

'Anybody can succeed'

Dreams come true in America, says France's Stephanie

By Mike Stone

What I like about America is that it really is the land of opportunity," says Stephanie Crouail, an ECSU Freshman from La Rochelle, France.

"In America we have a better chance of becoming what we want to than we do in other countries. Anybody can succeed. It still is the land where dreams can be realized."

Crouail got her first taste of America as a junior at Northeastern High School, in Pasquotank County. She completed her senior year in France, and returned to America to enroll at ECSU.

"I haven't declared my major yet," she said. "I am trying to decide between history, art and English. If I major in history, I don't want to teach it but to be a historian, which means going to graduate school."

Crouail said the French educational system is harder than the U.S. system.

"It is also very strict," said Crouail. "There are no extracurricular activities in school which means no football team or any other sport, no cheerleaders, no homecoming and no graduation ceremony. We go to school from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., so we don't have time to do many other activities. And we have a lot of homework."

When French students enter the eleventh grade, they must chose between three options: a specialization in literature and languages, math and science or business and economy, Crouail said.

"I chose the first option, which meant I had to take these courses in the 12th grade: English, German, French literature, philosophy, math, history, geography and physical education."

Only about 70% of French seniors are able to pass their final exams, which take place in June and last 15 days, according to Crouail.

"French students are more prepared to go to college because they are used to studying and are already asked to think like college students when they are in high school."

Crouail said French social customs are also different from American ones.

"When young people go out with a group of friends, we would generally go to the pizzeria around 8:30 and

stay until midnight or 1:00 a.m. Then we would go dancing in discos for the rest of the night. Then around 5 a.m. we would go to the cafe for breakfast. We would all go home around 6 a.m."

For Crouail, life in Elizabeth City is more slower-paced than life in La Rochelle, France, population 150,000. "I have my friends and a house where I can stay. I don't intend to stay here my whole life. But I like it here, even if it is not a place where there are many things to do. It is the perfect place to

"Americans think that they are the best and that they have the right to put their noses everywhere."

-- Stephanie Crouail

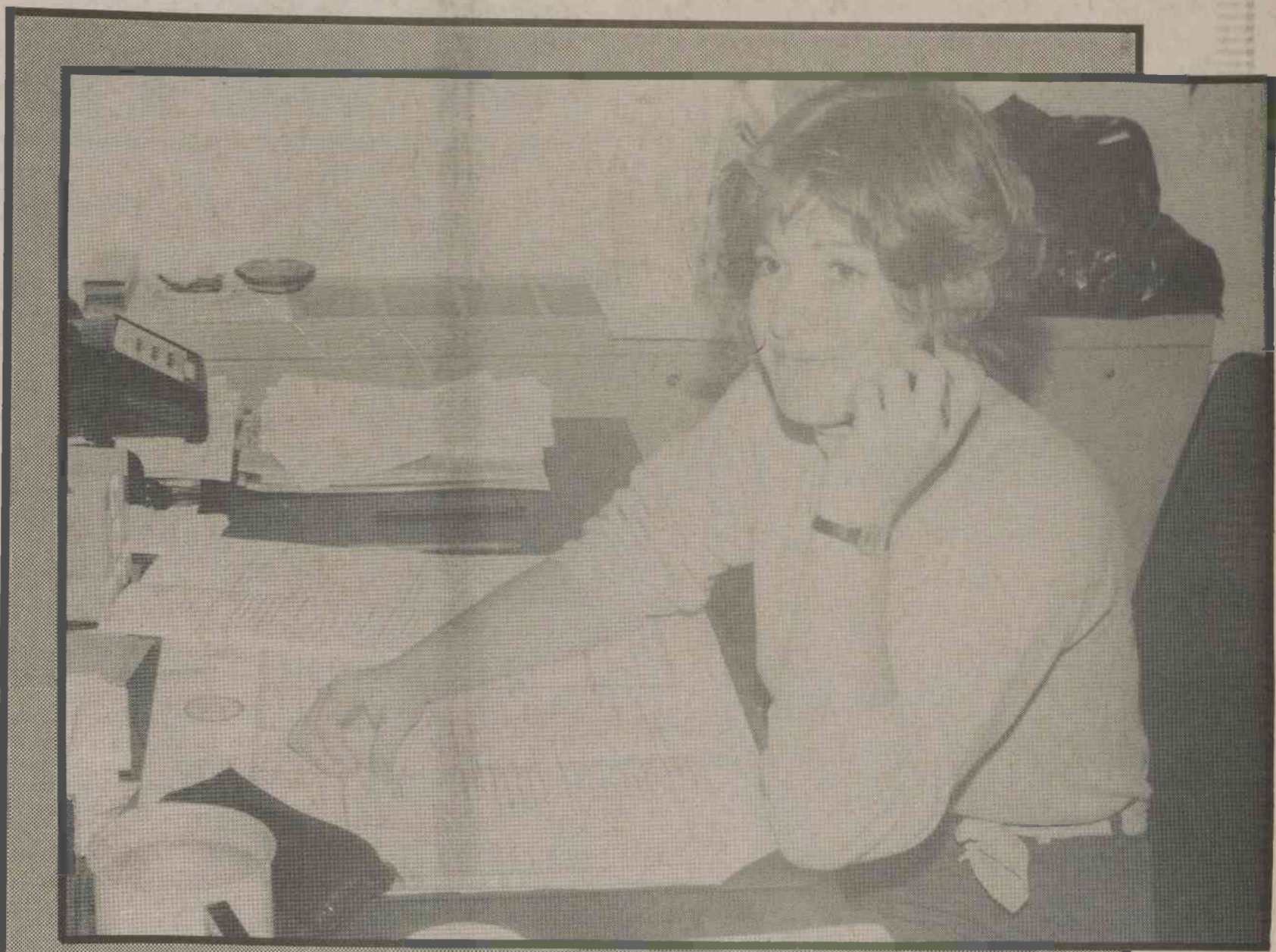


Photo by Richard McIntire

Stephanie Crouail, a native of France, doesn't really agree with American foreign policy. "Americans think that they are the best and they have the right to put their noses everywhere." But she admits, "In America we have a better chance of becoming what we want to than we do in other countries..."

study."

She finds American men less mature on the average than French men, and more old fashioned. "In France when you have a boyfriend, he doesn't ask you to marry him after three weeks," she said.

Her least favorite thing about America is the "excessive patriotism. Americans think that they are the best and that they have the right to put their noses everywhere."

The French system of government is similar to the U.S. system, she said, since France is a democracy. "They elect the president for seven years. We don't have a vice-president. If the president of the republic dies, he is replaced by the president of the Senate until new elections are held."

The president chooses a prime minister who is the chief of the government,

she said. "Basically I think our political structures are the same."

Another way the two nations are different is in popular music.

"Every country has its own music and singers," said Crouail. "In America you have country music, but in France, you don't. French people are very proud of their music and singers. English and American songs were being played on our radio stations a few years ago, but now more and more French bands are being formed and becoming popular."

"We have heavy metal, but it is not so popular in France. French teenagers prefer groups like the Cure over the Scorpions."

Crouail's diverse musical tastes encompass Mozart, Liza Minelli, Charlie Parker, Jacques Brel and Edith Piaf. "I just like the kind of music most young people like," she said.

ECSU's 'friendly' folks help Bahamian feel right at home

By Nicholas Allen

Back in 1984 Anthony Nixon decided he wanted to leave his native Bahamas and attend school in the United States. For Nixon, America was a land of wealth and opportunity.

"The opportunity is here for you to make it if you really want to," said Nixon, an ECSU senior and native of Cooper's Town, Abaco in the Bahamas. "America puts a lot of money into its educational system, and emphasizes education."

Nixon said the Bahamian government doesn't spend much money on education. The country has a high drop-out rate, and it is considered a great opportunity to attend college.

"The strength of a country is its education of its young people," Nixon said.

In order to qualify as a student in the United States Nixon had to apply for a student visa from the American Embassy.

"That enabled me to apply for college here in the United States," he explained. "It was necessary for me to show a financial statement to the Embassy so they would know that someone was responsible for me being here in the United States."

"I was accepted at UNC-Greensboro, but I had a friend who attended school here. I found ECSU smaller and more personal, so I decided to attend school here."

Nixon said the transition from the Bahamas to Elizabeth City wasn't that difficult.

"I found adjusting to ECSU very easy because the people here are friendly and cooperative," Nixon said. "The only minor problem I have had is that people do not easily understand the Bahamian dialect."

Nixon said he had an advantage coming to America from the Bahamas because of the similarities between the two countries in language and food.

"Culturally, the Bahamas are similar to Americans in several aspects," he said. "For example, a traditional Sunday meal there will consist of fried chicken, potato salad, rice and peas. Most of the foods eaten in the Bahamas are the same as in the U.S."

Despite the similarities, there are many differences, too. "In the Bahamas, all students are required to wear uniforms to school, but here they can wear anything they want."

When people visit, the Bahamas for the first time "many of them get the impression the country is uncivilized," Nixon said.

Foreigners get this impression because of the different dialects spoken in the Bahamas, Nixon said, and because of the reggae and calypso music, which can be traced back to the nation's African roots.

In the Bahamas, police do not carry guns, there are no zip codes, "and transportation from one island to another is done by plane or boat."

But television and radio are changing the way Bahamians live, Nixon added, "focusing primarily on American lifestyles and culture."

Nixon said he perceives America as being a highly competitive nation that "hates to lose." Americans, said Nixon, expect to be the best.

"Americans are proud to be Americans. You can see it in the smiles on their faces. They're confident."

Still, Nixon said Americans take some things for granted—like their freedoms.

"Some Americans don't take advantage of their right to vote, which really makes a difference."

A business administration major, Nixon's future plans include owning his own restaurant, studying law, and one day entering politics.

Nixon said he is grateful for the opportunity to live in America, and attend school here.

"I've been fortunate that ECSU has allowed me to receive a good college education, so I can go home and motivate the younger kids, letting them know that there is hope. They can look at me and say, 'If Anthony can do it, then I can, too.'"

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-- Anthony Nixon



Photo by Richard McIntire

Bundled up in a winter jacket that's not indigenous to his native Bahamas, Anthony Nixon takes a quick break between classes. Most other times Anthony enjoys sports, especially tennis, and good intellectual conversation.

 to the Bahamas