prospero is the quintessential loser monkey. He arrived too late for group housing and has never won or lost a fight, but assumes a consistent position of defeat. It weighs on him. He sits with his head down and will occasionally pull out his own hair. He sees a therapist.

The monkeys look alike, with a few exceptions (Mozart has a curled tail). They have small, pink, heart-shaped faces with pointed ears and eyes that look alternately criminal and melancholy. Their fur is a mousy brown, lighter on their underbelly. Because they are research monkeys, most are male. Onsite procreation is impossible, so the labs purchase young monkeys from licensed breeders.

What exactly is our species doing with these monkeys?

Although he doesn’t like to speak publicly about his work, Terrace does not try to conceal his research. Visit his website and you’ll see a video clip of a rhesus monkey sitting in one of the testing chambers, his index finger delicately extended to touch the images on the screen before him. He looks like he’s making a withdrawal from his checking account.

Terrace is interested in how primates process non-verbal, visual sequences. Not long ago, it was commonly thought that primates could learn a language. But, as Terrace’s research proved, gorillas are exceptional. His groundbreaking experiments on a chimpanzee named Nim Chimpsky proved that most lower order primates are mentally incapable of learning a language. (Terrace is not a fan of linguist Noam Chomsky, whose views on animal research would indicate that the dislike is mutual.)

Terrace argued that Nim could merely memorize visual sequences, not learn the concepts that underlay the images. Nim did not understand phrases like “Banana eat me Nim”; instead, he simply memorized which patterns resulted in edible reward. Unable to tear himself away from monkeys—Terrace’s CULPA reviews generally indicate that he’s more fond of them than students—he’s researching metacognition in rhesus macaques. His main experiment involves displaying an image, such as a lighthouse, on a screen; the monkey is then asked to indicate the likelihood (high-risk or low-risk) that he will be able to remember the lighthouse after a waiting period. If the monkey is assured of himself and subsequently able to re-identify the lighthouse, he receives many more banana-flavored pellets than he normally would.

To make this experiment work, the monkeys need to process a basic vocabulary of images and perform somewhat consistently, which can be complicated by the animals’ individual personalities. One rhesus monkey puzzled his researchers by only pushing the “one risk” image, which guaranteed a single pellet regardless of his ability to remember. The students who worked with him could not tell whether he was too confused to bet otherwise or whether he was simply fat, lazy, and brilliant.

Terrace’s research on animals is among the least invasive; this also generally means that it is among the least applicable to human life. The research will
not lead to new drugs or medical procedures. Even to his students, his work comes off as an intriguing theoretical exercise.

Dr. Sarah H. Lisanby, director of the brain-behavior clinic, and author of “Brain Stimulation in Psychiatric Treatment,” works with rhesus macaques in her research of therapy for depression and schizophrenia. Lisanby studies magnetic seizure therapy (MST), in which quickly changing magnetic fields are used to induce a kind of seizure that stimulates certain areas of the brain associated with depression and other disorders. It is seen as a more benign, less invasive treatment for psychiatric disorders than electroshock therapy. To research MST, Lisanby’s monkeys have small tubes surgically implanted in their brains. The same happens to Professor of physiology and cellular biophysics Dr. Michel Ferin’s monkeys. Ferin researches how stress influences the menstrual cycle in female rhesus macaques.

“The tubes aren’t to torture them,” said Glick. “It’s a much more gruesome lab, but it has a very direct application to human research.”

Researchers have to prove to the Columbia Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee that their particular work is unique and reliant on animal testing. The Committee reviews each proposal and strives for the “three R’s” of animal research:

–“replace the use of animals whenever possible”
–“reduce the number of animals needed to a minimum”
–“refine tests to cause animals the least possible distress”

It is hard to ascertain how well the committee functions: none of the researchers are willing to speak about their work publicly, often because they fear the wrath of the People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). PETA launched www.columbiaanimalcruelty.com to broadcast allegations of animal cruelty, and, in May of 2006, ranked Columbia tenth on its list of the worst American universities for research animals to attend.

PETA’s campaign has been going on since the 1980s. In 1986, the National Institutes of Health suspended all $75 million of Columbia’s federal funding for animal research after it determined that there were too few veterinarians, unsanitary postoperative conditions, and failure to enforce basic safety regulations.

Two years ago, the United States Department of Agriculture fined Columbia $2,000 for violating the Animal Welfare Act after a post-doctoral veterinarian fellow ratted them out to PETA. The government investigators found incidents where “several animals were found dead or in a morbid or moribund condition following surgery with little or no care having been provided.” Columbia halted the work of several researchers and fired one offending veterinarian.

Rarely, though, do the monkeys die from the procedures performed on them. Born into labs as pathogen-free babies, they often live well into their teens without contracting diseases or encountering forces that would end their lives were they living in the wild. But monkeys get old, feeble, and forgetful, which is a problem in cognitive research. An aged monkey will not remember an image as quickly as a young one, and with limited testing space, cages, and money, animal research labs cannot serve as retirement homes for elderly primates (though these do exist).

In the end, old monkeys are often put to sleep. The researchers, who are permitted to age more gracefully, refer to this process as “sacrifice.” Though a bizarre term, I relish the idea of these naked civil servants offered to a greater, though controversial, good.
Walking back to Carman during Orientation Week last year, I was approached by a young guy in a kippah. “Are you Jewish?” he asked.

His Jewdar was accurate (though it failed my brunette but non-Jewish suitemate). Quickly, he handed a flyer telling me to “light my Jewish fire” with Aish, “the hottest alternative for Jewish life on campus.” There were three recruiters, all dressed modestly in Abercrombie.

The young guy was Rabbi Sam Bregman, the 28-year-old director of Aish, which means “fire” in Hebrew. Not a gray-bearded rabbi out of my childhood, Bregman is young and hip.

Or at least, he tries.

“You seem like a cool girl with a cool personality. I haven’t spoken to many people here like you. Let me hit you up for some coffee,” he said.

Okay…

Aish has planned “hot” trips to Miami, London, and Israel, chronicled on its website with pictures of smiling Jewish faces. The promotional materials are cartoonishly savvy: “Israel. What a trip” was written under a map of Israel wearing an iPod. An ad for free Shabbat dinner showed the Seinfeld cast holding a bottle of Manishevitz. The flyer for Yom Kippur services: “Come away from the Holiday inspired, not bored!” The advertising has attracted a following: about to enter its second year, it has ninety people on its mailing list and thirty to forty active members.

Amused by the hype, I signed up for an Aish Passover seder. Rabbi Bregman immediately requested to be my Facebook friend. At the seder, he explained that we “chill” on the left side of our seats while drinking wine, an-
nounced “let’s roll” before washing our hands, and kept on asking, “Are you ready to rock?”

In 2005, a survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute found that seventy-nine percent of American college students believe in God. Morningside Heights is home to the largest cathedral in America, the Jewish Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary, and Robert Thurman, the first American to become a Tibetan Buddhist monk. But despite the neighborhood’s history and the twenty-nine recognized religious student groups on campus, Columbia culture is steadfastly secular.

University Chaplain Jewelnel Davis oversees nineteen religious life advisers in United Campus Ministries, but she acknowledges that organized religion doesn’t play a leading role in campus life. “Students might have a spiritual high experience when running at Riverside Park—their sense of God is not as parochially defined,” she said. Or, “community service is their religious practice.”

This devil-may-or-may-not-care attitude has led campus clergymen to spread the Good Word through pop culture. While few are as obvious as Rabbi Bregman, Columbia teems with godly hipsters.

Aish is not the only new, aggressive Jewish group on campus. Chabad—and its leading family, the Blums—moved into a new brownstone in August 2006 with aspirations of becoming the “new Jewish home on campus.” Like Aish, Chabad has been recognized as an official religious group since last year. Chabad, which came out of the Lubavitcher Hasidic sect of Judaism known for its black hats and cheriey spirituality, hosted the Matisyahu concert two years ago, and the Shofar Factory that recently sprung up on college walk.

The group boasts about 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students on its mailing list, of whom 200 or 300 are active at least a few times a semester, and twenty of whom serve on the student board.

Rabbi Yonah Blum, Chabad’s leader, treats every Jew like a member of his extended family. “Once you talk to him, you don’t think he’s like a rabbi. He’s like on a dude basis with everyone,” says Vera Tseylikman, C’08, a student board member of Chabad.

Tseylikman keeps coming back because she feels that, at Chabad, “You get to experience the power of real Judaism and real orthodox traditions without feeling as if you don’t belong or there’s a pressure for you to become more religious.”

Rabbi Blum is quick to acknowledge his wife, Keren, in his outreach efforts. “Any girl who goes there once is in love with Keren,” said Tseylikman. “Instantly once you go, you think she’s your best friend. Everyone asks her for love advice. You don’t even need to know her, that’s just the way she is.”

The Blums maintain that all are welcome to their home for Friday night Shabbat meals, from undergraduate to faculty, non-Jews to Orthodox. Chabad calls itself “the warmest home away from home,” open twenty-four seven.

“You don’t have to call,” Keren explains while breastfeeding her youngest child. “You come and you’re always welcome. It’s your student center.” And of course, at the end of our interview Rabbi Blum told me, “If you want to expect what it’s like, come for Shabbos.”

Rabbi Blum insists that Chabad doesn’t water down the message for youth culture; it just uses the new media that youth culture responds to for outreach. New media like the Facebook, where Blum has, as of writing, 672 friends.

Despite Aish’s and Chabad’s growing popularity, Hillel, with its gleaming, five-story Kraft Center on 115th Street, remains the gold standard for Jewish, if not religious, life on campus. Its leader, Rabbi David Almog C’98, is no square either. He recently used a picture of Krusty the Klown’s dad—Rabbi Krustofsky—to advertise a Hillel event.

Almog says his frequent Simpsons references—he has memorized hours of episodes—are more than glossy packaging. Instead, they reflect “a theology that’s very American, that a lot of people in this country are being raised in—a way in which satire is the very traditional understanding of tradition.”

Appealing to youth culture seems to be a long-term strategy. Rabbi Gavin Frank, who will take over as Aish Rabbi next semester, is not very different from Bregman. His students tell the twenty-five-year-old Frank—who reads up on the break-ups of Jessica Simpson and other pop culture icons while walking past newsstands on the subway—that he’s “pretty cool.”

 Barely older than his students, Frank says he can relate to the college demographic. Moreover, he
wasn’t always religious, and says he knows “what these kids have been through.”

“We try to bring kids in through cool programming and our hip outlook,” Frank explains. He is quick to say, though, that no matter how hip he tries to be, he would never hold an event to try to promote an idea that “in any way” compromises the Jewish religion.

Perhaps Aish is an extreme example of how campus clergymen go out of their way to appeal to college students, but the idea of a young theological leader who “can relate” strikes a chord with many students. Omar Siddiqi, C’09, President of the Muslim Students Association, admires the hipness of the rabbis and feels the Muslim students on campus could benefit from such a presence.

“It provides you with someone who you can identify with,” he says. “It lets you know there’s someone like you in the administration that is able to support you.”

Siddiqi grew up practicing Islam and wears a full-grown beard and a Kufi (head covering). He feels that being religious is difficult for students. “It’s publicly tolerated, but privately people do smirk at people who are religious on this campus,” he says.

Still, finding a hipster clergyman is not an urgent issue for youth-led MSA. “Not that we’re necessarily the coolest people on Earth, but in general the MSA E-Board does provide that kind of guidance if it’s necessary,” Siddiqi said.

The MSA’s religious life advisor, Imam Syed Z. Sayeed, leads Friday prayers once a month. Sayeed was born overseas, but has lived in America for over thirty years. He has been active in the MSA since he arrived from India in 1970 and attended Teacher’s College two years later. He’s sixty-six years old, with grown children in college. He laughed when I brought up the term “hipster clergyman.”

“Even when I was young adult, I didn’t really go through that kind of culture which was prevalent at the time,” he says, referring to the seventies. “I was mostly a traditional conventional person.”

And he’s not a fan of e-mail. “I’m really not into this electronic world as most teen and young adults are.”

But he doesn’t feel he’s really so out of touch with the students. “They come to me when they need some specific guidance,” he said. “I’m just a Muslim person with more life experience and a more mature understanding of my faith to a degree that I can share insights with younger people.”

Rabbi Yonah Blum, Chabad’s leader, treats every Jew like a member of his extended family. “He’s like on a dude basis with everyone,” said Tseylikman. He has over 650 Facebook friends.

Father Jacek Buda, priest of the Columbia Catholic Ministry, has no interest in being a “celebrity pop star priest.” That doesn’t mean he’s a diehard reactionary. He’ll accompany singing on his guitar, but only when he has to, during retreats (“because otherwise,” he said, “the polyphony would fall apart”). He also shares a sense of humor with many of his students.

“We’ve watched Family Guy with Father Jacek,” said Karen Giangreco, C’07, co-president of the Columbia Catholic Ministry, which has 250 members, of whom 20 are very active. “He’s not above pop culture issues, but in his ministering to Catholic ministry, he doesn’t make an attempt to appeal to pop culture.”

“I’m a fan of Monty Python’s Flying Circus and Wedding Crashers—that’s my kind of humor,” Jacek admits. “It doesn’t mean that it’s the guidance for my life.”

Jacek, who is thirty-seven, came to America from Poland in 2000, having mastered the English language through books. He dons a white Dominican habit designed in the thirteenth century. “We love that. Dominicans love their habits,” he said.

Jacek is no stranger youth ministry—in Poland, he hosted an hour-long live TV show for youth about faith and culture. But, he said, “we don’t specifically tailor the way we operate for students. Church is same for everybody.” He does not use the Facebook or speak in college slang, and he makes sure to keep religion separate from pop culture.

“I don’t think the message of pop culture is deep enough for questions that are being asked by students.”

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The article suggests that this bias perhaps occurred because of the influence of the religious belief that spanking is endorsed by God.

Then he usually takes my hand, places it over his eyes, on his forehead, on the back of his head, and holds it with his own in these places a long while. Other times he gets up with bursts of laughter and places himself opposite me where he can caress my knees in his special way.

The whole time all I wanted to say was: “You dumbass. Hannah’s the actually gay one.”

One example of this social custom in the United States is the fact that although Colin Powell’s skin tone is closer to George W. Bush’s than to that of most Africans, people in the United States readily accept Powell as a black American.

I don’t remember any time when I let someone prod my open sores. I’ve been fine with that. But now that I finally see that I won’t let even myself play with the wounds, I think I’m breaking – and not in the way I want to break. I’m like an egg. A raw egg with liquid insides that slap against the shell at any movement. There is a baby in that shell, there is life. Why do you only respond to the eggshell? There is a baby in that shell, there is life! And it is crying, crying all the time.

Bloomberg was originally a businessman and the goal of a businessman is to make money and run a successful business. Bloomberg made billions and has therefore reached his telos.

Strip when the red apples call your name. You have to answer them, if you don’t You’ll melt into the gutter, into trash, into piss, vomit, birdshit - I fill my pipe with fine rich tobacco.

He parked in a handicapped spot in front of the grocery store—”Why don’t you limp, Alowitious,” my dad joked, using a nickname I hated, “Be my handicapped daughter, will you?” That’s how I learned that my dad was a drug addict.

In other words, what allows, first the formation of discursive hegemony and, second, the notion of totality to be inherently contradictory to itself?

Please make sure he’ll be fine working with a team of volunteers half his age and also that he gets that this is not a serious acting class. Otherwise he’s British, so I obviously have no objections.

One thing will never change, unless blacks take the initiative and work, and that is that America is the white man’s country. However, as a black man I should not sulk at the fact that America is ruled by whites but rather I should try and get, like the theme song from The Jeffersons states, “A piece of the pie.”

Somewhere along the line I would like to include another paragraph from Sontag that talks about the importance of spaces and their cultural context. However, I have yet to find the right place in my essay. Maybe there is something wrong with me or the whole thing needs to be reorganized again.
What could we do with this new button? It offered some very interesting pictures of ourselves in a lit room but we had enough of those.

Christian belief traditionally views life as a test, and temptation to sin as the perennial pop quiz.

One also has to wonder the deeper meaning behind the recipe for “smothered chicken breasts” and “giblet gravy smothered over rice” so often found in African American and Creole cookbooks.

Great socialist projects are full of paradoxes.

Mr. Whitter told the detective “If you’ve got $25, I might be able to hook you up.” This shows a certain level of uncertainty, almost like an enticement to the officer in order to engage in future discussions that will flesh out the specifics of any deal that may happen.

Roland Barthes était un des philosophes français les plus importants dans l’histoire de critique. Il s’occupait avec le structuralisme, le sémiotisme, l’existentialisme, le marxisme, et plusieurs d’autres théories philosophiques.

Footnotes are like Pop-Up Video for the written word. And the next morning, my father would come in and take the beast, his dress shoes, off the top of our closet, lace them up, and head to work.

Even though it was one of the best chicken sandwiches I’ve ever had I was too torn up inside to savor it’s flavor. I ate that thing faster than you can say Klu Klux Klan, promptly paid my bill and hightailed it out of there. After getting into my hotel room I turned on the TV and immersed myself in a brilliant program on PBS on the beauty of the Islamic religion and how it has been tainted with extremist and crazy men with egos gone wild. As I watched one question hammered my brain. How is it possible that with programming like this, people can still be so backward?

Can you end a story about romance with hair gel, even if that’s where it really ends?

When your significant other tells you that he or she is cheating on you, while you are away, don’t you find that you are most likely to fail at presenting your presentation?

I identify myself Christian and as Catholic, I’ll admit, always with a smile.

I have watched enough comfortable-with-not-being-sexy talk show hosts throw Kleenex at enough recovering high school hoochies to know that it all starts with me.

When her U.S. visa runs out every six months and she’s shipped off to queen mum and all the rest of her bloody fantastic blokes, I get to rub the genie lamp. But when she gets the ok from INS to bring her flat fish-and-chips-ass stateside again, he’s all hers and I have to lay low.

My birthday is pretty much a federal holiday.

Perhaps the moniker “Ambassador Satchmo” for Armstrong could not be more apt, for he did much more than create music – he created a nation.

My exhibit: The moment when the light emanating from the only light source in the room is extinguished and when the darkness reigns, can last for a long time if you want it to. After my mother had sung my bedtime songs and tucked me in, I would always look directly into the lightbulb as she reached for the switch. Not because I wanted to blind myself, but I knew that it would make the transition between light and dark that much longer for my eyes if I did, as the only thing that awaited me in the darkness was not anything I was excited to see.

I am an Economics major in my final year at Columbia University seeking a full-time position at McKinsey as a Generalist Business Analyst.
THE NEW GUY

When B&W Senior Editor Marc Tracy sat down with Head Football Coach Norries Wilson at his office in Dodge Gym, the coach had reason to feel triumphant: the Lions had just won Wilson’s debut game. Wilson, who came to Columbia after serving as offensive coordinator for four years at the University of Connecticut, is the first black head football coach in Ivy League history. Since the Fordham game, the Lions have taken care of Georgetown, shut out Iona, and suffered their only loss in the first Ivy game of the season against Princeton. Wilson talked about the life of a student athlete, conditioning, and why Columbia won’t win the Ivy League this year.

B&W: Congratulations, Coach, on last week’s 37-7 rout of Fordham up at Baker Field. How’d we beat them?

NW: We played physical, we were the more physical team on the field, and, by and large, we had a total effort, as far as hustle.

B&W: One of the things you have said you wanted to do is simplify the offense. We scored 37 points—clearly the offense is doing something right.

NW: We didn’t score 37 points on offense, we scored 37 points. The defense scored 14. Simplify the offense? What we do on offense isn’t very simple. We changed some of the things we do on offense, and it’s some tough stuff to learn. A lot of checks, changes in protections, I think [quarterback] Craig [Hormann]’s doing a good job, we just need to do it a little bit faster.

B&W: You attended the University of Minnesota, where, in addition to playing football, you wrestled. Has the wrestling mentality affected at all your approach to football?

NW: Not really. The mentality you have to have in wrestling hasn’t really helped me in football, not that I’ve been aware of. I enjoyed wrestling.

B&W: What was your major at Minnesota?

NW: Psychology.

B&W: What made you want to do psych?

NW: You want the true story about this?

B&W: Absolutely.
NW: I had ten minutes to pick a major—practice started in ten minutes. I flipped open a book, and that’s what I came on to.

B&W: Did you enjoy it?

NW: I actually did enjoy it, I enjoyed a lot of the courses in psychology. Abnormal was probably my most enjoyable course, my least enjoyable was probably cognitive.

B&W: What experiences, on and off the field, have influenced your coaching?

NW: Seeing it on both sides, as a player and a coach, you know what you liked as a player and what you didn’t like as a player. You know what things, as an assistant coach, that you liked that were initiated by a head coach, and what things that you’d probably do differently. And you also, as an assistant coach, get a more intimate response from the kids than a head coach would, because you spend more time with your players than a head coach would. So you know what they like, what they didn’t like, and you have a feeling of how they’re gonna accept some of the things you need to do. Now as soon as you switch, in my opinion, to being a head coach, some things—I won’t say a lot—some things that you thought you would do, you would immediately figure out you can’t do in that way, just because it’s not the right thing to do.

B&W: Any examples come to mind?

NW: No, not really. Just sometimes, as an assistant, you’d be like, “No, you can’t run them today, they’re tired.” But the head coach would know, “we got to be in shape. Can’t be easy on them all the time, most of the time.” You have to pick your spots where you’re gonna give them a break, and you have to do it judiciously, so that they enjoy the break that they’re getting and they also know that they earned that break.

B&W: Which head coaches, past and present, are specifically inspirations to you?

NW: Tom Gadd, that I worked for at Bucknell [where Coach Wilson served as offensive line coach and then offensive coordinator]. I learned a lot of things from Coach [Lou] Holtz when I was a player. Coaches in general, I’d say [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Jim Hueber, of the Minnesota Vikings, right now. [Offensive Line Coach] Howard Mudd at the Indianapolis Colts right now. That’s just a few.

B&W: Could you talk about your general coaching philosophy? I know you’ve been emphasizing getting into shape. How have you been trying to improve the general fitness among your players?

NW: We’re gonna run them. We’re gonna be in great shape. We don’t want to lose a game because we’re out of condition. It’s impossible to be as fresh as you are at the start of the game in the fourth quarter, but to be able to recover and play a fourth quarter as hard as you played the first quarter, I think it’s important. A lot of games have been won and lost in the fourth quarter, and we’ve got to have the conditioning it takes to win a game in the fourth quarter when it’s tight. We run our kids a bunch, we require hustle in practice, we go full speed, whether we have pads on or not. It’s important so that when we get out there on Saturday, a change of speed by the visiting team isn’t something that surprises you.

B&W: You were saying earlier that you experienced the same tension between the two elements of the “student-athlete” in your previous gig at the University of Connecticut. UConn’s a very good school, but is there nonetheless an extra expectation that players be good students because this is Columbia and the Ivy League? Have you felt extra pressures?

NW: Yep. It’s probably the essence of “student-athlete.” We had the same issues at Connecticut, with night classes—it’s a little different here because there are no eight o’clock classes, no Friday classes.

B&W: That makes it harder?

NW: It makes it harder to have practice. The kids here have probably more pressure academically than they had at Connecticut, and that academic pressure also falls onto them athletically, because they don’t get as much time as other students to go ahead and study. They’ve got four hours a day to prepare for a varsity sport. I know that with the higher workload, it’s hard for them to manage their time.
B&W: I’m a senior, and I’m not used to having a good football team. How are we going to get better? Will we get better this year? In coming years?

NW: Well I hope we get better in the coming years. I can’t guarantee that. I can’t give a guarantee for this year or the coming years. The kids have to go out there and perform. I’m gonna do whatever I can to make sure they are in great shape, that we put them in good position to be successful. It’s a struggle that we’re all taking on together. The kids have done a great job trying to buy in on what we’re selling. I would love to sit here and tell you we’re gonna win an Ivy League title; that’s realistically probably something that’s not gonna happen. Our kids are gonna go out and try to win the game this week. After this week, we’ll concern ourselves with who’s on the schedule for next week. That’s how we look at it here.

B&W: When President Bollinger started at Columbia, he announced that he wanted to improve athletic: better sports teams, a better sports culture. Has the administration been supportive in your experience?

NW: I think, since I’ve been here, they’ve done a good job supporting the football program. I can’t speak for the other programs in the department. It’s not like there’s unlimited resources here. There’s only a few schools where you can just ask for something and they can just write a check. I think within the parameters that the program has to work with, they’re doing the best they can.

B&W: I’d like to wrap it up with three predictions. Bowl Championship Series #1 this year?

NW: Ohio State.

B&W: I mean at the end of the year.

NW: Ohio State.

B&W: Okay. Super Bowl?

NW: I don’t watch professional football. Who won last year? Steelers? It won’t be them. Probably—I can’t tell you, I don’t watch pro football.

B&W: You don’t root for any pro football team?

NW: The Bears, but I don’t have time to watch them.

B&W: So you spend your time rooting for your teams, and for Minnesota?

NW: Yep.

B&W: I suppose this isn’t a good time to tell you that I root for Wisconsin.

NW: Interview’s over.

B&W: Your prediction for the Ivy League?

NW: Penn.

B&W: They have a good team this year.

NW: They have a good team every year.

—Marc Tracy
P.E. DISPATCHES

And you thought you were done. To the many Columbians who missed the fine print about the two-semester PE requirement: we sympathize, and we’re here to help. We bring you dispatches from the front, the class students have survived, and, yes, enjoyed. For those of you who have completed the required stint, keep in mind that you receive credit for up to four PE class—don your mesh shorts and wristbands, and get back out there.

DIVING

Gordon Spencer brings an aged, mellow wisdom to his diving class, which he’s taught almost fifty times. Show up five minutes late, leave ten minutes early, it’s all good, man. He’s also got a bone-dry sense of humor; if you belly flop, you’ll hear your gym-mates laughing as you surface and wonder what Gordon said that cracked everyone up. Spencer’s initial announcement that the focus of the first few classes would be feet-first diving made this young man’s unathletic knees shake with glee, but if you want to be good, you have to be willing to do flips off the high dive at the end of the semester. The less ambitious can always hide out in the hot tub by the side of the pool. Diving is an explosive sport, and a big part of staying safe and healthy is keeping those muscles warm.

If you stay in too long, Gordon may admonish—“Hey, are you relaxing in there instead of doing your back dives?”—but look closer, and you’ll see the corners of his mouth breaking into a smile.

FENCING

“Ever since man has first picked up the stick, he has wanted to fight other man.” This is Aladar Kolger speaking—Dr. Aladar, that is, though no one seems to be sure of what. It is the first day of fencing class, and he has to teach the history of fighting. Coming from this man, nothing is a surprise. Until 1975, he taught fighting proper—real men, bare chests, Austria. The épée is a demotion. But Dr. Kolger still beams as he forces you to stand in unnatural positions and thrust your coiled limbs. He is renowned for his exacting demand—that you handle the weapon as though you were caressing a woman’s nipple. He is also not ashamed of his large pack-age, prominently displayed through his tight athletic pants.

The bottom line: you will not learn to fence. The fun starts when you stop trying.

S.C.U.B.A.

More than any other gym class at Columbia, SCUBA—the word is short for Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus—is a sport of contradictions. On the one hand, it is the only one that requires its students to master the contents of a 260-page textbook. On the other, it requires virtually no physical exertion on the part of its participants. When it comes right down to it, you’re being taught how to breathe swimming around at the bottom of the pool while lap swimmers work out above.

The teacher of the class, an employee of the Midtown diving-supply store that rents out equipment for class, is certainly well-versed in his “sport”—although some complain that his answers to student inquiries always seem to involve an additional purchase from his store. “It is a very-equipment-intensive class,” he told us on the first day in reference to the $200 class fee and additional $200 we would be forced to spend on personal gear. “If anyone can’t afford it, feel free to drop out now.”

HIKING

A gaggle of students wait outside the gates for a bus. It is 8:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning. The bus picks them up and takes them to a state park. The afternoon is spent ostensibly hiking—many students cancel out the exercise by smoking, while the more intrepid branch off and screw in the woods. Word to the fat: to qualify for the course, you need to be able to walk four miles in under an hour. ✶
Winning in Theory

If schools that can’t do, teach, then what does that say about Columbia’s new sports management degree?

BY ANDREW FLYNN

Columbia University is now offering an MS in Sports Management. This is the punch line. Like the ones about British dentistry schools. “We’ve always been good at the gentlemanly and the ladylike athletics,” Lucas Rubin, the program’s director, admits: “fencing, crew.” Not so much…well, everything else. Why, then, is anyone shelling out $1,132 per credit for a degree from the equivalent of the kid with asthma?

“I would say that there’s a type of stigma,” Rubin told me, on Columbia’s loser reputation, “but the flip side of that is that no one has attempted to do a really top program in sports management at the Ivy League level.” He seems an odd fit for the developer and director of a sports program: a Classics PhD who wears emo-ish glasses (though he does follow National League baseball). Then again, so does the program’s department: Continuing Education. “It does all the non-traditional programs” Rubin said, meaning everything from actuarial science to landscape design. “One of the things we do is develop programs that have substantial areas of interest or merit that are not represented elsewhere in the university,” Rubin said. Working outside the constraints of a standard university department, Continuing Education can make use of the resources from athletics, business, and law to achieve its specific goals. Yet what makes Columbia’s foray questionable is not just its dubious track record employing the skills it now intends to teach, but that sports management programs in general have drawn criticism for being unsuccessful, impractical university cash-cows.

The Wall Street Journal recently summed up the key problems with many sports management programs: too many classes focusing on academic theorizing, too few on practical skills; useless or incoherent required courses, like anatomy and injury-care; professors with little sports experience yanked from other disciplines; and virtually no national standards—standards which, even then, only a small portion of the hundreds of currently operating programs meet. The upshot? Possessing a degree from a sports management program is not going to be much of an asset when it comes to actually getting a job.

How exactly, though, does one go about teaching “management,” of any kind? Joel Brockner, chair of the Columbia Business School’s management division and a big sports fan himself, laid out the basic components of an MBA education: a slew of core classes that touch on the business essentials (accounting, finance, operations, statis-
tics, marketing, organizational behavior) alongside a summer internship in the field. “So, by the end of the first year,” he told me, “students have had broad-based ‘book learning’ and they have had ‘real world’ experience.” This is augmented by in-depth electives during the second year, readying students for any number of careers in the business world. “My rule of thumb,” said Brockner, “is that if one wants to enter virtually any field, including management, it is easier to go from broad-based general training to more specialized training.”

Rubin, however, is not sure that broad is the way for those who are dead-set on a management role in sports. “A manager needs to know about finance and accounting,” he began, “but a lot of these programs teach these big kind of meta-topics in sports that the average manager is never going to interface with. So you can look abstractly at how salary caps work in baseball. But the people that this program is really going to be training are not going to go out and negotiate salary caps. What they really need to know is how to budget an event.”

Graduates of Columbia’s program will know. Its courses—a melange of applied business and law classes, coupled with specialized management training—are focused. To create the curriculum, experts ranging from specialists in sports law to actuaries and management, is focused. To create the curriculum, experts ranging from specialists in sports law to actual operations managers were consulted, “so you end up with a nice blend of the academic and also the very practical.”

But, practically speaking, will the program produce results? “Having top-flight instructors is key,” Joel Brockner admitted, “as is having top-flight fellow students who provide lots of insight, future networks, and sources of support.” Sure, but with the program starting fresh, alumni contacts are sparse at best, and developing job placement tactics is a big project. “This is the toughest thing,” Rubin said. “We can’t guarantee people jobs.”

“I think one of the great kind of lies that goes on,” Rubin revealed, “is that the sports management degree is a way to become an agent—people who don’t have connections, aren’t in the business, don’t have a family that’s working with it.” But in reality, he continued, “sports management is much more geared towards people who want management style positions—you’re equipment manager, you’re a person who’s going to be operations manager for the Cyclones out in Brooklyn.”

I must admit I was skeptical when, while perusing the course catalogue, I came upon “Socio-Historical Foundations of American Sport.” An operations manager needs that course? Surely this was academia at its most gratuitous: space filler for the second-semester senior, not part of a tight, specialized training sequence.

Rubin didn’t stammer. “The idea of that course is basically to make people conversant and knowledgeable about sports. You have people who come into the industry who are football fans, but their first job might be in women’s golf. So the idea is to actually—again it’s very old-school in some ways—teach them a lot about sports and their history, and how they evolved.”

This is a tad misleading. “Foundations” is in no way a greatest hits of sports trivia. Taught by Peter Levine, a retired Michigan State professor and, according to Rubin, “one of the four or five top sports historians,” the course is somewhere between a survey lecture and a topical seminar. The ominous words in the syllabus, “These books will be read in their entirety,” tops a list of 13 volumes. These are not athlete bios, but real academic texts; the first week alone requires six textbook chapters, in addition to 230 pages from The Manly Art: Bare Knuckle Prize Fighting in Nineteenth Century America. Grades are based on class participation, take-home exams, and a final research paper. In other words: an average liberal arts class.

This is Levine’s intent. “I am not interested in pointing the class to any specific matters regarding careers,” he told me. “My concern is to give students the opportunity to explore fundamental issues and questions that place sport as a significant social, cultural, political and economic institution of American life.” One of the two-and-a-half hour sessions on boxing found that a casual rapport had already developed between Levine and his tiny class—two women and twelve men, lots of baseball caps and ties. “When was John L. Sullivan born?” Levine began. He then launched into a semi-lecture, semi-discussion on the cult of masculinity in the nineteenth century, the shift in sports values during the era of their commercialization, and their modern parallels.

Regarding quality, Rubin agrees. “If I could duplicate this class every term, we would have a fabulous program,” he told me. “We would have, you know, a school of sports.” Tell it to the football team.
They Do It in Skates
Roller derby, sport of queens.
By Marc Tracy

“We normally host the boat show, the flower show, the RV show, home show, two international beer shows,” an older woman working the box office on August 26 at the Rhode Island Convention Center in downtown Providence told me. “But never the roller derby.” She was selling tickets for that night’s bout, in Exhibition Hall A, between the Gotham Girls and the Rhode Island Riveters. Roller derby bouts involve teams of women roller-skating around an oval track for an hour. Some try to pass; others try to knock the passers over. They have uniforms and coaches and scorekeepers and pads. They also have “derby names” like Lady Batterley, Joey Hardcore, and Stevie Kicks—“I took your love, I took you down.” It’s not as kitschy as it sounds, I swear.

“What’s not to like about roller derby?” asked a fanboy with the self-granted derby name “Bobby Narco” as he pinned a dozen or so Gotham Girls buttons in a circular pattern onto his black Gotham Girls shirt. “You’ve got beautiful girls in fishnets—great costumes—hitting each other.” Many people’s perceptions of derby is colored by fading memories of its heyday. “We used to see ’em on TV in the seventies” said an older couple, down from New Hampshire to watch their daughter play, “but Sarah says it’s different now.”

“We are living in the midst of a roller derby revival. Whereas heyday derby was about five parts showmanship to one part sport, today’s derby girls take the game seriously. “What we do is totally unscripted, there’s just a lot more athleticism,” explained the Gotham Girls’ announcer, who also skates. Her name is Margaret Thrasher, and, as that night’s program announced, she’s “Prime Minister of Your Demise.”

The Gotham Girls wore red, logo-ed tank tops and black mini-skirts (fishnets optional); the Riveters wore blue one-piece button-down uniforms that recalled their tough New England foremother, Rosie. The night’s bout promised to be exciting: at the Tucson Dust Devil Tournament in February, the Gotham Girls had finished tenth in the nation, and Providence eleventh, out of twenty-four league teams (the Texas Roller Girls took top honors). This was an exhibition game; league play takes
place within the confines of metropolitan areas. So the Gotham Girls twenty-person roster, for example, was stocked with representatives from the four New York City teams: the Brooklyn Bombshells, the Bronx Gridlock, the Manhattan Mayhem, and the Queens of Pain.

After the first of three periods, the score stood at Gotham 44, Rhode Island 43. Each team’s point total was posted to a painted wooden ovary on the central scoreboard, both of which led down to a central uterus, on which was posted the...period. These periods, mercifully, are only twenty minutes long.

There are five players from each team in the rink at a time. Three are blockers; one is a pivot; one is a jammer. The jammers do the scoring; they skate out ahead and score one point every time they lap a blocker or a jammer from the other team. The blockers’ job is to avoid getting passed and aid their jammer. The pivot’s job is vaguer, yet undoubtedly more complex and significant. “There are two ways to be a pivot,” Ginger Snap, the Gotham Girls’ starting pivot, informed me. “Be a heat-seeking missile on their jammer, or be a heat-seeking missile on their everything else.”

Jams last no more than two minutes, after which points are tallied. (If a jammer is maintaining a lead, she can strategically choose to end it at any time.) The players go back to the benches briefly, substitutions are made, and everyone sets up again. Teams usually score about four points a jam, although they can end up as double-digit routs.

The athletes are really very good: the jammers dart through thickets of blockers as though they were on two feet, not eight wheels; the blockers unflinchingly throw their bodies about; the pivots quietly command their squads. And what characters! On this front the Gotham Girls held a clear advantage. Ginger Snap combined spunk with seriousness, and always appeared in total control of events. Team captain and jammer Bonnie Thunder exuded Jordanesque intensity as she raged around the track. Gotham skater/coach Ariel Assault used her especially mini miniskirt as a totem of authority. And there was Suzy Hot Rod, Gotham’s leadjammer: beautiful, determined, passionate.

In a word, they had charisma. I should note that the derby track was literally the floor of an anonymous convention hall with boundaries marked by different colored pieces of tape. But, because of the skaters, the crowd of 600 completely bought into it.

In the second period, the Riveters took a significant lead. During one jam, a Gotham jammer and a Gotham blocker were too rough and ended up in the penalty box, allowing the Providence jammer to collect nine unanswered points. Then, in the next jam, Suzy Hot Rod took a commanding lead over the Providence jammer and was about cut into the Riveters’ lead when their jammer slipped and injured herself, causing the jam to be called off before Suzy could lap anyone. (Many Gotham fans would place “slipped and injured” in quotation marks.) In the third period, Providence accomplished an 11-4 jam to seal the deal. Final score: 111-90 Providence.

After the bout, I approach Ginger Snap. She’s short, fit, and, as her derby name suggests, red-haired. I introduce myself. She responds, “I am sweaty.” She’s drinking a beer, congratulating skaters from both teams as they pass by—always, always calling them by their derby names. “To be a derby girl, you have to be a little counterculture,” she tells me when I ask her about the dominant punk-rock aesthetic amongst players and fans. Hambone, a Gotham referee, comes by and he and Ginger Snap kiss. “My husband,” she blushes. I ask her if she thinks the derby revival will last. The revival is all about refashioning derby as a legitimate sport, rather than mud wrestling without the mud. What is derby all about? Are derby girls primarily competitors, or primarily performers? “We’re definitely athletes first,” she insists. “We train way too hard for it to be just tits and ass.”

**Catch the derby girls in action!**

*On October 22, in Camden, New Jersey, the Gotham Girls play Philadelphia’s Liberty Belles.*
Some might think that getting fired from a job coaching sports at Columbia is like getting fired from McDonald’s. If it were Per Se, you could try again at, say, Chipotle or Tavern on the Green, but after a certain point there’s nowhere left to go. For Columbia head coaches who have fallen from grace, what’s left? Is there life after Columbia Athletics?

The answer to that question depends on how you choose to define “life.” In general, ex-Columbia coaches don’t have a great deal of upward career mobility. As a recent Spectator article pointed out, none of Columbia’s past five head football coaches has gone on to another head coaching job, though they have fared well in second-tier positions. Football’s Bob Shoop and Larry McElreavy both secured assistant coaching positions at the University of Massachusetts; basketball’s Armond Hill, fired in 2003, has since worked steadily as an assistant coach for both the Boston Celtics and the Atlanta Hawks.

When teams win, however, assistant coaches don’t get any of the glory—head coaches do. But at Columbia, at least for the high-profile teams who have recently undergone personnel changes, glory is far from guaranteed. Our football team hasn’t had a winning season since 1996, baseball since 1994, and men’s basketball since 1992-3. During these years, Bob Shoop and Armond Hill were fired, while both Ray Tellier (football, 1989-2002) and Paul Fernandes (baseball) were reassigned to administrative posts. Columbia’s men’s soccer team also had a losing record in the past two seasons, resulting in the retirement, under pressure from the administration, of long-time head coach Dieter Ficken. Perhaps the best place to be is out of the spotlight.

Athletics Director M. Dianne Murphy, however, insists that the decision to hire or fire a coach is “not just about winning and losing.” “There’s any number of things that we have to look at,” she said. “And we don’t look at any of them in isolation.” In addition to their sport, head coaches have to worry about fundraising, recruitment and alumni relations, and prospective coaches are scrutinized for their skills in all three arenas.

Interpersonal skills are a big part of the job; there are a lot of folks to keep happy, not least of whom are the alumni whose dollars support the team. While Murphy says that “alumni do not make hiring and firing decisions,” she does acknowledge “soliciting their feedback” in the process. On some level, there’s a sense that now is a very important time to focus attention on winning games, as well as on what Murphy calls “friend-raising and fundraising.” Columbia Athletics found a great deal of success in the 1940s-1960s; programs like basketball and football, now in peril, were both reasonably successful then. And, as Taylor Harwin, C’08 and Spectator Associate Sports Editor points out, “Those alumni, who are getting pretty old, are coming to a point in their lives where they want to know what they’re going to do with their money.” For the Athletics Department, “It’s good to have head coaches who can convince them.”

“When we are forced to make a decision about letting a coach go,” Murphy says, “we certainly are not doing it with a great deal of joy and happiness. … No one comes into a situation wanting to fire anyone. Let’s be very clear about that. But it is about excellence. It is about being successful. It is about doing all the other things that go along with doing the job as a coach.” In other words, being a good coach does not necessarily make you a good Coach. For some folks, it’s simply too much; but, if it doesn’t work out, always remember that Columbia will have no problem firing you—and maybe, there’s not as much shame in that as everybody seems to think.
Emily Jacobson, C’08, missed out on Orientation—the ice breakers, the Health Fair, CUnity. She was absent for President Bollinger’s hearty welcome at Convocation, and the first meal at the dining hall. For the inaugural week of college, her floormates on John Jay 12 were left puzzling her absence each time they passed the “Emily” sign on her door. Where could she be?

Answer: Jacobson was in Athens, Greece, competing with the US women’s fencing team at the 2004 Summer Olympic Games. “Once I got to Columbia everything worked out fine,” she told me. “I didn’t feel like I had missed all that much.”

Many of the internationally ranked fencers on Columbia’s fencing team tell similar tales—of balancing textbooks on airplane tray tables, passing épées and sabers through customs, and waging bouts against competitors from Harvard to Holland.

The places where men’s fencing team captain, James Williams, C’07, has competed read like postcards on the wall of a travel agency: Poland, Germany, Hungary, France, Venezuela, Italy, Spain, Tunisia, Chile. “I’ve been [to Cuba] only about twenty times!” said Team Head Coach George Kolombatovich. Yet the past and present international fencers I talked to were modest about their accomplishments and didn’t think of themselves as weekend jet-setters.

Out of forty-eight Columbia fencers, twelve do double-duty as college and international fencers, and Kolombatovich said they are usually found, “on the floor at the gym waiting for their next bout with their textbooks, taking notes, and reading.” The fencers typically fly out to Europe or Latin America or Asia on a Thursday night, arrive on Friday afternoon, rest up and prepare for the competition held on Saturday, and then leave on Sunday. “Ninety percent of the time we spent in a city was in the gym,” said Jacobson, who insisted that the Olympics was “not a vacation” while admitting that she attended a few of the Sports Illustrated parties thrown at clubs in Athens.

“Everyone who’s really competitive has a membership somewhere,” according to fencing team member Jefferson Baum. Many CU fencers practice at the New York Fencer’s Club downtown, where memberships cost $600 per year. Helmets, weapons, and other gear requires hundreds of dollars, to say nothing of plane tickets and accommodations for every competition they attend. There is a Columbia alumni endowment to help fencers pay their travel expenses, and top fencers may receive help from national fencing organizations, but according to Kolombatovich, “the reality is many parents are just phenomenally supportive of their children.”

The costs of international fencing go beyond money. Jacobson’s sister, Sada, postponed graduation from Yale to train for the 2004 Olympics, and found her readjustment to university life difficult. Of course, when she returned to New Haven, she had a gold medal that she didn’t have before. Still, Emily decided not to train for 2008. “The idea of coming back [to Columbia] in 2008 in the fall and all of my friends being gone upset me,” she said.

Meanwhile, Kolombatovich estimates that four or five current CU fencers have a realistic chance of qualifying for the Olympics. They have carved out lifestyles that somehow accommodate practice, homework, classes, social lives, as well as weekend trips to Europe, and they compare international fencing to a passionate commitment to any other extracurricular activity. “I don’t sleep as much,” said Williams. “You just gotta manage your time.”

By Sara Vogel

Illustrated by Christine DeLong
AMARANTH

The amaranth lies in a pile of discarded trash
Out behind the abandoned treehouse.

The amaranth travels through our stemming bodies,
Rich redness rising and resting with the sun.

The amaranth skips with joy, giddy in immortality;
Inhuman in its glow of obscurity and strength.

Yet how can one envy the amaranth?
As it does not exist it simply cannot die;
We, however, have lived.

We have lived,
Who find ourselves endearingly petulant in the aftermath.
We have lived,
Endless petals of the lifeless amaranth.

—Tom Faure
A couple months ago, over stale London scones (Verily requests that his editor divine which is the more redundant between “stale” and “London,” and excise it forthwith), Verily was in conversation with a friend of his, and the topic verged onto the wealth of nations. Naturally, Verily decried the heap of decadent bat-dropping known as late capitalism, though taking care to dissociate his harsh words from those critiques of said societal stage promulgated by the petit-bourgeois crowd of anti-capitalist troglodytes, a colony of whom were gathered nearby to protest some war or another.

“Capitalism is as a great beehive,” your hero announced, “except that, amongst the bees, the workers kill the drones; and not the reverse.” Seeing no light of recognition, no beacon of solidarity, in his companion’s face, Verily decided he could abscond with his clever simile without attributing it to its progenitor, the Grand Old Man Marx. If only Verily’s ex-girlfriend had been so dull-brained: she had ended it after espying in a love letter he had written her from Marseilles several lines from an amorous missive in Volume IV of the *Recherche du temps perdu*—and that from one man to another (M. de Charlus, you rascal!).

Yet Verily’s acquaintance’s wit had also apparently seen some recent time at the whetstone, for to this stab at money-making he responded: “Don’t knock it ‘til you’ve tried it.”

A formidable riposte: Verily had yet really to sink his canines into the cesspool of the market, excepting the two weeks he had labored at a coffee shop on the corner of Avenue A and Get Me The Fuck Out Of Here. Besides, the last time Verily had heard the phrase “don’t knock it ‘til you’ve tried it” directed at him—he frequently deployed it against others, usually in reference to Prague—it had been his scoundrel of a brother, the subject had been television, and subsequent viewing had proved his brother’s suggestion that Verily try the boob tube valid. (Who knew mafiosi had so much great sex?)

The gauntlet dashed to the ground, Verily vowed to about his brain from the Kantian duty motive to the Gekkovian profit motive. The aesthetics had always appealed; he had once heard an amusing disquisition from a Québecois prostitute on “je-banking.” So he updated his résumé—his references a veritable Page Six of Columbiana: Gayatri Spivak; Cesar Ignacio Ruiz Cortez; M. Dianne Murphy, “though she knows me as ‘Pussy’”—and dispatched it to several corporations whose names he collated by glancing at several days’ worth of emboldened words in the *FT*.

An interview here, a call from Verily’s uncle to his old Berkeley roommate there (Berkeley College, mind you; Merrily Veritas IV was educated in Connecticut, not California), and Verily found himself in a tall, tacky monstrosity, wondering how long it was before lunch, at which time he gained the privilege of waiting in line at the Halal stand on the corner for 40 minutes attempting to recall if his superior preferred the white sauce or the red.

Verily knows, as he savors his clove cigarette outside of Columbia’s own tacky monstrosity, that you, darling of a reader, will understand his reluctance to, as they say, delve into the experience. You could get bored; he could get suicidal. It will suffice to observe that je-banking manages to combine concrete economic reality with abstract theory as much as passionately studying dialectical materialism does, only it’s half as difficult and allows you only twice as much free time. The real world is to philosophy, as King Karl wrote, as sex is to masturbation.

—Verily Veritas
only one shop into my “research” for this article, my legs were already itching from flea bites. I scratched, and then combed through yet another rack of eighties-era knee-length skirts. Only two or three were wearable. “Goddammit.” I couldn’t help thinking, “I wouldn’t have swelling lumps on my ankles if I were at H&M.” But, I wouldn’t have found a ten-dollar algae-green winter coat at H&M, nor a hand-made dress with buttons depicting smiling bees. Beauty, as they say, is pain.

Vintage clothes have been cool for several long years now. Pop-culture trends emphasize retro looks as a form of ironically subversive authenticity—and what better way to wink at convention and simultaneously look fabulous than wearing cute cardigans or authentically weathered jeans. In other words, the ostensible reason kids dress like seventies rockers and fifties TV characters is because mainstream culture sucks too much to even warrant a reaction.

And there are other appealing characteristics of vintage. Used clothes (in thrift stores, at least) are always cheap. Even if they were made in a sweatshop thirty years ago, they aren’t fresh off the boat from Malaysia. Buying thrift and vintage almost always means supporting small businesses, or even Goodwill and the Salvation Army. And if moral concerns aren’t your bag (or Birkin), purveyors of vintage clothes often receive inspiration
from the designer-label items they come across in boutiques, and in turn pay homage to them in their own fashion lines.

Used clothing stores can be classified into thrift stores and vintage shops: the former generally have a wider selection and cheaper prices than the latter. New York City’s reputation for quality used clothing is based largely on its excellent vintage (though not necessarily thrift) shops, which are known for being pricey and cluttered with fancy designers’ pieces.

When on the hunt for decent used clothes, your first stop should be the East Village. Start at Monk’s (183 Avenue B), where you’ll find lots of well-worn jeans and cutesy skirts. I also noticed a hefty rack of faded hipster t-shirts, those wearable scraps of counterculture pastiche and twee irony that have become one of the flagship items of retro cool.

From Monk’s, go to 7th and walk west, stopping by Bobby’s (104 East 7th Street), which caters mostly to men, Eva’s (97 ½ E. 7th), which has lots of funky jewelry, and Tokio 7 (64 E. 7th), which carries a good number of consignment designer labels. These stores draw few tourists, and have the sort of charm that lends vintage shopping its appeal. Also, trying going south a bit to Centricity (63 E. 4th Street), run by an old woman who keeps two blue parakeets in a cage among the clothes. Neighbors frequently stop in to chat and smoke cigarettes on the stoop.

While these stores in the East Village were pioneers in making used clothing fashionable and hip, they have been largely supplanted by bigger stores that cater to a wider consumer base with less discriminating tastes. The most famous and successful example of this breed is Brooklyn’s Beacon’s Closet, most notably its bastion of cool in the heart of Williamsburg (88 North 11th Street), though it also has an outpost in Park Slope (220 5th Avenue). Beacon’s trademark logo is a picture of a smiling bald man with horn-rimmed glasses; about three-quarters of the hipsters at the Bedford stop on the L can be seen carrying pink plastic bags with this image at any time, day or night.

In some circles, Beacon’s has become more or less a true success story, the kind of establishment that has capitalized on hip culture, attained widespread brand recognition, and yet simultaneously remained firmly planted in the hearts of New York indie kids. Though one can attribute their unerring cool quotient to their unimpeachably hip staffers and soundtrack, they ultimately succeed because they satisfy a very large, very picky group of consumers with a cheap, ample supply of goods.

If your impetus for buying thrift clothes is the lure of the bargain, there are plenty of honest-to-goodness consignment stores in New York. However, they’re usually too picked-over to be of any interest to the fashion-conscious, consignment being a nicer term for garments that cater to legitimately low-income shoppers. (I’ve had far better luck at Goodwill stores in the middle of nowhere than the places in New York.) If you’re dead-set on deals, though, one of the better known used clothing stores is Domsey’s (431 Broadway, in Williamsburg), which used to take up four floors of a warehouse but is now a very modest outlet. While I must say I was somewhat disappointed by their selection, the prices—it’s hard to argue with two-dollar shirts and pants—make it worth a mention.

Finally, a less popular store that’ll deliver almost as well as Beacon’s Closet (it’s admittedly pretty difficult to top the coat and dress selection at Beacon’s) is the Williamsburg outlet of Buffalo Exchange (504 Driggs, off North 9th Street), which began as a tiny shop in Tucson, Arizona and has since branched out considerably. The immediate area vicinity bristles with hipsterdom; a graffito on a nearby brick wall reads “waiting for godard” in self-conscious cursive. At first glance, Buffalo Exchange looks irredeemably sleek and pretty darn chic, but, when it comes down to it, it’s a thrift store through and through. Here, you’ll find plenty of gently used clothes: the kind of stuff fashionistas are aesthetically obliged to toss or sell after one season of use, but that can make up a pretty awesome ensemble.

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The ostensible reason kids dress like seventies rockers and fifties TV characters is because mainstream culture sucks too much to even warrant a reaction.
Russian and Turkish Baths
268 East 10th Street
Take the 1 down to 14th Street, transfer to the L, get off at 1st Avenue and walk south.

A couple weeks ago, I took a good whiff of myself and realized that I smelled like stale cereal. It was time to escape the grime of Morningside.

Where could I go? There are hundreds of day spas in Midtown, but I don’t like spas. I am not clean or good-looking enough to go to a spa. And who would I want to hang out with while getting clean? Most definitely not spa monkeys named Luke and Heather—I’d rather sit around with fat old Eastern European men. In every spy movie, there’s always a scene featuring fat old Eastern European men in towels, having fun in a bath house before the hero kills their leader. That’s when I realized—I needed a Russian bath house. There are a bunch of them out in Brighton Beach, but for a good banya only half an hour away, I recommend the Russian & Turkish (but mostly Russian) Baths on 268 East 10th Street.

Ready to have things done to our bodies, my companion Mike and I walked into the brownstone that houses the baths, and a Russian guy in a robe put two metal boxes in front of us. He grunted, “Give me your valuables,” and gave us numbered keys. Full use of the basic facilities costs $25. If you bring friends, the Baths offer special group rates: $175 for ten people and $255 for fifteen. I can see student groups taking advantage of this, like sororities.

After we paid, an old Russian lady exclaimed “First timers?!” and gave us some cotton shorts. “Skeeny, skeeny.” After we changed, she pointed downstairs and ordered, “basement.”

The long, white-tiled main area was filled with laid-back, aging bathers whose wrinkles, flab and poorly aged tattoos diminished our insecurities. We soon learned that, in the bath house, people give each other a lot of fist-pounds. There’s also some occasional, very non-sexual nudity. If you want to be naked, there are special times for men (Sunday 7:30-2) and women (Wednesday 9-2) to have the place all to your own gender members, but otherwise you’re supposed to wear shorts or your swimsuit. Or you could just be that guy who’s naked because he feels like it. Nobody cares.

I hosed off in the Swedish shower, where pipes with holes bored into them shoot out water at multiple levels, like high-powered water-guns. Once I snapped out of the summer-camp flashbacks, I realized I was clean!

My next stop was a long, four-foot deep pool of ice-cold water. This water was so cold that my body didn’t just freeze; it experienced a new state of being. It was as if my toes had achieved consciousness and their first thought was, “Wow, this is just strange.”

After a dip in the cold pool, Mike and I saw the door with a sign over it: “Russian Room, Radiant Heat.” The Russian Room is where Satan got the idea...
for his fiery pits. Everyone sits in a dark cavern on pieces of wood laid across stadium-style stone benches. The giant rock-walled furnace is filled with 20,000 pounds of rocks that are cooked overnight. Patrons drape wet towels over their heads, like boxers in hell.

Mike leaned back and singed himself on the rock behind him. My contact lenses warped onto my pupils. I couldn’t touch my hair because it was so much hotter than the rest of my body. Breathing through my nose burned all my nostril hairs. I drank from one of the running faucets. A guy next to me grabbed a bucket from underneath the faucet and dumped it all over himself. Oh. So that’s what you do.

After a few more minutes in the inferno, I hustled out to the cold pool. I submerged myself, my heart rate jumped and my breathing quickened and my brain told me I was dying. I got out.

A Russian man asked me if I wanted a massage. At the Baths, the employees wear the same clothes as the customers, so don’t be surprised or uncomfortable if someone who looks civilian offers to touch you. I requested a platza, an Old World skin-care technique sometimes called “Jewish acupuncture.” The man led me back into the Russian Room to a wet mat on the highest bench and made me lay down on my stomach. He dragged in a bucket full of special olive oil soap. Then he got out a big leafy oak branch.

The Russian man covered my head with a towel. He then dipped the branch in the oil, lathered my back, and began to violently smack me. He struck me all over my back and legs with the branch before cranking every limb to near dislocation, all the while dumping buckets of freezing water on me to stave off the heat. There was no warning. I was totally powerless, bewildered by random sensation.

“Face up.”

“Huh? What?”

“Face up.”

“I don’t…huh?” I peeked out from under my towel.

“Face up,” he said as he spun two fingers. I flipped over.

My chest was lathered so the branch could return. I concentrated on breathing. The man executed some more massage holds on me, defeated me handily, and sat me up. I peeked out into the dark room. Some of the people were watching and nodding sternly, others were just suffering in the heat. I had forgotten my name.

The branch crashed into my face—perhaps brute force opens pores. Then he hit me in the armpits, dropped another bucket of water on me, and dragged me out by the wrist to the cold pool. I dunked myself, got out, and he wrapped me in a robe and sat me on a bench to recuperate. I spaced out as Mike received the same treatment.

When Mike went in, there weren’t any women in the room, so the guy felt comfortable pulling Mike’s shorts down and platza-ing his bare rump. Mike said it was no big deal, really, until a moment later when that very same sullied branch hit him in the face, which somehow made it even cooler and more Russian. Mike also got some cheers from the people in the room, who sang part of a Russian pop song for him and told him, at the end of the massage, “Now you’re a man!” I was jealous.

Before getting dressed we checked out the lounge. The walls were decked with reviews and signed testimonials from patrons like Bill Clinton, John Belushi, and John Amos from the movie Beast Master, who sent in a picture of himself as the Beast Master.

After dressing we floated back onto 10th St. and wandered the streets in a blissful daze. I kept rubbing myself and sighing. I couldn’t remember ever feeling so good all over. The feeling—the Russian Zen aftermath—lasted the rest of the day. ✿
Sharing Machines: How to Keep Pace

**DO** respect the “one 30-min reservation for one piece of equipment per day” rule for cardio equipment. Signup-sheet deception is always in poor taste. If you must cheat, please make some effort to conceal your misdeed—vary your handwriting, transpose your initials, etc.—unless you want the gym staff to hate you in your cowardly anonymity.

**DON’T** hover, even if only to establish that you are next in line for a piece of equipment. Even if the person ahead of you is working out beyond his or her scheduled time, hovering quickly becomes annoying, especially when accompanied by hateful stares. Much of Columbia might not have figured this out yet, but there are better ways to get your point across than passive aggression.

**DO** use the oversized digital clock that is visible from the top-level cardio machines to judge time, not your own watch or iPod clock. According to gym personnel, smaller clocks throughout the gym are actually more accurate, but no matter. If there’s confusion, don’t be afraid to ask employees to reset a clock to the main one; apparently they’ll only do it if someone complains.

**DON’T** relax on a piece of equipment between weight-training reps. It’s okay to rest, but remember that there is a fine line between resting and relaxing. Muscles need rest between sets for proper recovery; you do not need to squeeze in a paragraph of Saint Augustine before starting your next set.

Body Issues: We’ve All Got Them

**DO** keep unnecessary odors to a minimum. Especially in the lower fitness levels, the windowless cavern that is Dodge Gym can quickly become hot and malodorous. Remember to deodorize. Also remember that passing gas while on the treadmill is decidedly not cool.

**DON’T** neglect the paper towels and cleaning solution provided. How would you feel if the person ahead of you left the bike seat all gross and sweaty? Seriously. Ew.

**DO** expect to see people completely naked in the locker room. If you don’t feel comfortable with strangers in all their natural glory, find somewhere else to get dressed. If you do go in, try not to stare.

Socially Speaking…

**DON’T** get your flirt on at the gym. This is uncomfortable for everyone involved. There are plenty of other places on campus to be smooth, but the gym is for strengthening hearts, not breaking them.

**DO** think carefully about when and how to say hello to someone at the gym. Figuring out whether or not to acknowledge that dude on College Walk who was in your Lit Hum class two years ago is bad enough. Add into the equation sweaty backs, red cheeks, and spandex, and you’ve exponentially increased the potential social awkwardness of small talk. Generally speaking, you’d be prudent to keep social interactions brief. ✶
CAMPUS GOSSIP

When asked his favorite joke recently, Music Department professor Brad Garton gave us the following gem:

Why did the monkey fall out of the tree?
Because it was dead. [Editor's note: see pages 14-16 for the real reason.]

BRING YOUR OWN REMOTE

While the new televisions at JJ’s place are wonderful, they do have one flaw—you can’t change the channel. Some students have started bringing their own universal remote controls to get the job done, but find themselves running into trouble when the JJ’s staff keeps trying to fry them.

In the first meeting of this fall’s Softball PE class at Baker Field, a student answered a cell phone call while playing shortstop. The teacher, Columbia’s softball coach, yelled at him as he took his time getting off the phone. “Okay, can I call you later? Okay. Thanks.”

The good folks at Ritter Sport have recently been giving out a lot of free chocolate samples outside the gates and putting up a good number of advertising posters on local bus stops. A little investigation reveals that they are an athletic department sponsor, and sometimes give away free full-sized chocolate bars at football games.

In other news, MEALAC will now be sponsored by Hebrew National. Even tenured professors will have to answer to a higher authority.

AT LEAST THEY DIDN’T CALL US PUSSIES!

Ever since the Minuteman riot, people have taken up the nasty habit of calling us names, usually on Fox News. The Blue and White has sifted through muck and discovered potential slogans for the recently-launched capital campaign.

Bill O’Reilly, host of The O’Reilly Factor on Fox News:
-“An ultra-left institution”
-“A disgrace”
-“A place of indoctrination, not interested in free speech or learning”
-“The University of Havana–North”
-“A Kool-Aid campus”
-“A left-wing jihad that holds power at Columbia University.”

Hal Turner, conservative radio host, on his website:
-“Spics and kikes”
-“Savage beasts”
-“Filthy animals”

Jim Gilchrist, founder of the Minuteman Militia
-“A tangle of different radical an anarchist groups”
-“The 21st Century KKK”
-“Fascist liberal anarchists”
-“Domestic terrorists.”

And the worst insult of them all….

Martin Stewart, Minuteman
-“Undiciplined students”

Three years after the junior class entered Columbia, the bottom of every receipt at Morton Williams University Supermarket still reads “Welcome class of 2008!” It appears that MoWi changes their slogans about as often as they change their muffins.
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OR DIGITALIA?

After stumbling across an internally circulated packet entitled “A Seminar Leader’s Manual” put together by Columbia professors and graduate students for their colleagues, a B&W staffer felt it imperative to excerpt some of the more nefarious secrets of the college teaching trade. (All advice below has been quoted verbatim.)

-Long, dead silences are boring...

-Let students write or discuss the issue at hand before you call on them. (This allows them to think without looking stupid.)

-Some students are reluctant to talk in class, especially in a subject they don’t feel on top of. Some of these will blossom if you call on them; others will wilt.

-If Joe doesn’t take the hint, and continues to monopolize the discussion, speak to him privately.

-Never belittle a student, no matter how stupid the question is....As one guru of discussion leading says, “No negativity.”

-Follow up an answer with a question. (Another application of: “Ask, don’t tell.”)

-You do not need to say everything you know—it’s usually better not to say everything you know on the subject, but it is necessary to know more than you plan to say so that you will feel confident.

-A common response to a complicated problem is, “How the *?##*! am I supposed to answer/solve this?”

-How to write on the board
A. Both words and diagrams should be large and clear. If the room is large, get some big soft chalk.
B. Use colored chalk as much as possible. (But remember color blind students can’t tell red from green.)

C. If there is a white board instead of a blackboard, bring your own markers. (The ones in the class are often dried out.

D. Use diagrams as well as words. ...

E. Erase carefully.

-When you are facing the blackboard, stop talking. In other words, don’t talk into the blackboard.

-In this example, the student may know the correct answer and just be using poor English by accident, or the student may not know and be using unclear language on purpose to hide his or her confusion. Alternatively, the student may not even realize that s/he is unclear in his or her own mind!

-Asking, “Does everyone understand?” doesn’t usually get a satisfactory answer. You have to look at the students’ faces or ask a specific question in order to find out if they understand.

-If you start to explain, and realize half way through that you are stuck, it usually pays to stop and admit it. It doesn’t pay to continue, unless you are one of those rare people who can think well enough in public to get untangled in front of the class. The best strategy is usually to stop before you get in even deeper, and to go home and figure it out. (But be sure to tell the students the answer when you finish.)

THE ROOT CAUSE OF ANTI-PET TERRORISM

The Columbia University Medical Center is currently running a study on “pet bereavement.” If you’re willing to drag yourself out of your depression-ridden state of mourning and go up to 168th Street, a completely objective, non-sadistic team of researchers will pay you $200 to sit in an MRI for 40 minutes and think about your ex-best friend.

The language requirement…it’s un-American!