

President Norman Lamm and Rabbi Moshe D. Tendler examine the Lodz Sefer Torah. The Torah's casing is not original. It was placed on the scroll for shipment to America. The "Hachnasa" ceremony will take place on March 10th.

Academic VP Schwartz Resigns

BY MORDECHAI FISHMAN

Roiling the already muddy waters at the highest level of the University, William Schwartz, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the man presiding over the academics of all the undergraduate as well as graduate schools, has tendered his resignation to Dr. Lamm. Lamm has accepted Schwartz's letter of resignation, and now a process must begin to find a suitable replacement.

A graduate of Harvard Law School and a former Dean of Boston University Law School, Schwartz was a YU University Professor teaching law at Cardozo Law School, when he was nominated by a search committee and chosen by President Lamm to serve as Academic VP. With a distinguished career in private law practice as well as administrative academic experience, Schwartz was deemed fully qualified to lead YU onto higher levels of academic excellence. His multitude of contacts in the worlds of business and academia were augmented by his sitting on the corporate boards of various companies, including Sumner Redstone's Viacom.

Schwartz listed what he felt were his outstanding achievements during his tenure in office in his letter to Lamm, and said that he looks back upon his service "with satisfaction and pride." "When I began my term of service," wrote Schwartz to Lamm, "you charged me with the primary responsibility of augmenting undergraduate

enrollment. I am pleased to report that undergraduate enrollment is now at an all time high and that it has increased by more than 30% during the past five years." YU's leapfrogging through the annual college rankings was touted by Schwartz as another accomplishment of note. "When I assumed the position of Chief Academic Officer, the University was ranked in the third tier of the US News and World Report ratings. I am pleased that the University has been ranked in the first or top tier in each of the past two years."

Faculty relations and morale were also stressed by Schwartz, who noted that faculty morale was at a low level five years ago, but "significant and prudent salary increases" coupled with a more attentive attitude and an "open door policy" have "contributed to an appreciable improvement in morale." He lauded new policies that encourage faculty to write and publish scholarly work, as well as paying for all travel expenses incurred by any faculty member invited to a present a paper at a symposium. New programs such as the CEO Series given on Fridays to SSSB seniors and the Authors-in-Residence Program, were cited by Schwartz as examples of academic innovations that were instituted by his office and that have contributed to the general academic uplift of the school.

Many in the University applauded the changes made

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French Cardinal Donates Sefer Torah to R' Tendler

BY ARI KAHN

A centuries-old Sefer Torah finally found a home when it was donated to RIETS Rosh Yeshiva, R' Moshe Tendler and Yeshiva University. The Torah, which is at least two hundred years-old, was given to R' Tendler by Cardinal Jean Marie Lustiger, the Cardinal of Paris. Lustiger, who was born Jewish, but was raised by Catholic nuns who hid him during the Holocaust, came into possession of the Torah because it too was hidden by a Catholic priest during the Nazi Occupation of Poland.

Surviving the Holocaust

Much of what is known about the Torah was related by Cardinal Lustiger. A Sephardic Rabbi named Yehoshua ben Yosef got caught in Europe during the beginning of the Holocaust. He was in possession of this Sefer Torah and decided to hide it from the approaching

Nazis. R' Ben Yosef cut up the Torah along its seams and divided the sections into piles approximating the five Books of Moses. He folded the sections to fit into the lining of an overcoat.

The Rabbi and his wife, a friend of his named Nathan Pensky and his wife, and their son Stanislaw Pensky were sent to the Lodz ghetto each with a section of this Torah in their overcoats. They wore the Torah in these coats throughout their time in the ghetto hoping that one day they could leave to put it back together.

Unfortunately, they discovered that the ghetto was scheduled to be liquidated. They knew that they would all be deported and were certain that they, and therefore the Torah, could not stay together.

Outside the ghetto, lived a priest named Remano who had known the Pensky family. This priest provided the people of the ghetto with food and news of the outside world using

Stanislaw as his go-between. R' Ben Yosef decided that before the liquidation, they would give the five overcoats to Remano along with their five identity cards and if any of them survived they would return and claim the Torah.

All of them died in Auschwitz/Birkenau.

The priest, of course, had no way of knowing this. He kept the Torah hidden hoping that one day the survivors would return. He told only the members of his family, who in turn, helped the priest with his mission. The priest died without any survivors coming forward and the family kept the secret so no one knew about the Torah, but, in recognition of the work Remano performed for the Jews of the Lodz ghetto, he was given the status of a "Riteous Gentile" and a tree was planted in his honor at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.

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Confusion Surrounds Loan Offer to Parents

BY CHANAN HOSCHANDER

A recent letter of clarification sent out by the YU Office of Student Finances has brought to light a questionable relationship of benefit to both Yeshiva University and American Express. The *Commentator* has learned that the Office of Student Finances has released without express consent information relating to the financial status of YU undergraduate students to American Express Educational Financing, a subsidiary of the American Express Company.

The primary responsibility of the Office of Student Finances is to handle tuition arrangements between students and the University. This allows the office access to detailed financial information concerning students and those responsible for paying their tuitions. The American Express Company is a diversified worldwide travel, financial, and network services provider. It is generally considered to be one of the leaders among U.S. companies that issue charge and credit cards. The apparent purpose of the information sharing was to facilitate the American

Express effort to market loans and to aid in YU's effort to procure tuition payments.

The facts concerning this partnership were only uncovered as a result of a strongly worded mailing addressed to students and parents that outlined the consequences of delinquency in tuition payments for the fall and spring semesters. This correspondence was mailed and received prior to the due date of the spring semester tuition and thus prompted an unfavorable response from parents.

The letter, dated December 5, was received by a large number of students and or those responsible for tuition payments. The letter printed on Yeshiva University Office of Student Finances letterhead and signed by that office addresses the student saying that "according to our records," presumably referring to those of the Office of Student Finances, "you have an outstanding balance for the '97-'98 academic year." The text continues to say that "a major concern of ours is that you will not be able to register for the next semester." This thinly veiled threat is followed by an urgent

suggestion, "we want to help you meet your financial obligations, but to do so we need to work together quickly." The rest of the letter goes on to offer information detailing what it calls "one alternative available to families looking for financing options to pay educational costs." The alternative that is described is the American Express Educational Loans program, and specifically the Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS).

The distribution of this letter resulted in numerous phone calls to the Office of Student Finances from distraught parents who wished to voice their displeasure with the tone and implications of the letter. YU Bursar, Jean Belmont, whose office is located in the Student Finances suite on the ground level of Furst Hall, reported that more than ten calls of this nature were received. Some of the parents called since they objected to what they believed was a threat to their dependent's academic career. Others simply could not understand why they were considered to have an "outstanding balance" which might prevent

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Searching Once Again

As we say good-bye to Dr. William Schwartz, we must also say thank you. During the past five years, he has used his position, second only to Dr. Lamm, to enhance not only the academic reputation of YU, but the actual academic standards as well.

Even though Schwartz is stepping down, his work must continue. The next Academic Vice-President of the university will need the drive and effectiveness of his/her predecessor and the students need a voice in choosing the successor.

Schwartz never met with any students before he accepted the position but felt that he should have. The Academic V.P. works closely with the faculty of every school in the university and many students as well. Therefore, in order to ensure that the working relationship remains beneficial to all parties involved, the search committee must include not only faculty, but graduate and undergraduate students.

It will be hard to find someone to replace Dr. Schwartz, but if we are to succeed, all of us need to be part of the process.

Skeptical Optimism

We applaud the administration for recognizing the need to revamp the Student Health services. Nevertheless, with the retirement of Dr. Sar, we are losing the only advantage of the old system, a medical doctor on campus.

The on campus services will now include medical professionals, (read: nurses) and physician assistants (read: no doctors.) They are sure to address many modern health concerns important to the daily lives of most students, and will feel comfortable discussing any situation that students encounter. However, if a student does become sick, he will have to travel to a doctor he was referred to somewhere in the health system. This will entail a wait at the clinic and bring insurance companies into the picture.

A student who feels ill, especially one with the packed schedule of Yeshiva College, should be able to at least see a doctor and get a prescription without traveling across town. Students should also be able to purchase health insurance through this plan.

We hope this is only the first step towards making healthcare easily accessible for the students at YU, and that the other issues will be immediately addressed.

YU Commentator Recruitment Meeting

Wednesday Night
February 11, 1998
Morg Basement
10:15PM

Staff Positions Available

Refreshments Will Be Served

GET INVOLVED!

The Commentator

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MESSAGE FROM THE
YCSC PRESIDENT
SRULI TANNENBAUM

I would like to officially welcome all students back for the spring semester, and extend greetings to all the new students on behalf of the Yeshiva College Student Council. The spring semester began with a bang, on Super Bowl Sunday, as YCSC held the 2nd annual Super Bowl Bash, sponsored by Student Services. The event, in Weisberg Commons, featured a six-foot TV screen (thank you to Facilities management), refreshments, wings and heroes enjoyed by over 500 students. A special thanks to the Department of Food Services for their assistance in making the evening such a success. This is just the beginning of what will be an amazing semester.

Over the coming months look for lots of surprises like the nightly bagels, pizza and Dougie's that YCSC and Student Services provided to ease the tension of finals. We are busy planning many more activities. Last Tuesday we held our first open meeting of the semester at which we addressed many issues and topics. Foremost on the agenda were registration and cafeteria concerns. Their respective committees are currently addressing both issues. Look for more news and updates in the coming issues of the paper.

A special thank you to Eric Shubert for orchestrating the Book Exchange that

allows students to buy and sell used books with ease. Next week brings the long awaited return of the Morg Mart, look for postings of store hours. WYUR is currently working towards a return to the airwaves this semester, students interested in working for the station should contact Neil Berman.

This Thursday night we are pleased to welcome The Pimentas to our campus in a concert event sponsored by the Chabad Club. In the next month look for more Junior and Senior Class events to the Broadway performances of Mindgames and The Diary of Anne Frank. Signs will be up soon and tickets will be limited. Also, senior yearbook pictures will be taken soon so check your mail for updates.

In closing, I would like to invite all students to drop by my room or give a call and discuss any problems or suggestions they may have concerning campus issues. Additionally, I would like to thank all the students who gave their time to help run programs last semester and look forward to their continued participation this semester.

Sruli Tannenbaum
Morg 214
781-3157

ON MY MIND

Working for this august publication is not fraught with many side benefits. There is no generous compensation package that comes with the job, nor are lavish perks such as travel junkets and corporate "fact finding missions" the norm. There is no executive restaurant account; I feel lucky for eating Dougie's every two weeks on lay-out night. So when plowing through the drudgery and menial chores involved in putting out this bloody newspaper, I often find myself questioning my skewed judgment for ever getting me involved in the first place. Yet there sometimes exist moments of such sheer insanity and levity, that they can make me forget all the crap and almost make the whole thing worthwhile.

MORDECHAI FISHMAN
NEWS EDITOR

The *Commentator* mailbox can always be counted upon to provide such entertainment. Being a public entity with a listed address, we receive oodles of mail from everyone and everywhere. Press releases, advertisements, requests for money (I have yet to figure out why they keep on asking us for money), more press releases, enough dorm talks flyers to paper a dorm room, etc. You get the picture. (I truly get a kick when we receive mail labeled "urgent" addressed to editors who graduated five years ago.) However, digging deep into the usual garbage and fluff can sometimes be rewarded with a nugget of pure literary gold that shatters the ennui of the average school day and can bring a beaming smile to my face.

My favorite reading material is penned by a man from Brooklyn, that for the purposes of this column I will call Beserko Bob. Bob is one of the chosen few; the select individuals who have seen the light and feels obligated to share it with the rest of us still dwelling in the darkness of the cave. This is a fellow who feels he has some things that must be said, and he is passionately dedicated to saying them. But he is not satisfied with just saying them; no sir, he wants to disseminate them, he wants the whole wide world to know what he has to say. So how does he do this? Simple. He writes letters. Hooo boy, does he write letters.

You see, Beserko in Brooklyn has a minor personality quirk that is immediately apparent to anyone who receives his letters. It manifests itself in almost every idea he puts forth and every sentence he writes. Pervading every paragraph inscribed on the page, it leaps up at whomever may be reading his epistles, grabs them by the short hairs, and just doesn't let go. And what is this small shortcoming of his that is so glaringly obvious? Nothing seriously crippling, or something that would bar him from running for public office. Merely the fact that he is insane. And not just your plain old garden variety insanity. This dude is a full blown nutter.

Beserko Bob is a raving lunatic; a man whose neural pathways are so twisted and warped that he begins to make sense to himself. You name the cliché, he fits it. One card short of a deck, one beer short of a six pack, one kippah short of a minyan, etc. Bob is not just walking out on the lunatic fringe, he has well and truly fallen off. Yet, all of the zaniness percolating in his deranged mind bubbles up and pours itself out onto paper; and since there exists no limit to his madness, there is no limit to his letters.

His letters are pure unadulterated classics. I would love to print them for the entertainment of the general audience, however they do

not pass muster under the stringent standards of decency we set for ourselves. (They don't even pass under the not so stringent standards of last year's Purim issue. And for those of you who still have a dim recollection of the last Purim issue, that means these letters are pretty offensive.) Suffice it to say, that in the last missive he launched, he accused Norman Lamm of bestiality, called him the "adulterer of the Westside," and boasted of burying Artsroll gemaras. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, Beserko Bob has some untrammelled animosity towards our institution ("home of the centrist heresy," "major factor in the decadence of modern society") and towards our president ("guardian of the alternative lifestyle," "purveyor of prostitutes"). The full force of all this psychotic resentment he manages to cram into a four page letter.

So why am I telling you all this? Just to describe another maladjusted individual with serious chemical imbalances in his brain? There exist far too many of these (yes folks, even here at our very own university) to make this a subject of note. But Beserko Bob from Brooklyn is unique, and he has taught me an important lesson about people and their ability to influence others. There is one salient fact that separates Bob from the rest of the crazy herd, and allows him to raise his demented head and shoulders above the rest. He is a truly dedicated man, but more importantly, he is a dedicated man with a word processor. That is a dangerous combination. It takes very little effort for Beserko Brooklyn to spill his vitriolic hatred into the ears of, and attempt to influence, his friends, family and confidants. (The fact that they are close to this fool makes them mentally suspect due to their proximity and contact with this diseased puppy.) But Bob goes the extra mile, (or walks down the block to Kinko's) and is able to spread his message all over the place, and spread it thick, like rancid manure. He sends his letters to everyone, from all disparate walks



FROM THE EDITOR

NOAH STREIT

Vacation. I like the way that word rolls off my tongue. Vacation. Say it again. It seems like so long ago. Oh well... For all you new students on campus, I bid you welcome. I hope that you use Yeshiva University to its fullest extent. There are incredible classes offered here - take them. There are extraordinary people here - meet them. There are exceptional opportunities here - take advantage of them. For those of you returning, I'm sure you are aware of this, so I simply wish you hatzlacha. I know this upcoming semester is going to be a tough one, they're always tough. However its important that amongst our dual curriculum and whatever other extracurricular activities we involved ourselves in, we should not lose sight of our own personal growth and our place within society. It is true that we must devote much of our time to functioning on a micro level, but remember that we are and will be important members of the Jewish community and we must not lose this macro perspective. To enhance our macro perspective the *Commentator* will be expanding its coverage of that which occurs within the Jewish world, because while we exist within the confines of YU and especially when we leave our esteemed university, that is the world in which we function and it is imperative that we have an enhanced awareness of all that transpires within it. Oh yes, I also have an announcement to make in regards to the *Commentator*. I figure I might as well say it here because then I've committed myself and there is no turning back. Hopefully by March, the *Commentator* will turn from a bi-

weekly production, that is twice a month, to a weekly production - once a week. That means more *Commentator* for your reading pleasure.

Try not to get too excited. As always I make two requests. One is for your feedback. If you have any complaints, gripes, comments or praises you can always contact us by phone or over e-mail. Second the *Commentator* is always looking for writers, editors and administrators. So if you would like to join this 62 year old institution, please contact us and we'll be happy to have you. All pertinent contact information can be found in the "Letters to the Editor" section.

I'd also like to once again thank my editorial staff: Ari Kahn, my co-editor, Mordechai Fishman and Adam Moses, the news editors, Nir Knoll, the features editor and Akiva Herzfeld, the incoming features editor, Aylon Glaser, the layout editor, Shai Samet and Mark Hecht, the sports editors, Josh Levine and Edon Hirt, the business editors, and our incoming culture editor, Yishai Fleisher. I would also like to extend a thank you to Ben Sandler and Josh Yuter for placing us and continually updating us on the world wide web. Finally I'd like to extend another, most gracious thank you to everyone else who contributes to this wonderful publication. I realize you are underpaid and overworked, well, actually no one is paid, so scratch that. I realize you are all not paid and overworked and we at the *Commentator* truly appreciate your contributions.

So I wish the readers of this fine paper good luck, good health

of religious and secular life, including rabbis, teachers, community leaders, and laymen. He even sends them to a "decadent" student publication such as ours!

So here is the equation: one meshuggena, plus his deluded thoughts; equals absolutely nothing. The same wacko and his hallucinations, plus a little effort and a word processing program; equals a man with the ability to promote an agenda and influence unsuspecting and uninformed people. (I am sure that as I write this, there is someone rolling around Brooklyn, who really believes that YU is home to sybaritic orgies that would shame a Roman emperor, because Bob said so.)

I long ago gave up hope for all seriously concerned people to write to us and express what they think. I applaud those few and far-flung individuals who take the time and effort to write and try to make a difference, however, such people are a precious minority. The majority of this school's students do have legitimate concerns and issues that should be aired in public, to be debated and addressed. Yet most students limit their efforts to griping in the elevators and moaning in the

caf to people who usually think the exact same way as they do. I am not going to decry the apathy and seemingly uncaring attitudes of YU students, you have all heard it numerous times before. For whatever reason, people here on campus don't seem to give two shakes about something to make a minor effort attempting to draw attention to issues.

So here it is: an open call to all of Beserko Bob's kindred spirits here in YU. Since the normal people aren't writing us letters and drowning us in mail, why don't you loonies start sending us mail instead? The regular students here won't fill our mailbox and e-mail account with their letters, so please, take their place and entertain us instead. All it takes is a modicum of effort and a little help from Microsoft, and you too can disseminate whatever message you wish to be heard and impact the lives of others. If the rational and sane wish to have no part in bettering the world around them, then at least you loose cannons can alleviate the boredom of the standard *Commentator* mail and entertain us at the same time.

YESHIVA
COLLEGECAMPUS
NEWS

More Honors Courses, Qualifications Still Unclear

BY MATITHYOHU BALAS

Yeshiva College is slowly developing an "honors presence" in order to satisfy students seeking a more challenging workload beyond that of the regular college classes. Although many universities offer honors courses to their students, these colleges often bind their students within the program, and limit the entrance to the program with specific admissions requirements. As it stands right now, however, the classes labeled "Honors" at Yeshiva College, with the exception of the Freshmen English Honors Seminar, are open to all students.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that administrators are working daily to expand the Honors College, it is still unclear to both students and administrators at Yeshiva College what criteria actually define an honors course. According to Dean Norman Adler, YC deans and faculty members are currently working with the student senate in determining the criteria that define honors classes. So far, the courses labeled as "Honors" have proved extremely popular among students.

One of the most popular and inventive honors courses offered this semester is English professor Dr. Joan Haahr's class entitled, "Arthurian Legends." As a survey of the legends of King Arthur and his knights, the Dr. Haahr's class examines the legends as they continue to appeal to the populace through the ages and how various artists exploit them for non-literary ends. Dr. Haahr based her course on similar courses taught by Dr. Deborah Everhart and Dr. Martin Irvine at Georgetown University, as well as other professors throughout the United States. In addition to Dr. Haahr's classroom lectures, students interact over the Internet after classes in independent discussions about the lectures.

The fourteen students in the class are required to propose weekly critical discussion questions via e-mail to a class list serve, and to present a group oral presentation. Moreover, they must submit two hypermedia research projects that include a thesis-driven text, in addition to images and links to other materials. They are encouraged to visit Arthurnet, an Arthurian discussion group.

Arthurian Legends and its format, Dr. Haahr said, "encourages [students] to explore far beyond the actual class syllabus and to look into the large amount of available material... It allows for a new kind of learning."

The Internet-based nature of this class and for her other medieval literature courses like Chaucer is advantageous for students in the course because much of the medieval materials are not in print and much of it is es-

oteric. In order to compensate for the limited accessibility of these books, students can exploit the web, since many of the works are out of copyright, to get material that otherwise they cannot access.

Dr. Haahr expressed the interests of other faculty members in incorporating the technological advancements, like the Internet into their own courses. Dr. Carl Feit, Professor of Biology, currently is working on an advanced course in AIDS that also depends heavily on the Internet, and Dr. Brill is setting up a web-site for his course labeled, "Modern Jewish Intellectualism."

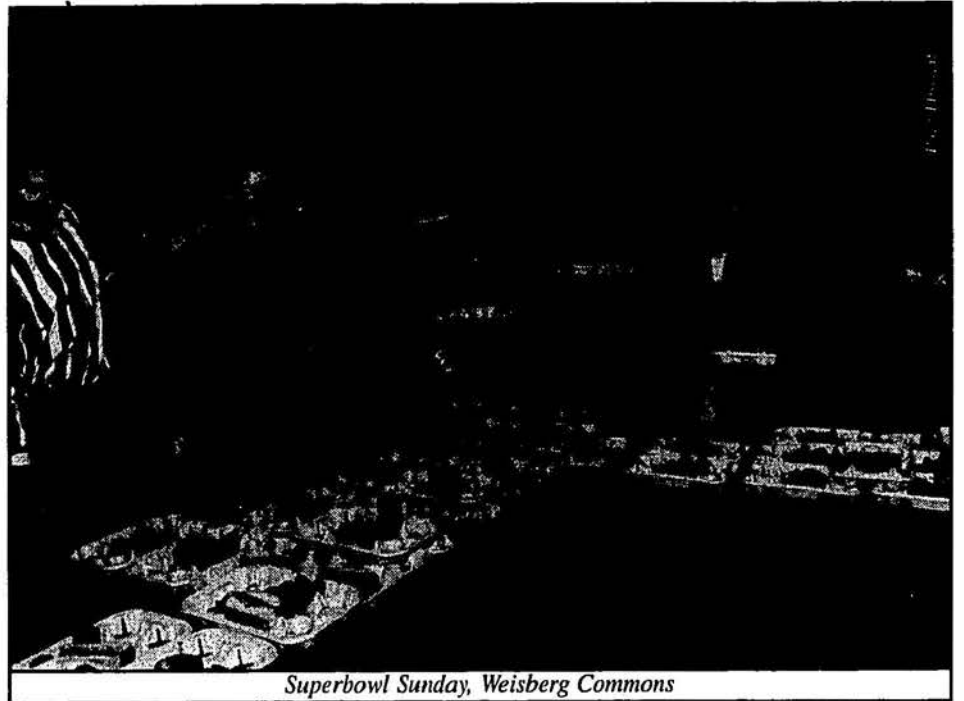
Dr. Brill echoed Dr. Haahr, stressing the need for the Internet in order to access rare medieval and early modern manuscripts. "At this point, much information, from medieval geography to the Nuremberg trials are accessible immediately with one click."

Thus far, students have indicated their satisfaction with the honors courses. "The class makes [the students] think in a coherent, structured, and logical fashion. Dr. Haahr appreciates and encourages serious work. The Internet projects makes [students] collect information from different sources, assemble them together, and present it in an original and professional manner. The work Dr. Haahr did for this course is praiseworthy and remarkable," commented Boris Gelfand, YC '99, about Arthurian Legends.

While the specific criteria defining an honors course remains amorphous, one class certainly deserving of the title is a six credit one semester Elementary Latin course, offered by Dr. Louis Feldman. After being repeatedly asked by a student to offer the class, Dr. Feldman agreed. The class is structured so that Dr. Feldman teaches two three-hour sessions every week. The class concentrates on Latin vocabulary, grammar, and usage, as well as the significance of some of the Latin words and phrases in Roman culture, and its influence on the English language.

Also well received is Jewish History professor Dr. Alan Brill's course, "Jewish Historiography and Philosophy of Jewish History," a study of nineteenth century Jewry's categories of tradition and modernity. The course explores extensively the standard modernist narrative of Enlightenment and Emancipation and topics relevant to it, while encouraging critical thinking and analytic writing and discussion of the issues surrounding the relevance of Jewish history.

By any subjective test, the courses labeled "Honors" certainly deserve the title. However, the administration is still working on objective parameters, in order that they may objectively measure the qualifications of the courses for the future.



Superbowl Sunday, Weisberg Commons

Arthur Miller and Five Others to Continue Authors-in-Residence Program

BY JEFFREY TAUB

In its second year, the Authors-In-Residence program continues to attract some of the most distinguished and highly decorated literary figures in the country to the classrooms of YU. This semester, the students are scheduled to study works by authors James McBride, Jamaica Kincaid, Mary Gordon, Tillie Olsen, William Joseph Kennedy, and playwright Arthur Miller. The inaugural year's participants included celebrated authors such as Jonathan and Faye Kellerman and Richard Rodriguez. Its success prompted the continuation of the program that is centered around the course entitled Honors Seminar in Contemporary American Literature taught by Dr. Joanne Jacobson.

The program involves lectures given by each author or playwright on various Sundays throughout the semester at SCW's Koch Auditorium. During the week subsequent to the lecture, each author addresses the students of Jacobson's class at YC and SCW. Dr. Jacobson notes, "This program is unique, to the best of my knowledge, in that it allows students to actually engage in dialogue with the writers [being studied] and for the writers themselves to conduct classroom lectures." Norman Adler, Dean of YC, emphasized the significance of this program and the reasoning behind its institution at YU. "This project in particular allows a student interested in contemporary literature to interact with, to read, and to absorb the insights of the leading writers in the world today. It's one of the most significant components of how we can introduce our students to the joy and excitement of the life of the mind."

James McBride is the author of the *New York Times* #1 best-seller *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*, the story of his mother's

birth to Orthodox Jewish parents and her subsequent flight from home to marry an African-American. McBride, a freelance writer, is also a former staff writer for the *Boston Globe*, *People* magazine, and the *Washington Post*.

Jamaica Kincaid is the autobiographical author of *At the Bottom of the River*, *Annie John*, *Lucy*, and most recently, *My Brother*. Kincaid is a recipient of the 1992 Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund's annual writer's award and 1997 Anisfeld Wolf Book Award.

Mary Gordon, an educator and author of short stories and critical essays, is the author of *Final Payment*, *The Company of Women*, and *The Rest of Life*. Gordon is a winner of the Kafka Prize for fiction.

Tillie Olsen is the recipient of an O'Henry Award and the 1975 American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters award, as well as a Guggenheim fellowship. Olsen is the author of *Tell Me a Riddle* and *The World Made Flesh*. She has published numerous works of non-fiction.

William Joseph Kennedy is the Pulitzer Prize winning author and 1984 National Book Critics Award recipient for *Ironweed*. He has also received the McArthur Foundation award.

Arthur Miller is the noted playwright who penned *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, and *All My Sons*. He is the beneficiary of the 1936 Avery Hopwood Award and 1938 Theater Guild National Award, as well as a Drama Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize in 1947. He has collected three Tony Awards for his plays and an Emmy Award in recognition of Outstanding Writing for the 1980 television drama, "Playing For Time." His most recent honor is a 1995 Oliver Award for the play *Broken Glass*.

Superbowl Bash

BY PINCHAS SHAPIRO

Across America and the world, Super Bowl Sunday is synonymous with good food, good friends, and of course, good football. YU is no different. On Sunday January 25, 1998, over 300 students flooded Belfer Hall's Weisberg Commons, a room generally associated with lectures and formal dinners, for the big game. On that famed Sunday, the Commons belonged to the dedicated students who have tracked the NFL's top teams for the past six months.

Coordinated by YCSC and the Office of Student Services, the second annual YU Dougie's Super Bowl Party gave students the game on a big screen, a chance to watch and cheer in a crowd atmosphere, and of course, free victuals from Dougie's.

Rav Blau began the evening by addressing the crowd. He delivered a powerful message on the difference between the Jewish perspective on life and that of a football player. With Rav Blau's opening remarks coming to a close, the smell of a few thousand buffalo wings permeating the room, and that ever eva-

sive kickoff time becoming inevitably closer, the intensity in the room began to pick up. Talk of who would emerge victorious, what the commercials would be like, and when the grub would be served spread wildly around the room.

After an exciting first half of competition and a frenzied feeding experience during half time, the crowd settled in for the second half. John Elway marched the Denver Broncos down field in the closing moments of the game. Poetically enough the game's MVP, Turrel Davis, after crossing the goal line twice before on the same drive only to have the touchdowns rescinded due to penalties, triumphantly marched into the endzone for the game's winning score.

As the last seconds ticked off the clock, the field and the room were filled with emotion. Then, in that one brief moment, it was all over. For some, months of anticipation, preparation, and hard work all disappeared as the game clock ran off its final second. But other reveled in their new found victory the mood was the other extreme. For them, screaming was the only way to express their excitement.

RENOWNED MATHEMATICIAN ADDRESSES YC STUDENTS

Dr. Sylvain Cappell of Courant Institute Visits Campus

BY JAKE SOLOMON

On Tuesday, January 27, the mathematics, physics and computer science students of Yeshiva College were privileged to hear a lecture by Dr. Sylvain Cappell, one of the world's most eminent mathematicians. The lecture, which was sponsored by the YC Math Club and the Office of the Dean, was entitled "Integration vs. Addition". Preceding the lecture, a dinner was served in Belfer Commons during which students were afforded the opportunity to ask Dr. Cappell questions and discuss topics of personal interest.

Dr. Cappell is a topologist. Loosely speaking, topology is the study of normal geometric figures as they undergo continuous transformations. A continuous transformation can stretch, shrink, bend, or twist an object, but it cannot tear it or attach to parts of it that were not previously attached. Topology also includes knot theory, which studies different properties of knots. Dr. Cappell studies topology in all dimensions. Most topologists specialize in either higher or lower dimensions since the third and fourth dimensions differ in many respects from higher dimensions.

Dr. Cappell currently works at the Courant Institute of Mathematical Science, a prestigious mathematical research program. He divides his time between research, administrative work, and teaching. The most time consuming of his duties is his research. In casual conversation during the dinner preceding the lecture, Dr. Cappell mentioned at least five papers he was either in the process of working on or had just recently published. In his administrative work he has had a great deal of influence on the development of the Institute. As he put it, "At this point, most of my colleagues were probably hired by me."

In his lecture, Dr. Cappell discussed several very basic but, to date, unsolved mathematical problems. One problem he alluded to is the "The Circle Problem." This problem was originally addressed by the famous nineteenth century mathematician, Gauss. The problem is to find

how well the number of lattice points inside a circle approximates its area. "The Circle Problem" deals with a circle centered at the origin of a Cartesian coordinate plane. It is reasonable to assume that the number of lattice points inside a circle reasonably approximates its area, but it has taken centuries to develop a reasonable idea of how great the error factor in this estimate is and a precise answer is as yet only a conjecture.

Dr. Cappell also mentioned an unsolved problem in computer programming which is being addressed by mathematicians. In addition, he dealt with the problem of summing sequences of functions of integers.

Finally, Dr. Cappell mentioned the problem of generalizing Pick's theorem. Pick's theorem deals with the problem of finding the area of a polygon (many sided figure) the vertices (angles or corners) of which are lattice points. In the 1870's Pick developed an insightful formula to accomplish this by counting lattice points inside and on the boundaries of such a polygon. However, this solution is only valid for two dimensional figures. Dr. Cappell recently published a paper involving some very powerful theorems about the calculus of complex variables which presents the complete solution of this problem in n dimensions.

Dr. Cappell concluded, "Anyway, I've taken you, I hope, on a little tour which shows you that counting, which is something you grew up with as one of the simplest of mathematical processes, already has problems which we need new ideas on, and for new ideas, mathematics needs more young people." The lecture was followed by a question and answer period.

Dr. Rosenfeld, Dr. Karpishpan, Dr. Otway, Dr. Cwilich, and Dr. Kaplan, members of the YC math and physics faculty, all attended the lecture. All were very pleased. Dr. Cwilich was especially impressed by the clarity of the presentation. Ben Franz, one of the students who attended the lecture, remarked, "Dr. Cappell is clearly one of the more fascinating and illuminating personalities we have heard speak at YU and it would be a pleasure to hear him speak again."

CEOs Lecture at YU for a Fourth Consecutive Year

BY NETANEL NEWBERGER

Management 4931, Contemporary Problems in Business, is a weekly seminar given by a major business leader in regards to their corporate experience at the Schottenstein Center in Midtown Manhattan. The various CEOs lecture for 45 minute and then for the remaining hour and 45 minutes, students act as business reporters, and question the lecturer about his or her experiences in 'the real world'. The purpose of the course, according to Dean of Sy Syms School of Business, Harold Nieremberg, is to "bring the students the experience, counsel, and guidance of CEO's of major business organizations."

In preparation for the sessions, each of the 60 enrolled students from both the Uptown and Midtown campuses researches the business to be discussed in class and writes a small report on the company and executive. This culminates in a large research paper about the various companies introduced in the course. Students' exposure to CEO's "bridges the gap between the business and academic world. Each CEO is an academic who can describe the subtleties in business, coping with challenges in business, and how to achieve a high level of success,"

explained Dr. Fred Palumbo, Associate Professor of Management and Marketing.

A recent speaker was Mrs. Alexandra Lebenthal, CEO of Municipal Bond House. After graduating from Princeton University, Lebenthal secured a position at Kidder Peabody, an investment banking house. She is presently working in her family's company. Lebenthal discussed how her business developed and stressed the importance of keeping a business within the family.

Upcoming speakers include: Takeshi Nagaya, President of Toyota Motor Corporate Services, on Feb. 13; Richard Goldstein, President of Unilever USA., on Feb. 27; and Aaron Feuerstein, Chairman of Malden Industries, Inc., on March 20.

This course is being offered for its fourth consecutive year. Each executive is presented with a plaque or scroll, as well as a videotape of the session that they attended. Alumni and Board of Trustees members are invited to attend the lectures as well. Eric Schubert, a SSSB junior, described the course as, "A unique opportunity to learn about various types of business ventures, with first hand accounts from people of a wide business background."

SOY TO HOLD ANNUAL SEFORIM SALE

BY MICHAEL GEWIRTZ

Once again, the sound of Judaic books landing on tables can be heard all around Belfer Hall, as SOY takes over Room 502 to conduct its annual Seforim Sale. The sale, chaired by SOY Vice President Joshua Muskat, attracts Jews from all walks of life and will be open to the public for an eight day span during the two-week period extending from February 8th through the 22nd.

The sale is known for its wide selection of seforim and unbeatable prices. The funds generated are directed to numerous charitable organizations and SOY functions. This year's sale hopes to be headed in the same successful direction as last year's unprecedented million dollars plus in gross sales.

Seforim Sale veterans Avi Turkel, Michael Gewirtz, Nachi Klein, Amichai Erdfarb and Steven Perel are assisting Muskat in the preparations for this year's sale. Muskat and his staff have been putting in long hours since winter vacation, and with the help of students from both the uptown and midtown campuses, have managed the daunting task of labeling and arranging the thousands of volumes ordered.

Trying to put the Yeshiva back in the SOY Seforim Sale, the sale has expanded its list of titles to over 5,500 and now features many more Rishonim, Achronim and Sheilos U'teshuvot sections than past sales have. The music section has been

expanded, with Shmuel Bodenheimer's group Besamim, which performed at this past year's Chanukah Concert, offering up their debut album at the Seforim Sale.

Past sales having attracted over 10,000 customers and established a number of best-selling seforim. Among the new titles that are expected to sell as well as the *Arstroll Tanach* did last year, are Rav Mirsky's second volume of *Hegyon Halacha*, the *Daat Mikra* on Breishit, new Seforim from YU Roshei Yeshiva, and the latest albums by Avraham Fried and Mendy Wald. Additionally, with the large influx of individuals who joined the Daf Yomi program several months ago when it reached the beginning of its seven year cycle, Artsroll's English Talmud should be a big seller along with many CD-Roms that cover the current Daf Yomi tractate.

This year the Seforim Sale will implement several new innovations in an attempt to ease the congestion at the check-out lines and traffic on the sales floor. First, an additional check-out register will be added, which will be set up as an express line. Second, with the enormous success of last year's decision to accept credit cards, an additional credit card machine will be added behind the cashiers' desk. Third, signs will be placed on each table, clearly demarcating what is in each section. Lastly, a diagram will be added to the catalogue that will assist shoppers in locating their favorite sections.



The Sefer Torah is written on goat parchment with a dark brown varnish. The white markings on the parchment (circled) indicate where repairs were made to the Sefer.

Sefer Torah

continued from page 1

The Journey to America

The Sefer Torah was discovered and brought to the attention of the Catholic Church. It wound up in the hands of Cardinal Lustiger in Paris.

Cardinal Lustiger wanted this Torah to go to an Orthodox Rabbi who was prominent in the American Jewish community. Although he had never met R' Tendler, he knew of him and decided to donate the Torah to him. R' Tendler is donating the Torah to YU.

On Wednesday, January 28, emissaries of the Cardinal brought the Sefer Torah to YU and met with R' Tendler and R' Norman Lamm, the University President.

Together Again

Somewhere between the end of World War Two and when the Church discovered the Torah, it was repaired. The Torah does not resemble our Torahs today. While modern Sofrim use ox parchment for writing a Torah, the Lodz Torah is dark in appearance and obviously not ox parchment. However, the sections were sewn back together and the stitching is

reinforced with ox parchment. An examination by R' Tendler confirmed that the parchment used is a goat-skin, but finished with a dark brown varnish that is rarely seen today. The Torah was made to be mounted in a case like traditional Sefardic Torahs.

Dr. M. Serels looked at the style of the writing and determined that it is indeed written in a version of Sephardic Script, probably originating from Morocco. Some of the letters must have been missing at one point because a sofer, perhaps the one who put the Torah back together, corrected or added letters but in Ashkenazi script.

R' Tendler seemed mystified about the gift from a Cardinal he has never met. However, he sees a lesson here for the students of YU. "Hashem promised Rachel *Imaynu 'V'shavim Banim L'gvulom,*" [sons will return to their boundaries,] her children will one day return to Eretz Yisroel. This is a case of *V'shav Gvulom L'Banim*, their boundaries are returned to the sons. The Torah sets our boundaries and this one has come back to us."

YCSC OPEN MEETING DRAWS 40 STUDENTS

Student Concerns Discussed and Solutions Explored

BY CHANAN HOSCHANDER

The third Open Student Council Meeting of the year was held on Tuesday, January 27. Approximately forty students attended. YCSC held the meeting with a twofold intent. The first part of the meeting informed the assembled students about the actions currently being considered and undertaken by the Executive Board. Then, for the duration of the session, the floor was open for the board to hear student concerns.

Sruli Tannenbaum, president of YCSC, opened the session at 10:15 with an affirmation that YCSC will now fulfill its commitment to hold open meetings on a bi-weekly basis. He began by dispensing the customary accolades for the recent events and efforts of his council. They included mention of the Dougies, bagels, and pizza distribution during finals week, as well as the very popular Super Bowl event which he declared to be a huge success.

The focus then shifted to the issues that are currently on the YCSC agenda. Tannenbaum announced that efforts to have WYUR, Yeshiva University's own radio station which has been silent for more than a year, back on the air are well on their way. He claimed that the broadcasting is expected to begin within the next few weeks. He then mentioned the upcoming return of another campus familiarity, Morg Mart. The mini-store housed in the basement of Morgenstern Hall is scheduled to open in a matter of days. Tannenbaum advised all students interested in obtaining paid employment opportunities at the mart to contact Charlie Ness, president of the Joint Business Society at SSSB, who is spearheading the reopening and management efforts. Tannenbaum also declared that the Guide Part II, which will include the listings of new students, is currently in the early stages of production.

Tannenbaum then allowed Ari Wartelsky, a recent graduate of YC, to speak on behalf of YUSSR (not affiliated with Yeshiva University). Wartelsky introduced a new program tentatively named the "Pushka Campaign" which would furnish each YU dormitory room and apartment with a charity box in order to raise funds for the organization which acts as a benefactor to Jews in the former Soviet Union. Wartelsky expressed the hope that for every dollar raised by students during the campaign, Yeshiva University President Dr. Norman Lamm would be willing to provide an equivalent University donation. Tannenbaum pledged the support of YCSC.

The floor was then turned over to the student leaders of each class. David Schwartz, Senior Class President, announced that there is an ongoing search for a venue at which to hold the Senior Dinner. He also noted that his council is

currently planning a class trip to the critically acclaimed Broadway show, *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The president of the Junior class announced an event called "Mind Games" which is scheduled to take place on February 19. Details will be publicized in coming days. Dov Brandstatter, Sophomore Class President, explained that his council is investigating the possibility of having a paintball event. Pinchas Shapiro, who holds the presidential post in the Freshman class, announced that a Freshman Class Shabbaton will be held on the weekend of March 21. In addition, a laser tag event is currently being planned.

Following this short talk, Tannenbaum invited those in attendance to voice their concerns. Moshe Singer, a freshman, opened the discussion with a complaint about the close proximity of smoking to the entrances of the residence halls which makes it difficult for asthmatics who live in the dorms. He suggested that smoking should be banned within a certain distance from the doorways. Tannenbaum said that various options would be investigated. The topic then shifted to various complaints about the cafeteria. Tannenbaum explained that improvements in that area are always being investigated.

Another common issue was subsequently addressed, that concerning the availability of copy machines. Tannenbaum reiterated previous contentions that companies refuse to place machines in residence halls. However, he did offer the hope that a new store which may soon open in the Yum Yum location will maintain a copy machine of its own.

On an academic note, a number of students complained about the new requirement of Physical Education classes to have a written final examination. No solution was reached, but consensus seemed to favor the position that such examinations serve no productive purpose. Students also expressed concern regarding the obvious dearth of useful academic advisement and qualified academic advisors. Tannenbaum assured the assembled crowd that options for change are being explored.

David Schreiber, YCSC Vice President, was impressed by the success of this third meeting. He asserted that those in attendance "were truly interested in the welfare of students." He added that "they raised intelligent issues and articulated them well."

This idea was echoed by Tannenbaum who claimed to look forward to these open meetings because it gives YCSC an opportunity "to hear what's pressing on students minds in the setting of an open forum which allows for debate on both new and outstanding issues." Tannenbaum urged all students to keep YCSC informed about their concerns.

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MORG MART
RESURRECTION



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FEB. 22 • 5PM • CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

William Joseph Kennedy

Pulitzer Prize and National Book Critics Award winner for *Ironweed*

APRIL 5 • 5PM • MIDTOWN CENTER

Jamaica Kincaid

Author of *My Brother, At the Bottom of the River*, and *Annie John*, and Anisfeld Wolf Book Award recipient

FEBRUARY 8 • 5PM • MIDTOWN CENTER

Tillie Olsen

O'Henry Award winner for *Tell Me a Riddle*, and author of *The World Made Flesh*

MARCH 22 • 5PM • MIDTOWN CENTER

Arthur Miller

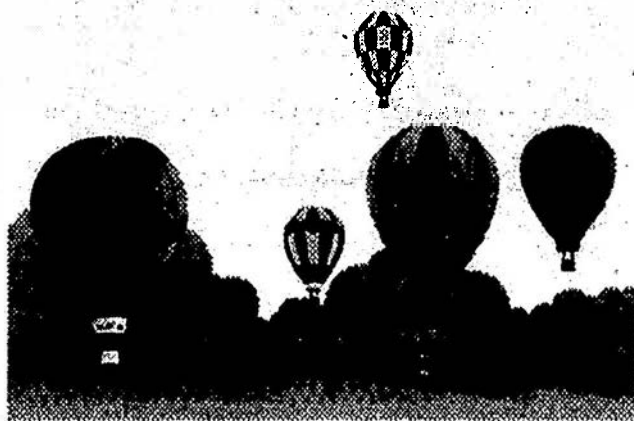
Legendary Pulitzer and Tony-winning playwright of *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, *All My Sons*

APRIL 28 • 7:45PM • MIDTOWN CENTER

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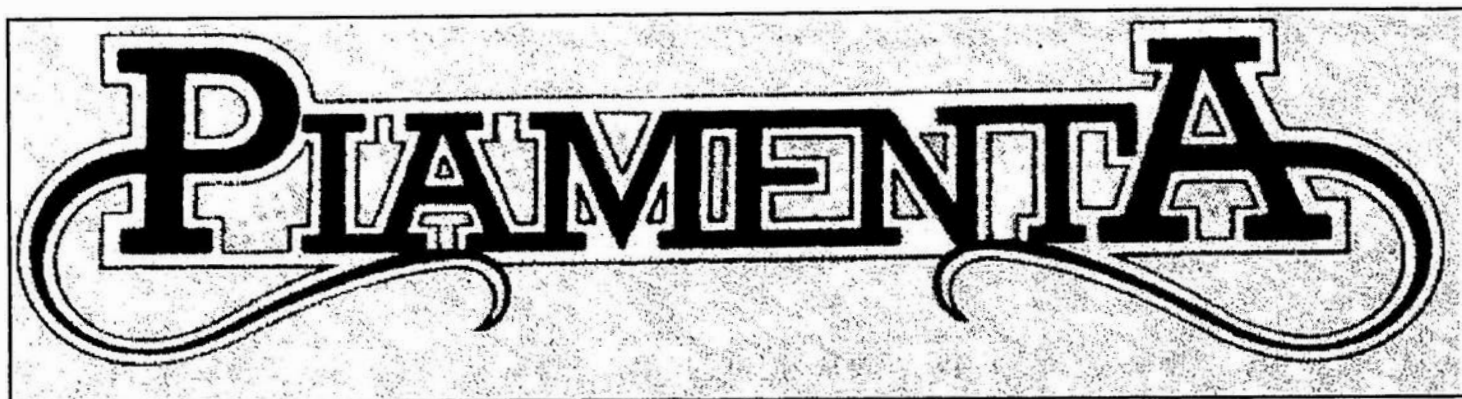
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Queens College
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YU Students H.E.L.P. Others

BY ROBERT GUTTMANN

Although many in orthodox circles often do not emphasize the philosophy of "Tikkun Olam," which emphasizes enlightening and ameliorating the lives of gentiles as well as Jews, some YU students are emphasizing this outlook, as they work to create a better life for the less fortunate, regardless of their religion.

Over the last six months, Josh Landa, a Yeshiva College junior, has gone through extraordinary lengths to design and found programming for the homeless. His organization, known as H.E.L.P., Health Organization for Life Program, conducts seminars in which homeless individuals are advised of health issues that may affect them. Seminars have included discussions on tuberculosis, pneumonia, hepatitis, alcohol and drug abuse as well as on the transmission of the Aids virus. The program, of which Mr. Landa is co-founder and president, utilizes the energy and knowledge of approximately 30 YC students. Additionally, in conjunction with Cornell Medical School, the group claims around 20 second year medical students in its membership. The lectures, which are given in three shelters run by the National Coalition for Shelter on the Upper East Side, are conducted on a biweekly basis. Mr. Landa describes how seminar leaders have elicited a "remarkable" response from the homeless audience, adding, "You'd never know some of them are homeless! Many of them dress well, are articulate in their questions, and show a real desire to improve their situation in life."

It may shock many that HELP is the only independent organization that provides health-education for the city's homeless. This fact becomes even more surprising when one realizes that the homeless population in the five boroughs ranges anywhere from an estimated 15-25,000! Indeed, Mr. Landa attributes his own idea for such an organization to pure luck. "The idea just sprang into my head," he said. "I was discussing with a medical student, who I was friendly with, ways that I could get involved in the health care area while still in college. She mentioned to me that given New York's large homeless population, maybe some work could be done in that area. Then, almost like an epiphany, the idea for an organization like HELP occurred to me."

Although Landa developed his group's underpinning philosophy, implementation of that philosophy proved to require a lot more work than having an

epiphany usually does. He first approached a volunteer referral service that had trouble taking seriously Mr. Landa's rather ambitious plan. Nonetheless, a meeting was arranged with the Coalition for Shelter, and soon, a formerly unrealistic and ambitious plan began to take shape.

Cornell had previously been involved in a homeless education program but the program had petered out a few years ago. However, a connection was made between the Yeshiva and Cornell students and soon the program was underway. Naturally, Landa was the first member of the group to give a seminar. His first lecture actuated a great deal of anxiety initially, but, ultimately, it proved to be an outstanding success. Landa said, "I'm sitting there, knowing that I would have to give a 45 minutes speech, but have no clue whether I would be able to fill the time. Also, I expected the interest level of the audience to be quite low. Surprisingly, 10 minutes into the speech hands went up! Ultimately, the seminar went over-time."

The end product of the seminar for Josh Landa is not simply educational — it contains a more personal aspect as well: "YU students and the homeless, never have any contact with one another. In the special environment of the seminar, these people share with us their experiences. We realize the unique thread that binds all of us. We have so many similarities, so many of the same foibles, the same caring for other people. The seminars have been, for all its participants, a real eye-opener."

Furthermore, Landa firmly believes that these seminars have an effect on the community that it aims to assist. He said, "Often, the nurse at a particular shelter (the organization serves three) will tell me that after a certain disease has been discussed, a number of shelter residents will approach him with questions and concerns regarding the illness, as well as testing information."

While the organization is only the brain-child of Mr. Landa, he hopes that it will continue after he graduates in May of next year. The fact that the organization has grown from the one man, to a group of over 50 members, and that these students have together have lectured approximately 1500 homeless, seems to indicate that this unique organization does have the mettle to survive. Indeed, the credo of the H.E.L.P. is best summed up by the mantra through which Josh Landa conducts his life. In the words of the great social activist Margaret Mead, "Never say that a small group of thoughtful, mindful, citizens can not change the world. In fact that is the only way that it *has* changed."

MORG MART RESURRECTION

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YUC 2/23

Culture in the Heights

BY DAVID ANZISKA

Walking through the hallowed halls of this fine institution, one is bound to hear the usual laundry list of complaints against Yeshiva University: there is a lack of school spirit, there is nothing to do on campus, cafeteria prices are simply exorbitant. But the most troubling and untruthful complaint is that the immediate neighborhood contains few recreational spots for students to "get away from it all." Indeed, the argument goes, if one wants to enjoy "city life," then the only way to do so is by hopping on a subway and going to midtown.

This sentiment could not be further from the truth. Located on 191st street near Washington Square Park, just two subway stops and a 15 minute walk away from YU is The Cloisters; a branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art devoted specifically to exhibiting Medieval art, represents the perfect haven for the typical Yeshiva student fed up with the congestion and daily ennui of urban life.

Built at the dawn of the second World War in 1938, The Cloisters was largely financed by the altruism of the great American tycoon, John D. Rockefeller. Its imposing hilltop setting, and verdant greenery (even in the winter) establishes an ambiance ripe for aesthetic prosperity. It owes its name to the five medieval cloisters integrated into the general structure.

When first entering into this large stone edifice, one is immediately struck by its castle-like quality. For a fleeting moment, one feels trapped in a medieval time warp.

The museum is arranged chronologically from Romanesque (approximately the 1100's) to the Gothic (1500's) period, possessing a whole slew of poignant works. Chief among the works that and initially striking are: the Fuentiduenas Chapel, whose apse was carefully constructed stone by stone and reconstructed at The Cloisters as a permanent loan from the Spanish government, the stained glass windows in the Early Gothic Hall, and the Nine Heroes Tapestries which tell the epic stories of nine figures from pagan, Hebrew, and Christian history.

Generally the stained glass windows were made to let lush, saturated colors pervade a church's interior, while tapestries were usually commissioned by wealthy noblemen both as a way of insulating rooms against dampness and displaying wealth. In particular, the stain glass windows at The Cloisters make for varnished imagery by depicting various Christian myths to the last detail; famous figures are rendered with amazing accuracy, leaving little to the observer's imagination. This overall emphasis on nuance and subtlety are apparent in most of the exhibited works. Two other endearing rooms that one must be sure not to miss are the unicorn room, exhibiting the famous unicorn tapestries, and the treasury, housing finely sketched liturgical works. For jewelry aficionados the treasury will provide even a greater delight as it contains

rare, valuable jewels from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

However, the true stars of The Cloisters are, not surprisingly, the cloisters themselves. In traditional Europe, a cloister consists of a covered walkway surrounding a large open courtyard with access to other monastic buildings. The central courtyard functioned as a passageway, a place for religious contemplation and a place for social congregation. Although late twentieth century New York City might differ greatly from barbaric medieval Europe, the cloisters at The Cloisters still fulfill a similar role. Shrewdly, the museum organizers have placed opulent herb gardens and benches throughout three main cloisters, helping to accentuate the museum's placid tranquility. A person could spend hours just sitting down and breathing in the fresh city air while taking in an awe inspiring view of the Hudson. But for those who are not content in merely enjoying nature's aesthetics, sitting in the courtyards can be a great way to see New York city's multi-cultural heritage at its vibrant best.

Unlike other art museums, where the crowds tend to be mostly upscale and priggish, the visitors at The Cloisters come from a cross-section of New York City. The sounds of German, Spanish, Portuguese and French mix in with lower middle class Bronx accents forming cacophonous melodies brimming with life. The Cloisters is a popular spot for Spanish immigrants taking advantage of the local area, working class families enjoying a cheap recreational activity, young European tourists backpacking around the city, old Jewish grandmothers out on a Sunday morning stroll, *avante garde* artists searching for inspiration, amorous lovers yearning for a little privacy and, yes, boisterous Israelis prattling endlessly on their cellular phones.

Thus, if one is looking for a stimulating yet enjoyable way to kill time, and is fed up with the hackneyed "Upper West Side" scene or "Museum Mile," The Cloisters is the perfect place. Even for those with less acute artistic senses, visiting The Cloisters can still prove illuminating. Indeed, it is only so often that a person will be afforded the opportunity to live near a place which unknowingly acts as a congregating center for so many people from such differing backgrounds. Before ranting about how little there is to do in Washington Heights, hop on the A train and get ready to see a breathless collection of unique artistic works, and a side of Washington Heights rarely spoken about.

Those who may feel uneasy touring a museum of medieval art, which usually contains Christian iconography and symbols, have little to worry about. The religious imagery, for the most part, is not threatening; the museum has few crucifixion painting. Additionally, Students may be happy to learn that if they visit the museum on Shabbos, the museum official will often grant free admittance, after he or she hears an explanation of the Shabbos statutes.

From Sickie To Tzitzis: YUSSR In Action

BY YEHUDA BURNS

Operating out of a small office near the Klein Hall Beis Midrash, YUSSR was founded by several YU students eight years ago, after the fall of communism. Since then, it has been an influential force reaching both individuals and whole communities in the former USSR. The students who founded it realized how the fall of communism might have implications for Jews in the Soviet Union. Subsequent relaxation of restrictions on Jews presented a tremendous opportunity. The activities of YUSSR have grown in the past eight years, and during the past winter vacation, the organization sent 15 students to Minsk to run a camp stressing Jewish values and heritage.

Eight years ago, the founders of YUSSR went to the Soviet Union to run several programs. On their return, they initiated a full-time effort. Their efforts grew until 1994 when the growth of the program necessitated a true representative in Minsk. Ari Orlow, a Columbia student, coordinates the day to day activities overseas. The administrative duties in New York are shared by Ari Wartelsky, Binyamin Krause, Ari Rockoff as well as other YU students and alumni.

The focus of YUSSR's efforts is on helping Jewish children in the former Soviet Union begin their trek into the religious fold. Ari Wartelsky, the Executive Director, summed up their goal very simply. "We want to show them what Judaism is all about," he said, adding, "[we want] to instill in them Jewish pride. They were not as fortunate growing up as we were, so we want to give them an opportunity to explore their heritage." Through its many programs, YUSSR fosters Jewish life and learning in the former Soviet Union, emphasizing the importance of Aliyah, emigration to Israel, and the continuation of Jewish studies.

While most people know of the intensive summer and winter camps run by YUSSR, many do not realize the variety of year round programs they provide. Their main base of operations is in Minsk, where they now are housed in the new Lauder Lech-Lecha Center. Their programs include Friday night services and groups, as well as religious schooling throughout the week. There the children hear Jewish stories and are taught minimal Halacha. Still, the greatest benefits don't come from the programs themselves; the counselors often are the greatest benefits — acting as model examples. In fact, many yeshivot from nearby cities send representatives to observe how the YUSSR officials operate the camp, in order that they may participate and recruit.

While the focus is clearly on the children, many parents find their way into the programs as well. Most parents know as little about Judaism as the children, so while they come to be supportive, they go home enriched. In fact, many parents decide to send their children to religious schools after seeing what goes on in the camps. YUSSR programs take note of this interest and actively involve the parents. Recently, they held a large Chanukah gathering which attracted nearly 100 families. Still, the focus remains on the children. "We believe in them and their enthusiasm. That's what makes it so special," Wartelsky said.

YUSSR also runs interactive halacha classes, where people learn about tzitzit and then they immediately translate what they've learned into action by making the

tzitzit themselves. Last Pesach, in an extraordinarily successful event, over 300 people gathered in Simeropol for a communal Passover Seder. For many, it was the first experience with the traditional Seder.

A major factor contributing to the success of the organization are the people involved in coordinating the events. "Every day is a story" at YUSSR. From meeting people on the streets who they have taught, to hearing stories about their impact, there are many tales to tell. Anya Zelikman grew up knowing little about Judaism. She went to a YUSSR summer camp as a translator, soon after made aliyah to Israel, and recently has married an traditionally observant man from New York. Another YUSSR story is about the Russian worker who, on hearing mention of YUSSR, exclaimed, "My son has a bris because of YUSSR!"

But with all the year round programs, the most successful YUSSR events still occur in the summer and winter. At these times, the organization rents campsites in the heart of the former Soviet Union, and then invites Jewish children whose backgrounds range widely in their knowledge of Judaism. A shochet, ritual slaughterer, comes to teach about Kashrut, and the counselors stress Jewish values and heritage. Over the recent vacation, YUSSR sent fifteen counselors to Minsk to run one of these camps. Keith Lustman and Netanel Lebowitz (REITS) represented YU.

The camp brought together over 80 people, ranging from ten to twenty years old. The younger children, from 10-16 years old, enjoyed a more relaxed atmosphere, with games and activities, while the older children learned and studied more.

It is this program that highlights the dual nature of YUSSR. On one hand the counselors try to provide an enriching environment that fosters Jewish pride and understanding. They try to foster Jewish identity in the former Soviet republics and to teach the teenagers to become models for younger children. Still, the other focus is a strong push towards Aliyah and getting them out of the Soviets. The learning is ultimately focused towards this goal. "We want to help the younger kids to move along, but also to build them up to get out of there," explained Lustman. "We're educating them to leave, but it's better to lose their influence at home if they can go to Israel."

One of the most moving moments came on the last Shabbos of the trip. After Friday night Tefillot in the Minsk shul, an elderly man approached the counselors and offered to sing a melody. The elderly man then began to sing Avinu Malkenu with the somber tune of Rosh Hashana, all the while encouraging the counselors and children with his moving rendition. He explained that as a young boy he was pulled from his home nearby Minsk to fight with the Russians in WW II. When he returned from the war, he found that his small town had been destroyed and all the remnants of Jewish life had been erased. In his bewilderment after seeing the vast devastation, he strayed from Judaism, but later felt the need to do teshuva. As the son of the town cantor, for this man singing tied him to Judaism and represented his return to the religion.

Lustman reflected, "You go and can make all the difference in their lives. Even if they wouldn't continue with what we teach them, we still give them a positive Jewish experience and they don't have much of that in their life."

VP Schwartz

continued from page 1

during Schwartz's tenure, and expressed regret at his taking leave of his office. Norman Adler, Dean of Yeshiva College, said that he was saddened by Schwartz's decision to resign, and said "I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Dr. Schwartz, whose vision, good humor, and gentle manner have energized all of us who worked with and for him. I think his legacy is clear; he has capped a long and distinguished career with a lasting contribution to America's premier Jewish university."

Schwartz informed Lamm of his decision to resign, and his "need to climb new mountains which present new challenges." He plans on returning to practicing law, and will be teaching in Cardozo come September. Recently appointed chairman of a Boston area bank as well as chairman of Viacom's executive compensation committee, Schwartz wrote that he wishes to "engage in other stimulating and challenging private and public ventures and endeavors which continue to seek to gain the benefits of my experience and expertise."

What does the future hold?

In theory, the vice-president for Academic Affairs is one of the most important and powerful figures in YU. Almost every aspect of education is deemed to fall under the rubric of Academic Affairs. Curriculum for the entire University including new pro-

grams or degree tracks, and any modification involving academics or courses, are the central concerns of Academic Affairs. The hiring and firing of deans, department heads, and even graduate school deans, as well as the granting of tenure to or disciplining of faculty and administrators all are done by the Academic VP.

Such a position is extremely sensitive, and is not an easy one to fill. Schwartz has agreed to stay on in his current position until a replacement is found, or until August 1, whichever may come first. Being that a search committee must be formed, a professional headhunting firm retained, the board and various segments of the University must be consulted, and candidates courted and interviewed, the process promises to be a long and arduous one. The odds that the position will be filled by August 1 are slim to none, leaving the University with the inescapable reality of appointing an acting VP while the search continues.

While searching for appropriate candidates from within elite universities in America or Israel, potential candidates from within the university will not be overlooked. SSSB Dean Harold Nierenberg has already served as acting VP once before, after the former VP Egon Brenner left the office, and before Schwartz was hired. The other undergraduate school deans, Norman Adler of YC, and Karen Bacon of SCW, would seem to be potential candidates for the position as well.

New Health Care Plan for Students

BY SHAYA SHTERN

Changing the healthcare system in place for the last half century, Yeshiva University has contracted out to an independent health care provider to supply medical care for students at the Main and Midtown campuses.

In a letter to parents, Dean of Students Efreim Nulman informed them that as of January 5, the Student Health Program for graduate and undergraduate students will be directed by the Greater Metropolitan Health System's (GMHS) Corporate Health Services Network, (CHSN) a partnership of the Beth Israel Health Care System. The program "will deliver on-site services at our Main Campus and Midtown Center" wrote Nulman, "and will coordinate access to care within the entire GMHS." The on campus care is slated to be provided by a nurse practitioner or a physician's assistant under the supervision of physician.

The new program is designed to supplant the old health care office run for years by Dr. Eli Sar. It is supposed to allow YU students access to the full range of medical facilities of the CHSN, including the Beth Israel Medical Centers in Manhattan and Brooklyn, the Phillips Ambulatory Care Center, St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Centers in Manhattan, and the DOCS network of physician practices. A student needing medical attention is supposed to receive preferential treatment at the hospital, and will be able to use the network of specialist doctors if the need should arrive. On campus, the clinics will be refurbished and revamped, and a "health care provider" will administer student care. This is a marked departure from the past, as no physician will be in the office. Nulman sought to reassure students who expressed apprehension over the fact that a doctor would not be on cam-

pus, and said that all medical care would be closely supervised by physicians and expertise of the network.

Beth Israel North, in Upper Manhattan, has been designated as the main center to serve YU students. The hospital is nationally recognized for their expertise in sports medicine, an advantage due to the sports injuries that may take place in the athletic center. Athletic Director Dr. Richard Zernick expressed his pleasure at having such a resource close at hand to deal with any injury that may arise. The hospital is already a University affiliate, being the Manhattan campus for the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "This creates a consumer conscious and user friendly service for the students," said Nulman.

"This is especially important because of the amount of students that come from out of town." The program is not a comprehensive full service student health program such as those at Columbia University or NYU. There is no University health insurance coverage; the student still must have private insurance coverage to pay their medical bills. Medical procedures are not to be scheduled through the Student Health Program, rather the program will only make referrals to physicians of the network, and if necessary, arrange emergency medical care.

When queried as to why the change was taking place now, Nulman said that the retirement of Dr. Sar after fifty years of service to the University afforded an opportunity to rectify any perceived faults in the system, "but we have only just begun to get our feet wet. Obviously kinks will have to be worked out of the system, but we hope student feedback will reach the Dean of Student's office, and all perceived faults will be addressed."

Shmuel Bodenheimer and

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New Home for Students' Butts

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

From afar, the item looks strange. The golden hue, detailed carvings, and rectangular shape can indicate a celebrated work of art, a birdhouse, a gold mailbox, or possibly the Ark of the Covenant. However, the item is a receptacle for cigarettes – and only cigarettes! It reads in bold letters, "Cigarettes Only Please, No Paper."

Over the winter break, the office of facilities management of Yeshiva University, busied themselves with making sweeping changes for the aesthetic enhancement of the campus. One of the changes made during the brief hiatus was this cigarette receptacle, which they hammered into the walls near the entrances of Rubin Hall and Belfer Commons. Its purpose is to facilitate the sanitary needs of the smoking population of Yeshiva College.

With many cigarette butts still lying on the ground outside Rubin and Belfer, the actual efficaciousness of this cigarette receptacle remains in doubt. However, what is certain is that this comical cigarette

receptacle has attracted widespread controversy, eliciting debate from students, and even condemnation from certain roshei yeshiva. Some students, such as Marc Gitler, noted how ironic it is that at a time when America is trying hard to crack down on smoking, the Yeshiva administration has decided to bend over backwards to accommodate student smokers. Gitler said, "It is quite a shame that this higher institution of learning is plagued with [enough] smoking to necessitate these cigarette cans. We all know the ill effects . . . we should strive to overcome these chains of addiction." Ari Romanoff concurred with Gitler, espousing, "I think, as a Jewish organization, we should discourage smoking, not open the door to smoking as these butt dispensers (sic!) are doing."

Another non-smoker, Jeff Kohn, thinks that the new addition to the walls of Belfer and Rubin is a "hideous sight," and he declared, "I don't even think people are using it!" Bruce Kessler, a Sy Syms senior, disagreed with these opinions. He said simply, "It is good."

However, even some smokers have reacted negatively to the containers. Ryan Ferster, a social smoker, insisted that, "Those containers are an absolute eyesore." While David Rappaport, an unabashed consistent smoker, declared, "I think it's ugly as (expletive deleted). And whenever I put a cigarette in I feel like I'm putting in mail." Rappaport added, "I'm not a mailman!"

Many of the smokers on campus expressed their opinions for and against the smoking bins with as much vehemence as David Rappaport did, but they desired to remain anonymous because they feared the stigma that so often comes with smoking at YU. One cigarette puffer, who engages in Seinfeldian humor, commented, "You can't take away the flick; it's the flick – it's half the smoke!" Another remarked, quite crudely, "I will stop flicking, just as soon as I start flushing." Assaf Shmuel, a Sy Syms sophomore, said, "I don't like it; I don't use it."

Other smokers regard the new cigarette receptacle with less harsh disapproval. One student said, "I think it's

funny. I like putting my cigarette in and watching it disappear. I would like to think, also, it was done for the convenience of the students, but I know it's really not."

Elie, a tall IBC freshman, withheld his last name. He said that he now deposits his cigarettes in the cigarette bin and he thinks that it is a good thing. But then he became sentimental: "I miss the flicking contests, when we tried to get it on the roof."

The opinions of smokers and non-smokers ranged widely concerning the cigarette receptacles, with not a few displeased by their new addition to their dormitory and school, and many totally apathetic to the whole issue. Yonaton Kaganoff, a non-smoker, however, not only supported the outdoor cigarette ashtrays, but he even suggested that, "the cafeteria store start selling cigarette patches." In response to this, another student quipped, "No, that would be too practical. More likely," he said, "next vacation Socol will put up chewing gum receptacles and pencil dispensers."

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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1:30 PM until 9:00 PM	1:30 PM until 9:00 PM President's Day		9:30 AM until 12:30 PM 6:30 PM until 10:00 PM	6:30 PM until 11:00 PM		
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CARDOZO ACQUIRES GREENWICH VILLAGE BUILDING

Complex to be Used for Student Housing

BY ADAM MOSES

Yeshiva University has secured the majority of shares in a residential condominium complex at 15 E. 11 Street in Manhattan's Greenwich Village neighborhood. The University intends to eventually utilize the building as housing for the students enrolled in its Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, an institution that as yet affords its students no residence options under YU auspices.

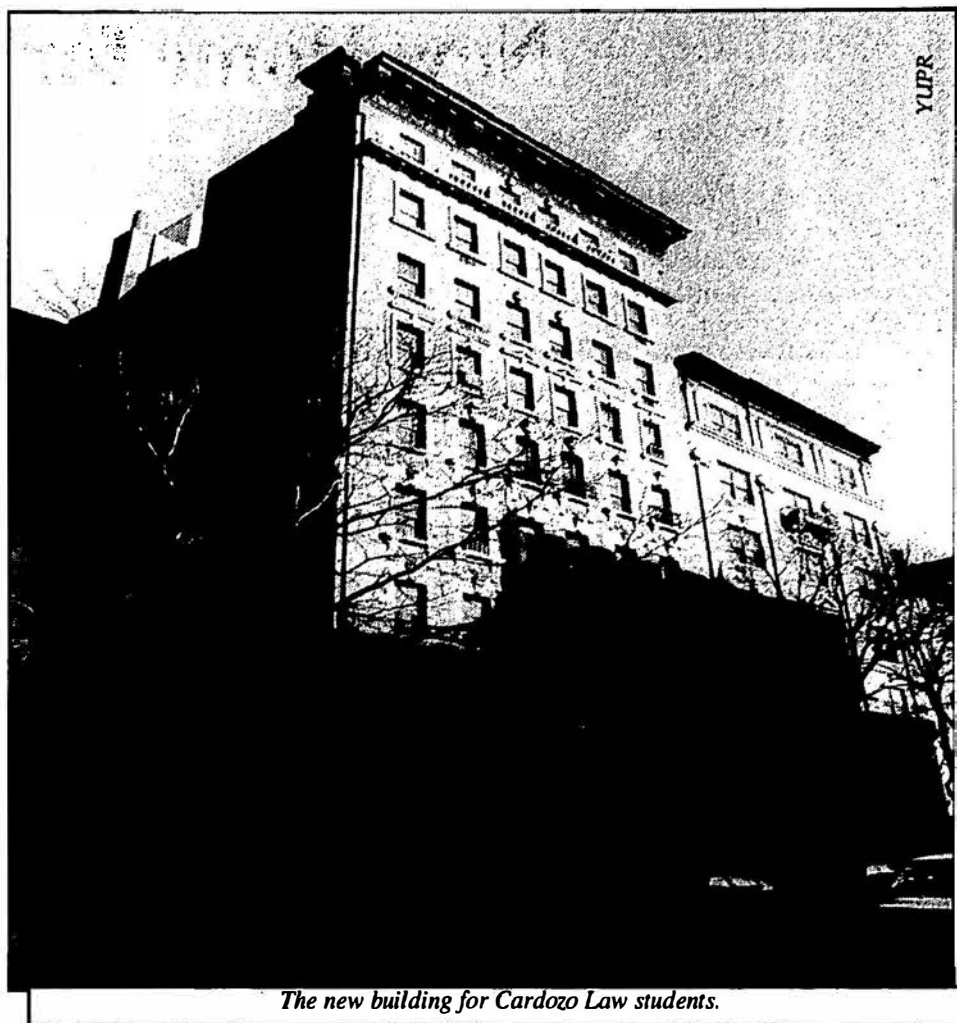
The University has thus far succeeded in acquiring 93 of the 11th Street building's 114 units. Over the course of the subsequent 18 months, the studios and one bedroom units are slated to become available to Cardozo students in phases as renovations are completed.

Cardozo School of Law Dean Paul R. Verkuil enthusiastically proclaimed that "the acquisition of these apartments marks a tremendous stride forward for Cardozo, which was founded only 20

years ago. Student demand for housing is significant, and I am pleased that we can now respond."

Cardozo's location in fashionable Greenwich Village is a feature frequently touted by the University in its effort to attract the interest of prospective students. In the absence of University-regulated housing options, however, students who wish to attend Cardozo are obligated to seek residential arrangements independently. The difficulty in locating available apartments in the desirable Village area coupled with the high prices demanded by landlords for these units have served as a source of considerable student ire.

The chairman of the Cardozo Board of Directors and University Trustee, Earle I. Mack, observed, "The ability to provide suitable housing nearby will further our efforts to recruit the very best students as we move from being one of the finest regional law schools in America to a truly world-class institution."



The new building for Cardozo Law students.

American Express

continued from page 1

student registration even though that "outstanding balance" referred to the payments for the Spring semester which were not due until December 15. In order to appease the irate callers and to allay the fears of others who remained silent, another letter was sent to all who received the December 5 correspondence.

This text of the second letter, which was signed by Bernard Pittinsky, Director of Finance, and dated December 16, contains an admission that the December 5 communication "could obviously have been clearer." In this clarification, Pittinsky claims that the purpose of the initial mailing was "simply to make students and parents aware of the Parent (PLUS) Loan Program as an option available to meet payments due for the Spring semester." Emphasis was placed upon the contention that the intention of the December 5 letter was not to imply that parents were "delinquent in their payments and that the Spring semester registration would, as a result, be delayed."

On December 31, *The Commentator* attempted to procure copies of both letters from the Office of Student Finances. Although assistants in the office were able to print out a copy of the December 16 clarification and apology letter, they could not provide the original December 5 mailing. When asked why they no longer had access to that text, one assistant responded, "that letter didn't come from us, it was from American Express."

At the request of *The Commentator*, Belmont then agreed to and immediately called her contact at American Express in order to have a duplicate of the December 5 letter faxed to the Office of Student Finances. Two hours later, Belmont told *The Commentator* that she had been advised not to comment on the situation concerning either of the two letters and that she was not permitted to release the fax of the December 5 letter which was then in her possession. Belmont has since revealed that source of advisement to be her superior, Pittinsky. Pittinsky has refused to comment on the matter. On Monday January 5, Belmont released the letter in question to the Office of the Dean of Students which subsequent-

ly passed it on to *The Commentator*.

Further investigation into the matter was hindered by a lack of cooperation at YU and bureaucratic safeguards at American Express. None of the YU representatives either involved with or apprised of the sharing of student financial information with the credit and loans company would discuss the issue until January 20. Similarly, all initial attempts to obtain comments from various offices at American Express were unsuccessful. One employee there, who wished to remain anonymous, explained that *The Commentator's* questions were encroaching upon "company privacy."

However, the relationship between American Express and YU was eventually elucidated by employees at the American Express Educational Loan Office located in San Diego. Steve McCurry, a sales representative at that office, explained that the PLUS loan offered in the December 5 letter is federally guaranteed to maintain low interest rates. He said that these loans are directed toward "parents who are unable to make their [tuition] payments or who have credit problems."

In explanation of this loan marketing program at universities, McCurry stated that an American Express field representative first contacts the school and proposes to offer this loan program to students. The university then submits a list of names and other information relevant to students to whom they wish American Express to provide their offer of assistance. American Express then begins the effort to inform the students in need about the PLUS loan in a letter such as the one dated December 5.

McCurry was then questioned about the ethical implications of solicitation and disclosure of student information and the effort to make the letter appear to be an official University mailing despite its American Express origins. He seemed to acknowledge the validity of such concerns. He contended, however, that American Express is just "trying to help people out...by providing funding for students who need it."

McCurry subsequently referred *The Commentator* to Fabrizio Balestri, Senior Vice President of Marketing at American

Express Educational Financing. Balestri added that the program in question is in its second year. He claimed that 20-25 schools participated in the program during the fall semester, but would not name any of those other than YU.

Balestri claimed that the credit company's involvement with the letters was simply for the purpose of expediting the mailing. He, however, admitted that the role played by American Express in the December 5 communication did require them to obtain information relevant to the students who would receive the letter.

Balestri claimed that the information made available to American Express included a list of names and addresses of students who had some minimum outstanding balance. He alleged that details referring to specific students were not revealed. He could not confirm the specific amount of the minimum balance that triggered the mailings. He explained that this amount was determined by the school in conjunction with the American Express field representative. However, he speculated that the minimum amount would have been one which was appropriate for the urgency of the letter which offered the loan. The field representative that dealt with YU has been identified as Suzzane Keighley. Despite numerous attempts, comment could not be elicited from Ms. Keighley.

When questioned about the usage of student financial backgrounds, Balestri emphasized that such information is utilized exclusively for the specific mailing for which it was obtained. Concerning current access to that information, Balestri claimed that the "data has been purged." However, he admitted that the only assurance that YU received relevant to the protection of students from alternative usage of the information provided to American Express was that "we gave our word."

Belmont, who later responded to questioning, called the agreement limiting the improper usage of the information given to American Express a "verbal contract." She added that this kind of procedure is standard in financial offices of all universities

who deal frequently with banks and loan companies. Moreover, she claimed that in this specific incident of disclosure "practically the whole [student body] was on the list."

Belmont alleged, in contradiction to Balestri's stated intentions of the PLUS loan program, that anyone with any outstanding balance for the fall or spring semester regardless of amount was included on the list. Furthermore, she did not believe that this represented any infringement upon the rights of students or parents to keep this information private since it was limited in detail to a report of names and addresses. She claimed that this type of information disclosure is commonly practiced by university financial offices in cooperation with various banks and companies. She asserted that "if one parent contacts us and complains that they've been contacted about a [credit] card, we'd stop this [arrangement with American Express]."

However, this assurance is limited in effectiveness due to the fact that parents were never informed of the University's cooperation with the company. Moreover, the December 5 letter that was mailed by American Express was printed upon standard YU letterhead and contained no evidence that would have revealed its actual origin. In addition, it would be difficult for individuals to discover the source of damage to their credit ratings as a result of this collaboration. Therefore, parents could not be expected to complain to YU about American Express since they would never have been alerted to the existence of the connection between the two institutions.

In response to *The Commentator* inquiry, Balestri declared that the current program that is used to market the PLUS loans to students via the aid of the University would be reevaluated. He expressed concern that American Express would be unable to "offer it anymore, but since it has worked so well, I hope that's not the case." However, this did not seem to phase anyone at YU's Office of Student Finances. Its policy remains as it was and this sort of practice is expected to be continued as long as it is considered productive.

ENTERTAINMENT

Music, Theatre, Restaurants, Cinema

Good Will Hunting

Starring Matt Damon, Robin Williams, Ben Affleck, and Minnie Driver

BY DANIEL LOWE
FILM CRITIC

Will Hunting, a young janitor at MIT, keeps a secret. His mind is extraordinary—his memory is photographic, he easily deciphers problems which harass the mathematics faculty at MIT, and he reads books in a matter of minutes. Facing a prison sentence, Will is bailed out by an MIT professor who discovers his genius. The court stipulates that in exchange for his freedom, Will must divide his afternoons between research with the math professor and a psychiatrist chosen by the professor.

Will Hunting's only consistently successful relationships are with blue-collar ne'er do wells, and perhaps this can be attributed to a cynicism of life and his genius. These friends cannot stimulate Will intellectually, nor even begin to fathom the profundity of his mind. During an early scene in *Good Will Hunting*, the brilliant Will analyzes a painting created by his new psychiatrist. In a malicious role reversal, Will studies the painting, its strokes and different colors, and within two minutes, he has discerned with prophetic clarity the deepest secrets of the life and mind of his astonished shrink. In a later episode, Will insults his girlfriend when she is most vulnerable, leaving her emotionally naked. These scenes represent Will Hunting at a spiritual trough—angry, bitter, and intellectually vindictive. Yet by the movie's end, Will has abandoned his misanthropic ways, supplanting a true love for himself and others. "Good Will Hunting" is the story of a young man's catharsis.

The movie stars Matt Damon, playing the troubled prodigy passionately, remarkably convincing in a very difficult role. Ben Affleck also triumphs as the blue-collar best friend, who often expresses his disappointment that Will spends too much time with the "construction guys." Minnie Driver is good as the girlfriend, though she does not elicit quite the degree of sympathy required to be a moral foil for Damon. But the film's *tour de force* belongs to Robin Williams, who gives arguably the best performance of his career. He plays the psy-

chiatrist who is able to handle the difficult Will, and the scenes with doctor and patient are the film's best. After the painting incident, the initially despondent Williams resolves to playing hard-ball with his delinquent genius. Eventually the clever psychiatrist's approach strikes the right cords with the unhappy Damon, and the emotional wall which the genius has constructed begins to crumble.

Gus Van Sant is generally a talented director while portraying society's seedier elements (*My Own Private Idaho*, *Drugstore Cowboy*), but in *Good Will Hunting* his direction is uneven. The action in gritty downtown often feels like it belongs in a different movie, and in these scenes, Damon's attitude toward his friends is unclear. It often feels as though Van Sant decided to leave a number of key scenes on the cutting room floor. Furthermore, it is unclear how much time passes during the course of the film. This uncertainty hinders the believability of Damon's development, as well as our appreciation of his relationships with Williams and Driver.

The film's screenplay, co-written by actor-pals Damon and Affleck, is well written, and although it has a good chance of taking home an Oscar, this distinction is probably undeserved. Hollywood tends to judge less strictly when actors try their hand at writing or directing (How else can one explain Kevin Costner's win for best director for *Dances With Wolves* vs. Scorsese's *Goodfellas*?). The dialogue is effective in Damon's scenes with Williams, but cliché-ridden and unfunny with his city friends. The romance with Driver has some good scenes, but there is little here, if anything, that we have not seen previously.

Yet the film is still an impressive one, and certainly a breakthrough for Damon and Affleck. It also revitalizes Robin Williams, who has meandered in drivel like *Flubber*, *Father's Day*, and *Jack*. Major themes like genius, love, and relationships may be just what the Academy of Arts in Sciences is looking for come late March.

☆☆☆ (out of four)

As Good As It Gets

Starring: Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, and Greg Kinnear

BY YAIR OFFENHEIM
FILM CRITIC

It sounds like a ludicrous plot from a television sitcom: A story about an obsessive-compulsive, bigoted writer of romance novels who has to cope with a gay neighbor and his dog, along with the family problems of a waitress (since she's the only one whom he trusts to serve him). Of course, he ends up going on a road trip with them and learns about life, love and relationships. *As Good As It Gets*, though reminiscent of a Seinfeld episode combined with a rejected movie scenario, is clearly deserving of its title.

Jack Nicholson plays Melvin Udall, one of the most fascinating oddball characters ever to hit the cinema. He's a bigot who (ironically) writes romance novels. Through a slew of hysterical incidents, it becomes common knowledge that Melvin is a textbook case of someone with an obsessive-compulsive disorder. With delicious glee, he expresses contempt for his gay neighbor Simon Bishop, played convincingly by Greg Kinnear. What's worse is that after Simon is hospitalized, Melvin needs to take care of Simon's dog, which comes to be more of a burden than Simon ever was. Compounded with that is his struggle in what seems to be a backwards relationship with waitress Carol Connelly (played by Helen Hunt). The film culminates in a road trip where all three simply spend time with each other, which as any writing rulebook explains, is the prime environment for character development.

The acting in this film is superb. What by all means should be mentioned first is Jack Nicholson's performance. Not many actors get a chance to work with a great script, which is one point of importance. Of even more relevance is the fact that not many actors get to play a character that is so fine-tailored for them, a viewer can't tell if the actor is playing a character or himself. With a bad script, that may be a sign of not being able to act well. However, this is a film where it crosses one's mind: Is Jack playing as himself or as Melvin? This is the finest performance he has given in years after a few years of movies that flopped at the box office. His last good performance was in *A Few Good Men*, with his last exceptional performance being arguably much earlier than that. Nicholson carries the film from scene to scene. One of the most enjoyable aspects of watching the film is just waiting for him to say something, as every word that leaves his mouth is perfect. That can be credited to a phenomenal script. The most memorable scene takes place when he opens the door to his neighbor Simon and lectures him

about knocking. There anyone can see it's vintage Nicholson, represented by sarcasm, put downs, followed by an additional dose of caustic remarks. Another notable line stings the air as he enters his psychologist's office without an appointment: "How can you diagnose me as obsessive compulsive and then tell me I have a choice about barging in here?"

Helen Hunt's acting was quite innocent and respectable, and a work of quality. Greg Kinnear shines in his moments as a poetic and insightful character. Cuba Gooding Jr. however, has proven, once again, that he lacks any acting capability. Even with good films such *Outbreak*, *Jerry Maguire*, as well as this one, he acts in his usual pompous and pretentious manner. He seems to come from the "Schummacher School of Acting" where he was likely taught that caffeine was his friend. The most strategically effective option for Cuba is to cease being typecasted.

The script itself is so surprisingly elementary that it may shock screenwriters that it was even written. No cosmic issues are addressed. It takes pride in its simplicity. There are usually two types of good writing: an original story, which by itself deserves credit for creativity, and a cliché-ridden story that is written well. James Brooks along with Mark Andrus have written such a great piece of work, that people would be eager in seeing the "further adventures" of the title characters. The scenes flow seamlessly as they are filled to the brim with jokes and none fall flat.

The film's basic message is rather affecting and conventional. *Carpe diem*, though at the same time realize that it's never too late to change. The human message sparkles through in Nicholson's brilliant performance as he progressively molds his life to what he wants it to be, and exposes his true feelings.

After viewing a few Brooks films, it appears that Brooks has finally honed his craft of telling great stories about ordinary people, or more specifically, imperfect ones. The human condition is what he knows best. However his other notable achievements as great as they may be, don't reach the level of this film. *Terms of Endearment* may have offered great drama along with great characterization, and *Broadcast News* may have been a great feature with more great writing, but Brooks' *As Good As It Gets* offers the purest characterizations he's made yet, along with a touching romance and a sharp comedy. Time virtually stops as the viewer gets to observe a moment in the lives of people that have something to say about themselves.

☆☆☆ (out of four)

ENTERTAINMENT

Music, Theatre, Restaurants, Cinema

Know your Alternatives

BY DAVID RAPPAPORT

I hope you all had a wonderful inter-session except for the people who chose to go to Jamaica, Barbados and what have you. Seriously, are you people that obsessed with creating the illusion of a life defined by an MTV beach party?

Anyway, I feel it is time for a serious music review and this leads me to today's topic:

The Top 10 Records of 1997*

* note that these records are in no particular order

Radiohead - O.K. Computer (Parlophone)

According to the band, they themselves set out to make a straightforward pop record. Thankfully, the final product came out to be one of the most glorious concept records ever made. The underlying theme of this record is that of transportation, physical and otherwise. Topics ranging from the wonderment of airbags to the spiritual beauty of alien abduction and back to the monotony of computer related society, Radiohead creates a utopia of aural pleasure from the deepest recesses of pop culture oblivion. So why can't Radiohead be slagged off as simply another angst ridden band? Because they are so damn good. I wish I could say more but words can't convey the astonishment of this recording. If it wasn't blasphemous, I would say that O.K. Computer is a better record than the Beatles' *Revolver*.

Spiritualized - *Ladies and Gentlemen We Are Floating in Space* (Dedicated)

This album treads the thin line between avant-garde and pop, but also throws in hints of gospel and soul. A truly excellent ambient (I'm not sure if this is a dance record) album. Brian Eno would have been proud to work on an album such as this. If there was any mathematics involved it would be *My Bloody Valentine* + *Stereolab* + the *Verve's A Storm in Heaven*. Almost impossible to get through one listening but absolute peace once you do.

Belle and Sebastian - *If you're feeling Sinister* (Jeepster)

When I first heard this record I immediately wanted to turn it off because it meant that Nick Drake folk had come back into style and the last thing the world needs is suicide folk music. A dark and simple record, it deserves to be listened to at least once a day. In a nutshell (help I'm in a nutshell!), this is lyrically the second best record of the year and by far and away the best new act of 1997. I find it extremely impossible to walk to class without humming the first single *Stars of Track and Field*. Belle and Sebastian have also been afforded to be an act that all artists seem to love which does nothing but destroy record sales. As long as frat boys never find this I'll be happy. Definitely one of the best of '97.

A Don Piper Situation - *Self Titled EP* (Scrimshaw)

The first release from this highly anticipated New York band features five songs and a hidden track. Yeah, I know, technically this isn't an album but musically, there's more here than most bands have in

careers. Using the bare essentials to convey a mood, they have probably created what I would like to call David Lynch pop. It doesn't jump out immediately and say "buy me buy me buy me!" It says, sit down, you're about to hear "a hitchhiking David Bowie getting picked up by the *Flaming Lips* on their way to a *Zombies* fan convention so make yourself at home because you will remember this music until you die." This release is available on Scrimshaw Records and will be followed by an unbelievable full length album on Capitol Records in the spring.

Apples in Stereo - *Tone Soul Revolution* (Elephant 6)

If this band existed in the late 60's or even the 70's they would have been recognized as rock and roll deities, but alas, it's 1998 and no one would know good music if Jewel sang it to them 24 hours a day. This record is perfect mod power pop with tons of harmonies and melodic candy. They are without a doubt the best indie rock band in America. Listening to this record is 100% pure fun. No other way to describe it. In conclusion, Oasis doesn't sound like the Beatles, the Apples in Stereo do.

Elliot Smith - *Either Or* (Kill Rock Stars)

Have you ever been walking alone on an empty suburban street after a nighttime snowfall and been in the mood to contemplate what in the world you were doing with your life and then felt like you were the center of the earth? That's Elliot Smith. An extremely soft and peaceful record, there is no other record better for lone subway trips with your walkman than *Either Or*. For those of you who have seen the movie *Good Will Hunting*, you will recall those beautiful acoustic songs played throughout the film. What you were listening to is Elliot Smith. If "Angeles" or "say yes" don't move you to tears, then I don't know what will. Buy this! Now damnit!

Portishead - *Portishead* (GOI Beat)

Cinematic, after dark music for a generation that knows more about English lit. than any other school subject. Using only small sprinkles of samples, band leader Geoff Barrow instead decided to record a great deal of the original music onto vinyl in order to mix them into the album as he wanted. What sets Portishead apart from the rest of the Trip-Hop genre are the heart wrenching vocals of Beth Gibbons which are reminiscent of a really rich man's *Cowboy Junkies*. Hip hop scratching and a theremin never sounded so good together.

Supergrass - *In It For The Money* (Parlophone)

Having grown in leaps and bounds since their hit debut, the 'Grass have, unfortunately, not averted a sophomore sales slump. Fortunately, the quality of this record is in no way mirrored by sales. As opposed to the obvious brit-pop-punk sophmoria of their first release (a must buy from 1995), the 'Grass have chosen instead to lyrically discuss the ridiculousness of the entertainment industry and the bizarre aftermath of their worldwide

smash hit single, "Alright." The mathematics are *Supergrass's I Should Coco* + 2 years - naiveté = New 'Grass. That is some good grass!

Blur - *Blur* (Food)

"Look inside America, she's alright." Seems kind of strange to be hearing those words out of the defiantly British Blur but alas it's true. This isn't even their second best release in my head so it's going to be hard for me to justify them as having one of the top 10 records of the year. So why are they 1 of the top 10? Because they write great songs with great Beatles hooks. Only this time they combine them with the slacker yankee philosophy of Pavement. It halfway works. Though not a cohesive record, there are many hidden gems all reminiscent of the good old days when British bands gave us loads of melody candy for our purchasing dollars.

Daft Punk - *Homework* (Virgin)

The only dance record to make my top 10 list. The reason is as follows. You can dance to it. Other "electronica" acts this year didn't seem to make you want to dance while *homework* always did. More of a disco record than a techno act, the 70's soul influences shine through on both their single's, "Da Funk" and "Around the World." A must buy for any closet dorm room dancer.

The albums that should have been contenders:

Built to Spill: *Perfect From Now On* (Warner Bros.)

Catherine Wheel: *Adam and Eve* (Mercury)

Erykah Badu: *Baduizm* (Kedar / Universal)

Travis: *Good Feeling* (Independiente)

Pulsars: *Pulsars* (Almo Sounds)

Ocean Colour Scene: *Marchin' Already* (MCA)

Poptopia: *Power Pop of the 70's* (Rhino) - compilation of the year!

Fountains of Wayne: *Fountains of Wayne* (Atlantic)

Mansun: *Attack of the Grey Lantern* (Parlophone)

Michael Pen: *Resigned* (Epic)

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Editorials OPINION

DECONSTRUCTING HAREDI

BY ADAM MOSES

The raging forces of theological elitism appear never to have occasion for lull from their pyrotechnic displays of intransigence. We have only to observe the remarks of Rabbi Elya Svei, *rosh yeshiva* of the Yeshiva of Philadelphia, at the annual convention of Agudath Israel before some 3,500 delegates for confirmation that Jewish religious supremacists remain strident in their efforts to unleash communal discord and its attendant tumult. Rabbi Svei, a member of Agudath Israel's *Moetzes Gedolai HaTorah* (Council of Torah Sages), took his time at the convention podium to unabashedly deprecate Yeshiva University President Rabbi Norman Lamm by characterizing him as a "*soneh Hashem*," or "hater of the Lord." This appalling burst of incendiary invective has ignited a conflagration that threatens to consume the fragile shelter of Orthodox unity. Traditional battle lines have been redrawn in preparation for a return to legitimacy *jihad*s that pit vanquishing rabbinic *ayatollahs* against infidels with the audacity to spout the value of moderation. The landscape of Orthodoxy bears the mar of a foreboding disquietude.

Rabbi Svei issued his condemnation in the context of his displeasure with two statements Rabbi Lamm made over the course of the previous year. Rabbi Svei deplored references in Rabbi Lamm's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary Centennial Address that explicated that institution's educational approach. The speech, made before assembled *musmakhim* and subsequently published for distribution, reiterated the avowed mission of RIETS to complement its primary commitment to *Torah lishmah* with "service to the Jewish community." Rabbi Svei took exception to Rabbi Lamm's failure to explicitly acknowledge contributions the "yeshiva" community has made to Orthodoxy during the RIETS address. This criticism appears to be particularly contrived in light of the nature of the function at which Rabbi Lamm delivered his oration, an event devoted not to provision of a candid reckoning of the relative contributions to Orthodoxy made by its warring factions but to recognition of the educational objectives and historical legacy of RIETS. Of course, a perusal of Agudath Israel convention transcripts reveals no account of Yeshiva University contributions to the Orthodox community. It would seem to us quite preposterous if this less than striking omission were to serve as the impetus for a volley of vitriol against Agudath Israel by the leadership of Yeshiva University as we understand that Agudah conventions are not conducted with the objective of extolling "modern" Orthodoxy for its accomplishments. Apparently this distinction is lost on Rabbi Svei.

Rabbi Svei's onslaught was also inspired by his objection to Rabbi Lamm's stated support for the Neeman Commission's efforts to forge understanding among the Jewish denominations in Israel with relevance to issues of theological jurisdiction. Apparently support of this dialogue, the objective of which is to foster Jewish communal coalescence, represents to Rabbi Svei an unacceptable capitulation. This is indeed surprising since the Neeman Commission does not purport to have the authority nor the intention to modify *halakha*, but on the contrary wishes to propose pragmatic solutions to denomina-

tional conflicts that are amenable to all Jewish groups. To be adopted, proposals require the support of a consensus of the groups represented and thus would of necessity require Orthodox approval. Support of the Neeman Commission then cannot reasonably be construed as an elaborate scheme to subvert the values of traditional Judaism but rather must be viewed as nothing short of a communal imperative employed in the pursuit of the laudable end of engendering conciliatory discussion among the ranks of our splintered people. While Rabbi Svei may not share an appreciation for the value of this objective, it is nigh impossible to conceive of those who do as advancing initiatives that display animosity toward God.

The Rabbinical Council of America exhorted the Agudah to "retract or disassociate itself from Rabbi Svei's degrading and extremist remarks" so as to avoid suffering a severing of ties with that organization. The Agudah declined. Rabbi Avi Shafran, an Agudah spokesman, explained in a published interview that it was not his organization's policy to retract statements made by its rabbis. He further indicated that Rabbi Svei probably meant what he said "and considered the matter serious enough to embarrass Rabbi Lamm in public." That Rabbi Svei's remarks are vested with what he considers sincerity, I question not. The rectitude of a perpetrator's intention in the performance of an iniquitous act, however, has always mattered more to Immanuel Kant than to practitioners of traditional Judaism.

Shockingly, tragically, Rabbi Svei's repugnant outburst has served as the harbinger for a wave of similar hateful expression among adherents to the "yeshiva" approach to Orthodoxy. The *Yated Neeman*, the only English language publication to which many rightist Orthodox individuals will permit themselves access, has for the last month been peppered with inflammatory editorials and "open letters" that suggest that positions advocated by Rabbi Lamm and much of mainstream Orthodox Judaism contravene essential tenets of Jewish faith. *Hareidi* rabbis at a number of prominent American yeshivas have provided justificatory arguments for attempts to delegitimize views that differ in any way from their own and employed Rabbi Svei's remarks as a springboard for the attacks they direct at "modern" Orthodoxy. It is difficult to conceive of a more elaborate effort to stratify the Jewish community than has been undertaken by these men. The logical fallacies and theological distortions to which their assaults appeal are apparent enough to a discerning, thinking observer. To those among the "yeshiva" community who entrust their leadership to provide them with the way they must think, however, this renewed assault exacerbates their resentment of "modern" Orthodoxy and serves as a legitimization of a continued offensive against that group. What some rightist Orthodox leaders fail to realize is that they inject their lethal venom not into an adversary, but the communal body of which they are a part.

One of the dangers of the Talmudic photocopy culture that generated the present strife resides in the quality of the products it manufactures. The leader plays the role of template in the duplication cycle. Any deficiencies of which this man is possessed become heritable traits expressed in his followers, those fashioned in the womb of his leadership persona.

Imitatio dei gives way to *imitatio rebbe*. The wealth of our tradition, possessed of its healthy breadth, is abnegated in order that a single man might exercise his, at times, misguided and exclusionary leadership. The proportions of this hazard assume alarming dimensions as flaws are conveyed to all of his faithful disciples without the mitigating influence of periodic recessiveness. Unfortunately, there exists no institutional mechanism for rectifying this malady. The hegemony of the *shtetl* master reigns supreme over these individuals. They prefer to exchange socialization in a broader intellectual venue for the freedom from the difficulties of thought afforded them by the narcotic simple "truth." This dangerous controlled substance is administered by an Orwellian thought police who will brook no opposition. It must be acknowledged that responsible leadership can yield the magnification of virtuous qualities with which the *hareidi* lord may be endowed. Whensuch conveyances transpire, despite concerns with the foundational premises of the dissemination structure, they must be viewed as contributions to communal betterment. Of course, the inverse, the animosity-mongering diatribes that occasionally issue forth from this sector with the inevitable results of disrupting the fragile equilibrium of communal accord and producing gratuitous contention, must be recognized as disastrous and inexcusable.

If Rabbi Svei's acrimonious exclamation had somehow been fashioned in isolation, if it could be said to be nothing more than an aberration divorced from a substantive foundation of rancorous detestation, we might with reason dismiss it as the demagogic excess of a Talmudic lord seeking to impart his partisan will upon submissive, cognition averse vassals. We would regard the remark as a display of the abominable vileness of which man is capable. We would, however, also likely maintain confidence in the possibility of the reversal of the destructive repercussions that the hateful words spawned. Sadly, Rabbi Svei's proclamation denies us that opportunity for optimism. It disrupts the fantasy that tranquil harmony among Orthodox Jews is attainable, perhaps imminently, to forcefully remind us that the more pugnacious amongst us may foment discord to advance nefarious ends and foster upheaval whenever it suits their hateful interests. It charges that Agudath Israel has suffered an abject moral failure that renders it a defective interlocutor in the pursuit of credible Orthodox reconciliation. It insists that we recognize that there is an entrenched institutional apparatus under the aegis of rightist Orthodoxy that seeks to inculcate animosity in its adherents toward centrist Orthodoxy. It declares too decidedly that all is not well in the state of Orthodox Judaism.

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LETTERS

To the Editor

Halacha and Smokers' Rights

To the Editor:

I would like to address an issue that is not thought about much and when it is, people tend to think very little of it. I am talking about smokers' rights. I am not out to defend the practice in *halakha*—it is at best *usser* <proscribed> to take up and *usser aval putter* <sinful but exempted> to continue once addicted. This is already known. I am not out to defend it from the standpoints of medicine or common sense, either. It is *mazik* <damaging>. This is already known. In fact, I am not out to defend it at all. Rather I am out to condemn the treatment that many smokers often receive at the hands of some of their non-smoking counterparts. Smokers are constantly berated for their habit and it helps no one.

At least three methods of reasoning facilitate the non-smokers' condemnation of the smoker. 1. Well-intentioned, if unhelpful, *tochochoh* <rebuke>. (This is innocent enough but difficult to understand. In most cases, the actor rarely gives *tochochoh* in other areas of *halakha* quite so readily and there are plenty of areas just as deserving.) 2. Defense of his air space or the world's (This is often hypocrisy as the actor rarely concerns himself overly much with other environmental issues and usually abuses his health himself.) 3. The sheer pleasure of giving someone a hard time (This is all too common and often disguised by more altruistic motives.)

1. They claim that they are enlightening us about the dangers of smoking but no smoker is unaware of the risks we face. They call it "positive peer pressure" but it is ineffective and only serves to alienate and make hostile the smoker. Some will *tainoh*, "If 1,000 warnings weren't enough maybe 2,000 will be!" We have already received more than 3,000 and repetition is not the answer. I assure you, the constant hoopla in the news is more than adequate warning. Their actions might be acceptable if they were genuinely *pikuach nefesh*, but they are not. I have never met a smoker who quit in order to end torment at the hands of his peers. I am not talking about the borderline, sometimes or closet smoker but the real deal. There is a chemical addiction involved here and I am afraid it is just not that simple. If you do not smoke then you do not know how it feels. Further, different people react differently to nicotine. Some can smoke and not become addicted. Everyone's system is different. Perhaps I should not have begun to smoke, but now that I have it has become a different story altogether. Do not be too quick to judge that either. Not everyone has had such an easy time of things and people react to

stress in different ways. Personally, I did not become aware of the *halakhic* ramifications until after it was already too late. I would like to see the genuinely concerned *bochur* apply half as much *zrizus* to rebuking *mechalelei shmiras negiah* <boys who are physically affectionate with their girlfriends outside of marriage>. While I am whittling away days in *olom hazeh*, they are forfeiting an eternity in *olom haboh*. That is also a form of suicidal behavior. However, we do not see that happen. Boys will eat a meal without *vassing* or *bentshing* and not receive a word of *tochochoh*. Let someone light up a cigarette and you'd think he was single-handedly keeping us all from the *geuloh*! Moreover smoking is one of the few vices that a non-smoking *frum* boy can "get away with" because it is a *taivoh* that he does not possess! He would not feel nearly so comfortable or confident speaking out against masturbation, for example, because it is a battle he must wage daily. However, it is easy to judge someone grappling with a situation that you yourself have never encountered and might never encounter. There is a double standard here. The would-be environmentalist is almost always a phony. I do not see him abstain from using air conditioning and automobiles. He eats beef that supports cattle ranching which deforests the earth and depletes the ozone. He litters, wastes food and money, and does not recycle. He pollutes his own body with caffeine (the heart is overburdened), white sugar (the pancreas is overworked), dairy (high cholesterol), and meat (growth hormones and antibiotics). He despoils nature and his own body in many and varied ways. There is a double standard here. If he cares only about immediate second-hand smoke, please be advised that this is almost always within his power to avoid without infringing on the rights of others. Smoking today is effectively banned indoors. I do not condone smoking where you have a captive audience. To force someone to breathe my smoke would be wrong. The public domain however, is another matter. If someone standing next to you fails to bathe, launder his clothes, use deodorant or mouthwash, it is incumbent upon you to move away. How much the more so if you fear his stink might harm you! Sufferers of cold and flu are contagious and not forbidden from public places; neither should smokers be. You can always avoid either of them. Rather than be inconvenienced however, many prefer just to bend others to their will. They can do so safely only with smokers because smokers are *persona non grata* today. There is a double standard here.

My *magid shi'ur* in Jerusalem was fond of saying, "There are no such

Signs of the Times

To the Editor:

The Commentator recently printed a letter to the editor by a YU student who was rightly upset that his signs for the *yahrzeit* of Yitzchak Rabin were torn down. While he correctly pointed up that signs were posted this and last November reminding students of the *yahrzeit* for Rabbi Meir Kahane, he seems to have "forgotten" what happened to the signs. Within no time, they had been torn down as well, albeit the student who chose to put them up did not come running to the Commentator to complain. Does not the "shtika khoda'ah" alleged by this letter writer apply in this case too? Since no one on the "left" seemed to voice his opinion against this other instance, are we all to assume that the "left" is in agreement with such actions?

When the student also writes that he "was not surprised by the behavior of Kahanists and their supporters", I wonder what proof he has to support his allegation that Kahanists were behind the tearing down of the signs, outside of implying that anyone who does not side with the "left" is a "Kahanist", or a supporter of Kahane. Furthermore, he writes that he has a question "for the rest of us who take Lo Tirzach seriously", insinuating that the "right" does not take this commandment seriously.

I only hope that next time a student chooses to "honor" a "hero" and

"leader" that he look into the past and see the whole spectrum. The facts would seem to show a total disregard by the Left in taking Lo Tirzach seriously. The incidents range from the handing over to the British enemy Irgun and Lehi freedom fighters to be put to death, to Rabin's direct involvement in sinking the *Altelena* off the shores of Tel Aviv in 1948 resulting in the deaths of 16 righteous Jews, some of whom were shot while swimming to shore. Are we to forget the Zionists of the Left like Chaim Weizmann, David Ben Gurion and Rudolf Kastner who knowingly let Europe's Jews be made into soap and ashes. Can we also forget that it was Rabin who would say, after each terrorist act, that these deaths were "karbanot l'sholom?" While the hands of the "right" may have some blood on them, those on the "left" are soaked in it. While the act of Amir was a *chilul Hashem*, why not also look at the *chilul Hashem* being done by those willing to abandon the Land of Israel to the Arab enemy.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l, one of the greatest *tzadikim* of this century, along with others, said that it is a *chilul Hashem* (not to mention against *Halacha*) to hand over any land. I guess some people on the Left think they know more than these *gedolim*.

Zvi Shapiro
SSSB '99

things as *posele tefilin*. If they're *posel*, then they're not *tefilin*—they're black boxes." You cannot make a *brochah* over them and you are not *yotze* the *mitzvah* by wearing them. So too, "*tochochoh*" that is not *lishmoh* is not genuinely *tochochoh*, it is harassment. It is an undeniable and unfortunate component of human nature that we enjoy critiquing others. That is because to do so implies that we are somehow better than the recipient is. It makes us feel good about ourselves. It is also an opportunity to relieve stress and tension by giving vent to pent-up frustrations and anxieties inside of us. This however, is grossly unfair to the victim of such maltreatment. He is made to serve as the proxy for our uncontrolled emotions. It is a case of misdirected anger. To make a rather extreme comparison, it is comparable to spousal abuse. A man goes to work and is yelled at by his boss but cannot answer back for fear of losing his job. He is yelled at by his client but cannot answer back for fear of losing the deal. By the time he gets home he is wound up tighter than an alarm clock. He finally gets a chance to yell at someone he thinks he can yell at—his wife. She does not deserve that. Neither do smokers deserve the misdirected anger they get. Students are put under sometimes enormous pressure by professors, administrators, rabbis, *shadchan-*

ims, *shiduchim*, peers and prospective employers. They cannot answer back for fear of jeopardizing what they hope to gain from them. Along comes public enemy #1, the evil smoker. He is society's newest bad guy. Let's give him hell. That will let off some steam. All of this of course, occurs on a pre-conscious level and one might not even be aware that he is doing it, so subtle is it. Nonetheless, we cannot be your psychological punching bags! I wish I had the space allowance to get into how America has progressively demonized the smoker over the past few years, making it socially acceptable to revile him—but I do not. Suffice to say that we as a society have been conditioned by the media to regard smokers as second-class citizens. We have become a persecuted minority. It is scapegoating and a very dangerous practice—almost as bad as smoking.

My father was *niftor* of lung cancer when I was only four. I am now twenty-five. I learned the lesson that smoking is dangerous early on and long before any of you. I have all the facts and will decide on a course of action using them. In the meantime, I do not need you to inform me of the dangers involved. You will just be wasting your breath.

Tuviah Breier
YC '01

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Andorra
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Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Armenia
Australia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belarus
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Bhutan
Bolivia
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei Darussalam
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cambodia
Cameroon
Canada
Cape Verde
Central African Republic
Chad
Chile
China
Colombia
Comoro Islands
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark
Djibouti
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Equatorial Guinea

Eritrea
Estonia
Ethiopia
Fiji
Finland
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Zimbabwe

Countries not eligible to sit on the United Nations Security Council:

Israel

Believe it or not, Israel is the only one of the 185 member countries ineligible to serve on the United Nations Security Council, the key deliberative group of the world body. Even Iraq is eligible. So is Iran. And so, too, are Cuba, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria.

Why is it that these seven nations, all cited by the U.S. State Department as sponsors of terrorism, are eligible to serve rotating terms on the Security Council, yet Israel, a democratic nation and member of the UN since 1950, is not?

To be eligible for election, a country must belong to a regional group. Every UN member state—from the smallest to the largest—is included in one of the five regional groups. By geography, Israel should be part of the Asian bloc but such countries as Iraq and Saudi Arabia have prevented its entry for decades.

The UN Charter proclaims "the equal rights...of nations large and small." But only Israel among all UN members is denied the right to belong to any

regional group. As a temporary measure, Israel has sought acceptance in the West European and Others Group (WEOG), which includes not only the democracies of Western Europe but also Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Turkey and the United States. Here, too, despite the support of several countries, including the U.S., Israel still has not been admitted.

Thus, without membership in a regional group, Israel can never be elected to serve a term on the Security Council or, for that matter, to the other most important bodies of the UN system, such as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the World Court, UNICEF and the Commission on Human Rights.

What should you do? Make yourself heard!

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LETTERS

To the Editor

The Wrong Defense

To the Editor:

This letter is actually intended for the editors and the author of the article entitled, "Defending the Stern Girl." I read The Commentator, and I usually find it an enjoyable way to keep up with what is going on in the Stern and YU community. Occasionally I find some columns to be offensive, but I try to remember that freedom of press entitles everyone to express their opinions. I appreciate the conflict that you must face as from editors who have halachic issues to consider when deciding what to print.

I certainly question the decision to allow derisive, mocking comments toward Rabbeim, but at least I see some logic in the arguments made in that editorial. Yet Mr. Anziska's most recent attempt at shocking us with his wit is infantile, illogical, and an embarrassment to your newspaper. While I am the first one to admit that I have made stereotypical statements about Stern girls, they are nothing like the author suggests. His propensity for hyperbole is obvious, and it completely undermines any argument he even came close to making.

I agree that many Stern girls get a bad rap, when in reality I personally know many who could have gone to Ivy League Universities and chose to go to

Stern. These are very bright girls, who take challenging classes and are too busy to spend time in Macy's or Bloomingdale's with their father's charge card. But the way to 'defend' them is not the way which Mr. Anziska has chosen. How ironic that he accuses everyone else of making stereotypical assumptions about Stern girls, and then he turns around and makes sweeping generalizations about everyone from Barnard girls to Brovender's girls!!! As for that lashon hara orgy you mentioned - you're right up there with those Barnard girls you've accused of being the ring-leaders.

In reference to your genuine concern for "the current and future state of Modern Orthodoxy as a whole", I suggest you take your ability to write and concern yourself with issues that are of real concern - instead of creating your own stereotypes. And I would recommend that the editors of this paper think a little bit about the quality of articles they allow in their paper - certain articles go beyond being controversial and individual expression of opinion. Some are just senseless babble which have no real point or validity to them.

Rachel Dulitz

Intramurals

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and Sausen, 14. The second game was a bit more competitive, but, unfortunately for the *Canes*, the *Globetrotters* were too tough to beat. Uri Yudowitz delivered in the clutch with 23 complimented by Ami Robinson's 14 points, most of which came down the stretch. After sweeping the series, the *Trotters* were pronounced Fall 1997 Basketball Intramural Champions. Captain Pinky Mikhli discovered this the hard way when he was doused with Gatorade during the celebration ceremony.

Just like any championship team, the *Globetrotters* were characterized by an extreme variety of players each having his own specific and distinct talent that contributed to the same goal, a championship. For example, Center Russel Kimyagnov displayed his incredible shot-blocking abilities. Forward Akiva Sausen provided an outstanding power game and unforgettable finishes. Power Forward

Micha Porat added his Rodman-like rebounding abilities while Uri Yudowitz demonstrated his incredible shooting from anywhere on the court. As point guard, Ami Robinson served as the court general leading the team in assists-to-turnover ratio. Strong bench players Andrew Harary, Aharon Weinstein, and Jeremy Goldberg showed their agility and quickness and hence the depth of the team.

The *Globetrotters* are not done yet though. In order to be declared the overall 1997-1998 Champs, they must repeat their championship title for the Spring 1998 season or defeat the victor of that season in a showdown between the two championship teams at the end of the year. The second semester intramurals have just begun. The question on everyone's mind is, "Can anyone beat the *Globetrotters*?...." We'll just have to wait and see.

YU Fencing Squad

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With an influx of freshman and sophomores on the team, Yeshiva has a wealth of unripe talent on this year's squad. However, due to the lack of experience, the conference record stands at 5-8. There are three weapons in fencing: sabre, epee, and foil. Only the sabre squad has hopes for glory at the fencing championships in March. However, foil fencer, Shaun Azari, and epee fencer, Hadar Weiss, each hope to succeed at the championships in March. In epee, the freshman phenom Alex Traiman and sophomore Steve Mellner have also been picking up steam of late, and look to

perform well in the championships.

Despite the lack of experience on the team, Coach Messing came down hard on his team after the trip to Boston, blasting the experienced fencers for "not getting angry enough," and telling them that they must start fencing better now. Then he told the freshman and sophomores that he has seen many come on the team in their first year and fence much better than they. With an important stretch of the season still ahead, Coach Messing is hoping that his motivational speeches will move his fencers.

The Commentator

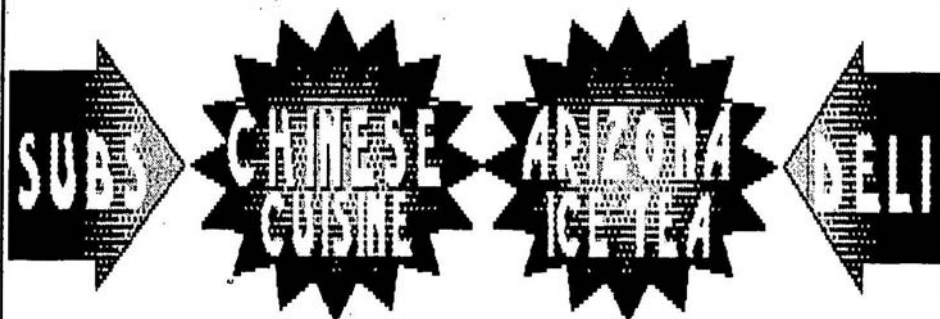
welcomes letters from its readers.

Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Students should also include school enrolled in and graduation date.

The Commentator reserves the right to edit all letters for syntax, content, and size.

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MORG MART RESURRECTION



COMING SOON

Schick Super Hoops Tournament

BY STAN WATSON

With the start of the 14th annual Schick Super Hoops Tournament, I can't help but be reminded of my overall progression in life both as an athlete and as a human being. As a student majoring in physical education at City College (CCNY), I participated in the every first Schick Tournament in 1983. That year, my team won all of its games and went on to represent CCNY in the regional tournament at Patterson College in New Jersey. Unfortunately, although we failed to qualify for the final round, held in Madison Square Garden after losing to Rutgers University at the regional level, our 3-2 losses, remains to be the best finish ever for a CCNY team.

Despite my team's loss to Rutgers who would eventually go on to capture the Big Apple Championship, my teammates and I remained to witness the rest of the competition. Sitting by the hallowed floor of Madison Square Garden, we watched Rutgers win the finals and the CCNY women's team lose to Fordham University. In addition to spectacular basketball games, the Garden was also flooded with Schick representatives giving out free razors, bags, T-shirts, and toiletry kits.

Over the past 14 years, I have witnessed many changes and developments in the tournament. First off, the sites for the regional have shifted from Patterson College to other universities such as Seton Hall, Columbia, and Northeastern. Second, many other sponsors have entered the fray, like Baby Ruth, TNT, and the NBA. Last, many offshoots tournaments based on the same premise as

the Schick 3 on 3 Super Hoops half-court game have been formed. Among these new competitions are the Hoop It Up, the World Trade Center half-court 3 on 3 vs. Professionals like Dominique Wilkins, and Patrick Ewing, the Trident-Certs 4 on 4 Volleyball.

Since my tournament debut in 1983, my career and involvement in sports has continued to progress. I have gone from being a player, to receiving the package for Yeshiva

University in 1988, to officiating the tournament at both YU and CCNY. At CCNY, I held a ten year term in CCNY's youth program (NYSP) from 1984 to 1994. Presently, I have continued to serve as Gymnasium Supervisor at CCNY for the last 14 years.

Here, at YU, I am currently the Assistant Athletic Director, Intramural Director, and Cross-Country Coach for 10 years. During my tenure here, I have continued to run the local Schick Super

Hoops tournament. When the tournament was occasionally held on Sundays, I've had the privilege to go to the Dodge Fitness Center in Columbia University with the YU men's and women's teams. One year, the Schick 3-on-3 team representing YU emulated my 1983 feat as they fell a game short from reaching an NBA arena appearance in the tournament.

Overall, I take pride in having participated in what I feel is one of the most competitive, fun, and social activities devised for half-court players from all type of learning institutions. The opportunity to meet great people, share an amazing experience with fellow students, develop lifelong friendships with professors, and participate in the camaraderie with my teammates and friends has made and will



Joel Jacobson going up for two.

Basketball Intramural Champs; Fall 1997

BY MICHA PORAT

The 1997-1998 basketball intramural season, consisting of talented players and extremely competitive full court basketball games, was at its best this past fall semester. Before the season began, the West Coast *Lakers*, led by Captain Mark Hecht, were favored to win it all, and it certainly looked like they would after defeating the heavily talented East Coast *Globetrotters* in the first game for both teams. The west coast team, however, did not live up to their expectations the rest of the way leaving room for the *Globetrotters*, who got off to a slow 0-2 start, to amaze everyone with a spectacular comeback. The team agreed that the turning point for them was the midseason pickup of high-flying center Russel Kimyagnov. As the *Lakers'* chances for the fall championship title began to dwindle, the *Globetrotters* regrouped when Russel was included in the starting five. Other starters included sophomores Micha Porat, Akiva

Sausen, Uri Yudowitz, and Ami Robinson. Despite the youth of the team, no other team in the league could match the chemistry and intensity of the *Globetrotters* allowing them to go undefeated the rest of the season.

By continuing the same pattern into the playoffs, the *Globetrotters* easily advanced into the semifinals where they faced the *Liberty*. Led by Abe Butel's 13 points, the *Liberty* put up a good fight, but they were still no match for the powerhouse *Globetrotters*. Uri Yudowitz led the *Trotters* with a game high 24-points including an incredible six three pointers; Akiva Sausen added a strong twelve points. In the end, the *Trotters* came up on top 53-41.

In a best of three series, the finals were pretty much the same story except, this time, the *Canes* were the victim. The first game was a blowout as the *Trotters* demolished the *Canes* by the score of 45-29. This time, Yudowitz put up 25 on the board.

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YESHIVA SPORTS

Foiled In Boston, YU Fencers Look To Crush Next Opponents

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

The YU fencing squad began the month of February by traveling up to Boston to compete against the best fencing teams in the nation. With over 500 fencers in attendance, the tournament, held at Brandeis University, lasted for an exhausting 9 hours, from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm. Schools participating in the tournament included North Carolina, Duke, Notre Dame, Rutgers, MIT, Brown, Cornell, NYU and Boston College. The YU team vied against five of these teams.

In the end, Yeshiva did not come out with a victory, but the YU fencers did

sabre squad, which is the strongest of the three weapons at Yeshiva, had a disappointing day, as they combined for only 7 wins.

The Sunday before travelling up to Boston, the YU fencing team journeyed up to Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, NY, to fence Cornell, West Point, N.J.I.T (New Jersey Institute of Technology), and Stevens Tech. (Stevens and Hoboken Institute of Technology).

The grueling schedule for the fencing squad continues over the next month, as the team spars with Lafayette and Haverford February 12, and Princeton University and Vassar College on February 22.

For a long time now, Yeshiva University has had a dominating fencing squad, making fencing one of Yeshiva's best sports.



The YU Fencing Squad

also succeeded remarkably. Senior foil fencer Shaun Azari, hailing from Los Angeles, made the most of his last trip to Boston, returning with 6 wins. Epee fencers Hadar Weiss, a junior from Scranton, PA, freshman Alex Traiman from Marlboro, NJ, and sophomore Steve Mellner from Scranton, PA added four, three, and two wins respectively. The

After competing against the top schools in the country, the fencing squad often returns to the teams in its own conference and slaughters them. Even when the fencing team as a whole does not perform well, the nature of the sport allows for squads or individuals to advance beyond the team.

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Dec. 17, 1997	Home	Mt. St. Vincent	Mt. St. Vincent	63-60	Wein: 19 pts, 13 rebs, 4 stls.
Dec. 21, 1997	Away	St. Joseph's	Yeshiva	61-52	Jacobson, Wein, and Zaibert each scored 15 pts.
Jan. 27, 1998	Away	SUNY Purchase	Yeshiva	75-65	Jacobson: 26 pts, 13 rebs, 4 assists.
Jan. 31, 1998	Home	Savannah College	Savannah	83-53	Jacobson scored his 1000 th point as a Mac.
Feb. 2, 1998	Home	St. Joseph's	Yeshiva	65-60	Neiss: 19 pts, 10 rebs.

Compiled by: Jonathan Teitelbaum

The Commentator

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