

# Junior witnesses Centennial Park bombing

by Donna Sammander

An Atlantan who stayed at home during the Olympics had three ways to claim fame. He/she could have been a volunteer (and sell his/her uniform for loads of money after the Games), or could have participated as a dove or a munchkin in the Opening Ceremonies. Or, he/she could have been at Centennial Olympic Park the night of the bombing. I have that strange sort of honor and was able to whisper the morning after that "yes, I too had been there so many minutes before or after the bomb went off." The most unpopular time for a sight-

seer to have left that night was twenty minutes before the bomb went off.

That night a wonderful Reggae Band, Steele Pulse, was playing and crowds of people flocked to sway in front of the stage or to lounge on the grass before the bomb exploded. I had never felt so carefree in Atlanta before. I had no fear of pickpockets, or muggers, or the random accidents that Suburban People are always warned of before taking MARTA (Atlanta's railway system). The streets were a living mass of people going in and out of the park. People hawked tickets and pins, sold hotdogs at outrageous

prices and splashed in the lovely fountain rings which were in the center of the park.

I had been separated from my family for three hours and was getting tired of the sights. The crowds seemed more sparse as I walked towards the exit. Some street drummers rolled out their rhythms, rolled them so vigorously that the bomb was a mere pop beneath their sound.

Then I woke up the next morning, at home, only to hear that the pop and the "fire works" had killed two people, near the stage where people had been swaying to song. To put it

that way, the bombing sounds as if it had ended all music, sight and sound for Atlanta during the Olympics. But, I felt no bitterness in others or myself that some madman (or woman) wanted to jinx a world-wide event of peace.

Rather, I was eager as many others were to attend the Park's Re-opening and to splash in the Olympic fountains at least one more time before the Games and all their colour and variety moved on. No matter how many tragedies threatened to end Our Games, I am proud that Atlanta pulled together to show that they had the Olympic spirit.

## Students lifeguard at pool in Olympic village

OLYMPIC from front page

spirit. As members of the recreational staff, Reide and Fraser managed to get tickets to see the ceremony's dress rehearsal, as well as packages of Powerade left over from the athletes.

Meeting the athletes was another exciting part of Fraser and Reide's unique summer job. The duo saw such famous athletes as Gary Hall, Jr., Michael Johnson, Hakeem Olajawon, Monica Seles and Andre Agassi. But the athletes were not the only famous people these St. Andrews students got to see up close. Brooke Shields, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Vanessa Williams and President Clinton also graced the Olympics with their presence. Reide and Fraser also saw Hootie and the Blowfish, the Goo Goo Dolls and Ziggy Marley. "I thought of them as being godly almost," Fraser said. "But upon meeting them, I realized they were just human."

One of the funny things about staying in the Olympic Village was that many people assumed that Fraser and Reide were athletes. Because they were working at the pool, they didn't have to wear standard staff uniforms and they took advantage of this on several occasions. Through careful planning, they managed to slip into the athlete's dining hall more than once. Fraser also pulled some strings with her former swim coach who was at the Olympics with the Zimbabwe team. She managed to get tickets to events where she got to sit with

the athletes. An additional surprise came when the security guard mistook the two for athletes and took them to the athlete's tram. They didn't argue the point. Many people asked Reide and Fraser for their autographs. They willingly played along and laughed about the experience.

Reide and Fraser liked the celebrities and the free stuff, but they found themselves moved the most by the Olympic Spirit itself. "Myself being from a third world country and Britta being from East Germany," Fraser said, "it was amazing to see such a display of unity."

They say the entire event was like a dream. It was so far from reality that after it was over, culture shock set in. The only low point was the Centennial Park bombing. It was the talk of the Village for the remainder of the games. The pair agree that it put a damper on everything. Several athletes left as soon as

their events were complete rather than staying in the "dangerous" Village. Normally the athletes would have stayed for the closing ceremonies, but this was not the case in Atlanta. Several bomb scares shook the Village following the centennial park bombing. Even the pool had to be cleared as the security dogs were brought in to investigate the bomb threats.

The Olympics ended nearly two months ago, but Britta and Lisa still relive their adventures when they talk about them. They smile at their memories—memories that will stay in their hearts for the rest of their lives. A year ago, they never would have thought they might work at the Olympics, and now it's a summer job that they will never forget.



Lisa Fraser and Britta Reide pose for a picture with Brooke Shields and Andre Agassi at the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta.