

**The Issues Explained:****Smoke shouldn't cloud new building**

A major issue on Rider's campus right now is whether smoking should be permitted in the new residence hall as well as the existing ones. In the next few weeks, a survey will be going out via E-mail to all of Rider's residents about the smoking policy. It will include questions such as whether or not smoking should be banned in all residence halls or just the new one. It will also ask those surveyed if they are a smoker or non-smoker.

There are a variety of reasons why smoking should be banned in the residence halls. Large universities such as Princeton and Penn State have already taken the necessary steps to ban smoking. However, since smoking has been permitted in dorms at Rider for so long, it is understandable there might be resistance to a policy change.

Currently, the residence hall rules permit smoking in individual dorm rooms at your roommate's consent. Although smoking is not allowed in the hallways, many residents say they still smell smoke in the hallways because it leaks under the doors. For this reason alone, smoking should definitely be banned in the new dorm, without reservation.

While convenience appears to be the most common reason to allow smoking, health and safety concerns are the leading reasons to ban it. The effects of secondhand smoke and the risk of fire should outweigh personal preference. The common good should be favored over the benefit of individuals. There is overwhelming evidence to support this.

First, it is common knowledge that smoking is a fire hazard. Smoking is the cause of thousands of apartment and dormitory fires each year. About 1,000 people die annually from fires started by smoking-related paraphernalia such as matches. Dorm fires have resulted in \$4.1 million of property loss annually. According to the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, statistics show that careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths in the U.S.

Secondly, the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA) has classified secondhand smoke as a Group A carcinogen, which means there is sufficient evidence that suggests it causes cancer in humans. When that smoke leaks under the doors, out in the hallways and in other people's rooms, it is damaging their health.

Statistics indicate secondhand smoke increases the number and severity of asthma attacks in about 200,000 to 1 million asthmatic children. Secondhand smoking causes diseases such as lung cancer in healthy non-smokers. It has been proven that separating smokers and non-smokers within the same air space may reduce, but does not eliminate, the exposure of non-smokers to secondhand smoke.

Researchers suggest one solution to the problems of secondhand smoke is to make your home smoke-free. Any family member can develop health problems related to secondhand smoke. A smoke-free home protects your family, your guests and even your pets. Therefore, smoke-filled dorms place the health of all students at risk. Also, many students are allergic to smoke or have asthma.

Perhaps designating smoke-free dorms is a solution. For the most part, smoking should be banned in the residence halls, especially the new one. At the very least, the "freshness" of the new facility should be maintained as a smoke-free environment.

In the country today, there is a movement toward a no tolerance policy in regard to smoking in public places. Smoking is viewed as an intrusive activity that violates the rights of non-smokers. States like New York have already banned smoking in public places. I think the answer for Rider is simple: Smoke free is the way to be.



Nicholas Ballasy

**THIS WEEK IN HISTORY ...**

**MAR. 13, 1781**

The planet Uranus is discovered.

**MAR. 14, 1879**

Albert Einstein is born.

**MAR. 17, 2005**

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

**Letter to the Editor:****A tribute to Dan Rather**

After 24 years in the anchor chair of the CBS Evening News, Dan Rather will step down. Known by many as "the hardest working journalist," he will be sorely missed (CBSNews.com). Yet, the recent debacle over the authenticity of the Bush National Guard memos threatens to overshadow his legacy. Both loyal supporters and especially his critics should reexamine and reflect on his extraordinary career as one of America's top journalists.

Working for the Associated Press and local radio stations, he began his work with CBS in 1962. Rather entered the national spotlight with his coverage of President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 (CBSNews.com). Following that national tragedy, he covered numerous events of the Civil Rights Movement. In addition, he has also interviewed every president since Dwight D. Eisenhower. He covered President Nixon's trip to China and even the violent clash of pro-democracy Chinese in Tiananmen Square in 1989 (CBSNews.com).

Not only did Rather conduct the first post Gulf War interview with Saddam Hussein, but he interviewed Hussein again in February 2003, prior to the American-led invasion of Iraq (CBSNews.com). Heavily criticized by the media following the interview, Rather stood firm amongst the controversy of interviewing one of the world's most notorious dictators.

One of Rather's finest hours was on September 11, 2001, when he provided non-stop coverage of our national tragedy without interruption for the next few days. At times he was moved to tears but maintained the utmost professionalism.

I tuned into Rather on Election Night 2004, and he once again provided marathon coverage well into the next day. Rather maintained his accurate, balanced and fair minute-by-minute updates throughout the night. More importantly, other news networks predicted a Bush victory in Ohio before most precincts had even reported. For this reason, Rather proceeded with caution and did not declare victory for either candidate in the state.

Announcing his decision to step down as anchor of the CBS News at the end of November 2004 did not stop Rather from maintaining his high-paced journalism track record. Since that time, Rather has covered the devastating East Asia tsunami. Within days, he traveled to the region and provided the most current information for his evening news viewers. He also reported from Baghdad during the January 30th Iraqi elections.

I am most proud of Rather for the way he handled the CBS News memo controversy. When he realized the documents were not legitimate, he took personal responsibility. Rather states, "We did use the documents. We made a mistake in judgment and for that I am sorry. It was an error that was made, however, in good faith and in the spirit of trying to carry on a CBS News tradition of investigative reporting without fear or favoritism" (CBSNews.com). How many other journalists do you know that have come forward and admitted their errors? I simply do not know any.

As a student looking to become a political journalist, I look to Dan Rather as both an inspiration and the epitome of what every journalist should aspire to be. His motto is, "It's not about how many times you get knocked down. It's about how many times you get up fighting." That's the contentious spirit I will miss when I continue to tune into the CBS Evening News.

Jamie Papapetros  
Freshman

**'DANCE TEAM' FROM PAGE 8**

the University House basement.

In fact, for the Rider Dance Team's final show at the end of last year, there was no available space for the team to practice, so they had to resort to practicing in the house basement of a fraternity that was nice enough to lend out the space. As if this wasn't enough, they have also had to practice on the outside basketball courts in the cold. Why cause the team the aggravation and bother of scoping out inconvenient places for practice when they could just be given a designated space?

Maurer Gym has open space for wrestling, cheer leading and aerobics classes, but doesn't seem to want to make time available for the Rider Dance Team's practices, who wouldn't want to use the space until after these organizations are done with it anyway. Their practices are at night, so why can't they use this space then?

Practices for the team are so critical because of the large amount of functions that they are asked to perform at. For instance, this past weekend the team was asked to perform at the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference games in Buffalo, which they were more than happy to

be a part of, but were they offered reimbursement money for transportation, hotel expenses or food? No. By the time the school decided to fund a bus to take students to Buffalo, it was already too late. The Rider Dance Team had already booked a hotel and made arrangements of their own.

I don't think I am just speaking for myself when I say that the Rider Dance Team is a vital organization on Rider's campus. For a team that is so dedicated to the school and its daily events (they practice every night for almost two and a half hours), I find it very unfair that they are not given as much support from the administration as they should. Because of the size of their budget, they are considered a club and not an athletics team, which would probably improve their chances of receiving more support from the administration.

The funding that the finance board has recently agreed to provide for the team is enough for shirts, but not much else. Due to the incredible amount the team does for the school, performing at all functions they are asked to, and the energy and spirit they bring to them, I ask, is this really fair?