SGA theme-park party invites 7,000 for free

Expense misdirected, some say, but they still plan to attend tonight

Alex Barcock
Staff Writer

Tonight the Student Government Association invites UCF students to attend Universal’s Islands of Adventure for the most expensive SGA-sponsored event of the year. While interest is high, some members of campus groups that were denied funding this year say they wish that money had been spent funding their organizations and events instead.

The $125,000 party is supported by student activity fees, where all SGA money originates, and guarantees free admission for up to 7,000 UCF students. A valid ID is required; no guest will be permitted at the after-hours event, which runs from 9 p.m. to midnight.

Yet while she hopes to attend, Hope Whitley can’t help but wonder whether more students would have benefited if some of those dollars had been steered her way.

Please See Stragglers on 3

Designed with comfort in mind

Environment can inhibit or induce the learning process, experts say

Joel Addington
Staff Writer

When students attend classes in certain buildings on campus, they often must learn in less-than-ideal conditions. Whether it’s uncomfortable temperatures or uncomfortable chairs, many classrooms leave much to be desired. Junior David Morales, for one, would change things about his classrooms in the Visual Arts Building.

“It would be nice if we had cushioned chairs,” Morales, 21, said. “Or a lead a desk with enough room for my textbook and taking notes.”

Other students, such as freshman Katherine Bold, 19, complain about the temperature in their classrooms. “It’s always freezing in the Classroom

Please See Designers on 4

Computer work stations are often a sore spot for uncomfortable users.
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Stragglers may have to pay their way into park

The difference: More students are expected, and this time they will have the park all to themselves. The free admission could draw between 5,000 and 7,000 students, SGA officials estimate. The number could be more than 7,000 since students show up for other campus events.

For those who need a ride, SGA has allocated $1,000 to rent at least four to five buses, according to Visual Arts Building parking lot at 7 p.m. and depart from islands of Adventure at 7 p.m. for the return trip to campus.

Heather Thompson, president of the Student Government Association, said her club has received more money than most campus clubs, and as a result, supports SGA's expense for the event. Members of her group plan to attend Islands of Adventure, including Thompson.

The draw of free admission and the possibility of a completely empty park was too much for a debate team.

"There won't be any lines," said Besold. "It came out of nowhere too," she said, "I paid for it."
Designers try to improve learning with better technology, lighting and desks

FROM PAGE 1

[1] Building, and you can't change the temperature," Bold said.

Experts say the environment in which students learn can either enhance or undermine the learning process. Further, they say students learn much better in classrooms with minimal auditory and visual obstructions and comfortable surro- 
gounds. Dickson majors in mind, UCF designers try to make the university's newer buildings conducive to learning as possible.

According to an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education, the Classroom Design Manual offers simple guidelines for universities to follow in designing classrooms. They include:

- Students should be able to see what's presented.
- Students should be able to hear what's said, "free from noise and distortions."
- Windows are in high demand.
- Light- ing, chairs, a room's layout, temperature and furniture debate whether to include summer. This is worse than with working technology and I students work together on exer-

Newman said the older buildings on campus, such as the VAB and the Math and Physics Building, need major renovations. Another older building, the Education Building, is being remodeled.

"Classroom Math and Physics Building needs a lot of work and will eventually be completely renovated," Newman said.

Added Dickson: "The Math and Physics Building is not well equipped and the lighting is not good."

Poor lighting can negatively impact learning, according to Daniel Nienaber, who works as a classroom-design consultant and wrote a book titled "Hard Facts on Smart Classroom Design." In the Chronicle article,

Nienaber said, "There is a lot of research that shows that the more light there is in a room, the more likely you are to get interaction."

"Considering the value of natural light, planners often debate whether to include windows in classrooms. The new Classroom 1 Building, for example, is windowless, while the older buildings have holes but has small classrooms, said Newman."

Some professors see windows as an inconvenience while others enjoy natural light and knowing what the weather is like before they go outside. "Windows detract from PowerPoint, so you have to take time to close them," Dickson said.

While some professors enjoy classrooms with windows, others prefer technological features. "Give me a classroom with working technology and I am a happy teacher," said Pamela Gries, an associate professor of criminal justice and legal studies, who teaches in the Health and Public Affairs Building.

"I use PowerPoint for lectures," Gries said. "I supplement my lectures with discussions of Web sites, so Internet access is essential for me."

Classrooms equipped with technology are also in high demand and greatly enhance student learning. This is especially true, the Health and Public Affairs Building.

"The Classroom Building I, which features wireless network access throughout the building, and the Health and Public Affairs Buildings are among the most high-tech buildings on campus. "I've only taught in Classroom classrooms, and none of them are there, except exceptions," Peter Bied, assistant professor of hospitality management, said.

"Whenever there is a technological glitch, they seem to be repaired promptly."

"Classroom I has in-ceiling document cameras so you don't ever need an overhead. They have VCR tape capability, CD-ROM, and Internet access," Bied said. "The only thing that is missing at this point is DVD capability. It is just fantastic."

Classroom designs are function specific. For example, if a classroom is going to be used for large lecture classes, an auditorium-style room with tiered seating might be consid-

There are at least two other departments involved in classroom design. The Office of Instructional Resources is responsible for the UCF multimedia classrooms on campus, and the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning is responsible for the four studio classrooms on campus.

Studio classrooms are designed to enhance a more independent student-to-student learning process, rather than the traditional lecture and note-

Ruth Marshall, the director of the Office of Instructional Resources, said faculty consid-

"These classes are usually a lab-type setting where students work together on exer-

Ruth Marshall, the director of the Office of Instructional Resources, said faculty consid-

"The function of each room and the number seats in each room are determined by facili-

With "Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning," said Ruth Marshall, the director of the Office of Instructional Resources.

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Civil libertarians not alone in raising their concerns

After revelations of previous misuse of surveillance powers by federal agencies, including the discovery in 1974 that the FBI and foreign intelligence agencies had spied on more than 10,000 U.S. citizens, including Martin Luther King Jr., this is specifically what Matthew Milbank, 24, a senior and president of Objectivist Club at UCF, doesn't understand. "The focus should be on Americans and more on terrorist countries that the Justice Department has listed as sponsoring terrorism. Iran and Syria are places that they list as huge supporters of terrorism, yet we are not focusing on those," he said.

He said these changes suspend due process and threaten public interest. "The manner of gathering evidence and going to a judge was worked fine. I don't see why they are changing it, or how changing this process combats terrorism. There should be due process for everyone."

The changes "went through quickly because of patriotism that follows a national event," in this case the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, said Drew Lauten, a professor who teaches American Constitutional law.

"The Supreme Court has ruled in other types of cases that in war times, free speech and civil liberties can become more restricted and this was no different in investigative activity, he added.

Allison K. Reuther is the director of civil rights in the office of Florida Attorney general Charlie Crist, a Republican. "Constitutions are not expressing any concerns about the Patriot Act to us," she said.

But it's a different story in the office of U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, a Democrat. "We have had very limited positive feedback," said Robert Lake, a staff member in Nelson's Orlando office. "Most of the feedback has been negative by concerned constituents."

Civil liberties organizations and some conservative groups are now raising the same concerns because it appears that many of the act's provisions had not been carefully studied before they were embraced.

Chief among the concerns are that it expands surveillance — in the form of wiretaps, search warrants and subpoenas — with reduced checks and balances to protect civil liberties.

The government may now spy on any individual's Web surfing by merely telling a judge that the probing could lead to information that is "relevant" to an ongoing criminal investigation.

The person spied on does not have to be the target of the investigation. Moreover, the government is not obligated to report to the court on the person spied upon what it has done.

Another provision deals with registries. The FBI is allowed to keep at least 18 different registries, which can now trace from phone to phone, computer to computer, without those in the registry knowing they are being used by a suspect or target of a surveillance order. In addition, the government is not required to have to show to a court that a particular information or communication to be sought is connected to a crime or investigation.

Malenius, the press secretary said the Patriot Act and Patriot Act II "are just modernizing crime-fighting techniques."

"But he can understand the rush job in a time of emergency that still doesn't make it right. "There is no evidence that our previous civil liberties posed a barrier to the effective tracking or prosecution of criminals," he said.

Joseph Burk, 21, is vice chairman of the UCF Young Republicans and disagrees with Milbank's thinking. "The public is supportive of it being passed quickly; they understood then, and the public opinion was that people wanted to give up freedom for safety. Public opinion was a factor in it effectively going through. Only now do people feel that they were giving up some things, he said. "If you have nothing to hide, why do you care?"

Gordon Wertsch, 20, a senior and registered Republican, voiced the ideas behind the Patriot Act are good and seem necessary for better investigations and protection. But the way the government is going about it is wrong. "These ideas go against the Constitution. They eliminate the checking-up element, which protect people and creates fairness," he said.

Lauten said that in his classes his students discuss what the Constitution permits the government to do. "It may regulate the time, place and manner of what you do when you do it, where you do it and how you do it. If it's not so much what the activists are saying but how they are doing it, why they are doing it, and the time they are doing it," he added.

"No one has an absolute right to say anything they want to at any time. And I feel that some activists seem to believe that, that the First Amendment says "You shall not impede the freedom of speech. Well, not exactly. You can't yell "fire" in a crowd, or threaten a person's safety. That destroys the public order. So, it's always a balance," Wertsch said.

"Weing" doesn't feel that the current administration has an agenda. "If we were trying to solve this problem, I could make more specific choices. But in looking for the best solution, eliminating checks and balances portions is a mistake."

"Laws don't discriminate. It's the people who improve the laws — investigators and police officers — who have the potential to abuse without anyone checking on them," he added.

"The current administration has an agenda. If we were trying to solve this problem, I could make more specific choices. But in looking for the best solution, eliminating checks and balances portions is a mistake."

"Laws don't discriminate. It's the people who improve the laws — investigators and police officers — who have the potential to abuse without anyone checking on them," he added.

USA Today recently reported that federal probes of alleged civil rights violations by police nearly doubled to proceed. From 1991 to 2001, the Justice department looked at 1,215 complaints of civil rights abuses by law enforcement. It filed changes in changes in just 3 percent of those cases.

Yet Burk is resolute in saying that he trusts and supports the government. "They have information and know more than the public," he said.

Said Lauten: "People fail to remember that Abe Lincoln, the great emancipator and Civil War Democrat, imprisoned newspaper editors in a time of war who wrote bad things about him. He restricted civil liberties. This type of act is not something without historic precedents."

"I haven't seen anything that those that balance too far in favor of the government," he said. "You have to consider the context of the times."

He added: "This is why we have courts. If there are constitutional problems, they can be addressed by the courts."

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th, they can apply for optional practical training which allows them to work for one full year after graduation. Post that, the only option is the H-1B visa.

Because employers are looking to hire applicants long-term, these restrictions cause employ­ers to overlook international stu­dents when hiring interns, Parker said.

An unstable economy and stricter immigration laws also pose barriers for international stu­dents in an already challenging market, Parker said.

"It is a challenge to find internships and jobs today when the economy is down compared to several years ago," Parker said. "Also, there is a heightened con­cern in the U.S. about immigra­tion status due to current events."

Bernardinez said internships are also less abundant now as many international students are turned away because compa­nies say that they do not have enough experience. Bernardinez said that how can we get the experience if companies are not willing to hire international students? Someone has to give us that initial opportunity.

Meanwhile, Syracuse University has shut down its exchange pro­gram in Hong Kong, and other American universities are reconsidering their study-abroad programs in the region.

"The move to suspend clas­ses for nine days, starting last Saturday, was made in agree­ment among the heads of Hong Kong's eight universities, in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease, known as severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS. The syndrome has infected more than 1,000 people worldwide and killed at least 89. Hong Kong has been considered the epicenter of the disease, with at least 300 cases and 15 deaths."

University officials are urg­ing students to stay at home and use this week as a reading peri­od. Libraries and other facilities at most universities will remain open. Several of the universities are disinfecting and cleaning campus buildings and posting information about the disease on their Web sites. Classes are scheduled to resume on Monday.

Programs of American uni­versities in Hong Kong and China are beginning to be can­celed or reconsidered because of the epidemic.

Syracuse University, which runs a study-abroad program based at City University of Hong Kong, has arranged for the 31 students in the program to return to the United States on Wednesday, said Kevin Morrow, a spokesman for Syracuse. The students have completed most of their course work for the semes­ter, he said, and will be able to finish up through independent study or an internship.

Syracuse has also canceled two short programs that were scheduled to begin in May in mainland China, Morrow said.

Princeton University adminis­trators are deliberating over whether to proceed with their summer language program in Beijing, scheduled to begin in June, said Perry Link, a profes­sor of East Asian studies at Princeton.

Paleontologist Paul Sereno has encountered some of the weirdest creatures that ever walked the earth. Yet some of the scariest things he's discovered aren't likely to become extinct anytime soon. Sad to say, mutual fund management fees will probably outlast us all. That's why Dr. Sereno was afraid of getting eaten alive. So he tuned to a company famous for keeping the costs down. That meant more money for him and less for the monsters.

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Supreme Court hears the first challenge in generation to using race in college admission process

STEPHEN HENDERSON
KENNEDY CENTER WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON

The Supreme Court heard its first challenge in a generation to using race in the college admission process Tuesday as two of its central justices emerged as the most conflicted members of the high court.

Justice Anthony M. Kennedy and Sandra Day O'Connor expressed consternation about the role affirmative action should play in admission decisions.

Kennedy said he would support affirmative action, and O'Connor said Monday that she was an opponent of affirmative action. But both justices also expressed misgivings about the way it has been practiced.

In a courtroom filled with cultural icons and political dignitaries who came to witness the historic arguments, both justices expressed strong doubts about the assertions—made by white students who were rejected by the University of Michigan—that race is an impermissible factor for colleges to consider.

Justice Kennedy and O'Connor also asked pointed questions of the university's attorneys about whether Michigan's programs go beyond legality and how long they might need to be in place.

O'Connor's varying points of view have been discussed almost since the suits were filed, and many have considered her to be the key vote in the court's decision.

Kennedy's past opinions suggest that he might be less on the fence about these issues but also open to changing his mind.

Many think the court's opinion may unfold around the pair's middle-ground positions because the other justices are so firmly divided. And some court watchers said Tuesday that Kennedy and O'Connor's struggle reflects a deeper tension on the court in its desire to deal with race discrimination, to ensure academic freedom and to practice judicial restraint.

"They've got to look at all of those principles and try to balance them in this decision," said Victor Rabiner, a New Haven, Conn., lawyer who filed a brief supporting the university on behalf of several black majors.

"They need a way to be able to look at these policies without getting too entangled in the educational process or to be second-guessing decisions made by educators."

Kennedy also seemed to be searching for a way to balance those interests in the arguments. If the justices struck down Michigan's policies, he asked, would it be to create a better plan that would satisfy the courts or the university?

"The cases, which separate at an important point in the educational process or to be second-guessing decisions made by educators," Kennedy said.

The justices will make their decision by July.

O'Connor first challenged Kolbo to establish how he could prove that race—and not some other factor—prevented his clients from being accepted to the university, and then moved to his claim that race cannot be used in admissions.

"You have some precedents out there that you have to come to grips with, because the court obviously has upheld the use of race," O'Connor said. "You're speaking in absolutes, and it isn't quite that."

Kennedy then broke into several inquiries that questioned whether the small number of minorities on campus was a legitimate concern for universities to try to correct.

"If your after your after ... your after the ... there's an under-representation, there's no cause for the state or the government or its educational experts to be concerned?" Kennedy asked incredulously. "I should think that's a very legitimate concern on the part of the state."

Kennedy was equally hard on Maurice Mahoney and John Payton, the attorneys for the university.

Kennedy suggested several times that there was a reasonable debate over whether Michigan's desire to produce a "critical mass" of minority students on its campus was a legally permissible quota system, which would be illegal. Kennedy asked Mahoney if that were true, "you lose, correct?"

Mahoney said no, but Kennedy kept hammering the point, doubting whether the university's focus was anything beyond a quota, because its staff during admissions deliberations is constantly checking "to see what the numbers are based on race."

O'Connor was less relenting with the university's attorneys, but she expressed reservations about how long the university might have to consider race.

"In all the programs which this court has upheld, you could see an end to it." O'Connor said. "There is none in this, is there. How do we deal with that?"
Bush's references to Scripture in his speeches over the top, students say

From Page 3

himself," Caldwell said.

"Privately, Bush even talked of being chosen by the grace of God to lead at that moment."

On another occasion, Bush said, "I believe God wants me to be president, but if that doesn't happen, it's OK."

Warren Goldstein, an assistant professor of sociology at UCF, said the combination of religion and politics is always dangerous. He also said the idea that Bush believes he has been chosen by God to lead the country is scary.

"I don't feel comfortable with those statements," Goldstein said. "I would prefer when [leaders] are driven by more rational considerations."

People justify all sorts of things when they have a God, [said] war is most often in the name of God," he said. "Some examples in history include the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition. Political leaders often use religion for their political purposes. And if one believes his leadership is a divine prophecy, he can justify all sorts of human atrocities."

Freshman Christopher Berryman agrees that leaders led by religious convictions may make decisions that may not benefit the nation as a whole.

"If someone believes they have a mission under God, they might be inclined to do something as foolish as ignore the United Nations, break alliances and put our soldiers at risk by putting them into a war they might not be able to win," Berryman said.

Harden said she believes UCF students support Bush if they do not want to live with the threat of terrorism.

"It seems to me that a lot of students respect Bush for his character and ability to make bold decisions," she said.

During a time of war, presidential addresses are meant to answer questions about precipitating world events. During these speeches, Bush's prolific use of Bible scripture has caught the attention of many students.

"Sometimes he gets carried away," she said. "I think it's hard for people who strongly hold to their faith to realize that other people have other beliefs."

But Harden believes Scripture brings healing to the American people.

"This country was founded by Christian men who were not afraid to proclaim their faith," she said. "I respect him for proclaiming his faith."

Goldstein said the real question is not what role Bush's religion plays in his decision-making process, but rather, how sincere he is in his speeches.

"The difference between sincere and cynical actors is that sincere actors are taken in by their own act," he said. "The question is: Is Bush cynical or sincere? What does he believe in?"

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Students deserve comfortable classrooms

UF needs to heed the advice of classroom design experts more and upgrade all its classrooms to maximize the learning potential of UCF students.

The older buildings on campus have a certain charm, but their charm cannot supersede their shortcomings in terms of design and technology. The Math and Physics buildings, for example, have poor lighting, which detracts from the learning experience of students who have classes there.

This is not to say that the newer buildings are perfect. These buildings and classrooms also need and deserve long-overdue upgrades they need and deserve.

Additionally, students who are too hot or too cold when in class will not learn as much as students who do not face such distractions.

Visual barriers, such as poorly lit classrooms or obstructed views, and audio barriers, such as poor acoustics or external noise from construction, can have negative impacts.

Othor antiquated buildings also need upgrades. Buildings such as the Chemistry Building, Phillips Hall and Calhoun Hall, all built before the advent of the Internet, need to be brought into the 21st century. UCF should make it a priority to have all its buildings well lit, well insulated from weather conditions and external distractions, and wired.

While UCF constructs new edifices, it neglects its older ones. These buildings and classrooms need better designs. As long as the university uses older buildings for courses, students will continue to learn in less-than-desirable environments. Until these buildings get the long-overdue upgrades they need and deserve, students will suffer the consequences of learning in a poor environment.

Learning environment is but one of many factors that contribute to the overall educational mission of universities such as UCF, but it is absolutely matters. Students who face visual or audio distractions in their classes likely will not learn as much as students who do not face such distractions.

We asked in an earlier editorial what the student body's money, the money we pay for our education, is spending to throw this party on anything he feels that the money would best be used so to facilitate learning in college do not work at all. As paying customers of the university students deserve the best learning environment possible, in all buildings.

OUR STANCE: Participate in event tonight at Universal

Tonight, Student Body President Marco Pena will host his $125,000 going-away party at Islands of Adventure. Universal Knights, as the Student Government Association has dubbed the festivities, will allow the first 7,000 students who show up to enter the park for free.

If 7,000 students show up, the event would qualify as a success, considering the low turnout at so many UCF events. Hopefully 7,000 students will end the semester on a high note.

SGA is providing four free buses for students. Since Islands of Adventure is so far away, SGA should have provided even more buses to transport students to the park.

UCF students are eligible for free admission, and they all paid for it. SGA should help them get there.

Pena could have used the $125,000 that he is spending to throw this party on anything he wants. The money comes out of executive accounts, including his discretionary fund.

He feels that the money would best be used so to facilitate learning in college because he wants his family's kids to afford the best.
**Front-line reporters embedded in bias**

**INSPIRED THOUGHTS**

**ADAM SHIVER - STAFF WRITER**

Reporting from the front lines, Mike Riegel. Today we have come across refugees fleeing Basra. We have seen the best of high winds kicking up blinding sandstorms and got to see firsthand as the 1st Marine Division laid down heavy ground fire. And also to note: I feel George W. Bush is a bumbling fool. Optimized? Yes. The job of a journalist? Never.

Peter Arnett has shown us exactly what not to do as a reporter: whether it is for a newspaper, television station, radio network or news magazine.

The television media has become inundated with reporters’ biases and opinions, and the recent judgment of Arnett is just an extreme example of this trend. The New York Sun and MSNBC reporter recently agreed to an impromptu television interview on CNN. The only problem was, Arnett was on the wrong end of the microphone.

During his interview with the Iraqi television station, Arnett stated that the U.S. war plan “has failed because of Iraqi resistance.” He also made mention of the fact that his war reporting “helps those who oppose the war.” NBC News was anything but about the views Arnett expressed in the interview, and fired him early Monday morning.

Arnett has apologized for this misjudgment and the bad press he has brought to his former employer. He unfortunately forgot to apologize to all real reporters whose reputations he has tarnished. By real reporters, I mean those who present the news objectively every day in their stories and reports. It is not the job of the media to give us their opinions; I’ll look for those on the editorial page of any daily newspaper or turn on a television talk show such as Hannity and Colmes. I expect to have someone speaking off their opinion, whether I agree with it or not, in forums like those. I certainly do not expect to have my news laden with biases.

Jim Phillips of the Phillips Philo on Real Radio 104.1FM was speaking just recently on embedded reporters. He, along with many callers to his show, felt that independent reporters are needed in Iraq, and I have to agree with this point.

Embedded journalists are governed by the military forces that are covering whether or not they realize it. If something unspeakable were to happen that placed the United States government or the military in a bad light, would those embedded reporters be able to report those details? If they reported the truth, they might be expelled from the military unit they were embedded with, ending their career-making assignment. If they manipulated the coverage in favor of the military, they might sacrifice their own journalistic integrity, but their careers would continue undamaged.

An independent reporter should be free of opinions and should give it to the public standards.

A reporter’s position is to be on the backside of a micro­phone, not fielding questions from other reporters.

Gatherers Christopher Amold can be reached at cchristopher@ufl.edu

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**Just another war opinion**

**MIKE RIEGEL - STAFF WRITER**

The United States will not win this war. The Iraqis will not win this war. After the first American soldier fell, this country lost the war the same holds true for Iraq. The fact is that there are no winners in war, only victims.

(Amount) everyone supports the troops. Even those who are against the war have respect for those who are putting their life on the line. It’s dis­missive and the mark of a simple mind to say that anti­war protesters are anti­American. Speaking your mind is one of the most American pastimes one can engage in.

There is a good reason to liberate Iraq — it is but nothing to do with U.N. resolutions. Slaughtering innocents is an evil dis­tractor that has committed thou­sands of atrocities against innocent men, women and children. (Most) people who support the war aren’t crazed death mongers who want to see innocent Iraqi civilians die.

There is a great American tradi­tion of defending the defense­less against tyrannical rulers in other countries.

But it’s never a good one. This war will not be fought by the people who started it, or their children. The soldiers don’t decide where to go and who to fight. The decision makers never see the front line, but if they did, would there be a war right now? Or ever?

Heroes will leave this country and go to Iraq. Most of them won’t come back, because they will have died on an Iraqi battlefield thousands of miles from home. Iraq will lose its share of heroes too, although it’s hard, for some to imagine. They’ll be closer to home, but they’d be just the same.

People do not like the United States for going to war with Iraq. Long after the war has ended, citizens of other countries will harbor rage against this country. That rage may one day manifest itself in the form of another war or terror­ist attack.

War is full of rules. But neither side will follow them all of the time.

War is full of exploding smart bombs. But the smartest bomb is the one that’s never used.

War is full of stories. But most of us won’t hear them.

The American media does not know everything, and what they report may not be the truth. It may be dissemination on my part to say so, but there are times when reading, hearing, and even seeing might not nec­essarily constitute believing. Certain media outlets are even (gasp) biased toward one political military, or another.

There is information about this war that we don’t know. We will never know it, and that is how our government operates. Could this information sway public opinion one way or another regarding this war? It very well could, but our democ­ratic society has entrusted certain people to make these decisions for us.

Iraq may be liberated by this war, but there will be no lasting democracy that will take the place of the current dictatorship. Democracy could be forced on a country, and it’s historically an unsuccessful and difficult form of govern­ment. We might feel that our system is the best, and that we’re always right, but that doesn’t mean the Iraqi people will agree with us. This will be very soon, or at least I pray it will. The United States most likely will be victorious. When that happens, Iraq will no longer be our enemy, but a friend in desperate need of our resources. If we truly believe we are fighting to make the world a better, safer place, we won’t leave our friends behind to pick up the pieces.
Bulls hault Knights’ rally for 8-5 win

Kristy Shone

The UCF baseball team rallied off four runs with two outs in the seventh inning, but it wasn’t enough, as South Florida won 8-5 Tuesday in Tampa. The loss is the second in a row for the Knights, the first time they’ve lost consecutive games this season.

Senior Ryan Bear sparked UCF’s two-out rally in the seventh, knocking a bases-loaded single up the middle to score Jon Cooper and David Mann. Cooper reached on a fielder’s choice and Mann drew a walk. A passed ball scored Nathaniel Krug and advanced Bear to second. Bear scored when Dee Brown knocked a double down the left-field line, making the score 7-4. The threat ended when Blaine Schulte grounded out to the pitcher for the third out.

The Bulls jumped out to an early 5-0 lead in the fourth inning off UCF starter Von David Sterntuch. USF scored five runs on five hits. Sterntuch picked up the loss for the Knights dropping him to 1-5 on the year. The senior gave up five runs on eight hits in four innings.

South Florida added a run in the six off reliever Matt Dec and the Knights added one in the eighth, but it wasn’t enough as UCF fell to 20-11 on the year.

Fox struck out a career-high six batters in his two innings of relief. One game after his 11th-game hitting streak ended, Bear went three-for-four with two RBIs for the Knights.

The Knights return to Jay Bergman Field for a three-game series against the Atlantic Sun’s Campbell. Friday’s game starts at 7 p.m., while the first pitch for Saturday’s double-header is scheduled for 3 p.m.

For the GOOD OF THE TEAM

Chris Bernardy

In the far too tangible world of sports, dominated by numbers and individual statistics, ways of measuring a player’s commitment to a team are tough to come by. But during the UCF baseball team’s final turn at bat in the second game of a double-header against Jacksonville State last Saturday, Ryan Bear proved just how much of a team player he truly is.

With the Knights behind 8-7 and down to their final two outs, with no runners on base, the senior watched a 5-0 pitch go by and took a walk, placing the tying run on first.

It may not seem like much, especially because the next batter hit into a game-ending double play.

But consider that Bear came into the game with a 19-game hitting streak and had failed to prolong that stretch in his previous three at-bats. Rather than taking an ill-advised hack at the 5-0 pitch, he sacrificed his own accomplishments to give his team a better chance at winning the game.

“I just try to take the same approach every day, get good swings on balls,” Bear said. “Just try to get anything going that we could to help the team.”

Such is the way of Bear. The Knights’ first baseman just goes out to the pitcher for the third one in the game-ending double play.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

592 Currently has highest slugging percentage of the Knights.

347 Currently has third-highest batting average of the Knights.

23 Number of runs Bear has scored this year. Second highest on team.

Senior Ryan Bear has proven he’s a team player

SEE Bear on 14
The Central Florida Future would like to graciously thank their partners, The Village at Alafaya Club and The Village at Science Drive in the fight to make cancer history!


We would also like to say special thanks to Jonco, Inc. for the benefit night at McDonald's UCF. Please join The Future, The Village at Alafaya Club, The Village at Science Drive, and 120 other teams Friday night at the Relay for Life at the UCF Arena. Help to raise money, honor those we have lost and those still fighting!

We are honored to support the American Cancer Society in their Relay for Life campaign. Please join us and make cancer history!

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Bear made switch from right to first

FROM PAGE 12

trying to help the team as much as possible.

He brings a lot of hardness to the baseball team," Coach Jay Bergman said. "He’s a good student, a good person off the field. Real quiet person, very laid back. Very competitive."

That description also personifies his play this year, quiet but competitive. His numbers are solid but not spectacular. As of last Saturday he had a batting average of .347, third on the team behind Clay Tomberner and David Mann. His six stolen bases are second to those same two. He has 21 runs batted in, tied with Dee Brown for second best. And his three home runs put him even with Blaine Schulte for tops among the Knights.

Overall the 6-foot-2, 220-pound right-hander has been UCF’s best all-around hitter, topping the team in slugging percentage (.562) and walking (15) more than he strikes out (10). Yet Bear isn’t fully satisfied.

"I’m still not 100 percent," Bear said. "My swing, where it needs to be, there’s still definitely room for improvement. But it’s everything thing working to improve that."

Though he began the year batting farther down in the lineup, his performance has turned him into the team’s clean-up hitter. It’s a role he enjoys because of the opportunities to drive in runs. His stepping up in the middle of the order has been vital as the rest of the Knights’ power hitters have struggled to find consistency.

"He’s a great job for us offensively," Bergman said. "He’s been batting at cleanup spot, and that’s a hard place to bat because you’re always going to get curveballs and a lot of hard pitches."

After spending two years at Gulf Coast Community College in Panama City, Bear transferred to UCF and started 20 games last season. He hit .285 in 30 games overall, with a home run, 10 RBIs and four stolen bases.

He played in the outfield in 2002, where he proved to be a solid fielder with a strong arm. He was originally penciled in as the starting right fielder this season, but once Mann proved himself capable of playing left field, a re-shuffling of the defense became necessary. Brown moved from left field to right, Rich Wallace from first base to third, and Bear took over at first.

"I just like playing the outfield," Bear said. "I like being able to throw the ball around a little bit more and just being out there and being able to roam around."

Still, Bear added that it doesn’t matter which position he plays and he put the team ahead of himself by willingly making the move.

As a senior, Bear fills a natural leadership role. There are only two other seniors among the Knights everyday position players — Wallace and second baseman Nathan Knag — further enhancing the need for seniors to provide younger players with a model for success.

"We’ve got a bunch of younger guys that look up to us seniors, and I think it’s good for us to come to field and work hard every day," Bear said. "Have a good work ethic and show them how to work hard and how to come out and play hard every day.

"Whether at the plate, in the field or in the dugout, Bear has been one of the most valuable players on the team. Through the Golden Knights have not met the standards set by their most recent predecessors, they still have an above-average record and a healthy chance to win their third consecutive Atlantic Sun Conference title. For Bear that’s an important goal to reach.

"We’ve got a lot of potential on this team and we just haven’t quite clicked on a consistent basis like we need to go on, to go to the postseason and advance," Bear said. "But that’s definitely our goal and that’s what we work for every week in practice and every day."

Cupp and Best earn conference honors

The Atlantic Sun Conference announced Monday that UCF’s Katie Cupp has been named the women’s softball league’s Pitcher of the Week, while Stephanie Best took Player of the Week honors for the second consecutive week. It marks the second time this season that UCF players have captured both the pitcher and player of the week honor.

Cupp, the A-Sun’s Preseason Pitcher of the Year, made three appearances over the past week, pitching 20 innings, striking out 24 and allowing only one earned run. She finished the week with a 2-0 record, including two shutouts. She had an impressive 8.35 ERA and pitched her second one-hitter of the year in a 3-0 win over Georgia State.

Best finished the week with a .429 batting average and a .782 on-base percentage. She slugged two home runs for the week, pushing her season total to 11. Best was 9-for-21 at the plate, hitting .429 with four doubles.

It is the third time Best has earned the player of the week honors this season, while Cupp is the second Knight to be named the pitcher of the week this year.

The Knights travel to Nashville to play Lipscomb on Friday, followed by an Atlantic Sun game against Belmont on Saturday.

Larsen leads UCF at Florida Relays

Sophomore Ann Larsen highlighted the list of UCF women’s track and field athletes at the Florida Relays on Friday.

Larsen placed 11th in the high jump with a mark of 5-feet, 6-inches — short the NCAA Regional qualifying mark of 5-7 that she has achieved on two previous occasions this season.

Other top-20 performances came in the 1500-meter event. Freshman Astrid Claessens placed 14th with a time of 4:45.62, followed by sophomore Amy Giles in 15th at 4:46.99.

Meanwhile, freshman Kim Wuppsh shaved time off her season best with a time of 14.63 in the 100-meter hurdles, while sophomore Valesy Martinez erased a hundredth of a second of her season best in the 100-meter hurdles, finishing in 21.93.

Freshman Andre Morrow

Please see Morrow on 15
Morrow broke own record in steeplechase

FROM PAGE 14

broke her own record as she placed fourth in the 3,000-meter steeplechase at the Florida Relays on Thursday.

It was the event in 1:19.14—shattering her previous record of 1:19.40, which she set at the UCF Invitational on March 8. That mark also stands as a UCF Stadium record.

For the second day in a row, senior Kelly Rollod earned 4,872 points to finish sixth in the heptathlon.

The Knights began the dual meet with 3,018 points carrying over from day one. Rollod, the reigning Atlantic Sun Conference's Athlete of the Week, started the day in the long jump, where she placed eighth with a mark of 17 feet, 8.25 inches. She then took seventh in the javelin with a throw of 101.01, and capped the day with a time of 22:45.40 for a fifth-place showing in the 5,000-meter run.

Junior Sue Dillman ended the evening with a personal best of 18:01.98 for 15th place in the 5,000 meters.

Up next, the Golden Knights travel to the South Florida Invitational in Tampa on Friday and Saturday.

UCF Youth Sports Day a hit

The UCF Alumni Association and Athletics Department played host to 375 elementary students on Saturday for the annual UCF Youth Sports Festival.

The youth sports festival is one of our best events. It gives us the chance to work with the alumni and their kids as well as the rest of the Orlando community. They get to see what UCF is about,” said Tom Messina, associate vice president and executive director of the UCF Alumni Association.

Athletics Director Steve Orsini, whose daughter Angela was participating in the cheerleading clinic, also sees it as a neighborhood fixture.

“This is really a special event because it is just one week of giving back to the Orlando community and it gives our athletes a chance to be role models.”

During the two-hour event, athletes coached the kids in the fundamentals of baseball, basketball, cheerleading, soccer and football in the style of a sports camp. The women's and men's basketball teams also led a clinic in the UCF Arena, where Lashey King a freshman guard on the women's team, gave participants pointers during passing drills.

“I love working with the kids,” she said. “They’re having so much fun.”

Beyond Jay Bergman Stadium, 3-year-old Brandon McClain, whose father, Mark, is in the UCF program, is really helping being more fun — the Knights or the children. Still, freshmen Ryan McFlight understood the underlying message.

“It's really great to give back,” said the goalkeeper, whose teammates were teaching the kids the best way to celebrate after scoring. “It really helped build my confidence.”

On an adjacent field, wide receiver Doug Gabrielson was teaching budding football players how to hit one of his passes, while Assistant Head Coach Alan Gooch looked on.

“The players love to be the coaches and work with the kids,” said Gooch, a long-time participant in the program. This event is a great opportunity for UCF to show the community what we’re about.”

SPORTS

Men's tennis ends season April 12

FROM PAGE 12

On the singles courts, the Knights won all but one match. Bradu was a 6-3, 6-2 winner over Denver's No. 1, Sander Sanetra defeated Scheinfeld, 6-2, 6-0 at No. 3. At the No. 4 spot, Sierra was victorious, holding off Jeremy Perez, 6-4, 6-0. Sieger was also a speedy speedster, beating Diaz, 7-6, 6-3, at No. 6. In a finely No. 5 match, Gurney recovered for a 6-7, 6-3, (11-9) win over Plotnik. Paiz was the only Owl to win in solo play.

The final match was a close contest for UCF which boosted its 4-3 record over a perfect 5-0. Since losing to Alabama-Birmingham on Jan. 25, the Golden have won all 17 of their matches.

On noon on April 12, the men's team will conclude the 2003 regular-season schedule with a home match against South Florida at the UCF Tennis Complex.

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8 Days a Week

Highlights of the cultural calendar

LINNIA BROWN

STAFF WRITER

Thursday, April 3

"The Road Less Traveled"

Four Corners of America Theatre presents "The Road Less Traveled" to February 24, 8:15 and 10:15 p.m. at the WAC. For more information, call 823-7487.

Friday, April 4

Dance party at the "Rock the Block"

Hotels, bars, and restaurants offer "Rock the Block," a block party in downtown Orlando. For more information, call 407-798-5070.

Saturday, April 5

Belly dancing class

The Downtown Disney's House of Blues hosts a belly dancing class. For more information, call 407-898-5070.

Sunday, April 6

"The Stair" at Home of Blues

Six shows are held at the Home of Blues. For more information, call 407-898-5070.

Tuesday, April 8

Dancing and drinking

The Loaded Hog in Downtown Orlando. For more information, call 407-934-2583.

Wednesday, April 9

"Seven Mary Three" at P'ark

The Seven Mary Three will perform at P'ark. For more information, call 407-898-5070.

Thursday, April 10

"Dinner and a Dance" at the Wall Street Plaza

The Wall Street Plaza hosts a dinner and a dance. For more information, call 407-341-0817.


8 minutes and counting down to true love

LINNIA BROWN

STAFF WRITER

I need a drink…fast.

That was my first thought as I barged apprehensively into Ybor's Martini Bar last Tuesday evening for "8-Minute Dating," a speed-dating event where young, single hopefuls congregate to pair up with eight eligible "dates" for eight minutes each.

"Are you here for the event?" a muscular bottle asked, smiling disarmingly. "I'm Ezra Simmons, the event organizer." Heh, baby. Unfortunately, Simmons then introduced me to the other event organizer — his girlfriend.

Oh, well. I just hoped my "dates" of this evening would be hot.

I glanced quickly into the crowded bar area, where a crowd of co-ed, nametag-toting twenty-somethings sipped Martinis, struggling to appear sophisticated as they sized up their prospects.

Well, the guys sized up their prospects. The cleavage-baring women, on the other hand, sized up their competition — as females usually do.

I suddenly felt like I was at a middle-school dance…or a mid-twenties cattle call.

"I can't believe I'm doing this," I confessed to Simmons, laughing, as he handed me a nametag and a dating card with my 3-digit code written next to me:

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Before you take off to enjoy the summer ...

The UCF Pharmacy would like to remind you that if you are graduating or not taking Summer classes you must have your prescriptions refilled before May 3, 2003.

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Love across the ocean

How one student deals with her fiancé serving in the war

ALEX BARCOCK STAFF WRITER

Heather Smith met her fiancé at their church about a year ago through a mutual friend. Though they planned to wed in the summer of 2004, Smith knew she would spend this month’s anniversary alone while John Beamer serves overseas in Iraq.

Beamer, 25, and a senior at UCF was called to active duty in early March to serve in Kuwait as a corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps reserve. 

Near the old Camp Pendleton Naval Training Center, Beamer’s reservist base spent two weeks preparing trucks to be shipped overseas. The trucks are Beamer’s passion, Smith says. He always wanted to know how Humvees, tanks and other heavy machinery worked.

Spend little time together in the days before Beamer’s departure, the two said goodbye on Jan. 27.

“At the reserve center, I saw him walk away through the gate, and I drove away,” the 21-year-old junior said. “It was kind of tough.”

This is not the first time their relationship has been long-distance — Smith moved to Washington, D.C., for the summer of 2002 — but it definitely will be the most challenging.

“I think we pretty much fell in love over the phone and through letters,” she said. “He’s a good man. He’s intelligent. He’s respectful. He’s just wonderful.”

Smith has tracked Beamer’s location as best she can.

From Orlando, Beamer flew to Camp Pendleton in California for a 10-day course. He flew to Kuwait in early February. Assigned to Camp Coyote, 30 miles south of the Iraqi border, he was involved in more training, more practice loading the trucks and more combat preparation. He spent the cool desert nights in a tent, thin canvas his only separation from the harsh sandstorms.

Their phone conversations were fairly frequent until the second weekend of March, when Beamer’s superiors cut communication because of the impending war. “He told me not to worry if I didn’t hear from him, that he was OK,” Smith said.

Smith continues to write letters almost every day, even though Beamer can’t write back. “I ask him if he’s sleeping OK, if he’s warm at night, how he’s treating him, what the weather’s like,” she said. “A lot of ‘I love yous’ and ‘I miss yous’.”

Because of a military policy that discourages mail from non-family members, Smith said she writes “Heather Beamer” on her return address and also has sent mail through Beamer’s mother, to get around the rule.

In preparation for their upcoming anniversary, Smith said, she bought a gift for the two to share — a star registered with the International Star Register. “He always writes at the end of his letters. No matter where we are, we’re always looking at the same stars,” she said. “This way we both have something over the distance.”

John is Charlene Beamer’s only child. Since Beamer left for Kuwait, Smith has paid weekly visits to his mother. Smith said those visits have brought the two closer and given Smith more insight into John’s younger years.

“Charlene Beamer is glad the visits have allowed her to get to know Smith better. She delights in Smith’s involvement as president of the campus organization ROCK, or Rebuilding on a Conservative Kusherne, through which Smith has led several pro-war, pro-American rallies.

“It is wonderful that she’s involved in that, that she’s willing to stand up for what she believes in,” Charlene Beamer said. At a recent gathering of families hosted by the Marine reserve center, one soldier’s mother told Smith of a letter she’d received from her son. “He said, ‘Does anyone over there support us? All I see is anti-war,’” Smith said. “That’s the saddest thing I’ve ever heard.”

Smith says the argument used by those who say they support the troops, but not the war, is senseless. “That’s like saying I’m for the carpenter, but not for making the house,” she said. “There’s just not an occupation out there where you don’t support what the whole point of their job is.”

The reserve center has suggested that families can help their loved ones by making care packages. Smith says she’s currently working with other families to get desert scarves to the troops.

Writing letters, sending gifts and organizing rallies has kept Smith active and her anxiety to a minimum, but she says she’s been a mirror through the news coverage still makes her nervous. She routinely sees coverage of Marines shot and killed. “You just pray that it’s not him,” she said.

Beamer’s deployment order ends a year from his departure, which means he could be back in January. Smith says orders from the president have extended that commitment, though, and soldiers may be kept for up to two years.

“He said he had a feeling that they’d be able to come home before Christmas,” Smith said. “He said he’d let me know as soon as he found out.”

Until then, Smith lives with photographs, memories and a set of dog tags the two share. She gave him a tag with her name on it made before he left, and she wears one of his while they are apart.

She’ll keep writing him letters, she said, and watching their star at night.

Heather Smith holds a picture of her fiancé John Beamer, a Marine stationed in Kuwait.

At the reserve center, I saw him walk away through the gate, and I drove away. It was kind of tough.

—HEATHER SMITH
Tarot cards used for centuries to explain present, future events

FROM PAGE 16

I've been into astrology since I was in high school. My friend Angie and I used to have all the books, and we spent most of our time in class casting each other's charts," Datz said.

Casting a chart involves determining the positions of the planets as they relate to the time, date and location of a person's birth. Those positions translate into a person's astrological signs.

Datz says the positions of the planets in your chart play a huge role in your identity because certain planets have particular influences attributed to them.

"I'm an Aquarius but I have a Capricorn moon, which means that I'm really free-thinking and open but at the same time I can be serious-minded," she said.

A third factor, known as the "ascendant" sign, represents the sign of the zodiac that was rising in the Eastern sky at the time of a person's birth.

"Your sun sign is how other people see you and your moon sign is how you see yourself, but your ascendant is how you really are," Datz said.

In addition to planetary birth charts, those interested in astrology often perform tarot card readings.

After much convincing by her friend, freshman Kate Wilhoit, 18, had her tarot card reading read for her. "It wasn't at all like I expected, but I think it was because it was my friend who did it. I associate psychics and fortune tellers with thick-accented gypsies in the movies, and my friend is just a normal girl - I didn't even know she was into that kind of stuff.

Even though she realizes few people take astrology seriously, Datz said that it doesn't bother her. "I usually when given the opportunity to see their birth charts, most people remark positively about the astonishing accuracy of astrology," she said.

Said Datz: "If you don't believe in astrology that's fine but you don't have to mock it. I don't believe in God but I don't spend my time making fun of Christians."
8 minutes can seem like eternity with some dates

FROM PAGE 16

eight (labeled with a place card) to meet my first date. "Sean 014," Sean was cool. A 25-year-old lawyer, he was tall and cute, in an intellectual, basketball player sort of way. He talked fast, smiled a lot and had great teeth. Definitely a good catch. But... no sparks. When the bell chimed at the end of eight minutes, we smiled, shook hands and walked off to meet our next matches.

I headed over to table 12, where 24-year-old "Luis 606" was waiting on a couch seat. Dark-haired, laid-back and typically unmemorable. Much like the first few matches, our conversation was another story.

I'm into girls," Ena declared shortly. "I've been taking a few semesters off from Valencia." When Next.

"Brian 066" and "Chad 013" were both wearing the typical 'bonus date,' which I shared with 24-year-old, laid-back and typically unmemorable.

I was starting to realize just how long eight minutes could be.

When we had finished the first four dates, Simmons announced a 25-minute break. I grabbed my drink and retreated to the ladies room, where girls were already comparing stories about their prospective dates.

Gratefully, I heard one girl saying that she had hit it off with both Brian and Chad, which made me feel a little better about not liking either of them.

After the break, I met with "Geno 258," a 29-year-old pharmaceutical sales representative from Philadelphia. Geno was a big flirt who liked to ask questions.

"So, what do you like to do when you come home from a long day at work to relax?" he asked, looking deeply into my eyes. "What was your first impression of me?"

I immediately understood why he was a salesman. For some reason, I also couldn't seem to stop pawing. "Sorry," I apologized, as my jaws opened, flirt-style, for the fourth time in eight minutes.

My next date, with "Mark 719," was probably the wackiest eight minutes of my life. Soft-spoken and shy, Mark had glasses and suspiciously thick hair. He was the only person I met all night who admitted to previously participating in speed dating.

However, Mark seemed a little older than the preset event age range of 22 to 28. "Um, how old are you?" I asked.

"Late thirties," he replied sheepishly, offering no explanation.

Right... perhaps he didn't get the memo about the age specifics.

My seventh and eighth dates were actually both really fun, interesting guys. people that I'd love to hang out with sometime as friends, although I still didn't really feel any fireworks.

I talked about travelling with Dave, a 28-year-old archeologist who told me all about combatting typhoid fever in Peru... and I talked about music with Dave, a 25-year-old who shared my passion for the man himself, Prince.

It's amazing how much you can talk about in eight minutes.

As a grand finale, Simmons also announced a surprise bonus date, which I shared with Kevin, a young, hot Winter Springs high school teacher.

Much like Chris and Dave, Kevin was great -- warm, funny, good looking and easy to talk to. Just as much as touching my animalistic, "date me, date me," side...none of the 8-Minute Dating guys had done so.

Or so I thought. As I stood around afterward chatting with Simmons, a gorgeous guy approached us, wearing an event nametag.

I suddenly envied the nine girls who'd gotten eight minutes with this guy.

He introduced himself as Ryan, a web designer and UCF graduate. We talked easily for a few minutes and he gave me his card. I haven't contacted him yet, but who knows — maybe I'll have a 8-Minute Dating success story after all. Sort of.

Regardless of the results, however, 8-Minute Dating truly was an enjoyable event. It was well-organized and creative and most of the participants seemed like fun-loving, decent, successful people.

In fact, I would highly recommend it to anyone single and adventurous enough to try it. As far as I think, maybe I'll try the 8-Minute dating scene sometime. Or maybe speed dating or 7-Minute dating (actual local speed-dating events)... or maybe just the good ole Orlando bar scene.

In the meantime... I'm calling Ryan.
Military rations becoming tastier

GORDON DILLOW
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER (AP)'

Veterans who remember the canned C-ration plastic bags.

The meals come in 24 different menus, ranging from "Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner" to "Meals Ready to Eat," and most of the Marines in the Kuwaiti desert eat them at least once a day while they're in base camp. And while combat Marines are on the "move," MREs are their breakfast, lunch and dinner.

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The menu slowly changes over time, with some of the less popular items being phased out. For example, the ham and egg omelet entree, known to Marines as "Dead Man in a Bag" because of its unpleasant aroma and greenish hue to the eggs, is no more. The so-called "Four Fingers of Death" — four hot dogs in a bag with beans — is also on its way out.

Each entree comes with a side dish — rice pilaf, potato sticks, Mexican rice, etc. Snacks such as M&Ms, and cheese or peanut butter that can be spread on a vegetable cracker for fiber are also included. Lack of fiber apparently was a problem with earlier versions of MREs, exciting them the nickname "Meals Refusing to Exit." (Poor quality in the earlier versions of MREs also resulted in them being dubbed "Meals Refused by Ethiopians" and other, even less tasteful names.)

Each MRE also comes with an accessory packet: plastic spoon, metal trowel, packet of sugar, cocoa or Tasters Choice instant coffee, powdered creamer, a small packet of teabag paper, Cheekiets gum and matches. Unlike in the old days, the new health-conscious military no longer includes mini-gacks of cigarettes with field rations.

Heating the MRE entrees and side dishes is simple, since each MRE comes with a disposable "Flameless Ration Heater." Put the entire bag in the heater bag, add a little water and a chemical reaction produces heat to warm the food. Virtually every Marine agrees that without heating, the MREs are awful — and even when heated, the popularity of any given MRE varies from Marine to Marine.

"I like the chicken and sausages," says Lance Cpl. Nena Shaw, 22, with the 1st Marine Division at Camp Matilda. "It's the one that tastes most like real food."

"A lot of people like the beef patties," says Lance Cpl. Ben Wilson of Murietta, with the 1st Battalion of the 5th Marine Regiment at Camp Grizzly. "The meat performed in the pork chop mix. I got that three days in a row once."
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