

Other Opinion

Loukia
Louka



Louka takes bite out of 'big apple'

When I told a few people here that I was going to New York for a recent weekend, I got quite a few raised eyebrows.

"New York? For just the weekend?" they inquired.

Distant Greatness

Even before my plane landed, New York's vastness seemed overwhelming.

Meeting my flight was an old friend, who lives in the northwestern part of Manhattan. I have always found it beyond my understanding that someone who spent four years at Elon could adjust to something as grandiose as New York. "You just get used to it like anything else you do. At first it was hard, but you have to want to get used to it," he explained.

If you don't have a car, or can't afford a taxi, the two major forms of transportation in the city are buses and subways. I'm convinced, after my brief stay, that even if I was born and raised in New York, I would still be unable to decipher the subway route.

There are an endless number of terminals, levels, trains, numbers and destinations. My most interesting conclusions came from taking the subway out to Greenwich Village, where my friends and I did some frolicking Saturday afternoon.

Manhattan Subways

The Manhattan subway system is the oldest of the subway

systems in NY. When the terminals were built, they began in Manhattan and then extended to the burroughs of NY. Today's Manhattan terminals are in poor condition. I shudder to think of what will happen if repairs to the trains and structures aren't made before a major breakdown occurs.

One incident that occurred in the beginning of our outing was something that visitors to NY always hear about. The three of us were standing in front of a token window in one station. I had just finished breaking a \$20 bill for some tokens, which are used to get on the subway. I was walking away from the token booth, with a fistfull of dollars and change clanging in my pockets, when a young woman approached me asking for seven cents to ride the subway.

O.K. I know that's not a grand sum of money, but I could feel my knees turn to water as I remembered tales of knifings over such incidents. The lady was serious in her request; almost as though she expected me to do her bidding.

Stunned into silence, I glanced over at my friends and unabashedly asked "What should I do?" in an unusually high voice.

So, there I was, holding \$16 dollars, inches from this girl's face. None of us moved for what seemed an eternity. Somehow, we were out of there, the scene gone, waiting for the train downstairs.

No Hand Outs

"You've got to walk away from that kind of thing. The open hand policy is outrageous here," he said.

After we finished discussing

this issue, the young woman stalked up to us. She threw a handful of pennies (probably 7¢) over the railing and blatantly informed us that she couldn't believe my refusal. The girl went on to say that she hoped the same thing will soon happen to one of us, and if she ever sees any of us again, she will remember the incident.

I'm told that New Yorkers have to constantly fight for their own personal space and in doing so, they become aggressive and impersonal as they fight to maintain their identity.

You can see it on the subways. For one, the youth of NY take out their frustrations by smearing graffiti all over subways.

These indecipherable slashes and curves in black, red and purple cover the subway maps in the cars with outrageous expressions of hatred.

As I looked around, my friend casually asked, "See anyone you know?"

National Roll Call

The subway riders seemed like roll call at the U.N. At one point, a tall black man dressed in long flowing white robes cautiously made his way through the car, carrying a knapsack full of newspapers and a tin cup.

Finally, we got to the city and headed out to Greenwich Village, known for its defiant youth.

Greenwich Village is a vast maze of specialty shops and outdoor cafes, crammed into every block. Street vendors are periodically situated along the sidewalks selling jewelry and handmade items.

San Gennaro Festival

The San Gennaro festival was also on hand. This annual event is held in Greenwich Village and Chinatown, for 11 days, to commemorate an Italian patron saint. Within an area of about two miles, there were endless food stands serv-

ing shishkabobs, gyros sandwiches and other specialties. At game stands people win giant stuffed animals that make it even harder for them to get around. This is not to mention plenty of good music and great pina colodas served right out of a coconut.

I really should have stayed an extra day or two. NY really doesn't sleep; there was always something to see or do. Probably the most fascinating aspect of my visit was the people. I've described them as different, for various reasons, but they know how to have a good time inside the "pressure" of big-city living.

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