

## Lending a Hand: Family, an important holiday tradition

With exams going until December 22 this year many students are getting home fairly late to begin celebrating the holidays with their families and friends. The added stress of studying for finals leaves little time to get in the holiday spirit. It seems that people are worn out and tired. People are stressed, irritable and grumpy. I can't really blame them but I think that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Before you know it exams will be over and many people will be spending time back home or with relatives. This is good news for some and bad news for others.

For some students, being at home is where a whole new stress begins. The readjustment of being home for a whole month and a half hits. Students who are used to living on their own find themselves back in their parent's houses under their parent's rules. It's rough.

I know that being home with family does not exactly make everyone want to deck the halls or light the menorah. An even worse prospect for some students is the thought of a bazillion hours in holiday traffic. There you are trapped in the back seat between Aunt Gina and your little brother who hates everyone because he is 14, on the way to some other relatives house to have a "very merry time." I realize that this is what causes people to become crazy. This is why people fight around the holidays and say things that they don't mean.

There is the added expectation that parents have about their son or daughter coming home from school. They probably miss you and can't wait to have you back home. When students finally get home they just want to relax and hang out with friends. Getting up for breakfast with mom and dad on Sunday morning is not always the top priority. Quality time sleeping-in probably appeals more to students.

A possible solution to different expectations that parents and family have compared to what the average expectations that students have is to compromise. Consider where your par-

ents are coming from. Understand that they just want to spend time with you because they love you! Although spending time with friends that you have missed or sleeping-in is important, chances are you will not remember sleeping as much as you might remember spending time with your family during the holidays.

I came to this realization last year when my dad was griping about going up to Conn. to see my crazy Aunt and her family as well as my grandparents. He said something to the effect of, "We always go up there and why can't they come down for once?"

To this my mom said, years from now when your parents are gone and we are home spending Christmas here, you are not going to be thinking about the amount of traffic that you sat in to see them. What you will be thinking about it how much you miss them and wish that they were here to spend the holidays with you.

Although I don't really enjoy sitting in a lot of traffic through New York or sleeping on the pull-out couch I realize that going to see them is important too. So even though it might seem like your parents are torturing you by making you stay in to help with chores before company comes or whatever it is they might ask of you, try to compromise. In the end you will have the memories of being together with your crazy family for the holidays. You will most likely not remember all the gifts you received or the amount or dishes you had to wash after everyone left. You decide what's important. For me I know where I will be this Christmas Eve, stuck between my brother, Peter and the dog in the back seat of the car on my way up to Connecticut.



Melissa Borotto

### The Optimistic Pessimist:

## Trying times await Americans in new year

The holidays are upon us. Christmas lists, family functions and New Year's plans permeate most people's thoughts. However, there are other things looming on the horizon at the end of 2004 besides fruitcake and sing-a-longs of Auld Lang Syne; things of a more depressing and grim nature.

At this time last year, it seemed America was mopping up the remnants of resistance after a successful campaign to topple Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in Iraq. U.S. Marines had just dragged Hussein out of his spider-hole on Dec. 13 and were nearing, the general public thought, the discovery of Hussein's cache of weapons of mass destruction. Things weren't looking that bad.

This year, the situation has changed a bit. After a grueling election in November, it seems the country is in a state of shock as the death toll in Iraq reaches 929 for 2004

(1275 total) with December only barely begun and the war continuing on with no clear end in sight. The future is very uncertain, and very near. 2005 may prove to be a landmark year in United States history, one that may shape the future of this nation forever.

We all heard all of the down and dirty stuff about both candidates during the election race, and there were a lot of negative things said about the President. What happens to all of those concerns and questions now? They don't just go away, we have to live with them for four more years.

Where do we go from here? That's a powerful question and many Americans seem to be asking it for a bevy of different reasons.

Some may be concerned about stem cell research, the most promising medical frontier since vaccination. Others,

especially those currently in college, might be worried about a draft being reinstated sometime in the next four years.

Now, with the death of Yasser Arafat just after the election on Nov. 11, the Middle East has grown even more unstable. Troops are being spread thin and the ones over seas are growing uneasy.

The only consensus among these many different concerns is that the next presidential term will prove to be a very decisive one in American history and the future of the next generation. We all must be continually vigilant and ready for the trials that Americans must face in this time of utter turmoil and constant uneasiness.



David Maccar

## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY ...

### DEC. 11, 1620

One hundred and three Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock.

### DEC. 12, 1800

Washington, D.C. is established as the capital of the United States.

### DEC. 14, 1503

Nostradamus is born.

### DEC. 15, 1939

*Gone With the Wind* premieres in Atlanta.

### DEC. 16, 1770

Ludwig van Beethoven is born.

## Looking to the Future: Tourists on the moon

Lately the future has been looking bleak. The U.S. death toll in Iraq has surged to a staggering 136 in November alone, Social Security is depleting and the job market is still dim at best. Scanning MSNBC's website for good news not pertaining to Paris Hilton or Britney Spears seemed pointless until I came upon a small story about a vacation idea with a strange twist.

Preparations are being made for the first tourist trip around the moon where private vacationers will be able to purchase tickets for a chance to slingshot around Earth's biggest satellite. Granted, tickets will start anywhere from \$60-\$100 million and passengers will not actually land on the moon itself; however the milestone should not be so quickly overlooked. Now, more than ever before, reaching for the moon is a feasible aspiration.

Constellation Services International's plan calls for a voyage that takes passengers into orbit in existing Russian Soyuz ships then links up with a booster from an international space station. The booster powers the Soyuz out of Earth's orbit then falls away as the Soyuz rounds the moon and returns to Earth in about a week's time. Prices are expected to lower by using as many existing technical components as possible and while it all seems unbelievable, that's nothing new to the American "imagination."

The world's fixation with flight has been inundated with disbelief from the very beginning. Prior to Orville Wright's groundbreaking take-off in 1903, people throwing around the idea of flying human beings would be given about the same strange looks that someone would get today arguing they had figured out a way to beam you aboard the Starship Enterprise. And yet, it happened.

Later, Capt. "Chuck" Yeager's flight in 1947 would be the first to kick its heels at the "absolutely unbreakable" sound barrier before Neil Armstrong, "Buzz" Aldrin and Michael Collins defied all reason whatsoever and actually *walked on the moon* in their 1969 Apollo 11 mission.

And now, we're preparing to send private citizens into space. Sure, people can laugh and say that it will never happen, that the average Joe will never be able to travel the lunar orbit in the same way that a businessman can drive from Philadelphia to Chicago or fly from New York to Hong Kong, but they'd be just as foolish and shortsighted as those that said Lindbergh would never make it across the Atlantic.

We are on the brink of a milestone with, literally, astronomical possibilities. If we can charter trips to the moon, just imagine what we'll accomplish next. The future is a bright one after all, and for proof, all you have to do is look up and shoot for the moon.



Vincent Civitillo