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Hilltopics Staff

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HILLTOPICS

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volume one, issue sixteen
week of february 28, 2005

A scorched tongue speaks out on a lost love

by Courtney Hebb

Wandering around the other side of the world, I find myself constantly faced with the phantoms of a forgotten relationship. It is stationed on the side of every street, like a hooker selling her wares, and my downcast gaze and bashful cheeks avoid direct eye contact with my past.

I am ashamed that I was seduced by this international playboy, but at the same time take comfort that I have learned from my mistakes. It is a story of unfaithfulness, indulgence, and a global conspiracy. These are my confessions.

I once was perfectly content with my average Joe. There was something simple and tasteful about his demeanor. It was my love for Joe that kept me going in the morning. However, sometimes a girl longs for something more... something more dangerous. Sometimes a girl has to reach for the stars, that is Starbucks. The warm mug coddled in my hands, the smooth sips that delighted my lips, the tantalizing tastes that tickled my tongue; I was smitten. Conveniently hailing from the Pacific Northwest, the birthplace of my new lover and the land where the espresso abundantly flows, my cup overflowed with my obsession. I even adopted the java jargon in my everyday lingo and stood in long lines to satisfy my addiction. But one day I awoke (without the assistance of caffeine) to a startling and unsettling realization about this affair. I was not special. He had started to branch out, taking over one city, town, and country at a time. I was just another one of the minions that came to delight in a small sip of pleasure. My wallet and I were just another small stepping stone assisting in the world domination. My emotions started brewing and I became bitter, denouncing all associations to my former fling and finding solace in local coffee shops.

So here is my coffee roast. Starbucks is an overpriced, conquering machine that sells average coffee. Although many of you are well acquainted with Starbucks and find it comfortable and safe, I dare you to branch out. That is your mission, your quest. For no matter whether you are in Dallas or Europe, a Starbucks cup is going to taste the same. Become a coffee connoisseur and search the world for the perfect cup. Pass the celestial buck, and explore.

Courtney Hebb is a senior political science and marketing major.

Election: Referendum fails, Russ elected VP

Student elections were held last week, and the results are in:

Special Interest Seat Referendum (67% Required for Passage): *Reject* (611 votes, 37%), *Accept* (1,055 votes, 63%)

Student Body President: *Liz Healy* (1,455 votes, 100%)

Student Body Vice President: *Taylor Russ* (937 votes, 56%), *Rafael Alvarez* (656 votes, 39%), *Adam DeSilva* (69 write-in votes, 4%)

Student Body Secretary: *Drew Washington* (1,513 votes, 100%)

Cox Senators: Max Roberts, Todd Lincoln Torrey, Stephanie Ramirez, Will Shaddock, Trent Calvo, Jonathan Sloan, Chase Spirito

Dedman I Senators: Van Ann Bui, Wesley Brown

Dedman II Senators: Jaclyn Durr, Justin Montgomery, Michael Jimenez, Christy Cangelosi, Adam Rizzieri, Benjamin Hatch, Robin Millican, Jeffrey Lee Humphrey

Engineering Senators: Sarah Rives, Frederico Gonzales, Brady Bishop

Meadows Senators: Emily Graham, Andrea Gulley, Brooks Powell, Toby Atkins

Asian-American Senator: Alan Lin

African-American Senator: Lee Hinga

Hispanic-American Senator: Roberto Espinosa

International Senator: Marina Rangelova

Senior Class President: Katy Blakey

Senior Class Council: Chip Hiemenz, Ashley Claire Earnest, Jordan Parker, Stephanie Ramirez, Kylie Slater, Jennifer McDowell, Ceesun Sumurdy, Kathryn Poindexter, Katie Walton, Kathleen Tarbox, Rawson Hart, Chase Spirito, Kevin Kariuki, Jeffrey Lee Humphrey, Tabari Stillman, Jasmine Culpepper

Student Center Governing Board: Tabari Stillman, Chase Spirito

Student Media Company Board of Directors: Chase Spirito, Max Roberts

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On the web: Go to www.smu.edu/honors/hilltopics to read all of the stories in this issue and more. You can also submit your thoughts to hilltopics@hotmail.com.

We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300–600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to hilltopics@hotmail.com by Wednesday at 8:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

Writing well is about more than term papers. Language skills are important life skills.

by Kasi DeLaPorte

Students know that their written work should be free from flaws, but this feat becomes more difficult when the writing that surrounds us – professional, academic or otherwise – is itself often flawed. Most of us have probably received syllabi full of typos or seen incorrect language on fliers or storefront signs: “Voted Cities Best Sausage” at Kuby’s in Snider Plaza, or “Ask your cleaners what they use?” at Swiss Cleaners in Park Cities Plaza, for example.

We should make others’ mistakes the catalysts that challenge us to strengthen our own writing skills. In the era of uncapitalized, unpunctuated emails and AIM shorthand, it may seem that the written word is a dying art. However, few things damage one’s argument more than the inability to properly convey it in words.

One of my professors told our class the cautionary tale of a student unfortunate enough to have sent her potential employer a resume and cover letter riddled with errors. The result: a disappointed call from said employer to the department chair, asking her to “send us a student we can actually use.” Since I doubt anyone wants to end up in a similar position, here are a few words of encouragement.

Strong writing skills ensure that you will be taken seriously. Without them, even the most intelligent ideas are lost. Therefore, we should all learn how to effectively, if not vividly, express ourselves in words. The journalist’s column and the playwright’s script may have little resemblance, but it’s my belief that writers of all genres can benefit from the same advice.

Work to stretch your creativity; strive to weave together poetry and prose. Yet, endeavor to always be clear and concise; choose the right words, and write them with confidence.

Besides the words, correct grammar and punctuation are essential. These tools instruct the reader how to interpret your work. My favorite example, supplied to my news editing class last semester: “Woman without her man is nothing.” It can be read two different ways: “Woman, without her man, is nothing,” or, “Woman! Without her, man is nothing.” Feminist theory aside, I think the point is clear.

My own chances at a Pulitzer are slim, but I’m lucky enough to have the ability, at the very least, to construct a sentence, organize my thoughts and tell a story – the process usually aided by my OCD tendencies regarding grammar and punctuation. (That being said, I hope my copy editors had a careful read.)

The point is that we all have stories to tell and unique voices with which to tell them. However, these voices are stifled when the metaphorical red ink begins bleeding on our pages. I hope that fellow students are inspired to improve their writing. Put some words down on paper, and put them down well. Keep in mind Ernest Hemingway’s sage advice, which I love reading on the *Daily Campus* office wall: “The first draft of everything is shit.” And tell a story, in your own, hand-crafted words.

Kasi DeLaPorte is a junior advertising and journalism major.

Defining heroism: *Hotel Rwanda* demonstrates how to show courage by choosing not to ignore

by J. Esteban Contreras

Hero. That word seems to have little value today. A hero can be somebody that throws, kicks or dunks a ball. A hero can be an actor, a model, or a rock star. A hero can be on a comic book. A hero can be a guy getting some air on a shopping cart. There are many different meanings of hero.

A hero should not be someone with just great talents or great looks. A hero should be someone who shows great courage, not for himself, not for fame or power, but for others. A true hero does not seek to be admired and does not seek to be important or popular. A true hero is selfless and courageous even in the midst of hardship. A true hero does not care if he is acknowledged or rewarded.

I don’t see many heroes on the big screen. This weekend was different because I went to see the story of an ordinary man doing extraordinary things. More than just a story of a man, *Hotel Rwanda* is a movie about the hard reality that a whole country had to live and die through. Based on a true story, it tells the story of Paul Rusesabagina, played by Don Cheadle, and the lives of those he chose to care for.

Hotel Rwanda shows how Paul, a hotel manager, helped save the lives of more than 1,200 refugees in a time of a war. The movie focuses on the people within the hotel and the relationships between them in order to show just a little of what actually took place. What actually took place was the fastest genocide in modern history. Almost a million people were brutally murdered while the atrocities went almost unnoticed in a world oversaturated with technology and media.

Choosing to ignore is shameful. Ignorance can be sad.

Awareness is a beautiful thing. Movies like *Hotel Rwanda* make you aware. Not only did it make me aware, but it moved me; it made me care. The movie made me question my daily habits, my daily choices, my daily words and thoughts. It made me desire a more compassionate heart for people. It made me wonder if I am really living the way I ought to live. Being comfortable, safe and free does not mean that I should be careless, ignorant and selfish. Rwanda could happen again. It already is.

Hotel Rwanda could become Hotel Darfur. Darfur is a region of Sudan where a similar campaign of ethnic murder, rape, and starvation is going on. As we walk to class and drive to work, thousands are being displaced, getting sick, and being murdered. Three hundred Sudanese die each day from war-related causes. Even though it is overwhelming and impossible for us to grasp, there are things we can do.

Action should come out of an aware heart. What we can do is become more informed, talk about it, donate and support organizations that provide relief and aid. I recommend watching *Hotel Rwanda*. Not because of the acting, the script or the direction, but because it is closer to reality than we think. We can be heroes by showing great courage and choosing not to ignore. Not again.

Visit <http://www.theirc.com/>, <http://www.msf.org/>, and <http://www.oxfam.com/> to help. Visit <http://www.interaction.org/sudan> for a list of other organizations working in Darfur.

J. Esteban Contreras is a junior marketing major.

General Education Curriculum lacks cultural, inter-disciplinary, and dynamic components

by Cason Pierce

Recently, a friend gave me an article from the *Atlantic Monthly* written by a graduate from the Harvard of the North. In the article, the author expresses his dissatisfaction with a poorly constructed Harvard Core Curriculum. He goes on to write "the essential elements of a liberal arts education lie scattered everywhere at Harvard, waiting to be picked up." Reading the article and reflecting on my own experience at the Harvard of the South, I found that I share many of the author's frustrations. Based on the frequency with which students and faculty alike have questioned recent provost candidates about redesigning or restructuring the GEC, I do not believe I am alone.

I think most everyone would agree that the GEC should accomplish at least three things. Most importantly, it must ensure that all students learn to read well, to write well, and to think critically. Fortunately, here the current GEC is successful. I do not doubt that every student who takes his or her education seriously will graduate with the previously mentioned skills. My complaints with the curriculum do not lie here.

The second purpose of the GEC should be to provide students with a common education, and this education should involve teaching the principles upon which society—in our case modern America—is built. I am absolutely not advocating that we neglect learning about other countries and other cultures, but we should not sacrifice learning about Locke, the Constitutional Convention, *Marbury v. Madison*, Gettysburg, Women's Suffrage, the *Grapes of Wrath*, jazz music, the Civil Rights Movement, or the Great Society in order to do so. I share my grandfather's concern in that it is today possible to graduate from SMU without having taken a single course whose designated focus is on America.

Third, the GEC should include and require students to take courses that deal with current social problems and issues. In order for SMU students to become the best citizens of their

respective countries and members of a global society, they must understand the issues that will shape the world over the next half century. In my mind, CF courses should assume this role. Unfortunately, only a few fulfill it now. The University should do more to add new courses, modify existing ones, and eliminate those that have become less relevant. For today's students, we should have a CF course on Middle Eastern relations that teaches students about the history of Islam, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the current War on Terrorism. Another possibility would be a course on the AIDS crisis in Africa that covers the history of colonialism, African independence, economic development, and the global public health response. Neither of these courses would have made sense for students graduating twenty years ago, and they may not make sense for those graduating twenty years from now. But either one of them would prove invaluable to students graduating today.

In short, my complaints with the current system are three-fold. First, provide students with instruction on the foundation of American society by requiring they take one course specifically about America. Second, offer courses—and require that all students take one—that are inter-disciplinary and address current social problems or global issues. Students and professors should work together to select topics and to create these courses. Finally, make the GEC course offerings more dynamic. Add new courses that cover emerging or recurring societal problems and update old courses to include discussion of current issues. Once again, much of this burden is likely to fall on our professors, but by changing old courses and offering new ones, they can even better serve as examples of the life-long learners SMU hopes to create. And we students, who are frequently questioning the relevance of our education, might actually stop complaining and become participants in our education.

Cason Pierce is a senior math and economics major.

Breaking out of the cookie-cutter: SMU's women need to take a more assertive role in the world

by Jeanette Purvis

Walking from class to class guarantees a barrage of catalysts for self-loathing as blonde, tanned beauties glide around in heels and polos as if walking through a J.Crew ad.

Is beauty to be held in higher priority than intellect or personality? Often I feel that society makes a woman believe that her power lies not in her mind, but under her chin and between her legs. It is true that females biologically wield a sort of ethereal pheromone cloud of power over males in terms of their sexuality, but every day women's self-objectification into play-things of beauty and sex does serious damage to our effectiveness as people and intellectual equals to men.

Browsing the biography section of the local bookstore, I find the ratio of books profiling extraordinary men to those profiling extraordinary women to be severely off-kilter. This is not merely because society has failed to recognize women, but more that there is a serious lacking of women brave enough to step outside of the role of the "nice" and "pretty" lady stereotype, brave enough to take their middle finger out of the back of their throats and raise it to everyone out there who tells them they are supposed to stay quiet and complacent. Women in movies are rarely the main character,

and if they are, they are hot with big breasts. I'm sorry, but it's a law of physics: silicone and ass-kicking just don't mix. No wonder girls are starving themselves and obsessing over male validation.

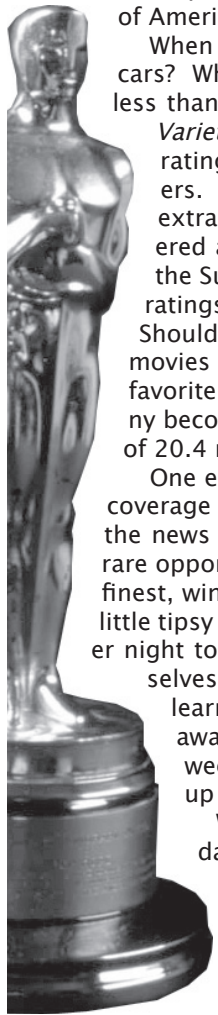
I must admit it is nothing short of an extraordinary talent how girls here balance all of that hot air above stilettos and big Louis Vuitton bags, paying hundreds of dollars for dye jobs and monogram backpacks in order to look exactly the same. But going to a tanning bed and hitting the Stair Master is easy. Our generation is one of the first to enjoy the equity of rights with men, and it is a shame that more of us aren't out there capitalizing on it, and wasting all of this time sculpting our asses instead of our minds and aspirations isn't exactly helping matters. But I would like to note that I am not suggesting that women burn their bras and stop shaving. All I ask is that you ladies try to find interest in something other than calories and boys, because look around; anyone can be pretty and skinny. The challenge is to be someone who finds power in the expansion of mind and not in the minimization of body and soul.

Jeanette Purvis is a sophomore English major.

Oscars ceremony may have become boring, but there's still something of value in watching

by Jon Grunert

Let's take a moment to talk about the Oscars. They were Sunday, in case you didn't know. If you did, then it's probably because you're strangely obsessed with them... like me. But the rest of you were probably oblivious to the awards. Don't worry, I'm not mad. It's not your fault. Most likely, you turned on ABC and said, "Hey, where's *Desperate Housewives*? And what is Chris Rock doing on Wisteria Lane?" Then you realized it was the 77th Annual Academy Awards and looked for something else. "Bo-ring." And I'll admit: I don't blame you. The event has become a bit dull for all of America.



When did the country stop watching the Oscars? When did the gala event of the year become less than a blip on the social radar? According to *Variety*, the Oscar telecast reached an all time ratings high in 1954 with 55.0 million viewers. How could one program pull in such an extraordinary number of viewers, still considered a ratings coup today? This outstrips even the Super Bowl's ratings in 2001. Shouldn't the ratings be higher now that everyone has a TV? Shouldn't the outrageous amount we spend on movies and popcorn encourage us to root for our favorite pictures and actors? Why has the ceremony become a non-event, sinking to an all time low of 20.4 million viewers in 2003?

One explanation could be the absurd amount of coverage that celebrities receive in every outlet of the news today. In 1954, the Oscar telecast was a rare opportunity to see the glitterati dressed in their finest, winning awards, losing awards, and getting a little tipsy with their colleagues. Now it's just another night to see a bunch of overpaid stars pat themselves on the back for gaining forty pounds and learning a British accent. It's one more stupid awards show that forces us to wait yet another week to see what those kooky housewives are up to now.

We can see most of these celebrities every day in *US*, *People*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and on *E! News Live*, so why should we tune in on Sunday? Why should we watch Star Jones-Reynolds vomit her post-wedding bliss all over Nicole when we could be watching one of several *Law and Orders*?

If we did watch, it would be to see something unexpected happen. But the scripted and time delayed "live" broadcast won't let us see the stars take a misstep. The Academy has become outlandishly self-important and just a little bit rude. If Oscar would loosen up and take himself a little less seriously, we'd tune in. But they're busy being artists and actors (accent on the second syllable, please). So we change the channel.

Maybe Chris Rock's devil-may-care attitude will have drawn in some new viewers this year. Maybe Jamie Foxx actually grabbed the nation's waning attention and made us care about the bloated awards season again. You never know. But I, for one, will be waking up at the crack of dawn every year to watch the day long countdown to the red carpet and the gloried ceremony. It's my thing. If you want to join me, that'd be cool. But if you check out Blockbuster, I wouldn't blame you.

Jon Grunert is a sophomore theatre major.

2005 Oscar Winners:

Picture: "Million Dollar Baby."

Actor: Jamie Foxx, "Ray."

Actress: Hilary Swank, "Million Dollar Baby."

Supporting Actor: Morgan Freeman, "Million Dollar Baby."

Supporting Actress: Cate Blanchett, "The Aviator."

Director: Clint Eastwood, "Million Dollar Baby."

Adapted Screenplay: Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor, "Sideways."

Original Screenplay: Charlie Kaufman, Michel Gondry and Pierre Bismuth, "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

Art Direction: "The Aviator."

Cinematography: "The Aviator."

Film Editing: "The Aviator."

Visual Effects: "Spider-Man 2."

Sound Mixing: "Ray."

Sound Editing: "The Incredibles."

Original Score: "Finding Neverland."

Original Song: "Al Otro Lado Del Rio" from "The Motorcycle Diaries."

Costume: "The Aviator."

Makeup: "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events."

Foreign Film: "The Sea Inside" (Spain).

Animated Feature: "The Incredibles."

Animated Short: "Ryan."

Documentary Feature: "Born Into Brothels."

Documentary Short: "Mighty Times: The Children's March."

Live Action Short: "Wasp."

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