

A Rant About Black History Month



"Carter G. Woodson": What would the founder of Black History Month think today?

BY TAYLOR BARKSDALE '18
STAFF WRITER

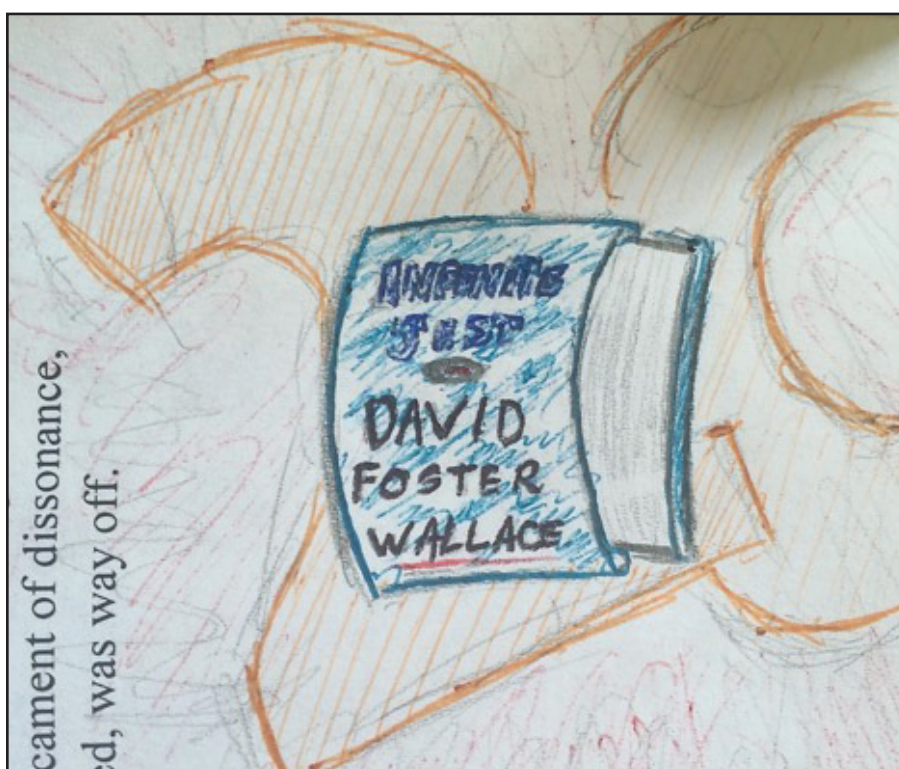
Black History Month, known to most as February, is a time of year in which we celebrate black success, black activists and black social movements that served to enlighten the masses as to the history of black people, or at least we are supposed to be doing these things. Black history does not start with slavery nor does it only entail that time in history. The Civil Rights movement is not the only movement in black history. In essence, I want to break down every idealized notion that exists in the minds of those who are ignorant to the cause.

Black History Month is not an attack on any other cultures' history, race or ideas / concepts. It was only bred out of a need. There was no one teaching the world about the amazing things that black people have contributed to the world outside of the misconception that our history only takes place in some Southern field on some plantation. Starting in 1928, Carter G. Woodson started Black History Month because he saw a lack of representation

of black history and a lack of knowledge from black people about their own history. My main goal is to help everyone understand that Black History Month is much more than what we see in the mainstream. There are so many other people who made a great contribution to our history than the likes of Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Medgar Evers and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Not to discredit their work of course because their contribution is greatly appreciated, but to many these are some of the only people whom they consider as leaders in the black community. We are more than anyone's labels, stereotypes, boxes and restrictions. Black History Month is something necessary not only for black people to learn about our history, but also to inform those who know nothing outside of what was taught to them in school and provide knowledge to those who seek to know more. All in all, I just want people to know that Black History Month is multifaceted and is not just a time to recognize the same eight Civil Rights leaders or to talk about how much people disagree with slavery.

Infinite Jest



Drawing by Ben Laviana

"Year of the Swagway-x1 Hands-Free Smart Hoverboard?": The book, published in 1996, still feels as fresh as ever. Ben Laviana explores the anniversary.¹ (See footnotes on page 8.)

Bid Day Spring 2016



Photo by Saad Khalid

"Merry Christmas": Anxious Potential New Frat Bros wait in the Amphitheater while over-eager Seniors scope out their new pledges. Zoe Laulederkind witnesses Bid Day on Page 8.

NEWS

Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers:

If you know Ally Limmer, 1) you are one lucky human, and 2) you've gotten something done, and you've gotten it done right, and you can't imagine having done any of it without her. Enough said.

If you don't know Ally Limmer, read on.

In this, our dedication to our dear friend and co-editor Al, we begin and end with her dedication.

Although dedication sounds like a buzz word from those inspirational

posters hanging in fourth-grade classrooms across the nation, Ally's dedication goes beyond anything that could be contained in a poster (or a letter). She doesn't just encourage dedication in others; she shows you how it's done. She is fiercely dedicated to all aspects of her life: her family, her friends, to Rhodes College and her home state of Texas.

Although her activities keep her quite busy, she always makes time for her family and friends. Whether it's listening closely to the intimate, boring-to-anyone-else details of their lives or showing up to a lunch date five min-

utes early so they know she values their time, Ally dedicates herself to the ones she loves.

Half-assing it isn't in her dictionary (and she knows a lot of words) when it comes to Rhodes College. This May, she'll be graduating with two degrees: one in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and another in Spanish. Her legacy includes not just phenomenal schoolwork, but leading in the Rhodes community as the Commissioner of the Allocations Board, president of HPS, co-founder and editor-in-chief of the Sou'wester and countless other activities.

Long story short, she's worked hard the last four years. This hard work has culminated in her multiple acceptances into medical schools, and we couldn't be prouder. Among these, she has chosen to grace the medical school at Texas Tech University with her glorious presence, and we wanted to dedicate this letter to her marvelous accomplishments.

With sugar, spice and everything nice,
ZD --> A

Resident Sad Editor Shares Story

BY DOUG FETTERMANN '16
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Happy Week Before Valentine's Day! Love and bitterness are in the air fighting one another for dominance in the lead up to the chocolate-filled consumer extravaganza that only some people get to enjoy. While some plan dates, the rest get to eat chocolate with friends and throw Anti-Valentine's Day parties and validate each other as to why it's ok that they're alone. In that spirit, let me tell you a sappy, melodramatic story that has absolutely no basis in reality about a boy.

For this boy, it is the first Valentine's Day in five years that he will not be kissing the girl he had thought he would be kissing for the rest of his life, or, at least, sending her a pillow with a heartbeat that would somehow serve as a creepy surrogate for the love that they had stretched so far across this country. But love, like gold, expands when stretched. The area between their schools – some

seven hundred miles – was covered in the golden leaf of their stretched-out love. He swore that people in Knoxville must have had some extra babies or marriages due to all the love flying back and forth between Lexington (Va.) and Memphis.

But sometimes something goes wrong. Little tears begin to form in love, sometimes in the middle but usually one end or the other begins to fray. They can go unnoticed and grow, or when found they can be fixed. But if all the tears happen on one end, how will the other person ever know that the relationship is falling apart so far away? The love he sees and feels is pure, unbroken golden leaf stretching for miles into the distance. He wears a golden crown, heavy, yes, but the weight reminds him of the hefty responsibility demanded by love. Not simply "don't have sex with other people," but also "care for this love in every way you can."

And so he tried his best to care for the love and to care for her. The visits to her

school were lovely, to make friends with her friends and to add a few lines of gold connecting the two places, anchoring their love more perfectly. Her visits here were less frequent, but accomplished much the same. The absences were harder. It is hard to build a body with just words. Gold is just a shiny piece of metal. But phone calls, skype dates and sending a journal back and forth made the interim somewhat bearable. When they became friends, four years before they started dating, they talked at least several days a week every week with occasional parent-chauffeured outings. They talked every single day, in one form or another, for five years while they were together. Now they don't talk.

What happened was both very slow and very fast. Through the years, she stopped fixing the tears and instead gave bits and pieces of it to others. A little piece of gold would hardly matter with the massive sheet they had accumulated. But gold leaf is fragile. Give it enough small tears, and it rips easier

than paper. Eventually she gave enough of the gold away that it tore on her end and came flying back to him. It came as a surprise; just a 10-minute phone call, and he was the sole caretaker of the love they had made together. Love, without the person you love, is an unendurable mass of emotion with nowhere to go. It drowns you, suffocates you, crushes you. Golden love is heavy when you have to carry it alone.

Love, however, cannot be reworked as easily as gold. It is hard to find passion hot enough to melt it down and rework it. It must instead be worn down through the passage of time. Erosion is an agonizingly slow but inexorable force. If there must be a moral to the story, let it be this: love is patient, but so is pain.

Hope you enjoyed the story! With luck, sharing it will help him GET OVER IT ALREADY. Happy Valentine's Day!

Staff of *The Sou'wester*

Editors in Chief, Zoe Laulederkind '18, Ally Limmer '16, and Doug Fetterman '16

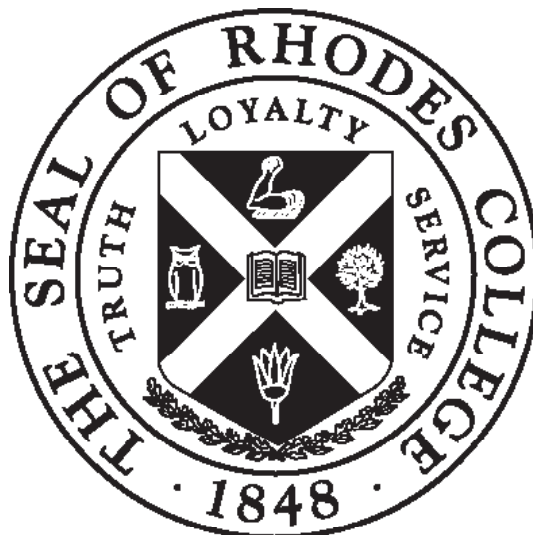
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Have any stories you think need a voice?
Comments/concerns?

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WITHIN THE GATES

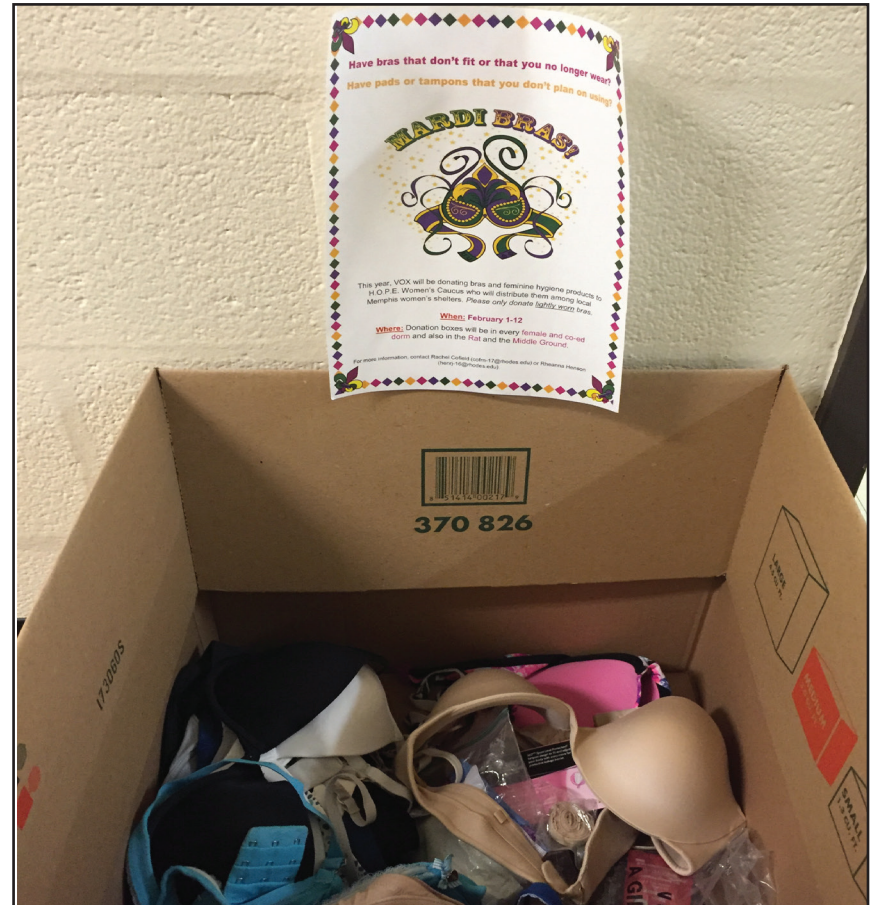
Mardi Bras: Not Your Typical Mardi Gras Handouts

BY ERICA SMYTHE '17
STAFF WRITER

Beginning the first of February, VOX, the Voices for Planned Parenthood group on campus, will set out a number of boxes for students to donate lightly-used bras and feminine hygiene products. These donations will then go to the H.O.P.E. Women's Caucus to benefit homeless and formerly homeless women that do not have the means to buy such "luxury" items. On average, a woman spends at least \$2500 on feminine hygiene products during her lifetime, which seems somewhat unfair for a biological function she cannot control. Rachel Cofield '17 and Rheanna Henson '16 decided to organize the project after attending a national Planned Parenthood event in Washington D.C. and participating in a workshop that mentioned the Mardi Bras drive. "While any donations made to homeless shelters are great, items such as bras and feminine hygiene products are often forgotten," explained Cofield, "[without] tampons

or pads, the women in these shelters may ruin the underwear that they do have, another item that is often not donated since one would need to purchase new underwear to donate them."

VOX asks that students only donate lightly used bras, meaning no gaping holes, exposed wiring or other imperfections that make the bra uncomfortable or non-functional. Additionally, no feminine hygiene products with exposed cotton will be accepted due to hygienic purposes; however, individually wrapped pads and tampons will be accepted. Don't currently have extra feminine hygiene products, or don't know where to find them? Have no fear! You can pick up a two-count box at the bookstore for \$2 or an 18-count for \$7.50. The Mardi Bras drive will continue through February 12 and will have donation boxes in the Rat by the tabling area, in the Middle Ground in the restroom alcove and in the laundry room of every female and co-ed dorm.



Career Fair!

Not sure what you want to do after graduation? Interested in networking with potential employers and companies? Come to the annual Rhodes Career Fair on Wednesday, February 10 from 2:30-5 p.m. in the BCLC. The best part? It is free to attend and highly encouraged. You won't want to miss this!

Summer/Fall Academic Internship Orientations:

Attend one of the four orientations to receive priority application status.

February 15, 4:30-5:30, Buckman 108

February 16, 4:30-5:30, Buckman 105

February 18, 4:30-5:30, Buckman 105

From the Commissioner...

The final two weeks of January led to some heavy spending by the Allocations Board! As student organizations scrambled to schedule their first events, the Board funded \$14,926.39-worth of well-planned events. As you get settled into the semester, we encourage you to look for signs around campus advertising such events! This puts the Allocations Board at \$115,895.41 on the year.

In other news, Earmark Reviews are approaching! When a group is "ear-

marked," it means that they receive a set amount of money from the Student Activity Fund, be it a percentage or a dollar amount, prior to the Board's spending any of the fund throughout the year. Currently, the Kinney Program, Rhodes Activities Board, Lecture Board and Rhodes Student Government all receive earmarks. Thus, their budgets will be reviewed this semester.

Each organization will present their current earmark, their preferred ear-

mark and their budget for the last two years to the Board. Throughout this process, the Allocations Board is tasked with multiple duties: evaluating the efficiency and impact of the organization, determining if appropriate and "lawful" spending has occurred and questioning if the funds are sufficient for the task of the organization.

This process has been notoriously dramatic throughout my time at Rhodes. I think it is hugely important for Ear-

mark Reviews to be as transparent as possible, though no results can be published until RSG has approved our decisions. Whether or not you are a member of these organizations, if you have any questions regarding the process or its outcomes, do contact me!

Sincerely,
Ally Limmer
Allocations Board Commissioner

WITHIN THE GATES

Scouting Descends Upon Rhodes

BY WARNER RAULSTON '19
STAFF WRITER

Last Saturday, two-dozen Boy Scouts, dressed in their Class-A uniforms and neckerchiefs (but mostly shorts and scout-related t-shirts because it was a Saturday after all), came from three states to Rhodes College to earn their Chemistry merit badge. Professors Dana Horgen and Will Eckenhoff, post-doctoral researcher Dr. Randall Binder of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the Rhodes chapter of the American Chemical Society organized the event, which was held in Kennedy Hall from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dr. Eckenhoff and Dr. Binder, along with myself, constituted at least three of the Eagle Scouts who participated in the event. This isn't the first time Dr. Binder has helped to "broaden the science horizon of local scouts," having played an active role in numerous workshops like this with scouts since he was a freshman in college. There is always a special feeling of enthusiasm among former scouts who seek to help the next generation of boys develop into the leaders they can become through scouting.

Professor Eckenhoff and Dr. Binder, along with numerous other post-docs from St. Jude and the Rhodes ACS volunteers, led the scouts through several labs and lecture sessions, teaching the scouts the basics of chemistry and laboratory protocol while allowing them to participate in several demonstrations of chemical properties. One of the high

points of the day was the career panel, where several individuals who have made careers in the field of chemistry came to emphasize the value that a background in chemistry can have when seeking employment.

I, having journeyed to many college campuses to earn various merit badges over the years, remember just how tedious such workshops can be. But the scouts who came to Rhodes were engaged and actively participated over the course of the lessons and labs. Chickasaw Council representative Ken Allen noted that this merit badge session was "one of the most engaging events of its kind that [he'd] seen—the kids really enjoyed it." Star Scout Nick Muskina of Troop 270 remarked that "the experience made education more interesting," a testament to the immense good that scouting can have on a young person's life as well as the dedication of the Rhodes and St. Jude researchers to the cause of scouting.

This was the first event of its kind here at Rhodes, but members of the chemistry department are already talking about sponsoring additional similar events in the future. Whether it be with a Girl Scout Troop or a coalition of homeschooled students who have a working understanding of chemistry but would stand to benefit from labs and demonstrations that are unavailable to them at home, Rhodes will continue to be a part of encouraging children to pursue careers in chemistry!

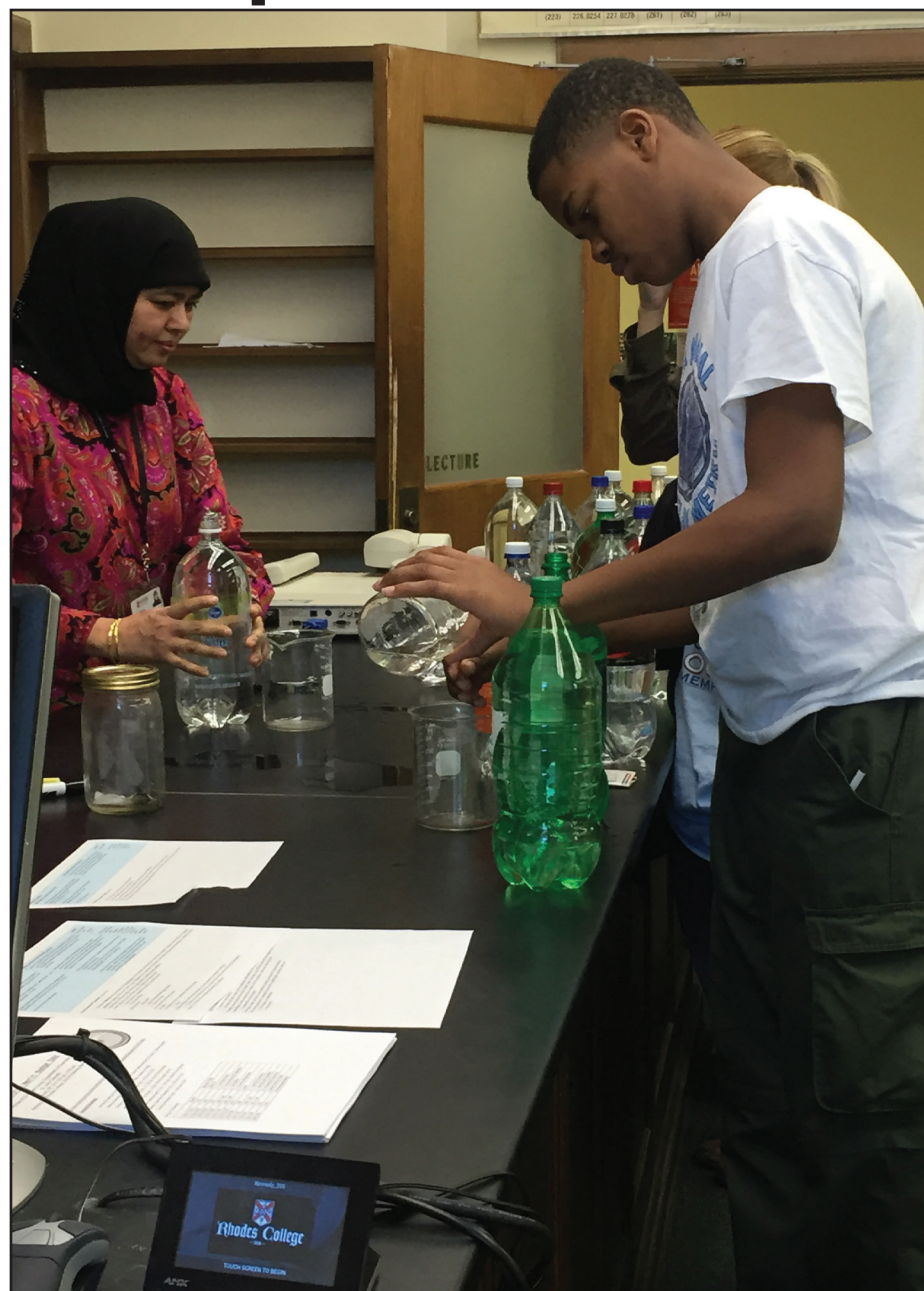


Photo by Ally Limmer

"Scouting Out Rhodes": Boys Scouts from throughout the region flocked to Rhodes College to learn about Chemistry and earn a badge.

Rhodes College Hires Charles Snyder as New HPA Advisor

BY JACK PATTON '18
STAFF WRITER

As the new Assistant Health Professions Advisor, Charles Snyder works with Dr. Jaslow to assist students interested in health-related careers. He helps students "prepare and apply for medical school and other health professions programs." Mr. Snyder also teaches Introductory Anthropology and Internship in Biology.

Before bringing his expertise to

Rhodes, Mr. Snyder did Health Professions Advising at Washington State University and also taught anthropology. Prior to holding that position, he worked at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Snyder specializes in medical anthropology which "uses anthropological methods to look at current health issues." Specifically, he does social epidemiology research, "looking at the social determinants of health." This semester, Mr. Snyder will earn his

Ph.D. in anthropology.

Mr. Snyder brought his wife and four young children with him to Memphis. His wife teaches business at the UofM, while their oldest child is only 11. Although they are a handful, Mr. Snyder enjoys having so many young kids because he is "constantly able to expose them to new things." Mr. Snyder's family also includes a couple of dogs, numerous fish and a bearded dragon. In his free time, Mr. Snyder enjoys walking the dogs, as well as playing "lots" of

video games. He also does research and writes – he recently had a book chapter published!

At Rhodes, Mr. Snyder enjoys the "social element" of the Rat. Unlike at his last school, lunch means eating with students and colleagues, even ones from other departments. Mr. Snyder encourages any students interested in a career in health – regardless of their major – to come by and chat so that he can offer advice and so that you can help him get to know Rhodes.

BEYOND THE GATES

The Tournées Film Festival Returns to Rhodes

BY ERICA SMYTHE '17
STAFF WRITER

This past Tuesday marked the beginning of the Tournées French Film Festival at Rhodes, hitting off the three-week-long celebration with the coming of age film *Bande de filles/ Girlhood*. Every year, the FACE Foundation, the founders of the Tournées festival, bring a wide variety of French films to more than 450 universities all over the United States. Advocates for the organization hope to emphasize both the diverse subject matter as well as the cinematic nuances seen in French film. The festival features both mainstream and experimental films that express the varied scope of French culture.

The third and final week of the festival features two films: the historical Franco-German drama *Parce que j'étais peintre/ Because I Was a Painter* and the 1959 black and white romantic drama *Hiroshima mon amour*. The festival will continue until February 10, showing films bi-weekly on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 7 p.m. in Blount Auditorium. Come experience French culture through film while taking a break from studying! Students of all languages welcome!

Last Burger on Earth (If You Finish It That Is)



"LBOE Deliciousness": The food is good and the portions are huge. Zoe and Ally approve.



Photos by Zoe

BY ALLY LIMMER '16 AND
ZOE LAULEDERKIND '18
EDITORS IN CHIEF

For the first installment of our new weekly column, we ate the Last Burger(s) On Earth. Early last Thursday evening on the gentrified Overton Square, we sauntered into LBOE greeted by a darkly lit bar at which sat the infamous math professor, Mouron. Vacant as it was, we were seated immediately by the double-persona-ed Zoe/Ellie waitress. (Her name was Ellie, we discovered via the check, but we maintain that she introduced herself as

"Zoe.")

Zoe/Ellie suggested the loaded fries, bragging "everyone who orders them loves them." According to common amateur food critic practice, we took her advice and ordered what turned out to be essentially McDonald's fries sprinkled with burnt bacon and a thin queso. Did we love them? Not particularly, but they weren't awful, and they're definitely not the last batch of loaded fries we'll try.

After we abandoned the appetizer, we ordered the last Californian burger with a bun and the last Caprese burger. The Californian burger was caked in

guacamole. Not hugely sure what else to say about that. Guacamole. The end. Congratulations, LBOE, you cracked the code. As for the Caprese, an Italian Spongebob-type fry cook conceived of this one. Although the pesto overpowered the rest of the concoction, this last Krabby Patty gets a solid 6.739 out of 9.3.

We evaluated the remnants, paid the bill and peaced out. Definitely not the last burgers we will ever have...on Earth, BECAUSE WE'RE GOING TO MARS!

Countdown to the New Hampshire Primary

BY WARNER RAULSTON '19
STAFF WRITER

I am writing this article before the Iowa Caucus, so I will say, "That crazy thing that just happened in Iowa the other day, I totally called it." I say this because not knowing the results in Iowa diminishes my ability to report on the status of the New Hampshire primary.

The state of the race on both sides of the political spectrum is relatively static, but there is a deeper story to tell when you look below the surface. Bernie Sanders leads Hillary Clinton by

13.9 points (53.4% to 39.5%) and has an excellent chance of winning the state regardless of his status in Iowa. When he inevitably does win there, you can expect political commentators to write it off as unimportant because Sanders is a resident of neighboring Vermont.

Only two democratic candidates from neighboring states have lost the New Hampshire primary: Ted Kennedy in 1980 when he was running against incumbent Jimmy Carter for the democratic nomination and Vermonter Howard Dean when he lost to John Kerry, a resident of another neigh-

boring state, Massachusetts. Regardless of what analysts will say about Sanders, a victory in New Hampshire for him would certainly create a sense of doubt over the inevitability of Clinton's campaign and lead to a boost in Sanders's national support.

The Republican side is less clear-cut than the Democratic race. Currently Donald Trump has 32.4% of likely voter support, nearly three times that of Ohio governor John Kasich who has 13.0%. But the combined support of the four "establishment" candidates is hypothetically enough to defeat Trump.

Kasich, Bush, Christie and Rubio have a combined support of 39.1%. Whether or not the establishment base in New Hampshire will be able to defeat Trump is based largely on whether or not any of these four candidates will drop out of the race, depending on how they perform in Iowa. But if they continue to run, they would certainly split the moderate Republican vote in New Hampshire, allowing Trump, victorious in the first two primary states, to sweep the rest of the statewide contests, and the nomination.

AROUND CAMPUS



Photo by Zoe

"Candy Bar in an Ash Tray": Ok, so many things to see here. There's the half eaten Butterfinger (but hey, free Nestle promotion code for the first person motivated enough to actually enter it) and then the pink-stained cig butt. Now I really wanna say that it's lipstick... but the color is too deep. It's undoubtedly blood. So now that ashtray is a biohazard, which is nice.



Photo by Zoe

"Crazy Dude Outside of SAE on Bid Day": First of all, mad props: he was by far the scariest active member on Saturday. I haven't been a pledge for years and when he was screaming "NO BID", I nearly shit myself. But also, control yourself buddy. If a pledge dies of fright, he won't be a very good DD, cig holder or whatever else y'all do.



Photo by Doug Fetterman

"Decapitated Head in a Tree": Sweet lord Jesus that was freaky. Miss Kim, you seem to have lost your body...and all life in your eyes... and I don't think the orange lipstick is doing you any favors. Now there are many many legitimate reasons for owning a disembodied head... but I can't think of any at the moment and I just want to close my own eyes without seeing her dead retinas in the back of my head. Please help.

SPORTS

Super Bowl, Bluff City Style

BY HAYLEY ROSENFELD '16
SATIRE EDITOR (STAFF WRITER)

Returning to the state that hosted the first ever Super Bowl, the Denver Broncos and Carolina Panthers will face off in Super Bowl 50 this Sunday at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif. This will be Carolina's second Super Bowl appearance and the Broncos' eighth. Far as the game might be from the Mid-South, Super Bowl 50 boasts multiple Memphis connections. It has been predicted that Bruno Mars will join Coldplay at the halftime show, meaning Kameron Whalum, a Memphis native and trombonist in Mars' band will also take the stage. Michael Oher, the Panthers' offensive player featured in *The Blind Side* is a Memphian, as is Broncos player Peyton Manning's wife.

Memphis is not short on places to watch the game and score great drink deals either. The Rec Room, B.B. King's, Huey's, Lafayette's, Celtic and Schweinehaus will be broadcasting the game and knocking down drink prices. The Flying Saucer downtown will also be showing the game and playing half-time trivia. And perhaps most importantly: all 60, 90 and 120-minute jumps at Sky Zone will be 50% off the entire day.

Of course, it is also possible to scream at the TV without leaving the comfort of campus: enjoy a burrito bowl and the Super Bowl all at once at the Lair. For those traveling back from Mardi Gras, no need to risk a speeding ticket high-tailing it back to Memphis; you might miss the commercials, but the game will be streaming via radio stations 105.3 FM and 870 AM out of New Orleans. Talk about a touchdown in the Delta Blues!



Study: Up to 74% of Students' Life Decisions Considered "Mistake" or "Haunting Regret"

BY MEAGHAN PICKLES '19
SATIRE WRITER

A recent study has found that a hefty majority of decisions made by Rhodes College students both on- and off-campus are followed by a mixture of sorrow, self-loathing and Catholic guilt.

"The vast majority of decisions I've made in my life can be attributed to bad timing, social awkwardness, procrastination, laziness or hazardous substances," said junior Chase Williams. "You could make a philosophical argu-

ment that I lack the decision-making skills and emotional stability to exercise what people know as 'free will.' The reckless decisions I will make in the next hour, for example, are already a mystery to me."

Students' dark, disturbing errors are not relegated to the weekend or "Thirsty Thursday," although those mistakes can most easily be spun as "too much fun" when talking to acquaintances the next day at the Rat. "While these regrets destroy the liver, weekday regrets destroy the soul," said jaded senior Patrick King while smok-

ing a pipe. "Yesterday afternoon at 2 p.m. I texted a girl I had hooked up with once 'Ay.' In the moment, typing those two letters gave me such a high, but I was not prepared for the devastating low that would follow."

When not taking a series of self-destructive risks both big and small, students spend time paying for previous mistakes with their dignity and health. "I am mystified by the hijinks I will surely get into today," said sophomore Amy Bradley. "Will I swipe right on the guy who sits behind me in Chemistry? Will I get caught up in the dra-

ma of Don Draper's complex personal life and watch six episodes of the critically-acclaimed series *Mad Men* when I have a paper due at midnight? These are all choices that I will complain about later to my friends, as if I were not in the driver's seat of my own life."

This study concluded that as a consequence of this pitiful chain of mistakes, students at the college have descended into a sort of emotional denial and will regularly assert things like "I'm learning so much about myself" or "I'm just figuring life out one step at a time."

THE BACK PAGE



Photo by Saad Khalid

BY ZOE LAULEDERKIND '18
EDITOR IN CHIEF

How do you feel about 8 a.m.'s?

Ever postponed taking a class just to avoid the dreaded 8 a.m. start time?

It's not unheard of, that's for certain.

But what if that 8 a.m. was a 7 a.m. on a Saturday, even worse right?

Unless, that 7 a.m. came with all the booze you can buy, jorts in every direction and a whole squadron of new friends without a single professor or les-

son plan.

According to the fraternities on campus, that sort of 7 a.m. is basically like Christmas.

Last Saturday at the break of dawn (i.e. 7 a.m. on a college campus post Friday night shenanigans), boys down the row from Pike all the way to Sig Nu broke out the Hawaiian shirts and Daisy Dukes, cranked up the regular party jams to full blast and overall raged in preparation for their soon-to-be pledges.

After approximately 2.5 hours of revelry, senior members of the fraternities made their way to the balcony above the FJ amphitheater while the pledges waited anxiously below.

IFC announced the bids, and the amphitheater inhabitants lined up when called frat-by-frat to run to their new houses.

Some houses provided frat flags for the pledges to carry as they ran; others needed no reminder of the brotherhood they pledged and raced with all their

might to the other active members anticipating their arrival.

And then...who knows what happened?

Sure, girls lined up and down the row to watch their friends and boyfriends become increasingly inebriated as the morning waged on, but no one went in those houses that morning except for the frat boys and their Christmas presents.

'Infinite Jest (Itself and Its Reputation) at Twenty

BY BEN LAVIANA '18
STAFF WRITER

As of February 1, its 20th anniversary has already past; its celebratory status streamers still loom with the promise of upcoming "special" editions—stately re-releases with newer covers and newer more-indulgent forewords that tell the reader how to feel about the piece prior to actually reading it—which one may expect to see others, or to be seen, reading it: Yes, *Infinite Jest* has re-entered the public conscious...though it can be debated whether it truly ever left. And make no mistake, it's a welcome homecoming, back to the forefront of recent praise-worthy American literature, though it seems, more often than not, that the novel itself in not what is being inviting back into our minds: for a novel so meticulous in its prose, world and character building, it's amazing how little of that is mentioned in recent retrospectives on the novel...

all of the talk is largely reserved for its reputation as a big, bold book and total tome for the hip and 'in-the-know' learned crowd—the mythos around its supposedly meaningful presence on one's bookshelf: cracked-spine or not.

Yes, *Infinite Jest* is a good, albeit inevitably flawed, book—though what we talk about when we talk about *Infinite Jest* is rarely the book in-itself: online one can find unironic blog posts regarding "6 ways to make people think you've read 'Infinite Jest'" and endless exasperated forum postings condemning the piece for its prose, length, excessive footnotes and other testaments to its perceived impenetrability (and therefore smartness), and one will find these standard responses nearly anywhere the presence of *Infinite Jest* is found...but here's a little secret: *Infinite Jest* is fairly accessible...one hardly needs to look beyond the text itself to find the answers to its secrets, as Wallace was clearly geared towards a

general audience, and its overwhelming continued commercial success confirms that—it's long, but taken page by page, never arduous. Like (arguable) protagonist Don Gately realizes later on in the book, though the then-perceived platitude dropped roughly 500 pages earlier: "That no single, individual moment is in and of itself unendurable" (204). It's not a difficult book, just so compared to other popular-fiction, sure; however this belief of its inaccessible nature in many ways has led to its continued commercial success: as our previous 6-step program confirms, it's 'cool' to appear to have read it, or at least own it. The novel has become a bookshelf symbol of sharp, fashionable intellectualism reflective of its owner (whether or not he's actually read it) when, in reality, *Infinite Jest* is a competent satire on American culture and its recent reliance on entertainment, one still relevant though dated in a few regards, along with a compelling investigation into

the nature of addiction and some lesser delves into other topics—and all that's at best...

While many times things with indefinite, boundless reputations are deserving of the groundwork of that esteem, it is so easy for the idea of that reputation to supersede the object of repute itself—and that seems to be the case with *Infinite Jest*, as its now-iconic tenth anniversary 'tennis-ball-green text on a blue gradient' spine lays idle on countless college bookshelves, there to impress others, and someday when it is picked it up, if it ever is, it'll be found the best way to be seen read in public, perhaps at a comfortable, hip coffee shop and, to its reader, become seen in the eyes of others as a Saint among the blind, just like it's now canonized author, and once it's over, the reader may be left with the predicament of dissonance, in which the actual novel read, compared to Platonic Ideal of the holy text promoted, was way off.