Ditch Day: the Shocking Truth

By ADAM CRAIG

Every year, Caltech press releases trumpet ditch day as a prime example of Caltech student life at its most ebullient. In a May 17, 2005 release Jill Perry, a veteran press release author for Caltech, proposed on this “annual end-of-school day of highly telegenic and photogenic pranks and games,” and even Caltech’s most widely-read student-run campus publication, the California Tech, features accounts from the students themselves of how much fun they had in their rollicking antics. Sadly, we at the Tech have uncovered startling evidence that, behind the colorful stack names and garish T-shirts lies a far starker and more disturbing reality. The first sign that something was amiss came from our on-the-scene photojournalist Meng-Meng Fu: image after image of students frozen in statuesque poses. Students from Lloyd, Blacker and Ruddock stood back at us from the JPEG’s with glazed, inert eyes, their hands hanging limply at their sides, feet planted flatly on the ground. Confirmation of our worst fears came a day later from staff photographer and Paul Miller correspondent Andrew Green posted an in-depth photographic study of the evolution of a pirate-themed Lloyd stack: forests of students transformed into inert mannequins. Even students who were not standing or sitting in a Caltech approximation of belt upright slouched lifelessly against nearby supports or appeared bent and twisted into unnatural positions. In the face of such overwhelming photographic evidence, we could only conclude that, during Ditch Day, Caltech underclassmen enter a catatonic state in which they attain waxy posability. Seniors then take advantage of this moment of vulnerability to dress their victims in bizarre costumes and sometimes even place them in strange poses. In this issue of the Tech, we have compiled eye-witness accounts and photographs from staff photographers, official Caltech publicity sites and other sources so that you can decide for yourself what clandestine agenda lurks at the heart of the eerie epidemic of the static students.


Putting a new twist on a tried-and-true title, Gaila Letrim and Ian Krajbach made mockery the mission of Jackass: the Stack. Freshman Yair Ben Assa recalled that the merry band “dressed as hoboes, putting Cannabis Deodorant, Old boy sauce, skunky beer and rancid ketchup on our clothes, then went to eat at the Athenaeum for breakfast.” In addition to random Ditch Day activities, “we circulated a petition to end women’s suffrage, telling people that we were trying to end the suffering of women. We got twenty-eight signatures at Caltech and more than forty total, mostly from young women. Well dressed people at Borders and Penny Lane Video signed our petition, and only the two clerks at Penny Lane pointed out that suffrage means the right to vote.” Aaron Platner threw down the gauntlet for his youngsters in Satanista: a race against time to uncover five five-digit codes that would release the pentagram-shaped lock on his door, revealing the mysteries within. “He just gave us the first one,” recounted freshman Mary Wahl, “the second we got by decripting a C program."

By ADAM CRAIG

Tomorrow Comes Tuesday

Moles Dig In

By MAYRA H. SHEIKH

Blacker Hovey had its fair share of elaborate, cleverly themed stacks this year. TV shows and movie themes were popular. The themes had quite a range of moral content, everything from a stack based on a children’s show, Mr. Rogers, to one based on the HBO series Sex and the City, which explores attitudes toward sex in modern society. There was something for everyone.

The characters from the land of make believe had to journey into the real world to find Mr. Rogers, who had been kidnapped. The characters had to be clever and use sign language and puppet shows to obtain information of the whereabouts of Mr. Rogers. Eventually, Mr. Rogers, played by a parent who flew down just for the occasion, was rescued. Mr. Rogers treated his rescuers to root beer floats and pizza. Mr. Rogers made peace with his abductor after an apology and the day ended on a happy note.

The Sex and the City stack was very educational. A good portion of the morning was spent conversing with Jane Curtis, the health educator; Candace Rypisi, of the Women’s center; and the Nurse Practitioners at the health center about college, sex, birth control, and being responsible. The stack also included foot massages from the participants of the Pulp Fiction Stack, a fashion show relay race across the bridge over Mil

Continued on Page 8, Column 1

Lloydies Swashbuckles Down

By JOHNATHAN MALMAUD

Yay! Lloyd be having a vast array of non-scurvy stacks this year, with everything ranging from pirate to vi- rus, from off-campus hoola-hooping to 3D knights in stainless.

Capt’ Jack Sprorrow himself would have been proud of the first stack, a swash-buckling pirate adventure in the oceans of Tech campus. Pirates were equipped with swords, cool hats, and cute uniforms for the girls as they searched for a hidden treasure trove deep within the bowels of the school.

Next was Bond. James Bond, Bond, represented by a group of four or so, was most definitely shaken and stirred as he engaged in cross-campus espionage to stop the villains with the help of the Foxy Ladies, half of whom were not ladies at all. The men of mystery could be seen around campus sniping each other with water-gun pistols.

They’re the first into danger. The last ones out. The Special Ops stack was divided into the special forces and the anti-terrorist group, who spent at least eight hours saving the American way with brainpower and water rifles that looked like they were out of Men in Black. The bio group was equipped with full-body hazmat suits and the Special Forces had the unmistakable green anti-terrorism uniforms recognized by all Counter Strike players.

The only off-campus stack was

Continued on Page 8, Column 3

By MAYRA H. SHEIKH

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

the hooking

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ADAM 3

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Ride:

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Perry, a veteran press release author for Caltech, propounded

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Jill

Column 1

Continued on Page 8, Column 3
Caltech Neuroscientist Receives Grant to Study How Autistic Patients Process Facial Information

By ROBERT TINDOL

Ralph Adolphs, a neuroscientist at the California Institute of Technology, has been awarded a $120,000 grant from the Cure Autism Now foundation to study the way that facial expressions can convey information about other people’s facial expressions.

The new grant continues Adolphs’s ongoing work to understand the role of a brain structure, known as the amygdala, in perceiving and understanding information about other people’s faces, an ability that grad school is all fun and games, but at Caltech and elsewhere, a joint appointment at the University of Iowa College of Medicine.

According to Adolphs, the grant will lead to progress in understanding autism, a disease in which certain disorders that make it difficult for sufferers to interpret others’ emotions are known to be involved in autism. They may be involved in autism, and also to possible ways for people with autism to improve their social functioning.

Students in Adolphs’s laboratory who have experienced autism have a hard time looking with sufficient attention at the faces of other people to read emotions. Yet, there is tantalizing evidence that the problem may lie with an area of the brain related to the ability to read facial expressions, but rather may not be entirely an inability to understand the world with their eye movements.

In fact, in 1995, the Cure Autism Now foundation is an organization of parents, clinicians, and parents of individuals with autism, and of those researchers studying Caltech’s new scanners.

“If our hypotheses are sup­ported, the implications might be dramatic for rehabilitation,” Adolphs says. “In a sense, we could be helping people with au­tism to see the world socially by telling them specifically how to look at the world with their eye movements.”

On Wednesday, May 25, at 8 p.m., Lewis will address these questions and discuss the chal­lenges involved in breaking away from fossil fuels in his talk, “Powering the Planet,” part of the Ernest C. Watson Lecture Series.

For one thing, it will take more than a willingness on our part to buy a hybrid car or have solar panels installed on our roof, he says. If we want to use wind, solar thermal, solar electric, biomass, and geothermal energy, it will take a lot of planning and willingness on the part of governments and industry. It will take R&D in­vestment, a favorable price per unit of energy to get anyone to produce alternative energy, and plenty of resources to create those energy sources.

Lewis will discuss these and other challenges that come up in a political, and economic—must be overcome before the widespread adoption of alternative energy technologies can be achieved.

Caltech has offered the Watson Lecture Series since 1922, when it was conceived by the late Caltech physicist Ernest Watson for the purpose of bringing science to the local community. Seating for this free public event is limited. For more information about the Caltech campus is on a first­come, first-served basis, begin­ning at 7:30 p.m.

For more information, contact events@caltech.edu, or visit www.events.caltech.edu. All lectures will be available online at Caltech’s Streaming Theater. http://today.caltech.edu/theater.

Science Writers Strive for Intelligibility

By CHRISTINE CHANG

Writing plays an essential role in communicating scientific discoveries to both other scientists and to the general public. Rec­ognizing the difficulty of writing about science to non-scientists, the Provost cosponsored the Third Annual Science Writing symposium in Sharp Auditorium on Monday May 16.

Steve Youra, the Director of the Institute for Writing Center and Chair of the Words Matter Program, opened the night by explaining the meaning of the Greek word “sym­posion,” the Greek root of which means “drinking together.” “In the spirit of the Greeks, I hope this will be a night of lively discussion,” said Youra.

This year’s featured guests were Margaret Wertheim, a writer whose articles have appeared in the New York Times and the LA Weekly, Caltech Professor Christof Koch and Leonard Mlodinow, who has written multiple books and even plans to run for president of Star Trek: The Next Generation. Each

Cont. on Page 8, Column 1
Irrational Exuberance  (semi-)true stories week

11pm: the Coffeehouse
I don't have to start my set until 12!

I am: computer games
Ah, the set will only take an hour anyway...

Bob's laptop begins to overheat during a game of Half-Life 2...

You know what that means, Bori! You'll never have any children!

And if you did, they would ask you, "Daddy, why do I have three heads?"

7:44 am: no end in sight
Oh crap oh crap oh crap!

Wake up! Ditch Day!
Eep!

7:45 am: ...

Bob is not disturbed.

I don't like sand. It's coarse and rough and irritating and it gets everywhere. Not like here. Here everything is soft and smooth. Will you go with me to ASCIT formal?

G.I.O.M. - Greg's Life of Misery

Hey Amy!

I don't like sand. It's coarse and rough and irritating and it gets everywhere. Not like here. Here everything is soft and smooth. Will you go with me to ASCIT formal?

But it worked so well for Anakin...

By Ning Bao, Nathan Lau, and Angela Shih

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Not Ditch Day
By JEFFREY PHILLIPS

Ditch Day was a blast this year thanks to all the seniors who made it possible. More importantly, I would like to thank the Deans for dictating the guidelines for a safe and sane Ditch Day. I can assure you I followed them to the letter, unwaveringly. It is important for me to state clearly exactly what did not happen, lest rumors to the contrary begin to spread.

No one in my stack climbed trees. No one rode vehicles across campus, especially not by hitching a ride on the back. We did not put dry ice in our drinks, especially not the one I took to Mannion’s house for lunch. We did not play with fireworks. No one played with fire, and certainly no one set themselves on fire. We did not steal any important documents for CIT bylaws. Is that my conscientious absti-

2002 UK Memo Claims Bush Planned to Invade Iraq Under False Pretenses
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A Space-Filling Diatribe
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Meanwhile, Kelly thinks Dima’s pants are stylish. Dima said they’re just filthy.

Peter will send out an announcement about IHC sign-ups, Warner will send one for ASCIT sign-ups.

Dima asks about the $340 banner for the formal, asks for people’s approval, it will be used for several years. Michelle is concerned that people walk around with their heads down. Ryan says to put it on ground, Dima says doormat. Dima motions for it, Peter seconds, 5-0 passes. We talk about the colors, red/white is Flemish, yellow/black is ugly, we’ll do orange/white, but not a neon. It’ll be good and seeable, though.

Dima talks about printing cards and fliers, says we should print post-cards to save money, do 2500 cards instead of 1000 fliers for cheaper. They’d make it easy for people to mail them to friends and such. Dima will need help stuffing, Tech express can maybe distribute them for us.

Kelly asks if we’ll have photographer? Dima and Ryan will look into it, talk to photographers and find someone.

We don’t know where the SAC mailroom copier is. Ryan will probably try to find it out more.

Michelle says don’t cheat.

Dima, Michelle, and Peter still need to mail out our club funding letters.

Next week action items:

People finish writing letters

Warner looks into sound system

Bylaw changes will be prepped by people.

Wuv, Peet-uh Foh-nee (Peter Foley)

May 5th, 2005

Present: Warner Leedy, Kelly Liu, Peter Foley, Todd Gingrich, Dmitry Kersnovskiy, Parvathy Menon, Meng-Fu, Michelle Wyatt

Absent: Ryan Farmer

Guests: Angelina Crans, Richard Eager, Scott Medling, Barett Heyneman

Introductions:

1. Call to Order, 5:08 PM

Money Requests:

2. Barrett requests $600 for Coffeehouse party.

Vote: 6-0-0 (approved)

3. Angelina and Neha request $100/house for multi-house event funding (Lloyd + Fleming = Love) for waterpark trip on Saturday.

Vote: 6-0-0 (approved)

4. Three undergrads (Richard Eager, Joe Wagem, and Alex McAuley) took out Professor Mark Wise to lunch at the Ash – requests ASCIT account funding of event. Kelly motions for a vote. Peter beats Todd soundly in motioning for a second. Todd bows his head in defeat but a clenched fist and a murderous glint in his eye let all know that this is not the last of Todd “Death-Tractor” Gingrich.

Vote: 6-0-0 (approved).

5. Scott requests $100 for once-a-term BlueSlip Milkshakes and a pancake breakfast.

Vote: 5-0-1 (approved)

Other Business:

5. Meeting to discuss and propose Bylaw Changes – Friday, 3rd Floor SFL, 7-9pm.

6. Dima arrives on the scene to call everyone’s attention to the “wonderful, sexy” ASCIT formal banner. His next mission is to post fliers to lure grad students to come to the formal. Because grad students are hot... squared.

7. Dima requests help pasting fliers around campus. Warner complains that his Scotch tape is see-through and leaves. “Spray adhesive... ohhh... gawd, mmm... ho-ho-ho.” Trembling in ecstasy, Peter reaches for Dima. Dima leaves.

8. Minutes and officers: look for updates on Donut... uh... soon. Also new Budget to be posted... soon.

9. Excuse to eat good food. Old BoD/New BoD dinner within the next month.

Important Dates


Meeting adjourned 5:35 PM.

I love your mom, Parvathy Menon

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Michal Brown • Robert Walters

**2005-06 Intel Foundation Ph.D. Fellowship Award Recipients**

Brown and Walters were awarded Ph.D. fellowship grants from the Intel Foundation for the 2005-06 academic year.

- **Brown’s fellowship research uses X-ray diffraction to validate an optical measurement method called Coherent Gradient Sensing. Advisor: Dr. Ares Rosakis.**
- **Walter’s fellowship research will focus on understanding the physics relevant to novel silicon nanocrystal based optoelectronic devices, including optical memory elements, modulators, and nanocrystal LEDs. Advisor: Dr. Harry Atwater.**

This year, the Intel Foundation Ph.D. Fellowship Program awarded 43 fellowships totaling $1.6 million to outstanding Ph.D. candidates pursuing leading-edge research at 17 U.S. universities. To learn more about Intel’s commitment to higher education, visit: www.intel.com/education/highered.
The Pirates of the Caribbean task stack was introduced with ranting a flag amidst the wreckage of the Iron Maiden. The stack's power was the prize of the seniors. Like true pirates, the members of the stack stood be
gainst a backdrop of a boat from the wreckage provid
ing an intimidating aura.

Hogwarts called to Ca
tech this year in the form of a stack based on the Harry Potter series. They spent their morning doing stories for various clubs, not math or physics classes, but magic classes.

The students all had made of the stack available for comment. They were well-planned and fun. We will find out soon whether the next class can live up to the standards set by this year's stack beginning.

The American Gibbons cited the value of science, writing, and art in science. "If you're writing for the wider public, you shouldn't be writing for the experts. You need to write for the general public to understand your work."

"I'm a fan of writing about science for the general public," said Mlodinow. "I believe that science should be accessible to everyone, even those who may not have a background in science."

"Science is so much a part of our world," said Wertheim. "It's important to understand the science behind the stories you tell."

"It's important to express your love of science," said Mlodinow. "It's not enough to just talk about science. You need to show people what science is all about."

"The trick is to find a way to make science exciting and interesting to a wide audience," said Wertheim.

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