

Fruit of the Vine essays offer insights on Amish

By Matt Boulette
STAFF WRITER

Don't be fooled by the flowing white locks of his beard — Max Carter, director of the Friends Center and campus ministry coordinator, is absolutely not Amish. Though the values of the electricity-shunning sect inspired his writings published in the October-December issue of the periodical *Fruit of the Vine*, Max is a resolute Quaker.

"The reason people confuse the Amish and the Quakers so much is because the Amish look like the way Quakers used to look like" Carter says of Quaker identity, one of the major issues he approaches in the essays.

In the seven short essays, Carter taking Guilford students in his IDS 405 Communities class to Lancaster County, Pa. He focuses on issues of forgiveness, identity, community, boundary markers and "negotiation with modernity."

He continues to take his Quaker Communities and Commitment classes on annual sojourns to Amish communities in southern Virginia and Iredell and Yadkin counties in North Carolina. These trips began in the early 90s and have continued since. Students split wood and help clean up the communities. Some have even helped to raise barns, but they focus more time on understanding the Amish way of life.

"It's not so much work projects anymore as it is getting acquainted with the community and learning about their way life, their philosophy, their application of their principles" he said of student visits to Amish communities.

"I realized that they are just like us but a little more spiritual" said junior Brittany Varner, who visited an Amish community in Parkersburg, W. Va., with an FYE class. She described the experience as wonderful and the people as "extremely welcoming."

The community is home to an exotic bird sanctuary run completely without modern technology. By capping education at the eighth grade, retaining a traditional German language, maintaining strictly uniform dress codes, and of course restricting the use of technology, Amish communities such as Parkersburg are able to keep a distinct identity.

Carter finds the clarity of Amish boundaries refreshing in modern society, where he sees basic values of simplicity, integrity, community, peace and equality dissolving. He feels some technologies, notably cell phones and the Internet, can demean communities by reducing human contact and isolating people.

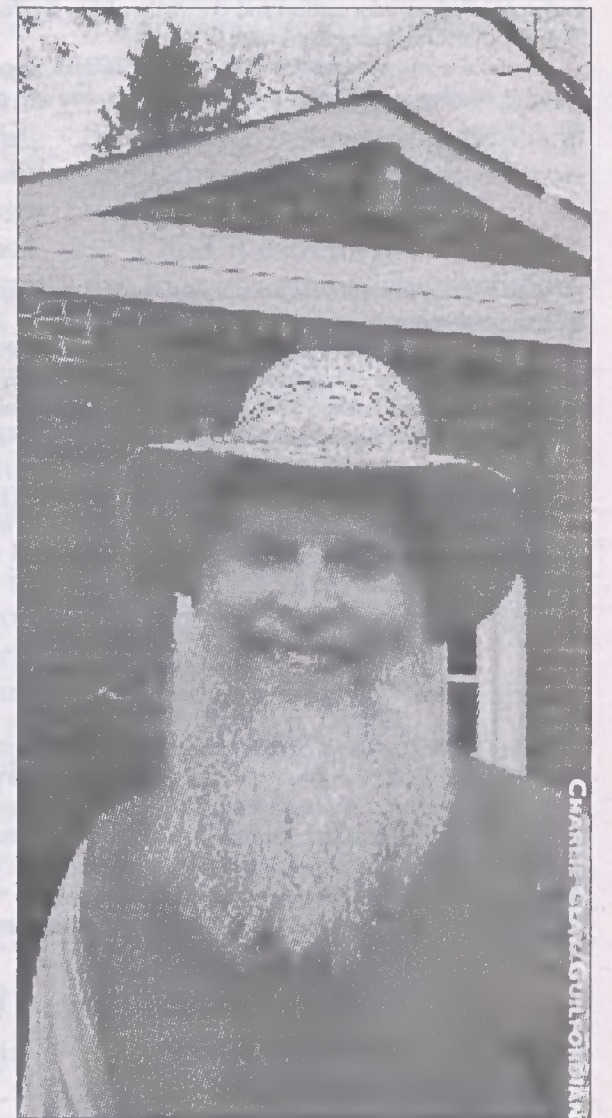
"We 'moderns' tend to accept new technology without question" he said. "What we fail to do is to investigate what impact it's going to have on quality of life — on core values."

A simple walk through the quad or the cafeteria confirms the consequences of new technology. The clattering of keys and the trill of ringtones are rapidly replacing face-to-face conversation. Carter also finds that these devices tend to replace other core values such as commitments to simplicity and non-violence.

On the dissolution of simplicity, Carter says, "(In a) consumer economy, how do we respond to the terrorists? Go shopping!"

On popular culture's response to violence, Carter says, "You gotta pack heat! Peace is for wussies."

In order to address these woes, Carter espouses a probationary approach to accepting new technologies, rather than accepting them without discrimination. Despite this wariness, Carter believes that technology can be beneficial if approached correctly, and so does not shun it completely. Annual trips to Amish communities help to expand upon these principles and allow students to reevaluate how they use technology.



CHRISTOPHER SPARKS/GUILFORDIAN

Hosseini speaks about Afghanistan, writing

By Noble Maxwell Van Pelt-Diller
STAFF WRITER

Tickets were sold out weeks before the event. The audience in the fully packed War Memorial Auditorium awaited the arrival of Khaled Hosseini, author of the bestselling novel, "The Kite Runner."

The lights dimmed and he walked onto the stage with the moderator, Beverley Abel, a producer for North Carolina Public Radio-WUNC.

Finally, they began the interview seated in comfortable chairs angled across from each other on a carpet.

Hosseini spoke of his childhood in Afghanistan and how he longed for people to recognize the true beauty of his homeland and not the violence that seems to constantly plague it.

"I never saw anyone fire a gun while I was in Afghanistan. There were tanks in the military barracks covered in dust that hadn't been used in years."

According to Hosseini, Afghanistan was a great place to grow up and was very peaceful.

He also answered political questions about his homeland and how he felt about United States' presence in Afghanistan. He said that Americans are considered guests by most of the community and that Afghans treat their guests with respect.

"Stronger military presence is a good thing. The U.S. helps keep the Taliban out, which an overwhelming majority are in

favor of," said Hosseini. "If the U.S. were to pull out their troops it would be very disconcerting for the Afghans."

Diya Abdo, assistant professor of English, required her world literature class to attend Hosseini's interview.

During a later class discussion, some students, as well as Abdo, expressed disappointment about the audience's reaction to Hosseini's comments; they said the crowd focused on Hosseini more as a representative of Afghanistan than a writer.

"I think the moderator's question did not allow Hosseini to speak to the things which I went to the event for — more specifically, his career as a writer and his novels," said Abdo. "The questions may have been better suited for a general discussion on Afghanistan. I was, overall, disappointed with the questions asked."

"I did enjoy the event even though I felt he was being very diplomatic and in many ways his questions were measured," said Abdo. "I had been hoping for less deliberate and measured answers. The entire program

was organized to fit a certain audience perspective."

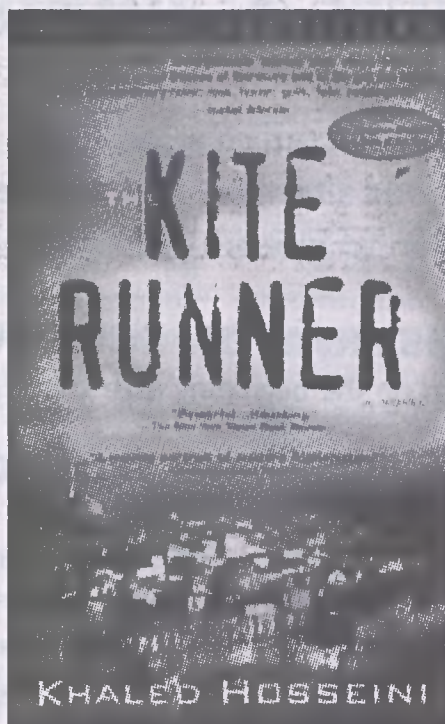
Abdo continued to speak about experience as a whole: "It really presented a first-hand experience to examine the way writers from other countries are treated, interviewed, and read."

Hosseini mentioned that he always knew he wanted to be a writer. However, he had no idea his book about the cancellation

of one of his favorite pastimes, kite running, would be so successful. During the section of the program where the moderator collected the audience's questions, one member posed a question about the most surprising part of writing the book.

"People were reading it," said Hosseini. "I suddenly realized this book is collecting an audience."

Word of mouth and book clubs across the United States caused his novel to gain popularity in contrast with the two book ahead on the bestseller list for 2005, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" and "A Million Little Pieces." This was his gift to America from his homeland.





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