

# Group notes positive achievements in Cuba

Twenty years after the communist takeover, the revolutionary spirit is alive and well in Cuba, according to Dr. Sandra Thomas, Vice President for Student Development at Meredith.

"Since the revolution, Cuba has raised the standard of living for the majority of Cubans. Cuba has become more productive in agriculture and there are no visible signs of poverty anywhere. There are also no visible signs of great wealths. They seem to be on target for their goals," Dr. Thomas explained. She visited Cuba during the Christmas holidays on a study tour sponsored by Meredith College.

According to Thomas, the reason for the tour was to study first hand the concept of revolution and third world development. "It was an opportunity to make a first hand study of a communist form of government and see first hand the building of a new society from 1959, and the building of what could be termed the new Cuban man and woman."

"Through revolution the new Cuban regime has tried to create a new man and woman that are first supportive of

communism and secondly believe in the revolution," Dr. Thomas explained. In the new society priorities are set on health and education. In the new Cuban family both parents work and jointly share household and family responsibilities. "They work for the benefit of all Cubans," Thomas added. An example of this push for equality of the sexes is that at least half of the university students today are women. Also there has been a recent surge in the number of day care centers for children.

In building the new Cuban society, Thomas said, there has been a strong effort to build communities in the spirit of communism. "The system of 'committees for the defense of the revolution' has created an extensive network of volunteer services. They provide social services and protection as well as political education in every community."

While in Cuba, Thomas and her group were guests at a block meeting of the 'committee for the defense'. "We engaged in dialogue and questions from both sides, about both countries," Thomas said, estimating that there were from 75 to 100



(Photo by Steve Wilson)

Cubans present.

The group also visited the Alamar housing community, which houses nearly 60,000 people. Alamar was built by the people themselves in micro birgades, and Thomas called the project "typical of

how they are building new communities all over the country." The living units, which are similar to most modern U.S. apartment complexes, house some of the poorest people in Cuba.

Housing is, for the most part, supplied by the government and each family pays six percent of its salary for this provision. Thomas said further that "almost all homes are supplied with a refrigerator and a television, even in the most rural areas. Television is one of the most effective means of teaching communism and sustaining the effects of the revolution."

Thomas noted that there were also some things that were missing in Cuba. She said that there were clear evidences of the U.S. blockade with Cuba since 1959. "One of the most obvious symbols of the blockade is that Cubans are still driving 1950's U.S. automobiles. They are kept in good repair. There are some more modern Russian cars, but for the most part it seems almost as if time stopped in the 1950's in terms of cars."

There is also a lack of abundance of items such as coffee, which is rationed. Ration cards are provided. "Each Cuban is only allowed one suit and one pair of shoes per year. Clothing, shoes, certain machinery and appliances, and certain food types are in very short order," der," she said.

Also missing are the obvious signs of capitalism found in advertising. Thomas said that the only billboards visible were Cuban propaganda messages in favor of "education, sports, physical fitness, and the triumph of the revolution."

Thomas commented that Castro holds the highest place of honor in Cuba, as both the commander in chief and the revolutionary leader. "He is highly revered. In most houses and on most streets there are large pictures of Castro. At the time of the revolution he was only 27 years old." Thomas added that the late Ernesto "Che" Guevara is also highly revered and is a great symbol for Cuban youth.

For Thomas, the trip was "wonderful." Aside from the study aspect of the tour, the group was also able to do some sight-seeing. They went into the countryside in the province of Pinar del Rio, as well as to the beaches. The trip also included a visit to Ernest Hemingway's home overlooking Havana. Thomas concluded that overall "Cuba is one of the most beautiful countries I've ever visited."

On Monday, February 11 from ten a.m. until eleven a.m. the Cuba group will present a lecture with slides and discussion on the New Cuba at Cate Center Auditorium for the Meredith community.



(Photo by Steve Wilson)

## News and announcements

### Upcoming Recitals in the Music Department

Friday, February 8, 8:00 p.m. Michael Zenge, guest piano recital, Carswell.

Friday, February 22, 8:00 p.m. Neva Morgan and Mary Wallace Tarkington, Graduation Voice and Piano Recital, Carswell.

+++++

Mr. Hugh Cameron will be on campus Tuesday, February 12 to interview for positions at Camp Don Lee and Chestnut Ridge. The interviews will be held from 10:00-12:00 in the Blue Room, Johnson Hall.

If interested, sign up in the Campus Minister's Office.

### Study Skills Offered

Do you know how to study? Want better grades maybe? Joy Jones and Cathy Pascal will be leading a study skills group concerning areas such as time management, textbook reading and underlining, note-taking, test preparation, and any other

areas of interest. The group will meet twice a week for three weeks. It is a great opportunity and could be a wonderful time-saver in the long run! Sign up now! Call Cathy Pascal in the Office of Career Services on Wednesday, January 30, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. or on Friday, February 1, 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

### Photography Exhibit Held

Meredith College will present an exhibit of photographs by Steve Murray in the art gallery, lower level of Jones Auditorium, January 20 - February 16. The gallery will be open Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Sundays 1:00-5:00 p.m. The public is invited to visit the exhibit.

Murray is a free lance photographer who was formerly employed by the News & Observer, the Raleigh daily newspaper. The exhibit is titled: "F-8 & be there."



(Photo by Steve Wilson)