



The Stentorian

The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics

May 1998

AROUND THE WORLD ...and back

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Successful negotiations with Iraq

On Feb. 23, 1998, UN Secretary Kofi Annan signed a tentative agreement with Iraqi president Saddam Hussein allowing full access to Iraqi weapons sites. After three days of peace talks and four months of heightening tension between Iraq and the UN, Annan is optimistic about the signing. The deal must be passed by all five members of the UN Security Council before it can go into effect. Annan says he is confident that the agreement will have "unanimous and strong council support." Despite the outlook for the agreement, President Clinton plans to keep US troops in Iraq and has not ruled out the possibility of air strikes. He has cautiously supported the peace agreement, but fears Iraq's track record on such agreements.

Tornadoes hit Florida

Six to ten tornadoes struck Kissimmee, Florida on Tuesday Feb. 23, 1998 leaving 38 dead, dozens missing, 250 injured and a 75 mile path of destruction, making it even deadlier than Hurricane Andrew in '92. Property damage is extensive and federal disaster aid was available. Surrounding counties experienced flooding and dusk-to-dawn curfews.

Weather Service warnings were issued just 20 to 30 minutes before the tornadoes reached the area. Authorities feel the warnings were not disseminated very quickly because the storm hit late at night while many were sleeping. This disaster is another result of El Nino.

Nagano Olympics end

The 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics came to a close Feb. 23. The 16 day games had their share of upsets, glories and unusual events. A letter threatening the bombing of the Olympic facilities turned out to be a hoax. The United States placed sixth in medal standings with a total of 13 medals. This keeps the US at third in Winter Olympic medal history with 143 medals. Nagano passed the Olympic torch to Salt Lake City who will host the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Cultures converge amid festivities

JOAN PARK

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that "People boil at different temperatures". It is true that people are different, and what separates an individual from another can be defined by the word diversity.

Discussions invoke diversity into everything from entertainment to politics. A word almost never defined, diversity reflects the fact that the population is made up of people from many countries, many races, and many cultural backgrounds. In an effort to bring more attention to campus diversity, the MPCs are sponsoring Worldfest for the community of NCSSM.

Worldfest, an all-day event, is to be held April 5th in the PEC. MPCs are hard at work to prepare for Worldfest this year. The MPCs are put fully in charge of activities for Worldfest, so that even the sponsor, SLI Amy Wheeler, does not know what to expect.

"They [the MPCs] are the boss, I'm just here to supervise, they're a pretty autonomous group," said Wheeler.

The MPCs are expecting to have many dance groups and performances of people from different

ethnic groups to come and share their culture. These performances will be made by groups on campus, like the Martial Arts club, Dance Team, Step Team, the African Dance Ensemble, and an Indian dance group as well as groups from off campus.

The MPCs are planning on having about 25 different cultures represented at Worldfest, including those less familiar, such as Armenian and Scandinavian cultures. They will also sponsor a dance the night before Worldfest, which will involve music from many cultures.

"We want to promote cultural diversity, to celebrate diversity by example," said MPC Senior Lee Spears.

"This is a time to share, a coming together, unification through diversity", said MPC Senior Silka



Smriti Bhotika and Rohan Lewis perform during Worldfest.

between them," said Patel.

There are many groups and club that are available for people with similar interests and backgrounds to get together and share their feelings and experiences.. These groups such as Chinese Seminar, Mahjong club, Asian

Quyen Nguyen

Cultures Club, Martial Arts club, Hindi Seminar, and Harambee, also offer the opportunity for students to get exposure to cultures different from their own.

The fact that NCSSM has the MPCs, a special group to help deal with diversity, emphasizes the importance of diversity-awareness in the community.

The MPCs are available at certain office hours, to peer counsel students that may be having some trouble with diversity or they are also "just here to talk, a good ear," said Robichaux.

Patel.

At NCSSM many students face a much larger range of diversity in comparison to their home communities.

"It's hard, being so close to people so different from them and we need to learn to respect other's space. I think at this school there's much respect, people aren't ignorant, it's just people have common interests," said Senior MPC Paul Robichaux.

"Compared to home, [students at] NCSSM seem more accepting to the diversities

New RLAs to bring changing of guard

ALEX MANN

Many juniors faced a series of new challenges and changes this year as they competed in the Residential Life Assistant (RLA) selection process. SLI Chris Smith is responsible for implementing many of these new ideas as he takes over the job of RLA Coordinator from Jeff Bray.

Smith and fellow SLI Anthony Reid worked closely this year with Bray to improve the selection process for RLAs. The changes included anonymity of applicants in the first round of the process and a new group interview session before the second stage of decision-making.

To make the applications anonymous, students were identified only by their Social Security number, application number and sex. The applications included evaluations by current RLAs, SLIs, and other community members, who were also asked not to refer to the candidates by name on the forms.

"It's modeled after the hearing

board student applications," said Smith, a member of the committee that selected students to serve on the judicial panel last fall. "[Keeping students anonymous] worked well on the hearing board. It gave us greater objectivity."

Smith said that the change was designed to address a common concern that RLAs may often be "hand-picked" by SLIs. He hopes the process will now be viewed as being more fair and effective.

Another addition to the selection

procedure is a "Group Process" session for candidates who reach the second round. The applicants are divided into groups of six to eight students and presented with simulations of potential hall problems and issues. The object is to discover how well the students work as a team to solve problems.

According to Smith, similar group programs are used by many

universities to pick RAs and DAs

"It gives us more information on the candidates. We can see how they interact one-on-one versus in a group and determine where their strengths lie," said Smith.

"I think [the addition of group interviews] is a really good idea," said Junior RLA candidate Ray Tan. "It shows you who might be too overbearing or too quiet to be an RLA."

Although many are excited by the change, some have reservations. "Cer-

tain people weren't able to express themselves well in the group because others controlled the discussion. I still think some of them might still make good RLAs," said RLA Brianna Boyd.

"It was hectic," said junior and RLA candidate Darius Smith of his group interview. "Everyone was talking, and it was hard to say what you wanted to say without getting

interrupted or interrupting someone else. I didn't like it."

Boyd said that on the whole she and other RLAs she had spoken with like the new program, but they have concerns as to how it will be viewed when the final decisions are made.

The last major change to the RLA selection process was that current RLAs were given a greater voice in evaluating junior candidates at the interview stage.

Instead of having two SLIs and one RLA meeting individually with each applicant, the numbers were reversed this year to increase the presence of RLAs.

Said Chris Smith, "I feel like the RLAs are just as good, if not better, judges of their peers than SLIs. They see each other in class, off campus, at IM games and in many other situations."

RLA candidate Darius Smith said that he enjoyed the individual interview most out of the entire selection process. "It felt like a discussion," he said. "It was fun."

The candidates for RLA found out April 28 if they made the final cut when results were announced.

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