



# Pirates Invade Caltech

## Seniors Abandon Classes in Unprecedented Day of Ditching



Photo by Josh Gutman

The above 39 foot by 46 foot Jolly Roger was unfurled on Wednesday, May 17th, as part of a stack for this year's Ditch Day. The tradition grew over most of the 20th Century and continues to evolve today. At the core of the modern tradition, seniors prepare elaborate stacks in which the underclassmen participate during the day. Recent stacks range from breaking through cement doors to completing day-long scavenger hunts. More photographs are available on pages 4 and 5.

## Dabney Does Drop Day Despite Difficulties

BY: ANNA HISZPANSKI

Despite numerous setbacks, Dabney successfully hosted its annual Drop Day Party this past Saturday, May 20th. However, the planning and building for the party did not come without trouble.

Originally slated to be held at St. Luke's Hospital the weekend after second term's drop day, the Darbs had to reschedule the party to third term due to filming at the hospital which overlapped the party.

However, the double-booking was not realized until after planning for the party had already begun and DJs had been booked.

"Some of the DJ's were very

unhappy about [the cancellation], most notably Nommo Ogo, a group of DJ's who had spun at the Drop Day [parties]... for the last three or four years," wrote Dabney House President, Jeff Kranski, in an email response. "As they had already made arrangements to come down all the way from Alaska to play here, they had to cancel their plans. They have not, to this date, returned any further attempts to get in touch with them...."

In addition to the problem with scheduling, Dabney had to completely overhaul its preparations when the house was informed that if the party was to be held at St. Luke's Hospital, it would have to end by 10pm.

"[One] requirement [was that]

all the music end at 10pm and that the final bus... leave by 11pm," wrote Kranski. "As most parties don't even start until 10pm, this was clearly an impossible requirement to meet."

With the date of the party only a month away, the Darbs looked for other viable locations. Steele House was a top choice, but the All-Sports Banquet was scheduled to be held there the day after the party, thus leaving inadequate time to remove the construction from the party.

Tom Mannion, Assistant VP of Campus Life, offered his backyard as the location of the All-Sports Banquet, thereby allowing Dabney to have their party at Steele House.

However, due to miscommuni-

cations, Dabney did not receive confirmation that they could host their party at Steele until nearly two weeks before the party.

"Had the location of the party been uncertain for even another day or two, Dabney would not have had a true Drop Day this year since we would not have had nearly enough time to do construction..." wrote Kranski. "Our backup plan was to simply buy a bunch of liquor and beer and hold a big party, though not an inter-house level party. This was a very real possibility within Dabney and one that I worked very hard to avoid as I [felt] that it would be a disappointment to a good number of Techers...."

The Darbs' determination to host a real Drop Day Party, how-

ever, overcame the difficulties. Many members of the house spent the majority of their days for the past week at Steele building.

"We got a lot built in basically four or five days," said Dabney sophomore and Social VP Zac Lizer.

"I feel we [did] a spectacular job on the party, thanks to the hard work of many of our freshmen and upperclassmen, regardless of the fact that we put it together in only two weeks," wrote Kranski.

With all the difficulties and postponements involved with the party this year, sophomore Aaron Hoffer summed the feelings of many in Dabney House: "I'm glad it finally happened."

IHC Explains:  
South House Update

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# Last Gasps of Track Chaps Has Fast Laps Back-to-Back

BY: MARK EICHENLAUB

Saturday the 13th, a few die-hard members of the Caltech track team (not including myself) concluded their season with a post-conference meet at Occidental. They represented the fleetest of the fleet, the jumpiest of the jumpy, and the most dashing of those who dash.

Jeremy Leibs and Helen Tai competed in the hurdles in hopes of qualifying for the national championships. Although neither of them met the qualifying mark, Helen improved her own school record to 15.19 seconds. Helen broke this record repeatedly throughout the year. Her improvement this season has been a testament to her dedication over four years at Caltech, as well as a testament to, like, being really fast.

Both hurdlers ended their collegiate careers with the meet. Two-time conference champion Leibs later remarked that he can begin masters competition in only thirteen years. This is a man who plans for the future – and is good at arithmetic.

It was a high-quality meet, and after the hurdles I spent a lot of time being wowed by the performances of people much faster than myself. (Embarrassingly, some of them were female. Good thing I wasn't racing. I do not get beaten by females.) As the sun set, the main attraction dawned (see how poetic that was? (*Ed: no*)).

The men's 4x400 team of Matt Kiesz, Stuart Ward, Patrick Boyle, and Tim Tirrell set out on a mission to break a seventy year old record. (That is, "record that had stood for seventy years", not "record for seventy-year olds", and not "record for seventy year-olds", both of which I imagine would be rather weak, because old people are slow and can't hold their pee in, and seventy-year-olds just drool a lot and you have to slap them on the back to make them burp or else they explode,



Kiesz, Boyle, Ward, and Tirrell don't need dentist appointments.

which is not helpful during a relay race, and incidentally makes them difficult to get through airport security.) The record they sought to break was 3:19.0, set in 1936 by McLean, Smith, Snelling, and Creal. Jolly good fellows they were, too.

All four runners were in good form. Three of the team scored points in the 400m final at SCI-AC Conference Championships, while Kiesz had scored points in the 800m, which is twice as good. Entering the meet, the team had struggled to put together four top-notch performances in the same relay this year.

In 2005, the team ran 3:21. At the beginning of 2006, with all the relay runners returning, the record seemed sure to fall. Sadly, (for us runners anyway, you probably aren't sad about it, so read that as "Ambiguously unemotionally") several of our sprinters endured injuries throughout the season, and as the championships neared, the team had run no faster than 3:27. At the conference championships, they all stepped it up a notch to clock 3:23. The next week, at Claremont, (during a race held there – they didn't go to Claremont just for fun), they improved marginally to 3:22. The

team was putting it all together, but time was running out.

This final 4x400 at Occidental was a high-stakes race, despite involving no horses. It was the last chance of the year to break the record. If that wasn't enough pressure, Ward, Boyle, and Tirrell are all seniors who were competing in their final collegiate race. Considering the talent those three represent, we knew that if the record didn't fall that day, it might well be another seventy years before we could challenge it again. And by that time we'd all be nine years old, which would suck.

The gun fired and Kiesz shot out of the blocks like a frightened gazelle, which essentially he was, except the gazelle ran on two legs and didn't have (big) horns. Because Kiesz had the inside lane, all the other runners were spread out in front of him, but his confidence held.

He kicked all the way in (kicked means "ran fast"; this was no Jackie Chan maneuver) and handed the baton off to Ward. Leaning around the first turn, Ward passed a slower runner and ripped off his lap, passing the stick to Boyle right at 1:41. The pace was for 3:22, just a bit too slow, but the final two runners would get running starts, as opposed to Kiesz

having to come out of blocks.

At this point, I was sprinting back and forth across the infield of the track so that I could watch the race on both the backstretch and the homestretch. I felt strongly that if I could scream very loudly at our runners twice per lap rather than once, they would run faster. I proved myself correct when Boyle handed off 2:30 into the race. Tim Tirrell was our final hope to chop off the seconds we needed. He threw himself into the anchor leg with reckless abandon. (Again a metaphor. Literally, his abandon had some modest amount of reck in it.) Some 48.2 seconds later, he crossed the finish line.

The Caltech runners exploded in celebration. They hugged and screamed and jumped and whooped. This team had chased the record for two years. Always, it danced just outside their grasp, taunting them before hopping away, sniggering. But underneath the bright halogen lights of the Occidental track, whipping around broad turns and whistling down quick straightaways, these four men stopped the waiting, the frustration, the suspense, and most of all the clock – in 3:18.30.

Sorry, McLean & Co., but records, like necks of henchmen in a Van Damme movie, are made to be broken. As the meet ended, our assistant coach Ian "Ian" Shapiro finished things off by running an impressive 15:38 5000m, utilizing a fast last lap to ensure he beat my best time for the event. What a jerk. As I jogged with him after the race, I reflected on the season.

Some of us had finished on a high note, some on a low. The 4x400 team enjoyed a storybook ending. For me and Ian, it was a satisfying one that left us hungry to return next year. For Helen and Jeremy, it was a bittersweet mix of running well, but missing lofty goals. For a few, the end itself had simply come and gone, a mundane anticlimax that marked a stopping point, not a resolution. But a track season is not about

how it all ends.

This year, I served as a captain for the team, and what I loved most about the experience was that we had more team unity than I had seen in my previous two years here. We trained together, competed together, joked together, ate together, and partied together. Together, we strove and excelled and accomplished things we couldn't alone. For me, the end of the season was not my final race four weeks ago, nor the team's final triumphant relay. The end was in the photo collage we gave our head coach Julie at the end of the year – an amalgamation of the year's memories. My hope is that those memories will last our lifetimes, along with their greater genesis – the friendships we forged together.

In track, like any other sport, the athletes tend to catch the glory while the true driving force behind the team – its coaches – remains in the background. Julie, our head coach, spends countless hours working for our team and making us what we are. Her dedication to her athletes shows in every practice. Scott, our distance coach, always knows what we need: whether that's a joke, some inspiration, or, most commonly, an extra set of intervals.

Ian, our mid-distance coach, not only coaches us but trains right along with us through the toughest workouts. Brian, a new addition to our coaching staff this year, has been more than just a pole vault coach. His pithy advice on life and whatnot always resonates with me. Justin, our throws coach, not only taught many of our team completely new disciplines, but also kindly refrained from skewering me with a javelin all year.

And so thank you to my coaches, to my teammates, and to everyone who supports the track team and athletics at Caltech. We might not always win (or ever win, come to think of it), but at least if we lose we'll mock ourselves in print afterwards. Until next year...

## Blast from the Past

### The Very Big Stupid

*The Tech takes a trip down memory lane with these two editorials, originally published in 2001. They both express fear that changes to Caltech would erode its unique culture in coming years. Have those fears been born out?*

BY: CHRIS ELION

If you've been reading the Tech for the past few weeks, you've probably noticed a trend. Recently, the administration seems determined to get rid of the few things that make Caltech unique and tolerable. Parking spaces, health insurance, and little things like course catalogs have all been targeted. In a few weeks, the Task Force on Undergraduate Residence Life will present its proposal for changes to the House system, and some of these will certainly be changes for the worse.

One of the frequent justifications given for these recent changes is that many other universities do things a different way. Other schools don't let freshmen park on campus, so we don't need to. Other schools don't provide health insurance to their undergrads, so we don't need to. They have a high tuition, so we should raise ours too, even though we just received the largest donation in history.

While the administration is busy getting rid of benefits that other

schools don't have, they seem to be forgetting a few of the bad parts that are unique to Caltech. At other schools, more than 30% of the students are women. At other schools, students don't consider taking "only" five classes to be a light course load. Life at Tech is so terrible that crippling depression is a perfectly appropriate name for a comic strip, not a reason to see a psychiatrist.

If the current trends continue, I predict a pretty bleak future. All of the positive things that differentiate Caltech from the alternatives will be gone, but the tons of work and frustration will still be here. Why, then, would anybody want to come here? I don't know about anyone else, but I'll be telling the brutal truth to all of the pre-fresh this year. Donations from alumni is sure to take a huge hit too. If Tech didn't give anything to you (besides emotional scars), why should you give anything back to Tech?

Now, I'll admit, some of this is overreaction. The outcry over health insurance has prompted the administration to rethink its decision, and some students are now on the committee that will decide the final policy. But this sort of thing is likely to continue, and we need people to complain every time that they try to sneak something by us. So speak up, or else the efforts to make Caltech like "other schools" will make us worse than all of them.

### Does Caltech Care About Us? (2001)

BY: JIALAN WANG

Does Caltech care about its undergraduates? Recent decisions regarding budget cuts, health care, the Ricketts firepot, and parking have tested the conviction of those of us who still think so and have given more ammunition to those who are discontented. Timing, in this case, seems to have been of the essence. Not only have several major changes been announced in close succession, but they also come against the backdrop of the largest donation ever to a university.

Of course, it is not fair to simply use the Moore gift as a reason Caltech should allocate more funding to undergraduates. However, its symbolic influence is powerful and magnifies the devastation on morale. It is difficult to keep believing that Caltech cares when the institute receives unprecedented generosity as our health insurance is slashed and when we see new buildings being built all around us as our own living environment continues to decay. Some of the gift is rumored to be dedicated to the renovation of the student houses, but now many students doubt that more than a small fraction will ever trickle down to us.

The lack of student participation or even consultation in the

decisions also magnifies their impact. Committees have been formed regarding health care and parking, but it will be at best difficult to achieve a reversal of decisions that have already been made.

Other universities would not even give a thought to student involvement, but Caltech was supposed to be different. As advertised, students are supposed to be treated like intelligent adults who are given the freedom and responsibility to influence the decisions affecting them.

As the nation enters economic recession, we would certainly understand the need for budget cuts, and we might even have suggestions to make the best of the new budget. However, not only were students not given the chance to influence recent changes, but the existence of similar policies at other universities was used as justification for both the health care and parking decisions.

This sort of duplicity not only undermines many administrators' genuine efforts to distinguish Caltech from more authoritarian universities, but is against the very nature of the Caltech honor code. Even if the same decisions were made, having student involvement before the decisions were made would have lessened our dissatisfaction instead of adding disenfranchisement to our list of grievances.

I think the problem is not that

administrators explicitly intend to exploit the undergraduates, but that our values cannot be reconciled with a business strategy. Caltech's main purposes as an institute are to foster world-class science and produce world-class scholars. This includes maintaining an undergraduate population, but we are just one of its many constituents.

Campus-wide decisions are made to "maximize utility" with the resources available, and words like "bottom line" and "cash flow" were undoubtedly thrown around during decision-making. However, the magic of the undergraduate experience does not fit into that equation. One budget cut or one fewer freedom is not enough to destroy that magic, so it is just treated as a constant.

But if each year a few friendships are never made because freshmen don't have cars to go to Tommy's, and a few more people have to drop out because they can't cope with medical problems and school at the same time, the effects of these decisions propagate. If decisions like these continue to be made, quietly and gradually, something beautiful and extraordinary will become prosaic. If our way of life is to continue, someone along the chain of command has to see the difference between strict economics and intangible assets.

# The Outside World

BY: MARISSA CEVALLOS

## Bush Visits India, Pakistan in Attempt to Ease Tensions in Asia

President Bush visited India and Pakistan this week in an attempt to decrease tensions between the two nations and improve U.S. relations in South Asia.

Security was heavy at both locations, and some protests and riots occurred, despite the fact that both nations are considered U.S.-friendly. The Pakistani government has allied itself with the U.S. in the 'war on terror' and 71 percent of Indians reported a favorable perception of America. The protestors are primarily Muslims upset with Bush for his actions in Iraq.

During Bush's visit, the U.S. and India approved a plan to open some Indian nuclear facilities to inspectors and increase economic ties between the two nations. India has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and refuses to limit possible production of nuclear weapons.

## Hamas Rebuffs Russia's Call to Recognize Israel

Hamas, the militant group that recently won control of the Palestinian parliament, sent a delegation to Moscow to meet with Russian leaders this week.

Previously no nation had recognized Hamas, which is considered a terrorist group by Israel, the European Union and the United States. Russian President Vladimir Putin did not meet with the Hamas leaders in order to limit protests by Israel. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

and other Russian lawmakers, as well as Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II will meet with the group.

Hamas refused the Russian request that it recognize Israel as a sovereign nation. Many nations are concerned that Russia has stepped forward and recognized Hamas as a legitimate political organization, breaking the international front against the group. On Thursday, South Africa also invited Hamas for talks, further weakening the international stance against Hamas.

## Bush's Approval/Disapproval Ratings Near All-Time Lows/Highs

Polls showed Bush had a 38 percent approval rating and a 60 percent disapproval rating this week. Nearly sixty percent of those polled thought Bush wasn't managing the government effectively, and that he was not paying attention to what his administration was doing, and 73 percent believed big business had too large an influence on President Bush.

The recent internal disturbances in Iraq, which inspired a ban on all civilian vehicles, contributed to doubt about Bush's plans in foreign policy. Reports that Bush was unaware of a deal to place a Dubai-based company in control of several American ports, as well as disapproval of the plan by most citizens has also hurt Bush's numbers.



## Dozens of Congregations Leave Episcopal Church Due to Ordination of Homosexual Bishop

Episcopalian congregations have been leaving the Episcopal Church, the American branch of the Anglican Church of England, due to its acceptance of gay bishops.

The Episcopal Church, a Protestant sect that allows priests of both genders to marry, elevated Bishop Gene Robinson, who has a same sex partner, to lead the diocese of New Hampshire. Two of the five candidates for Bishop of California are also openly homosexual.

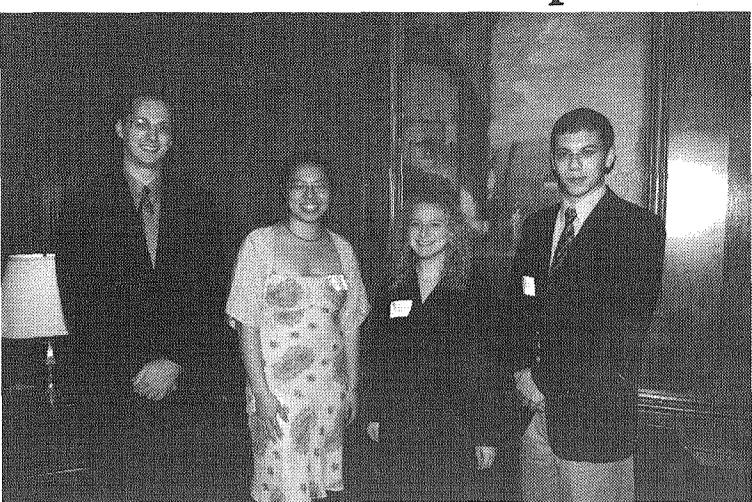
Churches have been changing their allegiance to African and South American branches of the Anglican Church that condemn homosexuality as immoral and banned by the Bible. So far more than 36 churches have left, but the national Episcopal Church is not worried, comparing this exodus to the situation 30 years ago when the church decided to accept female priests.

## Congressmen Sentenced to Over Eight Years in Federal Prison

Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham of California received the highest sentence ever given to a former member of congress for taking 2.4 million dollars in bribes from at least three defense contractors. The charges were for conspiracy to commit bribery, mail fraud, wire fraud, and two separate cases of tax evasion. The maximum sentence would have been 10 years, but was reduced somewhat due to Cunningham's age, health and military service, and could be further reduced should he continue to cooperate with authorities.

# Announcements 2006 Noland Leadership Award

Photo by Bob Paz



Ryan Farmer, Meng-Meng Fu, Rebecca Adler, and Matthew Walker were awarded the 2006 Robert L. Noland Leadership Award at a dinner presentation in the Athenaeum Library on May 17th. The Robert L. Noland Lead-

ership Award is for outstanding Caltech students who have demonstrated exceptional leadership abilities and have encouraged and supported others in realizing their own leadership capabilities.

Cunningham received cash and gifts to in exchange for influence in his decisions on a powerful subcommittee that approves spending for defense programs. He bought a mansion, yacht, Rolls-Royce and condominium near Washington with the money.

## Patriot Act Renewal Passes Senate, Receives Support in Congress

The extension of George W. Bush's anti-terror law, decried by some as an attack on civil liberties, passed the Senate and is likely to be approved by Congress on Tuesday.

The USA Patriot act would expire on March 10th without renewal, but with some minor changes it seems likely the bill will pass. The approval of the bill indicates that Bush still has strong support in Congress, despite some conservatives speaking out against the President as midterm elections approach.

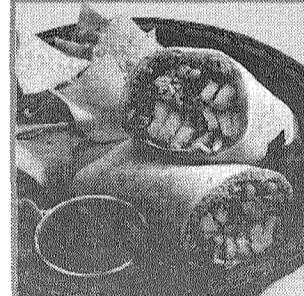
The renewed version of the bill includes three changes, allowing individuals to challenge a requirement to not tell anyone if they have been subpoenaed in a terrorist investigation, eliminates a requirement to tell the FBI about any lawyers consulted about National Security Records, and states that most libraries are not required to give up information about suspected terrorists.

Compiled from the BBC, CNN, MSNBC and Yahoo News.

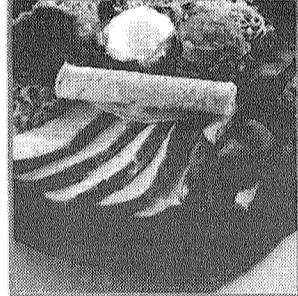
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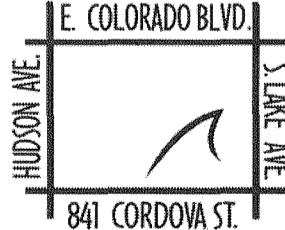
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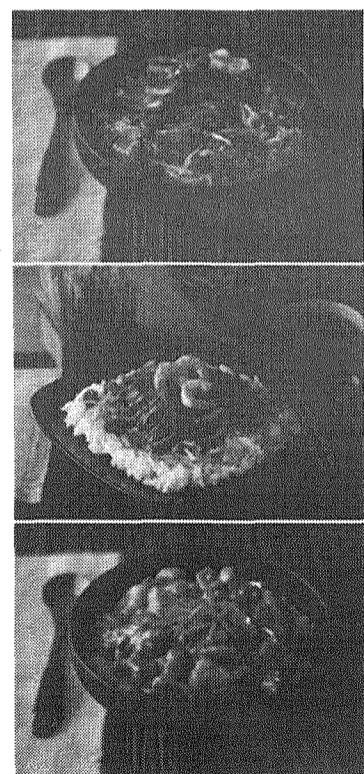
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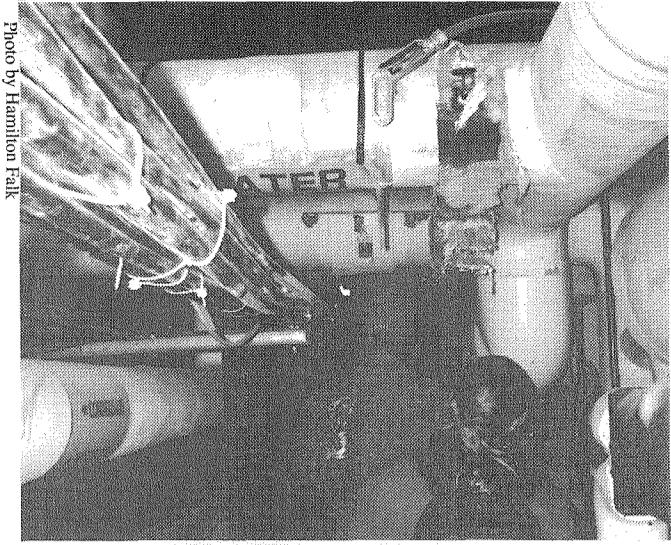


Photo by Hamilton Falk

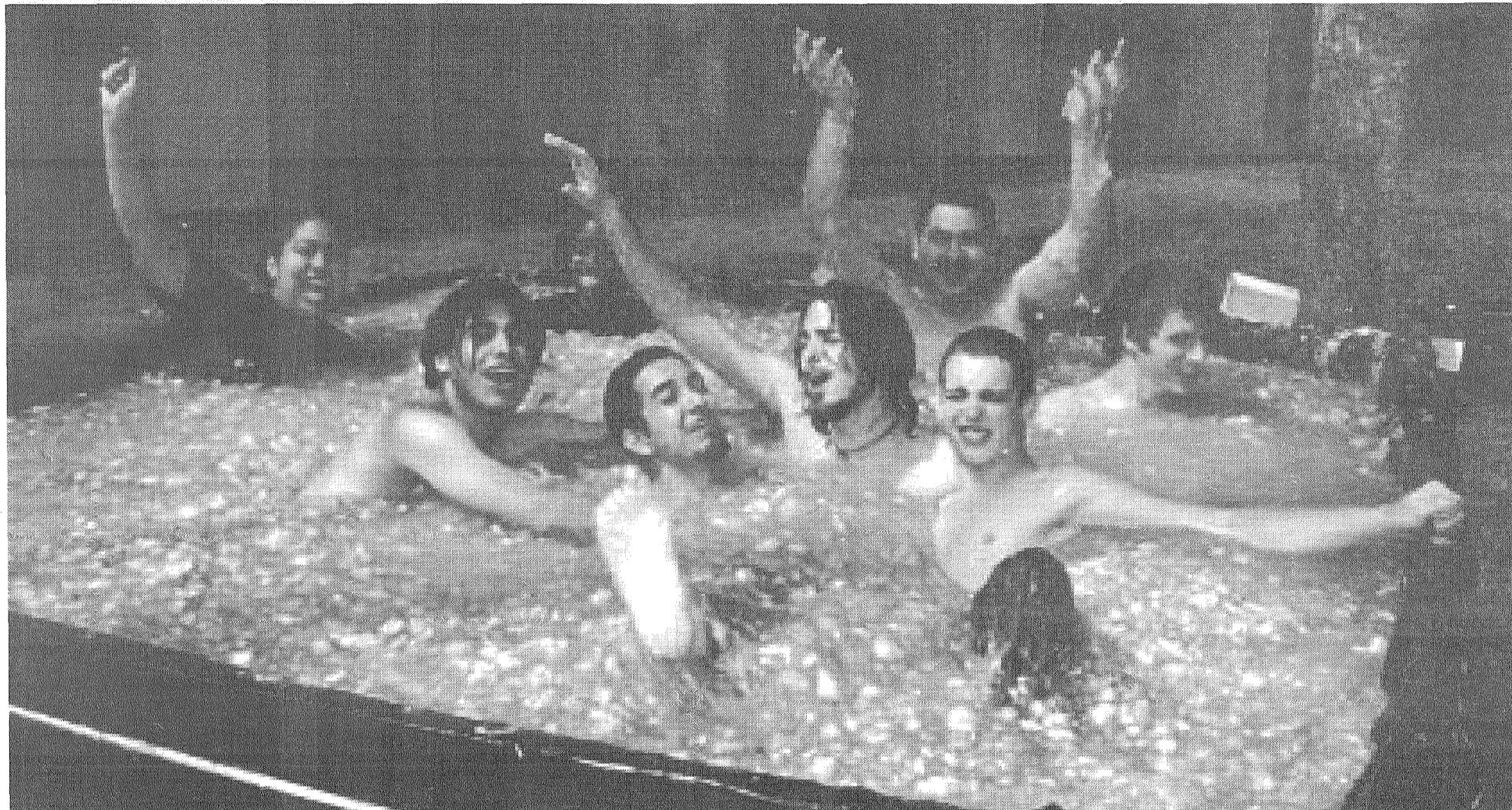
## Ode to Tomorrow

BY: ANONYMOUS

**T**omorrow comes so sweet and swift and sweet,  
Reminding all that all in all is well.  
The daylight breaks, behold! The sun to meet,  
And lo! The rays of warmth, the clanging bell--  
Such new surprises, games and puzzles here  
Without impending doom behind your guard.  
Yet still, sensations stirred by dreamlike fear  
Alarm the one who finds his quest too hard.  
Elab'rate schemes, betrayal, love and war,  
So many stories intertwined as one.  
Oh how I long to stay, to play some more!  
Alas...temporal, fleeting...still undone.  
Thus here I sit, alone with work instead.  
Ironic how I long to go to bed.



Photo courtesy of Caltech PR



Rub-a-dub dub, eight Scurves in a tub, along with who knows what sorts of fruits and goop. This abomination of a tub was located by Millikan Library.



Photo courtesy of Caltech PR

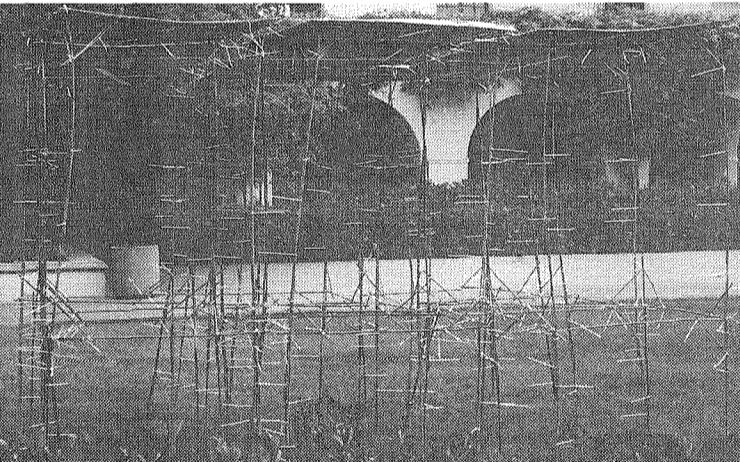


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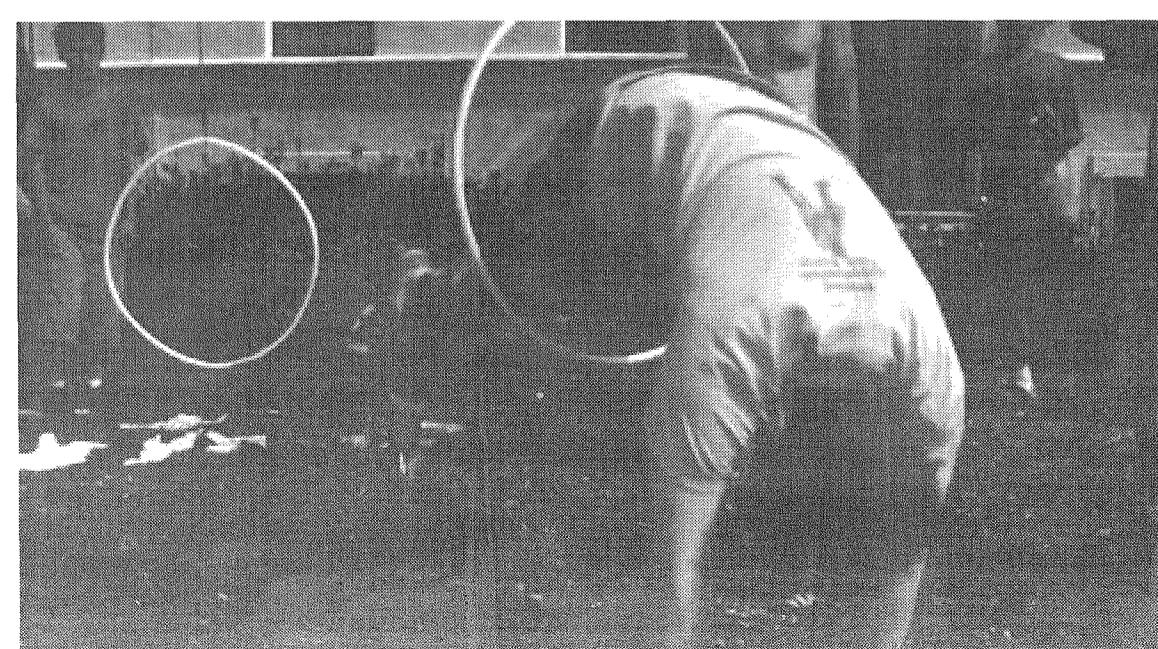


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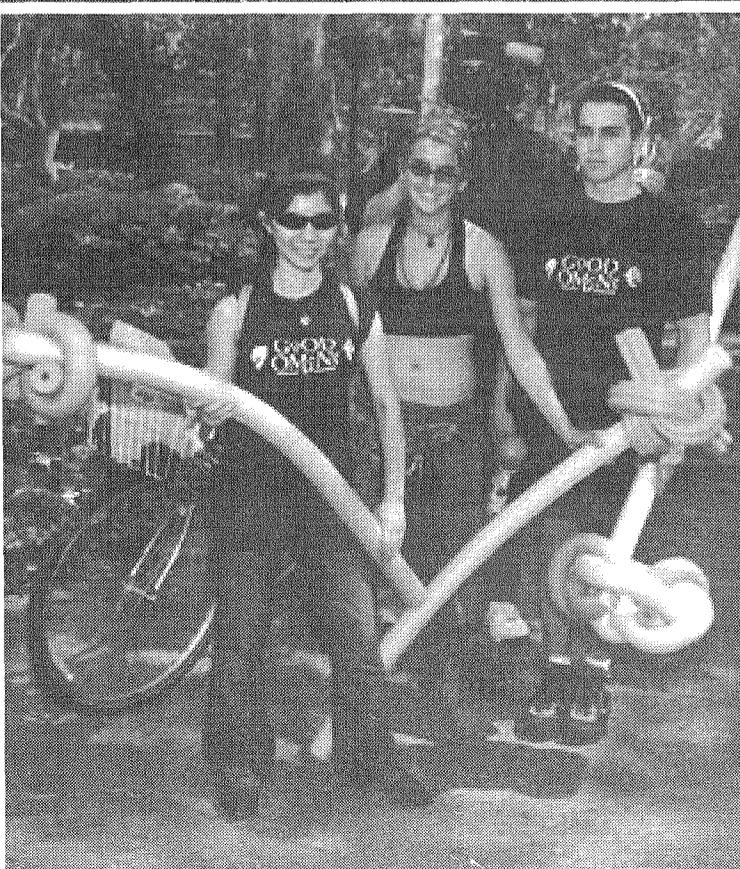


Photo courtesy of Caltech PR

Drink o' the Week

# The Ditch Day

BY: BRIAN HANLEY

*[Author's note: I in no way condone the violation of the alcohol policies of the United States, the State of California, the City of Pasadena, and the California Institute of Technology. That being said, I don't really care what you do or how you do it, so long as I don't know about it.]*

The Ditch Day is an important drink. It has a tremendous history and every year, it helps us deal with the horrible shit that makes up the average daily life here at Tech. Start the preparations by finding as much alcohol as you possibly can. Find vodka, bourbon, rum, tequila, Everclear, etc. Once you have all of these bottles, find a huge punch bowl. Get maybe a little bit of fruit or garnish and some ice or maybe dry ice (for cold and fun fog effect).

Now dump all of the alcohol you have gathered into the punch bowl. Stir thoroughly until the alcohol is evenly

mixed. Once the alcohol is well mixed, drop in the ice and/or dry ice and mix until the alcohol is so cold that you need to wear a jacket. Drop in the garnish and serve the resulting beverage into red cups so no one knows if you are drinking beverages or BEvERages. Really, no one will know that that clear liquid in that cup is not water, but the craziest most drunkening drink you could ever imbibe.

I suggest drinking no less than two or three cups because otherwise you will still be able to understand what is going on around you, and the point of this drink is to either get you to pass out or to make you so confused that you start making out with the poorly rendered drawings of women that plaster the walls of our houses. I must warn that over consumption can lead to hospitalization or death and I recommend neither as neither is as fun as it sounds.

So make the Ditch Day, drink as much as you can, and don't die. But really, Ditch Day is Tomorrow, so make sure you pre-party.

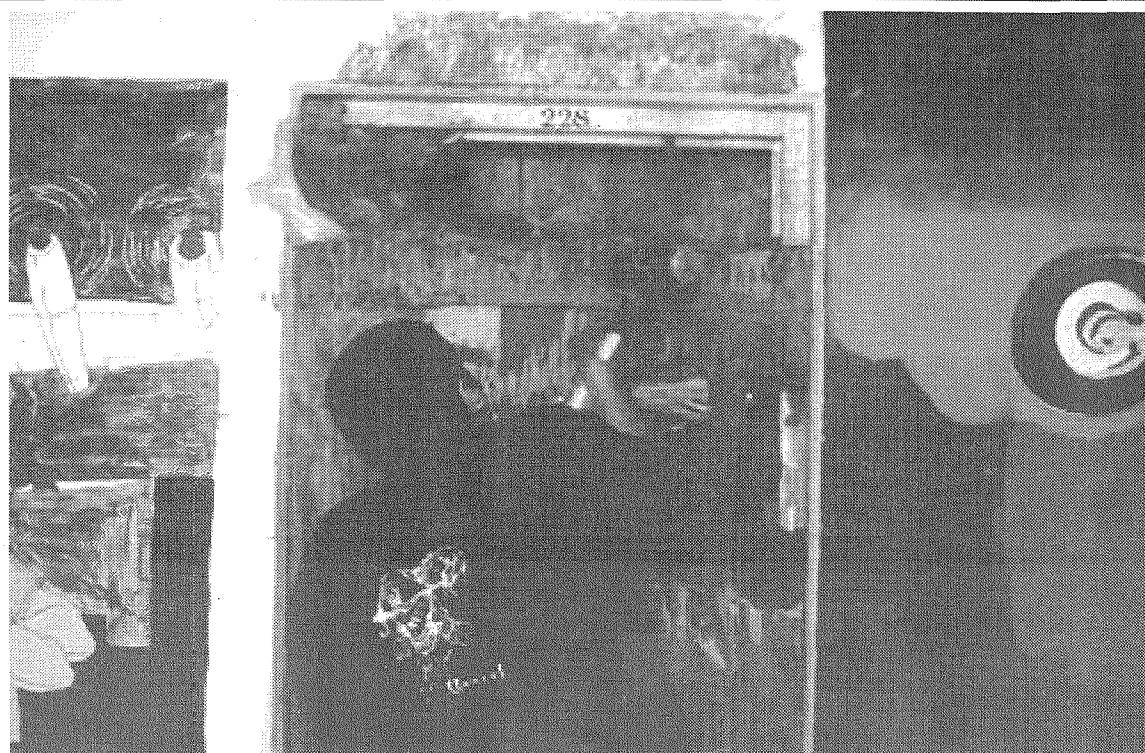


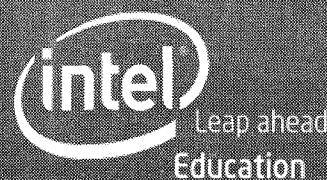
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This year, the Intel Foundation Ph.D. Fellowship Program awarded 40 fellowships totaling more than \$1.8 million to outstanding Ph.D. candidates pursuing leading-edge research at 18 U.S. universities. Bonnie Sheriff and Andrew Beyer were selected from more than 210 applicants.

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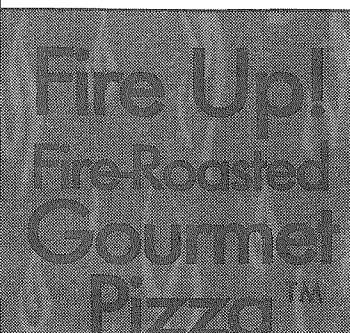
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Website Review

# Channel 101: The Unavoidable Future of Entertainment

BY: CINDY KO

If you're like me, you love spending time online to avoid work. Even if it's a few minutes here or there, you just can't function without a good distraction to keep you from working at max productivity.

Anyway, I'm here to add to your list of websites to "check" every five minutes—you know: Face-

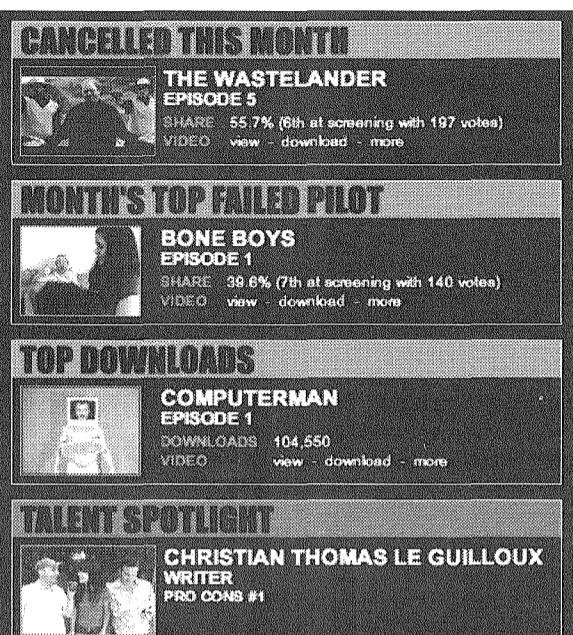
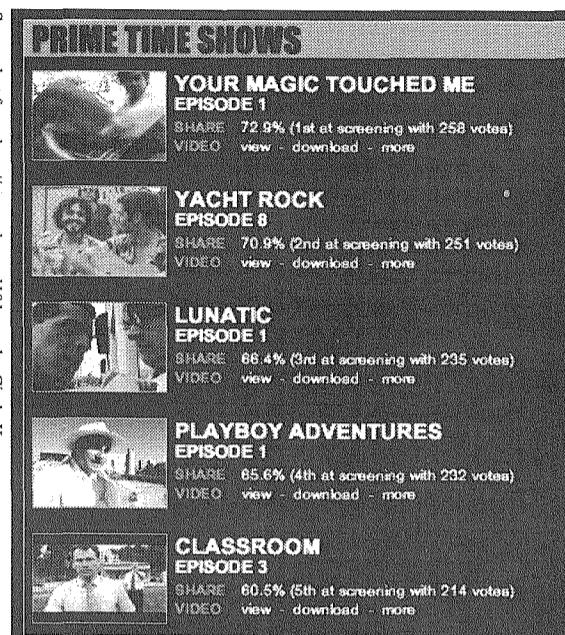
book, Gmail, CNN, MySpace, Slashdot... and now, I bring you Channel101.com. My best friend, Lara Pickle who goes to UCSD, showed me this site a while back and I've been hooked ever since.

Channel101 features short (about 3-minute) web movies with plots, characters, structure, drama, and so much more. They are all 'homemade' to some extent, but more like 'homemade'

professional.'

Lots of them feature recognizable celebrities, like Sara Chalke (from *Scrubs*) doing "The 'Bu" and Jack Black (from every annoying and obnoxious noise you ever heard in your life) doing "The Computer Man."

For every show, a new episode is supposed to come out every month or so, and then viewers give a thumbs up or thumbs down. De-



Channel 101 offers a wide variety of entertaining videos to watch. The videos are short clips by users.

## Ask-a-Prof Finding True Love at At Tech

BY: DR. NATE LEWIS

In the second installment of this column, a short and sweet response is made to an actual question submitted by a Caltech student. Keep emailing your questions and suggested pros to us at tech@caltech.edu.

**Q:** I am a lonely undergrad in search of my Soul Mate. How do I find her? And when I do, how do I tell her how I truly feel?

**A:** You're asking me, a former Techer-Lloydie, how to find a Soul Mate while at Tech? I had to go to grad school, at MIT (of all

places) to even have a chance! P.S. I found mine where a good Techer would, in the grad chemistry lab.

Nathan S. Lewis is the George L. Argyros Professor of Chemistry. He graduated from Caltech in 1977 with a B.S. and M.S. and is known for his Chla class.

## Non-Profit Develops Software to Help Developing Countries

BY: HAMILTON FALK

Unlike many of those that graduate from Caltech, alum Parth Venkat is avoiding pure science after graduating, but still using what he's learned in other areas. He is trying to build a business as well as help those for whom access to technology can be a life-changing option.

Venkat runs the non-profit organization Growing the World, which attempts to create financially sustainable software that will benefit less developed portions of the world.

The company's first project, eKheti.com is an online forum-based community targeting rural India. *The Tech* talked to this alumni entrepreneur about what he is doing, and why he decided to do it.

Venkat was a double major in Biology and BEM, and worked at JPL for two years, where he learned about science, presenting, writing and formulating plans. He also learned that he didn't like pipetting, and didn't want to continue on in high level biological research.

At the same time, he enjoyed his BEM classes, and with mentoring by Preston McAfee (the BEM officer), Venkat decided he could work rather go into business.

After applying in several places as a consultant and not receiving any offers that excited him, he was on the edge of accepting a job just to pay the bills when he was offered a temporary job at Caltech by Tom Mannion. He worked as an analyst and consultant, and worked directly with McAfee to

review the Caltech auxiliary operations.

While working for Caltech Venkat got involved in the Caltech Entrepreneurs' Club and with John Howard (the club's president), and Venkat learned about a project in a class that was creating a farming message board in rural India.

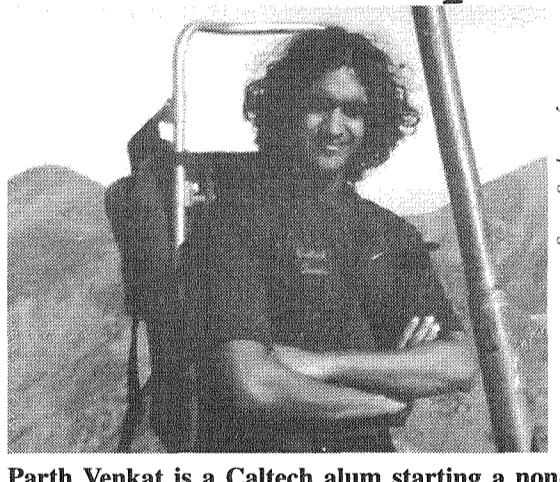
When the class ended, Venkat took over the project and founded the Growing the World nonprofit organization, which he believes will not only be a successful NPO, but will help him enter the world of business.

The idea of Growing the World is to take advantage of the benefits of software and technology to create a business that can help the citizens of poor developing nations economically and also let them become financially self-sustaining.

The project uses open source software to streamline their markets and help deliver information where it is needed.

The people behind Growing the World believe that software is underdeveloped by large businesses because there are no large entry barriers to prevent competition, but can be utilized effectively by a small number of volunteers to create targeted content for people with few resources.

The company likens itself to American websites like gap.com, eBay or orbitz, which have used relatively simple software to boost commerce by making access to information easy and efficient.



Parth Venkat is a Caltech alum starting a non-profit organization that will develop software.

The company believes that revenues from advertising are essentially unlimited, while the costs of creating effective software is very low.

The company's first project is eKheti, which is aimed at rural Indian communities, and future projects are planned which will focus on a social networking project for El Salvador, a web portal for Costa Rican high schools and a global environmental awareness site.

The eKheti program is a combination of a message board and business website. It supplies useful items like maps, information on agricultural methods, classifieds and other tools the internet can supply for rural farmers.

The site relies on information from academics and American non-profit organizations, as well as user-generated content, which are cheap and useful for the targeted audience.

The project is aimed at people without technical skills, low bandwidth and it must deal with



pending on the number of votes, the show can be cancelled or live for another month to come.

In addition to showing the top rated shows, the website also features, "This Month's Top Failed Pilot," which is kind of like a 'haha, your movie stinks a lot, let's show everybody!' type of deal.

Anyway, this is the website that brought you "House of Cosbys," which was about a Cosby fan that invented a way to replicate clones of Bill Cosby by use of a Cosby hair. To keep track of his Cosbys, they all have a number and a defining characteristic, e.g. Bathtub Cosby.

It started out pretty funny in its own way, but I think the guy who wrote it eventually got sued by Bill Cosby. Anyway, by that point, it was already not that funny. Lots of shows kind of end up like that.

My favorite show on Channel101 is "Yacht Rock," which

is modeled after VH1-type music specials, like "Behind the Music." Yacht Rock tries to go back in time, to the legends of Doobie Brothers and their smooth rock friends, to find the real stories that inspired the music.

Not only is it really entertaining, the camera treatment is really cool—I feel like I'm watching old yellowy footage from the 1970s. Yacht Rock continues to be a pretty popular show, the longest running in the history of Channel101 (which may or may not be saying much).

To be sure, check it out and see what joy three minutes can bring to your otherwise routine search for mild entertainment.

*Feel free to send in your own website review! Let us know where you go to seek the latest news, buy your stuff, or take a break between problems sets. Email tech@caltech.edu.*

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## Write for The Tech

If you are interested in working for *The Tech*, feel free to attend our weekly meetings on Fridays from noon to 1PM at the Broad Cafe

lowing some advice he found on the Internet.

A program like eKheti.com could diversify local markets and streamline commerce between markets, helping enrich people who otherwise would lack the information to improve their situations.

Venkat hopes to recruit Caltech students and alumni to work on various portions of the project, including things like financial work, product management and web design. He hopes people will visit the project website at [www.growingtheworld.org](http://www.growingtheworld.org) and possibly contact him about joining the project.

One example of how this information can help poor farmers is the case of BT cotton, a strain of cotton that has been engineered to include a protein that kills mosquitoes but is harmless to humans. This crop is no more expensive than regular cotton, and has a greater potential cotton yield, but due to lack of knowledge about it very few rural farmers use it.

Another problem that is wise spread is India is a lack of local diversity in production. In some cases there will be 50 farms in the same area all producing the same thing, which means that no one has any bargaining power and that the local soil becomes completely stripped of the nutrients required for that crop.

A great success story of a farmer using IT involves a man who reads on the Internet the advantages of selling emus, and thus changes his business from raising chickens to raising emus. The new product sells well and the man becomes one of the wealthiest people in town, simply by fol-

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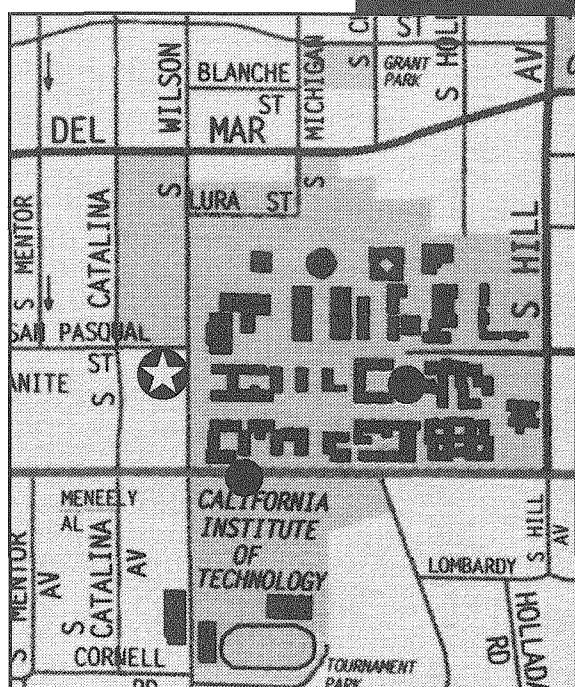
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# IHC update on the South House Renovations and Budget Cuts

BY: RICHARD JONES

Renovation of the South Houses was not taken lightly since the Houses themselves play an integral role in creating and maintaining the most unique social and academic college atmosphere in the country. The administration and student leadership have, for the most part, worked together over the past few years to plan and carry out an effective renovation.

Other than the groundbreaking of the North Houses, the renovation and occupation of the Mods has modified student culture more than any previous event in Caltech history. Members of Blacker, Fleming, Dabney, and Ricketts are currently separated not only from their homes, but from the North Houses and campus proper.

But the temporary separation was necessary—sections of the South Houses were literally falling apart. If renovations had not been made, the Houses would have been condemned by the City of Pasadena. The damage accumulating for the past several decades on the South Houses also made poor impressions on visiting faculty, alumni, and trustees.

Unfortunately, these steps haven't always been particularly effective. Partly because they lacked original blueprints of the South Houses, and partly because of a failed asbestos survey (which allocated around \$100,000 to do a job that ended up costing nearly \$3 million) Campus Planning was completely unaware of *six linear miles* of asbestos in the South Houses.

The renovation budget did not account for this unexpected cost, and was not revised in response. Since the asbestos needed to be removed before other aspects of construction could begin, the South House opening date pushed back to December 2006.

## Budget Cuts Required

By November 2005, additional complications associated with the asbestos, including walls that needed to be removed and replaced, made it apparent that significant cuts needed to be made, but the IHC and Provost's Office was not informed about these cuts until four months later. Two days before spring break, on March 16, 2006, the IHC was told to cut \$2.5 million dollars from the ~\$30 million dollar project by March 29.

The IHC didn't receive the list of items to cut from the South House project until March 27, two days before the deadline. The IHC was told that the total value of the cuts on the list was about \$1 million, so there was no way to reach the \$2.5 million goal.

The IHC didn't even know what most of the items on the list were nor were provided with their values. The IHC therefore found it difficult to ascertain what impacts these cuts would have on student life, and how helpful the cuts would even be. Thus, the council was not prepared to give answers by March 29<sup>th</sup> to Campus Planning, and met until early in morning on March 30<sup>th</sup> at Tom Mannion's house to generate a list of acceptable cuts.

Other administrative departments, like the Provost's Office, were equally surprised and frustrated with these setbacks. In response, it generously contributed \$1 million to shrink the gap to \$1.5 million, but even today only a fraction of the funds necessary to pay for the entire project have been raised due to unexpectedly low fundraising returns.

Lack of communication be-

tween administrative departments and from specific departments to students pushed the IHC to make unprepared decisions literally overnight instead of over 4 months. The members were not even informed of which cuts were being made final until May 12<sup>th</sup>.

Cuts approved by the IHC total \$734,688, which will be taken out of the general contractor's budget. Last Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, the IHC learned from the Architecture and Engineering Services department that the remaining \$765,000 in cuts, which were not approved by the IHC, were taken out of projects not assigned to the general contractor.

These projects included rehabilitation of parts of the SAC and the purchase of new furniture the Houses. Thankfully, Student Affairs has purchased new furniture or rehabilitated existing house furniture to account for this cut, but no money has surfaced to support the complete rehabilitation of the SAC.

## IHC Analysis of the Cuts

Given the circumstances, the IHC is relatively satisfied with the cuts. Although Campus Planning approached students late in the game, they adeptly identified relatively benign cuts. Indeed, most of items being cut will have insignificant impact on student life.

The most notable final cuts are an elevator for the main kitchen which was to be used mainly by kitchen staff, renovations of the main kitchen itself, trees in Blacker, landscaping in courtyards, handicap lifts from all the houses (reduced to only Ricketts having handicap access), some new house and courtyard lighting fixtures, student kitchen flooring, and house carpeting (the IHC tested cheaper, more stain-resistant carpet).

Also, a majority of the cuts that the IHC disapproved of were not carried out: tile will not be cut from the bathrooms, room sink materials will not be downgraded, hot water pipes will be retained and insulated, and wireless access will not substitute for ethernet, telephone, and cable TV wiring. Wi-Fi spots will be available (and are currently being installed in the North Houses, too).

Cuts that did occur despite our disapproval otherwise were changes in the lighting fixtures in student rooms and student kitchens. Also, some cuts that were approved were not made, which may partially explain why the cuts did not reach the \$1.6 million goal.

## Some Questions Remain

There are still unresolved questions about the renovation. The IHC doesn't know what cuts could have made that might have been more effective, because students were not informed about the cuts until four months too late. There are concerns that certain cuts, or substitutions for cheaper materials, may tarnish the ideal vision of the renovated south houses, an unpleasant consequence considering the cost and goals of these renovations.

The IHC doesn't know when and how the rest of the South Houses are going to be paid off. Students don't know exactly where everything from the South Houses is stored, though most of it is known to be somewhere within St. Luke's Hospital. Last, it's unknown why blueprints set up outside of the South House fences during Prefrosh Weekend included landscaping that was actually cut from the project.

Some renovations will likely

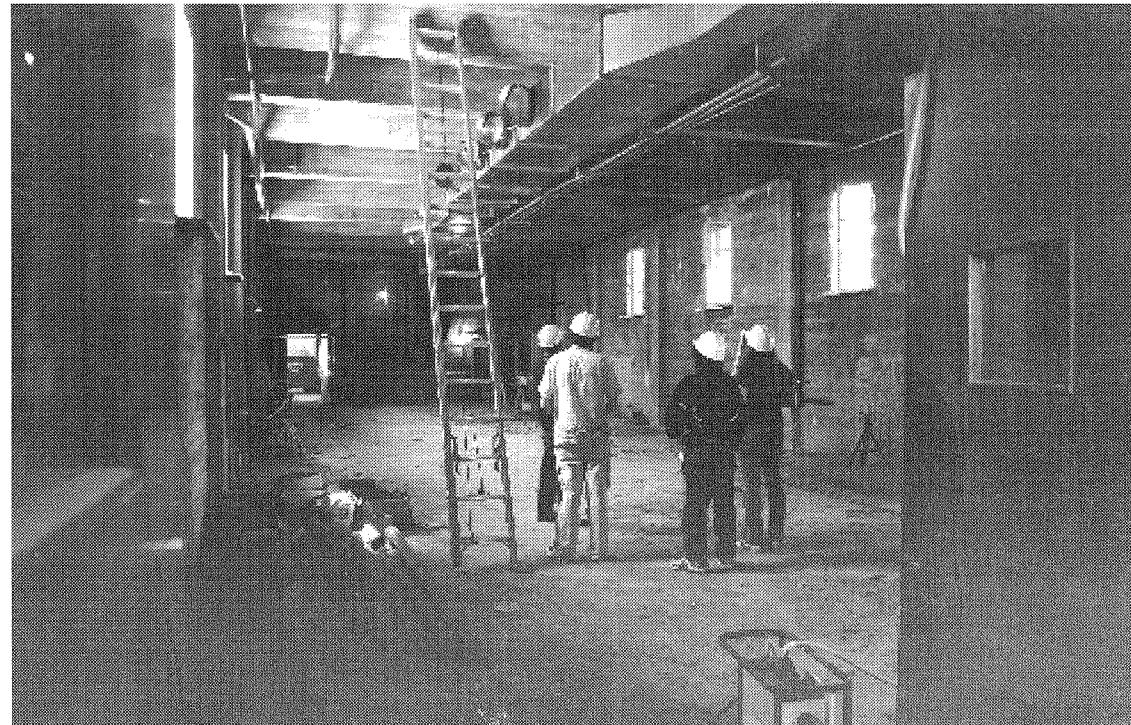


Photo by Matthew Glassman

Asbestos and budget over-runs have posed problems for the re-opening of the South Houses.

modify former aspects of student life in the South Houses, inciting student resistance. Directly opposing the "leave the door open" attitude of many students, the gates being installed at the entrances to the South will be installed, closed, and locked 24/7. Card locks on these gates (as well as key access) have been deemed most secure by an outside contractor, and will likely be installed. Fingerprint detectors locks may replace card swipes as an alternative.

Telephones and video cameras will be located near some of these entrances to accommodate students who forget their cards or keys. Doors will be monitored and closed by security if propped open.

*"Since the asbestos needed to be removed before other aspects of construction could begin, the South House opening date pushed back to December 2006."*

## Activity Center Weakened

Thanks to a lack of communication from Campus Planning, both the IHC and other administrative bodies had no opportunity to alleviate \$765,000 in cuts. As a consequence, students will surely return to a neutered SAC.

Even though a new Student Center will likely appear in the near future, deciding to reopen a SAC that does not meet current student needs and expectations is silly, and a waste of space. Funding should be sought out to reinvigorate this highly useful space.

Advocated by Maintenance during the planning phase, the new central air-conditioning system prevents Techers with severe pet allergies from living comfortably in the South Houses, when individual air-conditioning units

would have been both more energy efficient and cat-friendly.

Housing is currently evaluating the IHC's ideas of cat-alleys or cat-free alleys, rooms with filtration devices, and fees tacked onto cat licenses to allow cats back into the South Houses.

The old problem of cell phone reception will remain due to the fact that the South Houses are a large concrete box. Students might consider purchasing a Sprint phone in the near future, since the company has recently installed a tower on Millikan Library.

Some outcomes of renovation are unfortunate simply for aesthetic reasons. Only outer portions and visible sections of the roof will be covered with clay shingles, while other sections invisible from the ground will be left unshingled.

Gates will obscure the openness so characteristic of the South Houses. Downsized landscaping in courtyards and behind the South Houses diffuses some of the final grandeur of the project.

It is unfortunate that until now, the cuts and their effects have been largely invisible to most students. The IHC hopes to increase student awareness more quickly in the future.

The IHC is currently working on these issues, and will continue to make attempts to preserve essential aspects of student life.

## Lessons Learned

Renovation is good for Caltech undergraduates, but lessons can be learned from this experience. When the North Houses undergo reconstruction, Caltech needs to approach the project as comprehensively as undergraduates approach academics and House traditions.

Pageboys, Lloydies, and Rudds do not deserve the problems experienced in the Mods, like poor initial internet connectivity, temporary loss of hot water, and faulty gates. Caltech should account for

unexpected building setbacks, like asbestos, during budget planning.

Decisions to begin construction projects for students should only be undertaken when payment is sufficient and secure. Communication between student leadership and administration should be intensified especially during the building stage so that students can ensure that construction plans are carried out according to plan even in the face of unexpected events, like asbestos.

Student input into planning the new North Houses has already been undertaken, and should continue. The IHC has been informed that after reconstruction, the old names of Page, Lloyd, and Ruddock will be hyphenated to their new donors, not removed. Furthermore, a fourth North House will likely appear.

In the end, the IHC wants to make sure that the Skurves, Moles, Flemings, and Darbs were separated from their homes for good reason, and that renovation was carried out with enough skill, care, and funding so that it will not have to occur again for a very long time.

If it's any consolation, plans are in the works for a true "Welcome Back" party for the South Houses, and housing will allow some students back into the houses early to troubleshoot the renovations.

The South Houses will reappear on campus in (mostly) their full glory thanks to increasingly frequent, though still last-minute, attempts to integrate student input. But students still need to move back in and convince themselves that renovation was worth it.

Note: An IHC-sponsored Open House, organized with the help of the MOSH, will occur on May 24<sup>th</sup> in the Page Courtyard from 4 pm until 5:30 pm. There will be snacks and drinks, and the Housing office and Project development for the South Houses to answer any questions in an informal one-on-one manner.

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