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War and Journalism: Christiane Amanpour Interviews at SBU

By MANSOOR KHAN
Statesman Editor

Treading through the war-torn paths of Iraq is not uncommon for Christiane Amanpour, Stony Brook's most recent celebrity appearance. Amanpour is the Senior International Correspondent for the global news network, CNN, and some call her the preeminent authority on international war news. In a recent campus interview with Bob Zimmerman, a former CNN newscaster who is the husband of Dini Zimmerman, television producer for the Television Division of Javits Educational Technologies, Amanpour revealed her life story and her motivations as a journalist.

Amanpour, who graduated summa cum laude from Rhode Island University, is known for her coverage of wars and their human and political fallout. She has reported on some of the world's most controversial and critical conflicts, including the fall of Milosevic, the mass genocide in Rwanda and most recently, the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But through it all, she said, Amanpour remembers her reasons and motivation for being a journalist. "I feel an enormous responsibility to try and use the power of media and the power of CNN to make a difference," she said. "Ten years ago, we failed in Rwanda." Amanpour believes that ethnic massacre of the Tutsis could have been prevented by adequate and efficient journalism, and causes such as these are the reasons why she pursues her career as a reporter.

Despite her desire to discover and report the truth, however, Amanpour must always remember her role as a parent, she said. At home, she "turns herself off" as a war correspondent, but out in the trenches, she must consider her four-year-old son at home. "They want to kill us, they want to keep us quiet," Amanpour said. "I have to try to report, while trying to stay alive." Covering news in a war-torn environment is extremely hazardous to an individual's health, she said, and while years ago she may have leapt into dangerous situations without thinking twice about her own safety, she must now worry about what her son "would do without a mother."



Courtesy of Mansoor Khan

Christiane Amanpour is the Senior International Correspondent for CNN and is considered the preeminent authority on war news.

Amanpour's own upbringing contributed significantly to who she is today. The daughter of an Iranian father and a British Catholic mother, she grew up in Iran, and along the way developed a sympathetic tolerance for ethnic diversity. During the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, Amanpour found her world turned upside down, she said. With the conflict and tension of the revolution surrounding her, Amanpour decided that she had found her calling in life, to report news on "these kinds of situations."

While initially rejected by a number of different news stations, Amanpour found her place at CNN 21 years ago. She worked her way through the ranks to

find herself where she is now, and on the way discovered a sharp discontent with the state of journalism. In a time when news stations were concerned more with business and financial profit, Ted Turner started Cable News Network, a station designed to report news in the effort of public service, rather than monetary gain, according to Amanpour.

Even today, the distance from public service is far too common among many new networks, Amanpour said. In the war in Iraq, for example, "the American Press did not do a rigorous job of questioning the premise," she said, "that WMD is an imminent threat...a threat imminent enough to warrant a war."

In the post Sept. 11 world, Amanpour

explained, "Journalists were shocked to the core...and, like the rest of the country, followed their Commander-in-Chief. But journalists must question." That questioning just was not there, she said, and we now see the results. Amanpour once called Fox News "foot soldiers for the Bush Administration," to which they labeled her a "spokeswoman for Al Qaeda."

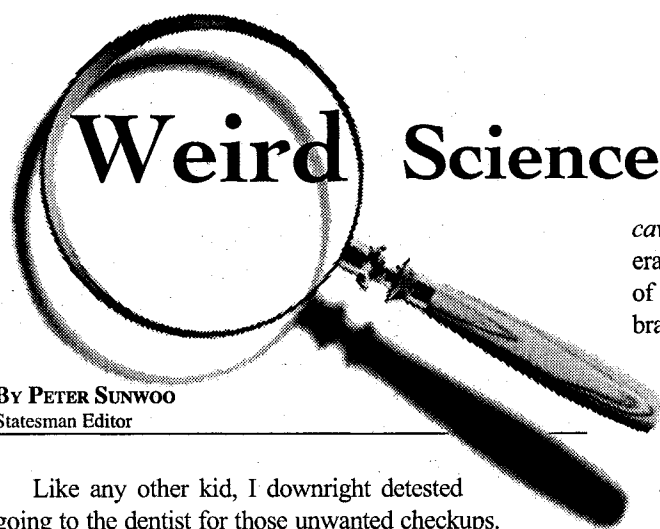
"That is the precise childish response," Amanpour said. President Bush's Sept. 11 speech to the country boasted the assertion, "Either you're with us or with the terrorists." That kind of response had a subconscious effect on politics and journalism in the United States, Amanpour said, and it seriously impeded efforts at reporting accurate and unbiased information.

Amanpour rejects the notion of "Gotcha!" journalism. She deplores the idea of reporting the news just to reveal what is "under the bed sheets." Instead, she firmly believes in reporting the news in order to make an effort at awareness and forward attempts at change. "I believe that governments need to be held accountable because they are doing things like killing people," she said.

Amanpour will soon be leaving for Darfur, Sudan to cover what some have already begun to call a government-sponsored genocide. Millions of Africans, forced to move, have reportedly been injured, with the death count up to 30,000. It is the journalist's duty to report as a public service, Amanpour said, and that is exactly what she has set out to do in Sudan. "I am emotionally and physically prepared."

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Weird Science: Bad News for Future Dentistry

By PETER SUNWOO
Statesman Editor

Like any other kid, I downright detested going to the dentist for those unwanted checkups. Every time the frightening appointments sneaked up on the calendar, a surge of dreadful thoughts rushed through my mind, and there was nothing I could do about it. As a kid I didn't worry about going to my pediatrician. Yea, there are shots here and there, but that lasts a second or two. Blood test results didn't faze me; I was a kid, I felt immune to everything. Cancer, that wasn't real. I wasn't worried about having any of the thousands of diseases out there, but those dreadful visits to the dentist were like waiting on death row for a kid like me.

You sit, the dentist tells you to open your mouth for an examination, he looks and either gives you a condescending look of disappointment for not taking care of your teeth, or a straight face. Fortunately, I've never had to see the look of disappointment, but that's only phase one. Phase two: the good old X-ray that doesn't lie. Those things take a few minutes to develop, and you have to wait there for the final judgment. The Doc comes back, and my little teary eyes would look up in fear. "So Doc, is everything okay?"

I don't know if it was my demented dentist that got some sick pleasure out of making me wait a few breaths for an answer or if it was part of the dentistry protocol. In any case, it was nerve racking. And from time to time, they respond with the most awful word man has ever created:

cavities! All the memories after the final verdict have been erased from my head, but some vague reminiscences of sounds of drilling and rattling still dwell somewhere deep in my brain. But thanks to Jeff Hillman, a dental researcher in the University of Florida, we may never have to go through these traumatizing visits again.

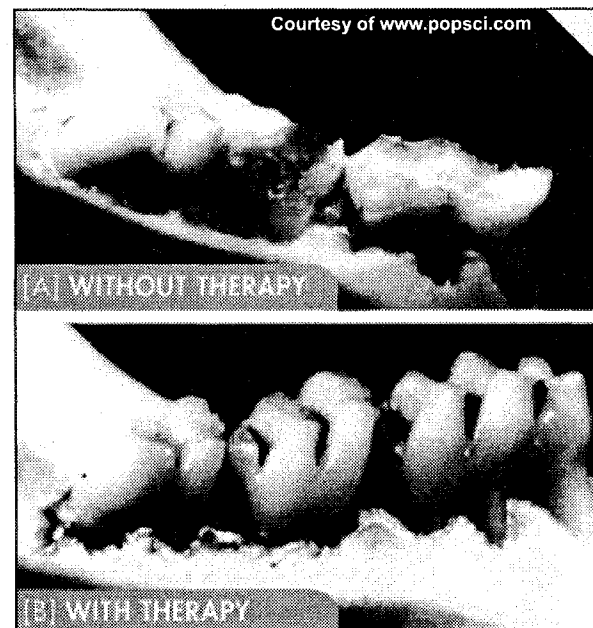
Hillman's company, Orogenics, has patented a heaven-sent swab of bacteria that when wiped across a set of teeth will allegedly grant a lifetime of protection from tooth decay. Let's see how it works. An individual tooth consists of an exposed crown and a root, buried in the gum and jaw. The crown is usually at least partly covered by an outer layer of an especially hard substance related to bone called enamel.

Bacteria called *Streptococcus mutans* cultivate on human teeth and convert sugar into lactic acid, which eats away at enamel. Hillman genetically engineered a mutant strain of these *mutans* (no pun intended) that feeds on sugar and doesn't produce lactic acid, but instead carries an antibiotic that helps displace the indigenous cavity-inducing strain. "The dentist will apply our bacteria and then tell the patient to go home and eat sugar," Hillman said. Seems ludicrous, but makes perfect scientific sense. Nerds and M&Ms could help colonize the new strain, creating even more protection.

The remarkable strain was tested on rats, which also carry the same indigenous bacteria, and the results worked perfectly in Hillman's favor. "If there was a market for preventing cavities in rats, I'd be a millionaire," Hillman said. Beginning this fall, Hillman will test the new strain on 15 to 30 volunteers. Lets cross our fingers. One major marketing problem that Hillman may face is horizontal transmission. If the strain can be easily transferred from sharing food or kissing, Hillman may be out of business.

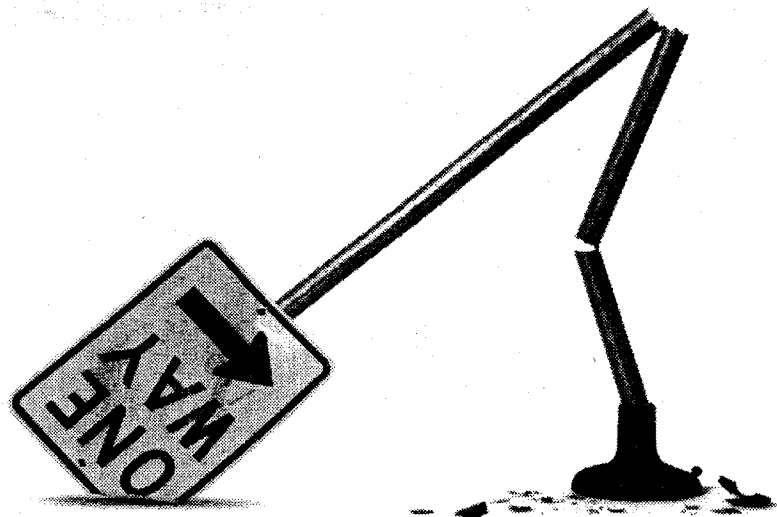
The mutant bacteria may also pose a threat to dentists everywhere, putting them out of jobs. But if the strain cannot be horizontally transferred, it could go commercial within five to six years.

Maybe in a few years I won't have to wait in suspense for my next dentist appointment. For now, though, I guess I'll have to keep up with the burden of brushing my teeth twice a week...I mean twice a day.



(A) Rat teeth colonized with a strain of *S. mutans*, also native to human teeth. (B) Rat teeth with Hillman's non-lactic acid producing strain.

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Ex-Reservist Details Iraqi Prison Abuse

By ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON
Washington Post

A former Army reservist who served with the 372nd Military Police Company in Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad provided a detailed account of Iraqi prisoner abuse that he says was directed and encouraged by military intelligence officers.

Kenneth Davis, 33, who held the rank of sergeant until he left the military last month, said he went to superiors to describe the abuse he saw and gave a statement to Army investigators implicating military intelligence personnel. So far, none has been charged in connection with the scandal for which seven soldiers from the 372nd, based in Cresaptown, Md., are being held responsible. He said that he has not been asked to testify for or against the accused soldiers.

"I believe the truth needs to be known here," Davis said in a lengthy interview at his Hagerstown home Friday. "These soldiers were led down a path, and whoever led them down that path is a culprit as well."

Davis' statements contradict testimony presented this week in a preliminary court hearing for Pfc. Lynndie R. England, 21, who is charged with abusing detainees at Abu Ghraib last year. On Thursday, Capt. Carolyn A. Wood, a top military intelligence commander who worked at the prison, said her unit did not encourage physical abuse or sexual humiliation of prisoners.

Davis said he took his story to Reps. Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md., and Curt Weldon, R-Pa., who are members of the House Armed Services Committee, and John Murtha, D-Pa., beginning in April. Bartlett said that the congressmen have videotaped Davis' statements. "Responsibility for this goes way, way up the line," beyond the seven soldiers charged, Bartlett said Friday.

Davis served at Abu Ghraib from Oct. 1 until early December, when he returned to the United States for a family emergency. He led a team responsible for escorting prisoners to court and accompanying high-ranking officers in the

country.

According to a copy of a signed statement Davis said he gave investigators May 27, he went in late October 2003 to Tier 1-A, the section of Abu Ghraib that housed prisoners of special interest to intelligence services, to speak with a member of his team.

There, his statement says, "I observed two service members.... I perceived both service members to be military intelligence (MI). I saw both MI soldiers handcuff two naked Iraqi detainees to the bars of cells on opposite sides. I then witnessed the same MI soldiers handcuff the detainees together, face to face. The MI soldier ... approached me and asked me in a sarcastic tone of voice: 'Do you think we crossed the line?' or words to that effect. I responded: 'I am not sure, you are MI' or words to that effect."

Through an interpreter, the intelligence officers repeatedly ordered the detainees to confess, according to Davis' statement. They told Cpl. Charles Graner, one of the seven accused members of the 372nd, to yell at them. When a third intelligence officer arrived, Davis asked, according to his statement: "Is this how you interrogate detainees?" The MI soldier responded, 'There are different ways to get it done,' or words to that effect. The MI soldiers escorted the naked detainees around Tier 1A."

A third detainee then joined the group, Davis said in his statement. The MI officer ordered Graner to tell the detainee to strip. The detainees, Davis recalled, were screaming and distraught.

"Then the MI soldiers ordered all three detainees to low crawl" so their genitals dragged on the cement floor. "When the detainees attempted to arch up, two of the MI soldiers put pressure in the middle of their backs and yelled at them to get down. Two MI soldiers then cuffed the detainees together."

Davis said he observed England taking photographs that night. In a photograph that has been published in several media reports, Davis identified himself, Graner, and four men he said were military intelligence officers.

Davis said he reported the incident to

his platoon leader and was told, "They are MI and they are in charge, let them do their job," or words to that effect." Davis has been in e-mail contact with Graner, who is still in Iraq. Retired Lt. Col. Guy Womack, Graner's civilian attorney, said that Graner's pretrial hearing is scheduled for Aug. 23 in Mannheim, Germany.

In a copy of an Army "Developmental Counseling Form" dated Nov. 16, 2003,

that Davis said Graner e-mailed to him, a written summary begins: "Cpl. Graner, you are doing a fine job in Tier 1 ... you have received many accolades from the MI units here...." Womack said that Davis' statements "support what we have been saying all along, and that is that military intelligence officers were in charge at Abu Ghraib and were directing the actions of the MPs."



Left- The infamous photo depicting a hooded prisoner on a crate in a "stress position" (Courtesy BBC News)

Upper Right- Guard with dog intimidating frightened prisoner (Courtesy Washington Post)

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Commentary

Just the Facts: The Mystery of Voting

By JAMES BOUKLAS
Statesman Staff

Many analysts and press correspondents will tell you that November will bring perhaps one of the most important elections in recent history. They are correct. They are wrong, however, when they urge everyone to vote.

Almost two and a half centuries have passed since the foundation of this government and it seems, sadly, that monumental elections are now being decided by acting skills. As a parent might say: I am not angry, I am disappointed.

A good number of people will vote for a candidate simply because he smiles at the right time, or maybe he'll have a look of concern when delivering a speech on welfare policies. "I don't like them fancy Massachusetts senators who think they're better than the little guy," some might say, "so I'm not gonna vote for Bush."

The other side might say, "George Bush simply doesn't speak in a presidential manner, while Kerry is a distinguished statesman." These are irrelevancies that have nothing to do with governing. Hate Bush because of his die-hard right-wing policies. Hate Kerry because of his free trade policies. Do not, however, prefer one over the other because of his acting abilities.

opposed us are on very uncomfortable terms with the president. This is a case-in-point: by simply tuning into any major station you could get a complete agenda right from the horse's mouth.

What to do, then, when politicians lie? In defense of the voting populace, it is not entirely easy to get straight information through mainstream news outlets. Neocons (not to be confused with old-school conservatives) have a lock on the cable news networks, including MSNBC, CNBC, and Fox News. The networks that are closer to "fair and balanced" are pulled to the right so they can try to look legitimate in comparison to their competitors. The airwaves are saturated with Bush apologists who refrain almost entirely from any harsh criticisms for the current administration. They are tough on the Democrats, as I should expect any independent journalist to be. It is the lack of toughness on the right of the spectrum that is deeply troubling, and overall wholly unhealthy for this democracy.

It is difficult to make a clear decision based on the right-leaning media when it is guilty of such obscenities as calling Abu Gharaib "Grab an-Arab," which is what Michael Savage, of CNBC's Savage Nation, said on his radio show in May of this year. "I think there should be no mercy shown to these sub-humans. I believe that a thousand of them should be killed tomorrow," Savage said. "I think a thousand of them

Slanted Reporting is what most of America's citizens are basing their votes on, instead of taking in real facts, and understanding what each candidate stands for.

Voting is unique in that it is both a right and a privilege: it cannot be taken away, and it can certainly be abused. When someone casts a ballot, he is taking the great responsibility of helping to steer the country in which he lives. This should not and cannot be done on a whim: it requires the knowledge and care that any major decision deserves.

It is simply too easy to vote blindly. That is not active participation: it is hypnosis. Do not allow yourself to be hypnotized by the climate around you. Take responsibility and make a genuine effort to know what's going on, if you decide to vote.

Listen to the politicians. Listen to President Bush when he gives a speech. He speaks in plain black-and-white terms, using phrases such as "you're either with us or against us" and "terrorists hate us because of our freedom." He firmly believes those two statements and has based foreign policy upon them. His administration went to the world and echoed the same words, referring to the global war on terror. The White House then proceeded to push the Iraq war through the UN with great resistance from our historic European allies, France and Germany, and other major players, including Russia and China. He wasn't kidding when he made his ultimatum. Leaders of the countries that

held in the Iraqi prison should be given 24 hour[s] - a trial and executed. I think they need to be shown that we are not going to roll over to them ... Instead of putting joysticks, I would have liked to have seen dynamite put in their orifices and they should be dropped from airplanes ... They should put dynamite in their behinds and drop them from 35,000 feet, the whole pack of scum out of that jail."

This is not objective journalism. This is a disgusting tirade by a bigot, and I could quote dozens more tirades of bigotry from Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, and other "objective journalists."

This kind of slanted reporting is what most of America's citizens are basing their votes on, instead of taking in real facts, and understanding what each candidate stands for. It is possible, however, to be an informed individual today, despite the skewed media. The New York Times, National Public Radio, and the BBC are three excellent sources of generally unbiased and fair news reporting. It is entirely possible to get a clear picture of today's issues from these sources alone, and I urge people to do so. Do not let corrupt journalists or unctuous politicians keep you in the dark. This is your country, and if you intend to vote, you had better get the facts straight.

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Greeks Honor Zeus Early, Capture Euro Cup Gold

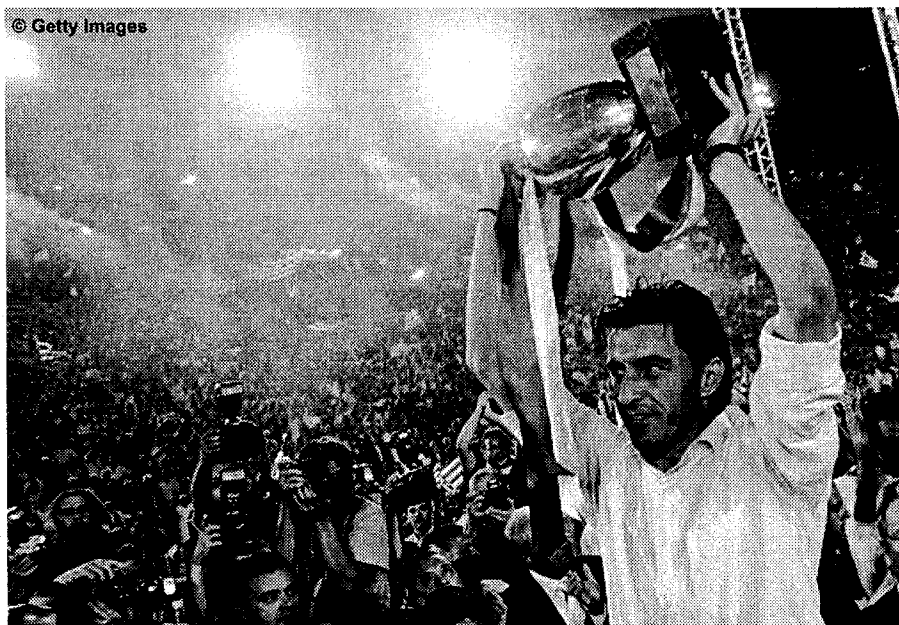
By MICHAEL ZANNETTIS
Statesman Staff

Fifty-seven minutes into the Euro Cup 2004 Final, Angelos Charisteas of Greece heads in, past the prone Portuguese goalkeeper, and scores the first and only goal of the game. A month before Greece is to host the Olympic Games, their soccer team wins the world's second best soccer tournament. Their German coach, Otto Rehhagel, once called them Lions. The Greek newspapers will call them Gods.

Greece became the first team in Euro Cup history to defeat both the host nation, Portugal, which it did on two occasions, and the defending champion, France. Of the three elimination games, Greece won each, 1-0, shutting out in succession: France, with the midfield general Zinedine Zidane, three time World MVP (1998, 2000, 2003) and Hierry, the Premier League's leading scorer for undefeated arsenal; Czech Republic, with their Nedved and Baros led attack; and Portugal, with the world-class trio of Figo, Pauleta, and Ronaldo.

Pele, soccer's greatest player and ambassador, once immortally coined soccer as *the beautiful game*. But the Greeks won ugly. In a tournament boasting some of the greatest players

© Getty Images



Theodoros Zagorakis displays the trophy to thousands of fans in the Panathenium stadium.

of their generation – Figo's midfield mastery; Zidane's otherworldly control of the sport; Ronaldo's emerging genius; Rooney's youthful power; or Beckham's celebrity – the Greeks triumphed with hard, organized team defense and opportunistic scoring. In six games they scored a meager seven goals, while giving up four.

They shut out their opponents for the last 354 minutes of the tournament:

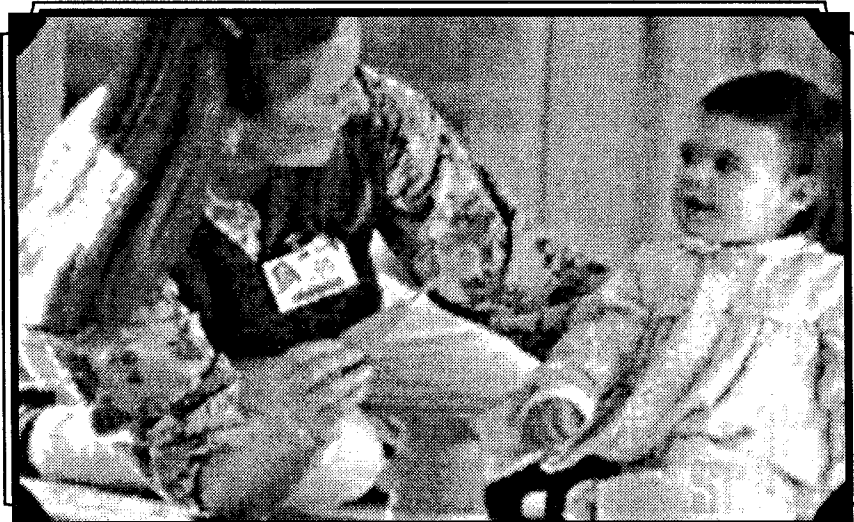
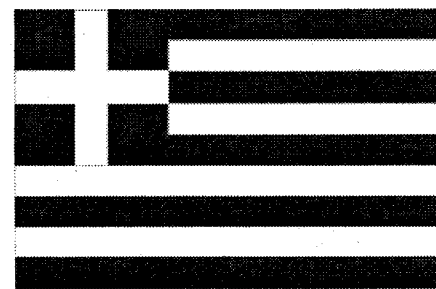
nearly six hours of perfect defense.

Soccer is a game criticized for low scoring matches, but for its followers it is the creativity and effort that provide the joy between scores and that makes it beautiful. Greece's only goals in the semi-final and final matches came on headers off of corner kicks. But as my old British soccer coach used to say, "It doesn't matter if you knock the ball in with your head or with your pecker,

a goal is a goal." If the Greeks were indeed warriors, they resembled more the brute Ajax than the swift Achilles.

Success breeds expectation. With the World Cup qualifiers looming, expect the Greeks to anticipate competing for their first tournament berth since 1994. That campaign was disastrous. The Greeks surrendered ten goals in three games without scoring once. But backed by their stalwart German general, the Greeks go into their next international tournament confident that they can produce results.

Michael Zannettis is a columnist for the Stony Brook Statesman who took a crack at sports writing. Coincidentally, he speaks a bad version of Greek learned from his parents, who come from that country. He also was born and raised in Astoria, which has lots of gyro restaurants.



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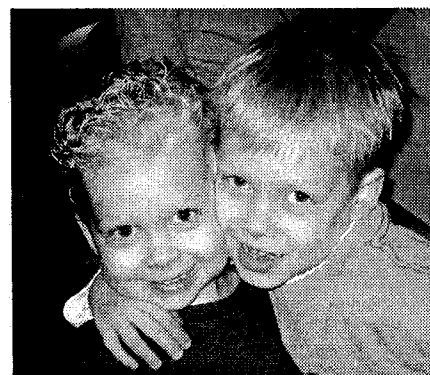
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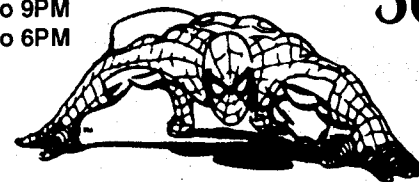
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Minority Report: "Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle"

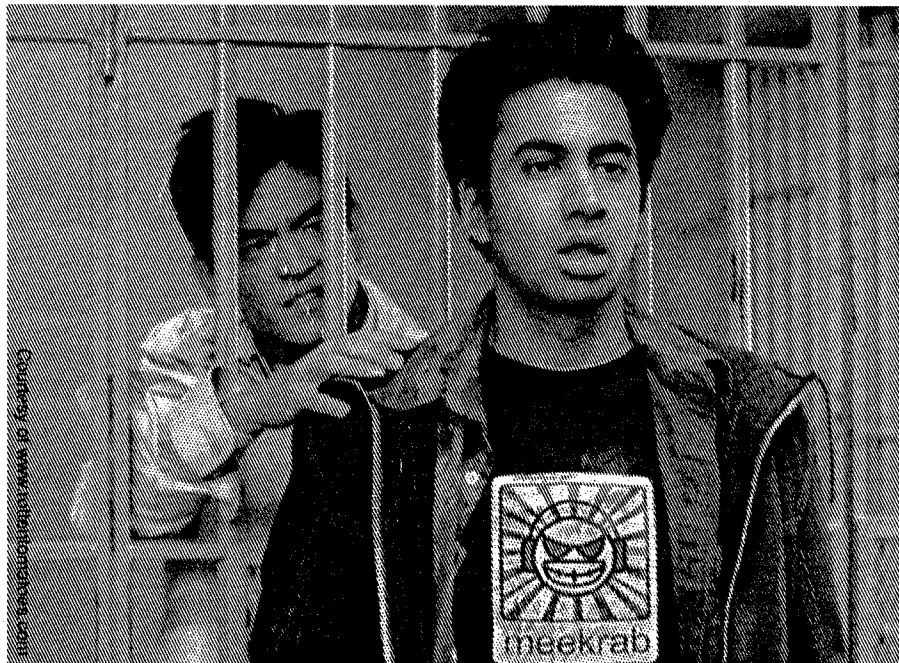
By PETER SUNWOO
Statesman Editor

Take one toking South Asian, one uptight East Asian, a lot of ganja, and a barny hunger for White Castle's Crave Case mini-burgers with extra cheese; mix it all up in a blender (or the NJ turnpike) and what do you get? Just another ridiculous marijuana-based comedy called *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle*, except this one has an Asian American twist. Yes, that's right, studious Asians do smoke pot, and yes, they do party.

Stoned and suffering the munchies, best buds Harold Lee (John Cho) and Kumar Patel (Kal Penn) go on an outlandish scout to find a white castle. Like in any teenage pothead movie, the cliché of improbable outrageous events occur to impede their goal. The two sky-high Asians get into all kinds of trouble from getting arrested, to being attacked by an insane raccoon, to having a foursome with a beautiful bombshell and a dude with genital warts on his face, to getting their car stolen by Doogie Howser.

But what sets this movie apart from the rest of outrageous teenage comedies a-la-American Pie is that it has an indirect message of the state of racial affairs in America. All of the common stereotypes of both South and East Asian Americans were incorporated into the comedy, fittingly, but it also has a bit to say about Caucasians.

Harold, a Korean American, is an accountant in a prestigious investment bank...because East Asians like math



and calculating numbers. He is portrayed as being overly submissive, and is often suckered into doing extra work for the domineering "white man." He is also infatuated with a gorgeous girl that lives on his floor, but doesn't have the confidence to approach her due to his ethnicity. He even says "the girls that like me I'm not interested in, the girls that I'm interested in I have no chance with." Meaning, I can go out with Asian girls, but not girls of other ethnicities.

Kumar is a pre-med student, which is basically a co-requisite to being Indian. And guess what? His father is a doctor. Oh did I mention that he's really smart and likes science. But unlike his best friend, Kumar

is a free spirited pothead and persuades Harold into doing impractical things like riding a cheetah through the forest to get to White Castle, or hand gliding away from the cops. Kumar is portrayed as being an Indian anomaly. He's extremely intelligent, has the perfect grades for med-school, but he purposely screws up his interviews with schools for an immediate rejection. That's right, not all South Asians want to be doctors, but like Kumar, many feel pressured by their parents.

The movie exaggerates many of the typical issues that Asian Americans go through in this country, and as a Korean American, I understand where it's coming from. But what's peculiar about

the film is that it also resorts to attacking whites, blatantly, seemingly in an effort to retaliate. *Harold and Kumar* basically shows the worst of the worst stereotypes of Caucasians. Granted, many films depict countless amounts of stereotypes against minorities, while glorifying the majority, but I don't believe it was right to try and get even. The list of insulting ways of scrutinizing white people go on and on in the film, from the controlling racially ignorant businessman, to the unintelligent mindless pot smoking hippie, to the hillbilly white trash that live in forests and have sex with random strangers, to the unintelligent "dudes" that cause havoc and are always in search of "extreme" things to do, and finally to the racist cops that arrest black people for no reason.

The movie was hilarious at times, a bit random, and very much geared towards the disgruntled Asian American. This was the first major film for the teenage viewer that was focused on the Asian American perspective and how we aren't like what most sheltered people think we are like. That in itself shows a lot of potential, but I was disappointed on how it was executed.

I am glad that Asians are getting more exposed in the media and being incorporated into American culture, but this film basically creates an extreme dichotomy between the minority and majority in this society. Two wrongs don't make a right, and so I give this movie 1.5 out of 5 stars. The 1 since I can't give a film a zero, and the .5 for being funny. In the wise words of Martin Lawrence, "can't we all just get along?"

"The Manchurian Candidate," More or Less Real Life

By EUGENE KOZLOVSKY
Statesman Editor

Maybe one day, you too can be controlled by a multinational corporation. Have you ever done something for no reason, something of no benefit to you but only for others? I thought so. That means they probably already got to you, too. Jonathan Demme's *"The Manchurian Candidate"* is an updated version John Frankenheimer's 1962 masterpiece of the same title. The two movies have a parallel plot, but Demme's version hits closer to home with current events. The original was a smash because it was set during the Cold War following McCarthyism and the Korean conflict. The more recent movie's time frame is present day and the war scenes reference the 1991 Persian Gulf War. In place of a Chinese psychiatrist manipulating people by means of brainwashing, we now have Manchurian Global, a company that develops the technology to control people by means of a chip implanted in a person's head.

The film focuses on Major Bennet Marco, played by Denzel Washington, a retired war veteran who led a group of soldiers during a routine reconnaissance mission that went awry. The troop runs into resistance and an all-out battle ensues, during which Marco is knocked unconscious and Captain William



Prentiss Shaw single-handedly takes down helicopters, snipes his enemies, and saves his fellow soldiers. For his efforts, Shaw is awarded the Medal of Honor. Years later, Shaw is running for Vice President under the encouragement of his Senator mother, and Marco is a downtrodden psychiatric case addicted to sleeping pills and Cup-o-noodles. But Marco is suspicious of the whole situation; he has no concrete memory of the monumental battle of his past and his dreams haunt him with visions of conspiracy and murder.

The movie rushes forward, slowly unlocking the secrets of that fateful day.

The conspiracy unfolds to reveal the mind-controlling schemes of Manchurian Global. Without giving too much away, suffice it to say that Manchurian Global is a multinational corporation that has basically invested in every president since JFK, and is trying to up that effort in new, more creative ways.

The filmmakers were very clever in engineering Frankenheimer's original intentions behind the 1962 version. The first movie took place in Manchuria, on China's eastern seaboard, but to keep the name of the movie the filmmakers justified the title with the name of a gigantic corporation. Instead of building

on the public's fears of Communism and McCarthyism, which have long since died in America, the new movie jabs at the impending threat that faces us today: big business.

In the new movie, the director stayed away from affiliation with any political parties, but those interested in politics could figure out the sides. Also, *Manchurian Global* ironically bares a slight resemblance to the booming oil businesses that buy off presidential candidates these days. It seems that the director tried to parallel the steamy reality faced in the political arena today, a move that many have called unwise in a world overshadowed by threats of terrorism and shady politics.

Apart from the ambiguous message that the movie may or may not have been sending, *"Manchurian Candidate"* proved to be an excellent piece of entertainment. Although not plentiful, there were a few drawbacks of the film. The running time is over two hours and the plot still had a few unexplained holes. Editing out a few very slow paced scenes could have solved this minor problem. The shortcomings were nonetheless outweighed by the over-the-top performances from the entire cast, led by Denzel Washington, Meryl Streep, and Liev Schreiber, without which this movie may have flopped. This is a must-see for fans of political drama, and I give it 4 out of 5 stars.



Statesman SPORTS

Athens Preps for this Year's 2004 Olympics

By MICHAEL NEVRADAKIS
Statesman Editor

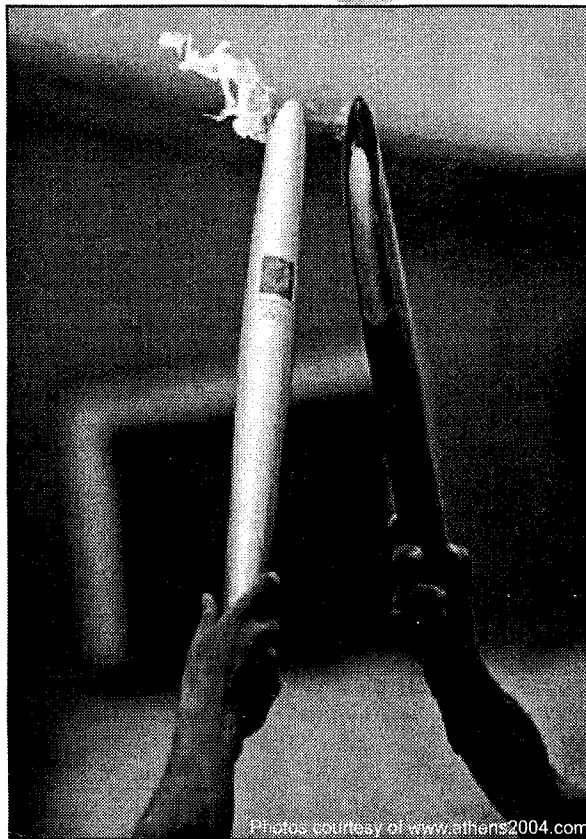
In the weeks and months leading up to the Olympic Games, much was said about whether Athens would be able to organize successful games or not. Most of what was said was of a negative nature. Concerns about Athens' ability to complete works on necessary infrastructure such as stadiums and highways, as well as the country's ability to successfully secure the games against the omnipresent threat of terrorism, were rampant, and in many cases, downright unfair.

However, one week before the opening ceremony, Athens is ready, and is a city transformed. I've had the opportunity to spend the past week in Athens, and I've been able to determine, first-hand, that the improvements that have been made to the city leading up to the games have had an instantaneous positive effect. The thousands of journalists that have gathered in Athens in recent weeks seem to agree as well, judging by the suddenly very positive press that Athens is receiving.

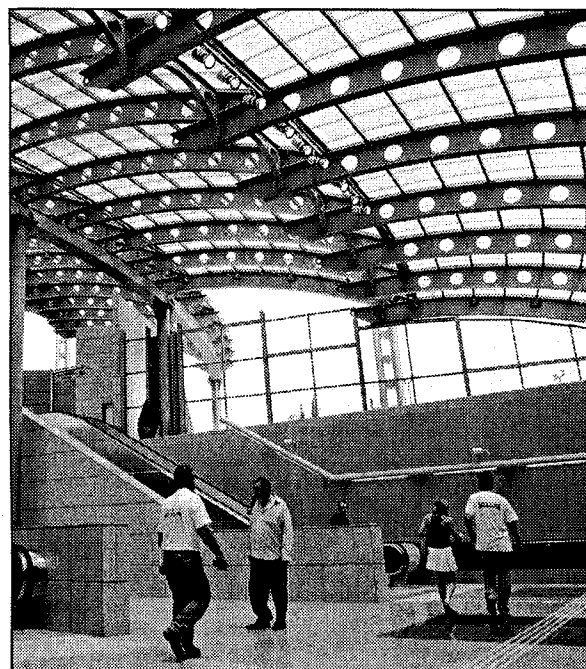
Athens is an ancient city. Remnants of its rich past are everywhere—from world-famous and historic monuments such as the Parthenon and the Agora, to smaller ancient remains, such as the ones on display in most of the city's subway stations—remains that were unearthed during the subway's construction a few years ago. Around these reminders of the city's bright past, a lively, sprawling city of almost five million has grown. It is a city that combines east and west, the old and the new, a city that has parts that resemble Paris, or Rome, or Barcelona, or the Middle East, and parts that are uniquely Athenian. It is Europe's city that never sleeps, with clubs, bars, cafes, and restaurants bustling 24-7. However, as a sprawling urban metropolis, it had its problems. Lack of planning and the problems Greece faced throughout most of the 20th century, ranging from poverty, to Civil War, to a military dictatorship, resulted in a city that lacked much of the infrastructure necessary for a city of its size. Many of the doubts that were raised about Athens' ability to host the Olympics undoubtedly resulted from this.

Fortunately, that's no longer the case. In the past five years, Athens has seen the introduction of a new and ultra-modern subway system, a light rail system, a suburban railway linking the city's brand-new international airport to the subway system and downtown Athens, a brand-new highway system, and a number of urban beautification projects, which led to the creation of a pedestrian-only walkway linking some of the city's most prominent ancient sites and museums, lighting up the Parthenon and other historic sites at night, planting trees and greenery, rebuilding the city's main squares, and last but not least, the construction or renovation of the sports facilities for the Olympic Games. New facilities include a basketball stadium, baseball stadium, the Olympic Village, and various smaller stadiums for sports such as weightlifting, judo, handball, field hockey, softball, and others. The city's Olympic Stadium was completely renovated, and now features a brand-new roof designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, which is widely considered a modern feat of architecture.

Security is also everywhere, but usually in subtle

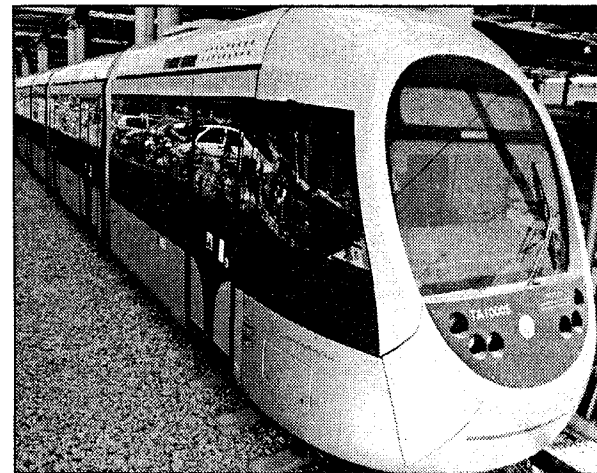


The torch relay ceremony for the commencement of the 2004 Olympic Games.

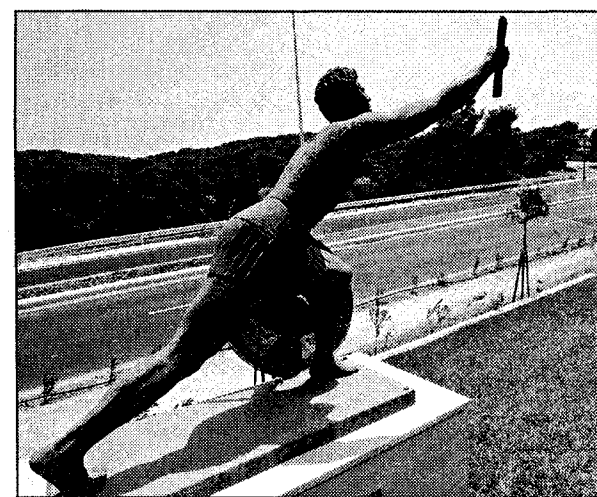


The new Athens Metro Station in Halandri (July 2004).

forms: a blimp encircling the city for surveillance, cameras set up at busy intersections, and plain-clothes police officers are some examples. Overtly, police are seen in airports, outside sporting facilities and government buildings, and on many busy street corners. This hasn't seemed to have dampened the festive mood of the city or its inhabitants, who are going about their daily lives as usual, a city where you can order a "Greek Mac" at a McDonalds, or go next door to a traditional "taverna" and listen to live Greek music while munching on some much more traditional Greek fare.



19 July, first day of the light railway network operation.



The newly constructed Attiki Odos Motorway Marathonos.



Road constructions at Falirou coastal zone (July 2004).

With a week to go before the games begin, the only work that remains is on the finishing touches: gardening, landscaping, painting, sweeping, a general freshening up as Athens hopes to repeat the success of the previous Olympics in Sydney in 2000. From the looks of things, Athens will have no trouble doing so.

Michael Nevradakis will be providing live updates from Athens on WUSB 90.1 FM, on Sunday evenings during the "Sports Guys", from 10-12 p.m., and on Monday evenings during "Salvage and Recovery Radio," between 8-10 p.m.