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Recommended Citation
SGA theme-park party invites 7,000 for free

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

Employers may like you, but they turn you away because you are an international student. They don’t want to deal with immigration paperwork.

Next year, the opportunities for jobs will be significantly lower for international students since the United States government plans to cut the H-1B visas limit from 65,000 to 20,000.

According to Melanie Parker, director of the UCF Career Resource Center, because of the limit on the number of H-1B visas that can be issued each year, H-1B visas are difficult to get approved.

“The employer has to make the case that a worker with certain skills cannot be found in the U.S,” Parker said. “They don’t want to have to do that.”

Junior Lino Silva, 20, faced the same problem. An international student from Venezuela, Silva applied to several internships only to be turned away because he was not a United States citizen.

Silva may like you, but they turn you away because you are an international student, he said. “They don’t want to deal with immigration paperwork.”

In order to keep international students as employees after graduation, employers must file and sponsor a H-1B visa on their behalf that generally costs $1,100.

The renewable work visa allows employers to pay money to keep international students such as Silva. Silva said, “If you run a business and two people who are equally qualified apply for a job except that one is not a U.S. citizen and will cost you more time and money to hire, logically you would hire the other applicant.”

Even if employers agree to file for H-1B visas on behalf of graduating international students, a job is not necessarily guaranteed since only a limited amount of H-1B visas are approved each year.

The $125,000 party is supported by student activities 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. While she hopes to attend, Hope Wohletz can’t help but wonder whether more students would have benefited if some of those dollars had been steered her way.
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Patriot Act causes concern as liberties fade
Diane Lazic
staff writer

While the U.S. Congress slugs through the latest Domestic Security Act, proposed by Justice Department attorneys as the Patriot Act II, students and professors are debating the implications of the act and its supposed link to the original Patriot Act.

As expected, opinions about the act fall largely along party lines. Lindsay Everette, the president of the UCF Young Democrats, said the Patriot Act and Patriot Act II "contribute to a false sense of security and violate the Constitution by taking away civil rights." She added, "It gives too much power to the executive branch, and does help push the agenda of the right-wing fringe." Brian Malanak, press secretary for Congressman Ike Skelton, said the Orlando Republican board supported both Bill and against the first Patriot Act. "Congressman Skelton was on the House Judiciary Committee. It was 'too bad,' with both extremes left and right, [that] they all agreed about this," Malanak said.

On Oct. 16, President Bush signed the USA Patriot Act (USAPA) into law. This law gave sweeping new powers to both domestic law enforcement and international intelligence agencies. Also at this time, Attorney General John Ashcroft revamped the Department of Justice to focus more on anti-terrorism measures. Most changes in checks and balances rewritten by the act were put into place.

PRESSE SEE Civil vi

Eligible students may have their way into park

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 3,000 and 7,000 students, SGA officials estimate.

For those who need a ride, SGA has allotted $1,000 to rent a van from the Visual Arts Building parking lot at 7 p.m. and depart from Islands of Adventure. Like other critiques of the expense, however, Belcher says she's happy the event is Islands of Adventure anyway.

Weber would like to go. But she's sure of a least one thing. A gradu­

ate student in hospitality management, she said the idea that others "may also have to miss out bothers them. They have a job, or have classes, or a ride to get there. If the four buses that SGA has lined up for transportation fill up, she said.

Though SGA allotted $125,000 for the event, they estimated it would cost $15,000 nearly triple the cost of last year's school-wide event at Vet's Wild water park, which cost $1,000.

The draw of free admission and the possibly empty park was too much for parties.

"There aren't any lines," she said. Belcher, "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

"I Building, and you can’t change the temperature," said...

Experts say the environment in which students learn can either enhance or hinder the learning process. Further, they say students learn much better in classrooms with minimal auditory and visual obstructions and comfortable surroundings. With comfort 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."
• Students should be able to comfortably (the manual mentions temperature and furniture among considerations).

Lighting, chairs, a room’s layout, temperature and even windows are just a few of the considerations planners contemplate when designing classrooms. Designers consider all of these features with students’ and professors’ needs in mind. Classroom design also vary according to the subject being taught.

Peter Newman, the director of UCF Facilities Planning, said that several features factor into the design of classrooms. "Acoustics are critical," he said.

The temperature of classrooms also strongly affects learning. "Nothing is worse than being too hot or too cold," Newman said.

Noisy heating and air conditioning systems can distract students from class. Similarly, if the walls are too thin, communication in one classroom can disrupt a neighboring classroom.

Newman said seating is always a main concern for students.

"Students prefer comfortable seats," said Dennis Dickson, assistant professor of hospitality management. "Flip-arm chairs make working difficult."

Although students and planners often complain about the older flip-arm desks with little surface area, some classes in the VAB and other buildings still use them.

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

"The 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 Niemeyer, who works as a classroom-design consultant and wrote a book titled "Hard Facts on Smart Classroom Design." In the Chronicle article, Niemeyer 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 I Building, for example, is windowless, while another building has holes in its walls that allow for 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 decrease 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 Griest, an associate professor of criminal justice and legal studies, who teaches in the Health and Public Affairs Building.

I use PowerPoint for lectures," Griest 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. The Classroom I Building, which features wireless network access throughout the building, and the Health and Public Affairs Building are among the most high-tech buildings on campus.

"I’ve only taught in Classroom I Building," said.

"There are at least two and technology are also in high demand. 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-ROMS, and Internet access," said Newman. 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 considered. The function of each room and the number seats in each room are determined by facilities planning.

There are at least two other design elements in classroom design. The Office of Instructional Resources is responsible for the IT multime- dia 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-taking routine. Each studio classroom has a feature—tables or stations that sit four students each and contain two computers. Typically there is one computer for every two students.

These classes are usually held in a lab-type setting where students work together on exercises. Computer science, math and physics courses lend themselves to studio classroom instruction.

Ruth Marshall, the director of the Office of Instructional Resources, said faculty consider- ations play a large role in classroom design. "The design elements [of multimedia classrooms] are based on the requests of the faculty and administrators who are responsible for the building," Marshall said. "They tell us what they want to do in the building and each of the rooms, and we determine what equipment is needed to implement their requests."
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Civil libertarians not alone in raising their concerns

FRONT PAGE 3

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 50,000 U.S. citizens, including Martin Luther King Jr.

This is specifically what Matthew Milhousen, 24, a junior and president of Objectivist Club at UCF doesn't understand. "The focus should be less 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 focusing on Americans," 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 all people."

The changes "went through quickly because of patriotism that follows a national event," in this case the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, said Dree Lenin, 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 an upend investigative activity," he added.

Allison K. Bentzel 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 some very limited positive feedback," said Robert Luke, a staff member in Nelson's Orlando office. "Most of the feedback has been negative by concerned citizens.

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 who the person spied upon what it has done.

Another provision deals with the "national ID card." The bill could allow the government to create a national ID card which can now come from phone to phone, to computer to computer, without destroying the privacy of the individual. It can then be used by a suspect or target of a surveillance order. In addition, the government is not bound of having to show a court that the particular information or communication to be seized is relevant to an ongoing investigation.

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

...while 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 of terrorists or prosecution of criminals," he said.

James Kevin Buck, 21, a junior and president of the UCF Young Republicans and disagrees with Milhousen'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."

"Now do people feel that they were giving up some things, he said. "If you have nothing to hide, why do you care?"

Gordon Worley, 20, a junior and registered Libertarian, said he trusts and supports the government. "They have information that he trusts and supports the government. The people behind the Patriot Act are good and seem necessary for further 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 helps protect and creates fairness," he said.

Laniater 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, when 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, who they are doing it with, 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 do without restricting freedom of speech. Well, not exactly. You can't yell "fire" in a crowded, or threaten a species. That's a turism. Public opinion was a factor in it effectively going through."

"We aren't doing that. We aren't doing that," he said. "We aren't doing that. We aren't doing that."

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

He added: "Lawns don't discriminate. It's the people who improve the law - legislators and police officers - who have the potential to abuse without anyone checking on them."

USA Today recently reported that federal probes of alleged civil rights violations by police rarely lead to prosecutions. From 1981 to 2001, the Justice department looked at 425 complaints of civil rights abuses by law enforcement. It filed changes in changes in just 5 percent of those cases.

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

Said Laniater: "People fail to remember that Abe Lincoln, the great entrance and civil libertarian, improvised newspaper editor in a time of war who wrote bad things about him. He restricted civil liberties. This type of act is not something without historic precedent."

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

He added: "I think we havecourts. If there are constitutional problems, they can be addressed by the courts."

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from hiring international students

FUM PAGE 1

dition, they can apply for optional practical training which allows them to work for one year after graduation. But 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."

Bernardine searched for internships throughout four years of college and found that internships are now scarcer due to recent events. "I had one internship before September 11 happened," said Bernardine. "Since then, many companies have changed their requirements to only hire U.S. residents."

Although internship opportunities are not readily available to international students, it doesn't mean they are any less important, said Nicole Howard, marketing internship coordinator for the UCF College of Business.

"It's crucial for all students to get internships. Companies expect students to already have internship experience when they graduate," Howard said.

Unless employers become more open to hiring international students, however, Bernardine sees the necessity of internship experience as a nearly-ending cycle of rejection for international students.

Many international students are turned away because companies say that they do not have enough experience," Bernardine said. "But how can we get the experience if companies are not willing to hire international students? Someone has to give us that initial opportunity."

Work visa costs deter employers

forces to withdraw from the Israeli territory immediately" Mushirul Hasan, a history professor at Jamia Millia who has also taught at the University of Virginia, said the resolution, which was largely symbolic, was a way for faculty members to voice their opposition to the war.

He emphasized that the ban was not sanctioned by the university administration, but that most faculty members were in favor of it. Hasan called the resolution "morally binding."

The boycott is one of only a handful of protests against the U.S.-led war in Iraq by educational institutions in India, even though India has the second largest Muslim population in the world. Last week, about 50 students at the University of Kashmir, which is located in India's only Muslim-majority state, marched with unfurled placards and burned pictures of President Bush, Police officers, apparently wanting to contain the demonstration, locked the university gates to keep protesting students inside the campus.

In Calcutta, tens of thousands of students boycotted classes to stage a peaceful march on Friday. They carried signs that read "No more blood for oil" and "Bush is a warmonger."

While the majority of Indians are against the war, student protests have generally been muted. Political organizers, who depend on young people to fill up stadium seats at their rallies, say it is difficult to pull in students these days. They blame the low turnouts on the endless end-year examinations that have just begun across the country.

Hong Kong universities suspend classes, students evacuate

A highly contagious flu-like disease that is sweeping across much of China has prompted all of Hong Kong's universities to suspend classes this week.

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 1,800 people worldwide and killed at least 90. Hong Kong has been considered the epicenter of the disease, with at least 55 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 coursework, so there is a "comfort level," 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.

"We'll probably have to look at sending students home," he said. "But we'll have to talk to the Chinese."
Supreme Court hears the first challenge in generation to using race in college admission process

STEPHEN HENDERSON
KENNEDY CENTER NEWSPAPERS

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 emerges as the most conflicted members of the high court.

Justices Anthony M. Kennedy and Sandra Day O'Connor expressed consternation about the role affirmative action should play in American life.

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.

But 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 might 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 Rabin, 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 these interests in an argument. If the justices struck down Michigan's policies, he asked, would the responsibility for devising a better plan fall to the courts or the university?

The case, which separately challenges Michigan's use of race in its undergraduate and law school admissions, marks the first time since 1978 that the high court has considered such an important affirmative action case. The justices will make their decision by July.

John Kolbo, an attorney for plaintiffs Barbara Grutter and Jennifer Gratz, didn't get through more than a few paragraphs in his argument before O'Connor jumped in with several crucial questions. 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 can never 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," in certain contexts, O'Connor said. "You're speaking in absolutes, and it isn't quite that."

Kennedy then broke in with 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 your after your after there's an under-representation, there is 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 Maureen 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 thinly disguised 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 considerations is constantly checking "to see what the numbers are based on race."

O'Connor was less reluting 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, there is none. 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.

“Private, 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 weird.

“I don’t feel comfortable with those statements,” Goldstein said. “I would prefer when [leaders] are driven by more rational consideration.”

“People justify all sorts of things when they have a God, [and] 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.”

Freshmen 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 pulling 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.

Junior Carly Usdin said it makes her uncomfortable to hear the president cite Scriptures in his speeches.

“How can you stand before a unified group if not all of them believe in something you’re basing your speech on?,” Usdin asked.

Senior Erika Hefferman said Bush’s use of Scripture does not offend her.

“Being at war in the right time to use the Bible,” she said. “In order not to alienate other religions, he should keep it to a minimum, though.”

“I believe God wants me to be president, but if that doesn’t happen, it’s OK.”

—GEORGE W. BUSH

President
Students deserve comfortable classrooms

UCF 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 supplant 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.

Other antiquated buildings also need upgrades. Buildings such as the Chemistry Building, Phillips Hall and Colburn Hall, all built before the advent of the Internet, need to be brought up to modern standards. 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 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.

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. Additionally, students who are too hot or too cold when in class will not learn as well as students who are comfortable. Learning potential of students who have classes there.

Physics Complex, should improve upon its older buildings. UCF owes it to its students to provide the highest-quality learning environment it possibly can.

UCF should solicit the advice of students in the design process for classrooms. After all, who knows better what type of classroom works best to facilitate learning in college courses but college students? Students could provide quality insight into what types of classrooms work best and what types of classrooms 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 Peña 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 have the time and the willingness to make the trip out to Islands of Adventure, as they should have a good time.

We ask in an earlier editorial what would happen if more than 7,000 students showed up. As it turns out, the 7,000 student and beyond will not be turned away, but if he or she wants to get into the park, he or she will have to pay $19.50 to join the otherwise free party.

After SGA has paid Islands of Adventure $125,000 of the student body's money; the park's rental is paid for. The arbitary $180.50 charge for excess students would serve to further line Universal's pockets. Regardless, since so much of students' money is being spent tonight, students need to show up and participate in this event. If you are free from work and school, take full advantage and head down to Islands of Adventure.

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

Peña 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 be best used so that 7,000 students can have fun in a theme park for free.

The many student groups who did not get funding, or who received far less than they asked for probably feel that the money could have gone to better causes. Still, they should take advantage of the evening and show up in full force. Those groups deserve a night of fun. And hopefully, they'll get there in time to grab in free.
INSPIRED THOUGHTS

ADAM SHIVER
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Reporting from the front lines, MIKE RIEGEL

Today we come home across refugees fleeing Basra. We have been shelled at night, 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.

Opinionated? 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 bad judgment of Arnett is just an extreme example of this trend.

The NBC News and MSNBC reporter recently agreed to an impromptu television interview on Iraq. 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 rightfully upset 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 that 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 see someone speaking off their opinion, whether they agree with it or not, in forums like those; I certainly do not expect to have my news laced 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 they 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 unsullied.

An independent reporter for the most part, give us the actual happenings taking place in Iraq. But alas, not many are willing to face the war unperturbed by military forces, just like they are unwilling to give up a career-making opportunity.

Most can sacrifice a little bit of integrity in exchange for the above.

A journalist’s reports should be free of opinions and should give it to the public straight.

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

Columnist Christopher Arick can be reached at chrissabirick@comcast.net

Just another war opinion

MIKE RIEGEL
STAFF WRITER

The United States will not win this war. Iraq 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.

(Almost) 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 anti-war protesters are anti-American. Speaking your mind is one of the most American pastimes one can engage in.

There is a good reason to liberate Iraq – it has a history of war, and has nothing to do with U.N. resolutions. Saddam Hussein is an evil dictator who has committed thousands of atrocities against innocent men, women and children. (Most) people who support the war aren’t crazed death villagers 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 no reason to stop loving War is always an option.

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’ll die 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 a 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 dissonance on my part to say so, but there are times when reading, hearing, and even seeing might not necessarily constitute believing.

Certainly media outlets are even (gasp) biased toward one political ideology 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 cannot 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 this. We will be over 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 lose our friends behind to pick up the pieces.
Brian Schulte against Jacksonville State last Saturday, Ryan Bear proved just how much he means to this team. Bear came into the game with a 19-game hitting streak and had failed to prolong that streak in his previous three at-bats. Rather than taking an ill-advised hack at the 3-4 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 trying to get anything going that we could to help the team."

Such is the way of Bear. The Knights’ first baseman just goes out and does his job every single game. Please see Bear on 14.

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 season. Second highest on team.

Bulls hault Knights’ rally for 8-5 win

Kristy Shonea
Staff Writer

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 Nathan Krugt 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 3-0 lead in the fourth inning off UCF starter Von David Starchbach. USF scored five runs on five hits. Starchbach picked up the loss for the Knights dropping him to 1-3 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.
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!

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It cannot silence Courage
It cannot invade the Soul
It cannot steal eternal Life
It cannot conquer the Spirit

We would also like to say special thanks to Jonco, Inc. for the benefit night at McDonalds 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!

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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 hard work to the baseball team," Coach Jay Bergman said. "He's a good student, a good person off the field, real quiet person, very hardworking. Very competitive."

That description also personifies his play this year, quiet but competitive. His numbers are solid but not spectacular: As of last weekend, Saturday he had a batting average of .347, third on the team behind Clay Tipper 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-3, 220-pound right-hander has been UCF's best all-around hitter, topping the team in slugging percentage (.592) and driving in 21 runs. Though he began the year batting around .250, he has raised his average with a home run, 16 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 Kraft - further enhancing the need for seniors to provide younger players with a model for success.

The recent shutout win against the UCF and started 20 games last season. He hit .305 in 50 games overall, with a home run, 10 RBIs and four stolen bases.

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"We've got a bunch of youngsters that look up to us seniors, and I think it's good for us to come in 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.

On 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 yet 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 screwed up on a consistent basis like we need to to go on to go to the postseason and advance," Bear said.

"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 Debbie 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 Player 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 2-1 record, including two shutouts.

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Best finished the week with a .429 batting average and a .782 on-base percentage. She slumbered two home runs for the week, pushing her season total to 11. Best was 9-for-21 at the plate, hitting .429 with 15 runs batted in.

It is the third time Best has earned the player of the week honors this season. Cupp and Best were both 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 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 Cajas placed 14th with a time of 4:43.89, followed by sophomore Amy Giles in 6th at 4:36.93.

Meanwhile, freshman Kim Wuppah shaved time off her season best with a time of 14:43 in the 100-meter hurdles, while sophomore Valerie Martinez erased a handful of a second of her season best in the 400 meters, finishing in her eighth on the team.

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 11:19.14 -- shattering her previous record of 11:40.02, 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 Roloff earned 4,872 points to finish sixth in the heptathlon.

In the discus with 3.018 points carrying over from day one, Roloff, 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 101.04, and capped the day with a time of 2.25.40 for a fifth-place showing in the 800-meter run.

Junior Sara Dillman ended the evening with a personal best of 110.98 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 Athletic Association and Athletics Department played host to 375 elementary school 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 Mesina, associate vice president and executive director of the UCF Alumni Association.

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

"This is really a special event because it is just one way 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 sports camp. The women's and men's basketball teams also led a clinic in the UCF Arena, where LaShay King a freshman guard on the women's team, gave participants pointers during passing.

"I love working with the kids," she said. "They're having so much fun."

Beyond Jay Bergman Stadium, 3-year-old Brandon Mikel's parents were taking advantage of his time with the men's soccer players as his mother Cindy documented the day with her camera. Of course, if the shine of the smiles were any indication, it might be debatable who was having more fun — the Knights or the children.

This year's Youth Sports Festival also featured a Chance to Play clinic in the afternoon for children ages 7 to 13 who want to try a sport or get some coaching from UCF's coaches.

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, Sanaz Mirza, 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. Joseph was also a speedy winner, beating Diaz, 7-0, 6-0 at No. 6. In a fiery No. 5 match, Gurney recovered for a 5-7, 6-3, (11-9) win over Plotnik. Paiz was the only Owl to win in solo play.

The match was the final stint for UCF, which boosted its A-Sun record to a perfect 5-0. Since losing to Alabama-Birmingham on Jan. 29, 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.

Crew earns third consecutive Petrakis Cup

JON KHITKELE STAFF WRITER

The UCF women's rowing team earned nine first-place finishes out of 10 last Saturday on the way to their third consecutive Petrakis Cup.

The Knights, who still seek completion from such colleges as Stetson University, the Florida Institute of Technology, the University of Tampa, Florida Tech and Jacksonville University although the winner of the Petrakis Cup was determined by the overall points between UCF and Jacksonville.

The varsity 8+ boat, consisting of rowers Kristen Laidon, Ana Cooper, Amy Price, Crystal Weiss, Tanya Kenzler, Maya Pishalny, Natalie}

Blades, Becky Mende and excocanm Sheila Marti, came in first out of six entries with a time of 7:12.5. UCF took first and second in the Novice 8+ and the Varsity 4+ in both sweep and scull which was never less than a first place in the Novice Lightweight 4+, Novice 4+, Varsity Lightweight 4+, Junior Varsity 4+ and Novice Lightweight 8+. The Junior Varsity 8+ came up just short of first, finishing second and third.

The next event for the UCF rowers is this weekend's Florida Intercollegiate Rowing Association Championship. The Knights have taken the previous five consecutive PIRAs, and hope to make this year No. 6. The competition runs Friday through Saturday in Tampa.
A bell sounded, signaling the second class.

"Universal Knights" · 1850 The Used · downtown Orlando.

African.

"Seven Days to the Block," an outdoor/indoor dance event, runs from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at The Groove Cantina. The Legendary Open Bar will also be permitted.

That was my first thought as I barged apprehensively into Ybor's crowded bar area, where a crowd of expectant moviegoers waited outside, counting down to the hour.

I need a drink... fast.

I suddenly felt like I was at a middle-school dance... or a mid-eighties college party. It was an essential experience in understanding astrology.

"It's for Colleen Datz, astrology means more than checking her daily horoscope. Datz believes in numerology and reading the positions of the stars as a way to better interpret herself and the world around her.

The best part about astrology is that it really helps you understand other people," the 22-year-old senior said. "It is insight into the inner, more secret sides of their personality."

Astrology existed long before Christianity, dating to 5,000 B.C. as a Hindu tool to determine which karmic stage a person's soul had reached. It was first developed by ancient cultures as a way of examining the relationship between people on Earth and orbiting bodies in outer space.

Today's pop culture mostly regards astrology as mere entertainment. Some associate zodiac symbols with psychosexual associations of the 1960s and '70s, or even with goofy pick-up lines ("What's your sign?"). Followers of sun-signs and tarot card readings, however, view astrology as a helpful tool in discovering daily trends and tribulations. As recently as the presidency of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, First Lady Nancy Reagan famously consulted an astrologer to advise her husband on the timing of his actions and pronouncements.

I ordered the strongest-looking citrus martini on the menu; hoping its alcohol content would ease my pre-date jitters. A few sips later, I was bonding with two girls standing next to me.

"Looks like there's a dress code for the guys tonight," one of them muttered, glancing at me. I noted that most of the men had donned exactly the same classic "gay" outfit — a blue long-sleeved, button-down shirt, tucked into khakis with a brown belt and brown shoes.

A bell sounded, signaling the start of the event. Fired up with the liquid encouragement of the martini, I confidently bopped over to the dance floor.

"Are you here for the event?" a muscular bartender asked, smiling disarmingly. "I'm Ezra Simmons, the event coordinator.

Hey, baby. Unfortunately, Simmons then introduced me to the other event organizer — his girlfriend.

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

I glanced quickly into the crowded bar area, where a crowd of co-ed, name-tag-toting twenty-somethings sipped Martinis, struggling to appear sophisticated as they stirred 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 need a drink... fast.

That was my first thought as I barged apprehensively into Ybor's Martini Bar last Tuesday evening for "3-Minute Dating," a speed-dating event where young, single hopefuls congregate to pair up with eight eligible "dates" for eight minutes each.

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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 plan to wed in the summer of 2004, Smith knows she will 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 January. He was stationed in Kuwait as a corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps reserve.

Their phone conversations are the only time they interact. Even though Beamer has been overseas for two years, his location remains a mystery to Smith, who believes it’s for the sake of national security.

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

“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 won- derful.”

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

From Orlando, Beamer flew to Camp Pendleton in California for a year of reserve center. He flew to Kuwait in early February. Assigned to Camp Coyote, 30 miles south of the Iraqi border, Beamer was involved in more training, more practice loading the trucks and more combat preparation.

He spent the cool desert nights in a tent, is 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 you’ letters, and ‘I miss you’ letters.”

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 Registry. “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 year we both have something over the distance.”

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

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

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 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.

“I get to hear all of his childhood stories, and she broke out all of the baby-picture boxes ... a lot of stuff I probably wouldn’t be allowed to see if I were here,” Smith said.

Charlene Beamer said 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 Kernelsome, through which Smith has led several pro-war, pro-American rallies.

“It’s 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 out 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 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 her parents, organizing rallies and keeping Smith active and her anxiety to a minimum, but she says 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.

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

At the reserve center, I saw him walk away through the gate, and I drove away. It was kind of tough.
The spread, or placement of cards, can change the interpretation of their meaning.

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.

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.

Wilholt remembers her first tarot experience. "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. 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.”

I think that there are others like me. Can I show you that it's not what people tell you it is? Can I tell you the truth?
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 060" was waiting on a couch seat. Dark-haired, laid-back and cool, Luis was another story. I talked about traveling with Dave, a 28-year-old archeologist who told me all about combatting typhoid fever in Peru; and I talked about retreating Dating' guys had typical jobs, Kevin, a young, hot 29-year-old with a goatee, however, his interests were another story.

"I'm into girls," Eats declared simply. "I've been taking a few seminars off from Valenica."

When Next.

"Brian 006" and "Chad 813" were both wearing the typical 'guy' uniform, had typical jobs, were typically sweet — and completely unmemorable.

I was starting to realize just how long eight minutes could be. When we had finished the first four dates, Simmons announced a 20-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 255," a 29-year-old pharmaceutical sales representative from Deland.

Geno was a big flir who liked to ask questions.

"So, what do you like to do when you come home from a long day at work?" 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,Bit-style, for the fourth time in eight minutes.

My next date, with "Mark 710," 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 retreating 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 far as touching my animalistic, "date me, date me," side... none of the '8-Minute Dating' guys had done it.

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 hadn'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 for me, I think maybe I'll try the '8-Minute dating' scene sometime. Or maybe '7-Minute dating' or '7-Minute dating' (actual local speed-dating events) ... or maybe just the good of Orlando bar scene.

In the meantime... I'm calling Ryan.

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Midnight April 3, with standard-issue field rations while they’re in base camp. And—assuming you don’t mind eating that actually taste pretty good while combat Marines are on the move—Marine ration becoming tastier over time, with some of the less popular items being phased out. For example, the ham and egg omelet entrees, known to Marines as “Don Man in a Bag” because of an unpleasant aroma and greenish hue to the eggs, is no more. The so-called “Four Fingers of Death”—four hotdogs in a bag with beans—is also on its way out.

The menu slowly changes from Marine to Marine, excluding M&Ms and cheese or butter. The MREs are awful—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 Caesar salad,” says Lance Cpl. Nena Wilder, 23, of Murietta, 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 patty,” says Lance Cpl. Ben White of Marietta, with the 1st Battalion of the 5th Marine Regiment at Camp Geiger. “The best performed in the Pork Choo Min. I got that three days in a row once.”

The Marine convoy carrying a U.S. humanitarian aid team to and from the city of Ummar Qan throw out candy and MREs to Iraqi children as they travel to the port to assess whether it is capable of receiving aid:

Military rations becoming tastier

GORDON DILLOW
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER (AP)

Veterans who remember the canned C-ration of earlier wars may not believe it. But the U.S. military has finally come up with standard-issue field rations that actually taste pretty good—assuming you don’t mind eating your meals out of brown plastic bags.

“MRE? They’re okay, I guess,” says Lance Cpl. Charlie Valle, 19, with the 1st Marine Division at Camp Matilda, Kuwait. “But you get tired of them pretty fast.”

MRE is short for “Meal, Ready-to-Eat,” and most of the Marines in the Kuwaiti desert are their breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The meals come in 24 different menus, ranging from “Thai Chicken” to “Mediterranean and Greek.” And while combat Marines are on the move, MREs are their freshwater, lunch and dinner.

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 or fiber are also included. Lack of fiber apparently was a problem with earlier versions of MREs, excelling them the nickname “MREs Refusing to Exit.” (Poor quality in the earlier versions of MREs also resulted in them being dubbed “MREs followed by Ethiopians” and other, even less tasteful names.)

Each MRE also comes with an accessory packet: plastic spoon, moldable plate, packets of salt, sugar, cocoa or Tasters Choice instant coffee, powdered cranberry, a small packet of aji pepper, Chexlecks gum and matches. Unlike in the old days, the now-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.

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