

DEPLOYMENT DIVIDE

Increase in Iraq troops causes mixed feelings



AP WIRE

HELLO, GOODBYE: (Clockwise from above) Sgt. Thomas Ketchum, 23, says goodbye to his fiancée Nikki Desarro, 22, before being deployed to Iraq for the third time on Jan. 10; members of the Virginia National Guard return after a year-long deployment; soldiers take position during a fire fight with insurgents on Jan 14.

REUBEN PEREIRA
Senior Staff Writer

As President George W. Bush announced Jan. 9 that he planned to deploy an additional 21,500 troops to Iraq, FIU students and faculty found themselves divided in their opinions on the President's proposed plan.

Senior Brian Swenson greeted the plan with approval, saying that the decision was a positive one that needed to be undertaken to solve the problems in Iraq.

"I think the decision to increase the number of troops was a good one because we really need to get sectors of Iraq under control," Swenson said. "I think the deployment of additional troops will help protect Baghdad from the insurgents and make it stable. However, I do think the troops should be sent towards the Iranian borders to stop the influx of terrorists from other countries."

Swenson, a Republican, realized that the majority of Americans could see the decision as a bad idea because according to him, most Americans think that by adding soldiers in Iraq, the war would be prolonged.

On the other end of the spectrum, Abraham Lavender, a Democrat and professor of sociology and anthropology, thinks that the decision wasn't

a wise one.

"I think President Bush's plan to increase the number of troops is terrible," Lavender said. "We're just digging ourselves in deeper at the potential loss of many lives and no potential benefits because of the civil war status in Iraq."

Junior Jephren Perez, an independent, voted for Bush in the 2004 elections and supported Bush's decision to invade Iraq. However, he conceded that the deployment of more than 20,000 additional troops was excessive.

"I don't think we need to have an influx of over 20,000 troops. That's a bit too much," Perez said. "However, on the other hand, I don't think we should withdraw right now would leave Iraq in ruins with the civil war that's taking place. The nation will crumble if America left it the way it currently is."

Senior Muhammed Malik, president and co-founder of Act Now to Stop War and End Racism FIU, strongly opposed the addition of the troops. A.N.S.W.E.R. FIU is a local chapter of a national organization that has campaigned against the United State's intervention in the Middle East, Asia and Latin America ever since its foundation in 2001.

"The troops must be brought home now. As in Vietnam, that is the only solution. Those who initiated the war and who funded the war should be held account-



AP WIRE



AP WIRE

able for one of the great crimes of the modern era," Malik said.

When asked about whether the Senate would approve or disapprove of the plan, Lavender said that Congress, including a good number of prominent Republicans and most Democrats, will oppose Bush and this will eventually end up hurting him.

"The opinions of the Democrats and the Republicans will matter in the long run because if the Republican Party doesn't stop Bush, they will pay an even greater price in the next Presidential election," Lavender said.

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Author discusses book, Holocaust

NAIHOBE GONZALEZ
Staff Writer

Rabbi Saj Freiberg of the Collegiate Learning Exchange was in the Graham Center promoting his organization when a student stopped in front of his table and exclaimed, "Oh my God, this is amazing!"

Junior Shira Azizollahoff's eyes had just fallen on a picture of Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, an international best-selling author scheduled to present "Spirituality and the Family: Life Is a Test," Jan. 22 at FIU.

"I'm reading one of her books [*The Committed Life*] right now in Spanish, and it is so amazing," Azizollahoff said. "My 14-year-old sister read it and was so amazed that I had to read it, too."

Freiberg gave Azizollahoff a copy of Rebbetzin Jungreis's latest book, *Life Is a Test*, on which her lecture will focus.

"This is a premier event at FIU," Freiberg said. "It's especially relevant to Jewish students but anyone who comes will be extremely impressed and will come away with something very special."

The Hungarian-born author is also a Holocaust survivor. While she was an inmate of Bergen Belsen, most of her family was killed in Auschwitz. In the last 40 years she has become an inspiration to the thousands of people she reaches through her organization — Hineni — her books, lectures, weekly columns, television shows, and even her role as an appointee of President George W. Bush.

Rebbetzin Jungreis agreed to telephone interview with *The Beacon*.

Q: You receive hundreds of letters from around the world thanking you for your wisdom and guidance. How are you able to touch so many people's lives?

With my heart. The heart is a powerful instrument. Everything I write and say is based on the Torah. The Torah is the word of God, and the word of God is universal.

When people hear an authentic truth, it resonates. It doesn't matter what background they have, what gender they are, or whether they're young or old.

Q: A reviewer of *Life Is a Test* wrote of the timeliness of your work in what he calls a grotesque age of materialism and decadence. Do you agree?

Unfortunately, yes, and worse. When you look around you see the craziness in the world, the materialism, greed, corruption and brutality ... and that's not what people want. They want something good but they receive so many confusing messages ... It's difficult to find authentic values.

Q: You have said that hatred against

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THIS WEEK ON CAMPUS

MONDAY • JANUARY 15

No School: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

TUESDAY • JANUARY 16

Last Day to drop/add classes

SPC Greek Culture: 12 p.m., GC Forum

Honors Council General Meeting: 3:30 p.m., GC 150

Honors Council Semi-Annual Registration Due

WEDNESDAY • JANUARY 17

SPC Egyptian Culture: 12 p.m., GC Forum

SGA General Meeting: 4 p.m., GC 150

"Women in Industry": 6 p.m., GC 150

THURSDAY • JANUARY 18

SGA new 3-day schedule forum: 2 p.m., GC Ballroom

SPC British Culture: 12 p.m., GC Forum

Women's Basketball vs. North Texas:

5:30 p.m., Golden Panther Arena

Men's Basketball vs. North Texas: 7:30

p.m., Golden Panther Arena

SPC Coffee House: 6 p.m., GC Piano Room

"Researching and Preserving Black Ecclesiastical Records in Cuba" presentation by Jane Landers: 11 a.m., GC 243, free

FRIDAY • JANUARY 19

Engage Leadership Workshop: 11 a.m., GC 305

AOL Orientation: 3 p.m., GC 314

SPC Film - Crank: 7 p.m. & 10 p.m., GC 140

SPC Winter in Wonderland Bus Trip

SPC Leadership Housing Complex

Dedication: 11 a.m., Lakeview Housing

- Compiled by Reuben Pereira

New Iraq plan received with skepticism

IRAQ, page 1

Swenson disagreed.

"I don't think anything is going to happen. The Democrats are going to politicize it. If the Republicans push the Democrats to vote on the plan, no one is going to do anything against it. No one is going to vote against the troops," Swenson said. "I think the war is getting so much publicity because of the Democrats. They're adding fuel to the fire. Defeatism is the solution of the Democrats. They prefer defeatism. There are a very few leaders who have the guts that Bush did."

Swenson went on to point out that the media had blame in portraying the war as another Vietnam when it

hardly resembled that war.

"They publicize it as another Vietnam and they want to compare it to Desert Storm," Swenson said. "When you're fighting these terrorists with no nation behind them, you're fighting idealism, not a nation. That's completely different from Vietnam and the Gulf War."

In their statement responding to Bush's War speech, Malik stated that the Democrats are not much different than the Republicans.

"They want to posture as opponents of Bush's surge without taking responsibility for bringing the war to a close," said Malik. "They're merely prepping for the 2008 elections hoping to take advantage of the public dis-

dain for the Bush administration and the Republican Party."

According to some political analysts, the plan seems to mark Bush's last ditch attempt to save his reputation as President before his term ends in 2008. Lavender agreed.

"George Bush is doing this against so many judgments in order to try to improve his image, but other innocent people are being asked to pay the price in lives to help him try to salvage his reputation," Lavender said.

Perez admits that whatever decision Bush will make in the future, he won't be remembered fondly.

"I think Bush has dug himself into a hole he won't be able to get out of," Perez said.

Writer concerned with rising anti-Semitism

AUTHOR, page 1

Jews today is reminiscent of Europe in 1938 but not everyone might agree. What makes you think so?

There is a lot of anti-Semitism around the world. The only thing is that people call it anti-Israelism, but it's one and the same ... Today *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* [a book with forged evidence of a Jewish plot for world domination] has become one of the most popular books in Muslim countries, and in Europe anti-Semitism has escalated to proportions unprecedented ... Even here in the [United States], you see men like ex-President [Jimmy] Carter bashing

Israel. And in the United Nations, nothing has been done. Iran has threatened to wipe Israel off the map, and nothing has been done about it.

Q: Last year you were appointed by President Bush, to the Holocaust Memorial Council and have been invited to deliver the benediction at the Republican National Convention. What makes you different from the majority of Jewish voters who are Democrats?

I identify with issues. When I see a platform that reflects that which I believe



JUNGREIS

from the point of view of my Biblical origins, then that is what I will support.

As far as most Jews voting Democratic, the Democratic Party in the past has been the party of the minorities, and

Jews are always a minority, so they identify with it.

Q: What makes you identify more with the Republican Party?

It's not a question of identifying more with one party or another.

I don't vote on party lines, I vote on issues. And I find very often that the issues the Republican Party represents are closer to my

Biblical values than the issues the Democratic Party represents.

Q: What would you like students attending your lecture to know about your latest book, *Life Is a Test*?

The book is a trilogy. The first section is a test of self-discovery, because we all go through that ... the second section speaks of tests of relationships ... and the third section is on global tests, like the Holocaust and 9/11. It's a book for every person no matter what their individual persuasion may be.

Jungreis will present her lecture Jan. 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the Graham Center, room 243.

SGA Notes

Jan. 10 Call to order: 4 p.m., Adjournment: 4:52 p.m.

President's Report (Alfonso "Alfie" Leon):

- Feb. 10 at 10:30 a.m., dedication of some named branch with College of Law for the Pharmed Arena. Ruth Bader Ginsberg will be present as a guest speaker.

Vice President's Report (Providence Okoye):

- MWF class schedule forum Jan 18. "Whether or not it's going to change, I don't know, but come and voice your opinions," Okoye said. Interim Provost Ronald Berkman will attend.

Speaker of the House's Report (Rocio Perez):

- Goal for the new year: Increase interaction with University Community, through things such as SGA Cares campaign.
- Feb. 1. Hurricane walkthrough with NOAA. Speak with A.J. Meyer, at-large representative if you want to attend.

Student Union (Michael Jadoo):

- Ticket Master may be coming to GC in the summer.
- Extra outlets installed in Food Court and second floor of GC.

Student Health Advisory (Rebecca Louisdor):

- Health Center now has extended hours to 7 p.m. on Tuesdays.

Elections Board (Judene Tulloch):

- Jan. 24 Special elections: Education, Health and Urban Affairs, and Graduate Rep. positions open. Applications are due Jan. 19 at 5 p.m.

New Business (aye-nay-abstain):

- Appropriation A07-01. In support of Women Who Read Conference. \$500 to cover the cost of the keynote speaker Patricia Ireland. (11-0-0).
- Council Meeting Discussion: May change SGA meetings to start at 3:30 p.m. because of Representative conflicts with 5 p.m. classes.

- Compiled by Angelina Troff, Beacon Staff

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Celebration promises to entertain

BY BEGONE CAZALIS
Staff Writer



Cecilia Moran, Chairperson for the One World Celebration

Attending FIU opens the eye of many students, this is a school that exposes you to different faces with different features, from different backgrounds.

Panther Square will be filled with diversity as it celebrates the unity of cultures during the One World Celebration from Jan. 16 to Jan. 18.

Cecilia Moran, a senior majoring in television production and chairperson for the One World Celebration, said the event was put together at the Biscayne Bay Campus in order to "celebrate cultures and diversity in a unified way."

"Attending FIU opens the eye of many students, this is a school that exposes you to different faces with different features, from different backgrounds. However, most students don't get to get close to all of the students from different nationalities. This is an opportunity to get to know other cultures," Moran said.

Anoush McNamee, the International Students and Scholar Services coordinator, said the One World Celebration will be different from other events at BBC that have celebrated diversity in the past.

bration] will be a lot more entertaining with the performances," McNamee said.

The events scheduled for the Jan. 16, which are being organized and sponsored by the Student Programming Council, will consist of a Brazilian carnival from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., surprise giveaways, and professional Samba dancers who will be performing in Panther Square.

On Jan. 17, the ISSS, will be hosting a day for Jamaica and Italy.

Food from both of these very different countries will be served to students. During lunch, performers hired from the William Penthouse Performing Company will be entertaining students with traditional music from both countries until 2 p.m.

However, the events won't end there.

A Polynesian luau, organized by SPC, will be hosted right outside of the Wolfe

University Center near the flagpole from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

On Jan. 18, India's culture will be celebrated, which is also being organized by SPC. Indian performers will do traditional dances while authentic North Indian food will be served for students in Panther Square from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.

According to McNamee, the idea of creating events for diversity awareness was developed by the National Association of Foreign Students Advisors. Universities around the country decide on what kind of events they want to perform.

"At FIU we decided to create the One World Celebration Week, the International Week, and maybe more events will come [along] the way," McNamee said.

FIU's participation is relevant as one of the most diverse universities in the

United States with a total international student population of 2,769 and over 100 scholars representing 125 countries according to statistics presented on the university's website.

Other FIU organizations volunteering for the event are the International Students Club, The International Peer Mentor Program, and the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship.

Michelle Jakes, a graduate student in integrated communications who works as a graduate assistant for ISSS feels the events will be appropriate after the holiday honoring the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"I think the timing of the One World Celebration is very special," Jakes said. "It will be right after Martin Luther King's day whose legacy is of peace and unity. We are expanding his message to the cultural diversity."

SGC, SOC look to fill council positions

BY ANA DAVIS
Staff Writer

While the Student Organizations Council is holding special elections to fill empty positions for their executive board, the Student Government Council at BBC will not be holding elections to fill theirs.

SOC will be holding special elections on Jan. 25 from 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. to fill empty positions in the executive board that have been vacant since last fall. Presently, the only executive board position filled is President.

The Students who will be eligible to vote during the special elections are representatives chosen by their respective club or organization. Each student club is given one vote.

SOC President Jon Doozan said he is looking for responsible and motivated students to fill the empty executive board positions.

"I am looking for people I can count on. The duties are not heavy, my goal is to make them manageable," Doozan said.

In order to run for an executive position, the

applicant must have at least a 2.0 grade point average, and be "in good standing with the University," according to Siegel.

All SOC officers are expected to serve a term of one year that will last from one Spring semester until the following Spring semester. Traditionally, elections are held the second to last meeting of every other spring semester.

According to Doozan, all new members will work for approximately 10 hours a week, but the hours are flexible. Students will be able to schedule their own hours.

Advisor Ivy Siegel has emphasized the importance of filling the other executive positions in order to "get more help with running SOC."

"It is important to fill these positions to better help the student body. [Doozan] is currently running a one man band," Siegel said.

Doozan, who was the SOC vice president in the fall, took over the presidency of SOC this spring after his predecessor, Yashica Heath, graduated

from FIU at the end of the semester. Aside from Doozan, Heath managed SOC at BBC without an executive board.

SOC is the governing body of student organizations on campus.

They are responsible for allocating funds to student clubs and coordinating activities to promote student interests. According to Doozan, SOC is "the council to go to in order to register a club."

Students interested in running for an open position must submit their applications by Jan. 23. Applications are available in the Campus Life office at the Wolfe University Center, room 141.

SGC-BBC, on the other hand, will not be holding elections although a number of positions became available this spring.

Camilo Silva, SGC-BBC President said the reason is because they are temporary positions that will expire after this spring.

"We will wait until April for the general elections," Silva said.

Students interested in any of the positions

must apply by picking up an application in the Campus Life office. There is no deadline to submit an application. All of the empty positions, which are paid, will be filled as SGC finds eligible applicants.

In order to qualify for an SGC position, students must have 50 percent of their classes at BBC. They must also be available to attend all weekly SGC meetings and be in good standing with the University.

SGC-BBC Vice President Pamela St. Fleur said during the SGA weekly meeting Jan. 10 that all former SGC members who left after the Fall semester left on good terms, but they left for different reasons.

"Some transferred, some don't have more than 50 percent [of their] classes in BBC which makes them ineligible to serve here," St. Fleur said.

St. Fleur also advised fellow SGA members during the Jan. 10 meeting, to work hard and to recruit new members.

"Get the word out, tell people to apply, to get involved and not be afraid," St. Fleur said.

THIS WEEK ON CAMPUS

TUESDAY • JANUARY 16

- SPC One World Celebration: 12:00p.m., WUC Panther Square
- Stonewall Open House: 12:30 p.m., WUC 159
- Dancing with the Wolfe: 6:00 p.m., WUC 155

WEDNESDAY • JANUARY 17

- International Students Club
- International Education Week: 11:00 a.m., WUC Panther Square
- Panther Power Meeting: 1:00 p.m., WUC 157
- CCC Impact Movement Lunch: 2 p.m., WUC 245
- SGA General Meeting: 3:30 p.m., WUC 155
- SGC-Invisible Children: 6:30 p.m., Mary Anne Wolfe Theatre

THURSDAY • JANUARY 18

- IVCF - Bible Study "Know why you believe": 12:30 p.m., WUC 159
- Campus Life - Coffee House Series: 5 p.m., WUC Panther Square
- Tau Kappa Epsilon - Meet the Tekes: 5:30 p.m., Ballroom A

FRIDAY • NOVEMBER 3

- Bay Vista Housing Mr. and Ms. Housing: 7 p.m., Mary Ann Wolfe Theatre

- Compiled by Maria Chercoles

SGC Notes

Jan. 10 Call to order: 3:33 p.m., Adjournment: 4:45 p.m.

President's Report (Camilo Silva):

- Three-Day Class Committee, present and will meet every other Friday. SGA members welcome to attend all meetings.
- Forum to discuss the changes brought by the new schedule cancelled until further notice due to ceremony honoring the memory of Dean Tony Marshall on the same day, Jan. 17.

Vice President's Report (Pamela St. Fleur)

- March 15, High Achievers Event. Theme will be "Recognizing our Shining Stars." Applications are available in Campus Life office.

Advisor's Report (Craig Cunningham)

- Feb. 2 Leadership Summit in FIU, Superhero Leadership Training. "Will be a wonderful experience, many guest speakers."
- Event is open to all students in leadership positions (SGA, Club Chairpersons, Peer Advisors, etc.)

Finance Chairperson (Zachary Trautenberg)

- Athletics Fee committee meeting Jan. 23. Looking to raise athletic fee by five percent.

New Business

- Camilo Silva (President): University Wide Retreat will be held Feb. 9 at BBC. All SGA members must be in attendance.
- Gabriel Labrador (At Large Representative): Currently working on a draft for a new SGA constitution. Some issues will be approved or dismissed by students in SGA elections.

- Compiled by Maria Chercoles

OPINION

C. Joel Marino Editor in Chief • Christopher Necuze Production Manager • Christopher Cabral Opinion Editor

MORE OF THE SAME

“Surge” merely a minor change to flawed strategy

DAVID A. FOCIL
Contributing Writer

In the course of our chaotic misadventure in Iraq, we have been consistently bombarded with distorted, naive and outright dangerous views on how exactly to handle a war that by all measures is not clearly defined and lacks tangible conditions for victory.

With these factors combined, it is no wonder that we are in a situation that none of the best minds in political discourse and military strategy are able to resolve, either intellectually or practically.

And yet for fear of an even more dire future for Iraq and the region, we press on, desperately clinging to the comforting illu-

sion of control. But can our leaders, who are entrusted with deciding the fate of our service members and some 25 million Iraqis, afford to gamble with so many lives? Because that is exactly what President Bush is doing with his so called “new strategy” for the war.

Among his proposals is to send an additional 20,000 combat troops to help secure Baghdad and the Anbar province.

The US Soldiers and Marines sent into these areas will supposedly augment the current troop levels and establish more checkpoints, more counterinsurgency operations, and attempt an overall suppression of the ethnic and religious violence that has plagued the country for so long.

What officials hope is that this will give the Iraqi government the time to train more troops and eventually take control from the militias and insurgents who stand in the way of peaceful development and stability.

However, what is often lost in the media discussion of this proposal is that all of these so called new ideas have already been tried and have for the most part failed.

The increase will allegedly raise levels to around 160,000—

So where is the new strategy? There is none...The President is in effect bluffing with a hand that cannot win.

yet since the war began in 2003 troop levels have fluctuated around this level with an average of around 150,000.

According to the Brookings Institution, troop levels in Iraq reached the 160,000 plateau in November 2005 before receding in 2006.

The administration is merely returning the scope of our deployment in Iraq to their previous levels, not launching an unprecedented new offensive to stabilize Iraq.

So where is the new strategy? There is none. This is simply a stalling tactic to see if the situation somehow can resolve itself. Bush has opted to change course in terms of rhetoric, while recycling most of his old plan.

This is not a new plan, it is merely the old plan reframed to make it seem like he has acquiesced to popular demands for change.

The President is in effect bluffing with a hand that can't win, except the stakes aren't just billions of dollars—they are thousands of lives.

The insurgents fight us not

because they oppose a better future for Iraq, but because they oppose our occupation of their lands.

The Sunni's and Shiites fight each other not because of some irrational hatred, but because they have struggled for control of Iraq and brutalized one another for so long that it seems the only reasonable course available to them.

These are problems of society, problems of how men and women choose to resolve their disputes.

Iraqis are fighting an internal war to decide what shape they want their state to take.

Some want theocracy, others hope for a secular democracy, and still others cling to ideas that died with a man at his hanging two weeks ago.

How are we then to make these fundamental choices for people so far away, with experiences and attitudes we barely comprehend?

This is the greatest problem with the war, and no increase in troops, or false promises of a new direction will change that.



Controversy injected into death penalty debate

ALEJANDRA RAMIREZ
Life! Page Designer

Angel Diaz, an inmate in a Florida jail was executed for a murder he committed in 1979 on December 13, 2006.

It took Mr. Diaz 34 minutes to die during his execution—22 minutes longer than it usually takes a person to die.

Executioners used the lethal injection method, but, according to *The New York Times*, a second dose of the lethal chemicals used to kill Mr. Diaz was used.

The first injection was found to have gone through the vein into soft tissue. It wasn't until the second dose was administered, that Mr. Diaz was declared dead.

After his execution, various newspapers across the country were quick to report the botched execution of inmate Angel Diaz. Within a couple of days, Governor Jeb Bush stopped all executions in Florida and made it a point to investigate the “human-

ity and constitutionality of lethal injections.”

Governors in other states were quick to follow. In California, it was ruled that lethal injection violated the eighth amendment prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment.

At first glance, some might think that Mr. Diaz's death is an extreme case, and to cite his death as cause to question the constitutionality of lethal injection executions would be going far.

As it turns out, Mr. Diaz is only the most recent of many similar outcomes using the lethal injection method, according to *deathpenaltyinfo.org*.

Take for example the case of Raymond Landry, executed on December 13, 1988.

Mr. Landry's injection catheter came out of his arm, leading executioners to reinsert the needle, starting the process all over. His death was slow and excruciating.

And what about the case of Elliot Rod Johnson on June 24,

The problem with the case is that it took so long for him to die. Like Johnson and Landry before him, Diaz was essentially tortured to death.

1987?

Due to collapsed veins, it took executioners almost an hour to administer the injection and officially pronounce Mr. Johnson dead.

These are just a few examples of bungled lethal injections.

If you were to scroll through the reported cases of botched executions—including execution by electrocution, lethal gas, or hanging—you might be surprised to see that the majority of these failures were attempted lethal injections.

The Human Rights Watch website www.hrw.org states that 19 of the 37 states with lethal injection statutes consider it the only legal method of execution.

If lethal injection is to be considered the least painful and barbaric method of execution, and it caused Mr. Diaz and others before him so much pain, something must be wrong.

The issue is not simply over

the morality of capital punishment as an abstract concept, rather, the problem with the case of Mr. Diaz is that it took so long for him to die.

Like Johnson and Landry before him, Angel Diaz was essentially tortured to death.

Death penalty opponents have questioned why something was not done earlier, and why the steps taken in the aftermath of this tragedy have not been more dramatic. Even some who don't

necessarily oppose capital punishment can do little else but ask these questions and be appalled at the suffering.

Those concerned with human rights can at least take solace in the fact that some states have taken steps to prevent another lethal injection related horror story from occurring.

But in the end, the death of Angel Diaz may only prove that all capital punishment is inhumane.



DIAZ

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

Letters to the Editor must be dropped off at GC 210 at University Park, WUC 124 at the Biscayne Bay Campus or sent to beaconopinion@yahoo.com. Letters must adhere to a maximum of 300 words. Letters must include the writer's full name, year in school, major/department and a valid phone number for verification purposes. *The Beacon* reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and/or spacing constraints.

DEEP THOUGHTS

JOURNALIST SEEKS MEANING OUTSIDE OF BIRTH CANAL



The Meaning of Life
a column looking for the answers
C. Joel Marino

Mongol General: What is best in life?

Conan the Barbarian: To crush your enemies, to see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentations of their women.

— Dialogue from the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie *Conan the Barbarian* (1982)

Out of all the wise sayings and proverbs and adages and quotes and anecdotes and sermons that I've ever read or been told about the meaning of life, this is the one that I tend to remember the most.

I don't particularly agree with Mr. "The Barbarian's" wisdom, and I haven't seen the movie since I was a child, so I can't exactly remember the quote's context.

But after I read that passage somewhere some time ago, I was struck not so much by the line's silliness but by its sheer intensity.

Instantly I pictured the muscled brute that is Conan staring away into some horizon, the battle either won or about to begin, believing with all his being that this indeed was the reward of existence and that he alone had discovered it. The fictional warrior knew the meaning of life.

It saddens me to say that I don't share that intense certainty.

I know what my father told me

to expect of life, what my educators helped me become in life and what I think could be vastly improved in life, but I can't clearly give an answer as to why there is life or what purpose that life is supposed to fulfill.

While I worked last summer as an intern in the Fort Myers *News-Press*, I overheard a reporter jokingly ask an editor just that question.

"Hey, buddy, what's the meaning of life?" he said.

As the reporter chuckled, the editor quickly turned around and said, "I don't know, but you're a journalist. Why don't you go find out for me?" They then proceeded to enjoy a merry laugh before returning to their respective jobs.

I, on the other hand, was intrigued.

Like many others, I've often wondered what it is that I was supposed to do once I popped out of that birth canal. This question becomes even more complicated in college when we are expected to define our lives on par with dictionary standards.

Now, I may not be fictional or a warrior, but I am a journalist. I've researched problems and investigated questions before using the objectivist skills of a reporter. Why not use those same skills to answer this question?

This, then, is the purpose of the column you're reading.

For the rest of the semester, I will

research what others have found "best in life" and why and how they have found it.

Yes, I know scientists, philosophers and the Monty Python troupe have all set out to answer this question before me, but none of them ever reached a conclusion as stoic and assured as that of Conan the Barbarian.

I know there has to be an answer to the question somewhere. I just hope it'll come from someone who is not a character played by Arnold Schwarzenegger.



Broad scope of graduate school exam causes SAT flashbacks

SARAH RODRIGUEZ
Staff Writer

Stellar grades and a flurry of campus involvement during your college tenure are much to be proud of, but they aren't the only necessities for students eager to step into the world of graduate school. Whether or not students agree with this system, the fact is that on many grad school scales of acceptance and refusal, much weight is given to GRE scores.

The Graduate Record Examination comes in two different forms:

the general test and the subject test. Most schools require only the general test, which, like the Standardized Achievement Test, evaluates verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning and analytical writing skills. It is computer-based in all U.S. locations and its duration is about three hours.

The analytical writing section is subdivided into an issue task, where one of two essay topics can be chosen, and an argument task, where only one essay choice is given. The list of essay topics for both sections can be viewed ahead of time at *ets.org*, the homepage for Educational Testing Services. The possible scores for both the verbal and quantitative reasoning sections range from 200-800, while the analytical writing scale is one to six.

Milza Rosales, program assistant at FIU's Graduate Admissions office, points out that not every college and school at FIU requires the GRE, but that those who don't are a minority.

"It'll be easier to list the ones

that don't," Rosales said. "For [the School of Business] they require the [Graduate Management Admissions Test]. Several [majors] in education, dietetics, linguistics, history [don't ask for the GRE]."

This, of course, is not an exhaustive list, but gives students some guidance about whether their field will ask them to hand over those scores.

As much as students may have crammed at the last minute for tests in high school — and may still do so now in college — chances are this will not work for the GRE, as one of the test's goals is to measure knowledge that students have acquired through the years.

Char Eberly, writing director at FIU's Learning Center, recalled the GRE's uniqueness.

"It wasn't like any other standardized test I've ever taken," Eberly said. "It seemed to measure more how you think, not how much you know ... which is how the SAT is. I don't know if that makes it a better test or not."

Additionally, most students have by now become so immersed

in their specific major that studying for the GRE may require brushing cobwebs off of concepts (like analogies and algebra) that they have not used very much since high school.

Jerry Pecknold, graduate student and teacher's assistant in English, agreed that his academic niche naturally influenced his scores.

"I'm in the English department," Pecknold said. "I've always relied on machines to take care of my math ... In the English section I did well."

In light of this specialization that occurs both in undergraduate and in graduate years, Pedro Carvalho, graduate student in Latin American and Caribbean Studies, thinks the test could be improved in some ways.

"It's a very broad series of questions," Carvalho said. "Some of the areas aren't as pertinent in your success in academia. Maybe [it would be better] to have, like the [Advanced Placement exam], specialized tests for the specific topics."

However, noticing they have

become rusty in some areas outside their major should not lead students to feel inadequate for grad school; instead they should just spend some determined weeks (or months) before the test reviewing.

ETS.org also offers a wealth of preparation material, of which the most helpful may be actual sample questions.

Entire practice books at a local bookstore are also dedicated to GRE prep, some of which are Barron's *How to Prepare for the GRE* (2007) and Princeton Review's *Cracking the GRE* (2007).

Eberly feels that such books are probably the most effective — and most economical — form of preparation.

"I really recommend the prep books," Eberly said. "They come with a CD that has entire practice tests."

Students ready to sign up to take the test should know that it is offered year-round at University of Miami and Miami-Dade College (North campus), that there is a \$130 fee involved and that they can register at *ETS.org*.

GRE General Test
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* Paper-based exam dates:
 > Feb. 10, June 9
* Computer-based exam dates:
 > Year-round
* Local Test Centers: UM, MDC

REVIEWS (YOU CAN USE)

MUSIC The Shins –
*Winning the Night Away***JOSE DE WIT**
Staff Writer

The Shins take their sweet time making records.

They came out of nowhere in 2001 with their debut album, *Oh! Inverted, World* and left newfound fans lusting for new material for nearly two and a half years. By the time they released a follow-up, *Chutes Too Narrow*, in mid-2003, expectations had been – perhaps justifiably – raised sky-high.

Fortunately, by most accounts, *Chutes Too Narrow* delivered.

It was a drastically different album from their first: it was tidier, cutting out the psychedelic interludes that littered the first album and instead focusing purely on strong, perfectly written songs. Some fans lamented the lack of those whispery, atmospheric tracks, arguing that the contrast between melancholy and euphoria that made the first album so intriguing was gone.

A deeper listen showed, however, that the band's songwriting had evolved and those same tensions were still there, though in a more sophisticated manner. The same feelings were juxtaposed throughout the album, not by interpolating disparate songs throughout its length, but instead present within the internal structure of the songs themselves.

Critical analyses aside, *Chutes Too Narrow* was an indisputably strong sophomore effort for the Shins, well worth the two-year-plus wait.

Now, after another four years of waiting, finally, a new Shins album looms on the horizon.

So given past experience, which suggests that album quality is commensurate with waiting time, one could expect that the Shins' new album, *Winning the Night Away*, should be a doozy.

And it's not bad. It really isn't. It's actually pretty darn good. It's the Shins, for chrissakes.

However, compared to the Shins' previous work, *Winning the Night Away* isn't really up to snuff, not by a long shot.

In some ways, *Winning the Night Away* is a return to the band's first album. Some of the creepy atmosphere is back, in the opening track, "Sleeping Lessons," and later on in "Pam Berry" and "Red Rabbits."

The Shins have never been a band to experiment much. They came up with a tasty formula on their first album and they've followed through with it all the way through their third. That said, they do tread some new territory on this album.

For example, "Sea Legs" is different from anything they've written before. While their songs are usually soaring, free-wheeling pieces, "Sea Legs" has a steady guitar cadence, rhythmic rather than melodic. Only vocalist James Mercer's singing keeps the song recognizable as a Shins song.

The rest of the songs on *Winning the Night Away* are classic Shins, no more, no less. Most of the songs on this album could have been just as much at home on either of their two earlier albums.

Keep in mind, though, with the Shins, more of the same is not necessarily a bad thing. Other retro-pop indie bands can try as hard as they like – the New Pornographers can eat their heart out – but they won't be able to come up with something this good, ever.

MOVIE *Pan's Labyrinth***C. JOEL MARINO**
Editor in Chief

In *Pan's Labyrinth*, Mexican director Guillermo del Toro presents a fairy tale that closely follows the formula used in many children's classics: a young girl who can't deal with her new stepfather's cruelty is whisked away into a magical quest full of perils and strange creatures with the promise that she will one day become a fairy princess.

In many ways, Ofelia (Ivana Baquero), the young girl, resembles timeless characters like J. M. Barrie's Wendy, who escaped to Neverland to avoid the horrible fate of growing up, or C.S. Lewis' Pevensie children who entered Narnia as the Germans bombed London to the ground.

In those worlds, though, the dreary presence of grown-ups was forgotten as soon as the adventure began, their rules only a catalyst for the magical times that lay ahead.

What makes this movie a great film is that the cruelties of the adult world are Ofelia's perils – as much as she tries to escape into her dreams, reality's shadow follows her and becomes as integral to the film's plot as the magical elements.

The embodiment of that brutal reality is Ofelia's new stepfather, General Vidal (Sergi

“The cruelties of the adult world are Ofelia's perils – as much as she tries to escape into her dreams, reality's shadow follows her...”

Lopez), who is the leader of a small army trying to defeat rebels hiding in the Spanish countryside during Franco's fascist regime.

Lopez portrays Vidal as a logical but cruel man who silently revels in the fear he inspires in others. His only cares in the world are the son Ofelia's mother will soon bare him and his fanatical wish to see every opponent of the new order die a painful death.

Though del Toro chronicles Vidal's barbarism and battle scenes with the grit of a superb war movie, his masterstroke comes with the introduction of a bizarre, ancient creature simply called the faun (played with a wonderful, slightly menacing pomp by Doug Jones) who comes to offer an escape from that twisted realm.

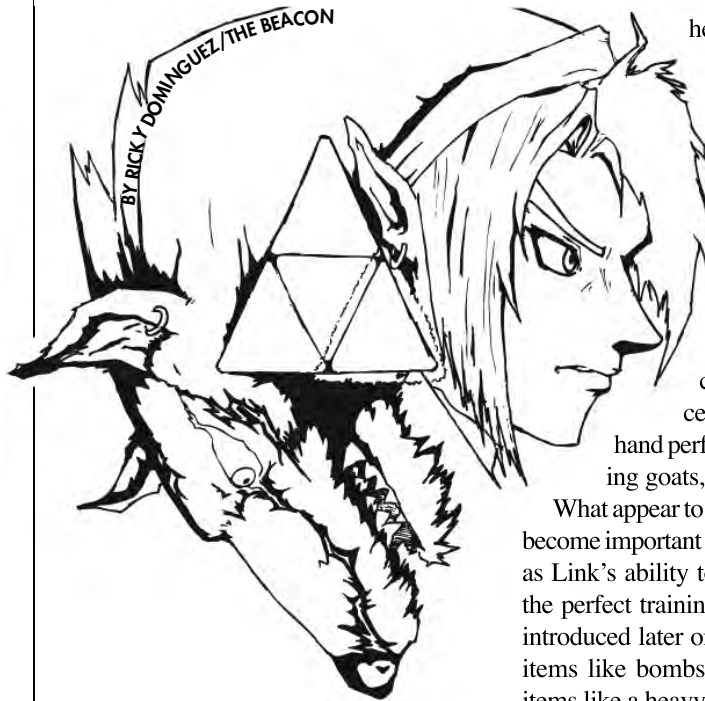
Ofelia meets the faun in a decaying labyrinth near the fort where she now lives. A gaunt half-man, half-goat monster whose mischievous smile hides a trace of the sinister, the faun tells the girl that she is actually the reincarnation of a long-dead fairy princess.

Because the girl wants so badly to believe this, she agrees to fulfill three dangerous tasks before the rising of the full moon to prove her royal worth.

Where another fantasy movie would have shifted focus to chronicle only these quests, *Pan's Labyrinth* keeps us tuned to what the grown-ups are doing when the child recedes into the adventures.

There is fear and sadness in this movie, such as can be found in the original Grimm fairy tales or the latest Harry Potter books.

By focusing more on the tale than in the fairies, del Toro has crafted one of the most original, bittersweet stories in recent years, reminding us that though we can't escape reality through dreams, it is as equally impossible to escape our dreams through reality.

GAME *Legend of Zelda "Twilight Princess"***REINIER HERNANDEZ**
Staff Writer

Fans of the much-lauded "Legend of Zelda" series waited patiently for the release of the latest entry into the franchise, "Twilight Princess," released at the Nintendo Wii's launch. With it came a sigh of relief from those wondering if Nintendo could incorporate their new technology while still maintaining the tight game play the "Zelda" series has become known for.

Following "Zelda" tradition, "Twilight Princess" begins with a new story, allowing those who might have missed out on previous "Zeldas" to still follow along. The plot this time begins with new villain Zant's attempt to overthrow the game's world of Hyrule by merging it with his world of Twilight. Standing in his way is the game's protagonist, Link, and another new character, the twilight imp, Midna. The biggest change to the series' formula comes from Link's ability to transform into a wolf while in the Twilight realm. While in this form,

he loses access to his various tools and weapons but gains enhanced senses, speed and power. Midna, Link's guide, provides him with various abilities while maintaining her own motivations.

The initial hours of the game serve as a tutorial to the game and the controls. In "Twilight Princess," Link begins as a ranch hand performing such duties as herding goats, fishing and riding a horse. What appear to be deceptively simple tasks become important skills later in the game, such as Link's ability to wrangle goats becoming the perfect training for the sumo mini-game introduced later on. The game combines old items like bombs and iron boots with new items like a heavy ball and chain.

Major concerns arose concerning how the Wii's unique controller would change the game play "Zelda" fans have grown to

love. The controls however, quickly become intuitive with the Wii's remote serving as the primary controller for weapons and items and the nunchuck attachment used for movement. Swinging the remote causes Link to swing his sword and adds a level of immersion never before incorporated into the series. It's highly satisfying to defeat an enemy with a well-placed combo of sword swings that you control yourself.

Aiming with the game's various long range tools is also used well with the Wii remote. Much like a computer mouse, you literally point and take aim at an object and release the B button to fire. Firing your bow and arrows has never been as accurate or intuitive. Link's wolf form is similar to control as his human form, using the Wii remote to control his various tackling and biting abilities.

Veterans and newcomers alike can rest easy in knowing that while the controls have been simplified to allow new players to enjoy the game, old fans can still appreciate the tight game play and storytelling they've come to expect from "Zelda."

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MEN'S SUN BELT BASKETBALL STANDING

WESTERN DIVISION

TEAM	CONF	OVERALL	HOME	AWAY
Louisiana-Monroe	4-1	10-7	7-1	1-7
New Orleans	4-1	8-8	5-2	3-4
Arkansa State	3-2	8-9	6-1	2-6
UALR	3-3	8-9	4-3	3-6
North Texas	2-3	11-5	6-1	5-4
Louisiana-Lafayette	2-4	4-12	4-5	0-7
Denver	1-5	2-14	2-5	0-9

EASTERN DIVISION

TEAM	CONF	OVERALL	HOME	AWAY
Western Kentucky	4-1	12-5	6-2	5-2
South Alabama	3-2	9-7	6-2	1-5
Middle Tennessee	3-3	7-9	4-3	3-3
Florida Atlantic	3-3	7-9	4-2	3-7
Troy	2-3	7-9	3-1	1-7
FIU	1-4	6-9	4-2	2-7

*All records up to date as of Jan. 12

NEXT FOR MEN'S BASKETBALL

MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
			NTU 7:30			
MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
			@ NOU 8:00		ASU 7:30	

Men's losing streak grows to five

BASKETBALL, page 8

after bumping knees with another player while trying to defend a shot. Villegas managed to return but was playing with a noticeable discomfort for the remainder of the game.

The Hilltoppers extended their lead easily as the short-handed Golden Panthers became fatigued as the game wore on.

"A little fatigue [was] setting in. It's kind of difficult. They're the best team in the league right now. We've been coming off of cold shooting nights. We weren't getting a lift off our shots," junior guard Michael James said.

"It's not familiar territory for us to play with seven or eight guys," Fuller said.

Whenever the Golden Panthers managed to put together a good run, the Hilltoppers would answer back with a timely 3-pointer or scoring run of

their own.

"That's where that experience comes in. They play a lot together and they know when somebody needs to make a play," James said.

Although the Golden Panthers are at the bottom of the eastern division of the Sun Belt Conference, Rouco said he isn't panicking yet.

"The only thing I can do is commend [my players] for their effort," Rouco said. "All I ask them all the time is to leave it on the court and I'm very proud of my guys. [The Hilltoppers] were a better basketball tonight than we were and I can't tell you anything else. I got to look at the positives."

The Golden Panthers' next game will be against another conference rival, North Texas, on Jan. 18 at 7:30 p.m at Pharmed Arena.

Their last win came on Dec. 22, 2006 against Palm Beach Atlantic.



JESSICA MARSHALL/THE BEACON

OUCH: Senior guard Johwen Villegas injured his knee during the second half after bumping knees with a Western Kentucky player.

Golden Panthers' second half surge comes too late

LOSS, page 8

that as WKU answered with a 6-0 run started by two consecutive lay-ups from junior forward Crystal Kelly, who finished with 13 points and 11 rebounds.

The Lady Toppers were able to weather the Golden Panthers' second half surge, shooting 47.3 percent from the field and 43.8 percent from three-point range.

Lady Toppers' senior guard Tiffany Zaragoza

and junior forward Charlotte Marshall combined for 4-for-6 shooting from the three-point line.

"I think we could've

“Laquetta Ferguson, junior guard
We as a team were not moving. There was a lot of standing in the first half.

done a better a job on [Dominique Duck] and Charlotte Marshall," Jekabsone said. "We knew she was a shooter."

The last five minutes of the game included both teams trading baskets with

little defensive stops.

Free throws from the Lady Toppers and poor rebounding in the last minute of the game halted

FIU's comeback.

The Golden Panthers will attempt to snap their three game losing streak against conference rival North Texas on Jan. 18 and will take place at 7:30 p.m. at Pharmed Arena.

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Short handed, men lose to Western Kentucky

CHARLIE GRAU
Sports Editor

With only three reserves on the bench — as a result of junior guard Dejon Prejean transferring to St. Thomas University, sophomore guard Elvis Lora's suspension, and injuries to forwards Facundo Giorgi and Marlon Bright — a win against a Sun Belt Conference opponent, Western Kentucky, on Jan. 11 would have been just what the men's basketball team needed.

The Hilltoppers (13-5, 5-1) didn't show any remorse as the Golden Panthers (6-10, 1-5) lost their fifth consecutive game 86-74 at Pharmed Arena.

"We just weren't lucky today," sophomore forward Alex Galindo said.

Trailing most of the game, the Golden Panthers only lead came with 8:16 left in the first half after junior guard Chris Fuller converted a field goal to give FIU a 22-21 lead. The Hilltoppers immediately responded with a 5-0 run to push their lead to 26-22.

For the remainder of the game, the Golden Panthers could only cut the lead to one after a dunk by freshman forward Cedric Essola with 1:08 remaining in the first half.

Despite shooting 55.6 percent from the field and out-rebounding the Hilltoppers in the first half, the Golden Panthers trailed 38-35 at intermission.

Fuller lead all scorers at the half with 13 points, going 3-for-3 on 3-point attempts. He even managed to give his team some momentum heading into halftime as he buried a three as time expired.

But Fuller's momentum couldn't offset



JESSICA MARSHALL/THE BEACON

HACKED: Despite scoring a career high 18 points, junior guard Chris Fuller could not help the Golden Panthers snap their five game losing streak. The Golden Panthers gave up a season high 86 points, in a loss to Western Kentucky.

the Golden Panthers' poor shooting from the free throw line as they went 1-for-6 in the first half and finished the night 12-for-26 at the line.

"When you shoot better from the field than you do from the free throw line, you're not going to win that basketball game,"

coach Sergio Rouco said. "They have to change their ways on the mentality of approaching a free throw line and putting in some more time.

"All that stuff about bringing in a voodoo doctor and the shot doctor ... the only doctors I know are medicine doctors."

The Golden Panthers' misfortunes continued as the Hilltoppers opened the second half on 11-4 run.

Worst off, senior guard Jowen Villegas went down with 10:49 left in the game

BASKETBALL, page 7

Women's basketball loses at home to Western Kentucky

SERGIO BONILLA
Asst. Sports Editor

The women's basketball team's offense was stuck in quicksand during the first half against Western Kentucky (10-5, 4-1) and the Golden Panthers (9-7, 3-3) fell 71-61 at home despite a late second half surge Jan. 11 at the Pharmed Arena.

During the first half, the Golden Panthers' offense only managed to score 22 points and shoot 34.6 percent from the field.

In addition, the stagnant offense was plagued by nine turnovers leading to 12 points for the Lady Toppers.

"I'm looking and searching for answers," coach Cindy Russo said. "We had two, three, four chances to score but didn't."

The Lady Toppers took an early lead they would never relinquish with two quick field goals by freshman forward Alicia Bunton and sophomore forward Dominique Duck, who finished with a team-high 15 points and four offensive rebounds.

The Golden Panthers' second leading scorer, senior center

Lasma Jekabsone, was held to just two first half points on 1-for-5 shooting from the field due to constant double teams.

The Lady Toppers' defense didn't allow the Golden Panthers to get comfortable in their offense.

Junior guard Laquetta Ferguson recorded just three points, three turnovers and one assist in the first half.

"We as a team were not moving," Ferguson said. "There was a lot of standing in the first half."

Although the Golden Panthers failed to develop an effective offense during the first half, the second half proved to be a polar opposite.

The struggling Jekabsone and Ferguson led the Golden Panthers' second half offensive attack. Jekabsone scored 13 of her team-high 15 points as she finished with 10 rebounds. Ferguson dished out five of her team high six assists as she finished with nine points simultaneously switching from shooting guard to point guard in the second half.

"I'm comfortable playing any

position on the court," Ferguson said. "Coach wanted me to play the point so I did."

Ferguson was moved to point guard after coach Russo elected to bench sophomore starting point guard Iva Ciglar, who finished the game with three points and three assists, one minute into the second half.

Russo said that Ferguson would remain the starting point guard.

"We're going to try different things," coach Russo said. "We're going to mix it up."

The Golden Panthers scored just eight points six minutes into the second half until sophomore forward Marquita Adley sparked FIU's comeback attempt with a steal and fast break lay-up. Adley finished the game with nine points and seven rebounds.

Freshman guard Monika Bosilj also hit two consecutive three-point shots as she finished with 10 points.

"The bench was very instrumental to our comeback," coach Russo said. "They play well together and they're always ready."

The Golden Panthers' bench



JESSICA MARSHALL/THE BEACON

CONTAINED: Junior guard Laquetta Ferguson was the facilitator in the second half as she finished with nine points and six assists.

outscored the Lady Toppers' bench 14-3 in the second half.

Two minutes following Adley's lay-up, the Golden Panthers began a 15-5 run to

bring the score 50-54.

However, the Golden Panthers would not inch any closer than

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