

The Future of What?

SARA WISE

When it was time to report to the group sessions to discuss the summer reading book, *The Future of Life* by Edward Wilson, I had no idea what to expect. Would there be some sort of test? An essay, even? Would I be asked to make intellectual comments? As a nervous junior, I slipped quietly into the classroom, prepared for the worst, with pencil and paper in hand.

Quickly I discovered that there had been no need for such alarm. What followed was casual discussion and insightful conversation between students and advisors regarding the book. Although most students shared a number of comments, a few people sat silently in the back of the classroom. Some of these students were simply more enraptured with their box lunches than with the discussion, while others stared ahead mindlessly, half-asleep.

I left the class slightly confused, with pencil unused and paper still blank. I expressed my concerns to Carter Smith, a senior on my hall.

"I don't understand," I said. "If that was all we were going to do with our summer reading, I could have easily

gotten away without reading it at all."

"Exactly," she replied, "That's why half of the seniors didn't even buy the book."

And so, I decided to determine if that was really true. Wandering around the cafeteria one day, I took an informal survey to discover who really read *The Future of Life*. Of the students polled, the majority, 61%, claimed they did read the book. Most "yes" responses were followed by groans of irritation for ever having read it at all. 23% of students admitted they read at least a part of the book.

The most amusing responses came from students that readily answered with a "No." A total of 16% provided this answer, the majority seniors. Several couldn't recall the title of the book, and a few even admitted they never even purchased it.

It turns out that our "required summer reading" was, for several students, merely optional. Now that I know this, maybe next year I won't be nearly as stressed about the discussion meeting. Instead, I think I might just be one of the students in the back row, quietly munching on the carrots from my boxed lunch.

"61% of students claimed they read the Future of Life."

Jazzcetera: Advice on Life

JASMINE LAGRONE

What is the NCSSM experience? It's about going out into a brand new world of independence and responsibility. We were chosen from among hundreds of others to take the greater challenge, representing the best and brightest of North Carolina. After the glory of acceptance, comes the reality of everyday life. Now what?

After pulling consecutive all-nighters to finish that physics project or struggling through a grueling day of advanced Spanish, the drive for knowledge comes into question. Maybe you just can't see the point of knowing about Bacon's rebellion or interpreting the meaning of slope. At times, homework seems like a useless burden. However, I hope that we all share a common purpose for being here.

In reality, this "worthless" knowledge is actually a way to

prove that we are capable to learn. Our grades represent both our past work ethic and great potential. So, make them count.

"How do I study?" is the rhetorical question being asked across campus. The answer really varies with the individual, but I do

have some helpful hints that have served me well throughout the years. As you can tell, I'm really more of a writer than a math or science person. Yet, I've always performed fairly well in all my subjects due to my ability to learn, something I'd like to share with all of you.

Before you cram for that American studies test, sit down and create sound strategies that correlate with the

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ROBERT DAVIS AND TAMZIN MITCHELL

The buzz begins minutes before 10 p.m. Happy Half has not yet begun, but for some this is the only event to which they can claim to always be early. Most nights at NCSSM, students gather on the pavement between Hill and Watts for the half-hour between Super Study and check. But what calls them out there night after night? Is it the pizza? The ever-squeaky, ever-occupied swing set? Or is it the people?

To the casual observer, Happy Half is insanity. Countless bodies mill about, forming chattering pods of constant change. As conversations within groups change, or friends see friends, pods rearrange themselves into group after group. But how are these pods connected, and where does each individual fit

Happy Half

in this strange cacophony?

Happy Half is an extended family reunion, one that spans two generations and dozens of

live hours away or just down the street.

"I really just go because everybody else goes," says junior Vann Newkirk of Happy Half. To many it is a time to bond with friends and classmates, and to escape from the seemingly endless hours of homework.

Happy Half creates an atmosphere which goes beyond the casual chatter of day-to-day relations and builds a general sense of community. More profound than any organized ice-breaker, Happy Half is centered on closeness and hugs.

In the end, however, few think about creating a substitute family. As junior Aisha Amuda says, "It's a fun time to eat other people's pizza."

It may not be family to everyone, but for some it's a half hour of home.



Katie Tygielski

individual households. And why not? Everyone at Science & Math is separated from his/her families, whether they

What Handbook?

YAJING GAO

Recently, I did a quick unscientific survey around hall, and found only about 15% of my hall has actually read this year's Student Handbook.

Even many of the seniors who have leadership positions and juniors who need to read it for an SL101 assignment failed even to download it.

This problem could partially be blamed on the lack of a paper copy in the orientation packet. Most people simply forgot about the electronic notifications for the Handbook and never bothered to look for it.

So what's new in this year's Handbook? The answer is: nothing more than you would expect.

After downloading both last year's Student Handbook (from www.ncssm.edu/studentlife/docs/handbook2003.p

df) and this year's Student Handbook (from *At-A-Glance*), I used a program called Diff Doc to compare the differences in those two documents.

It turns out that the bulk of the Student Handbook stayed exactly the same. The only major difference is the use of the trimester system instead of our old semesters. Another issue is the addition of the honor code, which replaced the old "Statement of Principles."

Minor changes include the new title of President instead of Executive Director, the title of Assisant Director is replaced with Senior Vice President, and instead of Department Head, it's now Department Dean. Also, the security deposit has increased for the juniors from \$75 to \$150. Other than that, there is almost no difference between the Student Handbook of last year and this year.

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