

# COMMENTATOR

September 8, 1998/16 Elul, 5758

The Official Undergraduate Newspaper of Yeshiva College

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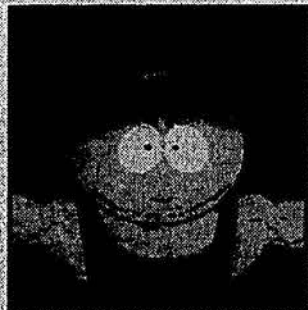


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## HONORS COLLEGES TO BE ENDOWED

### Schottenstein, Abraham to Bankroll New Academic Programs



Courtesy of YUPR

Jay Schottenstein

BY MORDECHAI FISHMAN

In a development that could potentially alter the academic face of Yeshiva University and realize the aspirations of various administrators, funding has been secured for honors programs at Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women. *The Commentator* has learned that S. Daniel Abraham of the Slim-Fast Corporation and namesake of the Yeshiva University Joint Israel Program, has agreed to donate ten

million dollars to create an honors college at Stern while the Schottenstein family of Columbus, Ohio has agreed in principle to sponsor the same program for Yeshiva College.

Sources within the administration have indicated that the Stern donation has been secured, with Mr. Abraham signing an agreement with the University, while the Schottenstein family is still in negotiation concerning the final dollar amount of their gift.

David Rosen, Director of Yeshiva University Public Relations, denied any official knowledge of the donations and said, "I expect the University will be soon announcing honors programs at Yeshiva College and Stern, but as of today we have nothing to announce. It would be premature for *The Commentator* to speculate about these programs at this time."

Furthermore, the students felt they were missing the "dorm environment" that many regard as an essential element of the college experience.

Yeshiva College students in Strenger Hall were placed on the third floor, which is usually used for students of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and is separate from the high school floors. These students were asked to remain patient as the Office of Residence Halls looks for alternative housing arrangements, such as openings in the dorms or in the IHP apartments.

Efrem Nulman, University Dean of Student Services, explained that "many colleges are struggling with housing space...an ideal solution would be to look for a building to purchase and then convert this building into student housing. We already did this at Stern and until we can accomplish that here, we will continue to accommodate students in the best possible manner."

Mixed feelings can be found among the undergraduates assigned to live in Strenger Hall and on the first floor of Rubin. Simon Landsberg, a YC/IBC Freshman housed in Strenger

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The Office of the Vice President for Business Affairs was unable to comment. Daniel Forman, Vice President for Development, declined to comment as well.

While both Dean Norman Adler of YC and Dean Karen Bacon of SCW purported to have no knowledge of the gifts, neither dean could restrain their obvious enthusiasm when queried about honors

in their field and possibly stay for a fifth year on campus.

Though these plans were never actualized, a small group of honors courses was created. With interdisciplinary classes in subjects such as modernity and composition and advanced courses in diverse subjects such as Latin, biotechnology and Jewish intellectual history, the era of an honors program at YC began, albeit on a smaller scale than envisioned by its planners.

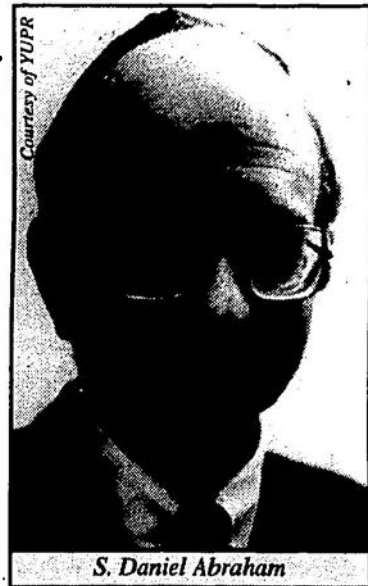
The new funding promises to allow the programs to expand greatly and actualize the visions of the deans. Current honors offerings at YC include courses including "Nationalism and Patriotism,"

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**Nearly Two Million Dollars Doored**

programs. "I am overjoyed that the funding will be available for this very important project," said Bacon, bordering on giddiness. "These new academic opportunities, along with our new facilities, will put Stern College on the map where it belongs." Adler was no less reticent, stating that an honors program, combined with the high intellectual caliber of YU students, could catapult the University into the front ranks of liberal arts colleges in America.

What all the new money will buy is far from clear. The original proposal for an honors program at YC was put forth by Adler three years ago. Honors courses would be open to all students and would be noted as honors classes on student transcripts. Students who took the requisite number of honors courses would be designated "Honors Scholars" and be required to spend a summer doing research



S. Daniel Abraham

## AECOM is Wired for Direct Internet Access

### No Plans Underway for Upgrade at YC

BY CHANAN HOSCHANDER

pany, referred to as USIS.

Marking the culmination of a summer of preparation, students at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine arrived at their apartments to find direct hardwired connections to the Internet. The access now afforded to all medical students who reside in Eastchester Housing at the Bronx Campus of AECOM represents a concerted Yeshiva University effort to catch up with other major academic institutions that have offered similar service in recent years.

The final decision to provide connections to the apartments was made by the AECOM administration late in the 1997-1998 academic year. The technical task was then handed to the Research Information Technologies Department at the College. The actual wiring of the apartments and all cable connections were the responsibility of an outside com-

Workers from USIS spent the summer installing cable connections throughout the housing complex. The effort to complete the wiring of the twenty-seven floors in three buildings required days of continuous labor which often began early in the morning.

All students desiring direct internet access must utilize computers which meet certain technical specifications. Most systems with either Windows 95 or Windows 98 are sufficiently equipped as are the latest operating systems from Macintosh. In order to receive access, students must engage in a connection process, which is run by CompUSA, the company chosen by the institution to handle first-time connections. For a \$75 service fee paid directly to CompUSA, students' computers are checked for com-

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Some of the eleven undergraduate students who were placed in Strenger Hall pointed out a few of the disadvantages of living in the high school dorms. Among these are the smaller size of the rooms, some of which have bunk beds as opposed to the traditional single beds found in the college dorms.

## Hard Times For Hardwiring

The recent successful effort to provide Internet access to the nearly 1500 rooms in Eastchester Campus Housing at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine demonstrates undeniably that this University is fully capable of equipping its residence halls with Ethernet connections when it wishes to do so. Regrettably, Yeshiva College's Uptown Campus, which is host to less than half the number of rooms found in the Eastchester complex, remains a desolate technological wasteland, bereft of the computational resources so essential to contemporary university education.

If the University wishes to ostentatiously tout its top tier ranking in the *U.S. News* rankings, it must, at the very least, afford its undergraduate students educational facilities befitting this designation. We know of no other top tier American universities that have yet to furnish undergraduate students with direct Internet access from campus housing units. It is therefore disingenuous, we believe, for the University's public relations arm to claim that the Main Campus is being updated to "meet the needs of the 21st century" when there are, as yet, no plans afoot to install dormitory Ethernet connections.

Many Yeshiva students, who already encounter significant time constraints as a result of the dual curriculum, must battle mightily during their precious few moments of free time to gain access to the handful of available computer terminals in the overcrowded library and computer laboratories. To our way of thinking, it is unacceptable for the University to withhold educational resources from students, especially when the effect is measurably adverse.

The University's successful efforts at Einstein suggest that administrative foot dragging at the Main Campus is attributable either to blind greed or gross ineptitude. We find both of these explanations to be repugnant. Residential Ethernet connections must be installed in short order on the Main Campus.

## Getting Their Money's Worth

The news of recent donations to the University for the creation of honors programs has been greeted with enthusiasm by students, faculty, and administrators alike. Rightfully so, we believe. With the infusion of financial resources earmarked specifically for the enhancement of the College's academic landscape, there exists the opportunity for this institution to take great strides forward in its crusade for intellectual excellence. The onus is now upon the administration and deans to fully utilize these gifts by creating well thought-out, inclusive programs. An unwieldy hodgepodge of ill-conceived, exclusionary initiatives surely will not do.

As the beneficiaries of the magnanimous gifts of S. Daniel Abraham and the Schottenstein family, we the students have a responsibility as well. The donors are not, as the cynical may believe, purchasing ornate nameplates and staged ceremonies from President Lamm. They are making an investment in the future of this institution, Modern Orthodoxy, and the wider Jewish community by supporting us, the students, and seeking to improve our education. Their investment is not linked to the vagaries of the global economy or the fluctuations of the stock market; rather, their returns can be gauged by the impact their efforts have on the caliber of this university's products. Only if we the students embrace the new programs and fully exploit the opportunities they afford us will the Schottenstein and Abraham investments be considered successful.



### MESSAGE FROM THE YCSC PRESIDENT DROR BARBER

Dear Fellow Students,

I would like to welcome back all of the returning students and greet the new incoming students for the first time. By now most of us have settled in and are ready to face the challenges that the coming year brings.

There is a story I would like to relate to you that took place this weekend, which made me stop and think about our roles as students and more importantly as Jews. While driving down Route 17 in my Suburban, I suddenly heard my tire pop. Slowly and cautiously I pulled over to the side of the road, and got out to take a look. After looking at my shredded tire, I assessed my situation. I was stuck in the middle of a busy highway, with no means of communication, and miles from the nearest phone or gas station. Immediately I turned on my hazards and stood aside my car hoping someone would pull over.

Within minutes a car pulled over and a middle aged

out his jack. One of my friends, excited to see all the help we were receiving thanked the man's wife for pulling over. She responded rhetorically, "For a Jew we wouldn't stop???"

To make a long story short, after multiple attempts to try and fix the tire, he lent me his Allstate card and we contacted a tow truck driver through a cell phone provided by another Jew who stopped on the side of the road to help. Before leaving, the man's wife begged us to take some fruit and soda, and we kindly accepted.

To most, the experience of a flat tire is not one we look upon as an uplifting experience, yet that is how I will always remember that day. Not only was there a tremendous amount of *Gmilla Chesed* that went on in that brief hour, but there was a certain kinship felt between all who were participating in our predicament. It truly lent meaning to the idea of "*Ish Echad Blev Echad*". *Achdut* is something that is rarely felt in our

community today. Unfortunately, it seems as if the only time we are truly together is when a tragedy hits our community. It is this lesson that I was reminded of that day on the road. It is only through unity that we truly achieve our goals.

It is with this idea in mind that I look to our coming year both academically and religiously. It is only through student unity that we can achieve the goals that we have set forth. How can we expect the administration to listen to us if we are at odds with each other? All the student councils, student clubs, as well as student newspapers, must work together to achieve a better student life on campus. Every voice on campus counts. That means getting involved any way you can. Whether it is through various committees, or as a member of a club, you must always remember that your voice can and will be heard. With every added active member our student voice as a whole gets louder. It is only through our involvement and our unity that will be recognized and heard. I don't think I have to tell you how this relates to us religiously. In this month of Elul, it is important that we as Jews stand together as we plead to *Hashem* for forgiveness. G-d listens a lot better to one loud voice than to many faint ones. It is with this that I wish all of you a very sweet New Year.

Kativa Vichatima Tova!!!

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### CORRECTION

In the previous issue, the words "It's my life goal to overtake Brandeis. We're almost there. Go Macs" were mistakenly attributed to Ben Mantell due to an editing oversight. We regret the error.

The Governing Board of The Commentator would like to extend its deepest condolences to Sy Syms and the entire Syms Merns family upon the untimely passing of Steven Syms Merns.

"May the Almighty comfort you amongst the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem"





**FROM THE  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
ADAM MOSES**

## Toward Improved Campus Life:

### *A Satirical Take on Military Occupation and Restoring Western Culture*

To those who have recently ventured from the confines of the luxurious dormitory facilities, it is apparent that Yeshiva University Security Chief Don Sommer's military occupation of the uptown campus has been a thorough one. Uniformed warriors saturate the vast expanses of the two-block campus from Belfer to Schottenstein to the "Main Building." These mercenaries of death are trained in the useful skills of identification card demand, sitting, standing, and the occasional surreptitious sleeping episode. This totalitarian police state has given rise to a campus that is virtually bereft of crime, life, spirit, vitality or any other features that might suggest that a university exists at the corner of 185th Street and Amsterdam Avenue.

Even with the obvious strength of the on-campus commando presence, there are periodic lapses in security efficacy. A few months ago this phenomenon was manifested with the theft of two ornately sculpted ritual *kiddush* cups from the Yeshiva University Museum, which is reportedly housed in a small locked chamber in the bowels of the Gottesman Library. Recognizing the need to prevent a recurrence of such an institutional catastrophe, the administration decided that innovative security measures had to be devised. In consonance with its historical legacy of brilliant protection schemes, YU Security immediately instituted beefed up checkout requirements at the Library exit.

The checkout station now obligates students to surrender their backpacks for inspection and submit to an intrusive full cavity check by a rotund stick-toting Bulgarian woman named Mucusa before leaving the Library. While this is clearly a necessity for the retention of the remaining cutout cardboard synagogue exhibit in the Museum and may, as security has suggested, uncover the perpetrator who brings the valuable goblets back to the library with him/her to utilize as part of a lavish fourth floor repast, some audacious students have suggested that an electronic alarm system might be more effective and less intrusive than the current approach. Some even risked running afoul of Mucusa when they contended (gasp) that an unfortunate security guffaw should not have spawned unnecessary inconvenience for students and the insulting implication that they bear responsibility for the theft of the University's holy grails. This momentary ascendance from the depths of apathy that resulted in a fleeting expression of student independence of will was ignored and shortly thereafter forgotten about entirely. Alas, now we need only speculate about what useful measures might

have been adopted had student perspectives been taken seriously.

Of course, it would be inaccurate to portray the Tiananmen Square Library repression episode as the watershed event in stifling on-campus student experience. Precedent for this policy direction can be found in a host of previously established provisions relating to campus life. While we all concur that it is indeed benevolent that University policy is formulated to accommodate neighborhood residents through regulations that provide an outdoor social and recreational area in front of Morgenstern Hall, the unspoken rule that only students require identification to enter University buildings while local residents enter freely, and the culturally sensitive doctrine that most University employees speak a language other than English to forge demographic consistency with the environs, these initiatives are viewed by many students as deleterious to the character of their campus experience. To be fair though, during the winter months, all wild carousing, drug deals, and gang wars involving non-students on University grounds must be concluded by 4 A.M. to facilitate the efforts of the handful of students who wish to study in the absence of the music and smoke filled din that generally engulfs the campus.

Propagandistic pamphlets bearing the University's seal argue that Washington Heights provides a unique university experience. This may be correct in the sense that no other university in the country is subjected to comparable physical conditions, but is disingenuous if "unique" is intended to convey a favorable connotation.

Barring the imminent resurrection of Washington Heights as a viable residential district, the physical locale of Yeshiva University will not soon be considered one of its crowning virtues. In light of this unfortunate state of affairs, students must be made to feel as comfortable as possible within the limited confines of their cloistered enclave. It follows that YU students must be given unequivocal priority of access on campus. Despite our sincere desire to coexist comfortably with our neighbors and our willingness to make sacrifices toward the attainment of that end, we must not concede the essential quality of life requisite for collegiate fulfillment. This mandates campus security efforts that are orchestrated to protect and serve students rather than intimidate and inhibit them. Only under these conditions can we look forward to a day when the rumbling of a column of armored Daihatsus heralds the triumph of the human spirit in the face of adversity rather than the siege of a hostage student populace.

## "Sex Sells" Even To Orthodox Jews

Whenever I see clips of television commercials that date from the 1950's, I chuckle. They're so benign. Yes, they were provocative for their time, but they pale in comparison to the advertising of today. Modern advertising has gone beyond the standards of yesteryear to the point where I'm embarrassed to watch TV with my dad in the room.

After all, a lot has happened since my dad's youth. The liberal anti-establishment that gained prominence in the 60's and the onslaught of the woman's liberation movement created a climate of complete moral relativism. As a result, Americans clamored for sexual freedom and old sexual taboos were broken. This, coupled with the radical consumerism of our era, has led to a brand of advertising that is often licentious and at times, debasing.

Simply put, contemporary advertising is a blinding barrage of sexually explicit imagery. Advertising executives have engaged the sordid side of America's raging libido—and it's worked. That's why early American advertising looks so prudish.

Observant Jews have been inured to sexually graphic advertising, as well. Even though our tradition deplores pornography, we have nevertheless

been acclimated to the amorous content of modern advertising. After all, there is no escape. It's on buses, on TV, and in magazines. We have therefore become accustomed to it.

This is somewhat understandable. To a certain extent, the Orthodox community must operate within the gamut of contemporary morality, otherwise, daily life in modern America would be impossible. To be sure, there are communities in this city that attempt to withdraw from modern American culture. But the task is too colossal to be completely effective. Nor must such a lifestyle be viewed as ideal, given Judaism's universalistic teleology. Therefore, concessions are made.

But there comes a point where our community must stand firm behind our religious principles. We must not lose our ideological bearings and ignore immoral excess. A few examples will confirm this sentiment.

Last year, I noticed a billboard towering over the West Side Highway. It was an advertisement for Calvin Klein Jeans. The billboard pictured a woman with a strident and raven-

ous look on her face thrusting her hand into her crotch. Truthfully, I would have been shocked had I not seen other Calvin Klein advertisements earlier that year featuring young teenagers sprawled out on bathroom floors in their underwear. The ads were appalling and bordered on child pornography.

Then there's Abercrombie & Fitch—probably the most sexually-charged clothing manufacturer in America. In a recent issue of *Vanity Fair*, Abercrombie & Fitch placed an ad that featured four dissolute woman playfully chasing four naked men. The men were holding Abercrombie & Fitch clothing over their genitals—lest they appear immodest.

Examples such as these abound. But while it's a reality in modern America that "sex sells," many ads are still relatively tasteful. It's the exceptions, however, that are jarring and serve to reacquaint us with the slippery-slope of contemporary morality. Thus, a certain sense of vigilance is in order.

By purchasing clothing from manufacturers that employ prurient advertising techniques, tacit approval is given to the advertisement. That's not to say that the buyer endorses the lifestyle portrayed in the ad, it simply reveals a lack of

sensitivity for Jewish values. Furthermore, the buyer provides financial support—albeit minuscule—for yet another sensationalistic advertising campaign. It's therefore unconscionable for an Orthodox Jew to purchase clothing from such a company.

Objections to such a view are to be expected. Our present acceptance of American culture will make the repudiation of any specific advertisement or company seem arbitrary and sanctimonious. But given the content of certain advertisements, a line must be drawn.

There will, of course, be different viewpoints and standards. Last year a Rabbinic student approached me, and in his pious manner advised me to stop wearing jeans. He explained that by wearing jeans I was identifying with the sacrilegious elements of our society. That, apparently, was the line that he drew. I, on the other hand, had absolutely no idea what the texture of my pants had anything to do with my religious convictions. I now know what he meant, as I probably didn't hear him correctly. He must have thought that I was wearing Calvin Kleins.

**Josh Abraham  
Columnist**

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Mr. Andrew Liebowitz, & the Entire Office of Student Services  
For All the Time and Effort they Expended  
Making Orientation an Overwhelming Success**



# FORUM

## OPINION

### "The Farther You are from YU, the More Prestigious it Becomes"

BY AARON J. LEFKOWITZ

"The farther you are from YU, the more prestigious it becomes" I'm not exactly sure when I began to heed those famous words that I heard last semester. Just a few blocks from Wall Street, I was nervously standing at one of the lavish bathroom stalls on my first day at the firm. Feeling happy that I hadn't been fired yet, I suddenly heard a calm voice coming from my left. "First day on the job?" I quickly turned and saw a tall, bearded young man with a familiar looking round object perched on his head. Not having had any profound conversations in the bathroom since the days of sword fighting with the boys, a cool "Yes" left my lips. He responded warmly that he was an associate attorney at the firm for the last few years. "Where do you go to school?" was the next obvious question from this fellow patron in the men's room.

Immediately after giving the answer the tension of the first day quickly faded. This unfamiliar and rigid environment outside of the *beit medrash* on 185th street suddenly seemed comfortable. I had found a comrade in the secular world around me. Before the two of us had left the men's room and walked to our respective offices, we had discussed the fact that we both loved Dr. Marrin and had some of the same Bible professors. We played a little Jewish geography and discovered that we had *makomot* close to each other in the main *beit medrash*. As we departed he told me "if you need anything, don't hesitate to ask." I walked back to my desk feeling relieved, and not just for the obvious reason. Among the trenches in the battles of the business world, I found an ally simply because I told him that I go to YU.

Perhaps it was the time I first went for an interview at the firm. The moment I told the cold interviewer where I received my schooling, a sense of awe came across her face. She nodded her head in approval of Yeshiva. The expression on her face seemed like she was begging to ask me "what exactly goes on over there?" I felt that she just wanted to know what it was in the kosher food that produced such intelligent, energetic, hard working boys who are so motivated to get ahead of their peers. She just wanted to know how a school with no females and a campus that makes Gettysburg look like heaven can produce such successful students.

I may have been reminded of the quote when I wandered outside about 12:30 into a swarming sea of suits running off with lunch bags and into restaurants. I may have thought of the quote every day when I saw Vinny, another Intern, reacting in amazement to my dally lunch hour stories. One day I stopped two *yarmulka* clad boys hoping they would lead me to a restaurant that offered the proper ritually prepared food.

Every day I met another YU alumnus,

always willing to lend a rookie some assistance, teach me some tricks of the trade, or to throw a Wall Street area *minchah* booklet at me. Vinny was amazed at the fact that I had so much in common with people I had just met on the street. He was unfamiliar with the common bond and security that a Jew feels when he sees a fellow *Yid* wandering around a rest stop in the middle of Hicksville.

The quote I have so revered was eloquently stated in a Civil Liberties political science course by Dean Hecht, an individual in our institution who is a supreme example of a successful merger of *Torah*

### Student Soap Box

*U'Madda*. Pacing back and forth in the only Con Law course in the country where the cases are analyzed like a *blatt gemarah* and the justices "teich up the Constitution," one day Dean Hecht was addressing our class about the future opportunities and advantages of the Yeshiva student in the "real world." With his patented smile, *yeshivish* dialect, and the precise language of a Harvard professor, the Dean proudly said, "I can not stress the fact more, one day you guys will see, that the farther you get from YU, the more prestigious it becomes." The guys in the class looked at each other in bewilderment. What did he mean by that? That in Teaneck grandmas are proud of their grandchildren at YU, but in Brooklyn they really *shep nachas*? That the farther we run down Amsterdam Avenue, the better law school we'll be accepted to? Was this just another behind-the-back push for us to send our children to Yeshiva as well? Amidst the rustling of the traffic and honking outside, as well as the occasional blasting of rap music from a boom box, the pre-law guys knew they had to trust the message of our advisor. Just a few months later, and 190 blocks away, I was able to better understand what the Dean was referring to. To the average college student, he was referring to smiles of approvals in interviews and to meetings in the stalls. He was referring to finding restaurants and even to Vinny.

After the summer, I'm sure that every student has his summer anecdotes. After countless interviews, running around the Stock Exchange, writing some briefs, or preparing a general ledger, we all have a better understanding of the Dean's powerful words. Perhaps, we can all take this message back to Washington Heights. Maybe we will better appreciate what is contained here in our few little blocks. Maybe we can call this home instead of prison. Perhaps we'll be able to come to grips with the fact that we really don't just "go to yeshiva in the morning, and attend classes in the afternoon." Since in the "real world" it doesn't matter whether you were a champion in the *beit medrash* or a BMP bum, we're all just *Yiddin* out there, and we should appreciate the *chevrah* we have here now. It's the best group of guys in the world. Perhaps we can even stop com-

### A Jewish University?

BY YISHAI FLEISHER

As I leaf through this semester's course catalogue, I am not dismayed when I see only five Political Science classes. I do not get upset when my friends down at NYU mistake my thin yellow catalogue for some kind of restaurant menu. I give them the standard response: Yeshiva College is a small school and therefore can only have a limited variety of classes, but our school offers the kind of Jewish education that will not be found in any other university. We've got that *Torah U'Madda* stuff happening uptown, I say.

Yeshiva University's banner proudly proclaims the motto of *Torah U'Madda*, the much spoken of yet rarely seen synthesis of our ancient religion and modern disciplines. In layman's terms, *Torah U'Madda* means that we are a Jewish university which strives to unite the secular world with our religion. Yet as I leaf, once again, through the course catalogue I realize that sometimes that is not necessarily the case.

In this world there are plenty of instances of the religious hybrid that we pay lip service to but for some strange reason they are absent from the little yellow but not so different course book. For example, the Holocaust is a field of study which naturally lends itself to both historical and theological analysis. Theoretically, there is no one more equipped to deal with the Holocaust than Yeshiva University, and there is no school that should care more about it. (Course catalogue says: one Holocaust class.) The Holocaust issue should be tackled as an interdisciplinary class, taught by a team of a professor and a rabbi, creating a class in which the history of the event and its theological implications will unite.

Hallways in Rubin are decorated with signs proudly proclaiming that the nation of

Israel is with the Golan, and that Hebron is eternally ours. Hold on, hold on, I think I'm getting a revelation here: Israel is yet another one of those rare occurrences where Torah meets *Madda* without some ill fitting *shidduch*. (Course book says: zero classes on the Middle East.) Israel is an essential Jewish issue that is on everyone's mind, but shunned from the classroom. If any school should pioneer this study it should be YU.

What about the Bible codes? You know, those pesky people who believe that the Torah contains codes in it that can only be broken by a computer. Torah and computers, sound familiar? Yet Yeshiva University professors and rabbis are complacent in their fear/hate relationship with this topic, and choose to relegate this work to other schools. Instead of being an uninformed and opinionated peanut gallery composed of professors and rabbis relying on their friends at Harvard to do the work, we should be at the forefront of this discipline. Prove it or disprove it. That's *Torah U'Madda*.

Yeshiva University should make a concerted effort to reunite the failing marriage of *Torah U'Madda* and bring the Yeshiva back into the University. The first step towards this goal should be to tackle those issues that lend themselves best to this concept no matter how politically charged or sensitive they are, such as the Holocaust and the Middle East. The next step after that should be to introduce Jewish art classes, comparative law classes, and add Jewish philosophy classes (course book says: one Jewish philosophy class).

For many people in this school the greatest synthesis of *Torah U'Madda* is Dougie's and football. However, if we believe in this concept of *Torah U'Madda*, then let's stop watering it down with yiddishisms and thumb movements. We are a Jewish university and we must embrace our identity. Our very name demands it.

## THE COMMENTATOR

is currently soliciting submissions for the Student Soap Box, a recently launched feature devoted to sharing student viewpoints with the broader University community.

PRELIMINARY DRAFTS MAY BE SENT TO:

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plaining about the expensive hairy chicken in the cafeteria. (Actually, we can still complain about the chicken.) But those of you who have experienced five weeks of sleep deprivation to study for Orgo; those of you who have tumbled sloppily out of bed in Morg with your only destination of the day being a visit with Grandma's girls; for the fellows who haven't gotten on that downtown van in a month because she

wants to go out with a guy from Ner; and the students that would rather see a proctologist rather than step foot in the Registrar's office; for the *bochrim* in the *beit medrash* with ring-around-the-collar who just don't have a long enough night *seder* to figure out that *Tosafos*; just remember and take solace in the fact that the farther you get away from YU, the more prestigious it becomes.

# FORUM

## LETTERS

### Frustrated Already!

To the Editor:

Allow me to introduce myself. I am a freshman. That means that I have spent less than three weeks on this campus. In the days since my arrival I have experienced the most intense moments of unwarranted, unsolicited frustration and aggravation of my life.

I ignored all the monotonous murmurings of cynical upperclassmen and the negative cliches I had been hearing my entire first week here. But alack and alas, I too, am now a bitter, cynical, negative person, due to the most ridiculous things.

The conflict of emotions is staggering. Coming to YU, a top tier University, an awesome Yeshiva, and the greatest bunches of guys in the world-yet I am so angry I want to punch a wall.

Why in only three short weeks do I feel so aggravated and frustrated?

Maybe it's because every time I start to do some work in the library, my computer freezes.

Maybe it's because I have been late to class six times while waiting 20 minutes for a Belfer Hall elevator.

Maybe it's because I only have twelve minutes between classes to run to the Caf in hopes of purchasing dinner only to find lines stretching to the Cross Bronx Expressway.

Excuse me, which office was I supposed to go to???

Maybe it's because I ruined my new shirt last week because I leaned on a wall of wet paint.

Maybe it's because I am still waiting for that blasted elevator.

Ooops, this computer just froze. Again.

Welcome to YU, land of aggravation, frustration, and Sy Syms fliers clogging my mailbox.

Joseph Stettin  
YC '02

### Not Our Blunder

To the Editor:

I read with interest your article "Major Real Estate Deal Provides Stern With Sorely Needed Space," in *The Commentator* issue of August 23.

While covering the real estate picture in an accurate fashion, your article contains a gross error. You state that, according to your sources, the Board of Directors of Stern College for Women committed a "colossal blunder" by refusing to buy the lot next to Stern College when it was put on the market. This is far from the Truth.

In actuality, the Board of Directors of Stern at all times enthusiastically advocated the purchase of this lot. The Board consists of a group of men and women dedicated to the welfare and advancement of Stern College. It was the opinion that the College would be well served by acquisition of this land, which would then provide an ideal location for the necessary expansion of the College.

Mr. David Yagoda, then Chairman of the Board and head of its Real Estate Committee, personally, and with the full endorsement of the Board, pleaded for the purchase of the property. The Board was so anxious to obtain the lot that even after it was sold, efforts were made to negotiate with the new buyers to get the property back for Stern to no avail. If indeed, throughout all this a colossal blunder occurred, the Board of Directors of Stern College bears no responsibility.

In view of the disturbing distortion of facts printed in the *The Commentator*, we feel that a retraction is in order and look forward to reading it on the front page of your next issue.

Lea Eisenberg  
Chairman,  
Board of Directors of  
Stern College for Women

**-EDITORS' NOTE-**  
*THE COMMENTATOR published its version of events with the strong backing of several high-level University administrators. Until such time as compelling evidence is furnished establishing that responsibility for the University's failure to acquire the property was not that of the Stern Board, we stand by our account.*

**Love basketball?**  
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**in a long-standing YU tradition.**  
**All interested candidates should contact**  
**Etan Walls ASAP**  
**at Rubin 402 or by calling 568-8649.**

### A Kinder, Gentler Era?

To the Editor:

I just read your initial 1998-1999 publication released during the first week of school, and I congratulate you on your fine product which is upbeat and positive in almost all respects.

Only too often in the past, *The Commentator* served as springboard for gripes, complaints, and articles which on occasion caused me to cringe. I hope this year's first edition will set the tone for a kinder, gentler publication.

While one is certainly entitled to voice contrary opinions, one must act in a responsible fashion and never lose sight of the fact that your words and their impact extend near and far. Given the tone of this latest edition, I am certain that you will bring credit to yourselves as well as the Yeshiva.

Moshe S. Neiss  
MTA '68 YC '72  
RIETS '75 BRGS '75

### MYP Blues

To the editor:

I am writing in response to the column "Good Advice" for incoming students by Josh Abraham. In no way do I mean to denigrate Mr. Abraham or to speak *Loshon Hora* about any program in YU, rather I would like to shed some light on the issue of "YU guys copping out on a good education."

In YU, students in all programs must fulfill the same core requirements when it comes to Bible, Jewish History, and Hebrew language. (Namely 4 courses, 2 courses and 2 courses respectively.) In IBC and JSS, a student can fulfill these requirements in the mornings as part of their Judaic curriculum. In MYP, not only must students take these courses after 3pm as part of their General studies course load, but the classes offered are for the most part harder classes. (Having been in both IBC and JSS and now MYP, I can attest to this fact.)

This means that a MYP student upon returning from Israel, has 8 semesters of Bible, J.H and Hebrew to cram into their remaining 6 semesters on campus. Factoring these hard courses into one's already heavy schedule, and considering that we are already dealing with a double curriculum, and that MYP students don't even start classes until 3, you've got yourselves a student with a tremendous amount of work on his hands.

Another point to consider is that after graduation, MYP guys are fighting for the same jobs as IBC and JSS guys. IBC and JSS students can knock off these 8 courses in the mornings, thereby easing up their general studies course loads and providing them with ample study time and the opportunity to get good grades. MYP guys on the other hand are left with such a heavy course load and insufficient study time. They effectively have no choice but to find the easiest classes they can with the most *Mesorah*.

Contrary to what Mr. Abraham thinks, for MYP students, taking good classes with good teachers where one can truly learn is not always an option. So yes, many YU students do "shop around" for easy classes. And yes, the concept of actually taking a class for the sake of learning and not the "easy A" is not so common. But for MYP guys at least, it is just not their fault.

What I cannot fathom is why, by choosing MYP and demonstrating one's commitment to Torah learning, this institution—which prides itself in being both a YESHIVA and a University—"punishes" MYP students by forcing them to shoulder a harder than normal course load? This in turn "forces" them to take the easier, not necessarily better, classes thereby lowering the standard of their educations.

Eli Alony  
YC '99

**THE COMMENTATOR**  
welcomes letters from its readers.  
Letters must include the author's name,  
address, and telephone number.  
Students should also include  
the school in which they are enrolled  
and date of expected graduation.  
*The Commentator* reserves the right  
to edit all letters for syntax, content, and length.

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# SSSB Holds "Top Tier Accounting Firm Night"

BY ADAM BENSLEY

On Wednesday, September 2, approximately 150 students from the Sy Syms School of Business attended "Top Tier Accounting Firm Night" in Belfer Hall's Weissberg Commons. The event, which allowed students to meet with representatives from the most prestigious accounting firms, is the first in a series of informational events arranged by the Office of Placement and Career Services for those interested in securing positions in the fields of accounting and management information systems (MIS).

The purpose of the evening, as explained by Associate Dean of SSSB Ira Jaskoll, was to "allow students the opportunity to meet with and make themselves known to representatives from the top seven public accounting firms in a formal environment." Students were also able to gain a sense of what the firms' expectations were regarding prospective applicants. SSSBSC President David Neiss felt that the evening gave students "a little taste of what to expect in the real world and to get some practical information from the representatives of top accounting firms."

In addition to the regular attendees - Arthur Anderson, Deloitte & Touche, Ernst & Young, KPMG Peat Marwick, and Price Waterhouse Coopers, a consolidated version of the former "Big Six" - the event featured representatives from the accounting firms of BDO Seidman and Grant

Thorton for the first time. Representatives from all seven firms were available to discuss opportunities in the field of accounting and three of the firms - Arthur Anderson, Deloitte & Touche, and Price Waterhouse Coopers - also provided representatives from their separate MIS divisions. Many of the major public accounting firms seem to be headed in the direction of creating separate computer consulting divisions.

Shaan Elbaum, President of the Sy Syms Accounting Society, described the evening as having given students "an excellent chance to be introduced to representatives from the top tier accounting firms. Also, it leaves an impression on students as to which firms provide career opportunities that best fit their needs and interests."

Most of the representatives present felt that the evening was mutually beneficial. Matthew Koenig, who represented Ernst & Young, felt the evening gave the firms a chance to meet and recruit what he termed as "top talent." The friendly atmosphere was conducive to personal meetings between students and representatives.

Most students felt the event was very useful and informative, and many gained a greater sense of familiarity with those firms they may later be applying to. Eric Schubert, a MIS major remarked that the information given on his field was "presented very well and should prove to be extremely useful in my job search."

# A New Chapter for Campus Bookstore

BY ROBERT GUTTMAN

For years, the semi-annual trek of the Yeshiva college student to the campus bookstore has been accompanied by a heightened sense of anxiety and trepidation. Undermanned and overworked, the bookstore's staff faced trouble handling the needs of a growing undergraduate student body. Beyond the physical limitations of the bookstore, many students were bothered by what they claimed was the almost hostile attitude of the bookstore staff towards questions or problems posed by early semester book purchases. Whether the complaints were warranted or not, there has been a visible attempt by the bookstore's ownership to improve the general service of the store.

Although the sign hanging atop the bookstore reads "YCSC Bookstore," ownership maintains no formal ties to the current student council administration. YCSC President Dror Barber reaffirmed that the store's designation was imprecise, asserting that no official relationship exists, rather, the sign is a throwback to the bookstore of decades ago when the student council owned and operated the bookstore.

Indeed, the Collegiate Bookstore Association owns the current store. The CBA is a nationwide chain of on-campus stores providing academic material at the university level. When asked about the recent changes, the store's acting manager noted that ownership of the store had not changed. Rather, upper-level management hired new personnel to work at the bookstore in response to student complaints over the previous management.

The most notable change in the store is the new staff behind the counter. A bit of inconsequential remodeling was undertaken but did little to alter the character of the store. Of greater importance, the store changed its attitude toward dealing with teachers getting enough books in, and on time. Accompanying the shift in focus was a new way of dealing with students. "Service with a smile," is the new motto, and it has not gone unnoticed.

The students have met the new personnel and change in atmosphere of the bookstore with praise. Ari Engel, a YC Junior, is a computer science major who relies on the store for deep discounts on computer books. He noted that "there is a definite change in the way that the store's staff deals with students. I think that it's a positive one." This sentiment was echoed by Elli Kryksman, also a junior, who contrasted his experience this year with the trouble he had last year. "There is a definite willingness now, on the part of the people working there, to help you out if necessary. Last year you almost felt that if you needed to ask a question from the staff you were infringing on their time."

While the overall impressions of students regarding the bookstore were positive, continuing problems were nonetheless raised. Many students noted that the bookstore, despite the recent improvements, is a poor example of what a top-tier university bookstore should look like. "On other campuses, the bookstore is a source of academic and living material throughout the school year, said a student." While still lacking, most students are pleased with the modest improvements.

## OFFICE OF PLACEMENT & CAREER SERVICES CALENDAR

### SAVE THESE DATES!!!

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	EVENT
September 8, 1998	8:00 p.m.	Midtown campus	Mid-Size Accounting Firm Night
September 9, 1998	2:30 p.m.	Midtown campus	Mock Interviews
September 10, 1998	2:45 p.m.	Uptown campus	Mock Interviews
September 11, 1998	10:00 a.m.	TBA	Accounting Field Trip
September 12, 1998	8:15 p.m.	Midtown campus	Finance Night
September 16, 1998	2:30 p.m.	Midtown Campus	Graduate School Workshop
September 17, 1998	2:45 p.m.	Uptown Campus	Graduate School Workshop

Please look for notices regarding these events on the Office of Placement & Career Services bulletin boards outside our offices.

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## YCSC to Hold Freshman and Sophomore Class Elections

BY MATTHEW SCHARF

September 12 marks the official beginning of permitted campaigning for the freshman and sophomore class elections. Preliminary electioneering, including submissions declaring intended candidacy is already under way. To date, according to Canvassing Committee officials, the process has proceeded without a hitch.

Presently, the candidates are involved in garnering signatures. Each candidate is required to submit a petition with the signatures of no less than one third of their class prior to midnight on Thursday, September 10. Canvassing Committee officials will then check that the background of each candidate satisfies the signature requirement in an effort to verify each candidate's eligibility for the position for which he is running. Every candidate who receives this clearance, as well as the clearance of the Dean of Students, will then be placed on the ballot for the election slated to take place on Thursday, September 17.

Candidates are permitted to begin placing campaign posters around campus at midnight, Saturday night, September 12. All signs must be approved and stamped before being copied and displayed. Additionally, in order to minimize the clutter that is concomitant with any election, candidates are limited to placing no more than one sign (8 1/2 by 11 inches) per floor and that sign may only be hung on bulletin boards or on friends' doors. There is also a \$100 cap on election expenses per candidate.

Yeshiva College Student Council President, Dror Barber, a veteran of YC elections, commented, "I'm looking forward to a clean and fair election and to working with the incoming freshman and sophomore representatives." Due to the fact that the election rules are explicit in the delineation of the conduct required of a candidate, that should not be a problem. Candidates are held responsible for the behavior of their friends, family members,

campaign supporters, and anyone deemed to be acting on the candidates' behalf. Violation of any election rules will result in a warning to the candidate. Second offenses will result in possible disqualification. Disciplinary matters will be handled by YCSC in conjunction with the Student Court.

As with all elections on campus, the Canvassing Committee is handling the bulk of the task. The Canvassing Committee, ably headed by Michael Ausubel who is assisted by Moishe Singer and Donny Rose, expects the elections to continue in a timely fashion. This would contrast with last year's elections when the Office of the Registrar implemented a new computer system, delaying the completion of the official class rosters. This caused the elections to be postponed for several weeks. The rosters are used for the determination of the official class of each candidate, as well as the tally of the official class number and all class members eligible to vote in a particular race.

Although official clearance is still pending, a tentative list has been compiled.

Freshman class presidential candidates: Eric Gutman, Shneur M. Bielak, Steven I. Weiss, Richard Woolf, and Alain Zeytouneh. Vice presidential candidates: Farzin Baroukh Rahmanou, Nachman Shafar, and Nathan Siegel. Secretary-treasurer candidate: Natanel Barookhian. Sophomore class presidential candidates: Jason Cyrulnik, Brian Glass, Joseph Meyer, Raymond Sultan, Joel Fogel, and Tamir Nachum. Vice presidential candidates: Monty Stechler, Daniel Simons, Michael Silverberg, Menachem Feit, Moshe Baron, Joshua Rosman, Eric Distenfeld, Uriel Weisz. Secretary-treasurer candidates: Jason Berrebi, Aryeh Goldberg, David Shor, and Franky Ehrenberg.

The time, date and location of the elections have yet to be announced. Any questions regarding the elections should be addressed to the chairman of the Canvassing Committee, Michael Ausubel.

## Law and Med School Acceptances Turn Heads

BY DAVID MENCHEL

The Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women class of 1998 continued the success of previous classes with an extraordinarily high percentage of graduates admitted to professional graduate schools. This includes the acceptance of several students to some of the top graduate programs in the country.

Of the fifty-three YU students who applied to law school last year, an impressive 94% of applicants received at least one acceptance to an American Bar Association accredited law school. Of the thirty-four YC/SSSB men who were accepted, four gained admission to Harvard Law School. An additional eighteen acceptances were garnered (some students received multiple acceptances) to highly prestigious law schools such as Columbia, NYU, and Penn.

Dean Michael Hecht, Pre-Law Advisor since 1971, asserted that the most important credential considered by law schools in the admissions process is one's score on the LSAT, a standardized test taken by all law school applicants. YU students have achieved excellent results on this test for years. This past year's law school applicants were no exception. Four students placed in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile of test takers. An additional eight students received scores that placed them in at least the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile. Nearly a third of all applicants scored in the top five percent of all test-takers. The mean score attained by all applicants placed them in the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile.

So why do YU students perform disproportionately well on the LSAT? Dean Hecht claims that the results reflect, in part, years spent engaged in meticulous Talmud study. Dean Hecht professes that the skills one develops while studying Talmud, namely the ability to scrutinize complex material and to conduct a careful textual analysis, are exactly what the LSAT is testing.

These results come from a group of students that Dean Hecht characterized as a good or solid group, but not a great one. By no means is this one of the best classes for law school acceptance in YU history. This coming year's group is considered to be even stronger, as Dean Hecht says he is expecting "a bang-up year," with one or two students getting into Yale, four into Harvard, and ten into NYU and Columbia combined.

All four students accepted to Harvard Law School were enrolled in YC. Hecht acknowledged that SSSB students were overrepresented at the lower end of law school hopefuls. The most popular major among last year's group of applicants was political science, with history and psychology in a close second and third. These three were far more common than all other pre-law major areas of study.

Dean Hecht also stressed the popularity of Cardozo, to which seventeen students were accepted last year. He believes it to be an excellent option for law school hopefuls. Hecht emphasized the school's young and scholarly faculty, as well as its aspirations to be a great law school as reasons to consider it over other area schools including Fordham. According to Hecht, students who finish in the top quarter of their class at Cardozo and interview well will get jobs comparable to Columbia or NYU graduates.

Last year was also a successful one for YU students applying to medical schools. Of the forty-nine students who applied, an extraordinary 83%, or forty-one students gained admission to medical school. Compared to the national average of 35%, YU's acceptance rate is outstanding and is a source of pride to the pre-med majors. In addition, all fourteen of the students who applied to dental or optometry school were accepted.

The applicants had above average success in gaining admission to the top medical schools as well. Two students were admitted to Johns Hopkins, which is considered one of the most selective schools in the nation. Seven were accepted to NYU, the largest number of acceptances to this selective school ever. Twelve students were accepted to the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, which is ranked twenty-fifth nationwide. Also there were students admitted to Cornell, Maryland, Stonybrook, Albany, and Mt. Sinai, as well as other high quality medical schools.

This class was classified as a good, though not great one in regards to medical school admissions by Dr. Weisbrot, a pre-med advisor at YU. He said that this year's MCAT scores were excellent, which is what made this class a better than average one. The average score this year was a 26, a marked improvement over the past years' average of 24. Weisbrot stated that he hopes the improvement in MCAT scores is an ongoing trend, since it is a significant component of the application process. "If the students continue to improve their MCAT scores, we expect the acceptance rates to go even higher in the next few years," Weisbrot said. One pre-med student commented that he feels that the improved MCAT scores are due to faculty improvement over the last few years, with 40% of pre-med students majoring in the natural sciences. Weisbrot noted, however, that there is no clear pattern for success.

The deans emphasized that in addition to YU's number 42 ranking, students should take pride in and be encouraged by the University's success in placing students in the country's top professional schools. Dean Hecht added, "Excellence is what counts, and our students are sought after. We've had a very good track record."

## AECOM WIRED

*Continued from page 1*

patibility, several network programs are installed, the network outlet in the apartment is activated, and the connection is verified. Students must also purchase a compatible Ethernet card available from CompUSA or other major vendors.

All of this year's first-year medical students, who belong to the Class of 2002, are required to have the connection. This led to some controversy since the \$75 fee was unexpected and not included in their tuition payments. However, opinion on campus was mostly positive and students looked forward to the enrichment of their four-year education at the College.

Exact figures regarding the cost of the effort could not be obtained at press time, however sources familiar with the process at the institution believed the expenses to have totaled something on the order of one million dollars, with approximately ninety percent of that allotted to the cable contract and the rest to the electronic aspects. Funding is believed to have come from internal College resources. Tuition was not specifically raised to bankroll the effort.

The success of the effort was somewhat surprising to students and administration officials alike, especially considering the magnitude of the project. A connection work-station was set up for incoming students in the lobby of the 1935 Eastchester

Road building. At the present time, 138 students already have full access. According to Robert Lummis, Director of RIT at AECOM, "It has been a tremendous amount of work." However, he added that the result was a much needed success.

Currently, there is no such effort to connect the residence halls at Yeshiva College in such a fashion. George Sullivan, assistant director of Management Information Systems at YC, stated that "there are no concrete plans to do any of that [which was done at AECOM] here."

However, he believes that "the University wants to do it. They are sympathetic to the needs of the students."

Sources familiar with YC and YU administrative decisions, have suggested that Internet connections at YC and Stern College for Women will become a reality within the next year or two, yet students at the undergraduate schools who often wait to use library computers for classes which now provide Internet access are not satisfied by mere speculation. One student, who desired to retain anonymity fearing administration backlash, wondered "why do they take so much pride in the [US News and World Report number] 42 ranking when they continue to compromise our education by denying us the technology available to our peers at other top-tier schools?"

## Dormitory Shortage

*Continued from page 1*

emphasized that "it was a very, very rough start, but I am trying to adjust."

Ari Lieber, a YC/JSS Senior housed on the first floor of Rubin, referred to the Rebbeim and facilities also located on that floor. "I think that having spiritual advisors right next door and world class medical help only seconds away is a college student's dream come true. Having a *Beit Medrash* down the hall doesn't hurt either."

Paul Starkman, a YC/SSSB Junior residing in Strenger, informed *The Commentator* that he was recently issued a dorm room that became available in Morgenstern Hall, but would not be moving because he already paid the telephone installation fee for his room in Strenger Hall and the Office of Residence Halls refused to reimburse him for the cost. When this reporter informed the Office of Student Life of

the situation, Dr. Nulman, who was not aware of the existing problem, immediately informed Starkman and all others in his situation that the University would help pay their telephone installation fees.

Meanwhile, the Office of Student Life and Office of Residence Halls are continuing to work together to accommodate the students who live in Strenger Hall and on the first floor of Rubin. The University is considering several immediate solutions for both this year and next. However, due to the expected continued increase in enrollment, long term solutions to this housing problem need be found. The University would not comment on the existence of any suitable buildings for purchase in the neighborhood. Until a new dormitory is constructed, the current difficulties are expected to worsen.



# ARTS & CULTURE

## Fact, Not Opinion

BY DAVID RAPPAPORT

I trust that every record you bought this summer was crap. Guess what? It's your fault. Yes, my friends, it's your fault! Stop buying records because you liked one song you heard on the radio. That's stupid. Two months after you bought the CD, you will have become so sick of it anyway that you'll just toss it. Please stop buying records. I implore you. If you stop buying it, they won't make it. In all seriousness, did you really not get enough baritone vocals from Pearl Jam that you needed it on Matchbox 20? If you only are buying three or four records a year, you shouldn't be buying music at all. Is it just me or do all these rock bands with DJ's songs sound like "The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion?" At least the Explosion is a parody. Sugar Ray is actually serious. On the TV show "Politically Incorrect," the lead singer stated with a straight face that NEA stood for National Rifle Association. Idiots like the ones from Sugar Ray only justify Bill Maher's irrational republican sentiments.

Let's talk about Fastball. Their hit song doesn't sound anything like the old Mexican standard "*Besame Mucho*." While the half of you are out buying this awful piece of unoriginality, the original is wandering around a record store in the oldies section, having been covered by a little known British band called The Beatles. As for that fat a\*\* from Smashmouth, three words: "She's Not There."

There have been new releases this summer that are worth noting. They are as follows:

### Neil Finn - Try Whistling This.

Former front-man with seminal Australian band Crowded House; this is his solo debut and the melodies are just fantastic. If you liked Crowded House and you are semi-familiar with Paul McCartney's solo career then this record is a must buy.

### Liz Phair - whitechocolatespaceegg.

The reigning queen of indie rock strikes

again with her third record. Unfortunately, she is now married with a child (and it isn't mine) and seems to feel that it is now time to abandon her confrontational song-writing that made her such an exciting performer in the first place. If you missed her first record you've been missing the reason why Alanis Morissette exists. Though the new album is good, I recommend her first record *Exile in Guyville*. It's one of my 10 desert island discs.

### Cornelius - Fantasma

If you can recognize any sample on Beck's last album, then this record is for you. Cornelius is Japanese and the reason why they are winning double-u double-u two.

### Belle & Sebastian - The Boy with the Arab Strap

A couple more weeks before this one comes out but this is a shoe-in for record of the year honors. If you like Paul Simon even in the least bit, you will love this band. Purchase both this sophomore effort and their debut (which is already out) called "If You're Feeling Sinister."

### David Garza - This Euphoria

The only thing good that Atlantic records has done since releasing the first two Led Zeppelin records. A great record inspired by everything great about Queen, T. Rex and the Byrds.

### Hershel Savage and the American Flag - self titled

If you like Guided By Voices...what the hell am I saying. There are maybe four of you who might have any idea what I'm talking about. If you like early "Who" and the quirkiness of They Might Be Giants, then this stuff is for you. Actually, if I had to make a choice, I'd rather you all went out and bought Guided By Voices' "Alien Lanes."

Whatever.

PS. Someone needs to shoot Perry Farrell.

Next Issue.... Why MTV's *Rock the Vote* should be banned and why I think MTV's *Jesse* is the greatest revenge ever.

## The Sound of Music

BY STEVEN BERNSTEIN

Over the past few years, Broadway has seen a great many revivals of Rodgers and Hammerstein's classic musicals. Recent productions of *The King and I* and *Cinderella* have enjoyed great success on both Broadway and television. This year, Hallmark is presenting a revival of Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II's final collaboration -- *The Sound of Music*. *The Sound of Music* has not been performed professionally in over thirty years. This is due mainly to the fact that many producers felt that it would be impossible to capture the magic of the film on stage. The truth is, this show does owe its huge popularity to its 1965 film adaptation. However, even had film not been produced, *The Sound of Music* would still have remained one of Broadway's classics.

What makes *The Sound of Music* a classic is its content. Not only does the play contain some of America's most loved songs ("Do-Re-Mi," "Sixteen Going on Seventeen," "My Favorite Things") but it also has a pretty damn good script (It ought to be... it's based upon the actual events that befell the Von Trapp family). This revival provides a synthesis of both the original stage version and the film adaptation of the show.

This revival is true to the original in that it is not the sugar-coated watered down fairy-tale that the film was. It addresses an important theme. *The Sound of Music* is about standing up for what you believe in -- against all odds. To be alive with the 'sound of music' is a metaphor for not being afraid to speak your mind. Maria will not be intimidated by the Captain and is the only person in his household who will reprimand him. The Captain, being a true patriot, will not live under a Nazi regime. Their living with the 'sound of music' is what makes these characters perfect for each other. The characters of Max and Elsa are exactly the opposite. They are willing to compromise their integrity in order to keep the peace. Their characters add the perfect contrast to the Captain and Maria.

These characters were well written and exemplify the main theme of the play.

While the film version of *The Sound of Music* does not address this key issue as clearly as the original, it is still considered one of the best movies of all time. This revival was able to capture the elements for which the film is praised, its fantastic songs and its beautiful panoramic shots of the Alps. Musically, this revival clearly gives the audience the best of both worlds. In addition to keeping the two songs that were not included in the film ("How Can Love Survive?" and "No Way to Stop It") the two songs that were written exclusively for the film ("I Have Confidence" and "Something Good") were also added. Visually, the play is stunning. To capture the feel of the Alps, the scenic designer chose the motif of a souvenir snow-globe (i.e., those little globes that produce a snowfall effect when shook), which appears on the main drape. The traveler curtains are concave in shape and extend the concept of this snowy world existing within a glass ball. The set pieces are painted with such depth and detail that they literally jump out at you. The set changes are done quickly, smoothly, and in a certain case during the second act, shockingly. Although in the back of my mind I knew I was looking at two dimensional flats, the illusion was achieved -- I really felt as if I were in Nonnberg, Austria.

When it comes down to the bottom line, *The Sound of Music* was fantastic. Hallmark's production of this timeless piece, is a tribute to Broadway's most talented duo. It is my hope that in the next few years the Rodgers and Hammerstein Broadway legacy will continue, allowing a whole new generation to experience the music and the magic of some of Broadway's greatest masterpieces.

*The Sound of Music can be seen at the Martin Beck Theatre, 302 W45th St*

*Music by Richard Rodgers*

*Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II*

*Book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse*

*Starring Rebecca Luker and Michael Siberry*

## FULL LENGTH FEATURE HOME CINEMA

BY YAIR OPPENHEIM

Being that the glut of holiday movies has not yet arrived, I've decided that it would be of interest to you all to recommend some videos to watch for those of you already fatigued after a few days of school. Here are two movies that are great to pass the time by: one tests a person's preconceived notions of time and space, while the other hits close to home as a tightly knit emotional tale.

### Dark City

*Dark City*, is directed by Alex Proyas, and stars Rufus Sewell, Kiefer Sutherland and

William Hurt. Combining identity crises, superhero myths and a new concept, a city whose

architecture changes every night as do the minds and memories of its citizens, "*Dark City*" is a powerful vehicle. The "Strangers" as they are called, are responsible for "tuning" the city as they like, but what roles Sewell and Sutherland play is even more mysterious and prophetic. Unfortunately, not much detail can be disclosed about the plot for enjoyment purposes, but rest assured, it's thrilling as it is thought provoking.

Interestingly enough, the film has as much significance as Fritz Lang's 1927 b&w film *Metropolis*, which it

drew inspiration from; it's an effect-driven story, not an effects-driven movie. The visuals are necessary not as a neat trick, but as a conceptual plot device. It's an idea, along with the mad scientist role that Sutherland provides and the score by Trevor Jones, that pay respect to the innovative film which began the sci-fi genre.

People might be suspicious how such a phenomenal film passed them by, and may dismiss it, yet it is these same group of people who would have flocked to it, if say, Harrison Ford were to star. If you want to see a sci-fi film as thrilling as *The Fugitive* and as cool as *Batman*, this one's it.

### The Deer Hunter

There are many people who don't believe that movies exist if they have never heard about them, especially those that showcase an already famous actor's early talent. If you want to see a great Vietnam film, a great Robert De Niro performance, Christopher Walken's Oscar winning performance and the Best Picture of 1978, you simply must see *The Deer Hunter*, directed by Michael Cimino.

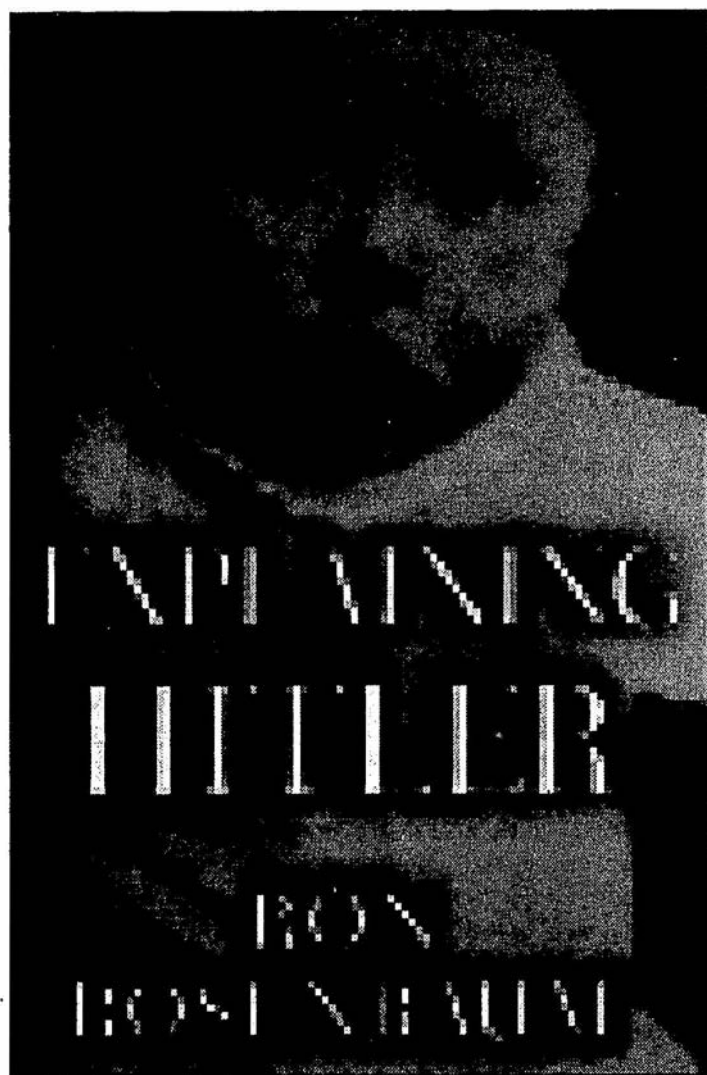
*The Deer Hunter* is a film that manages to balance an accurate portrayal of the Vietnam war with the experience of coming home. Many films have tried to show

both, but end up being weighted down by one of the two topics, or by their preaching of a self-imposed agenda. For example, Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July* was a film that tried to be everything: a war movie, an anti-war movie, and a piece of America that wishes to be forgotten. All of this adds up to one broad portrait that soon loses steam. *The Deer Hunter*'s focuses on war and returning from it, yet by cross-cutting the two ideas during the film and keeping both intensified, it succeeds triumphantly as not just a great film on the subject matter but as a great piece of storytelling.

The film is about how the Vietnam affects a group of friends in a small Pennsylvania town. Meryl Streep, along with De Niro, offer stoic performances as people who seem to always be able to hold in their emotions. Christopher Walken offers a character who isn't really sure what he wants from the war; he just got married, but doesn't feel like coming back into it.

The film is noted for an absolutely mesmerizing finale, one that if simply seen out of context will still raise goosebumps. It's also a film that finally showcases a real life character that hasn't been done enough justice in the cinema - the soldier who returns and just doesn't want to talk about it.





BY DAVID MIRSKY

*The Search for the Real Adolf Hitler: Author Ron Rosenbaum talks about his new book, Explaining Hitler, and its Quest for Answers*

Thirty years after the results of the Russian autopsy of Adolf Hitler's scorched corpse were released, there is still a feeling that Hitler has escaped: that he has eluded explanation. In a new book by Ron Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler*, (Random House, 1998. 444 pages; \$30.) we are drawn into the world of countless theories and conjectures of what drove Hitler's pursuit for the total annihilation of the Jewish people. Rosenbaum, a writer who has been praised as "one of the few distinctive voices of modern American literary journalism," takes us from Vienna and Munich to London, Paris, and Jerusalem, and from Hitler's home-town in Austria to the bunker that served as his grave, in an excruciatingly detailed journey into the attempts to fathom Hitler's imprint on human history. We are introduced to the theories of some of the greatest Holocaust theologians and historians of our time, such as Emil Fackenheim and H.R. Trevor-Roper, leading us on an exploration of this demonic character's role in stoking the fires of the Holocaust.

Spending more than ten years of his life searching the scant and murky evidence about the life of Hitler, Rosenbaum had to constantly battle the years of previous scholarship on Hitler's life, which basically contended that explaining Hitler is a daunting, if not impossible task. Yehuda Bauer of Hebrew University, the creator of formalized Holocaust Studies and one of the foremost authorities on the Holocaust, proposes that "Hitler is explicable in principle, but that does not mean that he has been explained." Rosenbaum includes Bauer's statement in a selection of quotations at the beginning of the book, as if he is holding this thought over the readers' heads before they embark on the journey into Hitler's life. When asked about the merits in tackling Hitler's elusive make-up, the author cites Bauer who opines that "Hitler is not necessarily inexplicable in theory," admitting that "we could explain Hitler if we had all the information, but it may be too late because there may be too many gaps in the record." Rosenbaum, however, also gives support to Holocaust theologian Emil Fackenheim's point that "all the conventional modes of explanation (psychology and psychoanalysis) may not be adequate to explain Hitler, even if we had all the facts." Hitler,

## The Search for the Real Adolf Hitler

according to Fackenheim, might be placed in a "realm of Radical Evil," a theory where Fackenheim puts Hitler beyond the pale of human nature, where we cannot apply our conventional modes of what constitutes evil.

It is this very idea that Hitler was "off the grid, beyond the continuum in a category of his own," as Rosenbaum presents in his book, that runs in direct contention with the theories attempting to explain Hitler's actions as being rooted in some bad life experience. Rosenbaum relates that the notion of Hitler's unique evil has been coined by the philosopher Berel Lang as a "new chapter in the history of evil;" an evil so far "unprecedented" before Hitler, but, as Rosenbaum puts it, Lang unfortunately has "indicated possibilities in human nature which suggest there's no reason it can't happen again." Even if one accedes to the idea of Hitler's evil as being ultimately unique in the spectrum of human nature, it does not offer much solace to those seeking to point to a single cause of Hitler's drive for the "final solution."

Enter Simon Wiesenthal, the Holocaust survivor and Nazi hunter with whom Rosenbaum finds himself "empathizing." Wiesenthal is convinced that if he could confirm the famed "syphilitic Jewish prostitute theory," then, as Rosenbaum quotes from a book about Wiesenthal, he "would be happy" with such an explanation for motivating Hitler's behavior. While Rosenbaum sympathizes with Wiesenthal's desire to "find some explanation," he is unsure if he would be happy with such an explanation as it "almost tends to blame this mythical Jewish prostitute for being the occasion of Hitler and the subsequent genocide."

Along the lines of the Jewish prostitute theory that attempts to explain Hitler's anti-Semitism, are the theories such as one which blames Hitler's mother's Jewish doctor for driving Hitler's hatred of Jews. Rosenbaum devotes an entire chapter to the work of Professor Rudolph Binion and his quest to prove the theory that Klara Hitler, Adolf's mother, was caused needless pain by Dr. Bloch, when he attempted to treat Klara with *iodoform*, a disinfectant that is caustic when applied to broken skin. Binion contends that the image of the *iodoform* soaked gauze causing unbearable agony to Hitler's mother "metastasized and festered" in the young Hitler's mind, and the resulting hate came spewing forth in Adolf's speeches that spoke of "the Jewish cancer." While Binion veers away from ascribing the Holocaust to this one incident in Hitler's life by revealing that Hitler himself was partly responsible for the approval of such a treatment, and that he in fact protected Dr. Bloch during WWII, Rosenbaum contends that Binion's take on Dr. Bloch's treatment of Klara Hitler does "lend itself to a blame-the-doctor oversimplification." Rosenbaum describes in the chapter about Binion's theory, that he felt that there was "something emblematic and tragic" about the attempt to outline the precise mathematical units and prices of the gauze used by Dr. Bloch in order to "bring us closer to the elusive spectral figure supposedly lurking in that thicket (of details)."

With such theories almost creating images of Hitlers that would, as Rosenbaum describes them, not "recognize each other well enough to say 'Heil' if they came face to face in Hell," the author searches to free ourselves of espousing evidence of a questionable and highly contested nature in explaining Hitler. When asked if there could have been someone else other than Hitler, Rosenbaum mentions Milton Himmelfarb's 1984 article in *Commentary*, entitled *No Hitler, No Holocaust*, as having great influence on him to embark on a project of this nature. The article impressed upon Rosenbaum the

idea that the anti-Semitic machinery could have existed in a Germany without Hitler, but that the "decision to exterminate was Hitler's own personal will; Hitler's own personal responsibility." The author veers from the school of thought ascribing to a "party of inevitability": the contention that if it weren't Hitler, it would have been someone else. One can only shudder at how close attempts came to assassinating Hitler, if in fact the "final solution" fed off the depravity of the mind of a single human.

Considering that Hitler could not have accomplished what he did without his henchman, one is found questioning the extent of "evil" among the masses. On this quandary, Rosenbaum refutes Hannah Arendt's suprisingly respected notion of the "banality of evil": the idea that there is nothing deeply rooted in the actions of many of Hitler's confidants. Rosenbaum cites the trial of Nazi criminal Eichmann, which was covered by Hannah Arendt. She felt comfortable accepting Eichmann's defense that he was a "poor schnook clerk" and was "just following orders." As reprehensible as Eichmann's claim of innocence was, Arendt still chose to develop her concept of "banal" evil: a notion that Rosenbaum does not buy into.

When asked whether he had any idea where the project would go as he plodded through the scattered evidence of a disputed past, Rosenbaum responded that by talking face to face with some of the greatest thinkers and authorities on Hitler's life, he had hoped that his conversations would bear the fruit of being "revealing and illuminating" and relate to him "something more than what could be found just in their written works." Rosenbaum felt "gratified" in hearing them "talk about these questions in ways that they hadn't written about them." While Rosenbaum understands the concerns of Claude Lanzmann, the creator of the acclaimed *Shoah* documentary, that an attempt at explanation could lead to some degree of exoneration on the part of Hitler, the author parts from Lanzmann's idea that such study is to be considered "obscene."

Lanzmann's strong opinion against such inquiry could stem from his fear of what the cover of "Explaining Hitler" could stimulate in people's minds: the baby pictures of Hitler serving to force the memory of an extermination Hitler into one of a frighteningly cute baby. It is this baby picture that Rosenbaum claims clarifies the questions that haven't been answered; it is not to nauseate people into thinking of Hitler as a fellow of the human race, but the baby picture serves as a basis from which to launch Rosenbaum's quest to bridge the "abyss" between an "obviously innocent child" and the "guy who became, perhaps, the greatest figure of evil in memory."

Referring to the fantasy *Police Gazette* series: "Hitler Alive in Argentina," Rosenbaum urges that Adolf Hitler "didn't escape to South America; it's important that he not escape responsibility," even when the author might have to accede that Hitler will ultimately escape satisfactory explanation. We are offered an unprecedented and original probe into the make-up of a man who lacerated the heart of the Jewish nation, presented in a work of meticulous fact-finding and profound inquiry. While the trees around the Nazi death camps grow thick and concealing, Rosenbaum leaves us with an important marker along the charred landscape of the Holocaust, reinforcing the conviction to *Never Forgive, Never Forget*.

*The author of the book, Ron Rosenbaum, a graduate of Yale University in English literature, has written for Harper's, The New Yorker, The New Republic, Vanity Fair, Esquire, and has written eight cover stories for the New York Times Magazine. He is the author of a novel and three collections of Essays and Journalism. He currently contributes to the New York Times Sunday Magazine, writes a cultural affairs column for the New York Observer, and teaches a course on literary journalism at the Columbia Graduate School*

NEVER FORGIVE, NEVER FORGET

ARTS &

# ARTS

## THIS POLICY IS A DRAG!

BY MORDECHAI LEVOVITZ

In the wake of last issue's cover story concerning Yeshiva University's policy of denying housing to homosexual couples, I deemed it necessary to do my part as a *Commentator* culture critic to reexamine YU's artistic policies that may have homophobic origins.

Initially, I intended to review last year's YCDS productions of both *Ghetto* and *Sleuth*. I soon realized, being that I became friendly with almost half the actors and crew-members of the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society, there was no way in which I could give an objective theatrical review. After seeing both shows, I think that the cast and crew of both shows deserve a lot of credit for putting in so much effort and for putting out such wonderful performances.

However, I would like to address an issue concerning the YCDS at large. While the productions they

put on all contain captivating plots, impressive lighting, and talented acting, they all lack one very essential element...female characters. I understand that this is an all-male college and as such I am not arguing for female actors; this is however no excuse for stopping male actors from playing female characters. We all know that Shakespeare's original productions consisted of all male casts. This was the case even in such plays as *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, where pivotal characters are female.

I am well aware of the verse in Deuteronomy prohibiting cross-dressing, but as I will soon show, major *Poskim*, including the *Bach* and the *Ramoh*, hold that this prohibition would not apply in our case. Perhaps my most compelling argument comes from the fact that in Stern College for Women, girls are allowed to portray male characters in both their drama and musical productions. There seems to be a contradiction within YU, for the *Posuk* clearly prohibits women donning male apparel in the same way it prohibits male cross-dressing. If the administration of YU deems it necessary to enforce adherence to the most stringent *Shittot* when it comes to the men's drama club, why does it take a more lenient stance when it comes to the women's productions? It is my opinion that this very double standard exemplifies a greater homophobic prejudice that is sadly, masked behind *Halakhic* ideals.

The controversy regarding cross-dressing is based on the *Posuk* in Deuteronomy 22:5, which states: "The articles of a man should not be on a woman, nor should a man don woman's clothing, for whoever does these, it is an abomination before G-d."

This verse can be interpreted *halakhically* in a number of ways. For practical purposes, I will go straight to the *Poskim*. The *Bach* (*Yoreh-Deah*:182) concludes that the prohibition is subject to social interpretation. In that, I mean that one is prohibited to wear any apparel of the opposite sex if it is done with promiscuous intent or for sociological beautification. He adds that even if one is wearing a seemingly cross-gender apparel for beautification, it is only prohibited if one is actually trying to pass in society as a member of the opposite sex.

The *Ramoh* (*Orach-Chaim*: note 8), agrees with the *Bach*, holding that when cross-dressing has no intent other than entertainment, it is indeed permissible! Consequently, he permits cross-dressing on Purim, and cross-dressing during wedding festivities. Seemingly the *heter* would apply to cross-dressing in a play or musical as well.

Being that most Ashkenazic communities rely on the *halakhic* rulings of the *Ramoh*, it would seem from the information given, that there is more than ample basis for *halakhically* allowing cross-dressing in a theatrical

production. When one cross-dresses in a play, he is not trying to realistically pass in society as a member of the opposite sex, instead, he is trying to portray a stage character. A theatrical character, in addition to being in essence not real, has the unique quality that all know he is just an act and hence, the character has no place in a real social environment. As long as the play is not promiscuous in nature, it is logical to infer from these Rabbis' words that it is permissible for students to don costumes designated for the opposite sex during theatrical productions.

The opposing view is held by Maimonides. He is of the opinion that the intention of the transgressor is a non-issue. In both his *Sefer Hamitzvot* (Neg: 40) and his *Guide to the Perplexed* (3:37), he describes the reason for this prohibition as relating to magical practices and idolatry, not simply relating to sexual immorality, as one would generally think. Consequently, promiscuous intent is not a factor in transgressing the prohibition. The mere act alone is sufficient. Similarly, the *Sefer Hachinuch* (542) does not consider intent as a factor in the transgression. Although one can even now kvetch that they are both referring to cross-dressing in normal sociological situations and not to theater (which might not constitute "Ishem cross-dressing"), I admit that these rabbi's rulings allow room for a more stringent approach to this problem. Adherence to this position would mean outlawing cross-dressing in both male and female productions.

The question now transforms itself into one of different issues. Should YU enforce its students to comply with the most stringent interpretation of this law even though it is customary for most of the students to rely on the more lenient rabbinical position regarding this issue? If so, why then should the school decide to be stringent when it comes to this issue, but so very lenient concerning others? The Yeshiva didn't seem to have a problem with an official Seinfeld club...so watching a show that contains both *Pritzut* and *Nivel Peh* is fine with YU. I wonder if the school thinks that Maimonides or even the *Ramoh* would approve of students watching Seinfeld? I think not! Yet concerning the Dramatics society, the school is so vehemently opposed to something that most of Orthodox Jewry find both acceptable and totally permissible.

Why isn't the school sensitive to the needs of its artistic male students? An Orthodox boy in YU who has a passion for the theater is already limited. First of all, there is only one drama club in YC, and it only puts on one play a semester. This severely limits the amount of roles there are (*Sleuth* only had four characters). The Drama club is itself limited in what types of plays they are allowed to put on. It can't pick plays that are inappropriate for a *halakhic* institution; which mean no plays about prostitution, love affairs, homosexuality, or sultry romances. More striking, is that even within a *halakhically* approved play, the drama club is further limited in that no women are allowed to act in YC productions. (I am also opposed to that policy, being that other clubs in YC are co-ed. I don't see why Stern women should be allowed to discuss debate with men but be allowed to act together in a respectable play with men...unless of course the school has some hidden agenda to keep women out of the public life, but I will leave that for another article.) Finally, the YC dramatics student is most severely limited by the intensity of a YC double curriculum.

Despite all of this, the Orthodox actor still comes to YC; a compassionate school would try to make his college dramatic experience as fulfilling as possible, in light of all the previous limitations mentioned. Instead, YC has decided to torment the male artist even further with superfluous limitations. It limits the actor to playing only characters of his own gender, thereby crushing experimental acting opportunities and cheapening the plays by changing all the female characters into male ones. This seems truly out of character for a school that prides itself on compromising within the *halakhic* circle to adapt to a dialectical existence.

I hope that YC will rethink its policy concerning the men's dramatics society. If we would be allowed to have female characters in the next semester's play, our acting experience, on the whole, would be greatly enhanced. There would be a whole new spectrum of opportunities for YC actors. If however, YC decides to keep the status quo, Stern should in turn change their lenient policy to match YC's stringent stance. If YU fails to be consistent, its ideals will ultimately become meaningless. Without ideals, all is lost.

Garde-Manger  
Toviyahu Breier

## Madras Mahal: Kosher Curries for the Everyman

What is a *garde-manger*? It is a French term for a specialty chef whose task it is to prepare those dishes that do not involve true cooking. Examples might be salads, desserts, canapes, relishes and the like. We who dorm at Yeshiva University are bound by certain strictures that prevent us from truly cooking in our rooms. As such, those of us who wish to beat the high cost of cafeteria food find ourselves amateur *gardes-manger*. It is from this tradition that we take the name for our new column. It is our hope to broaden the cultural horizons of our student body by providing restaurant reviews, recipes and other insights to enriching the diet. It is well to know which places are good to take your date, where to go with friends, business associates, etcetera. It is with one such exposition that we begin our column.

*Madras Mahal*—little more than a corridor, the tiny bistro nestles proudly between several Indo-Pak groceries and idol-shops. It proudly displays a sign proclaiming that it is a "non-smoking vegetarian" restaurant—a fact that caused me no end of dismay as I found myself exiled to the pavement under the awning for a cigarette break between courses. The décor was plain. Inexplicably, Christmas lights adorned the entranceway, and floor-to-ceiling mirrors lined the walls. It was a simple but clever ruse to produce an optical illusion of spaciousness. The waiters, smartly dressed and armed with an amphetamine alacrity, darted to and fro, taking orders and delivering the Far East's finest fare. Overall, the place had a homey, come-as-you-are feel to it. There could not have been more than six inches between tables. Any time I would leave or return to my seat, and I found myself having to slide my buttocks across my neighbors' table through the impossibly narrow gap.

I arrive on a Sunday at five in the evening. The place has about two patrons besides myself—a momentary respite in the bustle of this industrious enterprise. I start with the first item on the menu, a soup called *rasam*. It is a flavorful and hearty dish for \$3 and stimulates the appetite while heightening the senses. Building on a lentil base, it is rife with the pungent aroma of asafoetida, the sap from an herb in the parsley family, and fresh curry leaves, the foliage of a rare tree in the citrus family. *Asafoetida* (Persian *aza*=resin, Latin *Foetida*=stinking) is believed by some to be the *hiltet* mentioned in the Gemara as the strongest taste known to man and the highest level of *charifut*. Surprisingly, its flavor is not really sharp, but musky and gamey. Other components were coriander "seeds" (really dried *Umbelliferae* fruits) and leaves (also called cilantro). The former is reminiscent of orange blossom waters, the latter is said to strongly resemble the flavor of beetles (this is a good thing!). Whole brown mustard seeds (having lost their bite in the heat of cooking, they now offer nutty overtones) and Sanaam red chillies (dry-roasted) round out the dish. This starter was one area in which they excelled. It was rich, complex, tart, warming, robust and engaging with a pleasant texture and it was even pretty, in a swarthy sort of a way.

The very next order of business is to have my tea—a fragrant decoction called *masala chal*. It is black Assam CTC leaf (crushed) tea infused with a tisane of aromatic spices used especially for sweets—ginger, green cardamom, clove and cassia among others. It is served with hot milk and sugar packets (I used four) so the diner may embellish it to his or her liking. I think I probably make better *masala chal* myself at home

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# ARTS & CULTURE

## Madras Mahal

Continued from page 10

(you're invited) and at \$2 would give this drink a miss (it probably costs 20¢ to make). A word of caution for those who would try it—due to the long steeping periods involved, it probably has more caffeine to it than your average cup of coffee.

I next moved on to an appetizer called *iddly*, essentially a dollop of unseasoned, steamed farina ("cream of wheat"), and a donut of primarily lentil flour. They are served with an array of up to four different kinds of chutney (sweet and savory dipping relishes)—mango, coconut-mint, tamarind-date and green chilli. The coconut was bland but the rest pulled their weight and made the meal.

My entrée was a *bhindi masala*, or curried okra. Okra is a smallish vegetable, similar to squash, that grows in swamplands. It can be difficult to cook right as it will fast turn to a gelatinous mush if heat is misapplied. *Madras Mahal* was more than equal to the task and produced tender-but-crisp veggies that sat amiably in the thick curry paste. Alongside this treat, as with all others on the menu, one receives a helping of *basmati* rice. *Basmati* is the world's finest rice, grown in the foothills of the Himalayas. Its name is Sanskrit for "fragrant," and its fragrance is further enhanced by adding a couple of whole doves to the boiling rice for a delicate and sweet perfume. The secret to eating Indian food on a healthy stomach is plenty of rice. Rice is "bulk" and acts as a binding agent in the digestive system. So long as you temper your curries with plenty of white rice, your meal will be a wholly enjoyable one. A forkful of rice to a dab of curry is an advisable ratio.

A magnificent puffball of bread, glistening with the oil it had just been fried in, arrived in a wicker basket. The soccer ball-sized sphere of pastry dough was (pardon the cliché) light, golden and flaky. I was saddened that there was not more of it provided for the \$3. Those who prefer something more grandiose can opt for the *dosai*. This is a huge circular flatbread, easily two feet in diameter, folded over like a giant papier mache omelette. Everything ran smoothly until the staff played to a full house. Their clockwork efficiency faltered somewhat under the enormous burden; a fork was forgotten here, a condiment there. Par for the course, but never endearing. The language

barrier presented an occasional obstacle but the waiter's courteous and attentive mien more than made up for it.

Dessert was a tiny cup of Heaven. *Kulfi* is an ice cream-like confection, containing rich saffron, pureed nuts, rosewater and *kewra* (screw-pine essence) to name a few. This paradisaical sweet alone merits a trip.

The *hashgacha* is provided by Rav Chaim Dovber Gulevsky of Brooklyn. Although I was unable to reach the rabbi for comment, I recall a telephone conversation I had with him about two years ago concerning *Madras Mahal*. They are *milchig* but not *chalav yisrael*. They are open for business on *Shabbat Kodesh* but there are no Jews employed there and it is owned and operated entirely by Gentiles. Those who are concerned about the possibility of *lifne iver* (enticing others to sin—such as providing a temptation to violate the Sabbath) should consult their local Orthodox rabbi. Because people tend to be more lenient in their dealings with a dairy establishment, a *mashgiach temidi* (constant supervisor) has not been provided for. This means that anyone who is *makpid al inyon bishul akum* (stringent about foods cooked without direct Jewish involvement) should call ahead and find out what sort of supervision was available on that particular day. It is safe to say that one may treat all food there as *b'chezkat milchig*. *Kemach yoshon* (properly aged flour) is unknown to them.

All in all, *Madras Mahal* is a good place to begin your exploration of the many and varied cuisines of the Subcontinent. The novice will be pleased by their Westernized versions of traditional recipes. The seasoned palate, however, may find something lacking in authenticity as they cater to a clientele mostly unaccustomed to the strong flavors typically encountered in this region. It is a quaint respite from the ordinary and an opportunity to demonstrate one's appreciation for the finer things in life. Aspirant bridegrooms beware—it is not the most romantic of spots, but it is a great place for a change of pace when "hangin' with the boys."

Until our next meal together, *bete'avon!*

*Madras Mahal*  
104 Lexington Avenue @ 27th St.  
(212) 684-4010

## LITERARY

The Commentator is pleased to introduce Alter Shimon Reiss's original short fiction work entitled "Glass" as the inaugural contribution to our literary section. This section is concerned to showcase the artistic efforts of Yeshiva College's most promising authors and will chiefly feature works of short fiction. An occasional smattering of poetry will also appear in these pages.

We were walking along the beach, in late September. It was something of a ritual. When the weather got cold, we'd go out to the beach, and walk for miles. The sand always got into everything, and walking in sand is harder than walking on something solid, but the empty sand and sea were always glorious, even on days like that one, when the sky and sea were a uniform dull grey. She was already dying then. I think that she knew that she was dying somehow, despite the fact that the doctors didn't know then. Looking back, I recall signs that are obvious in retrospect. The weariness around her deep grey eyes, how she stopped for breath more often than she usually did, but in that moment, I was just happy to be with her.

We weren't saying much that day, just walking, companionable. I had been away that summer, but we had talked ourselves out about what we had been doing some time ago, and we were just walking, for the most part. Then she picked up a bit of sea glass. She did that sort of thing, occasionally. She was one of life's natural born scavengers—my clearest recollections of her are of her delight at finding a nickel on the street, or buying a terrifically ugly lamp at a flea market.

Being a naturally polite person, I stopped when she picked up the glass, and waited for her. She caught up (a little breathless, my memory insists on recalling), and gave one of her grins. Not the little ones, or the polite ones, but one of those bursts of light that made her angular face beautiful. She held up the glass. It was rounded, pitted, and a brilliant blue. It was quite nice.

"It makes you think about the universe, doesn't it?"

Not particularly, it didn't. "Reality is translucent and blue?" I ventured.

Her grin flashed again. I don't have any pictures of her smiling like that. Camera grins, smirks, artificially solemnity, yes. But a smile from the depths didn't seem to get caught on film.

"Well, that. But also things like beauty, change, time, and beer."

"I suppose. Beer?"

"Well, beer bottles are where lots of the nicest sea glass comes from. And transience."

"Hmmm?"

"Well, sea glass never stays the same, unless you take it away from the ocean. It changes and changes, until it turns into sand."

I nodded. "Seems reasonable."

She slipped the glass into her pocket, and we walked on, quiet again. After about a half an hour, she pulled it back out, and looked deeply into it for a second, and then wheeled back, and pitched it out into the ocean. She always had a strong arm, but there was something extra in that throw. The bit of glass arced out, glittering blue suspended between the cold sky and the cold water. It hit water far enough away that we couldn't see the splash.

I didn't say anything. It was her bit of glass. And she was prone to spontaneously explaining things she did.

"It's about transience, sorta." She paused, but I had nothing to say. "I could take the glass out, put it in a drawer or something. But, like, then I'd have it, and I wouldn't remember it." Another pause. I still didn't have anything to say. Could be that on some level, I sensed what she was talking about. "You can't keep things. They change, and change. But if you fix them in memory, they stay there for good, and they don't get all changed." Which is odd, considering how her room always looked like a tasteful garbage dump, with stuff oozing from everywhere. But I understood.

And maybe she saw that I understood, because she gave me that grin again, then turned and ran off to her house. And I went to mine, and that was that.

And maybe she was right, and maybe she wasn't. But there was something to what she had said. And when I see something neat, sometimes I pick it up, and sometimes I don't. But the blue glass suspended between grey sky and grey sea is there unchanging, a beam of light like a smile.

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## An Educated Consumer Knows How To Write

BY DAVID ANZISKA

"Have a nice weekend, and remember: don't forget the memo you have to write."

How many times does a conversation similar to this take place in the offices and sterile cubicles of corporate America? Indeed, whether one is a middle level executive toiling in some corporation or an investment banker raking in the dough in some prestigious investment bank, the ability to know how to write is an invaluable commodity which can determine how fast and far one can move up the corporate ladder. Thus, for the life of me, I can not understand how the Sy Syms School of Business – a school whose stipulated objective is preparing young men (and women, of course) for the harsh business world – does not do a better job in teaching students how to write.

While the ability to write does not seem to be a skill a person must have in order to succeed in business today, one should definitely not be mistaken: writing is a skill all people in the work place must display on a daily basis. Brief memos, informative studies and critical reports play an integral role in determining the direction where a company may decide to go. One can literally dream up of thousands scenarios where an accountant or stock analyst is forced to write passages which others will read and base their decisions on.

But in order to sharpen my point, I feel it imperative to bring an example from a teacher in SSBB, Dr. Aaron Brown. Last year Brown wrote a scathingly article critiquing the writing acumen of a YC student (a Classics major!) who had written a pompous, grammatically lamentable article bashing Syms students for their parochial education. While surely this was a shining moment in SSBB's short-lived history, as a Finance professor deftly deflated the ego of an arrogant YC student in front of the whole Institution, Brown, by writing such an articulate and thought provoking article showed one remarkable feature that most, if not all, of the cackling Syms students failed to pick up on: the necessity of being able to express oneself coherently and succinctly.

Had Brown written like the typical Syms student then I doubt very much that people would have taken his letter very seriously. However, Brown displayed barbed wit and sharp logic his "Logic and Rhetoric" teacher at U. of Chicago would have been proud of, and methodically went about in demolishing the YC student's article. What one should have

learnt from Brown's article is that even financial analysts know how to write; indeed, even financial analysts know more grammar than your given Classics major at a "Top 50" university. Yet Dr Brown is far from being unique. Earlier this year the New York Times published a piece on their prestigious op-ed page by an investment banker turned novelist.

Thus, if SSBB students are serious about making money (which I definitely know they are) and being as qualified as possible for the "real" world, then I suggest that they listen to what I am going to say. SSBB should require all students to take two years of English Composition and one year of Expository Writing geared specifically for the business world. Moreover, SSBB should require that all students be forced to write a coherent senior thesis (which, incidentally, YC does not require for all majors) on business (or if they prefer non-business) oriented topics. The benefits of such requirements are clear: SSBB students, for really the first time, will be forced to articulate themselves on paper for an extended period of time. They will be forced to think critically, organize thoughts and persuade other to adopt their views. More importantly, SSBB students will feel much more comfortable when it comes to writing. For their entire college careers, students will be able to cultivate and nurture a skill that they will use for the rest of their lives. Who knows – some students may even enjoy writing and pick it up as a hobby.

The stereotype of a Syms student – i.e. a close-minded, money-obsessed person not smart enough to go to graduate school and become a professional – is both false and insulting. It is a crude generalization perpetuated by YC students whose lack of confidence in themselves forces them to disparage others. On the whole, most students would be willing to work harder and think more, if they could only see the tangible benefits in doing so. The writing education SSBB gives to their students is tantamount to malpractice. Indeed, instead of trying to imbue its students with the proper skills, SSBB forces its students to take a disproportionate amount of "Mickey Mouse," low-level courses. One hardly sees the logic behind a policy that requires a business student to memorize trivial facts in some marketing book, while not requiring that same student to be proficient in his logic and writing skills. If anyone disagrees with any points in this article, then I implore them to pay attention to the next time Dr. Brown writes another article.

## Yeshiva College Adds New Professors

BY YOSHI BLUM

In the continued effort to improve upon and expand the breadth of Yeshiva College departments, several new professors, – full-time, as well as adjunct – have been hired for the 1998-1999 academic year.

Norman Adler, Dean of Yeshiva College, considers the new faculty essential to the continued improvement of Yeshiva College's academic standards and reputation. He asserts that these additions "will enable this institution to be viewed as a source of traditional Jewish intellectual ferment worldwide."

Although Yeshiva University has recently received much acclaim for being ranked "number forty-two" by *U.S. News and World Report*, Dean Adler has even higher expectations for the future. "These new appointments to the faculty are part of an ongoing effort to place Yeshiva University in the highest levels of American academics," he added that, "an honors program will infuse a sense of quality and intellectual stimulation."

Two full-time appointments have been made: Dr. Joshua Zimmerman and Dr. Richard Waxman. Zimmerman, who received his doctorate in history from Brandeis University, was recently granted the Zborowski Chair in Interdisciplinary Holocaust studies, a joint appointment between the Bernard Revel Graduate School and Yeshiva College. Professor Zimmerman, whose research interest lies primarily in Eastern European History, will teach an elective course on the Holocaust.

Waxman, has been appointed visiting

full-time professor in psychology. He is a significant addition to the department, as he will teach four courses this semester. They include Introductory Psychology, Psychology of Language, Experimental Psychology, and Learning. Professor Waxman earned his Ph.D. from Yeshiva University's Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology. His primary research interest is in the field of cognitive neuropsychology. In addition to these full-time appointments, several new adjunct professors have recently joined the Yeshiva College faculty.

Frank Felsenstein, Ph.D., who is primarily interested in Eighteenth Century British literature and the perception of Jews in British literature, is a new addition to the English department. He received his doctorate in English literature from the University of Leeds, U.K.. He will teach a survey course in that same subject.

Warren Page, Ph.D., who received his doctorate in Mathematics from the Polytechnic University of New York, has been hired as an adjunct professor in Mathematics department. His research interests are primarily functional analysis, topology, and measure theory. He will teach two courses: Multivariable Calculus and Probability Theory.

Michael Yomi has recently been appointed an adjunct assistant professor in economics. Having received his Masters at the City College of New York, he is currently working on his Ph.D. in economics at that same institution. Professor Yomi, whose research interests are focused on the field of comparative economics, will teach Macroeconomics as well as Contemporary Macroeconomic Issues.

## Lamm Appoints Willig to Helm of Wexner Kollel Elyon

BY DAVID MIRSKY

Touted as a vehicle by which a select group of rabbis will be enabled to "communicate effectively and address issues of social and economic, as well as religious and philosophical concern in the modern world" by President Lamm, the new Bella and Harry Wexner Kollel Elyon has been established with Rabbi Mordechai Willig at its helm.

Rabbi Willig, the Rabbi Dr. Sol Roth Professor of Talmud and Contemporary Halakha at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), has been a *rosh yeshiva* at the Mazer School of Talmudic Studies since 1973, and assistant head of the post-graduate institute since 1987. Hailed as a world leader on issues pertaining to the *agunah*, a Jewish woman who cannot obtain a religious divorce because of a recalcitrant husband, Willig received his Yeshiva B.A. in mathematics in 1968, followed by a Master's degree in Jewish History and rabbinic ordination in 1971. Willig is also the spiritual leader of the Young Israel of Riverdale.

Created through an endowment bequeathed by Mrs. Bella Wexner and her daughter Ms. Susan Wexner, the new *kollel* honors the memory of Mrs. Wexner's husband, Harry, and her parents, Lena and Harry Cabakoff, of Columbus, Ohio. Mrs. Wexner and her late husband founded The Limited chain of retail clothing stores, and have long supported numerous charitable causes.

Carrying the torch of the now defunct Gruss Kollel Elyon, the new Wexner Kollel Elyon intends to combine intensive Torah learning with useful courses in areas such as written and oral communications, business ethics, dispute resolution, counseling, and leadership development. An elite group of 16 students, half from the *semikha* program and the other half on the post-ordination *kollel*, will enjoy significant financial support grants, possibly including funding for housing and continued graduate studies. Once completing the program, Wexner fellows will have to participate in three years of some form of Jewish community service, including work in schools, congregations, and other communal or social service agencies approved by RIETS.

Adding to the community improvement theme of the newly established Wexner *Kollel Elyon* will be the Lena and Harry Cabakoff Annual Lecture delivered by Rabbi Mordechai Willig to the greater Yeshiva University student populace. Along with the annual lecture, outstanding rabbinic contributions will be rewarded with prizes given by the President of RIETS. One award will be for a "dynamic RIETS alumnus who is a practicing rabbi in a small to medium sized community" and the other will award the author of a superb paper published in the upcoming *Kol Zvi*, a RIETS journal established to honor the memory of Harry Cabakoff.

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## Towards Honors and Intellectualism

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

From the very beginning of his tenure at YC, Dean Norman Adler has mounted a campaign to raise the intellectual level of learning in the College. By pushing teachers to strengthen course requirements and promoting the development of honors courses, he has tried to bring the innate talents of faculty and students to the forefront of education. As plans for a more fully developed honors college begin to take shape, *The Commentator* has examined Dean Adler's motivation, as well as the consequences of his crusade.

Adler's thesis on the need to push the intellectual limits of YC students stems from his interpretation of the *pasuk* "Kedoshim T'hiyu - You should be holy." As such, the Jewish people, who practically invented family values, have a unique duty to be an enlightening influence outside the Jewish community. To do so, Adler claims, "We must first acquire knowledge." In his view, this is the correct manifestation of the maxim of *Tikkun Olam*.

Despite the scant foundation for his exegesis, which does not conform to the traditional understanding of the relevant Scriptural passage, Dean Adler maintains that it is proper to integrate Jewish values with secular advances. Central to his plan is the development of a core of students to comprise an "intellectual elite." This group would then filter, in essence, their ideas down to the entire student body. The final picture, then, is of a student body capable of not merely standing their own in the secular world, but one that can rise to the top both professionally and academically.

To fulfill the vision, Adler has employed several mechanisms. Foremost, he initiated a program to introduce incoming students to the rigors of the intellectual mind set. Featured prominently is the seminar which concludes Freshman Orientation. There, students gather to discuss choice literary texts which highlight issues of secular culture and society. Notably, last year's *Galileo Project* developed into a year long series stemming from the initial dinner seminar. A compilation of ideas developed in the series is being prepared for publication later this year.

Beyond the perfunctory introduction afforded most students, most events are geared more directly to the core students whose involvement is central to the program's success. Events such as the Dean's Coffee Hour, held periodically at club hour, invite guest speakers who explore current issues with interested students. The objective is to involve students in exploring ideas in a conceptual framework, helping develop the tools to become an independent thinker. With students describing the discussions as "stimulating" and "captivating," it would seem that the program has made its mark.

A recent thrust has been the push for students to apply for fellowships such as the Rhodes, Marshall and Fulbright Scholarships. These highly competitive programs afford stu-

dents the opportunity to study abroad to develop leadership skill and advance humanitarian interests. Their focus is seeking out academically superior students with strong interpersonal skills to mold into true leaders. Dean Adler believes that more YC students should apply for these fellowships, firm in his belief that YC students are capable and deserving of the honor.

Applicants for the program would necessarily draw from the top intellectual prospects at the College. While many of these students gravitate to the humanities and other conceptual areas of study, Adler has tried to draw students from the science departments as well. At a lunchtime meeting with this year's Roth Scholars at Einstein, he affirmed their status as members of the "intellectual elite" of YU. He also encouraged them to look beyond their professional aspirations, possibly devoting time to more academic scientific pursuits. His parting message was that "it is not enough to work towards your own aspirations, you must also develop skills that make you an effective leader in your field."

For Adler, the moves to develop independent, visionary thinking are most directly played out by the new honors college. The college would integrate current honors offerings and develop new courses which would then be open to all interested students. Those students completing enough honors-level courses would be eligible for an "honors" diploma if they also participated in independent research projects in their field of study. Possibly, a fifth year of study on campus would complement the program and be used for advanced study.

Students remain mixed on the viability of Adler's vision. Many students quickly fell in line with his plans and eagerly participate in his programs. Others, however, disagree with the vision of transforming Yeshiva College into a center for intellectual study. Some, like Jake Solomon, a YC junior, contend that Adler is "just adding a new packaging to what we already have." He contends that the recent push is nothing more than a ploy to boost the school's ranking.

Others don't believe that the push will have any lasting effect. Maury Grebenau, also a junior, put it, "Intellectualism? Why not? But most guys are just going for the grade." To the more cynically inclined, this is a valid perspective. For them, college is but a means to an end and it doesn't matter how we learn. "All I care about is getting into law school," one student noted. "From there on, I'm set."

In all, Adler's vision plans to catapult Yeshiva University from a lower class college into a top-ranked liberal arts institution. More than simple academics, the program centers on developing Jewish intellectuals who can be effective leaders in the secular world. In doing so, they accurately transmit the message that Judaism and secularism are not mutually exclusive.

Chaim Woolf contributed to this report

## Honors College

Continued from page 1

"New Physics and Astronomy," "Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation," "Experimental Psychology/ Biopsychology," and a writer-in-residence program. Adler stated that funding could be used for new faculty hires, research opportunities, and advanced classes in new fields of study such as neuroscience, molecular biology, and communications.

"Funding would be very important," said Adler, "but the push towards intellectual excellence was developed by the students and faculty. Watching thirty to forty students applying for advanced academic scholarships; seeing students going to the Dean's Table meetings and participating in the highest forms of intellectual discourse; listening to young Jewish actors and artists performing at the Arts Festival; all this has convinced me that this school can be the leading institution in Jewish thought."

Dean Bacon voiced similar hopes for an

honors college. "Money could be used for a variety of improvements. New faculty could be hired to teach specialized classes, students could be sponsored for conferences and summer research positions and mentoring program could be instituted." Acceptance to the courses would require incoming students to have at least an A- average, while current Stern students would be required to have qualified for Dean's List status. Prior to graduation, an honors student would have to give an oral presentation and a paper to an honors committee composed of administrators, faculty, and students.

"I think that at Stern College we have very bright and motivated students and a talented faculty," said Bacon. "What we have been looking for is the financial resources to give the students even greater resources and greater intellectual challenges, and an honors program gives us that opportunity."

## YC Professors Active Over the Summer

BY YEHUDA BURNS

The early weeks of the semester give us a chance to look back and reflect with friends on how our summer went. Was it fun and exciting? Did I accomplish anything? Was it at least interesting? It seems that most students spend their summer either working in a career-related field or in a camp or Kollel, relaxing and learning. As for teachers, who usually ask, "How did you spend your summer vacation?" it is interesting to see what they've done.

*The Commentator* asked the Yeshiva College faculty to "keep in touch" over the summer, cluing us in on what they were up to. We got a number of responses; some teachers spent their summer writing, others traveling, and for some, the more mundane task of preparing for new classes being offered this fall occupied them. Here's what they told us:

Dr. Ross Zucker, an Assistant Professor of Political Science spent the greater part of his summer working on a new manuscript. His text on "Democratic Distributive Justice" was completed by mid-summer and sent out for publication. Dr. Zucker extended his work to the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, where he presented a paper on the same topics represented in his latest work.

While Dr. Zucker shared his work with colleagues, Dr. Gabriel Cwilich, a physics professor, took his work to a global audience. He traveled to Florence, Italy to meet with researchers at the European Spectroscopy Laboratory, and attended STATHYS XX, a triennial statistical physics conference at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he spoke before over 2000 fellow physicists. Additionally, Dr. Cwilich traveled to France where he visited the University of Nice, setting up international research collaborations and arranging for a possible American visit of his colleagues, perhaps even as guest lecturers at YU.

Beyond his travels, Dr. Cwilich spent time preparing exciting new programs for the coming year. He continued gathering materials for a book on last year's Galileo Project, and worked with Dr. Thomas Otway on a new honors course in frontier areas of physics. Perhaps most interesting, though, was his work with Drs. Otway and Raji Viswanathan of the Chemistry Department, in developing the Center for Undergraduate Advanced Computation.

Together, the group received substantial grant money from the National Science Foundation for the center, which will be housed on the 16th floor of Belfer Hall. They spent the summer organizing materials, ordering new computers and equipment, and devising suitable projects for student use. The computational center, which will develop more fully over the next two years, will enable the performance of "advanced mathematical and theoretical manipulations in an undergraduate setting." Such an option was formerly unavailable at YU.

Similar to the developments in the science departments, Professors Ellen Schrecker and Hadassa Kosak of the History Department were busy bulking up their own courses. Together they attended a week-long series of seminars, entitled "The New Media Classroom," at CUNY, sponsored by National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Social History Project. There they were exposed to a wide variety of technological resources that can be exploited for classroom use. The seminars have special relevance to Dr. Schrecker, whose American Cultural History class this

semester will be expected to use web-based resources to "make electronic presentations, hold discussions by means of a class list-serve, and, perhaps, create [their] own web site."

Dr. Schrecker explained her motivation for introducing electronic media to the classroom setting. "It's clear that we all have to become more techno-literate than most of us are. This is a way to help students gain that skill." Additionally, "they may find that doing part of their course work in electronic form will be more exciting than the traditional format." For her class, "the rich documentary and visual materials" available on the web are valuable for "we will be able to gain access to many more resources than we could otherwise find."

Complementing the academic pursuits of many faculty was the basic science research of many of the science faculty. Dr. Cwilich continued his work on wave propagation in disordered systems, and even supervised student work on numerical simulations in random systems. Dr. Carl Feit, a biology professor, continued his work on cell surface antigens, tiny sugars that dot the outside of cancerous cells. By characterizing these molecules he hopes to differentiate between highly malignant and more benign sarcomas, a type of tumor. His research is funded through both government and private foundation grant money.

Outside of his hardcore scientific work, Dr. Feit also continued his research into the interplay between science and religion. He investigated the role of scientific investigation from a Jewish perspective, culling scientific fundamentals ranging from modern physics to human genetics. Included in his deliberations come *ethico-halakhic* perspectives on modern issues such as pollution, human cloning and the definition of life and death. He has previously written on these issues, including a notation in a recent *Newsweek* article. Additionally, his work will come together in a new course to be offered in the Spring on "Science and Religion."

Dr. Barry Potvin, a strong proponent of research among faculty, continued his work in a cell biology lab at Einstein. He continued his ongoing investigation in the area of "Glycobiology," an area that investigates the structural role of sugars in bodily reactions. It is currently being reported in scientific journals that many of these sugars play a role in the spreading of cancerous cells and in the normal functioning of the body's immune system. In particular, Dr. Potvin's research focuses on the genes that allow these sugars to develop into their three dimensional shapes.

Dr. Potvin has been working at Einstein for the past 11 years, full-time in the summers and part-time during the academic year. For him, the need to work at Einstein comes from two directions. "First, I enjoy it. Otherwise, I wouldn't do it. More importantly, being in an academic environment is very important for a teacher." Working in a lab, he explained, exposes him to new technologies and prevents his classes from stagnating. While most read journals to keep current, "it's more exciting and revealing to be there, using these new techniques, instead of just reading about them."

Aside from his research, Dr. Potvin found time to meet with students doing their own research at Einstein. "It's important to keep a pulse on what the students are doing," he explained. "This way, I can see what they're learning about and what's missing." He also noted that seeing students in a lab environment allowed him to work with them to generate new results in their experiments.



# Controversial "South Park" Minyan Divides Student Body.

BY DAVID ANZISKA

Those little rascals from South Park are mired in yet another maelstrom of controversy. Only this time, it is not just the usual laundry list of activists and concerned citizens — parents, politicians, religious leaders, educators — who have been taken aback by the popular cable show's sexually charged content and raunchy jokes. A good deal of students at YU are now up in arms, resolute in curtailing South Park's burgeoning popularity at the college.

These students, besides for being repulsed by the large crowds that often gather in the various lounges across campus for the show's airing every Wednesday night at ten o'clock, are equally dismayed by the *Minyan* that is formed in the Morg Beit Midrash right before show time. Known derisively as the "South Park *Minyan*," it usually begins at five minutes before the hour, and rarely takes longer than three minutes, just in the nick of time for the show's opening credits. The *Minyan's* "one minute" *Shmoneh Esreh* and "twenty second" *Shma* have become legendary; throughout the *Minyan's* duration, nervous students often move about anxiously, pacing back and forth, their minds drowned in a sea of doubt of whether the *davening* will finish in time for more important matters.

Not surprisingly, a large segment of the student population at Yeshiva — an institution where traditionally any action that has deviated slightly from the conventional practice has often been relegated to taboo status and become fodder for endless controversy — are enraged. For these students — comprised predominantly of the more observant element in the institution — such a *Minyan* reeks of hypocrisy and should be disbanded at once. The sheer idea that their fellow classmates are rushing their prayers in order to watch a show consisting of foul-mouthed cartoon characters hurling four-letter epithets at one another is too galling to even contemplate. Moreover, the *Minyan's* detractors add, students who choose to go to this *Minyan*, instead of waiting the extra five minutes to *daven* with the Yeshiva in the main Beit Midrash, should be ashamed at themselves as Jews and especially as *Talmidim* in America's largest Modern Orthodox yeshiva.

Sophomoric in its humor, obscene in its dialogue and graphic in its numerous references to sex, South Park, in its brief yet tumultuous history, has become a popular-culture phenomenon, amassing a cult-like following numbering in the millions; literally thousands of web-sites have sprouted throughout cyber-space dissecting the show's every episode; fraternity houses across the country hold "South Park" parties, where people are encouraged to dress up as their favorite characters. With its witty references to old sitcoms, washed up Rock 'n' Roll stars and other tidbits of pop-culture folklore, South Park is now widely seen by sociologists and media commentators alike as the ultimate post-modern farce, a television show whose sense of irony is particularly representative of this country's current Zeitgeist.

Comedy Central, the once sagging cable network which airs the show, has seen its ratings across the board double, buoyed by its first bona-fide hit. South Park is a crudely drawn cartoon which depicts life in a stereotypical suburb, as seen through the precocious eyes of third-graders. Despite their angelic looks and harmless appearances, the pint-sized characters in the show curse like sailors, indulge in nihilistic violence and often pull off cruel pranks that leaves at least one of the characters dead every episode.

Combine that with cartoon's numerous allusions — both subtle and unsubtle — to copulation, homosexuality, pornography and drug use, and you have a television show that even the most understanding parents won't let their children watch. Some of the show's more over-the-top premises include a showdown between Jesus and the Devil on Christmas Eve, a ten year old female character trying to seduce her married teacher, and a black cook at the school (who coincidentally sounds a lot like Isaac Hayes) being arrested for drug use.

Predictably, the show has been greeted with as much criticism as it has with praise. Television critics and parental watch groups have belittled the show for its glorification of violence, anti-religious overtones and smutty language. Countering with equal fervor, the show's supporters see South Park as a slick satire — television at its scabrously funny best — combining high-brow and low-brow humor to form a Matisse-like cartoon that can be understood on numerous levels.

As an institution whose walls are not impervious to the perfidious trends of popular culture, YU has seen a similar debate erupt, dealing not only with the show's content but whether a *Minyan* whose sole purpose is to let students watch an X-rated cartoon should be allowed to continue. For attendees of the *Minyan* and fans of the show the answer is a clear yes. "I love the show," said Daniel Goldstein when asked about his feelings concerning South Park. "I think the humor is quite sophisticated. It is truly one of the great shows on television these days." Regarding the *Minyan*, Goldstein, a tallish, good-looking twenty-year old clad in jeans and a tee-shirt, did not even know that there were people in the college who opposed it. "Why should anyone care that we are *davening Maariv* a bit earlier," the YC junior opined. "I think it is better is to *daven* than not to *daven*. Hashem accepts all *tefilah*."

Other fans of the show saw the opposition to the *Minyan* as reflecting the right-wing course many students in the university have taken in recent years, and as yet another attempt by the student body's more religious segment to impose its will on the mainstream. As one student who responded on the condition of anonymity sternly put it: "I think the opposition comes from the more 'Yeshivish' part of this school. It is unfortunate that people would be against other Jews *davening* to G-d, no matter how quick or unfelt their *davening* was." The student chafed at the notion that it was hypocritical for him to attend such a *Minyan*. "I can *daven* wherever I want, whenever I want. I feel it is even a greater hypocrisy for a Jew to rank out his fellow Jew just because he does not agree with another person's actions."

However, many students when asked about the *Minyan* and their views on South Park in general, relished the idea of critiquing their fellow students. "It is disgusting that people are attending this *Minyan* and setting aside time in their day to watch such a show," said Monty Steckler, a sophomore majoring in history. He has never actually seen the show, but, nevertheless, has read about it. "What's the point of *davening* if you're going to race through it and have no *Kavanah* and then immediately afterwards watch such a show?"

Others took even a more unforgiving stance. Jonathan Price, an MYP student, called the fans of South Park who take over the televisions in the lounges, thus forcing everyone watching television at the time to see the show, "disgraces." He elaborated on his comments stating "I have no idea why such people would choose to attend this

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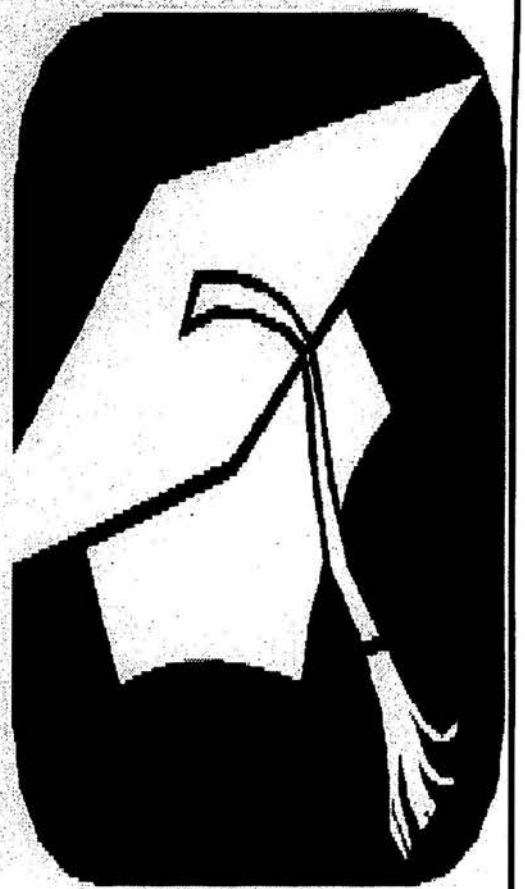
THE THEATER  
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

Commencement

1999

SENIORS, HAVE  
YOU FILED FOR  
GRADUATION?

IF NOT, PICK UP KIT  
FROM THE OFFICE  
OF THE REGISTRAR  
ON YOUR CAMPUS



institution." Another MYP student went even to greater lengths in his opposition to the *Minyan*, going to the extent of personally disparaging the types of students who are fans of the show. Wisely speaking on the condition of anonymity, the student — black hat on head and Gemara in hand — pointed to the fact that the students who gather to watch the show come mostly from JSS, IBC, BMP and less prestigious MYP *shiurim*. "At least some of them are *davening* before watching this drivel," the *Chareidi* looking senior concluded sheepishly. This last sentiment was echoed by many of the more religious-looking students interviewed for this article. Although never stating it explicitly, many used coded phrases hinting to the fact that students

who were serious about learning were not fans of the show and that fans of the show should not be considered part of the Yeshiva.

Still, there were students who offered tempered words of optimism. Roni Shapiro, adopting a more conciliatory position, stated "that while I don't like the show, I do think students have a right to watch it publicly on the YU campus." He added that "people should refrain from judging others, especially in Elul." The question for the rest of the school year, is whether voices of reason like Mr. Shapiro will ultimately triumph. If not, then once again another petty, yet contentious issue will help exacerbate an already pronounced chasm in an increasingly factious student body.





# YESHIVA COLLEGE

## CAMPUS NEWS

### WHO'S WATCHING YOU?

Photos  
by  
Etan  
Walls

Big Brother watches as you enter Rubin Hall

BY YEHUDA BURNS

Over this past summer, the University's security department began installing a series of video cameras on the uptown campus. The cameras were placed both in clear view and in hidden locations throughout the campus. The new cameras promise to provide students with added security, but their presence on campus underscores the role security plays in daily life at YU.

New to the campus are a variety of security devices whose presence is already being felt by students. Other tools include devices which allow security guards on patrol to "check-in" while on the beat. This ensures that the guards complete their rounds and would figure prominently in reconstructing the circumstances surrounding any incident. In addition to the cameras, which are used primarily to monitor doorways, other "secret" devices have been strategically placed; their identities, though, were not disclosed by the University Department of Security.

Jeffrey Rosengarten, Director of Supporting Services at YU, explained the secrecy behind the new devices. "If the people we're trying to keep out know what we're doing and how we do it, then our tools are useless." He noted that since criminals generally have more sophisticated technology than the people they prey on, disclosing how they are being kept away actually helps them to sneak in.

The cameras are easily seen focused on the entrances to

Belfer, Furst and Rubin Halls as well as panning from the rooftops of these and the Main Building. Other hidden cameras have also found their way onto campus, with some students hunting for them in what has amounted to a scavenger hunt. As such, some insist that a camera was placed in the Caf Store to monitor events there. That possibility was strongly denied by security, though.

The sudden appearance of cameras has raised questions as to whether they are a response to recent campus events or the possibility of terrorist actions in the New York area. Rosengarten insisted, though, that their introduction was merely part of an ongoing move to beef up security. "Technology has been developed," he said, "that will allow us to do things in a more efficient manner." Instead of responding to a specific incident, "they [the cameras] help increase the general awareness of what's going on around us."

With administrative attention focused on increasing security, some students have begun to wonder whether or not to be afraid to live on campus. Josh Klein, a YC Junior remarked, "If they're investing so much money into new equipment, it would seem that there's something out there to be afraid of."

From the administration's perspective, this fear is misplaced. "On the contrary," one administrator noted, "students should feel less worried. The better job we do, the more prepared we are to deal with any incident."

As part of the effort, security guards have been directed to be more thorough in checking student ID's, especially entering the dormitory areas. A memo to this effect was distributed to guards and students at the beginning of orientation this year. The memo noted "recent events and possible terrorist threats" as contributing to the need to check every ID. For students, the routine has become more of a hassle than a help, with one student muttering as he entered Rubin, "Why does this guy check

my ID every day when he knows me already?"

Rosengarten contends that the measures are definitely necessary. "It's very good for security personnel and students alike to always be aware and in the habit of noticing when something is out of place. This way, we won't have any lapses." In fact, he admitted, the added vigilance has paid immediate dividends since it has detected people trying to get into places where they should not have been.

For the guards whose job it is to watch over us, job duties have become more complicated. With cameras aimed directly at the entrances they protect, it seems to some that the cameras are intended to monitor guards rather than students. One guard, who asked not to be named, was apprehensive when simply asked about the new cameras. "Yes, I think they're watching," he said. "That's why I have to check everyone's ID." A more senior security member, though, denied this and said that there were simpler ways to monitor how the guards do their jobs.

In the same respect, Rosengarten reassured students who felt that they, too, were being watched. "Cameras are everywhere today," he stressed, drawing comparison to the cameras used by the police to give tickets to motorists. "I have no interest in watching you, in particular." Still, by keeping a lookout, "we get a sense of who's doing what." That way, it's easy to tell when someone is doing something he shouldn't be doing.

Simply, the new measures are in response to a global trend of escalating violent incidents. The Security Department insists that in addition to their own personnel, "We have top people from outside the university looking out for our security needs." The ultimate goal, however, is to create an environment in which students shouldn't even have to think about their own safety. That day, however, still seems a bit out of reach.

### Students Stranded with Their Vehicles:

181<sup>st</sup> Lot Reneges on Student Parking Agreement  
Leaving Students to Find Parking on Their Own

BY RABIN RAHMANI

Student car owners at YU face a new problem this year. The Twenty-Four Hour Parking Garage, located at 508 West 181 Street, recently informed the Yeshiva College Student Council that it will no longer offer YU students the discounted rates it has for the previous few years.

Only days before the beginning of the semester YCSC was informed that the parking garage was under new management. The new management has decided to discontinue the discounted rates for Yeshiva students. Management of the Kav Tav Corporation, which now owns the lot, claimed that they simply had no spaces left to accommodate Yeshiva students.

This news came as a shock to YCSC Vice President Howard Mazin, who oversees student parking. In a letter originating from his office

prior to Orientation, students were informed that YCSC "has arranged for student parking at substantially reduced rates with the Twenty-Four Hour Parking Garage on 181 Street."

In previous years, students had the choice of 24-hour parking seven days a week for \$570, 24-hour parking Sunday through Friday for \$495, and daily vouchers for commuters for \$5.00. The garage's management agreed to provide spaces for students who had already reserved a spot through YCSC but refused to accept any more students who would be paying the discounted rates. Furthermore, they boosted the price for the vouchers to \$6.00, again claiming that lack of space and additional costs for the garage prompted these decisions.

Jacob Blazer, Director of Off Campus Housing and Parking, arranged a meeting with the new garage owner in an effort to assist

YCSC and the many students who had been stranded without parking. According to Mr. Blazer, the new garage owner informed him that he normally charges \$10.00 for daily parking and that he is unwilling to offer YU students the \$5.00 rate that they previously received. Furthermore, he claimed that the garage has a monthly rate of \$160 and offering student parking for \$495.00 per semester would translate into a \$200.00 loss per car each semester.

Blazer reminded him the new owner that he has an "ethical obligation" to honor the contract, which the garage had maintained with YU for many years. The owner responded that the contract had been made with the previous owners and he therefore had no obligation to honor it.

According to Blazer, the owner never cited lack of space as a motive to deny parking to students. The owner could not explain why he had waited so long to inform YCSC of his decision.

At the garage, the manager who would only identify himself as "Marco" explained that "we have no spaces left." It is apparent that the garage is now filled to capacity on a daily basis and cars in search of parking are often turned



Cars line Laurel Hill Avenue, leaving few parking spots

away. The owners of the garage could not be reached for comment.

Blazer told *The Commentator* that the Office of Student Affairs, and David Himber, Associate Dean of Student Services, are trying very hard to negotiate a new deal with the garage ownership. However, he was unable to predict when or if a resolution will be reached.

Howard Mazin, vice president of YCSC told *The Commentator* that "there is a student life meeting next week and we will definitely discuss this problem. We are looking into the situation and hopefully the problem will be resolved by next semester and students will be able to obtain a spot in the lot."

Until then students who are having difficulty with their parking situation at the lot on 181<sup>st</sup> are being permitted to park in various YU owned lots on a case by case basis.

THE COMMENTATOR  
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