

# The Muddraker

Volume XX, Issue 3

Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, California

March 2010

## Professor Benjamin Wows Colbert Nation

By Garrett Menghini '13

If you were one of the million Americans who watched The Colbert Report on January 27, you may have been surprised to see a familiar face. For Professor Arthur Benjamin, what began as a surprising phone call in December culminated in an appearance on Stephen Colbert's late-night show.

In this episode, Professor Benjamin participated in a seven-minute interview, conducted by Stephen Colbert. Although the interview displayed his ability to perform incredible mental math calculations, it was Professor Benjamin's TED talk that drew the attention of the producers. "I was contacted out of the blue by them in December," said Professor Benjamin. "They had seen me give a 3-minute TED talk about the virtues of learning statistics (instead of calculus) in high school. They did not know about my mental math stuff until I told them about it during my phone conversation with them in January."

Says Professor Benjamin of his experience, "I was pretty nervous, since I had seen enough episodes of the show to know that he might ask me anything. I was expecting to

have to 'defend' math, but I had no hints as to what else he might ask." After introducing Benjamin's book, Secrets of Mental Math, as well as his DVD, The Joy of Mathematics, Colbert's first question, "Can you really have sex with math?", proved just how random the host could be.

"The main thing the producer repeatedly told me was to not try to be funny. They like their guests to play it straight and try to make legitimate points, even as Colbert asks off-the-wall questions. I figured they would ask me to do some mental calculations too, and I was afraid I would give a wrong answer or say something foolish. I tried not to think about the fact that the episode would be seen by over one million people."

After coolly responding to Colbert's first question with "I better not go there," Professor Benjamin appeared to settle into his role. When Colbert prompted him to square 388, Professor Benjamin immediately responded correctly with 150,554. Says Professor Benjamin regarding the beginning of the interview, "Once I got the first few answers right, I was able to relax a bit more."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTHUR BENJAMIN

Throughout the interview Professor Benjamin countered Colbert's jokes and whimsical questions simply by being himself. In response to one of Colbert's final questions, Benjamin explained his favorite number: "When I grew up my favorite number was 2,520. It was the smallest number that was divisible by all the numbers from one through ten. I was a weird kid; as a kid I loved playing with numbers." Professor Benjamin proceeded to state, "I found the consistency of mathematics to be absolutely beautiful, and I still do today." He then finished the interview with yet another mental calculation, correctly squaring 245 (60,025).

Although the interview was brief, The Secrets of Mental Math immediately experienced accelerated success. Before his appearance on The Colbert Report, Professor Benjamin's book had an Amazon rating of 2209. However, the day after the interview, its rating skyrocketed to 17. Professor Benjamin is not planning on an immediate sequel; however, he is working on a Mental Math DVD course that is due to be released in 2011. So keep an eye out for this next DVD on the bestsellers list, as Professor Benjamin continues to inform the American public about the power and beauty of mathematics.



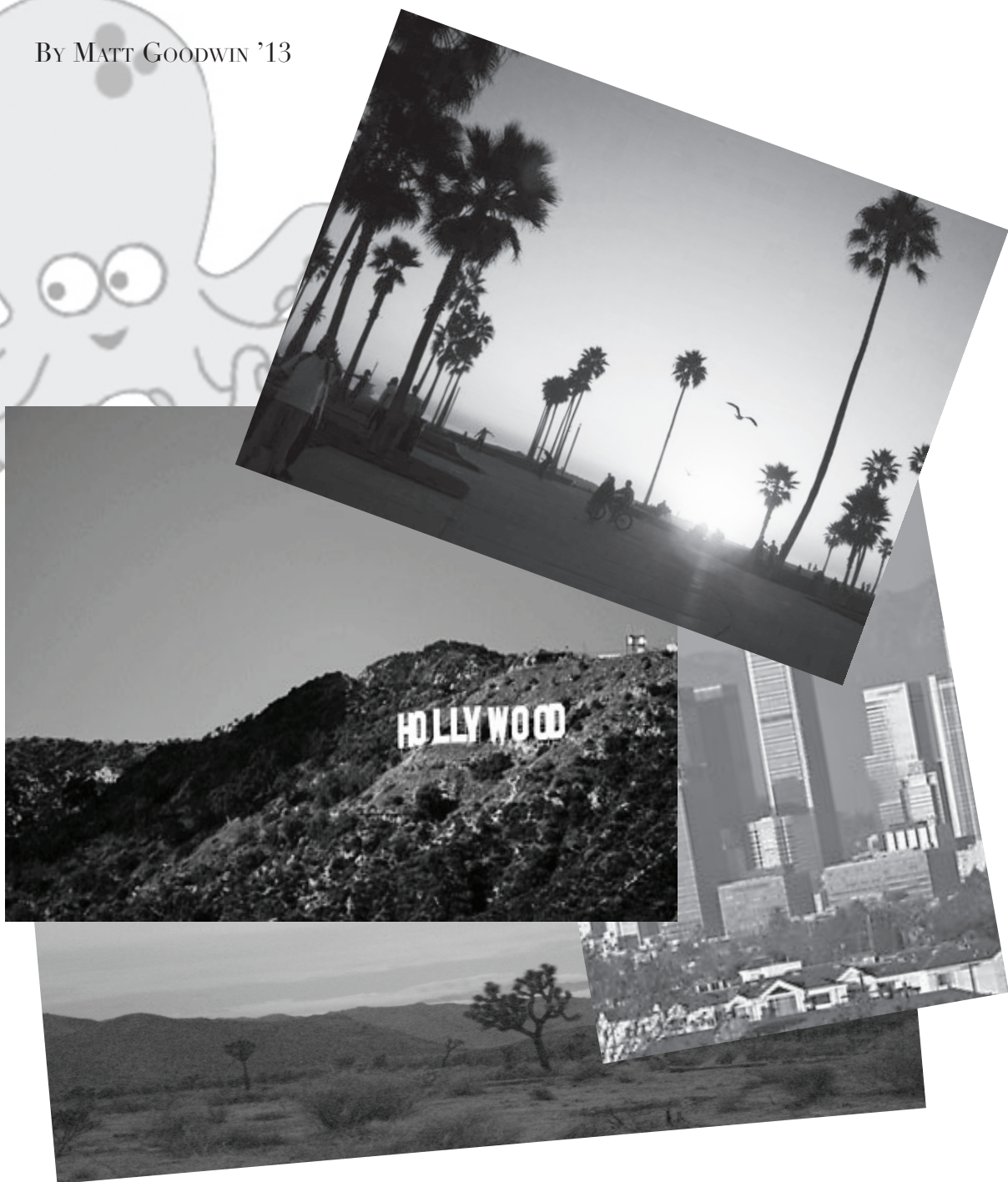
PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.COLBERTNATION.COM

## Off Campus Connection Offers Escape from Mudd Bubble

By Matt Goodwin '13

The recently opened Off Campus Connection started as collaboration between students as a means of improving the Mudd community. The leaders of the group, Raffi Attarian, Caro De Freitas, Nick Hasegawa, Jennifer Osgood, and Jeff Taylor, were originally inspired by their freshman Humanities class, taught by Professor Debra Mashek, that dealt with building community. In their Junior year these students decided it was their turn to give back and set out to do their best to improve what Mudd currently offers to its students. One of the greatest issues that needed improvement was the notorious "Mudd Bubble." They knew, from personal experience, how constraining the bubble could be. Last year, they met with Professor Mashek to discuss the logistics of the Off Campus Connection. At a recent meeting, I talked with those involved just to see what the center would have to offer. Stationed near the exit of the dining hall, the "OCC at the Hoch" would provide students with information regarding off-campus events and transportation. From a resource library to information concerning local events and volunteer opportunities, the OCC aims to help Mudders engage themselves in the surrounding community and build strong off-campus relationships. Students can also enter occasional raffles by stopping by and perusing the local events board and booklet stationed at the OCC.

Now, many of you might be curious about the resource center's mascot "Ollie the Octopus." His origins arise from the OCC acronym (OCCtopus) and in further brainstorming sessions it became apparent that Ollie makes a rather fitting name for a helpful, informative Cephalopod. So, if you're feeling a bit overwhelmed by "the Bubble," feel free to stop by and plan an adventurous escape.



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# Taking to the Skies with the Barnstormers

By Stephanie Porter '13

During the last weekend of winter break, a small group of Mudders met with one goal: to learn how to fly. Organized through the Barnstormers Club, this flying mini-course sought to teach students some of the basic steps of learning to fly an airplane.

The Barnstormers originated from the Bates Aeronautics Program, a two-year curriculum of classes and flight designed specifically for HMC students that lasted from 1962 to 1990. Now an HMC club for any student with an interest in aeronautics, Barnstormers hosts a variety of activities, including an annual fly-in of former Bates Program graduates, a gliding trip, visits to aeronautical museums, and now the flying mini-course. Iris Critchell, who acts as the club's advisor, discussed the origins of the Barnstormers club: "Students through the years have shown a wide range of interests in aeroscience, aviation, and aeronautics.

They simply asked me to be the club advisor and help them make contacts in the field, or provide some aero learning opportunities. Quite a few of these students went on to interesting careers in aeronautics and space." One such student is NASA astronaut George "Pinky" Nelson, who spoke at Mudd earlier this year.

Mrs. Critchell has organized the flying mini-course for six of the last ten years. This year, she took nine students in three groups up in the air in her Cessna 172 airplane. Dr. Eugene Kopp, the parent of a Bates alumnus, generously lent his own plane to the program. The group of students was provided lunch through the kind efforts of the Roberts' family, who are also HMC alumni. The students organized group dinners over which they discussed the day's events.

For the mini-course, students spent mornings in Sprague Library studying



IRIS CRITCHELL AND JOSEPH MIN '12 COPILOT CESSNA 7642G INTO RIVERSIDE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT. PHOTO COURTESY OF KATARINA HOEGER '13



BARNSTORMERS MAP OUT A CROSS COUNTRY FLIGHT. PHOTO COURTESY OF KATARINA HOEGER '13

weather patterns, generating flight plans, identifying significant landmarks to use during flight, and estimating distances, times, and velocities. The afternoon hours were devoted to ground school and to carrying out the flight plans designed that morning. Participants flew a short run to a nearby airport for the first lesson, and a longer, cross-country flight on a separate day (due to the adverse weather conditions at the end of break, some flights were postponed to later dates).

Students responded enthusiastically when asked about their experience with the mini-course. "I actually really enjoyed plotting our course in class using the

maps and the tools that we had and then following that course in the air," explained Johnson Qu '12. "The mini-course was definitely a great way to end the break," commented J Brill '13. "Not only did I get to fly in, and fly, a personal plane, but I was taught how to use various tools to make a flight plan and then execute it. That sense of being in control was really something. Everyone in charge was really great and took care of everything, from housing to transportation to food. Thanks to all of them!"

*Subscribe to aeronautics-I for further information on the Barnstormers Club and their flying activities.*

# All-Stars Take the Grand Texas Stage

By Johnathan Chai '13

The National Basketball Association's top players are set to match off in the 2010 NBA All-Star game in Dallas on February 14th. The Western Conference starters include our local L.A. Lakers guard, Kobe Bryant, veteran forward Tim Duncan of the San Antonio Spurs, and Carmelo Anthony of the Denver Nuggets. The PhoenixSuns have two players on the starting roster: Steve Nash and Amar'e Stoudemire, who have thrived in Phoenix with their fast paced style. The Eastern Conference also has a talented group of well known superstars, including LeBron James, Dwyane Wade, and Kevin Garnett. Allen Iverson makes another appearance after returning to the Philadelphia 76ers. The Eastern quintet is completed with the young, emerging

center, Dwight Howard of the Orlando Magic. The starting lineups are determined by popular fan vote, but team coaches select the reserve players for both conferences. Deron Williams gets his first shot at the All-Star game after having several remarkable seasons as a point guard with the Utah Jazz. The Chicago Bulls have not had an All-Star since Michael Jordan but Derrick Rose, the first overall pick in the draft a few years ago, gets his first appearance as well.

During the All-Star weekend, a number of events take place. The skills challenge, featuring four elite guards, tests ball handling ability and shooting. Players will also showcase their sharpshooting in the H.O.R.S.E and Three-Point Contest. Many celebrities

are also expected to make appearances at the games. Musician Pitbull, Chris Tucker, and Joel Moore from Avatar will participate in the Celebrity Game. Alicia Keys, Shakira, and Usher will perform during the halftime show. The most anticipated side-event is usually the Slam Dunk challenge. Last year's dunk champion, Nate Robinson, will fight to keep his title against Gerald Wallace, Shannon Brown, and the Dunk-In winner. The Dunk-In is a new concept introduced to this year's festivities. Rookies Eric Gordon and DeMar DeRozan will face off during the halftime of the Rookie Challenge game to earn the right to compete with the other three dunkers.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES

# A Head Start in Freshman Physics

By Johnathan Chai '13

The Physics department held a workshop over winter break to help the Class of 2013 prepare for Physics 24, the classical mechanics course taught to second semester freshmen. From January 13th to 16th, twenty students practiced drawing free-body diagrams, studied rotational motion, and set up equations involving Newton's second law. Each of the four days consisted of two three-hour sessions, one in the morning and the other in the evening. Professor Patricia Sparks gave brief lectures at the start of each day, and the students worked on problem sets in their free time. The program's objective was to help level the playing field by introducing classical mechanics concepts to freshmen with weaker backgrounds in physics. Three sophomores, Jeep Srisuknimit, Paul Hobbs, and Lilian De Greef, acted as teaching assistants and provided problem solving advice. Hobbs also organized DOS subsidized day trips to the movies, laser tag, mini golf, and bowling. Says de Greef, "there was no sense of pressure and large chunks of the day were devoted to whatever unrelated fun things we felt like." By the end of the intensive four days, everyone had gained a greater confidence in tackling physics problems. The workshop was a success and, with student feedback, Professor Sparks hopes to improve it for next year.



# Deans, Career Services Swap Places Over Break

By Scott Almond '11

Given the hubbub that has been generated by the planned renovation of Thomas-Garrett Hall and the emptying of Sprague Library, the community was surprised to learn of another change on the Harvey Mudd Campus: the swap of Career Services office and personnel with that of the Dean of Students'. The switch was prompted by a continuing desire to unite the Deans in a single wing.

Originally, the swap was scheduled to occur over winter break and be completed before school reopened on January 12th. However, rainy weather was formidable during the last week of construction and delayed the completion of the project until January 18th. According to Associate Dean of Students/Director of Student Activities Chris Sundberg, "We could either go crazy to get it done on time or we could take an extra week to do it right." The

main concern was the carpeting, which couldn't get wet without risking permanent damage. The Dean of Students resided in the first floor of Sprague Library until the renovation of the new office was completed.

Although the move united Deans Mary Cardenas, Maggie Browning, Chris Sundberg, and Guy Gerbick, Dean Beverly Chen will retain her old office in the west wing north of the Registrar's Office. Her current office provides more privacy and space while granting more student access than a new office in the east wing would.

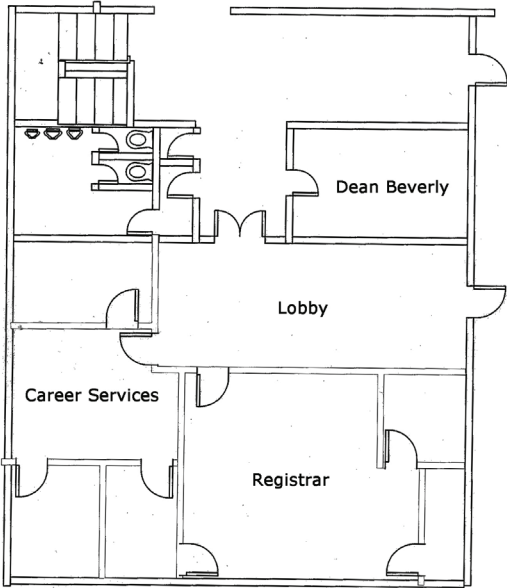
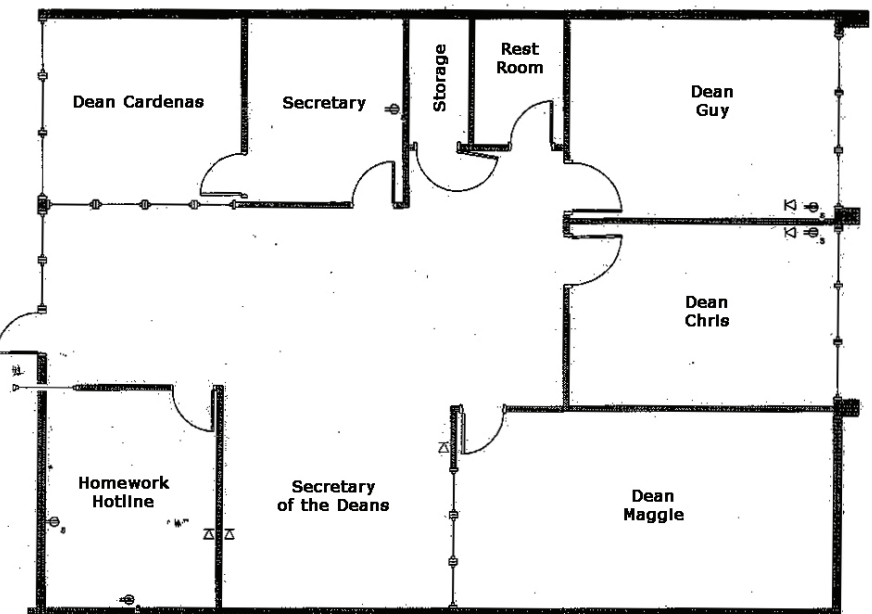
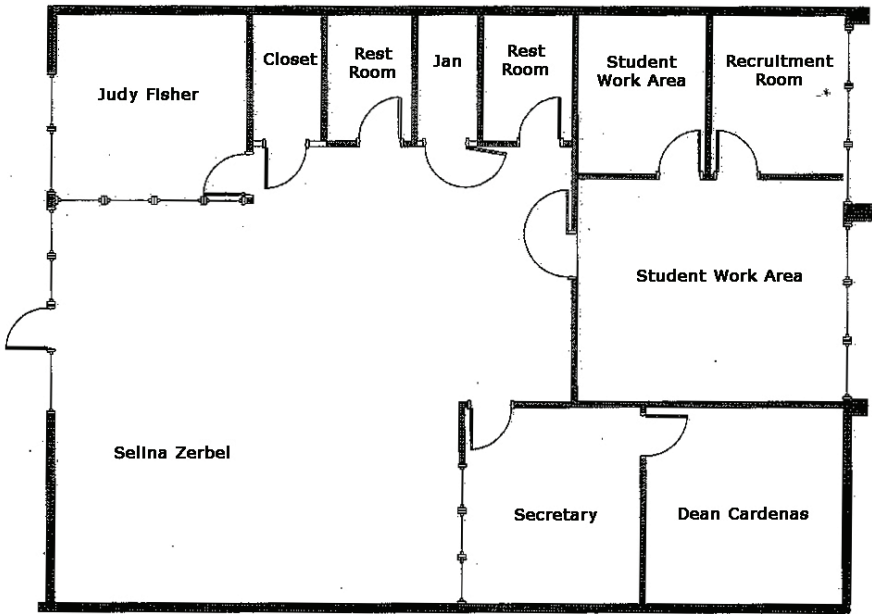
The office of the Dean of Institutional Diversity will not be directly connected with the new Deans' offices. The wall separating the lower and upper portions of the East wing is a load-bearing wall and could not facilitate a door connecting the two halves.

This move grants a considerable amount of space to the Dean of Students at the expense of Career Services. With the new space, DOS has created a "Homework Hotline" service where local high school students can call Harvey Mudd students for help on homework problems. Gabriela Gamiz-Gomez, whose office is also located in the new Dean of Students' office, is organizing this new program.

When asked for his thoughts on the uneven swap, Sundberg indicated that whereas the Dean of Students' office has seven staff members, the Career Services office only has three. As such, he felt more floor space was warranted for the additional offices the Deans would require in the East wing.

Secretary of Career Services Selina Zerbel said she was happy with the swap. Although the new location offered fewer

rooms than before, she indicated that they could make do with less space. The rooms are noticeably smaller than before and amends need to be taken to account for the loss of one recruitment room; Zerbel said that an additional recruitment room can be procured from the Hoch Dining Hall if the first is in use. Although the rooms are smaller, this loss is somewhat beneficial. Judy Fisher, Director of the Office of Career Services, had previously indicated the primary recruitment room in the old location had proven intimidating because of its size when only a two-person room was needed. Zerbel concluded the move had gone quite smoothly and besides some remaining work to reduce noise by removing certain vents, she was eager to begin work in the new location.



Floor plan of the East Wing of the Platt Campus Center before (left) and after (right) the switch. Deans are being consolidated into the East Wing.

Current floor plan of the West Wing of Platt Community Center. Although they have less space now, Career Services feels they can take advantage of it.

## A Return to Sprague

### New Student Computer Labs to Occupy First Floor

By Ben Keller '10

Ever since the books and staff departed Sprague Library last spring, the first floor has become something of a no-man's land. While the upper floors are used by the math and computer science departments, and the fourth floor remains the home of the Dean of Faculty's office, the ground floor feels abandoned, providing a lackluster backdrop for upperclassmen hurrying to their clinic rooms. But this will soon change, as the College begins its implementation of a new "learning studio" that will replace the computer labs in the basement of Parsons as the central CIS-managed computing facility for students on campus. If all goes according to plan, the new facility will not only breathe new life into the first floor of Sprague, but will also redefine the way students use computing resources on the academic side of campus.

The idea for a new computer lab has been more than a year in the making. In the fall of 2008, HMC received a grant from the Fletcher Jones Foundation, part of which was allocated for a renovation of the Parsons Mac and PC labs. Before proceeding with any changes, CIS staff held focus groups and discussions with students and faculty to determine what the users of the space most wanted from it. In these discussions, students and faculty alike expressed their preference for flexible, comfortable spaces that could be easily reconfigured for group work. It quickly became clear that a simple renovation of the existing labs would not be enough to achieve these goals. When Sprague Library was closed, CIS, in consultation with the President's Cabinet and the Department Chairs Committee, immediately began to consider the idea of appropriating the first floor for a new lab space that could better meet the needs of its users.

Over the summer, CIS and F&M hired an architect to begin considering layouts of the new space. While a renovation of the existing labs was initially expected to be completed by the end of last semester, the complete redesign has added to the complexity of the project, which is now on track to be completed by the end of the current semester. If this goal is met, the existing Parsons labs would also be closed at that time.

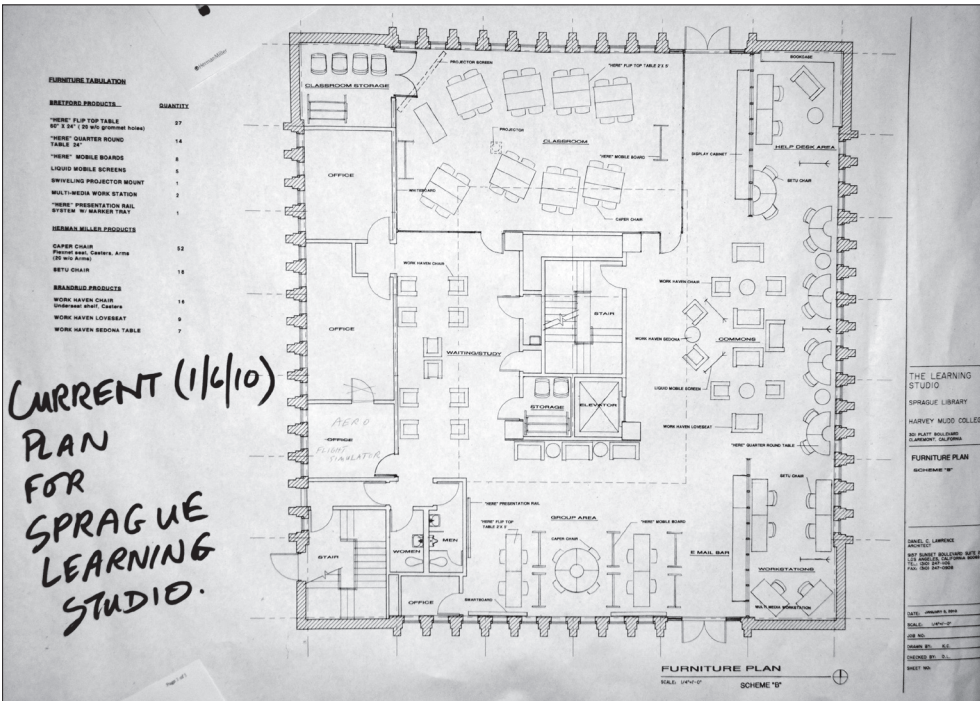
space are not yet finalized, it is expected to feature a mix of Macs and PCs totaling roughly eighteen fixed workstations, as well as up to two dozen laptops that will be available for student checkout. One area will be designated as classroom space, featuring flexible furniture and "NanaWalls" that can be opened or closed to optionally isolate the classroom from the rest of the facility. Other areas will feature comfortable chairs and numerous whiteboards, allowing students to configure the space according to their needs. A CIS help desk will be staffed during business hours, although the space will be accessible to students at all hours, similar to the current labs.

When I spoke with Elizabeth Hodas, the Director of Educational Technology and Media Services within CIS, she was optimistic about the new space, stressing the extent to which CIS was trying to be responsive to the feedback of its users in designing the new lab. However, she noted that the space would definitely be "experimental," and that CIS was "not expecting it to be perfect" on the first attempt. Although many students and faculty use the current labs, the new space will be a much better reflection of the ways in which students work on academic computers. By moving away from monolithic rows of terminals and shifting focus to spaces that encourage flexibility and collaboration, the new learning studio will be able to more effectively promote both teaching and learning at HMC.



The first floor of Sprague Library, no longer in use after the library was moved to the Claremont Colleges' Honnold Mudd Library. The CIS department is in the midst of redesigning the empty space into a "learning studio."

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATIE HAUSER '13



The proposed floor plan of the new Sprague Learning Center. CIS hopes to move away from computer labs consisting of rows of computers, and towards a more flexible workspace.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATIE HAUSER '13



An example of a chair that could be used in the redesign of first-floor Sprague Library. Flexible furniture such as this will help make the space both useful and comfortable.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDRUD.COM



# Gender-Bending Posters Spark Debate on Campus

By Alice Paul '12

Towards the end of last semester you may have noticed some new posters around the Hoch. Not your plain, white, small posters that seem to sprout on every wall and wart. These posters were big, colorful, and bold, featuring pictures and quotes of Harvey Mudd students. These posters were the work of Lowell Reade '12 and a few other students at Harvey Mudd.

For a final grade in their Intro to Queer Studies class at Scripps, students could either choose to write an essay or design a project that encompassed the themes of the class. A group consisting of Mudders chose the latter, creating a collection of posters featuring Mudd students and quotes about gender identity and gender roles in so-

ciety. Accompanying these larger posters were smaller posters with attention grabbing phrases regarding similar ideas.

“We decided to do a project about gender identity and gender variance because at Mudd, and in society in general, there is such a deeply held belief that gender exists as a binary -- you’re either a boy or you’re a girl. And we wanted to say that ‘No, that’s not true, especially at Mudd,’” explained Reade.

Some of the posters featured personal statements about the pictured person’s own gender while others incorporated more general opinions. One particularly powerful poster stated, “Androgynous (and proud),” boldly declaring an identity without offering

excuses or qualifiers. The author clearly didn’t care what you thought about their gender.

“I think transgender identities and other sorts of trans topics are very unfamiliar to many people. I know that for me, I’m still always learning more about it, and I hear that a lot from other LGB people,” says Reade. Perhaps this is why some of the phrases (such as “gender-fucked,” “girlyfag” and “fuck the gender binary, buck the gender finary”) on the posters generated such a response on community-l, where many shared their opinion on the word choice and potential confusion to visitors. Although Lowell believes these phrases distracted people from some of the more powerful messages, the pro-

vocative language seemed to add to the overall power of the project. It really highlighted the ways in which we fail to completely acknowledge the identities of others around us. Mudd may have introduced gender neutral housing, but there remains much more to be acknowledged, discussed, and understood about gender identity on our campus. This project was a powerful statement, but hopefully it will not be the end of the conversation.

*For more information, and to see the posters, you can visit the project website at [genderpending.blogspot.com](http://genderpending.blogspot.com).*

## Mudd From Afar An International Student’s Experience

By Ayyappa Vemulkar '13

I first visited the United States about three years ago as a member of an exchange program. Staying with a wonderful host family, it was quite obvious that the first day would hold a couple of surprises. While I was sitting down at the dinner table for my first American meal and worrying how different an American pork chop was from an Indian one, my hostess posed a rather simple question: “What milk would you like?” Surprised by the question, I replied, “Chocolate will do quite fine.” “Well, yes. I could put chocolate in your milk, but what kind of milk would you like?” was the instant reply. Astounded by the question, I wondered whether I was missing something. Various kinds of milk flew through my head: goat, cow, buffalo. Not wanting to appear cheeky, I told her I had no clue what she was asking. Then came the “1% fat, 2% fat, or whole milk,” and thus I was introduced to the diversity that characterizes this country at every level.

I think I pretty much fell in love with Harvey Mudd College the day I arrived for Summer Institute. After running through every syllable of my

name with two SI mentors Nick Hill '12 and Steve Matsumoto '12, I prepared myself for the task at hand: not really communication so much as pronunciation. I then remember SI mentor Hayden Hatch '12 handing me my room key and, with great enthusiasm, jokingly saying, “Are you ready? Are you ready for the moment? The minute you touch this key, you’re a member of Harvey Mudd College.” I learned a lot about American culture and the new lifestyle I would have to swim in during SI. The three weeks were wonderful. We played “Sha-raads” instead of Charades and gorged ourselves on delicious food. Exploring Los Angeles, I was introduced to the concept of excellence that is ever so prevalent here. The emphasis that is placed on the need to develop and create efficiently and aesthetically surprised me. The emphasis on quality over quantity attracted me towards what I believe is a challenging and satisfying lifestyle. Two exciting weeks, with important lessons in diversity, an amazing cultural mashpot, and an introduction to campus flew by quickly.

The friendly atmosphere at college swallowed me instantly. I didn’t quite understand the exclamatory tone people would say “Harvey Mudd!” in when I told them where I had decided to go to college. My first class in Special Relativity certainly dealt with that. Unicycles and skateboards were things I only saw in movies back home, but here they filled the walkways on the way to classes. The first week of college was truly a honeymoon. However, it also hit me with a really heavy concept called responsibility. I soon realized that food in America was named differently, too. Over Thanksgiving, my roommate’s family and I entered a diner in search of warmth. The order that went across the table was quite consistent: clam chowder and bowl of chili. When the moment came for me to place my order, I was quite convinced that clam chowder and chili was the way to go. Something troubled me though while we waited for our food to be served. I failed to understand how a bowl of chili peppers could sufficiently satisfy someone’s hunger, especially a country not used to spice. I also utterly em-

barrassed my roommate by using the word “chilis.” As it turns out, the word “chili” has no plural! I certainly didn’t understand why rice and beans with ham needed its own special name.

The work ethic here is a new experience entirely. The presence of the Honor Code, along with a strong collaborative environment and the challenging academic program, makes life exciting and eventful. The simple fact that we are challenged to think beyond our usual scope, as compared to the do-what-you’re-told attitude I was used to, was a splendid change. I think the most important part about going to Harvey Mudd College is the fact that I feel at home here, even though I actually come from the other side of the globe. The strong presence of trust, the small college environment, and the ever-forgiving attitude at Mudd is really inviting even for those weak at heart. The experience so far as an international student has been spectacular, and I am quite confident that there are plenty more memorable moments on their way.

Random Thoughts  
on the passing scene

### *Now a One-Time Cinema Critic!*

By Kevin Tham '12

- My other article for this edition of the Muddraker is somewhat unusual, in that it’s pretty much apolitical. It’s a review of James Cameron’s magnum opus Avatar; one of the highest grossing films of all time (Gone with the Wind is first if you adjust for inflation; Avatar if you don’t). Short version: the cinematography and CGI are beautiful; everything else has been done better. Of course, keep in mind two things. One, I’m probably horrifically biased towards the most “technical” aspects of the film’s creation, being an engineering student, and probably spend too much time reading websites dedicated to taking the tropes and clichés of media apart. Two, for all the flaws in story and character, Cameron’s movie was still inspiring enough for me to try my hand at the Roger Ebert trade.
- To all of you of a more pacifistic bent

who bemoan the increase in U.S. military power over time, I should like to point out that a very significant portion of Haitian earthquake relief efforts are very military oriented. Coast Guard cutters, the USNS Comfort hospital ship, the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier (remember that it’s crewed, and that it needs to supply its crew – supplies it can divvy out to the suffering via helicopter complement), C-130s to land personnel and (donated) supplies...the list goes on. And all that military preparedness is the reason (perhaps not the main one, or the intended one) that these ships and copters can be moved into action so quickly. Send donations to [redcross.org](http://redcross.org), or [americares.org](http://americares.org), or...you know what, just find a reputable group and send them.

- The Haiti earthquake was very strong (7.0 moment magnitude), and we probably

won’t know the number of casualties from the natural disaster. High end estimates place the count at 200,000 dead, as many wounded, and at least 3,000,000 total affected (displaced, etc.). Meanwhile, a fair number of Americans are more interested in the Jay Leno/Conan O’Brien tiff than in post-quake relief efforts (the Haitian government has officially called off full rescue operations). Interesting.

- Advertisements in the Hoch tell me that celebrations and commemorations of Martin Luther King Jr. will continue into February. Fair enough, except...at time of writing, tomorrow, Jan. 27, is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. You’ll probably be reading this sometime after Valentine’s Day (in which case, insert mildly annoyed rant at corruption to “V-day” like some sort of victory-in-war date and refer to previous Random

*Random Thoughts, continued on page 5*



# Superbowl XLIV: The Saints Go Marching In

By Kevin Leyden '13

“Who dat? Who dat say dey gonna beat dem Saints?”

This chant, the battle cry of a New Orleans fan base hungry for success, reigned supreme on the night of Sunday, February 7, as the Saints won Super Bowl XLIV over the Indianapolis Colts by the final score of 31-17 in their first ever appearance in the NFL’s title game. Saints quarterback Drew Brees was named MVP, with 32 completions in 39 attempts, two of them for touchdowns, and a rating of 114.5.

Super Bowl Sunday brought the football fans a spectacle of a game, a nailbiter all the way up to crunch time. In the first quarter, Colts quarterback Peyton Manning was in control, driving his offense down the field while the Saints struggled to find their groove. A field goal and a TD pass from Manning to Pierre Garçon put the Colts up 10-0. The Saints held the ball for much of the second quarter, but could not find the end zone; still, Garrett Hartley came through with two field goals of over 40 yards to make it close at halftime, 10-6 in favor of the Colts.

On the Saints’ first drive of the second half, running back Pierre Thomas caught a short pass from Brees, taking it 16 yards to the house and giving the Saints a 13-10 lead. The Colts countered with a TD run from Joseph Addai, but Hartley kicked another long field goal, this time from 47 yards, to bring the Saints within a point heading into the fourth quarter. With under six minutes remaining, Saints tight end Jeremy Shockey caught a two-yard TD pass from Brees, who proceeded to complete a two-point conversion to Lance Moore, making the score 24-17, Saints. Manning, famous for his fourth-quarter come-from-behind victories, thought he had a man open, but Saints cornerback Tracy Porter jumped the route and returned the interception 74 yards for a touchdown, which was the icing on the cake for the Saints.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEN LIEBENBERG/NFL.COM



SAINTS PLAYER LANCE MOORE CATCHES THE PASS FOR A TWO-POINT CONVERSION TO BRING HIS TEAM INTO A SEVEN POINT LEAD OVER THE INDIANAPOLIS COLTS. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK J. TERRILL.

A Super Bowl victory came just at the right time for the city of New Orleans, which was still suffering from the effects of Hurricane Katrina, and for a Saints franchise that had never had such a huge win in its history. The Saints are woven into the fabric of the city, just as Green Bay “is” the Packers and Pittsburgh “is” the Steelers. Saints fans are diehards who make their house a hostile environment for any visitor, and have been a beacon of hope in the midst of the damage inflicted by Katrina. They and their ravaged community deserve this victory more than any other fan base; life is good in the Big Easy.

The spectacle of the Super Bowl did not disappoint, either. The Who were solid in their halftime performance, busting out several hits including “Pinball Wizard,” “Who Are You,” and “Won’t Get Fooled Again.” There were some extremely memorable commercials, too, such as the Budweiser spot where the people in the bar made a human bridge so the truck could cross a canyon, the Doritos ad in which the little boy slapped his would-be stepfather across the face for wanting his Doritos, and Audi’s Green Police campaign, which definitely got fans’ attention. I have to give a shout out to the beaver who lived like royalty after posting its résumé as a fiddle player on Monster. All in all, these contributions made it a good Super Sunday for the non-fan as well.

And now, the offseason begins! Fans everywhere will start talking about the upcoming draft, and Colts fans are in disbelief that their leader would let them down in crunch time, but in New Orleans, Lombardi Gras will rule in the streets for months, and in the minds of Saints fans for all time.

Who dat, indeed.



*Random Thoughts, continued from page 4*

Thoughts for annoyance at social justice group’s inflation of figures for noble causes), but I note no apparent celebrations or commemorations advertised, certainly none funded by the colleges. The time of writing also happens to be India’s “Republic Day,” when the country affirmed their new constitution in 1950 (and declared independence in 1930). I don’t wish to accuse anyone of anything for this particular bit, but how, exactly, do the colleges and humanitarian groups on campus decide which, if any, notable days should be commemorated, and how much they should be noted?

- Amusingly (if you like schadenfreude...I do!), Massachusetts elected Republican Scott Brown to replace the deceased Ted Kennedy (in pace requiescat) in the Senate. It’s getting much more media attention than your average East Coast Senate seat race because, supposedly, now the Democrats do not have a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate, and much hand-wringing over the fate of the health-care reform bill has ensued. First, that bill wasn’t going into effect until the mid-2010s anyway,

and second, it didn’t exactly have the full support of every senator with a D in parentheses after the name until after a significant amount of dealing. And besides, to those who talk about the bill as if it would reduce the cost of health care, let me reiterate what I wrote two issues ago – the costs are already settled. They went into the x-ray machines, the anesthetic, the time and tuition that the newly-minted surgeon and physician sunk into medical school. The bill messes with the price of health care (admittedly, so do some setups of insurance policy). Cost reduction will come about by those who can develop faster, cheaper ways to manufacture x-ray machines, drugs, and/or research plans, or even someone who can develop a way to produce a full surgeon in seven years from high school instead of the twelve-plus (college, med school, residency) it currently takes. That’s our job, politicians of all stripes; that’s the engineers’ job and the scientists’ job, that’s the Mudders’ job (shameless plug).

- I wish it were somehow required (even though wishing probably will not make it so...

ah well) of all politicians, social justice advocates, rhetoric masters and other such people (regardless of class, station, etc.) to take at least one college level economics course and one engineering design course. It might help moderate some of the fluffy language that so infuriates me when I try to process their speeches. For instance, it might force those advocates who say that “if it saves one life, it’s worth it” to reflect on alternate ways to save more lives, the costs of their options, and how many lives might be saved through investment in areas other than that which they advocate, e.g. a “no asbestos in cars” advocate being forced to compare the price per year of life of such a modification, including labor and enforcement, to the price per year of life of, say, subsidizing regular mammograms for breast cancer screening. (If my microeconomics textbook is any indication, the difference is on the scale of tens of million dollars per year of life.)



# James Cameron’s Avatar

## The Billion Dollars Went to the Artists

By Kevin Tham '12

Unless you’ve been living under a rock for the past eight months or so, you probably know some of the background of what James Cameron, of Titanic, Terminator, and Aliens, calls his magnum opus. You might know how the idea was floated first some fifteen years ago, how Cameron has stated his intention to make the film from 1996 on, how the movie took so long and had such a big budget because it uses the most advanced motion capture techniques and computer generated imagery to bring Cameron’s ideas to life. You might also know how quickly it became a smash blockbuster, grossing one billion dollars in 2.5 weeks, and how it recouped its quarter-billion dollar production costs and more over the Christmas season. And, no doubt, you’ve probably read some other reviews praising Avatar as one of the very best movies of the year, if not the decade. However, its Metacritic score at time of writing is 84 of 100—universal acclaim, sure, but Pixar’s recent releases of Up and WALL-E beat it handily (88, 94), and so does Miyazaki’s Spirited Away (94), Coppola’s Patton (91) and, bizarrely, Baron Cohen’s Borat (Cultural Learnings, etc., 89). So what deflates Avatar to the level of “great blockbuster, but not GREATEST CINEMA EVAH!” levels?

Let’s start with what the film does correctly. The motion capture and CGI no doubt received the largest portion of the movie’s budget, and it shows. The animation of the cat/lemur/human cross-thingy Na’Vi is fluid and easy, without any jarring differences of texture, coloration, etc. between human and CGI characters that so characterized early forays into the technique. Environments are grand seas of green, blue, pastel pink and bioluminescence, with giant palm fronds blowing in the wind, oversized dandelion-like seed-things that flutter in and out of view and are partly sentient, and fungi-flowers that retract with an audible “fhwip” when touched. (It would be a fun place to get lost in, if not for the fauna). The rather deadly animals that inhabit the rainforest vistas are similarly well-designed and animated, only looking out of place due to their blue and purple colorations against the natural greens and browns of the moon of Pandora. They stand out immediately and invite some minor cannot-suspend-disbelief speculations over what environmental pressures would create such a jarring color contrast. The

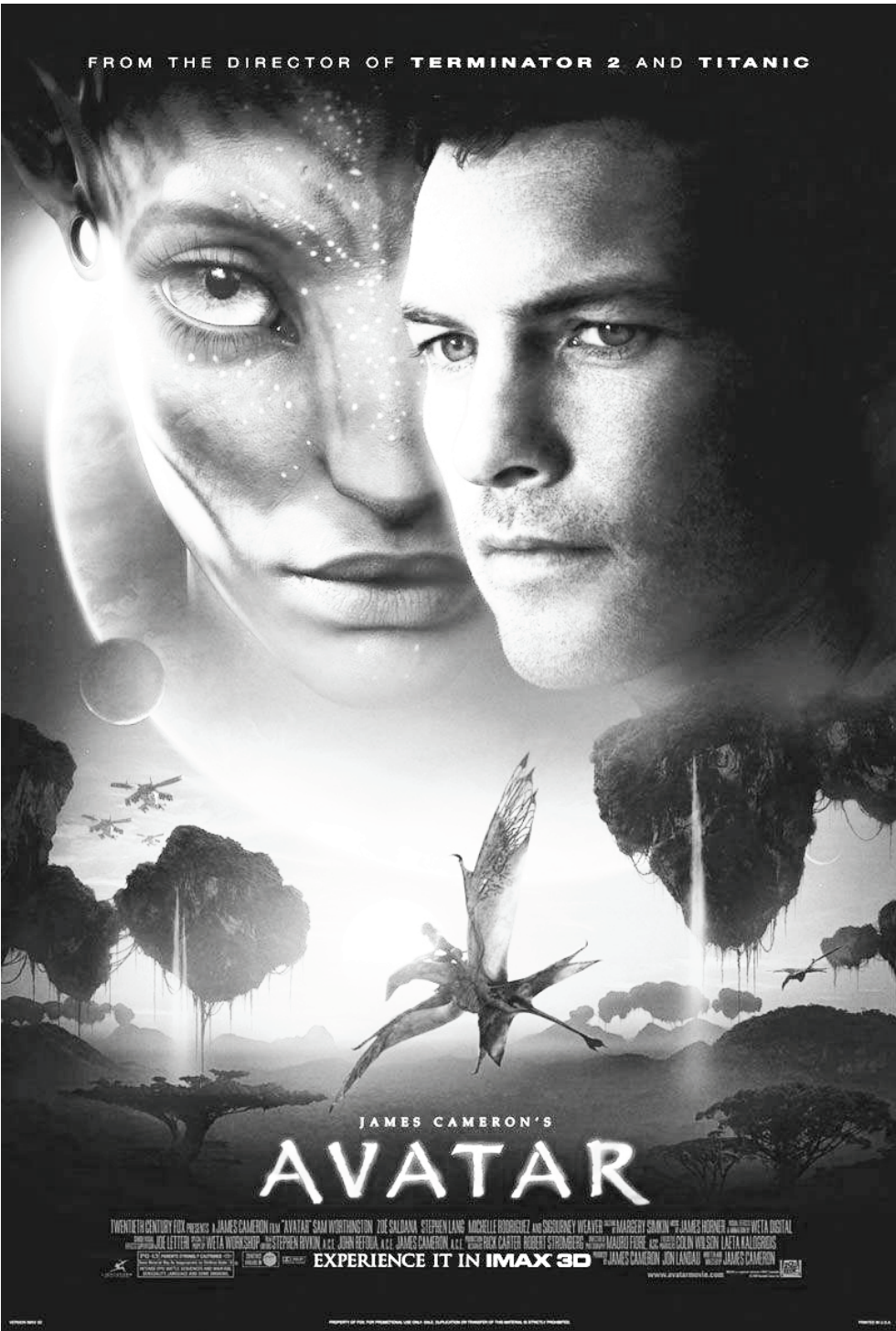
flying pterodactyl/dragon creatures, referred to as Banshees, are quite graceful in flight, but again one wonders at their colorations (one of the larger ones is bright red, a color which would not exactly serve as concealment in the air) and why their wings have membranes. On the other hand, if, while examining these landscapes, your thoughts tend towards examining Pandora as something outside of Cameron’s imagination, some actual little speck light-years away from Earth with an environment evolved as such, then arguably the artistic directors have succeeded.

A shame, then, that plot, characterization and interaction, and scripting did not receive the same level of attention. The movie’s plot, involving a conflict between the blatantly evil mining corporation RDA and the superior, noble and naturalistic Na’Vi over some mineral actually referred to as “unobtainium,” is straight out of older movies like Dances with Wolves or The Last Samurai (if you care to compare the two); it’s a perfectly standard addition to the “going native” set of movies and loses none of the predictability of action and unintentionally humorous maudlin overtones. (If you’ve never seen those movies, here’s a quick rundown—hero meets tribe while working for villainous organization, hero starts liking tribe, hero integrates into tribe, hero beats villainous organization with wisdom/help of tribe.) Dialogue between characters, both human and Na’Vi, is saccharine, wooden, utterly unnatural, and also unintentionally laugh-inducing (the protagonist character, for instance, has a war cry that sounds like that of Howard Dean, and a fair bit of the Na’Vi’s dialogue on their cosmology is ripped straight from a straw-cult of Gaia); an interesting contrast to the beauty of the views. Sample from a scene involving the hero learning to hunt like a Na’Vi: “I see you, brother, and I thank you. Your spirit will depart, and your body stay here to become one with the People [a literal translation of Na’Vi in the movie]”. Enough sap to start a maple syrup plant.

The characters are utterly forgettable; a few scant hours after leaving the theater I found that I could not remember the names of any of the major characters, and found myself referring to them by archetypes. You have the fairly bland hero (who, after some help with Wikipedia, I recall is named Jake Sully [Sam Worthington]), and

the absolutely grating amalgamation of every Noble Savage trope ever. Other characters are even thinner, with your Ace Pilot/Defector from Decadence, your Mystic Mama, your Tribal Chief, your Semi-ineffectual Scientist and her even less effectual assistants, a fairly-ef-feminate Corrupt Corporate Executive, and a whole bunch of gung-ho workers and soldiers straight out of a Vietnam War movie. The Na’Vi divinity character (always required in this sort of “going native” movie to get audience support and possibly spur the hero’s defection) is a Gaia-archetype God-mother thingy referred to as Eywa, who apparently lives in the trees as a big packet of data that can command how the world changes and reacts. Her existence, for me, drives the climax of the movie straight from “whoa, the hero wins, like we didn’t see that coming” to “what a blatant and obvious Ass Pull”.

As with all Hollywood movies, there are a number of battle scenes designed to make sure that absolutely nobody is cheering for the RDA in the conclusion. The first, as is fairly standard for this scheme of film, is an absolute RDA-wins curbstomp, with Na’Vi bows and arrows bouncing off RDA gunship cockpit glass (don’t ask what a mining company is doing with mil-spec gunships), which is what makes the second one so absolutely infuriating. The RDA decides to modify its mining shuttle and explosives into an impromptu bomber to wipe out a Na’Vi refugee camp and holy site. The hero, showing off his Messiah archetype, unites the Na’Vi and moves to knock the bomber and its escorts from the sky before the holy Tree of Souls gets blown up. But first he prays to Eywa, with an even more maudlin monologue (“...they killed their mother!” he says, referring to the humans and Earth), and is then told by his Love Interest that Eywa doesn’t listen to pleas like that. So, obviously, when the heroic Na’Vi are throwing themselves ineffectually against the RDA forces and are just about to be defeated, a blatant and quite literal Deus ex Machina appears (remember—Eywa only exists as a CGI construct, if that) as all the animals of the moon start kamikaze-slamming into the RDA forces, giving the hero his chance to blow up the bomber. (The ecological damage resulting from such a large scale battle is not addressed.) But that’s still not the climax—the Hero and his Love Interest have to



personally take down Col. Crazy, who has somehow survived near-asphyxiation, getting blown out of the sky, and Banshee kamikazes to be personally killed by the main characters. The whole scene was obviously supposed to be the dramatic climax of the film, intended to have the audience on the edge of their seats. It left me alternating between fuming at Col. Crazy’s strategic incompetence and laughing. (But then, a fair bit of the film had me laughing.)

I’ll quickly address the question of whether the film is racist by noting that the racism could go both ways. On the one hand, the non-native hero quickly adapts and may even be considered superior to the native Na’Vi, uniting them against a common threat and doing deeds that other Na’Vi show are somewhat possible only rarely by someone with supremely honed skills. On the other hand, the Na’Vi are obviously physically and philosophically superior to the human scumbags, to the point where the hero can’t even look human in his

interactions with them, and are implicitly show to be “right” about the nature of Pandora in a way that none of the human characters, not even the semi-ineffectual scientist, can understand. (Some would call them “Aryan”.) This question is perhaps better left to the ethnic studies groups, who would be better intellectually equipped to tackle the problem.

So, to summarize, Patton had more plausible and exciting action scenes and a better cast of characters, WALL-E and Up had better character personalities, development and interactions, Spirited Away had subtler plotting and message with a more interesting story to tell, and Borat was intentionally trying to be funny. Avatar only shows superiority in art direction, but it is certainly superior. The cardboard characters, the obvious plot, and the hammy dialogue are basically an insult to the work that went into the scenery.



By Samantha Ipser '13





# Ask a Prof



*“Ask a Prof” is a regular section of the Muddraker. Here, you’ll be given the chance to anonymously ask professors whatever you’d like. We’ll be rotating professors for every issue.*

*Dear Professor Maloney,*

*What talent or skill do you wish you had?*

*-Inquisitive Intellectual*

There are many talents that I wish I had...but perhaps the one I’ve wanted the most and for the longest is athleticism - that combination of strength, balance, and coordination that allows other people to catch a fly ball, execute a series of perfect pirouettes, or land a back handspring.

My nonexistent athletic ability is certainly not for lack of trying. My mom grew up poor and was determined to raise her children with ‘middle-class values,’ which to her meant signing us up for every extracurricular activity she could imagine. Over the course of my childhood and adolescence, my athletic activities included: soccer, T-ball, swimming, ballet, tap, jazz, gymnastics, figure skating, horseback riding, hula, basketball camp, water polo, and skiing. I was terrible at each, got C’s in every PE class, and spent three years trying to learn to ride a bike. When I got a part as a bar

maid in my high school production of *Oliver*, I danced and ‘Oom-pah-pah’-ed my heart out. But after the show, my mom came up to me with great sympathy in her voice and said, “Oh sweetheart, you got my genes!” Translation: “You really stunk it up!”

In graduate school at Cornell, my friends somehow convinced me that I should show up for the non-competitive chemistry softball team (the closest thing I could find to T-ball). Everyone was incredibly kind and supportive, and after getting on base a few times, I was beginning to think that maybe my hand-eye coordination had improved. Then one day when I was celebrating my safe arrival at first base, my friend and fellow teammate pointed out that what I called a base hit was actually a fielder’s choice. Our team captain had put himself before me in the lineup and had run for second, know-

ing that the opposing team would choose to throw him out before me. In fact, he had been taking outs for me all season! So much for my improved softball skills.

With time I’ve come to see that all my childhood activities ended up teaching me a much more valuable lesson than how to do a cartwheel (which I still can’t do). In the process of stinking up the stage, the soccer field, the dance studio, the ski slopes, and so on, I learned how to fail. I learned over and over again what it is like to give my all to a pursuit, to do abysmally at it, and to keep doing it anyway. It’s a lesson that has served me time and time again in adulthood - like the time I put my thesis committee to sleep during my admission-to-candidacy exam in graduate school, or the time when my postdoctoral advisor and I patented a ‘new’ antibiotic that was actually reported in the litera-

ture 50 years ago, or like the time I attempted a VSEPR demo in Frosh Chem only to have all the balloons (ahem, electron groups) unravel and fall to the floor prompting raucous laughter...during both of my back-to-back lectures. Yep, I’m perfectly happy to stink up the classroom and research lab here

at HMC. It’s what I do best.

Still, I can’t help wishing that I were more athletic. I’m not saying I want to be Kobe Bryant, but it would be awesome to make it through a semester of teaching in Jacobs B132 without tripping down the stairs in the middle of class...

Prof. Katherine Maloney



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATIE HAUSER '13

*Have a burning question for an HMC prof?*

*Email the Muddraker at [muddraker@gmail.com](mailto:muddraker@gmail.com).*

## Ghost Hunting on the 5C’s

By Matthew Goodwin '13

When I was confronted to do an article about ghosts, I was admittedly intrigued, but also a little dumbfounded. I didn’t just want to write an article about ghosts here at Mudd and across the 5C’s, I wanted to find some. I figured there must be some tormented spirits around here, maybe lurking around the North Courtyard late at night searching for the sandals lost at Suds long ago. Or perhaps there were some peeved poltergeists lurking around the Libra complex looking for the mysterious Jacobs B123. Asking around, there really wasn’t a great idea of where I should be looking. Yes, apparently there are some specters at Scripps but I figured it wouldn’t be best for me to wander around that school’s corridors at some ungodly hour

telling people I was looking for ghosts, because, well its a bit creepy. After discussing my need to find something “paranormal” to write about with friends it was decided we should go a tour of the Claremont Colleges, figuring that if there were some spirits on campus we might run into them going on a midnight stroll. With the “Wolf Moon” above us we set out on an erie Friday night armed with a hand-cranked flashlight and admittedly low expectations for what we might find.

Our first stop was the “Outback,” the brushy area behind Linde Field. On our way we were met by a small herd of bunnies; ghost bunnies I reckon, for no normal bunny would be caught dead out this late at night (Isn’t that what Peter Cottontail

was all about?). Taking this as an omen, we stepped into the Outback, not sure of what we might find. At first we thought it may have been somewhat of a dead end, but as we walked further and further away from the point of no return we began to feel as if we had found what we were looking for. Scattered on the floor were signs of the haunt. The parts of a smashed television laid strewn about (ghost of Westies past?) next to a cash register stripped of its contents (pirate ghost? Perhaps...). Further along we found even more disturbing signs of an other worldly presence. Next to what looked to be the site of a campfire was a pile of still-frozen scones (Redcoats?) and even further was a paper-mache figure dressed up in children’s

clothing. The cryptic word “Reztip” was scrawled on a nearby picnic bench. Figuring we had overstayed our welcome, we found our way out and continued on a bit more optimistically to the rest of our night’s destinations.

Not having much luck on the Pitzer and CMC campuses, it was suggested we go check out Pomona, the oldest of the 5C’s. We made our way to the Greek Theater with a great sense of anticipation of what we might find. We found the theater empty and decided to perform a séance of sorts to awaken the ghostly audience. Going off of the séances I’ve seen on television, I called out to the spirits of the night, even going so far as to offer them Scooby Snacks to tease them out of hiding. It

was of little use. The auditorium stayed as quiet as it had began. No one was levitating. No one was speaking in tongues, and the only “who” I was thinking of calling was “Dominos” despite Ray Parker’s best efforts to convince me otherwise.

Walking back to Mudd, we knew we were done for the night, but not entirely defeated in our quest. Perhaps, just perhaps, the ghosts were busy that night. Maybe they had homework, maybe they were at ITR games or playing Left For Dead 2. So as far as ghosts on the 5C’s go, I find inconclusive evidence either way. Perhaps they don’t want to be found, or maybe they’re all at Jay’s Place Flexing Out for eternity.



# The Muddraker Poll

“What goal would you like to accomplish in 2010?”



**Megan Wheeler**  
Class of 2013

“I’d like to pass all my classes. I’m doing the Core classes, E4/E8, and choir off-campus.”



**Masato Kocberber**  
Class of 2010

“I’ve signed up for the Warrior Dash at Lake Elsenora. It’s a three-mile run through a paintball course.”



**Paul Riggins**  
Class of 2012

“I’m applying for the SMART scholarship from the Department of Defense, which pays for college and offers both summer internships and a job after graduation.”



**Heather Audesirk**  
Class of 2011

“I would like to join Global Clinic in Singapore. I think the project has far-reaching impacts and it’s also a good experience.”



**Prof. Eliot Bush**  
Assistant Professor of Biology

“I would like to buy a house, in Claremont or maybe in Upland.”



**Kim Kilday**  
Class of 2013

“I would like to do well in my second semester, and also be more outgoing. There are lots of people here whom I don’t know yet.”



**Samuel Meyer**  
Class of 2012

“I want to finish making the South chess pieces in wood. I’ve got to get the wood first.”



**Jeff Hemphill**  
Class of 2013

“I want to make the Atwood Rube Goldberg contraption a success!”



**Benjamin Hsieh**  
Class of 2011

“I want to explore the city of Claremont through its restaurants.”

Poll conducted by Fiona Foo ’13  
Photos courtesy of Katie Hauser ’13



## Πυζζλε οφ της Ισουςε

By Scott Almond ’11

AT THE END OF A SEMESTER-LONG LOGIC COURSE, THE PROFESSOR ANNOUNCES THAT IN LIEU OF A TRADITIONAL FINAL, HE HAS DEVISED A TEST THAT THE ENTIRE CLASS WILL TAKE PART IN AND THAT ALL THE STUDENTS IN THE CLASS WILL SHARE IN THE SAME GRADE.

DURING THE SECOND-TO-LAST DAY OF CLASS, THE PROFESSOR MAKES THIS ANNOUNCEMENT:

“I HAVE MADE 20 T-SHIRTS, ONE FOR EACH STUDENT IN MY CLASS. I WILL HAND OUT THE T-SHIRTS ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS FOR YOU TO WEAR. ON THE BACK OF EACH SHIRT IS PRINTED ONE OF TWO WORDS: ‘HARVEY’ OR ‘MUDD’. YOU ARE FREE TO LOOK AT THE BACK OF EVERYONE ELSE’S SHIRT, BUT YOU MAY NOT LOOK AT THE BACK OF YOUR OWN SHIRT (THOUGH THE USE OF A MIRROR OR OTHER METHODS).

ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS, AFTER HANDING OUT THE T-SHIRTS, I WILL LINE YOU UP. I WILL ASK THE FIRST STUDENT WHETHER THE BACK OF THEIR SHIRT IS PRINTED WITH ‘HARVEY’ OR ‘MUDD’. MAKING NO INDICATION AS TO WHETHER THEIR ANSWER IS CORRECT, I WILL MOVE ON TO THE NEXT STUDENT AND REPEAT THE SAME QUESTION. I WILL REPEAT THE QUESTION FOR EACH STUDENT IN THE CLASS. UNDER PENALTY OF THE HONOR CODE, YOU MUST NOT COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PEERS USING SUCH METHODS AS WHISPERING OR CREATIVE COUGHING.

YOU MAY CONSULT WITH YOUR CLASSMATES BEFORE THE FINAL, BUT NOT DURING THE LAST DAY OF CLASS. THE NUMBER OF CORRECT GUESSES THE CLASS MAKES FOR THE SHIRTS THEY ARE WEARING WILL DETERMINE YOUR GRADE FOR THE FINAL.”

WHAT IS BEST GRADE THE STUDENTS CAN GUARANTEE THEY WILL RECEIVE?



Solution: 95% - 19 students are guaranteed to correctly determine whether their shirts are printed with “Harvey” or “Mudd” if they stick to a plan. The first student counts the number of “Harvey” shirts he can see (Q) and declares “Harvey” if the number is even or “Mudd” if the number is odd. Each subsequent student keeps track of the number of “Harvey” shirts declared before him (X) (this number does not include the first student) and counts the number of “Harvey” shirts remaining (Y). The procedure the rest of the students follow goes as follows: If Q was even (the first student declared his shirt said “Harvey”), then if X & Y are both even or both odd, then the student declares their shirt to say “Mudd”, otherwise they say “Harvey”. If Q was odd, then if X & Y are both even or both odd, then the student declares their shirt to say “Harvey”, otherwise they say “Mudd”.

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