



Opening Remarks

As the new year gets rolling, and I find myself swamped with course work, lab work, and a night job, I ask myself "Why do I continue to write these biting commentaries, up-to-the-whenver news, and scintillating/thought provoking articles?" Just call me Little Miss Altruism...and submit your signed petition for my canonization to sainthood to the Vatican. Better yet, volunteer to write some articles for me, and I'll petition for your canonization...c'mon, it looks great on a resume...

Also, let me reiterate MSAC's welcome to this semester's new students: Dawn Olsen, Catherine Wood, Mike Swain, Steve Textoris, and Rob Walker. Anything you guys really need to know, you'll have to get elsewhere; all the pointless, irrelevant, gossipy stuff, you'll find right here.

MSAC News

The last MSAC meeting was Tuesday, January 19, at high noon. There was (amazingly enough) a pretty decent turnout, but, as usual, I'll recap it for the lazy, busy, or clueless who did not attend:

-February is Black History month. The Black Student Association has lots of activities planned, which you can crash by looking up the dates on the calendar posted in the lounge. (Actually, you wouldn't be crashing, they'd like people to come, but I thought it would sound more attractive to some people if phrased that way).

-The Wellness Committee is beginning a "Great Strides" program which has something to do with setting and reaching goals. It was my goal to find out more about it before writing this, but I never quite reached it...I guess you'll have to see Pres. Young if you want more information.

-MSAC now has in its possession a copy of the book Ask The Experts, a listing of USF faculty and the academic topics they are experts in (ie, who to call when you are researching something weird which you know nothing about).

-Spring Party, everyone's favorite albatross, I mean, tradition, is on again for this year. Sometime in the not so distant future, the committee heads from last year's gala will convene to determine how many committees and volunteers will be needed to pull this off, and will present this information at the next meeting.

-Student Government is having a volleyball tournament to benefit the Ronald McDonald House. The entry fee is \$2 per player.

-February 9th (mark your calendar, you trendy DMS

people), the Business Club is having a "Dress For Success" meeting in the Davis Lobby from 12-2pm. It will feature makeovers and hair-styling (where's Myrtle when we need her most?).

-Mike Swain has done us all a favor (be sure and thank him) and accepted the position of Student Government Rep from DMS.

-Marc Frischer is doing another T-Shirt order since the Christmas lot sold so well. There was a list in the lounge, on the bar, where you could specify your color and logo preference--it may still be there or not. You have until the first week of February to make your wishes known, so he can have the order here by Valentine's Day.

-TGIAF is having some trouble booking its speaking dates. For those who are unaware or have forgotten, it is a painless experience consisting of speaking informally, to a small group of people you see every day, for about 30 minutes. You choose your own topic, you choose the day you do it. It's a great opportunity to try out a talk before giving it somewhere else, or just to share what you are doing with other people in the department. Give Beth a break--do a talk.

-Heather Penta has been feeding a stray cat for some time now, and really wants to find a home for it. Are there any pet-seeking individuals out there? I would take it myself, but my lease excludes animals. If you can't take it, spread the word among your non-MSL friends. Make it your good deed for the month or something.

Lounge Renovations

This was actually a topic at the MSAC meeting, but such a large one that I thought it deserved it's own space. Lynn Leonard, student crusader, has taken on this project and is already doing a super job. She has outlined the major work that needs to be done first and foremost (like installing plumbing and getting hot water for the sink), what things are better off just being trashed (the nasty refrigerator that is conducting its own evolutionary experiments--beings arising from 3 year old potato salad, etc), and a whole host of more cosmetic improvements (new furniture, a lunch counter, panelling, painting, etc). Personally, I thought it all sounded great. Plans are in the works to finance this venture, and we may even get decorating advice from the USF department of interior design. Do not underestimate the importance of fixing up the lounge--not only will it make a nicer place for us to eat lunch, entertain, etc, but it benefits the whole department to have a spiffy looking place to invite guests, interview people, or show off to visitors. Keep your ears to the ground for more updates and how you can participate. In the mean time, anyone wanting to get

their two cents in can become involved just by tracking down Lynn. I'm sure she could use the help, so don't be shy.

Chili Cookoff

Get psyched--this coming Friday (1/29) is the first great Chili Cookoff, sponsored by your own MSAC and coordinated by the multi-talented Nan Schmidt. Everyone (that means faculty, staff, students, spouses, friends, bums off the street, etc) is invited to participate. Just bring a pot of your special homemade chili (NO CANS ALLOWED)--preferably in a crockpot, but microwavable containers are also acceptable (we have no cooking facilities in the lounge, remember?) If you are intending on sampling the competition (and who isn't), be sure to bring a mug and spoon from home (we ARE environmentally concious, now, aren't we?). It is undetermined how many contestants are currently cooking, but in the spirit of making sure there will be enough chili for everyone to taste, we could always use more. If you aren't already entered, give it a shot! Preserve your family's honor by entering their recipe, or invent your own if you can't remember what your family's is. It'll be fun, and there are prizes (although what they are is a closely guarded secret). The five categories which will be judged are: (1) overall best, (2) hottest, (3) wimpiest, (4) best traditional, and (5) best nontraditional. There has been a slight alteration of judges. The poster lists Pam, Pam, Mark, Mark, and Mark. The revised panel will include Marc, who will have legally changed his name to Mark in order to qualify as a judge, and an anonymous impersonator to stand in for Mark, who will be out of town. It promises to be a hot night...don't miss it!

Chinese New Year Party

Last Saturday (1/23), the Friendship Assoc. of Chinese Students and Scholars co-hosted a huge Chinese New Year party with the Suncoast American Chinese Assoc. (SACA). The big bash was held in the CAC (this is the first time it has been held in St. Pete--looks like our students are pretty persuasive). Those who were at the beginning of the food line (which closely modelled the Great Wall of China) got a chance to sample dishes like Kim Chi, spring rolls, curried noodles, and, of course, fortune cookies. Unfortunately, SACA miscalculated the number of people and ran short of food, so many of the 400+ guests had to wait till 9pm for the second shipment of food to arrive. (NOTE: This was SACA's fault, not our students, and clever people took the lag time to order pizza). A strange thing I noticed, at my table anyway, was that all the Americans were eating with chopsticks, and all the Chinese were eating with plastic forks--cross-cultural melting pot, or utensil shortage--you decide. In addition to the food, there were lots of colorful decorations including enough helium ballons to airlift the sundome. I did not stay for the entire evening, but I under-

stand there was a raffle (for prizes ranging from a TV to silk flowers), music, a dragon dance, and several skits. For all those who celebrate it, happy 4691--the year of the rooster.

TGIF

Attendance has been medium and pretty constant, but we'd like to see some of the DNR people come visit once and a while, not to mention some of our own people who have been missing for a while. For the new students (who we'd also like to see), TGIF is a social function held every Friday from 5pm to around 7pm. There is a keg of beer, sodas (WHEN CERTAIN PEOPLE REMEMBER TO BUY THEM, otherwise there is just pukey diet Coke), and snacks. Lately, in addition to pool, other games have come to enliven TGIF, such as Jenga and Twister. There have also been theme weeks, such as Tie-Dye TGIF, Juggling TGIF, and this week, Chili Cookoff TGIF. Suggestions for theme TGIF's are always welcome--just tell Marc Frischer or Tom Young. So come on down...you don't want to miss all the action, do you?

Trivia

In the late 1930's, the Chisso Corporation of Japan established a coastal factory to produce vinyl chloride and formaldehyde. By-products of this plant contained mercury and were discharged into the local bay. Through biomagnification, the marine fishes and shellfish accumulated high concentrations of the toxic compound methyl-mercury chloride. The fishes and shellfish were in turn consumed by the inhabitants of the area. About 15 years after the dumping of mercury into the bay began, a strange, permanently disabling neurological disorder began to appear among these people, especially the children. Today we know it was due to mercury poisoning, but what did they call the disorder at the time? Hint: It was named after the bay.

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