



THE HOUGHTON STAR

Concerns Grow Over Delayed Campus Center Renovations

By Katarina Kieffer

Ongoing renovations to the student center may continue through the midway point of the semester, leaving students without a fully-finished Campus Center until as late as November. While the finished product may be well worth the wait, the exact date of completion remains unclear. Project Manager Steve Peck has stated that October 1 was the new deadline, while Vice President of Student Life Sharra Durham, saying it would be "mostly done by the end of September," cautioned that at least one shipment of furniture was "significantly delayed" and probably wouldn't arrive until November.

While the "Pardon our Dust" signs may have come down a little later than everyone expected, most students will freely admit that the recent Campus Center renovations are a welcome improvement. "It began with a broad concept of a ski lodge, minus antlers on the wall," recalls Katherine Hamilton, former SGA President and member of the design committee, "and then morphed for a brief time into the more specialized idea of a Scottish hunting manor, to follow in the grand Highlander tradition." This eventually led to the current design, which Hamilton describes as "the better aspects of [the design committee's] prior concepts" combined with "an overarching classic contemporary feel." Yet however welcome these changes, there are still some obvious key pieces of the design missing; as one student succinctly

remarked, "It no longer reminds me of a doctor's office. However, I would like a place to sit."

The missing furniture is perhaps the greatest inconvenience for students, but it is not the only cause for concern. According to project manager Steve Peck, the original plan was for the construction to "start the first working day after graduation and finish before the students returned for school." This did not occur; returning students were confronted with bare floors, unfinished walls, and a promise that the construction phase would hopefully be completed by the first week of classes.

Sharra Durham, the recently appointed Vice President of Student Life, maintained that "Some delay was anticipated, but I think this is more extensive than certainly I was made aware of when I first got here. But then, when you work with vendors and external entities, that's sometimes just part of the deal." Yet the delay in construction was apparently not the fault of the construction company. Rather, project manager Peck insisted that "the decision to start this [CC Renovation] was at least two months too late in order to ensure that the project could start and finish on time. The renovations started late due to final drawings [for the project] being completed May 24. Many other key design elements were not finalized until after renovations started."

The design committee consisted of individuals chosen to represent the interests of various groups. Interim

VP of Student Life Denise Bakerink and Greg Bish were the administrators involved. Phyllis Gaerte served as a representative for the Campus Store and the Info Center. Steve Peck of the Maintenance department served as Project Manager, while Assistant art Professor Jillian Sokso was included as a voice for the art department. Kate Hamilton, then SGA President, and Christy Macbeth, former CAB Director, were chosen to represent

student interest. Interior decorator Annette Basinger of Hanlon Architects, the firm responsible for remodeling Big Al's in the early 1990s, was the key professional consultant for the project. According to Hamilton, there were indeed many design elements, including furniture choices and carpet, that were not decided upon until "after the end of the school year." The decision about where to place the new Welcome
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Java 101 Opts to Go Green

By Cameron Gayford

Recycling bins have popped up, napkin holders have changed, and now another fixture of the Houghton College campus has taken a significant step along the path to environmental responsibility. Our familiar basement coffee shop, Java 101, has—like Pioneer's napkins—"gone green" in a big way.

Although Java 101 is not formally connected to the Greener Campus campaign, run by Evangelicals for Social Action, owner Aileen McCallum said that it was research conducted by ESA "that was a part of what turned me on to [the new products]... part of what got me started."

Prompted by ESA's research, McCallum began a complete changeover in basic materials. Nearly everything one receives with their Java 101 purchase is now "ecologically

conscious." For example, Java's paper hot-beverage cups, distributed by Eco-Products (www.ecohotcups.com; www.corncups.com) are made from "sustainably [sic] harvested paperboard" and lined with plastic manufactured from corn. Eco-Products' website claims their cups are 100% compostable [sic]. In addition to their line of cups, the company retails a variety of other biodegradable corn-plastic products, such as the cold-beverage cups that Java 101 now uses for chilled specialty blends and smoothies.

Java 101 has also begun using uncoated biodegradable paper plates, 100% recycled content napkins, drink trays, and paper towels, recycled paperboard drink sleeves, corn-plastic straws and all-natural wooden stir-sticks. McCallum's establishment discovered, for hot drinks, the corn-
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THE WORLD OUT THERE

by Thomas Lerew

Democrats React to Petraeus Report

Congressional Democrats offered a strong response to General Petraeus' report of progress in the military conflict in Iraq. The general testified early in the week that military objectives were progressively being achieved and called for the gradual withdrawal of the 30,000 troops that comprised the April surge. Democrats insisted that the withdrawal was not scheduled to happen soon enough and characterized Petraeus' remarks as administration propaganda.

Bush Nominates Attorney General

Following the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales after a lengthy congressional investigation into the firing of eight U.S. Attorneys, President Bush has nominated Michael B. Mukasey to be the new attorney general. Mukasey is a retired federal judge from the New York City region. He is best known for his work in hearing highly controversial terrorism cases and is endorsed by the president as a "capable legal mind determined to fighting terrorism." Congress is expected to take up debate of Mukasey's nomination in the coming weeks.

Many Languages Slowly Dying

New research has been released documenting the gradual decline of the world's nearly 7,000 languages. Experts believe that the decline is largely due to the growing number of bilingual people that give up their native language and over time those left speaking the language pass away. It is estimated that one language is lost every two weeks according to an analysis done by the National Geographic Society. The five areas of the world whose languages are declining most rapidly are northern Australia, central South America,

North America's upper Pacific coastal zone, Eastern Siberia, and Oklahoma and the southwest United States.

O.J. Simpson Charged in Casino Robbery

NFL Football Hall-of-Famer O.J. Simpson was arrested Sunday, September 16 on charges of two counts of robbery with a deadly weapon, two counts of assault with a deadly weapon, and conspiracy to commit a crime and burglary with a firearm at a casino hotel in Las Vegas. Simpson claims that individuals had stolen high-priced sports memorabilia and were selling it for significant personal profit. The truth to these claims is still under investigation. If convicted, Simpson could face up to 30 years in prison.

Sarkozy Works to Reform France's Work and Retirement Benefits

President Nicolas Sarkozy believes that labor unions combined with an increase in French work and retirement benefits is hurting France's ability to compete globally. In his "new social contract," announced this past week, Sarkozy is looking to eliminate many of these "unnecessary" benefits and increase the standard number of work hours from 35 per week to at least 39. Though he was elected as president on a similar policy platform in April of this year, the reaction of the French public is as yet unclear.

Legend Luciano Pavarotti Dies

Renowned tenor Luciano Pavarotti passed away on Thursday, September 6 after a long fight with pancreatic cancer. He was 71. The Italian set the standard for operatic tenors of the 20th century. Best known for his work with The Three Tenors, he later made significant contributions to noble global causes in collaboration with famous pop artists such as Sting, Elton John and Bono. Pavarotti will be forever remembered for his incredible personifications of powerful operatic roles that have stirred music lovers around the world.

Student Group Emphasizes Informed Action

By Elizabeth Zook

Formed under the Office of Student Life, the new committee called Nehemiah's Restoration hopes to be an active resource for individuals in the Houghton community who aspire to turn good ideas into meaningful actions. Like Global Christian Fellowship (GCF) and Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA), those involved with Nehemiah aim to supply students and faculty with current news on global issues and problems.

Yet group spokesperson Ben Tilson observed that students he has conversed with are generally dissatisfied with information alone; people also want to know how to respond to the critical situations so often discussed on campus. While acknowledging that awareness is a large part of what Nehemiah's

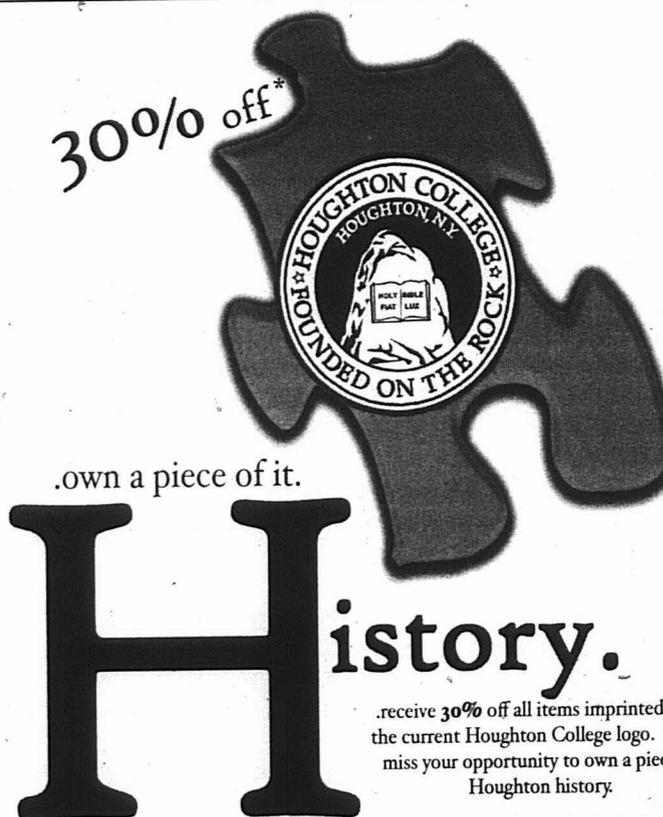
Restoration advocates, group member Sandy Stark remarked, "We're trying not to just be all about talking and educating ourselves; we're trying to act as well." Possessing information itself is one thing; using it is another.

The committee will seek to equip people with knowledge for action. This means group members are needed largely for research, to compile information on already existing organizations. Examples of groups with which Nehemiah is presently connected include (but are not limited to): World Hope, World Vision, World Relief, Wellspring, and Youth For Christ.

In the future, members of Nehemiah plan to make contact with organizations in as many areas of service as possible. One reason for this, Nehemiah

• *Nehemiah continued on page 3*

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• *Nehemiah continued from page 2*

spokesperson Ryan Musser explained, is to promote using individuals' gifts and natural talents for service. This vision explains the group's name: the primary narrative in the Old Testament book of Nehemiah is the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall, and how different groups of people helped rebuild sections of the wall.

Nehemiah's Restoration wants to equip a diverse community in specific ways. "We want to be able to empower the psychology students to use what they're learning in issues of dealing with human trafficking victims or [concerning] child soldiers," Musser said. "We want to be able to empower the business department to use what they're learning to alleviate poverty

on Nehemiah's list of priorities. Musser discussed how the committee wants "to act as a hub where all these [on-campus] organizations [such as GCF and ESA] can come and connect to us and connect to each other." The group also hopes to establish connections for the benefit of local area organizations in addition to those from Houghton College. This mentality translates to Houghton locations abroad such as London, Australia, and Tanzania. Members of Nehemiah anticipate creating personal connections with churches in these areas, utilizing networks that already exist.

Nehemiah's Restoration is "still very much in the planning stages," Tilson noted. The group has yet to decide on a consistent meeting place, though it does

“...We’re trying not to just be all about talking and educating ourselves; we’re trying to act as well.”

with micro-loans, and be able to empower the art department and music department to use their artistic skills to advocate for different issues, to raise awareness, or to use [their skills] for some sort of therapy." This makes it essential for the group to designate liaisons to head different areas of research.

If all goes as planned, Nehemiah's Restoration will accrue a wide variety of resources. Tilson and Musser expressed the need for a place to store and organize their findings. Not only does a physical location facilitate access to the gathered information, but it also promotes its sustainability. One of the group's primary concerns is that connections will be lost as key members of the group graduate. A Nehemiah resource center, suggested by faculty advisor Professor Kiti Ndunge of the Intercultural Studies department, will help ensure the survival of valuable research for years to come. The center will also be accessible not only to students, but to others living in the wider Houghton community.

Developing local as well as global community is another important goal

convene at the same time each week: Sunday evenings following Koinonia. The group is currently organizing World AIDS Day events, which will take place in December. Stark emphasized that this year the committee plans to spend less money on guest lecturers and more on community involvement. "It's still in the works," she added, but from what has been discussed thus far, it is clear that the group intends to shift focus, making the day more about education in action than simply informational sessions.

To find out where meetings are going to be held, students should contact Ben Tilson, Ryan Musser, or Sandy Stark via e-mail. The need for participation is crucial to the success of Nehemiah's Restoration in light of the amount of research that is required to create an effective database. Tilson, Musser, and Stark all admit to being ambitious, even a bit ambiguous, about the new group's exact scope at this point. Regardless of uncertainty, committee members are determined to make a positive impact in their community, and are adamant about serving in tangible ways. 



Photo By Wesley Dean

While the construction phase may have finished, the space remains incomplete.

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Center was also a much-debated topic; as Peck noted, "There were a lot of little reasons why the project was not finished before the students returned."

Some remain optimistic. "From what I've seen, I think [the new design] is lovely," Durham offered. "I think the unfortunate aspect is that you can tell that students are longing for it [to be completed] immediately; while they were unpacking the high tables, people were already using them." The apparent cause of the delay is that furniture was ordered from a variety of companies, resulting in different order dates and shipment schedules. While Durham recognized that students may find the delay troublesome, stating she was "equally concerned" and had been "asking for regular updates," she believed the decision to use a variety of vendors was for the best, ensuring that pieces were found that were durable, fit with the design theme, and "had the best aesthetic quality."

It is imperative that the renovations be completed as soon as possible. There are several upcoming campus events in the next few weeks that require a functional space. The weekend of October 4-7 is perhaps the most important, when the long-awaited inauguration of President Mullen will take place, coinciding with

this fall's Homecoming festivities, as well as Family Weekend. "Yes, we have this major campus weekend coming up where families are going to be here, homecoming alums are coming back, and local, as well as national representatives are going to be here for the inauguration," Durham elaborated. "Those events are important, [and] they're on my radar—they're on everybody's radar."

But Durham consistently emphasized that, while these events were significant, ultimately "the campus center lounge is for students, and so it's really about getting it [completed] so that it's a useable space for students." She expressed concern that students were becoming accustomed to using other areas to "gather in community" as opposed to meeting in the Campus Center lounge. In the end, Durham upheld student interest as foremost: "My advocacy and the advocacy I've sensed from really everyone on campus that's involved with [the renovations] is [that] this is student space. Students contributed money for this project. We need to get it done." 



Reception To Be Held Tonight for New Exhibit

By Margaret Boecker

The art faculty at Houghton is as active professionally as ever, and they invite the campus this Friday to view a sample of their recent work in a distinguished exhibit that officially opens the Ortlip Gallery's 2007-2008 season. "Invitation" will have a free reception at 7:00pm on Friday, September 21 and will feature works by the art faculty, various friends and alumni. With the number of contributing artists exceeding twenty, a wide variety of content promises to result in an exhilarating show.

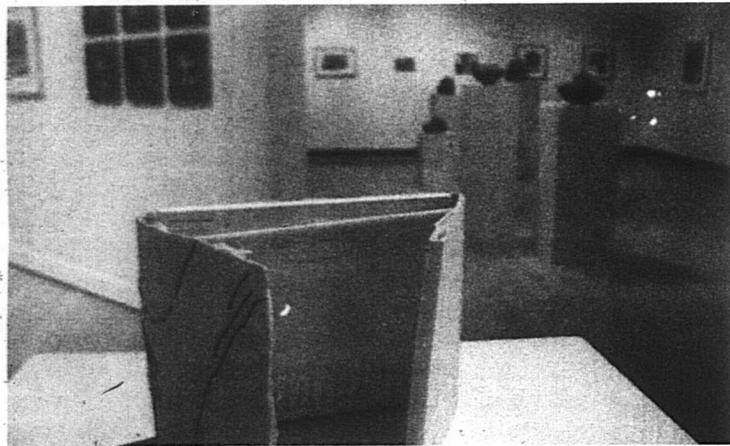


Photo by Margaret Boecker

Artworks range from representational to 3D to abstract.

"It's a very eclectic show, which is what we wanted it to be," says Ted Murphy, "and it shows diversity along with influences we've made and that have been made on us. The point was always to celebrate in a more eclectic style—a pluralistic kind of approach."

The show's title "Invitation" reflects an idea Jillian Sokso had when working with the Inaugural committee. Rather than the traditional faculty exhibit, it was decided that the exhibit would be designed to bring together the artworks of people who have affected one another in some way—a message about influence to be spoken not only



Photo by Margaret Boecker

Over 20 faculty, alumni and friends contributed artworks to compile "Invitation".

of the art department itself, but also of individuals who perhaps in some way have influenced the faculty as well. "It's nice to receive a formal invitation saying 'I think about your work here at my studio,' be it a colleague, a mentor, a former teacher or a former student," Sokso says. "In fact, a lot of times, I think the students influence me more than I influence them."

All Sokso's students would readily confirm the wonderful addition she has been to the art department in her three years here. Printmaking, photography, and even a new class in bookmaking are among the areas in which she has shared her talent and skill. Sokso's contributions to the show include

several prints from two different bodies of work which she describes as "fairly abstract," focusing on process and media.

Ted Murphy also allows viewers a glimpse into his recent work with watercolor. Landscape paintings done in watercolor are a step in a different direction for Murphy, who normally produces abstract paintings—but abstraction finds its way into his landscapes as well. "I'm trying to build on that previous work," he says. "I'm interested in how the landscape is influencing the way the picture emerges, just like with an abstract painting. I feel like as I paint the problems that arise make the painting more interesting."

Other faculty contributions include new ceramic pieces by Gary Baxter and a piece by John Rhett of a view out a window in his home. Also, don't forget to look for the shiny silver frames that encase Prof. Dave Huth's contribution to the exhibit—a dynamic assortment of colorfully manipulated photos undoubtedly meant to play games with the viewer's imagination.

Sokso comments, "This exhibit is an example of what the department is doing. It's sort of an illustration of what the art program looks like... there are so many successful graduates who are going on to continue to make art even if it's not their primary career." Extending a personal "Invitation" to the campus and community, the opening reception for this exhibit is free and open to everyone. All are welcome.

• Java 101 continued from page 1

plastic straws are less than ideal—they often collapse at high temperatures. "We're fixing that," McCallum told the *Star*, mentioning that she's ordered more wooden stir-sticks and a different kind of eco-friendly straw. Also coming soon: compostable trash bags to complement the shop's new environmentally responsible orientation.

Why the change? "We wanted to make some changes for a while," said McCallum when asked about the thought process behind going green. She started looking into switching products a while ago due to Java 101's location. Houghton's distance from major urban centers makes it hard for a small business like Java 101 to find

disposable products and suppliers to deliver them. McCallum recalls discussing the available options with Greg Bish before a personal friend pointed out the Eco-Products website. Eco-Products, though not local—and slightly more expensive—delivers its bulk orders through the mail. McCallum describes her new supplier as "a little bit more convenient, and better for the environment."

The eco factor was the biggest push behind the final decision, McCallum says. "One person making a change in their life is important," she stressed, "but a business affects so much more." Java 101 typically throws out three bags of trash per day, compared to a typical student's one bag per week.

Naturally, returning students may

notice an increase in prices coinciding with the product shift. When asked, McCallum explained, "The reason I raised prices has not been because of the cups, it's been because of the milk and coffee costs and payroll has gone up slightly." The Eco-Products supplies are slightly more expensive, but not enough to cause the price increase, which she says have been due for awhile.

So what's next for Java 101? McCallum told the *Star* that she was planning on offering freshly-squeezed organic juices at the counter. If customers are interested in more information, they can always stroll into the basement of the Reinhold center and check it out in person, or investigate for themselves online or through the mail.



New VP of Student Life Emphasizes Stability, Accountability

by William Airhart

Houghton College announced last spring that Sharra Durham had been hired as the new Vice President for Student Life. The *Star* sat down with Ms. Durham just after her homecoming to discuss the upcoming year. "I think that people [at Houghton] want to do well and want to succeed," said Durham. "I'm very excited to be back in Houghton."

Durham graduated from Houghton in 1994, and has since gone on to earn a master's degree from Alfred University in student development. She is currently working on her dissertation in higher education and administration from Texas A&M University. About half of the current professors at Houghton were teaching when Durham attended Houghton, and the transition has been eased by the sight of familiar faces around campus. "It is nice to walk into a meeting," she noted, "and have some level of familiarity."

Quickly settling into a comfort zone has helped Durham begin to tackle the problems that lie ahead. "If you look back on the last six years of student life, there's been a lot of change in administration," she pointed out. Transitions are often difficult, and in the context of an inaugural year for our college president, the challenge is greater still. "Probably the biggest task ahead of me is to be a stable, positive presence and [to] continue the good work that's been done in the past." What excites Durham most is the opportunity to push students to achieve their potential; not interested in patting students on the back, she instead will look to hold students to a high level of achievement. "I think that there are a lot of great people [and] ideas," she noted, mentioning some of her interactions with student government. "I will contribute to setting a high bar for what students can and should be able to achieve during their four years here at Houghton."

Numerous editorials have been written in recent years lamenting the lack of trust that exists between students and administrators. Durham is not immune to such critiques, and views the trust gap as one that must be bridged as quickly as possible. "Trust can be broken so quickly, but it takes very intentional effort to rebuild it," she said. Restoring student trust is a long and arduous task, but "it's a task in front of all of us to continue to build the community... [and] trust is a part of that." Specifically, she spoke of an obligation to "communicate well with students and to address questions in a timely and professional fashion," something that has been a problem in the past. "The right hand needs to talk to the left hand more," she quipped. "If [students] have a question, they can come forward and talk about it with open dialogue."

Questions of student dialogue inevitably lead to questions of student discipline. "Discipline is a part of community building," she granted. "[But] I'm challenged by the perception that it's the central part of community." Discipline is too narrowly viewed as punishment and doesn't take its positive lessons into account. "The disciplinary process... is an educational process.

**"Discipline is a part of community building...
...[But] it's not just a punitive process."**

It's not [just] a punitive process." Of course, as the person finally responsible for determining appropriate sentences for the various transgressions of students, Durham knows that it is she who must conclude when to lean towards penalty or grace. "It's a balancing act," she admitted. "[But] you can't avoid it."

Emphasizing this point, Durham stated her belief that "99% of the



Photo by Web Dean

Durham was calm and sincere during the interview.

student population is here to learn... some students are challenged by living in [the Houghton] community, but it's not an overwhelming number." Students are "absolutely" trustworthy, she continued, and she would "go the distance [in helping] a student." This point hints at Durham's larger vision for her position: working with

students to show them that the Student Life office is about more than just discipline. "It's a piece of what we do," she acknowledged, "but it doesn't define us." Areas of campus as diverse as athletics and the campus store fall under the jurisdiction of student life. "I just don't think that students know that," Durham lamented. "We need to do a better job of marketing and advertising who we are and what we

do."

Much of who Houghton is as a community is marketed through the Statement of Community Responsibilities. A recently-appointed task force will be examining the document over the coming year, and will presumably have the power to alter the document if needed. The long-standing policy on dancing, for example, may be up for revision. Would Durham support an alteration to allow Houghton students to host dances on campus? "The [dancing] policy is consistent with the heritage and history of Houghton," she cautiously noted. When pressed on whether or not the policy should be changed, Durham laughed. "No comment." But should it at least be reviewed? "Oh, absolutely. And I'm open to change."

It was refreshing to have such a candid and wide-ranging conversation with a college

administrator. Durham's commitment to "more open, fluid dialogue" was on display throughout the interview. Students are all too familiar with administrators who speak in rosy terms but fail to deliver on promises of open discourse and transparency.

We won't know for some time how the Student Life office will be shaped under its new head. Anyone serious about bridging the gap between students and Student Life will struggle to alter perceptions and make progress. From the outset, though, Durham has been saying all of the right things. "I think we'll all be able to accomplish great things together," she said earnestly. If Houghton administrators are able to commit themselves to themes of trust, dialogue and accountability, Durham just might be right. 



Why I Love Women's Volleyball: Teamwork and Unity

by Ryan Johnson

During the recent Houghton Tournament, our women's volleyball team defeated Pikeville not once but twice and gave the best they had against Notre Dame College. Nothing grabs you and doesn't let go quite like the intensity during a Houghton volleyball match. Only unadulterated excitement is felt when the ball is served and each team sets itself for a perfect storm of skill and agility.

The reason for the strong beginning to the women's season can best be explained through the cohesion they have as a team. In any sport, one of the most important parts of playing to the best of your ability is to work together with your teammates to achieve not only victory, but also an experience not soon forgotten. Senior outside hitter Stefanie Swanson has worked hard with the rest of the team to try and keep the group unified. "Our goal is, of course, to make the new players feel welcome and like an essential part of our team,"

she said. "This year was no different."

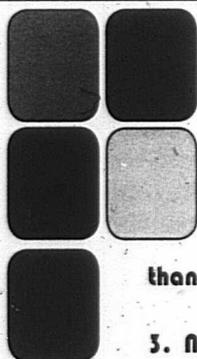
Volleyball is not only a game of spikes and digs but also incorporates coordination as a whole. It takes more than one person—several must work together to simultaneously defend and attack. There needs to be a smooth transition from player to player to take the fight to the other team. During preseason training, this was a main focus due to the seven freshmen joining the team. "With seven new girls coming in, any team might struggle to find cohesion on or off the court," Stefanie noted. "Because of this, I think [our] efforts doubled to make our new seven feel welcome." Stefanie feels positive that not only did practices prior to the start of their season help with molding the team, but that it also gave them time to truly come together as players and as friends. "We really took advantage of preseason this year," she told me. "[We used] our break times and weekends to do plenty of random activities, such as wiffle ball, bonfires, cookouts, karaoke, and movie nights."

Shortly after the season started, the team went up against Azusa Pacific, the 8th ranked NAIA team in the nation. Knowing how tough this game would be, the girls went into it prepared and ready to play to the best of their ability. Playing their hearts out, they went on that court already victorious. Although in the end the match was taken by Azusa, they left better off for the experience obtained and the lessons learned. Nancy Cole, head coach of the team, had this to say about Azusa: "They do not make a lot of errors, which of course is how you win in volleyball. When you play a team like that you have to be aggressive in your offense." Coach Cole knew it wouldn't be the easiest team they'd play this season, but she had faith in her team—and it was well placed. "If you want to compete with teams like that you have to be aggressive, we had points where we played right with them," she said.

So far, the season has produced many obstacles that the team has had to struggle through. While their winning has begun to "mesh" in the eyes of Coach Cole, and she believes that they are not only becoming closer, but better. No game

goes to waste because more chances are had to learn from what they're doing wrong and to continue to excel at what they do right. "The girls are doing a lot of things right and doing them well. That is exciting to see," Cole commented. "The goal is to continue to move toward playing that way more of the time."

Coach Cole knows that her team is becoming stronger with every point they earn and every game they play. She has faith in the fact that her team is not only full of spirit but also filled to the brim with talent. The Houghton Volleyball team faces several strong teams in the weeks to come including Roberts Wesleyan, Carlow University, and a rematch against Notre Dame College. The girls are giving all they have to better themselves and the team. Upcoming home games are by no means rare and making the time for even one could change the way you think about volleyball or make you love it even more. A dig can save a game, and a spike can win it; but it's you who can inspire the players. Off to a fantastic start, we could ask nothing more from these girls but what has already been given—their best. 



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Questions or Submissions?
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Letter Box

The Houghton Star is dedicated to the free exchange of ideas, and encourages community members to participate in the discussion. Ideas expressed in these pages reflect solely the opinion of the writer, and the editorial staff reserves the right to omit any contributions for reasons of length or decorum. Letters to the editor (signed) should be 500 words or less in length and be submitted to STAR@houghton.edu. Names may be withheld upon request.



An Englishman and an American

By Chloe Ackerman

I have, on many occasions, been accused of being an Anglophile. People say this to me with any number of emotions in their voice, ranging from disgust to perplexity. They have horrible food, bad teeth, and haughty demeanors. Why would I choose to be obsessed with the English culture? How could I betray America like that?

It's simple: gentility. They have it. We don't.

On my way from the airport to my new home, I had to carry two fifty-pound bags on the metro, up and down many flights of steps, and through vast crowds of people enclosed in tight spaces. I had no idea how I was going to do it alone, and I was sorely tempted to spend an outrageous amount of money on a taxi to avoid it altogether. However, when I got onto the platform for the train from the airport to the Underground and started struggling with my suitcases, a man nearby carried them into the train for me. On the way out of the train, another person did the same thing. When I reached the Tube, people walked around me, didn't bump me or harass my luggage, and helped me on and off the train.

The real kicker, however, was when I got to my home stop and faced a huge escalator, many people, and the difficulty of getting through the narrow ticket passage. A little old lady, not more than five feet tall and somewhere between 65 and 70 years old, swooped in and announced that she was going to help me. She grabbed a suitcase right out of my hand and carried it off. I thought for sure that she was trying to steal it, but of course she wouldn't get far, since she couldn't have weighed more than twice what the bag did. She carried it all the way out of the station before handing it back to me, then nodded once and walked off. I have never experienced that type of kindness in a big American city.

Why Harry Potter May Be More Important Than the Bible

By Chris Krowka

SPOILER ALERT: This piece contains sensitive information regarding the final book of the *Harry Potter* series.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows could reasonably be considered more important to the modern Christian than the Bible. There are a number of reasons for this, all of which are both more extravagant than the last and peripherally significant to a larger claim (to be explored in *Harry Potter and the Quest for More Meaning*).

To begin, the issue of cultural (and temporal) relevancy leaps out at us. Jesus used stories when he was speaking with people, employing parables to teach and educate his listeners in ways that direct lecturing would have failed to do. However, the primary significance of these stories today seems to be to provide job security for pastors, since most of the parables are so outdated that it takes a sermon to learn both the literal and moral meanings. *Deathly Hallows*, on the other hand, is a story we can all relate to—Muggles though we may be. I can better relate to Harry's grief at losing a friend to Voldemort's Death Eaters than I can to the grief of an Old Testament prophet who decides to rip his clothes and smear himself in ashes.

Also, let me point out here that

While England is much more secular than America, its people seem to understand something that we don't: those around us are people, too. We as a general population are very capable of walking by a struggling person and ignoring them. The English do not. They treat each other with respect, even saying, "Sorry," whenever they bump into someone on the street. Americans keep on walking, or worse, instigate something. This flaw in our society saddens me even more in the context of our beliefs. We're supposed to be a Christian nation. Where did our common courtesy go?

"hyper-relating" to the books—in the form of taking up wizarding or the occult—could only happen to the select few who would also receive T's on all their O.W.L.s. It is repeatedly stated throughout the books that you must be born with the ability to do magic. Many of those who really want to perform magic (such as Petunia Evans) are unable to because they were not born with a gift for magic. So fears of children seriously taking up magic—seemingly a perennial target for a number of Christian zealots—is difficult to stomach as a serious objection.

A number of themes and lessons found in the Bible can also be found in *Deathly Hallows*. These range from the abstract (such as love and death) to the practical (such as helping those less fortunate and being a good steward). J.K. Rowling has maintained that death is one of the largest themes in her books—perhaps mirroring the Bible—and even uses a biblical quote for the headstone of Harry's parents: "And the last enemy that shall be defeated is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). Later developments prove this quote to very significant, as Harry discovers that he must die in order to break Voldemort's power.

If *Deathly Hallows* is safe for children, and contains many of the same themes and lessons as the Bible, what is left to contradict my wonderfully imaginative thesis? The lack of any reference to God would likely be the first and loudest response to this. It's true that the *Harry Potter* books do not mention God. But need this be its Achilles' heel? I answer that it does not. I can see two problems that the lack of God would advance. The first is the idea that we can get by on our own, that we do not need to rely on anything outside of ourselves. The second would be, obviously, the lack of God.

The first objection is rather flimsy. *Deathly Hallows* does not teach the lesson that anyone can make it solely

on their own—in fact, the opposite is true. The only character who is arrogant enough to believe in such extreme autonomy is Lord Voldemort. Only he believes that total self-sufficiency is a virtue, and in turn eschews anything associated with relationships, such as friends or love. All other characters rely on other people or things for support. It is evident enough to see how they rely on other people, but the 'something' they rely on is just as important. Harry trusts his friends in *Deathly Hallows*, but it is another belief that is driving him—the belief that good can win over evil, and that death is not the worst thing possible. At the end of the book, Harry goes willingly to his death, with nothing to sustain him but the belief that somehow, evil would not win and love would conquer all.

This reply to the first objection leads into the second objection: that God is not mentioned in any of the *Harry Potter* books. Many of Jesus' parables do not contain direct references to God, but are nonetheless profoundly significant of some deeper truth. Or, for example, what if someone pulls another person out of the road, saving their life? Should we not applaud the first person, simply because there was no mention of God or attempted evangelization afterwards? In the same way, if a story is deeply edifying and is rich with biblical morals and Christian ethics in its compelling narrative, should we so readily speak against it because of its lack of a divine reference?

If I retreat somewhat from my initial claim, for the sensibilities of the more rational reader, it seems we are still left with the vital importance of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in the edification of the both modern Christian and the modern non-Christian. A story overflowing with biblical principles that is simultaneously a great read can, and should, attract both camps.

Chris is a senior History and Philosophy double major and serves as speaker of the SGA Senate.



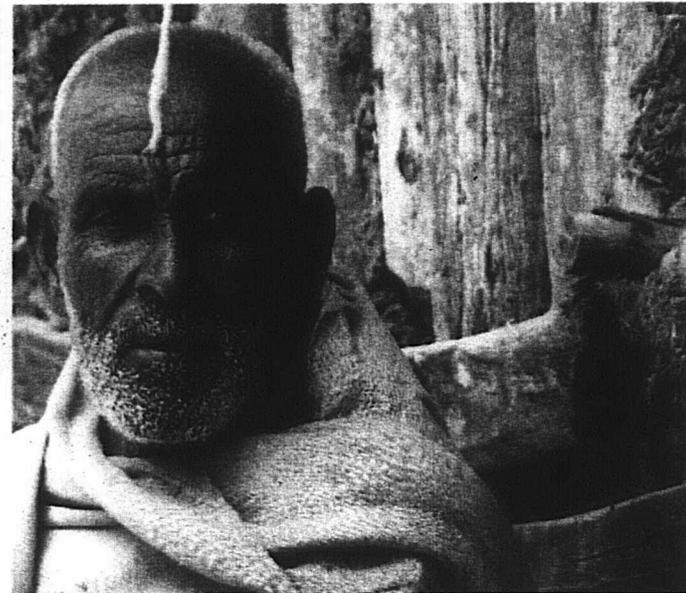
Notes on the Photos:

These photographs were taken by Justin Hackett during a month long stay in Ethiopia in April 2007 during the Go-ED Africa semester abroad. The first photograph is of Trinity Orthodox Church, one of the most famous churches in Ethiopia. Infamous emperor Haile Selassie, who ruled during the 20th century, is buried here. Selassie is considered a divine being in the Rastafari movement which results in Trinity Church being a 'Mecca' of sorts for its followers. The second photograph is of a man in South Gonder located in Ethiopia's Amhara region.



Trinity Orthodox Church; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

featured photos of the week



"Exiabber y meskin" South Gonder, Amhara Region, Ethiopia

Rothenbuhler Hall Gets New Bridge

by Wesley Dean

After many years of faithful service, the Rothenbuhler bridge is being demolished and replaced over the next six weeks. Since last spring rumors have been circulating that the men's dorm was going to be receiving a new bridge. The current structure has battled the elements and a shifting hillside for over twenty years. Upon returning to Houghton and finding the same bridge still standing, residents assumed that the project would not take place until next year. It came as a surprise for residents, then, when it was announced on September 12 that construction would commence the following Monday. Micah Warf, a concerned student, insists that the construction "will have life-changing implications for many residents, as they will now have to walk down to the first floor and back up the hill instead of simply exiting on the third floor bridge." The construction noise also threatens to disturb the sleep of many residents.

Not wanting the passing of their bridge to slip by unnoticed, the men

of Roth held a commemoration ceremony this past Sunday afternoon. Gabe Jacobsen, Roth's Resident Director, read a eulogy that reflected on the bridge's past. After a moment of silence, a rampage of vandalism was unleashed as 50 cans of spray paint were quickly put to use. Students rushed to mark off their territory and demonstrate their skill with spray paint. The top and bottom of the bridge and the Jenga-like beams supporting it were rapidly covered with names, designs and tribal insignias proclaiming floor superiority.

Some students, such as Dan White, raised eyebrows with the quality of their work. As other students doodled designs, White quickly set to work spraying an intricate design of his name. When asked whether he had spray painted before, he remarked, "Not really." Many remained skeptical. Several girls who volunteered in passing to add their personal touch to the bridge by spray-painting "I LOVE ROTH BOYS!" in large letters.

Later in the evening around 8:30, Vice President of Student Life Sharra

Durham visited the dorm to answer questions from the dorm residents. When asked why the project had not been started during the summer—when none of the students were around—she informed residents that the project "wasn't given a green light till mid-July and it took time to send out the bids and decide on a contractor." She also assuaged fears by mentioning that the workers would be obligated under contract to wait until 8:00 AM every morning to start work, ensuring that students get their sleep. After answering questions, Durham joined in the vandalism by spray-painting "ROTH" in bright orange letters. Durham assured students that it was her first time using spray paint, and declared, "That was fun!" after her masterpiece was completed.

Construction workers commenced work Monday morning on the new bridge. Some students are hoping to preserve pieces of the bridge, comparing the spray-painted masterpiece to the Berlin Wall. Construction is expected to take six to seven weeks.

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