

Lawmakers push bills to shut down illegal hotels

BY ELIZABETH VANCE

Columbia Daily Spectator

For Upper West Side assembly member Richard Gottfried, applying the current building code to illegal hotels is like calculus.

“I understand it when people from the Buildings Department explain it to me, but couldn’t necessarily explain it myself,” he said. “I got a B-plus or an A in the course, but ask me a week later to explain calculus, I couldn’t do it.”

He is currently working to simplify the code, with a bill sitting in committee in the state legislature that would change the legal definition of permanent and transient occupancy in residential buildings. But with multiple bills addressing the issue still sitting in the legislature’s housing committees, the fight against illegal hotels seems to have calmed down for now.

In February, assembly members Gottfried, Linda Rosenthal, and Micah Kellner each introduced bills aiming to crack down on residential “single-room occupancy” buildings, or SROs, that are being used as hotels—which are particularly common on the Upper West Side.

The state appellate court ruled in January 2009 that it was legal for SROs to function partially as hotels by admitting temporary residents, as long as that was not the building’s primary purpose. Since then, local politicians have worked to make it more difficult for owners to rent out their rooms through new legislation that would change the legal definitions of “transient” and “permanent” residents.

Gottfried said the state assembly’s housing committee is working to resolve issues with people in the hotel industry who fear being caught in the crossfire as he looks to eliminate the illegal hotels. Because of the complicated nature of zoning laws, it can be difficult to tell which hotels are legal or illegal under the bill in its current state, he said.

He said his goal was to see the bill passed before the end of the summer recess, and that the support of the mayor’s office, which drafted the language of the bill, would lend political clout.

“Our goal is that apartments that are legally meant to be housing for permanent residents should not be diverted into being transient hotel



PATRICK YUAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

CHECK IN | Rick, a resident of Pennington on 95th Street, believes his landlord has been renting rooms to tourists.

rooms,” Gottfried added.

Rosenthal’s bill, known as the “natural persons bill,” would prevent landlords from leasing portions of their buildings to companies who convert the blocks into hotel rooms, limiting landlords to renting only to “flesh and blood” tenants.

“By restricting the ability to lease these apartments to natural persons, my legislation will end the conversion of these units into for-profit illegal hotel enterprises,” Rosenthal said in an email.

But Rosenthal’s bill may be held up by ongoing debates in the legislature. According to Jonathan Davis, Rosenthal’s legislative director, the bill has been delayed by the ongoing budget debates in Albany, though Gottfried said that he didn’t think that was a factor in his own case.

Upper West Side City Council member Gale Brewer said that she is optimistic that Gottfried’s

legislation would help free up affordable housing, since most people who live in SROs have limited or fixed incomes.

“We are very supportive and are going to do a [City Council] resolution to support this,” Brewer said of the bill.

Yarrow Willman-Cole who works with the Goddard Riverside SRO Law Project, an organization that works to protect the rights of tenants in SROs, said that all of the bills will help the city protect against the illegal conversion of residential units into hotel rooms.

“It’s important that the legislation is passed because landlords are taking more and more units out of the affordable New York City housing market every day and it’s more dire than ever that the city protects this type of housing for residents,” Willman-Cole said in an email.

Still, even in the neighborhood of the Continental building, a party in the lawsuit against New York City that declared most of the supposedly illegal hotels legal, outrage seemed muted. Multiple people said they hadn’t heard much about the issue.

Boris Kogan, who lives on 94th Street, said he didn’t feel that the SRO buildings being used as hotels are a problem for the neighborhood. “I’ve been living here for two-and-a-half years, and I’ve never seen or heard of any problem with a tourist,” said Kogan.

Susan Elliot, who lives at 711 West End Ave., was also among the unconcerned. The hotels in her neighborhood are mostly hostels accommodating young tourists, she said.

“I don’t mind the kids at all,” she added.

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CC, SEAS name top seniors

Richard, Davidovits to be schools’ valedictorians

BY AMBER TUNNELL

Spectator Senior Staff Writer

While some students may be staggering towards the end of the semester, four seniors were rewarded this week for four years of academic achievement.

Arianne Richard, CC ’10, has been named the Columbia College valedictorian, and Jeffrey Spear, CC ’10, will be the salutatorian.

Richard is a biological sciences major. As a junior, she was awarded a Goldwater Scholarship, the most prestigious prize for undergraduates planning to pursue Ph.D.s in science or math. As part of the award, she received \$7,500.

On campus, she is involved in the group CU Dance Marathon and does corporate relations for the group. Richard attended Concord Academy in Massachusetts for high school.

Spear is an ecology, evolution, and environmental biology major and is most known for his fencing abilities. He is a national champion and has been an All-American fencer in each of the last two years. He was also named a first-team Academic All-American athlete last year by ESPN The Magazine.

This semester, when the rest of the team was on a break from competition, Spear traveled to Budapest, Hungary, to compete in the men’s World Cup.

In February, Spear told Spectator that traveling while being a student can be challenging. While he was in Budapest, Spear said that he

was also working on his thesis.

“Sometimes it almost feels like I am living a different life over here and that can make it difficult to keep up as a student,” Spear said in an email from Budapest in February.

“The opportunity to represent the U.S. and Columbia to the rest of the world is an experience for which I will always be grateful. All student athletes play a role as ambassadors for their school, but to have the opportunity to take that to the next level, and to represent the U.S. and Columbia abroad, is something very special for me,” Spear added.

Before enrolling at Columbia, Spear was homeschooled in Wynantskill, N.Y.

Seth Davidovits, SEAS ’10, was named valedictorian for the School of Engineering and Applied Science. The salutatorian is Rodney Chang, SEAS ’10.

Davidovits is an applied physics major, who co-authored a paper on classical density functional theory. On campus, he was the president of the Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Club and vice president of Engineers Without Borders. He also interned at the Argonne National Laboratory.

He attended Andover High School in Andover, Massachusetts.

Chang is a mechanical engineering major and a member of Pi Tau Sigma, the mechanical engineering honor society.

He attended Baton Rouge Magnet High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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FORBIDDEN FRUIT



SAMUEL DRAXLER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

RED RED WINE | With smart wine and fruit choices when making their own sangria, students don’t have to break the bank on pricey restaurant alternatives. See page 3.

Barnard funding for sororities, but not recognition

BY ELIZABETH SCOTT

Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Though Barnard’s Student Government Association has yet to formally recognize Greek organizations on campus, it continues to financially support its students’ participation in them.

Some members of Funding at Columbia University (F@CU) have argued that the money they contribute as councils that officially recognize Greek life, shouldn’t go to supporting Barnard’s participation in Greek life if they don’t recognize it, though the SGA continues to give the Panhellenic Council money to support its student participation.

F@CU is a board made up of the incoming and outgoing presidents and vice presidents of funding from General Studies Student Council, Engineering Student Council, Columbia College Student Council, and SGA, and holds a summit at the end of each year to allocate funding to student groups.

Sharmin Ahmed, BC ’10 and SGA vice president of finance, said that Barnard’s council “gave a contribution to Panhell [Panhellenic Council] specifically because they

have been active in saying they have Barnard students” who participate in the organization and are part of the executive board.

For the past two years, SGA has contributed \$1,000—which, according to Ahmed, is more than SGA would have owed proportionally had they been contributing as a council that officially recognizes Greek organizations. “We just give a flat-out amount of \$1,000 because

“We want to show that they have our support in whatever they choose to participate.”

—SGA president Katie Palillo, BC ’10

that’s the amount comparable to what we should give. A thousand is an arbitrary number, it’s a number that the F@CU committee decided long before. . . . We’ve stuck by \$1,000 and we stuck by it because we didn’t want to contribute in ratio because that would be making the statement that we recognize Greek life and we didn’t think that that is a statement we could make. It was an arbitrary number but it was comparable to what we should have

contributed—sometimes it’s more, sometimes it’s less, and last year it was more,” Ahmed explained.

The Panhellenic Council has been granted “stage one” recognition at Barnard—which includes the ability for sororities in the council to flyer, reserve space, hang banners in Barnard Hall, and get an adviser.

What the sororities are missing is “stage two” recognition, without

which they cannot apply for allocations for the academic year. Most other Barnard groups have “stage two” recognition. Any group, however, can apply for co-sponsorship with SGA regardless of whether or not it is recognized by the council.

Despite the fact that Barnard has contributed and continues to contribute money to the Panhellenic Council, the InterGreek Council feels that recognition is a critical part of the equation. In a recent

statement addressed to the presidents of the four undergraduate councils, the IGC wrote, “Should IGC be unsuccessful again in gaining stage one recognition and should Panhell be unsuccessful in gaining funding through stage two recognition from SGA in the future, we will be forced to take additional steps which may include the total restriction of Barnard students from involvement in Greek Life.”

What is problematic, some say, is not the amount of money contributed, but the fact that the money isn’t accompanied by recognition—which, CCSC President Sue Yang, CC ’10, said, would calculate the amount owed by considering factors such as sorority growth and participation. “Right now, the \$1,000 is an arbitrary number, it’s not based on anything—if they’re recognized it would be grounded by factors taken into consideration, like future growth versus a number that’s made up.”

According to Nuriel Moghavem, CC ’11 and the vice president of finance for CCSC, the relationship between councils and student

SEE SGA, page 2

INSIDE

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Columbia students gleek out in ‘Glee’ auditions

After answering an open casting call for the popular TV show “Glee,” Columbia students Joey Goldberg and Emily Alpern Fisch share their motivations for and experiences of being part of a nationwide talent search.



Sports, back page

Cornell, Dartmouth hire new basketball coaches

Both the Big Red and the Big Green have filled their coaching vacancies, hiring Bill Courtney and Paul Cormier, respectively, to take over their basketball programs. This makes the Columbia job the only head coaching vacancy in the league.

Opinion, page 4

Sealed without a kiss

Alexandria Symonds reminisces about the ups and downs of a past relationship—with Spec.

A tangled web

Amanda Gutterman explores the role of the Internet as the modern deus ex machina.

Today’s Events

Women and Leadership

President Bollinger and student discuss the role of women’s leadership.
Italian Academy Theater, 6 p.m.

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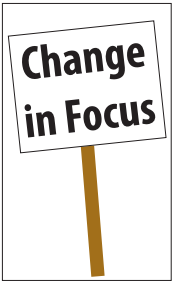


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‘Money-Driven Medicine’ digests health care debate

BY DANIEL VALELLA
Columbia Daily Spectator



Even as health care bills are being passed, many Americans are continuing to ask themselves, “What’s really going on?” A new documentary film, “Money-Driven Medicine,” albeit agenda-driven, answers many brimming questions and clears up quite a bit of confusion. In many ways, it’s a crash course in U.S. health care. Based loosely on Maggie Mahar’s best-selling book “Money-Driven Medicine: The Real Reason Health Care Costs So Much,” the film offers an in-depth analysis of the \$2.6 trillion U.S. health care system, why it faced and still faces so many problems, and what—the filmmakers believe—needs to be done to fix it. Per person, the U.S. spends twice as much as the “average developed nation” on health care, according to the film—one-sixth of the nation’s GDP—yet a great deal remains to be resolved. “Money-Driven Medicine” takes the stance that most of this spending is wasteful and provides no benefit to patients. America is the only developed country that has chosen to turn medicine into a largely unregulated, for-profit enterprise. As Donald Berwick, president of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, says in the film, “We get more care—but not better care.” Berwick’s main argument is that the U.S. focuses most of its resources on high-tech and tremendously costly “rescue care” that patients need after they become incredibly ill, rather than on the preventive and primary care that would likely keep many out of the hospital entirely. Emergency rooms, Berwick points out, find themselves overflowing with people. Primary care

physicians, on the other hand, are becoming increasingly rare. A number of student organizations on Columbia’s campus would seem to agree. The Pre-Medical Society and Project HEALTH, just to name two of many, consistently articulate their concern with the misguided fiscal compensation system for physicians, which drives many medical students away from primary care and into high-paying specialties. In many ways a well-founded cinematic Marxist argument in an uncompromising capitalist society, “Money-Driven Medicine” supports its point of view with an interview of medical ethicist Larry Churchill, who explains, “The current medical care system is not designed to meet the health needs of the population. It is designed to protect the interests of insurance companies, pharmaceutical firms, and—to a certain extent—organized medicine. It is designed to turn a profit. It is designed to meet the needs of the people in power.” Pharmaceutical companies, the experts interviewed explain, produce and sell many drugs that Americans simply don’t need. So, while many of the uninsured and under-insured receive too little care, the well-insured often receive unnecessary and sometimes risky care. Veteran physicians stress that reform must begin with the doctor-patient partnership. “Before patients can reclaim their rightful place at the center of our health care system,” Mahar says, “we must empower doctors and nurses to practice patient-centered care—based not on corporate imperatives but on the best scientific research available.” “Money-Driven Medicine” makes a strong argument for universal health coverage, but even audiences who don’t agree can learn a great deal from the shocking data the filmmakers bring to the screen. In a time of tremendous confusion, it’s a film that answers many questions, yet also leaves the viewer with many more. “Money-Driven Medicine” is available for seven-day rental from Amazon for \$1.99.



CASH COW | Dr. James Weinstein and other medical professionals break down the health care debate in “Money Driven Medicine.”



GLEEKS | Joey Goldberg, CC ’10, and Emily Alpern Fisch, BC ’11, answered an open nationwide casting call for the Fox show “Glee.”

Students try to bring CU some ‘Glee’

BY LOGAN HOFSTEIN
Spectator Staff Writer

For the past month, Fox’s “Glee” has held a contest on MySpace to search for the next cast member, and at least two Columbians have joined the fray—Joey Goldberg, CC ’10, and Emily Alpern Fisch, BC ’11. Alpern Fisch and Goldberg come from singing backgrounds and have been involved with Non Sequitur, a coed a cappella group at Columbia. Alpern Fisch also performed in an off-Broadway show when she was a teenager. The pair auditioned for “Glee” because they loved the show, but there was also something more to their decision than that. “The moment I knew this was an extraordinary show was during the episode with deaf students signing and singing along with the McKinley High Glee Club to ‘Imagine,’” Alpern Fisch said. “This show really resonated with me, having spent eight years of my life performing in a deaf theater company. In fact, I have been performing that exact song, using sign language, since I was 12 years old.” Similarly, Goldberg said that he feels “a connection with the themes of the show and what the characters go through. It’d be a dream come true to be a part of such an awesome production.” With such a great prize, the competition is fierce. There are over “30,000 submissions,” Goldberg



CASTING COLUMBIA | With their submission of a monologue and a song they performed, Columbia students number among the hopefuls to land a role in the online casting call for the musical dramedy “Glee.”

said, while the last submissions were still trickling in by the Monday deadline. It is possible to view the entries online, and to award “gold stars” to the entrants one would like to see on the small screen. But regardless of whether his videos receive few or many gold stars, Goldberg said he will not let the number bother him. “The voting isn’t really how they’re deciding who will be chosen,” he said, “so I’m not thinking too much about it.” The contestants submitted a one-minute monologue and a song that was once sung by the cast of “Glee.” Fox gave the contestants a choice of the top 10 songs from the show for karaoke. Both decided to sing “Don’t Rain On

My Parade,” a song from “Funny Girl,” most often associated with Barbra Streisand from the 1968 theatrical release. It was a coincidence that Alpern Fisch and Goldberg chose the same song. Alpern Fisch decided on it because she had “tape cassette recordings of me singing that song ... in my car seat when I was a little kid.” Goldberg chose “Don’t Rain On My Parade” because it “is not typically sung by a guy” and “it allowed me to have the most fun.” The monologues were a little more difficult to film because of the strict guidelines. The videos had to state “your name, where you were from, how long you

had been singing, [and] why you wanted to be on Glee,” Alpern Fisch said. Goldberg’s goal was to show his “goofy personality [that] I feel fits with the show.” But regardless of the outcome, they are both happy with the work they put forth. “I think I’m doing a good job of reminding myself that the chances of anything happening are extremely unlikely,” Goldberg said. “Even so, I’m keeping my fingers crossed.” Alpern Fisch echoed a similar sentiment. “I am keeping my hopes up,” she said, “because you can’t even be considered unless you put yourself out there and give it your best shot. And I believe I did that.”

At-home sangria beats stores to the punch

BY DEVIN BRISKI
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Spanish for “bloodletting,” sangria is the ideal cheek-flushing summer drink for Hispanophiles. Students can claim this overpriced eat-out favorite with a little prep work and logistical planning—no crystal punch bowls are necessary for a decidedly less glamorous presentation for dorm gatherings.

Though sangria is typically made with red wine, Vino Fino owner Jorge Alvarado explained that, when it comes to making sangria, “There are multiple choices—just like life.” The standard choice, red wine, makes for a richer, darker, and more complex drink, while white wine lends itself to a milder and sweeter concoction. Alvarado, who prefers white sangria, recommends choosing a dry white wine, pointing out a \$14 Puerta Vieja bottle available at Vino Fino. “I find the white sangria a little more refreshing—which is funny, because I prefer red wine,” Alvarado said. Alvarado also recommended using an Italian wine called Lambrusco for students short on time. “It’s already sweet and carbonated,” he noted, meaning that students can skip adding the carbonated water and extra sugar in typical recipes. Although it may be tempting to scrimp on wine because of all the add-ins, Alvarado advised



FRUIT OF THE ROOM | With good ingredients, homemade sangria soars.

against this decision. He stated that students should go for a \$10-15 bottle of wine versus the always-tempting two-buck chuck. “You’re still going to get the dryness, the minerality, the tropical notes,” Alvarado said of pricier bottles, regardless of the fruit. As for the fruit, most recipes call for apples and oranges, with variants requiring anything from peaches to passion fruit. Alvarado also revealed a trick of the trade, advising students to divide the process, first combining the hard alcohol—typically triple sec and brandy or vodka—with the apples, letting it marinate for an hour, and later adding the wine, soda, and other fruit. Lastly, to throw a successful sangria get-together, students will need a large container. Anything from a plastic storage container to two soup pots should work for preparing and serving, depending on the

amount of confidence guests have in their hosts’ routine cleanliness. And when the carefully crafted concoction runs out, just slice oranges into jungle juice. By this point, people will be too drunk to notice the difference anyway.

Red Wine Sangria

Ingredients:

2 magnums of red wine
1 gallon of orange juice
2 cups of triple sec
1 cup of cognac
1.5 qt carbonated water
1.5 qt ginger ale
1 tablespoon of ground cinnamon
orange slices (to float on top)
sliced apple

Mix triple sec and cognac, add sliced apples.

Let this marinate for an hour.

Add wine, orange juice, carbonated water, ginger ale, and cinnamon.

Slice up oranges and let them float on top.

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To Spec, a letter: better late than never

BY ALEXANDRIA SYMONDS

Dear Spec,

It's been a while since we've talked, hasn't it? That's mostly my fault, so I'm sorry. I meant to write or call or something, but you know how these things go—we get so busy. After I passed The Eye on to Thomas, I had all these plans—an Eye lead story, a semester of design or copy-editing experience, something to keep us connected. We were supposed to stay friends.

And then we didn't. I haven't been over to your building to see you in over a year. For a while you kept inviting me to your parties, which was nice. I appreciated the invitations, even though I never went. It would have been weird—you with your new editors, me with my new activities, trying to ignore the fact that we'd never "totally kept in touch" like we'd promised.

We have all those mutual friends, who we figured would ensure that we'd still see each other once in a while, but they haven't, and that's okay. Sometimes, I'd ask them how you

SENIOR COLUMN



DANIEL
AMZALLAG

Outside the gates

regard to nuance, and often attempt to thwart projects altogether. Monthly meetings are famous for their bickering and lack of focus on specific issues, and instead usually consist of presentations by politicians paying lip service to mandatory city procedures and outraged board members shouting at them cathartically. Ultimately, the boards' resolutions on these issues are nonbinding, which gives them no weight in the political process. In the face of pressing community needs, this futile squabbling wastes time and resources.

This combination of disempowerment and incompetence is fatal to the community boards' enormous potential to improve people's lives—and it is the prime reason for their obscurity. The first step, then, toward infusing boards with significance, is to narrow their responsibilities to concentrate on apolitical neighborhood projects, such as parks, public transportation efficiency and cleanliness, or access to proper nutrition. They are currently responsible for a wide range of community issues—from development plans to street fairs to city budgeting—which prevents them from engaging in careful study of local needs and the specific, practical plans that can address them. Narrowing community boards' formal duties, and consequently removing their partisan alignment, would permit more attention to improvement on an individualized basis.

Community boards should adopt a pragmatic approach, narrowing their current roles as activists and anti-development rebels to nonpartisan pursuers of commonsensical neighborhood improvements.

Community Board 9, which comprises Morningside Heights through West Harlem, has already accomplished two such projects. After almost 20 years of deliberation and political wrangling, West Harlem won the Harlem Piers, a two-acre waterfront park on West 125th Street, which was originally a proposal of CB9. The Manhattanville Community Center, a multi-million-dollar complex used for after-school activities, senior citizen programming, and community meetings, was originally conceived by CB9 members as well. These types of nonpartisan endeavors were aimed at addressing basic community needs—exogenous from an anti-development political agenda—and should be the focus of community organizing.

Perhaps the most important function of the boards is to link local residents, too busy with work and family to devote attention to politicking, with the political process. Community boards have connected individuals with problems as mundane as bedbugs to ones as serious as tenant harassment with proper city services, while providing valuable on-the-ground information to elected officials. As the board is composed of ordinary citizens with local jobs and homes, who remain in close contact with constituents, it is ideal to identify and address neighborhood needs, such as green space, parking, crime, or youth programs.

Unfortunately, attempts to engage in long-term battles with developers and politicians overshadow these practical goals. Community boards are currently obligated to present "197-a plans," or grand schemes, though nonbinding, for local development. They also issue nonbinding opinions on land-use problems, such as zoning changes and municipal development. Board stances on these issues—such as a now-approved plan to rezone 125th Street or Columbia's Manhattanville expansion—are usually unnecessarily and unreasonably critical. Board members regularly take categorical stands against development without

were doing, and they'd make up something to make me feel better that was obviously too ridiculous to be true, like, "Actually, Spec's not doing so great. The web editor is holding the website hostage and everyone there is mad at each other!" That was really nice of them to say, almost as nice as if they'd told me you'd gotten fat or something.

Still, we did have our good times, didn't we? Before you, Spec, I never stumbled home to my dorm at 7 in the morning, delirious and exhausted from what we'd spent the last 12 hours doing. You snuck me into more concerts and movies than I can count, and that really made me feel like a true New York person, even though I had only lived here for a year!

Remember when we'd sneak up to the roof of your building to make out, only to find that we'd have to wait our turn because of all the other people making out up there who had already claimed the good making-out spots? So we would just eat some cold pizza and wait? That was fun, and kind of sad.

When you first said you wanted to go steady, and I became the editor of The Eye, I was so excited. And that was a magical year! I got to send people to Fashion Week, and fix a bunch of dangling modifiers, and oversee

a redesign, and write editor's letters about whatever the fuck I wanted.

Yes, I have baggage from our time together: Professors routinely return my papers these days with "TOO MANY EM DASHES" written at the top. I learned that from you, and it's hard to unlearn. You always thought they looked nice, like so many chocolate sprinkles. I also still have that sleep disorder, from when I had mono and you

Yes, I have baggage from our time together. Professors routinely return my papers with "TOO MANY EM DASHES" at the top.

kept me from getting more than five hours of sleep in any given night. You had needs, damn it, and I had to meet them.

But I learned a lot from you, too: When editors tell me to "tighten a kicker," I don't stare dumbly at them like I used to stare at you. I also learned how to put a ton of work into something for no pay and very little recognition, which has done wonders for me at my internships. I wipe the spots off the mirror, don't leave the keys in the door, I never put towels on the floor anymore, etc. I also learned that if I don't credit Jewel for that last line, that's plagiarism and I'll be in big trouble.

I think what's really kept me from getting in touch before now, though, was seeing how quickly and easily we both moved on. I think when people leave some place, they like to fantasize that everyone will sit around



ELIZABETH SIMINS

talking about how great they were. This never happens, anywhere, ever. By the same token, I expected there to be a big hole in my life, all this extra time in my schedule, once we were done, and then there just wasn't. We'd moved on.

I hear you're doing well these days, and I'm glad for that. There are a lot of people who need you now just as much as I needed you then—to give them direction, experience, and lots of late nights they'll wish they remembered a little better.

Fondly,
Alex.

The author is a Columbia College senior double-majoring in American studies and English. She was the editor in chief of The Eye on the 132nd managing board and music editor on the 131st Associate Board.

Who made this casting call?



AMANDA
GUTTERMAN

The Far-Side of the Familiar

Last weekend, when I saw the new Roman Polanski film, "The Ghost Writer," I surveyed the cast of characters: Ewan McGregor, transformed from when we last met in "Trainspotting," an outworn

Pierce Brosnan as ex-prime minister—who can look at him with a straight face after "Mamma Mia"?—Kim Cattrall, who turns out to be British, and Olivia Williams, whom I recognized from "Rushmore." But one key cast member was missing from the credits. He's a show-stealing personality from this year's romantic comedies, the behind-the-scenes man in the best new action flicks, the guy who solves the mystery in chart-topping political thrillers. This ubiquitous unnamed actor is the Internet.

In "The Ghost Writer," a young writer who specializes in ghostwriting political memoirs begins the daunting task of investigating the life of controversial British ex-prime minister Adam Lang, in order to compile his autobiography. He stumbles upon the dark secret of Lang's involvement with U.S. military operations and discovers the ex-prime minister's mysterious relationship to an American professor named Paul Emmett. Ominous music simmers in the background. It is nighttime. McGregor has narrowly escaped assassins and checked into a dim motel. Suddenly, he opens his laptop and plugs Emmett's name into the Google search bar. Surprise! Paul Emmett is affiliated with the CIA. The thread of the plot unravels neatly from here.

In "Up in the Air," the Internet meddles in the love affair between George Clooney and Vera Farmiga, two traveling executives married to their work, as an unsteady third wheel. When Farmiga displays a startling foreknowledge of her conquest, she explains, "I Googled you. That's what us modern girls do when we have a crush." Certainly, the Internet accelerates the plot. After she Googles him, there is painfully little left for her to discover.

The Internet's acting career hardly stops at this. Take, for instance, the 2009 political thriller "State of Play." A mysterious set of D.C. shootings is linked to the murder of Representative Stephen Collins' mistress during the senator's highly publicized investigation of PointCorp, a dubious organization that sends mercenaries to Iraq. When it is time for the big revelation, the camera once again moves to the sinister glow of the computer screen as the courageous journalists cross enemy lines—to the PointCorp website.

Though I would recommend any of these films, this evidence leads to an unequivocal verdict: The Internet is a bad actor. It is a stock character, unable to perform any part but that of deus ex machina, a plot device that is often disparaged as the authorial "cop-out." Use of this device suggests that the author is unable to provide a resolution to the plot line he or she created that is consistent with the story's internal logic.

Movies tell us important information about our culture. Filmmakers project their impressions of society onto the big screen, and the big screen projects them right back onto us. The subconscious plays a role on both sides of this equation. What does it mean, as far as cultural input, that the Internet plays deus ex machina in our film output? Perhaps the underlying conclusion is that the Internet functions the same way in our lives, unraveling daily mysteries for us so that we don't have to do it ourselves. Just like in the movies, we use the Internet to investigate associations between political players, to plumb the depths of big companies' iniquity, to uncover the identity of a potential romantic partner.

Why, then, does the Internet's role on the big screen sit so uncomfortably? Dramatic scenes couched in Internet browsing—the lights are low, the music is threatening—are completely ridiculous. One explanation is that modern appliances have no place in theater or cinema. Consider the criticism of NYU's recent performance of "Othello," where the first scene was conducted over mobile phones—the actors' faces were blank, expressionless, washed by technology.

However, I can't believe it's impossible to incorporate modern gadgets in a meaningful way, and furthermore, it doesn't seem genuine to exclude items so significant in our lives from the arts. Perhaps the solution is time, and with a few more years of acting experience, the Internet will grow up and expand its aptitude like a tedious Disney Channel kid who may someday perform in decent movies.

Another possibility is that the Internet as deus ex machina falls flat because it makes information too ubiquitous, and the characters proportionally less heroic. We want our protagonists to be special, and cringe at the prospect of them being a reflection of ourselves, sprawling impotently in front of a screen.

Personally, I miss Hitchcock's "To Catch a Thief," from a time when characters in film figured things out for themselves. And yet, in my unheroic off-screen life, I remain entirely dependent on the Internet and unwilling to part with my daily deus ex machina.

Amanda Gutterman is a Columbia College first-year with an intended major in anthropology or comparative literature and society. The Far-Side of the Familiar runs alternate Tuesdays.

THE ANGRY PEN



COMIC BY IGOR SIMIC

Pick up a copy of the Spectator tomorrow to read a history of the Columbia men's tennis team's past performances in the NCAA tournament.

TOMORROW



SPORTS

TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2010 • PAGE 6



Check the sports page tomorrow for a profile of Athlete of the Week Clark Granum,, who helped lead the golf team to its third straight Ivy title this past weekend.

TOMORROW

Final look back: My favorite columns



JELANI JOHNSON

Can't Knock the Hustle

This past week-end was the NFL Draft. While the draft represents a graduation from college to the professional ranks, it also signifies a removal from the cozy confines of the college experience. With Columbia's graduation approaching, I can't help but feel like a football player awaiting draft day. While I won't be playing football, I am preparing to play the game of life.

SENIOR COLUMN

This is my final column for Spectator. Unbeknownst to me, the "Senior Columns" are supposed to be grand farewells. Honestly, I feel no need to purge my conscience or proffer any buried revelations. I've been a columnist for three years and during my tenure, I've never been one to bite my tongue. In fact, if anything, my outspoken frankness has been a point of contention between my colleagues and me. It's no secret that I don't fraternize with many Spectator staffers, and I'm sure that my presence in the office is not missed. At its core, writing a personal column is a solitary act. I have always believed that a columnist shouldn't cater their writing to what they think people want to read, but rather that they should simply write what they want. Anything I've written has come from my heart, and this column is a slice of my soul. In many ways, writing this column has been cathartic. As a history and anthropology double major, I sometimes grow weary of writing within an academic framework. My biweekly

I have always believed that a columnist shouldn't cater their writing to what they think people want to read.

musings in this column allow me to stray from the rules and structure of academic writing.

Any graduating senior will tell you that reminiscing has quickly become a favorite pastime as the semester comes to a close. As we prepare to depart, the inclination to look back at our four years in Morningside Heights is natural. With that being said, I've been reflecting on some of my cherished memories as a columnist. Although myriad stories come to mind, a few in particular stand out:

- Soon after I became a columnist in fall 2007, I wrote a column comparing members of the Columbia men's basketball team to their NBA counterparts in terms of skill and importance to the team. Although some of the comparisons were flattering, others were comparatively scathing. A few days after the column was published, I was eating in John Jay Dining Hall and I bumped into former Columbia basketball coach Joe Jones.

He looked me up and down before asking, "Are you the guy that wrote that smack about my players?"

"Yes," I replied.

"You were a little tough on my boys, don't you think?" he continued.

"But everything I proposed was accurate. Right?" I responded.

He paused for a few seconds, looked me in the eye, and slowly said, "Yeah," before breaking into a toothy grin.

We both chuckled, and then he walked away.

While on the topic of Joe Jones, I think that Kevin Bulger's article a couple of weeks ago was phenomenal. It is rare that you get to read a player



COURTESY OF BETH SPERGEL OF THE CORNELL SUN

COACHING CAROUSEL | Cornell has chosen Bill Courtney, former assistant at UVA and Virginia Tech, as successor to Steve Donahue, who took the Big Red to the Sweet 16 in March.

Cornell, Dartmouth fill head coaching vacancies Columbia position only head coaching job left in Ivy basketball

BY ZACH GLUBIAK
Spectator Staff Writer

As Columbia continues its search to find a replacement for former men's basketball coach Joe Jones, similarly vacated positions around the Ivy League are beginning fill up. Last week, Cornell announced the signing of former UVA and Virginia Tech assistant Bill Courtney as the successor to Steve Donahue, who took an offer from Boston College after the Big Red's upset run to the Sweet 16 this March. It was Donahue who lured Jones away from Morningside Heights to take the top assistant job at BC.

Some coaches who were reportedly interviewed for the Columbia job during the weeks since Jones' departure included NJIT head coach Jim Engles, University of New Orleans top man Joe Pasternack, and St. Mary's associate head coach Kyle Smith.

Yesterday afternoon Dartmouth concluded its own coaching search, introducing Paul Cormier as the next basketball coach after the Big Green

decided to look for new leadership following a tumultuous 2009-2010 season. This will be Cormier's second stint as head coach in Hanover, N.H. Cormier held the position for seven years, from 1984-1991, recording some of the program's most successful campaigns before heading to Fairfield to run the basketball team there for another seven years. During Cormier's time at Dartmouth, the Big Green finished second in the Ivy League in consecutive years for the first time since 1960, losing out in 1987-1988 in a one-point loss in the season finale and then finishing one game behind the conference champion in the 1988-1989 season. In his final five seasons in Hanover, he registered a 73-57 mark, including 40-30 in the Ancient Eight.

Cormier, who has held an array of scouting positions with several different NBA organizations for the past 12 years since leaving Fairfield, will return to find a program struggling to find its feet after several tough years.

In 2009-2010, the Big Green went



COURTESY OF DARTMOUTH ATHLETICS

TWICE AS NICE | The Dartmouth Athletic Department has hired Paul Cormier as the new head basketball coach. This will be Cormier's second time at the helm of the Big Green.

5-23 (1-13 Ivy) and finished at the bottom of the Ancient Eight. The two previous seasons saw Dartmouth record 9-19 and 10-18 records, respectively.

Courtney will find a starkly different

scene when he arrives in Ithaca. The Big Red has won three straight Ivy League titles, amassing a staggering 72-21 record (38-4 Ivy) during that time frame and making three straight trips to the NCAA tournament. After first-round exits two years in a row, a veteran Cornell squad turned in impressive double-digit upsets of Atlantic 10 champions Temple and Big 10 powerhouse Wisconsin in the tournament's opening weekend. The Cinderella run captured the attention and the imagination of the college basketball world before Cornell bowed out to No. 1 seed Kentucky in the Sweet 16. The Big Red finished the season with an Ivy League-record 29 wins.

Cornell, despite the loss of senior stars Ryan Wittman, Louis Dale, and Jeff Foote, returns several talented playmakers and can now lay claim to a level of recognition and prestige rarely enjoyed by an Ivy League school since the reign of Penn and Princeton in the '70s.

All of this was not lost on Courtney

SEE CORNELL, page 2

Baseball to take on Penn this weekend for chance at league title

BY JACOB SHAPIRO
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

After an average weekend in Ithaca, the Columbia baseball team is teetering on the cusp of the playoffs.

The Lions played solid baseball this past weekend, splitting a four-game series with Cornell on the road. But the team was unable to capitalize against one of its weaker Ivy League opponents, adding some drama to this weekend's highly anticipated series against Penn.

Currently, Columbia enjoys a two-game lead over Penn in the Gehrig Division, but the outcome of this weekend's games will decide if Columbia has indeed seized another opportunity to play for the league title. The Lions just need to win two out of four games to clinch the division. The team would then move on to face the winner of the Dartmouth-Brown series, as the two teams remain tied for first place in the Rolfe Division.

If Penn wins three games this weekend, it will force a rematch between the two teams for the right to play for the Ivy League Championship. Last season, Cornell and Princeton found themselves in the same situation. However, if Penn sweeps Columbia, the Quakers will seize the outright divisional victory.

Although the team would have liked one more win last weekend to settle some nerves, the situation, as it stands,



JASPER L. CLYATT / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

SO CLOSE | Dean Forthun and Alex Ferrera will look to lead their team to the Ivy playoff series. The Lions need just two wins this weekend to ensure playoff berth.

is advantageous and the pressure is on Penn, not on Columbia.

Infielder Alex Ferrera echoed these sentiments. "We would have liked to get one more at Cornell, but coach keeps telling us, 'Don't look back, just keep looking forward.' All we need to do is win two games."

But if fans are looking for some reason

to be worried, the team's power outage last weekend is a potential cause for concern.

The Columbia offense, which led the Ivy League several weeks ago, cooled off a bit, although it was still aggregately the second best offense in the league as of April 20—second only to Penn. The team only managed to post seven runs against Cornell's average

pitching staff and was shut out in two out of the four games played.

"We definitely had an off weekend at the plate," Ferrera said. "The guys might have been trying to do a little too much, but the Cornell pitchers did a pretty good job of locating their pitches."

Columbia dropped the first game of four by allowing the lone run of the ballgame with two outs in the final frame. Darkness halted the second game of Sunday's doubleheader midway through the fifth inning, but the Lions were already down 7-0 at that point. Overall, the team scratched out just nine total hits between the two games serving as the bookends of the series.

But in the middle two games, the Lions' offense banged out 21 hits, although they accounted for just seven runs. In the second game of the series, the Lions put runners on base in six of the nine innings, but the clutch, two-out hit that has been so crucial all season seemed to elude them.

"We were still hitting the ball, but maybe not as much in terms of stringing hits together and capitalizing on the big inning like we usually do," Ferrera said.

The team ran themselves out of a few innings, hit into one double play, and left eight men on base—but still edged out the one-run victory.

The best offensive weekends were had by the team's power-hitting "Alex" tandem. Alex Ferrera knocked his seventh home run of the season in a Columbia win, and Alexander Aurricchio smacked

SEE BASEBALL, page 2

What to Watch

The editors' picks for the week ahead

COLUMBIA:

Columbia vs. Penn, Saturday, May 1, 12 p.m., Robertson Field

In a series that could decide who represents the Gehrig Division in the Ivy League playoffs, first-place Columbia will try to protect its two-game lead over second-place Penn. The first two games will be held in Philadelphia on Friday.

NEW YORK:

Yankees vs. Orioles, Thursday, April 29, 7:05 p.m., New York, NY

New York hosts Baltimore for a three-game series this week, with the final game scheduled for Thursday. As the Orioles currently sit last in the league, the Yankees have an opportunity to pick up a few games on the first-place Rays.

NATIONAL:

Trailblazers vs. Suns, Thursday, April 29, TBD, Portland, OR

Steve Nash and the Suns will have the opportunity to win their first-round series when they head to Portland with a 3-2 lead. Brandon Roy and the Trailblazers will try to win on their home court, forcing a seventh game in Phoenix.