

High-priced high-way room has its drawbacks

By Alec Ferrell
Staff Writer

This school year has presented me with many new views of Grimsley. In student council I have had the opportunity to observe and be an initiator of the way things work here. Also, as a senior, I have been able to view other students from a somewhat authoritative standpoint. But one of the newest and most disenchanting aspects of this school I learned of in the classroom. Actually *one* classroom in particular: the North Carolina Information Highway room.

You've probably walked down the south end of the second floor hallway in Main Building and wondered about that strange room facing the lawn. Why are the windows in the door blocked off? Why is there a burgundy curtain over the windows outside? Is that a 36" T.V. in there - two of them!?! That is just the first hint of the trademark aspect of the N.C.I.H., *inconvenience*.

Let me explain the setup. Upon entering the room a student is suffocated by an overwhelming sense of sterility; three rows of metal and plastic grey tables with swivel chairs to match, tight grey industrial carpeting, a lowered ceiling with Styrofoam tiles and bug-esque fluorescent lighting, and square, grey soundproofing canvasses placed strategically about the white washed walls. In short, a dentist's office.

After the initial shock of the eyesore the room's physical quality gives, one must then notice the technology. On each desk there is something that looks like a miniature Stealth Bomber, yet is in fact a super sensitive microphone that takes the sound in our room and pipes it into whatever other school's highway room

we might happen to be connected to at the time, through a speaker at the front of each class. Looming in each corner of the room are two state-of-the-art surveillance cameras, one on the students and another for the teacher. A Macintosh PowerPC equipped with a CD ROM and all the other goodies sits on the only wooden object in the room, which can be altered to accommodate a VCR and show it on the two T.V.'s on each end of the class. And descended above the desk of the facilitator (a Gestapo-like sentry who keeps conduct and any fun under a hawk's eye watch - usually our lovely media assistant Ms. Toon) is a larger, more complex camera for showing documents in full zoom. On the facilitator's desk is located an object called the "AMX" control panel, which is a touch operated computer screen that allows for selection of cameras, focusing and zooming them, volume controls and a mute button.

All in all, each room is equipped with about \$15,000 worth of technology. And yes, there I am with my head on the sterile grey desk, sound asleep.

No, I don't sleep in there. That would be impossible considering the amount of annoyance and confusion produced by the corruption of images sent by other schools, the constant noise amplified by apathetic, chatterbox students from the other schools, and just the general discomfort that envelops you as you walk through the stuffy, air-conditioned room.

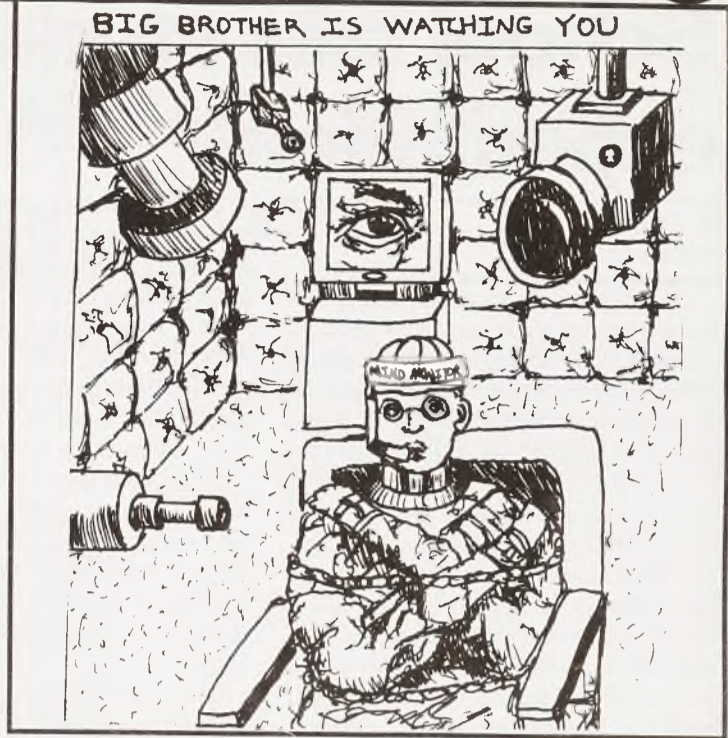
My first class in the N.C.I.H. room is Japanese, in first period. Our teacher and his real life students are at Eastern Guilford, and we are also accompanied through the airwaves by students at Smith. It is very interesting to attempt

to learn a thousand-year-old language while guys at Eastern are still fascinated by the sensitivity of their microphones, and the reactions that we give them as our eardrums explode. There's nothing as enlightening as learning a new verb tense and hearing the constant "scratch-scratch-scratch" of a deliberate pencil running over the microphone; or even better, the paper shuffle. It's enough to drive one crazy. Our teacher, Eastern High School's Mr. Drumwright, has proved to be a valuable *sensei*, despite his difficulties in disciplining the barbarians that disrupt. I suppose it is hard to send someone at another school to the office. I have truly enjoyed learning the language, but the constant hassle by and between students over the waves simply makes it a fairly unproductive learning experience.

Humanities, taught by our Mr. Hands, is a somewhat different story. There are only two schools involved, Page and ourselves, which proves to be much less hectic and far more educational. We have had myriad problems with the technology. Everything from our image being divided by a big black bar, to extreme sound reverberation that makes everyone end up sounding like that little blond girl Carol-Ann from "Poltergeist." Senior Dong Dang and myself are the only students who are in the information highway room for both classes, and we both agree that it is tedious both times over.

I wonder if the "big people downtown" have ever taken a class in their much praised technological "advance." It seems that this project is one that looks like a million dollars on paper (and probably cost just that, even more) but cannot represent in actuality. Priorities in education these days have become perverted to the point that high-ticket fluff holds precedence over the teaching of fundamental knowledge. This could be a good indication of why the quality and quantity of broad knowledge in today's students are on a drastic decline. I feel that the best way for all of us to do our job of learning the best is to get rid of all the red tape and political ploys, get ourselves knee-deep in chalk dust, swell up that writer's cramp and get back to the basics. If it worked for our parents, by golly it can work for us too!

Of course, that Fax machine sure is dope.



Time is on no one's side

By Peter Baggish
Reporter

There just isn't enough time -- time to eat, time to sleep, time to work, time to relax. If only we just had a little more time, a couple extra hours a day, maybe.

I mean, who set the time length for one day anyway? We could have 25 hour days. That would give us one more hour every day to sleep, eat, or work. Imagine the possibilities: more time to eat breakfast in the morning; more time to do your hair and make-up... more time to watch go by -- to procrastinate. It doesn't matter anyway, scientifically it's not exactly feasible, since one second is defined as the time required for 9,192,631,770 periods of radiation of cesium atoms and it takes 86 400 seconds or 24 hours for the Earth to revolve once about its own axis. So, in other words no-can-do on the 25 hour day.

So maybe it's the way we use our time that's the problem. Maybe we shouldn't wait so long at our cars before school; maybe we shouldn't watch that extra hour of T.V. After the Seinfelds and Melrose Places are over, maybe we shouldn't wait until the night before to write our 10 page essays and prepare our 15 minute presentations. That seems to happen a lot. We wait until it's nearly too late to do the things we want and are supposed to. This called procrastination. It is the vampire that drains our lives away, it is the bicycle without a seat onto which we blindly jump.

I myself am an extremely adept procrastinator. My papers are always late, my homework is never done when I go to sleep at night, even this article is late, but I just can't seem to start my mind's engine until all the others have passed me by. I am an outsider to

time, or at least the time everyone else goes by. I could set all my clocks forward and my calendar ahead, but then even Einstein couldn't save me from the time warp I would have created.

If we all worked like gears in a machine, or automated bank tellers that always give people what they wanted, when they wanted it, then everything would get done on time, and we would all lead stress-free content lives. But gears can break, teller machines can tell you you're overdrawn, and people get lazy and bored.

Schedules. We need schedules. Each and every person would get a calendar that told when all your appointments were and when your papers were do, and made sure that you weren't late, or maybe we should all have our own secretaries, soft-spoken women named Louise, who made us tea and coffee and buttered our bagels in the morning, and straightened up our back packs before driving us to school. Or maybe we could all get little spider monkeys, genetically enhanced to manage our time and throw peanuts on command, that would follow us around all day and lightly tell us with their easy to understand monkey sign language, what we needed to be doing.

Minus Louise and the monkey, we are left only with our constantly daydreaming brains that would rather focus our hate than our eyes. As the collective Popeye would say, we are what we are, and we have what we have (at least until the advent of brain transplants), so open your eyes, wipe the weariness from your brow, and check your watch, because this period will soon be over and after that, the day, and if you hurry up and hug your mom, you just might be able to catch the sun rise.

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