

# Campus Extras

5

## More winter weather? Ask a groundhog

CHRISTINA HOLDER  
News Editor

It must be nice. For one day out of the entire year, all eyes are upon you.

Hundreds of reporters stand poised as you sleep, awaiting the moment when you will open your eyes. Hey, people like you so much that they even name a day after you. Hometown hero? Celebrity?

How about National Weather Forecaster? With the National Weather Service's new IBM supercomputer making 690 billion calculations per second, yet predicting only three to six of the 20 inches the Triangle received last week, perhaps a second opinion is due.

Enter the most popular weather forecaster for today. Take it away, Punxsutawney (punk-sa-tawny) Phil.

Known as the Marmot, the Woodchuck, the Whistlepig and most commonly to us as the Groundhog, Phil was pulled out of his warm burrow at 7:25 a.m. in Gobbler's Knob, Penn. today. Gobbler's Knob, a knoll outside of Punxsutawney, Penn., is home to the state's furriest celebrity.

Phil draws thousands of people each Feb. 2 to predict the next six weeks' weather. A ceremony called the Inner Circle takes place while Phil makes his prediction.

As legend claims, if Phil sees his shadow, he will be frightened and return to his hole to sleep through six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't see his shadow, spring is predicted to come early.

This day of superstitious predictions has its roots in ancient Ireland, when on Feb. 2, the mid-point of the Winter Solstice (approximately Dec. 21) and the Spring Equinox (approximately Mar. 21), the pagan holiday of Imbolc (Oimelc) was celebrated. Fair weather on this day indicated a bitter second half of winter.

A similar tradition was adopted by early Christians in Europe under the name of Candlemas Day, a day in which the clergy blessed candles and gave them to people to prevent the coming of a dark winter.

Like Imbolc, if the sun shone on Feb. 2, six more weeks of winter would soon ensue.

Later, in the 1700s, German settlers arriving in America brought the tradition of Candlemas Day to the States. The settlers, looking for an animal to cast its shadow, chose the badger as the symbol for predicting the weather.

Groundhog Day we know began in North America in 1723 when the Delaware Native Americans settled in Punxsutawney.

Believing that all creation emerged from "Mother Earth," the Delaware citizens believed that creatures called Lenni Lenapes sprung from her and developed into men. The ancestors of these creatures were called oijiks (wojaks), which were later pronounced as "woodchuck" by European settlers.

Eventually the traditions of Candlemas Day and the belief in the groundhog as a sacred ancestor merged into America's official Groundhog Day.

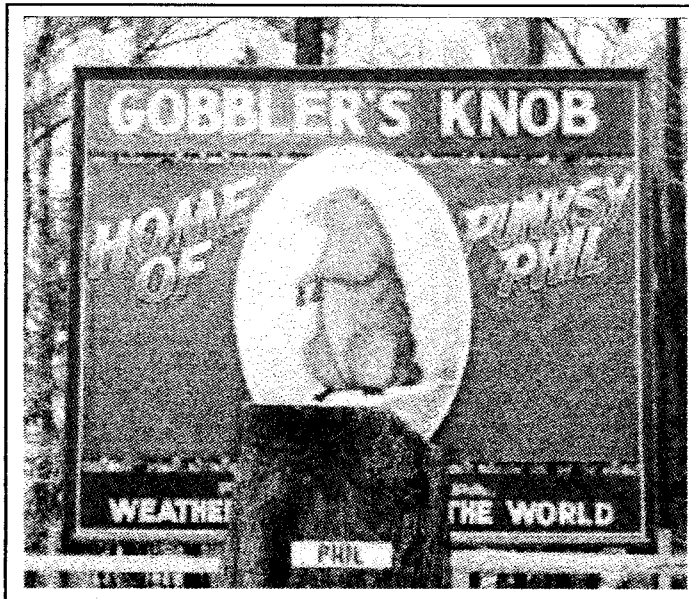
Pennsylvanians chose the groundhog as a replacement to the badger the German settlers watched each year.

Punxsutawney became known as the famed home of the furry weather extraordinaire when in 1887 the editor of the *Punxsutawney Spirit Newspaper* wrote a story on whom he called the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, a group that participated in the tradition of hunting groundhogs, and the groundhog who had not seen his shadow yet.

In the years following, the story was magnified into new proportions, and the rest has been left up to Phil and his descendants.

Thus, we arrive at the day Punxsutawney celebrates with a passion. And in fact, it seems to be a day that most Americans look upon with a fondness, if not for the superstition, then at least for the entertainment value.

Columbia Pictures recognized America's fondness too, when in 1993, they released the



Punxsutawney Phil, of Gobbler's Knob, Penn., will tell us on Wednesday how much more winter we will have.

PHOTO BY PUNXSUTAWNEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

appropriately titled film, *Groundhog Day*, in which TV weatherman Phil Connors (Bill Murray) realizes, upon waking each morning, that his life is a perpetual Groundhog Day.

Each year since the release of the movie, larger crowds have found their way into Gobbler's Knob for the chance to see Phil.

Other states have attempted to break into the meteorological spotlight with rising stars such as Ohio's Buckeye Chuck or Louisiana's Cajun Groundhog.

Yet the fans of Punxsutawney's Phil claim they are impostors and continue to swarm around Phil's burrow each year for the forecast despite Phil's 39 percent accuracy rate over the last 113 years.

However, the folks in Gobbler's Knob do not mind Phil's relative inaccuracy. They insist that he has never been wrong.

Indeed, today, Phil was put inside a heated burrow before he made his prediction.

Usually, he lives at the Punxsutawney Library in a climate-controlled home eating ice cream and dog food to keep his weight around 15 pounds.

Today's weather forecast for Punxsutawney, Penn. was partly cloudy, leaving those who wanted to predict Phil's prediction to sit and wait.

## 1999 Meredith graduate joins Peace Corps

PAIGE RISSER  
Peace Corps

Erika Dean, daughter of John and Pam Dan of Richmond, Va., has been accepted as a Peace Corps volunteer. Dean departed for Zambia on Thursday, Jan. 27, 2000.

As a Peace Corps volunteer, she will work as a health educator, helping communities to identify their health needs to improve health care, programs and activities.

Dean received a Bachelor of Science in Child Development in May 1999 from Meredith College. She is a 1995 graduate of Midlothian High School in Midlothian, Va.

Dean had previously worked for the Coalition on Donation, a non-profit organization that provides public education on the critical need to increase organ and tissue donation.

Today, there are nearly 7,000 Peace Corps volunteers serving in 78 countries worldwide. Volunteers help bring clean water to communities, teach children, protect the environment, help start new businesses and prevent the spread of AIDS.

## Campus Briefs

### Paralegal information session offered

OFFICE OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Meredith College will offer a free information session on the paralegal profession on Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2000 at 7 p.m. in 114 Harris.

Attend a panel discussion with local paralegals and the director of the Meredith Legal Assistants Program.

Call (919) 760-2855 for more information.

### Take a major leap at the Majors Fair

EMILY PHILLIPS  
Majors Advisory Board

On Feb. 9, the Meredith College Career Center will host the seventh annual Majors Fair in Belk Dining Hall between 4:30 and 6:00 p.m.

"The Majors Fair is a great opportunity for freshmen and sophomore students who are undecided about their major to speak with several departments on campus at one time," said Assistant Director Toni Rhorer.

In addition to academic departments, the Registrar's Office, the Office of Academic Advising and the Career Center will all be on hand to answer questions related to major or career choice and preparation.

"One of the great things about the Majors Fair is that students can actually declare majors or minors on-site with the Registrar's Office," said Rhorer.

Refreshments, as well as door prizes including gift certificates for area restaurants and vendors, for Meredith College clothing, dry cleaning coupons and signed novels by Clyde Edgerton, will be distributed throughout the event.

There will even be a grand-prize drawing for dinner at the Angus Barn restaurant.

"Hop on Over" and join the fun at the 2000 majors fair.

SUBMIT YOUR PRESS RELEASE TO THE HERALD. THE DEADLINE IS 1 P.M. ON THE MONDAY BEFORE WEDNESDAY'S PUBLICATION.