

RIVER ROMP



DTH/BRENT CLARK

Parents and their children play in the waters of the Eno River Sunday afternoon at the Festival for the Eno in Durham. Along with providing plenty of entertainment the festival sends an environmental message with educational booths set up by Eno River Association and other groups.

Double Dutch

BRIAN FREDERICK

DANIELE EUBANKS

When we were kids, my father paid my brother and I \$50 not to shoot off fireworks. He told us that this amount would become \$100 when we were teenagers. I'm not sure when this practice ended, but I know I never made it to the Ben Franklin level.

For the first few years, I was content watching the older neighborhood boys shoot them off, knowing I was \$50 richer.

I soon realized, though, that I could just shoot them off at my friend's house and still collect my reward. (I wasn't getting paid \$50 to be honest.) In any case, like most American boys, fireworks fascinated me.

At some point, I decided I'd much rather skip the \$50 and shoot off all the fireworks I wanted in my own driveway.

The novelty eventually evaporated in the brutal July sun. Even lighting up whole bags of fireworks at once lost its appeal. The next logical step in my fireworks craze meant crossing the state line for some contraband: bottle rockets.

(The final illogical step in my fireworks craze resulted in a couple felony counts of criminal use of explosives and some community service, but I'll save that for a future "Serious Lapses in Judgment" column.)

Bottle rocket wars were the true tests of the worth of fireworks. Snakes, sparklers and parachutes were no good in the heat of battle. Ironically, nor were tanks.

The weapon of choice was the two-cent bottle rocket. The larger the better. Colorful Roman candles almost looked like actual weapons.

Stealth attacks usually warranted actual firecrackers. A pack of black cats or jumping jacks in your enemy's bunker did more to frighten and upset them than any bottle rocket ever did.

The largest of these epic battles among my friends took place on an isolated sandbar in the middle of a river. Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn would have fit right in. Except for the fact that every one was tripping acid, stoned and/or drunk on High Life.

From behind bushes, we'd jump out, launch our attack and scurry back. The climax of this battle occurred when I launched the largest of my rockets at the opposition. (This thing looked like a beer can attached to a stick.)

My best friend Jim had been carrying a ridiculous wooden shield that was surely the remnants of a junior high Camelot play. Jim had taken some abuse all day because of the shield, but at that moment, he raised the shield and blocked his face. The rocket hit the shield just as it exploded.

"Ha!" Jim yelled in triumph. We all laughed at the near-miss that would have blinded, if not permanently disfigured him.

The sun soon fell, as did our interest in bottle rockets, sandbars and psychedelics. These days, I'll go to the stadium shows, but I haven't shot off a firework in years. If only I was still collecting \$50.

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A celebratory event that guarantees body-shaking explosions, breathless "oohs" and "aaahhs", and smoke-shrouded bodies is a sure way to get people together.

Flashing and rumbling, fireworks are Viagra in a bottle (rocket). Men may as well mainline testosterone.

In fact, they've become pretty essential to American life. Who wants to go out on date number two if number one was, "fine, but no fireworks"?

I'm a huge fan. When else can every man in America be convinced to venture into the great outdoors and spend some time gazing up at the stars with women?

The only other occasion I can come up with is the launch of a space shuttle, but it's the same sort of rocketry, explosive spectacle, so no dice there.

Give me a couple of pretty sparklers to wave around and all the trappings of tradition (think streamers, families on blankets, wieners) and I'm as happy as a lark. But it seems like men are more concerned with

oomph. The bigger the blast and the higher the trajectory, the more chest-thumpin' good-times grunting they'll do.

As a youngster, my father once stockpiled 25 pounds of fireworks underneath the family couch. Not sure exactly what he was planning there, but it did not flip grandma's skirt up.

When I was a little girl, I got to light the fuse on the Roman candles. My dad and brothers hyped it up so much that when a few sparks finally sputtered into the night sky it was kind of anti-climatic.

It was then they informed me you couldn't buy the "big daddy" fireworks in Florida anymore. The "year of the ban" seemed to virtually castrate the men of my home state.

So, ever since that embarrassing fizzle, our men have been making trips to South Carolina, the last bastion of incendiary masculinity, to smuggle in the mandatory contraband.

Don't get me wrong, I love the big pyrotechnics shows the professionals put on around the Fourth of July. They're gorgeous, and at the risk of sounding a little hokey, they make me feel really proud of my country.

I was darn proud to be an American last Independence Day as my friends and I staked out a little spot next to the Washington Monument in D.C. and took in the most extravagant explosives display I've ever seen.

Independence is nice and everything, but the Fourth of July wouldn't be much of a party without fireworks.

So pass me my little box of sparklers, boys, and I'll let you bring the boom.

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Topic of the Week: Fireworks

Heart Presents 'Step Forward'

The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — An American on the brink of death has received the first self-contained artificial heart in a landmark experimental operation.

Surgeons from the University of Louisville implanted the titanium and plastic pump into the patient at Jewish Hospital on Monday. The hospital released no information on the patient, not even saying whether it was a man or a woman.

"The patient is resting comfortably," the hospital said. Spokeswoman Linda McGinity Jackson said the patient had been "awake and responsive" Tuesday.

Doctors said they expect the new implant to extend the patient's life only a month or so. But the device is considered a technological leap from mechanical hearts used in the '80s, which were attached by wires and tubes to machinery outside the body.

The new grapefruit-sized pump, known as AbioCor, is designed to allow recipients

to maintain a productive lifestyle while wearing it. No wires, no tubes.

Power is sent from a battery pack worn outside the body through the skin to an implanted coil, control package and backup battery. The internal battery, about the size of a typical pager, can work on its own for about 30 minutes between charges — long enough for a patient to take a shower, for example.

Drs. Laman Gray and Robert Dowling, who trained by implanting the pump in baby cows, performed the surgery. Surgical teams at four other hospitals around the country had been trained to do the surgery, but Louisville was first.

Experts hope the experimental heart, made by Abiomed Inc. of Danvers, Mass., will lead to new hope for patients with failing hearts.

"I think it's potentially a major step forward in the artificial heart development," said Dr. David Faxon, president of the American Heart Association.

He stressed that the dream of an

implantable, permanent artificial heart is not yet a reality, adding, "This is obviously an experimental device whose long-term success has to be demonstrated."

David M. Lederman, Abiomed's president and chief executive officer, said earlier this year the company had received Food and Drug Administration approval to perform at least five human trials with the artificial heart. If the experiments are successful, more patients could be added to the trial later, he said.

Patients selected for the trial must be suffering from a chronic, progressive heart disease expected to result in death within 30 days. They had to be ineligible for receiving a human heart transplant.

The goal of the experimental trials with the artificial heart is to "double the life span of these patients" to 60 days, Lederman said.

"Every patient will probably die on the AbioCor," he said. "We need to understand that, with this new technology, we may have failures."

SCHOOLS

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cesses of our schools is living in a community where many parents are professionals who have high expectations for their children."

This year's scores also indicated that the gap between black and white students has narrowed.

According to the district and school data, the reading scores for black student in grades 3 through 8 have improved to 69 percent, increasing 5 percentage points in 2001.

Bivins said much of the success of African-American students is due to staff critically looking at personal education plans and resources to make each stu-

dent successful.

The district has placed a lot of emphasis and resources in trying to close the gap. They have implemented the Blue Ribbon Program as well as the Minority Student Achievement Plan, which specifically deal with African Americans, Bivins said.

Superintendent Neil Pedersen said he is encouraged by the increase.

"Our students' reading, math and writing proficiency levels have increased significantly this year," he said. "Students and their teachers are to be commended. Although we have many ambitious academic goals for our students, a minimum expectation for all students is to be proficient in these areas."

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STUDENT GROUPS

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University community. Cubes cannot be reserved, and events cannot be advertised for more than ten days.

"Sometimes we do have a problem with people coming over and painting over someone else's," said Tammy Lambert, administrative secretary for the Student Union. "You need to follow the rules if you want to use it."

Parker doesn't think that one marketing tactic works better than another.

"I think it sort of goes along with the idea that if people are interested, they're interested, and if they're not, they're not," Parker said. "I think they look at what you have to offer and they try and find exactly what it is they'll be doing and if they want to do it, they'll do it."

Jeffrey Fuchs, director of athletic bands and coordinator of band activities, agrees. In fact, he intentionally makes finding out about the band difficult enough that students have to seek it out.

"The kids who come to our program have committed a great deal of time — usually they come to us with at least seven years of experience doing this thing, making music," Fuchs said. "They come find us."

But several marketing tactics have proven to be successful, and while Pit-sitting is not as effective as it used to be, due to the quantity of organizations, groups are focusing more on word of mouth and one-on-one contact to recruit members.

"The intangibles are all of our students who go back to their high schools wearing their Marching Tar Heels apparel — their jackets, their hats, their shirts — and they talk to their friends about being in the band," Fuchs said.

Lauren Wells, a member of Campus Crusade for Christ, said that in addition to sponsoring a picnic on the quad on the first day of classes, her organization talks to students individually. "We like to take a personal approach as much as possible, so I imagine that we'll probably go door-to-door," Wells said.

Groups are also encouraged to register through the Student Union so they can be included on the University's Web site and be authorized to use Student Union facilities. When they register, organizations receive a handbook that gives them suggestions for how to promote their group.

In addition, the Carolina Union Activities Board is trying to promote other campus organizations by co-sponsoring events, offering more forums and developing more creative programs.

"One thing we're thinking of for next year is planning a hip-hop week, and we're looking at co-sponsorships with the Black Student Movement, Hip-Hop Nation (and) the BCC (Black Cultural Center)," said Kristi Booker, forum chairwoman.

Many groups this year are also sending mass e-mails to students about their organization as well as placing ads in publications that send special editions home to freshmen. Boyd said the Campus Y also tries to co-sponsor events with other organizations.

But Boyd said the key to whether an organization sinks or swims lies in its appeal. "You have to meet a need that people don't feel like is already met," Boyd said. "There's a million groups that work with kids. There's a million groups that have canned food drives. It's like finding a niche that no one else has found or has offered yet."

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CBS Hopes to Spice Up Sequel of 'Big Brother'

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — CBS' "Big Brother," which showed that reality television could be simultaneously offensive and dull, hopes to make amends in its second season when the show debuts at 8 p.m. tonight.

The new players who will be stuck in the "Big Brother 2" house for three months amid prying cameras are aggressive, uninhibited and determined to win the \$500,000 prize, the show's producer says.

When "Big Brother" debuted last summer as part of a reality television craze imported from Europe, the idea of putting strangers in a house filled with unblinking cameras drew strong reaction. Some condemned it as a cheap exer-

cise in voyeurism, a bid to match the sexual titillation that European viewers got as their reward for enduring the show's essential tedium.

The show's Dutch producer, Endemol Entertainment, tried tinkering to improve the lackluster ratings, at one point offering \$50,000 to any player who would scam to make room for a newcomer, an attractive blonde. That drew further outcries, with one incensed viewer comparing Endemol to a zookeeper poking a stick at caged monkeys.

Trying to make repairs as the show aired was just one of the problems with the original, according to Arnold Shapiro, a veteran producer brought in by CBS to shape "Big Brother 2."

"It's a new show that happens to be called 'Big Brother,'" Shapiro said.

"We're giving it our best shot. The question is whether the audience is going to give it another chance."

Changes will be immediately apparent, he said. In "Big Brother 2," players will be tucked inside the house within the first 15 minutes tonight and will immediately face the first of many challenges: Earning their food. The house itself has been remodeled to make it less spartan and more inviting inside and out. The chicken coop that took up part of the back yard, for instance, has given way to a basketball hoop.

Voting procedures have changed, with contestants instead of viewers giving players the boot. And the series has been cut from six to three times a week, airing Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

But the most serious flaw, as Shapiro saw it, was uninteresting casting. The

3,500 applicants for his "Big Brother" were culled to pick the liveliest combination, he said.

The six men and six women range in age from 26 to 46 and come from 10 states. Shapiro said psychological screenings showed the contestants are able to handle the experience of being recorded by 38 cameras and 62 microphones — and to make the most of it. In other words, this group might not be as prudish as the last.

"We're not setting out to make it salacious," Shapiro said. "We're setting out to make it as real as possible by casting people who are uninhibited — and I mean that in every sense of the word — and who are not afraid to speak their mind or express their sexual or romantic interest in another houseguest if they feel it."

TECHNOLOGY

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ety of software geared toward research.

According to the web site of ATN's Center for Bioinformatics, "the Center's focus is to enhance the quality and competitiveness of UNC-CH research by promoting computational technologies through educational opportunities and technical support." There are already a

number of similar programs in place at UNC, and more on the way.

"We'll know we've arrived when students and faculty members on this campus take their computers for granted," Moore says on her own web site. "My goal is to make information technology as transparent as the electricity that lights our classrooms."

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