

# FOCUS

A Blind Brook High School Student Publication

News Editor: Craig Bergman

News Section

## Applying Early: The Blind Brook Way?

By Keith Hanauer

As December roles on, high school seniors are sweating a little more as they wait to hear from their schools of choice. Many seniors now choose to apply early, either early decision or early action, depending on the school. Nationally, the trend towards applying early is up significantly over the last decade. According to an article in the Wall Street Journal dated May 29, 2001, most private schools fill one third of their slots by early admission as compared to one-fifth of their slots ten years ago.

Across the country, but particularly in the Northeast, students scrambled to get their applications in by mid-November. Blind Brook students are no exception. This year a little less than half of the class applied early. According to the guidance department, this percentage has remained fairly steady over the past few years and thus has come to be more or less expected. This statistic is noticeably higher than that of students across the country and is even slightly higher than that of students

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## BB Makes Move to New Facility

By Lisa Hamilton

As the winter holiday break nears, the Blind Brook Middle/High school administration and faculty are finalizing plans to temporarily relocate almost all classes to the new middle school building. This shift will allow extensive renovations to take place in the existing structure. As described by Assistant Principal Michael Mitchell, the plan calls for the construction crew "to gut the whole building." "All of the open classrooms will be gone and a lot of things will be changed," said Mr. Mitchell. Some aspects of the building, however, will remain unchanged, including the commons and locker areas.

The move is scheduled to take place on Thursday and Friday, December 20 and 21, which have been changed to half days of instruction, with the afternoons set aside for moving furniture, books, and supplies.

Students passing the construction site on a daily basis have expressed doubts about whether the new building will be ready on time. "It still looks like it's just the shell of a building. How can it be ready in two weeks?" questioned senior David Stockel. However, Principal Robert Chlebicki is optimistic, pointing to the fact that the construction crew has met two other



Brick by brick, Blind Brook Middle School nears completion as the school community busily prepares for the move in January. Photo by Mark Harris

crucial deadlines, including the opening of school in September.

Teachers have already begun packing for the move. According to Mr. Chlebicki, they will take only what they need for the second semester to the new building, and the rest of their materials will be stored in boxes somewhere else on the property.

Students are being encouraged to stay

after the eleven o'clock dismissal on the two moving days to help the teachers and the custodians carry things to the new building. Students who help will receive community service credit.

In a letter dated November 13th, Mr. Chlebicki also invited parents to help on those two days. He explained that he has been told that parents similarly helped to set up the school when it was first built twenty five years ago.

Asked about any disruptions in teaching or learning brought about by the move, Mr. Chlebicki stated, "The move itself won't affect the learning environment outside of those two half days of school. Other than that I don't think there will be any effect on teacher's instructional time with students."

To ensure a smooth transition, Mr. Mitchell noted that "We will probably have an orientation to familiarize the students with the new building. Students won't [otherwise] know where their classes are."

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## Retired Superintendent Selected as Middle School Principal

By Kyle Wirshba

The search for a principal for the new Blind Brook Middle School finally came to an end on November 19, when Dr. Thomas Wolf was unanimously appointed by the Board of Education. This appointment ends a nine-month search during which the position was advertised several times and approaches to two earlier candidates ended unsuccessfully.

For many, the decision came as a relief, because some community members doubted that a principal would be chosen before the start of the next school year. However, the efforts of Superintendent Dr. William Miles, Principal Robert Chlebicki and others, who have devoted significant time over the past few months to interviewing candidates, have paid off. After three rounds of candidate interviews, all involved are enthusiastic about finding an individual whose extensive background in curriculum and instruction makes him ideally suited for the job.

Dr. Miles and Mr. Chlebicki had only words of praise for the newly appointed sixty-four-year-old Dr. Wolf. Mr. Chlebicki said that immediately after sitting down with Dr. Wolf he knew he was the right man. Mr. Chlebicki indicated that he is happy to get the opportunity to work with someone who is "intelligent, wise, and knowledgeable, and whom I can learn a great deal from."

Dr. Miles is familiar with Dr. Wolf's



Dr. Thomas Wolf

Photo by Mark Harris

professional abilities, having previously worked with him for approximately five years when Dr. Wolf was superintendent of the Windham-Ashland-Jewett School District in Greene County, N.Y. At that time, Dr. Miles was the area's Board of Cooperative Education Services Superintendent. Dr. Miles stressed that Dr. Wolf is truly excited about starting a new middle school. According to Dr. Wolf, a good middle school addresses the needs of early adolescents, which he believes to be distinct from those of both elementary school children and high school students.

Dr. Wolf not only has a great deal of educational experience but is also a man whose personality shines through. Dr. Miles said that "Dr. Wolf is a low key people person and a great communicator." He also added that his interview with Dr. Wolf lasted for three hours.

Dr. Wolf's educational background includes a Bachelor of Arts from Yale, a Master of Arts in Teaching from Harvard, and a Doctorate from the University of Massachusetts. Dr. Wolf also taught in suburban Massachusetts, an area that has high academic standards according to Dr. Wolf. In addition, Dr. Wolf has thirty years of administrative experience, having held administrative positions in Newton and South Hadley, both in Massachusetts, as well as in Pawling and the Windham-Ashland-Jewett school district, both in New York. Dr. Wolf, who is the father of four and grandfather of two, is actually coming out of a recent retirement to take the newly-created position of Middle School Principal in Blind Brook, because he looks forward to the challenge of working directly with students again.

Dr. Wolf will officially start his new position on January 2, but he is working part-time during the month of December. Prior to taking over the daily operations of the school in September when the sixth grade moves over from the elementary school, Dr. Wolf will focus on curriculum and program development.

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# Are Five Days Enough? Senior Attendance Debate Continues

By Hadass Blank

As winter arrives and cold germs spread throughout Blind Brook, a proposal for reworking the Senior Attendance Policy to allow seniors to call in sick without receiving cuts has sparked considerable debate in the Blind Brook School Congress.

On page 25 in the Blind Brook Middle/High School Student and Family Guidebook 2001/2002, it states that the Senior Attendance Policy, "Unlike the policies for underclassmen...contains no provisions for detentions or suspensions for missed classes. But there are other consequences for excessive absences... [and] Seniors are required to be present at school meetings and assemblies..." The guidebook goes on to say that, "Should a senior fall below this requirement, course credit will be denied...and an F will be on their report card and transcript."

This policy, by not differentiating between excused and unexcused absences, aims to hold seniors responsible for attending enough classes each quarter—a greater freedom students will need to face in college.

"Class fieldtrips, school activities, guidance appointments, and court hearings are the only exceptions to the rule of five cuts per quarter," stated Assistant Principal Michael Mitchell. "Absences for sicknesses and funerals are counted as

vacations and are all counted equally." After five cuts during the course of one quarter, an appeal can be made to a committee comprised of the student's guidance counselor, Mr. Mitchell, and an impartial teacher. The committee then meets to discuss reasons for the excess absences and to decide whether the student will lose credit and, possibly, eligibility to graduate on time.

Recently, numerous upperclassmen at Blind Brook have expressed concerns that "senior privileges" are being increasingly compromised by strict policies that adversely affect the students. In particular, the Senior Attendance Policy has been called into question. "The attendance policy is pretty rough," stated senior David Stockel, "It's not easy to stay under the five cut limit if they're going to count sick days as unexcused absences."

*Though student reactions seem to be fairly clear-cut one way or the other, the opinions of faculty and administration are not quite so black and white.*

On the other hand, numerous Blind Brook seniors dismiss the complaints, explaining that altering the policy, "would make the [attendance] problems even worse." Upon being asked his opinion on the policy, senior Jason Stein responded, "I don't really see what the big deal is. The policy seems fine, and I think all the talk about it is a waste of time. They shouldn't fix something that isn't broken."

Though student reactions seem to be fairly clear-cut one way or the other, the opinions of faculty and administration are not quite so black and white. Many have expressed mixed feelings. "Though the Senior Attendance Policy was printed in the Family Guidebook before I came here, I do like and dislike various points," commented Principal Robert Chlebicki.

According to Mr. Chlebicki, the policy was enacted to prevent students from neglecting their schoolwork after their acceptance to college. However, in some ways, the policy's more lenient aspects may serve to make this problem worse. "I like how the policy puts responsibility into the hands of individual students so they can be responsible for their own actions," explained Mr. Chlebicki. "However, I dislike the policy because abuse of the rules happens too often when seniors decide to take weeks off each quarter because no credit would be lost."

A few months ago, seventh through eleventh graders at Blind Brook were asked to fill out a survey put together by Congress. The survey sought the opinions of underclassmen as to whether the existing Senior Attendance Policy should be altered. The results were 2:1 in favor of change. Based on such statistics, some members of Congress feel that change seems inevitable. Stated Loren Fishkind, a junior and member of Congress, "So many students want the policy to change that it's probably going to have to happen. The only question is how." That is the very question presently under debate in Congress. While some representatives advocate completely disregarding the current policy and composing a new one from scratch, others believe that only certain revisions to the existing policy are necessary.

Debate in Congress has been going on for weeks about the issue, as a wide variety of different viewpoints are emerging. "I think the existing policy is mostly fine," said Flavia Godoy, a sophomore representative to Congress, "But I think that illnesses and funerals should be excused from being cuts."

"I would like to see the seniors have the same requirements as the rest of the student body. Why does there have to be a difference at all?" questioned a junior who wishes to remain anonymous.

## New Committee Formed to Improve Science Department

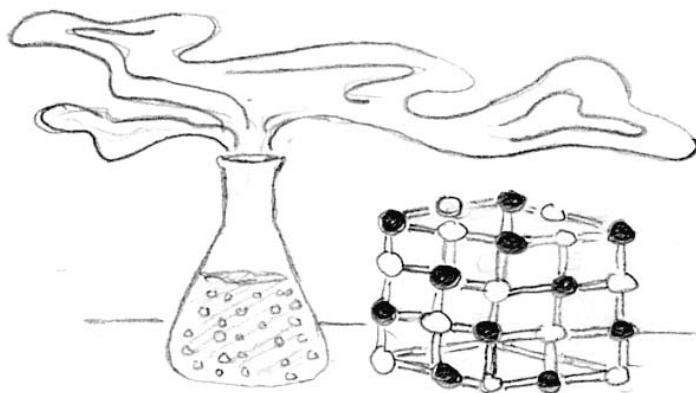
By Jeffrey Genova

A Science Program Improvement Team has recently been assembled to review the district's kindergarten through twelfth grade science curriculum. The committee, which adopted the acronym SPIT, was formed in response to a departmental assessment by the Tri-State Science consortium, an independent organization that Blind Brook has been affiliated with since 1995. The committee is comprised of faculty representatives from the elementary, middle, and high schools. Currently, chemistry teacher and department coordinator Pat Steponovich and earth science teacher Dr. Lei Novak represent the high school science department in this newly formed body, with Biology teacher Janet Lobdell serving as an alternate.

SPIT's goal is to recognize weaknesses in the science department and to devise a plan of action for improvement to be presented to the Board of Education for final approval. The committee convenes about once a month and is still in the process of analyzing the results of the Tri-State Science consortium's assessment. Explained Mrs. Steponovich, "The committee is still really in its infant stages, but we're going to explore possible ways to revise the curriculum. We're especially interested in looking into International Baccalaureate, which is an

alternate form of curriculum assessment and development."

The Tri-State Science consortium, whose assessment of the Blind Brook science curriculum prompted the creation of the SPIT, based its examination of the department in three areas: student perfor-



mance, internal support, and external support. The district was presented with both numerical scores and written comments regarding fifteen indicators within the three categories. Each of the fifteen indicators was rated for its approach, implementation, and results. The scoring scale went from one to four, four being the highest score. Science teachers were trained to provide the materials and student work necessary to make an accurate assessment.

The six indicators in the category of student performance are standardized testing, longitudinal data, active learners, college performance and co-curricular activities. The science department

received a score of one in each category except performance assessment and active learners, which received scores of two.

The seven indicators in the internal support category are instruction, supervision and evaluation, professional development, environment for change, shared vision and goals, curriculum development, and student needs. The department received scores of one in supervision and evaluation, professional development and shared vision and goals. Scores of two were given in instruction, environment for change and curriculum development. Student needs was the highest overall category on the entire assessment, receiving a score of three.

The final category surveyed was external support. The two indicators assessed in this category were parental support and budget support. The scores were one and two respectively.

The results received a varied reaction among teachers, administrators and students. Principal Robert Chlebicki commented, "We pretty much knew where we stood and thus could probably have conducted an equally accurate self-assessment," and that the findings were just a "confirmation of knowledge we already had."

However, science teachers expressed genuine concern with the poorer than

expected ratings. Earth science teacher and SPIT member Dr. Lei Novak said she "didn't understand how they [the Consortium] came up with the numbers because the numerical ratings and written comments seemed to contradict each other." Department head and chemistry teacher Pat Steponovich, also a SPIT member, concurred with Dr. Novak, saying that she didn't understand how the numerical ratings were derived and why the weaknesses weren't outlined in the consortium's written comments. Mr. Chlebicki explained that the written comments only addressed the department's strengths and did not highlight the department's weaknesses. He also stressed that the assessment was based on a snapshot of the department and that the science department might not have provided all the necessary material for the evaluators to derive a truly accurate score.

Perhaps the most obvious flaw of the Kindergarten through 12th grade science department is the lack of a curriculum coordinator, who would make certain that the goals of the elementary, middle, and high school departments were uniform. In larger districts, an assistant superintendent often assumes the role of curriculum coordinator. The importance of uniform curriculum, especially at the elementary level, has taken on new importance with a standardized science test now being administered at the culmination of fourth grade. Mr. Chlebicki commented that each school is doing a good

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## News Section

## Weekend Retreat Fosters Interpersonal Growth

By Emily Redmerski

More than one month after the Human Relations Weekend, the halls of Blind Brook are still buzzing with excitement over the annual student retreat, sponsored by the Human Relations Club. From November 9th through 11th, twenty-nine students from grades 9-12, along with three faculty members, ventured to Camp Sloane in Lakeville, Connecticut for a weekend of organized activities and social interaction.

Senior and Co-President of the Human Relations Club Frank D'Angelo felt the weekend's main purpose was to "take students out of the Blind Brook atmosphere and place them in an environment more conducive to forming bonds and relationships." According to D'Angelo, Camp Sloane's secluded location helps to achieve this goal, because it enables students to feel comfortable interacting with other students of different ages. Additional goals for the weekend were for students to get better in touch with themselves, to improve listening skills, to work more cooperatively in groups, and of course, to have an enjoyable experience.

The staff chaperones for the weekend were Spanish teacher and Human Relations Club faculty adviser Marsha Arest, Assistant Principal Michael Mitchell, and guidance counselor Jean Nugent. According to

Mrs. Arest, the weekend's activities honed listening skills, built self-esteem, and encouraged individuals to work together to accomplish a goal. The latter was developed through various project adventure activities. Commenting on the activities, freshman Angela Criscione, a member of the club's Executive Board, said, "I think the activities helped to bring people closer together and allowed everyone to get to know each other better." Mrs. Arest also praised the activities, remarking that they "dealt with issues that were hard for some people, but they felt the support of the whole group".

From Mrs. Arest's perspective, the only goal that was not fully achieved was the carryover of the cooperative social skills practiced during the weekend into the school environment. However, despite this one criticism, most involved with the trip spoke very positively about the experience. Senior and Human Relations Club Co-President Dean Kaplowitz believes that the goals were attained because "People are still communicating even now, a long time since the weekend took place." Sophomore Jessica Novick had similar feelings. Said Novick, "I felt the weekend was a lot of fun and a great experience that allowed me to make new friendships that I will hopefully be able to keep over the year."

### Applying Early Continued from page 1

across Westchester County.

Of those students who do apply early, many have applied early decision, meaning they will receive responses by late December provided that they make a commitment to attend the school if accepted. Early action, also a popular process, similarly has students apply to their school(s) of choice at earlier dates, but it does not require a commitment to attend if accepted, leaving the student free to decline.

Applying early is in no way a necessary or required practice, but it is one that, from the perspective of Blind Brook students, seems to present a number of advantages. In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult for seniors to gain admission to their schools of choice, because competition in the college application process has become more intense. Westchester is one of the most competitive counties in the country when it comes to college admissions. As Senior Allison Schultz commented, "The earlier you get in, the less competition you have." In general, colleges tend to admit early applicants at a slightly higher rate than regular admission applicants.

The reason that colleges show a slight preference for early decision applicants is that such applicants, because their acceptance is binding, increase what is called the college's "yield," the number of students accepted by a particular college who then choose to attend that college. This figure is one of the measures often used by college guidebooks to indicate a given school's popularity. It is also used as one factor in the student selectivity score in the widely-read annual US News and World Report ratings of colleges.

The early application path also has the added advantage of possibly ending the

college application process in early winter rather than mid-spring. Senior Frank D'Angelo explains that "early decision is a fantastic option, because it allows you to hear back from the school of your choice pretty early on in the year. That way, if you get in, the process is over, and if you don't, there's still plenty of time left to send out applications to other schools."

Many support the early application option, because it seems to help students to narrow their choices and to focus in with absolute certainty on specific places. When asked why she chose to apply early action, senior Lauren Morabito simply said, "I like the school." Senior Stephanie Platt applied early decision to what she calls "the perfect school" for her. Sammy Tager explained that she applied early to a school in which she "will be able to do what . . . [she] loves: play basketball."

Others students prefer the option because they hope to end the process quickly, avoiding much of the work involved. Senior Sang Min Lee applied early decision to his favorite school because he "just wanted to get it over with."

On the other hand, approximately half of this year's senior class year rejected the early application option. Senior Tarynne Goldenberg is one of those and commented, "Applying early is risky. If you don't get in, all you've done is put off a whole bunch of applications. Putting off on doing applications will make you crazy. The best thing you can do is to do them all as soon as possible." Some students simply were not sufficiently certain of their first choice to merit the commitment required by early decision. Senior David Markowitz explained, "I have enough problems getting my applications in on time as it is."



Cars waiting to pick up students have greatly contributed to the traffic problem.

Photos by Mark Harris

## Asst. Principal's Letter Unsnarls Traffic Chaos

By Carrie Schmelkin

On November 20, Assistant Principal Michael Mitchell sent a letter to the parents of Blind Brook middle and high school students addressing various traffic problems in the main Blind Brook parking lot. "Ever since I have been in this school," stated Principal Robert Chlebicki, "there have always been problems with the pick-up and drop-off in the Blind Brook parking lot, because people just don't listen." As construction of the new Middle School progresses, creating a new traffic pattern, traffic problems have worsened.

Mr. Mitchell's letter delineated certain specific problems. First, in the morning, parents are waiting until they get in front of the school entrance to let their passengers out. This problem is compounded when parents don't listen to the security guards' directions. As Blind Brook security guard Jay Riddick commented, "Parents wait until they get to the top to drop off their kids and then they wait and watch them walk into the school."

Another pressing concern is that the school buses "cut" the line causing cars to wait for the buses to unload the students before driving off. Ninth grader Caryn Giamio noted, "You have to wait behind the buses and then when you get to the top, another bus comes and you have to wait even longer. The students in cars have to get to school too."

Finally, parents who pick up their children in the Arbors create an additional traffic issue outside of school property. Residents of the Arbors have a difficult

time coming in and out due to the double parking by Blind Brook parents. This situation was recently brought to Mr. Mitchell's attention by Richard Begl, property manager of the Arbors, who expressed concern about this problem.

In order to deal with the slow traffic flow in the mornings, Mr. Riddick and Mr. Mitchell suggest that three or four cars should unload at once in order to speed up the traffic. As to the problems in the Arbors, Mr. Mitchell hopes that "Members of the Community Service Club can canvass the area, handing out flyers telling parents not to pick their kids up there."

To correct this situation, Mr. Mitchell has requested that all drivers comply with the directions of the security guards, that drivers drop off their passengers only in the designated areas, and that drivers do not pull out of line to unload. At this time, the school does not have an alternate plan in effect for the bus problem, because space is limited. However, Mr. Chlebicki seems confident that the problems will improve next year when the construction is completed.

The school has received complaints about these situations from parents. Most faculty and students, however, seem less concerned about the problems. Eighth grade social studies teacher Mark Greenwald remarked, "I have not a single problem with the parking situation although I've heard about the issues." Furthermore, freshman Blair Fisher said, "Neither my parents nor I are bothered by the situation. We notice it, but we deal with it."



A daily sight once classes end, crowds of students waiting to be picked up block the entrance to the building.

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News Editor: Craig Bergman

**News Section****KONCEPTS** by Brett Konner

Construction is well underway at Blind Brook's new Middle School.

Photo by Mark Harris

**BB Makes Move to New Facility** Continued from page 1

Middle school Spanish teacher Trudi Davis agreed, saying "There's definitely going to be a period of adjustment where we will have to get used to the new building." Junior Rachel Fischer added, "It will be very confusing not knowing where to go at first, especially since we have been accustomed to the current school for so many years."

Some high school students are particularly concerned about not having enough time between classes to walk from building to building and to the portable classrooms. Junior Matt Gordon stated, "It is imperative to allow more time for everyone to travel between periods, especially when

we first move and the long walk is not yet routine. Sophomore Arielle Fredman added, "Getting from the 'ports' [portable classrooms] to the new building will take a lot longer."

The structure of the new building is expected to provide a positive learning environment. "Teachers will not have to deal with outside noise anymore," noted Mr. Mitchell. Matt Gordon commented, "The move to the new school with closed classrooms will give students and teachers a more comfortable and tranquil environment to learn in, as opposed to the noisy and disruptive classrooms that we have generally been in."

**Committee Formed** Continued from page 2

job but that overall coordination is lacking.

Other major weaknesses, according to the report, were results on standardized testing and budget support. Blind Brook students pass the regents exams with flying colors, yet they still score about a letter grade below their report card grade. Dr. Novak said the discrepancy was normal because the report card grade includes labs and class participation as well as test scores. However, when confronted with the question of inflated grades in the science department, Mr. Chlebicki said he was unsure whether science grades are inflated. Another question pertaining to standardized testing is whether teachers are "teaching to the test." Dr. Novak explained that she does teach to the test but also includes other relevant information. Biology teacher Jerry Citron also said that he sometimes teaches to the test explaining that "It is important to teach to the exam because unfortunately that is how science apti-

tude is measured." Although Mr. Citron acknowledges the necessity of teaching to the exam, he believes it is not the best way to teach science. Mr. Chlebicki summed up the controversy stating that teachers should "teach to the demands of the test."

The science department is one of the most expensive departments to maintain because of the equipment required for labs. Although the department's budget has increased over the years, Mr. Chlebicki said the budget might not have increased as much as it should have.

Students also had varied opinions about their science education. Junior Adam Brackman expressed interest in having a greater variety of subjects offered. Junior Blair Mosner said, "Students should be much more respectful and mature in the classrooms." Senior Jeff Gnerre stated, "Serious science students get to pursue their interests in the science research program, which caters to the specific interest of the student."

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# Sports

Sports Editor: Frank D'Angelo

## Boys' Varsity Basketball: Now Or Never

By Jeffery Kaplow  
and Frank D'Angelo

Over the past few years, the Blind Brook Boys' Basketball Team has seemed to grow better and better. In the 1999-2000 season, the team went 18-2 before the playoffs, ended in a three-way tie for the League Championship with Hamilton and Tuckahoe, and lost in the first round of the Sectional Tournament. Last year, the Boys' team finished the regular season 19-1 as the sole champion of League III-D. That year, they lost in the finals of the Sectional Tournament to Haldane.

As of December 12th of this year, the team was 4-0. The Trojans defeated Dover Plains in their home opener. Dover was thought to have been the best team in Class C, but the Trojans' victory made coaches and writers turn their heads. Blind Brook also grabbed the Championship in the Irvington tip-off Tournament for the third straight year, defeating Irvington and The Masters School on two successive days. They most recently defeated Valhalla by a score of 62-38.

One would think, simply by logic deductive reasoning, that the team will go 20-0 this season, capturing the League and Sectional titles. As capricious as this may sound, don't rule out the possibility.

This year, the most popular team in Blind Brook has a bright outlook for their season. Led by Head Coach Jeff Charney, and Assistant Coaches Jerry Roth, Adam Greco, and Greg DiPaoli, the Trojans are primed for success. With more experience than they've had in the past four years, this squad is expecting bigger and better things.

"I'll be disappointed if we don't get that Sectional banner at the end of this year," said senior Robert Frank. "We have so much older talent. If there's any year we'll be able to do it, this is the one."

Coach Charney, who notched his 150th victory last season, has been a staple of Blind Brook Basketball for over a decade. He expects this to be his last season coaching for the Trojans, and so this season carries with it a greater sense of finality.

Said senior Chris Greco, "This year, things seem to be in place, so we have to go out with a bang—not only for us seniors, but Coach [Charney] too."

The team has seven seniors this year in Jason Stein, John-Michael Grzan, Chris Greco, David Stockel, Frank D'Angelo, Robert Frank, and Brett Konner. These seven players have a combined 13 years of past Varsity experience. Stein and Grzan each have three years under their belts; they are the CO-Captains this year (along with junior Kevin Aughavin, who is also in his fourth year).

After this year, the Varsity team will be left with a dearth of seasoned players, and will have to dip into the current pool of JV talent.

This really hasn't been a problem, though, over the past four years. For instance, last year the team graduated Matt Effler, John Aughavin, Carl Latella, and Greg Bach. Latella and Bach contributed sparsely last year. Latella saw a few minutes off the bench at the point guard position in place of the league-renown Grzan, and Bach quit half way through the season. Aughavin

was known for his tenacious defense and his occasional shooting streaks. And Effler, of course was a dominant force inside, scoring over 17 points a game and meriting All-State Third Team honors.

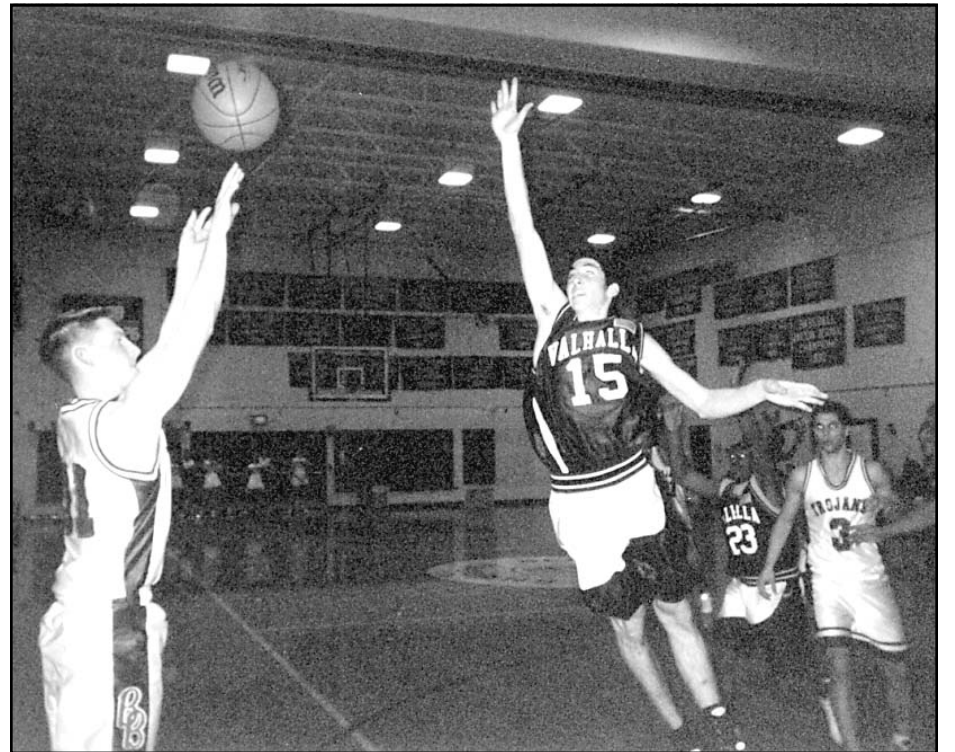
Replacing Aughavin this year is a quicker, more versatile Greco, who has a great outside shot and a skillful drive to the hoop. Greco, who scored 20 in the first round of the Sectionals last year, will be a key member of the Trojans this year. He will draw players outside with his shooting and open up the middle for Stockel, Stein, and Grzan.

Stockel, although a half a foot shorter than Effler, may be as powerful as him. He certainly won't be able to score in the high teens and low twenties each game, but he will be a crucial part of the Trojan's defense. Stockel will rely on his frame to guard taller players. His intensity is also another high point. This year's "big man" has also displayed keen shooting skills as of late.

Also compensating for the loss of Aughavin and Effler are two bench players who, although having seen meager time last year, will be an important component to success this season. Frank D'Angelo is the team's sixth man. D'Angelo can play the 3, the 4, and the 5 spot on offense. Charney plans to use him down the stretch for his long-range shooting and his rebounding. Robert Frank will be playing the 1 and 2 spots, the guard positions, off the bench. He is a sharpshooter and a high-intensity player who is bound to give the Trojans solid minutes this season. Frank is a quick, scrappy defender who can force players to fault.

Both have improved their defense tremendously this year. This has allowed Charney more confidence in substitution.

The team has seemed to overcome the loss of its former seniors. The Trojans will convert to a more equilateral offense this year. Last season, Blind Brook could afford



Junior Kevin Aughavin shoots for the basket in a game against Valhalla.

Photos by Frank D'Angelo

to be more stagnant, since they could rely upon Effler down low. Now, without a firm go-to man in the middle, the offense has opened up. For the first time since the early 1990's, the Trojans are a shooting team.

They will rely on a vast array of offenses, varying from isolation to flashes to the basket. The Trojans are virtually unstoppable against man-to-man due to the one-on-one dominance of the starting five and their screen-and-roll offenses. This has forced teams into zone defenses, which have allowed the Trojans to display their outside shooting prowess.

On defense, Blind Brook has simply befuddled teams with its match-up zone defense, a keen combination of man-to-man and zone which Charney has perfected over the years.

"I think our defense is great this year,"

stated Charney. "We have guys who understand it, and we have a great overall sense of where to be on the floor. Our quickness has helped too, and now we're getting more steals and transition opportunities."

The Trojans can score in transition, and often get into fast-break scoring sprees. But, traditionally, Blind Brook is not a run-and-gun team. In fact, they've managed in the past to slow quicker teams with their set offenses.

"We can run the ball, but sometimes we're better off with our set plays," asserted Charney. "We've really slowed down the quicker teams like Hamilton, Tuckahoe, Graham, Leake and Watts—those guys—with our discipline. When we play the game we're used to playing, teams have a tough time beating us."

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## Ski Team Finds New Members, Hopes for New Success

By Eliot Rifkin

The Blind Brook Varsity Ski Team, although somewhat unpopular in the course of Blind Brook athletic history, has received some recognition over the past few years with Sectional Honors. Led by Coach Marcello Marcoccia, the Ski Team has hopes of sending a number of players to tournament competition.

Last year, only Evan Foxx and Stacy Grossman skied well enough to participate in Sectional meets. Each received Sectional Honors. But eight and ten years ago, the team had as many as six skiers with such honors.

"This season, we have a lot of new members with lots of potential and hopefully we will come out successful," said Stacy Grossman.

In total, the team has 24 members, 18 of which are Blind Brook students and 6 which are from Rye Neck. Seniors Evan

Foxx, Tim Hodge, William Keane, Sang-Min Lee, Tim Lightbody, Rebecca Barclay, Jessica Levine, and Diana Sterk lead the pack. In addition, juniors Brian Goldstein and Jordan Lutsky will join sophomores Jeff Genova, Dan Goldstein, Robyn Berke, Stacey Grossman, Olivia Richardson, and Leslie Steinberg, and freshmen Mark Harris, Andrew Heiser, Ben Solarz, and Lindsey Jackson.

Something about this season has attracted new younger kids to the team. There were two 7th graders, two 8th graders, and four freshmen added this year. Those Middle School Members include Shinsuke Kawano, Scott Statman, Christina Dicostanzo, and Laura Marcoccia. Of course, with new members comes the possibility of new talent and more Sectional stars.

Said Coach Marcoccia, "I haven't seen these numbers in years; the future can

only look brighter."

Some players, like Leslie Steinberg, have maintained a more realistic outlook. She said, "Most likely, we'll have to rely on Evan Foxx to do something special."

Ben Solarz added, "I think we all realize we're not going to be dominating out there but we're still looking forward to an exciting season."

In preparation for their winter meets, the team has, and will continue to, practice on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 3:00 to 4:00. It is then when they can be found inside the new weight room in the high school gymnasium. Until the end of December, the team will continue with "dry practices," or weight training and endurance running. Come January, they'll simulate meets with "snow practices," which will most likely be held at locations upstate.

Sports Editor: Frank D'Angelo

## Sports Section



Blind Brook's boys' varsity basketball team cools off in the locker room.

## Van Gundy Says Goodbye to Knickerbockers

By Jason Stein

When I first heard that New York Knicks Coach Jeff Van Gundy resigned, I was shocked. After a couple of pensive seconds, I started to piece together the story. I was at Frank's Franks Hot Dog stand the day before, and I saw Coach Van Gundy walking down Anderson Hill Road, muttering to himself. He then purchased his daily hot dog. He did not look happy. As I started to speculate what had happened, I felt bad for him.

That afternoon was not the first time I had seen Coach Van Gundy in person. Last summer, on a hot day in the middle of July, I was working out on the basketball court at the SUNY Purchase gymnasium. I shared a court with Van Gundy. The coach ran up and down and playing, while I played on my hoop. Of course, with him adjacent to me, I focused extra hard on each shot, on the off chance that he would look over at me. To my surprise, Coach Van Gundy walked over to me on his way out of the gym, to express his regrets that our Blind Brook High School team had lost in the Sectional Finals a few months earlier. He told me not to feel bad about missing the last shot at the final buzzer of that game.

Our team often uses the gym after the Knicks do, on days that the Blind Brook Gym is not available. I guess he started following us over the years. Or, he follows local high school basketball, and he recognized my Blind Brook practice jersey. Regardless, the fact that he knew who I was showed me that he was not like the most people in the NBA, who think they are better than everyone else. Ever since that day, he was my buddy, always saying "hi" to me around the SUNY facility.

I felt bad because I knew that a coach resigning in December usually means one thing. The coach left before he was forced to, due to an abundance of "L's" in the win-loss column. However, this was not the case, and I had no reason to feel sorry for the coach. Van Gundy simply came to the realization that it was not going to work anymore with the Knicks and he did not need the aggravation. It was not his fault; he was doing his job. There was nothing else he could do.

What didn't the Knicks front office do to help the franchise? To start, they made no off-season moves to address

their glaring height and athletic concerns. Their three significant additions: Clarence Weatherspoon, Shandon Anderson and Howard Eisley, all were similar-type players, and the Knicks already had sufficient depth at their positions. They were not bad players. They simply were in the wrong place.

Latrell Sprewell's moaning about the team's lack of size was believed to reflect Van Gundy's sentiments without Van Gundy having to say them. Then, when Marcus Camby was injured, which always seems to be the case, the Knicks had no one to replace him. (We are discounting Travis Knight, even though he's our friendly neighbor, and plays a mean game of 2-on-2 ultimate Frisbee with his dog at Pine Ridge Park, and Felton Spencer for what should be obvious reasons.) Toronto had exploited the Knick's lack of size, forcing New York to take a rare first-round exit from the playoffs last spring.

The timing of Van Gundy's decision confuses many. New York had won two straight, and five of six since Camby came back, including an impressive victory in Milwaukee days earlier. No one had to tell Van Gundy that the Eastern Conference was wide open. Just a month into the season, the Nets, Pistons and Celtics are front-runners. But he obviously saw something that made it clear to him that it was time to leave. It was a decision that was made after a brutal Friday practice during which players repeatedly made the same mistakes, and Van Gundy got to the point where he threw them out of the gym.

Sometimes, it is as simple as being overly frustrated to the point of exhaustion. Coach Van Gundy was doing everything he could, but felt like nothing was getting through to the players.

The bottom line is no team can be a great team with undersized, slow power forwards, an overpaid, overrated shooting guard, a slow, old point guard, and no "real" center. Do not be surprised if Sprewell tries to jump ship like his coach. I wouldn't blame him either.

It is not looking good for the Knicks. As an avid fan, I would love to see the Knick's attempt to beat the Lakers (which is virtually impossible). I hope that somehow the Knick's can find some heart and desire to bring themselves back to the top of the East. For now, like other Knick's fans, we wait hopefully and say farewell to a great coach.

## Boys' Varsity Basketball Continued from page 5

This year, the Trojans will face off against bigger schools than the Hamiltons and Tuckahoes of years past. This season, the Trojans will find themselves in Class C due to prior dominance in Class D and an increased school enrollment. They will see more of schools like Dover and Edgemont. They will also be facing off this year against Horace Greeley, the team that handed Blind Brook its only regular season loss last year in a heartbreaking double-overtime, 9-point loss.

By the time FOCUS goes to print, Blind Brook would have already squared off against Horace Greeley in Round 1 of the Edgemont Dave Kintzing Tournament. According to senior John-Michael Grzan, "this is going to be our real test this season. If we can get past Greeley, we have a good chance of going undefeated."

Either way, the Trojans should have no trouble competing on this new level.

"Moving up to [Class] C will probably only test our endurance as a result of a longer schedule. I think the teams in [Class] D are probably better than those in C," said Charney.

The Trojans certainly have the talent. There may not be another team in Class C with a double-scoring threat like All-Section guard John-Michael Grzan and All-Section MVP Jason Stein.

Grzan's speed and endurance at the point position are unmatched. On offense, he has no problem hitting the open man, creating space on the court, or draining the mid-range jump shot. Charney, this year, is working with Grzan on his long-range shot.

Many times the team relies upon Grzan to break the press by himself. In fact, his ball handling abilities may make him the most irreplaceable player on this Trojan squad. In the Irvington Tournament, he was named MVP after scoring 25 points against Masters. Most recently, he received the Con Edison Award, given by The Journal News to a player excelling academically and

athletically.

Stein is the powerhouse of the Trojans. He adds a spark to the game with his combination of three-pointers, drives to the basket, and breakaway dunks. His versatility is unlike that of any other player in the League. Stein's rebounding and defensive abilities will continue to be a driving force behind Blind Brook's success.

Stein is an intimidating presence on the court and received an Honorable Mention for The Journal News's "Players to Watch" list. His first two points against Irvington were his 999th and 1000th of his Varsity career. Grzan is still about 300 points away from the 1000-point milestone. Grzan and Stein also played together during the off-season on the Hudson-Valley Empire State Scholastic Basketball team.

The third Captain is Kevin Auhavin. Auhavin is probably the best defensive player on the team. He can play up top and down low, and his steals and pick-offs are often the beginnings of key offensive possessions. Auhavin has always been an outside scoring threat, but his rebounding is the most important element of his game. He will be the one veteran player left after this season.

Other players on the Varsity squad are sophomore Tom Wethington, juniors Ricky Winter, Craig Bergman, and Alex Harik, and senior Brett Konner. Wethington will also be an important player this season. He has provided further help under the basket, and has shown great promise as a future scoring-machine for the Trojans. In a recent game against Valhalla, when D'Angelo was out due an ankle injury, Wethington stepped in off the bench to score 4 points and play solid defense.

This year's Team Manager is Dean Kaplowitz. Kaplowitz will fill the position left open by Jason Askinasi, who scored 8 points in his one and only appearance of the year against Bronxville for Homecoming.

## Midnight Madness Strikes Again

By Leah Citrin

It's fun. It's wild. It's full of school spirit. It takes place once a year on the night before Thanksgiving vacation. And it's.... well.....mad.

For the past four years, Midnight Madness has slowly found its niche here at Blind Brook. When it started, there were few more than thirty people in attendance. On November 20, 2001, four years later, the gym had been completely sold out, and people were left with standing room only. Part of this may have had something to do with the MC of the night, Brian Niles, who, according to Athletic Director Jim Spano, "did a great job."

Though in high schools Midnight Madness is not necessarily a common event, Spano explained why we have it at Blind Brook. "We knew that it was very successful on a college level. Colleges sold out their gyms to kick off their seasons, so we thought that maybe it would also work out on our level too."

And work it most certainly did. Who were the geniuses behind the idea of bringing midnight madness to Blind Brook?

"It came out of our Parent Athletic Advisory Committee. We were brainstorming ideas and it was that committee who said let's give it a try," confirmed Spano.

For four years, people of the community have been drawn to the annual celebration in increasing numbers. But why?

For some, it's because they are partici-

pating. Both the Boys' and Girls' and Varsity Basketball teams had inter-squad scrimmages. In addition, a Blind Brook/Ridge Street faculty team headed off against the Policemen's Benevolent Association. The night also included routines from the Cheerleaders. And for the first time the Dance Team performed.

For others, attendance was socially rooted.

"I went because my friends were going," asserted freshmen attendee Hillary Berkowitz.

A fairly large percentage of those present included alumni who were returning home for Thanksgiving. In a way, it offered them the same opportunity a traditional early winter Homecoming would.

"It really has filled the void [of a homecoming]," said Spano. "The homecoming game is a little later than it used to be, and so the college kids have usually gone back to school by then. Homecoming is more local for the kids in the school, and the Midnight Madness has really become a more communal event because its not held in January."

You can already start looking forward to next year's Midnight Madness, because Spano is assured that this fairly new tradition at Blind Brook will remain an annual event.

When asked to summarize Midnight Madness in just one word, Spano, with a laugh, offered "exciting."

# Features

Features Editor: Matt Stolzar

## A Philosopher in Blind Brook? Harik Says "Yes!"

By Matt Stolzar, Features Editor

The students gather around in a circle, all wondering what's going on. Did someone dare argue with Alex Harik? The booming voice of Harik is heard, as his opponent begins to duck down and whimper away. The walls begin to shake in anticipation, as the surrounding air pressure increases. Everyone knows the climax, yet their hearts still pump rapidly as they wait. And then it comes in one resounding roar, "Harik says 'No!'"

Who is Alex Harik? Is he a philosopher or a comedian? The question is debatable, but the fact is when Harik talks, people listen. As a reporter I delved behind the scenes in a one on one interview with Harik, to learn his philosophy, and get to know the man behind the myth.

His actions are easy to follow. For starters, Harik takes on a Bob Dole approach to talking, always referring to himself in the third person when debating. After winning an argument, which he virtually always does because of his powerful voice and witty responses, Harik ends his statement in one of two ways. If he was the initiator, and has proven his point, he will follow with a blaring "Skiminadoo Yeah Ha!" If he is refuting the point, he will scream, "Harik says 'No!'" But what does Harik say "No" to? I asked him this very question to which he laundered down a short list in his own words.

### Harik Says "No" To...

- "GNC Supplements: Why, might you ask, does he say 'No' to supplements? Well, you have all noticed the muscular girth surrounding Harik's body. Harik is all natu-

ral. People take creatine and steroids that enhance muscle growth, and Harik thinks, 'no, no, no!' What is the need for this? Quick gratification? When Harik was a youngster, he was frail. But then as he grew and worked out, he sprouted into a massive individual. There is not one morsel of muscle enhancement on Harik's bulky physique. Harik tells those who are small to follow good ethics. Strive to be all natural, like Harik."

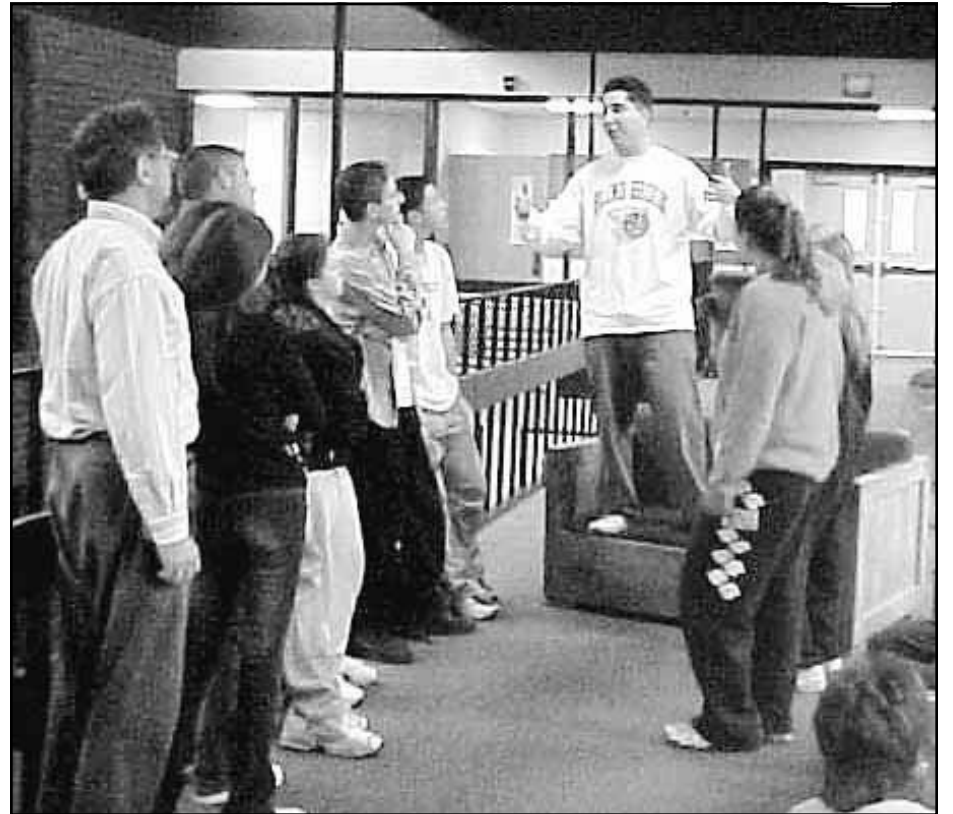
- "Boy Bands: To N Sync, Harik says, 'bye bye bye,' after he knocks them out. He calls it a dirty bop!"

- "Alcohol: Why, might you ask, does Harik say 'No' to alcohol? When Harik goes to a party, that is when the party starts! Harik needs no alcohol to add to his excitement. Why drink alcohol when you can drink Harik's beverage of choice, Capri Sun?"

- "Abdominal muscles: When Harik works out, he does a minimal force, maximum strength lift. Harik needs not waste his time working out his abs. What good will abs do when Harik knocks you to the floor? Nothing, simply nothing!"

- "Shakespeare: Why, might you ask, does he say 'No' to Shakespeare? Harik feels Shakespeare is overrated. While he is still important to learn, he is not original. He is copying off other writers whose stories he took! If he was such a genius, why couldn't he come up with his own plots?"

On Friday, December 7, the entire school caught a glimpse of Harik as he wrote a speech, which was read by his top disciple, senior Robert Frank. The speech detailed the special treatment given to those in the play, who unlike athletes are allowed to miss classes on the day of the



"Four score and seven years ago..." well, maybe not, but junior Alex Harik works the crowd, engaging both students and teachers alike. To that, Harik says "Yes!"

show and still perform. The students enjoyed Frank's accurate rendition of Harik's style.

Behind the philosophy, Harik has many attributes of the typical high school student, and shows various examples of leadership. He is a member of the Varsity basketball team, the School Congress, Vice

President of the Model UN club, and a Class Officer. When asked the ultimate question, is Alex Harik a philosopher or a comedian, Harik responded, "Alex Harik is a philosopher. His method for imparting his ideas is comical, yet he maintains some very serious thoughts through his philosophies. Harik wants justice, nothing more."

### In-Depth with Blind Brook's New Staff

## Jay Riddick

### A Security Guard and Friend to the Students

By Sanghee Lee

At the beginning of this school year, everyone noticed a new man in the hallways. He is Jay Riddick, the new Blind Brook Security Guard. But as the year has progressed, students no longer see Mr. Riddick. They see Jay, a man who has instantly been welcomed into the Blind Brook community.

As a child, Jay grew up in Brooklyn and Queens. He attended the University of Virginia, where he majored in accounting and psychology.

Jay has held a wide variety of jobs. Said Jay, "You name it, I have probably done it in my life." Jay's family owns a limousine company, and Jay has helped out in the management aspect of the company. He also has experience as a bodyguard, a bouncer at clubs, and as a security guard at fashion stores such as Bloomingdales and Macy's.

Jay took the job at Blind Brook because he likes the high school environment. He

stated, "It seemed to me that everyone was so down to earth and nice to one another, and I liked the nice neighborhood around the school."

Jay has various responsibilities around the school. His first and foremost concern is safety, especially the safety of the students. He also must make sure that everyone is following the basic rules, such as the food and beverage policy.

Jay is not just another security guard at school; he is more like a big brother to most students in Blind Brook. Jay attributes his camaraderie with the students to the lack

of a generation gap. Jay comments, "I'm not that old, so we are into the same things like music and parties." Jay also never hesitates to give his opinions and advice to students. He advises students about the dangers of drinking, smoking, and abusing drugs. "I don't say that stuff just because we are in school. I am like a big brother to these

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Jay Riddick

Photo by Mark Harris

## Spanish Club Gets Cooking

By Jessica Levine

In late November, Richard Ampudia, owner and chef of Café Habana, a New York City Mexican restaurant, came in to cook and talk about Spanish food and culture to Blind Brook's Spanish Club. Ampudia has an impressive track record, having been highlighted in *Food and Wine* magazine, and, last month, interviewed for the New York *Times* Food Section.

Ampudia was born and raised in Mexico to a Mexican father and American mother. His desire to become a chef and restaurant owner came from his lifelong enjoyment of all kinds of foods. Mr. Ampudia wants Mexican food to be known for more than just Taco Bell. He uses some of his family's recipes in his restaurant's menu.

This is the second year Ampudia has visited Blind Brook. Last year, he brought traditional Mexican cooking utensils and a variety of different chilis. He also brought a delicious Mexican lunch for the entire club to enjoy. This year, back by popular demand, he returned with a fascinating lesson on the history of Mexican chocolate. In both Spanish and English, Ampudia talked about the history of chocolate from the Aztecs until present day. Said Sharon Chasan, an interpreter for the BOCES

program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the advisor of the Spanish Club, "It was great for the students to have a unique opportunity to meet a Mexican native who is also a restaurant owner and chef. They were able to combine their love of the Spanish language, culture, and food."

This has been Chasan's second year as the Spanish Club advisor. After many years at the helm, Marsha Arest stepped down last year and passed the torch to Chasan.

Chasan has a strong Spanish background. She comes from a Mexican family, and is a fluent Spanish speaker. She has been interpreting for deaf students in Spanish classes at Blind Brook for six years.

In her first year, the Spanish club engaged in a variety of activities aside from just meeting Richard Ampudia. They studied and celebrated Hispanic cultural events and holidays, such as Cinco de Mayo and the Day of the Dead for Halloween. For Valentine's Day, some students went to the elementary school and made cards in Spanish with second graders. As Chasan looks forward to the rest of the year, she hopes that the club continues the success that it has had over the past year and a half in bringing Spanish culture to Blind Brook.

# Of Integrity and Treason

By Brian Rosenberg

Will the military tribunals Bush has authorized be fair? Are they constitutional? Will they give terrorists a fair trial? Will Walker be tried by one of these tribunals? What rights does he have as a United States citizen? Only time will tell.

America is supposed to be a haven for freedom, a paragon of virtue, and a model of democracy for the world to follow. Yet, this fairness has started to crumble. Even the dam of our Constitution cannot hold back the reservoir of emotion swelled by the past events. If one can look dispassionately at our country all the signs are there. Muslim citizens are beginning to be discriminated against, not only by other Americans, but also by the government itself. The government's law enforcement arm has been given an undeclared carte blanche from the Bush administration. They have started to detain and arrest without reasonable proof other than a person's ethnicity. Minority groups are starting to leave the country in fear of these arrests.

The latest among this long list of grievances is the institution of the military tribunal to try terrorists. This is, without exception, one of the worst mistakes our country can make at this time. Who are we to say that America can suspend the rights of a person and due process at any time we wish. What kind of precedent does this set for the world? Granted, most of the men tried by the tribunals will probably be guilty, and they probably deserve whatever they get. However, we cannot renounce our principles and succumb to the hatred that fueled the terrorists on September 11. That would only do their work for them.

To complicate matters from the government's perspective is the case of John Walker, who grew up in California. He was an introvert and pacifist who had an interest in comparative religion. He is the son of an upper middle class divorced couple named Frank Lindh and Marilyn Walker.

Now meet a man named Abdul Hamid. Abdul is a fighter for the Taliban in Afghanistan, and has been recently captured. He believes in an extremely pure form of Islam, hates what America stands for with a passion, and has been studying at a puritanical Pakistani religious school for some time now.

How John Walker metamorphosed into Abdul Hamid is a story in itself, but the ramifications of his decision will probably have a significant impact on the course of action the Bush administration takes. You see, Hamid/Walker is still a United States citizen. Walker's plight has drawn into focus what has been an abstract and slightly surreal conflict for many of us.

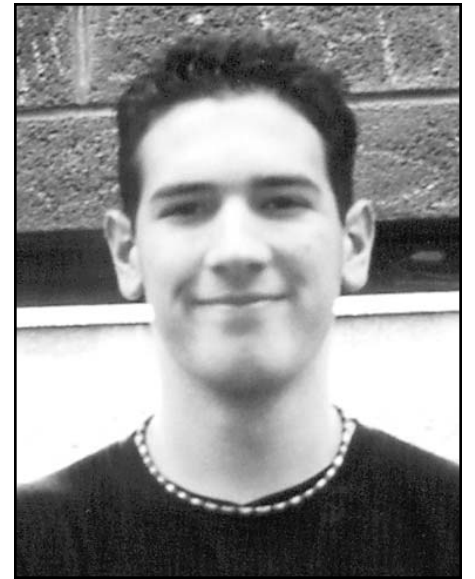
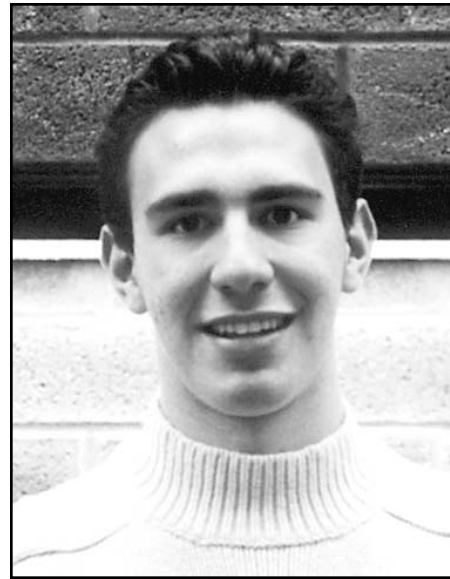
President Bush and the government have several choices. Although a military tribunal cannot try a US citizen, it is theoretically possible that the government could first strip him of his citizenship and then try him as a terrorist before such a tribunal. However, this option is not a course of action the government is likely to take. More likely would be a treason trial by a civilian court, although this option would also be an arduous one as a result of the constitutional stipulation that there must have been at least two witnesses who directly observed the defendant's treason.

All technicalities aside, is what John Walker did really treason? He traveled to Afghanistan to fight in a cause he believed in. Yes, Walker did indeed say that the attack on the USS Cole and the World Trade Center bombings were just and right, but those are simply his thoughts. Our government cannot punish people for something in which they believe; it's called the right to free speech. Furthermore, Walker is not implicated in any Al-Qaeda terrorist activities. Lastly, Walker fought against the Northern Alliance, never against American soldiers themselves. He never directly fought against the United States government. In fact, he joined the fight against the Northern Alliance before September 11th and before Kabul and Mazar-I-Sharif became household names. So what right does the United States government have to try Walker for treason? Justice Department lawyers are, in addition to treason, also considering other charges, including murder and conspiracy that also carry a death sentence. These possibilities are even more ridiculous than the last. Again, Walker clearly had no connection with Al-Qaeda, and never harmed or conspired to harm a US citizen. He was only fighting Northern Alliance troops. Therefore, it is clearly ridiculous for the US to prosecute him.

Whichever path the Bush administration chooses to pursue in the Walker case, we must consider if indeed these pro-Taliban fighters are in fact terrorists. Consider the fact that from their point of view, they are rebelling against an unjust, albeit more powerful nation trying to meddle in their internal affairs. They view themselves as patriots, warriors of Islam who are fighting for a just cause. Do not confuse pro-Taliban fighters with Al-Qaeda terrorists. Even though some of them might sympathize with and try to justify terrorist actions, they do have a right to free speech and freedom of thought. Don't they?

Although the terrorists themselves, in contrast to the pro-Taliban fighters, should be prosecuted to the fullest extent possible, they should still be accorded the same rights as any other suspect. The US has no right to suspend habeas corpus or any of the other rights accorded to more conventional defendants in the United States. After all, we have a saying in the US, innocent until proven guilty. Just because the terrorists committed more heinous crimes cannot serve as a reason to suspend any of these rights. Anything less would risk innocents being convicted for something they didn't do, and that would be illegal and morally wrong. Trying the terrorists by military tribunal, or stripping them of any of their rights, or not according them due process would undermine our justice system and damage the very moral fiber of this country that we hold inviolate.

## The Bizarre World of Blind Brook



Freshman Steven Lande, pictured left, bears a striking resemblance to senior Brett Konner. Or, is it senior Brett Konner who is pictured left?

Photos by Jake Sussman

## Cloning Accusations as New Students Replace Old

By Matt Stolzar, Features Editor

Is Blind Brook sponsoring secret cloning labs? Evidence has been piling up that two new students may in fact be clones of older Blind Brook students. Freshman Steven Lande and sophomore Jon Spiess both new to Blind Brook, bear striking resemblance to senior Brett Konner and alumnus Jason Askinasi respectively. The cloning labs are speculated to be located in either the upstairs science closet or behind the cafeteria freezer. Students have been warned to be careful about leaving any genetic information behind, as any leftover DNA is likely to be cloned. As of now, no suspects have been named, but it's assumed that the cloners have strong science backgrounds.

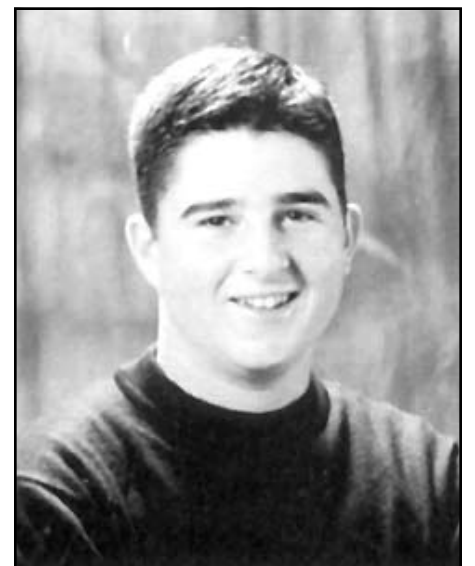
The most striking resemblance is between Spiess and Askinasi. On Spiess's first day of school, students already began to call him "Pudge," a nickname Askinasi once held.

The Lande to Konner resemblance took a little longer to unfold. This is

attributed to the fact that Konner is still a member of the Blind Brook community, and when kids saw Lande, they just assumed it was Konner. Said Lande, "As I first started walking around school, I heard whispers behind me saying, 'They've got to be twins.' I didn't really know what they were talking about though because I was new here."

Senior Rachel Kaplowitz stated, "There are so many times when I have to do a double take because at a glance I think it is Brett but it turns out to be Steven."

One theory that's been tossed around that refutes the cloning idea is that maybe the students miss Askinasi so much that they've created in their heads this image of him in Jon Spiess. But the Lande-Konner case discredits this theory, as Konner still has one year left at Blind Brook. Another school of thinkers claims it's all just one big coincidence. Regardless of the reason, something fishy is going down at Blind Brook, and someone ought to get to the bottom of it.



It seems that, with sophomore Jon Spiess, alumnus Jason Askinasi lives on in Blind Brook even while away at college.

## Jay Riddick Continued from page 7

students, and they look to me for advice."

Said junior Martino Cecere, "I enjoy talking to Jay because we can have a good conversation that interests us both. When we talk, I really feel like I'm speaking with any other friend of mine."

One of Jay's hobbies is basketball. Jay proved that he could run the point guard position at this year's Midnight Madness, as the teachers battled the Rye Brook po-

licemen and firemen. Jay has also become an avid supporter of the Varsity team, attending games and working with the players at their practices.

Jay has obviously brought a young and down to earth voice to Blind Brook that the students can all relate to. When asked how long he planned on staying at Blind Brook, he joked, "Well, I hope to keep this job as long as they'll have me around."



# Arts & Entertainment

A &amp; E Editor: Gillian McBride

## The Dark Roast: A Day in the Life of a Barista

By Taryne Goldenberg

Starbucks.

A coffee empire consisting of sticky chi, espresso grinds that invade every inch of exposed skin, frappuccino mix, empty conversations, and excessively long closes. Covered in mocha, spilled coffee, and every other unknown substance, I put my smile on and use my "super star skills" to aid me in any situation.

In order to understand what it's really like to be a barista (a.k.a. that person behind the bar who makes all those drinks), I've decided to take you through an entire workday.

If you have the joy of opening, you get to be at Starbucks super early before the sun has fully risen. That means 5 a.m. on weekdays and 6 a.m. on weekends! You then have an hour to put out all the pastries, making sure they look pretty, brew the coffee, make the whipped cream, stock the "condiment" bar (we couldn't really come up with a better name), and make sure the espresso bar is up and running.

Once all that is done, there is already a line at the door waiting for you to open. I mean really, who comes to Greenwich Ave. at 7 a.m. on a Sunday morning just for coffee when everything else is closed? Oh, and of course there's the jerk that comes in at the same hour and orders decaf... yeah, I know.

If you are not opening, then before you even arrive at work it's a battle just looking for a spot to park your car. You can circle the block four times before you actually find a parking spot, and then, of course, insert a million and one quarters for two hours worth of parking. Not that it matters; the traffic cops are likely to give you a ticket anyway.

Get to work and punch in. Well, first you have to find a coworker nice enough to let you use his register to do that. Then say "Hi" to the people working the floor while making your way into the back room. Go downstairs, trying to dodge the boxes of syrups, cups, and coffee beans cluttering each step, and make sure not to fall down the steep stairs (which is quite painful, let me tell you).

Put your belongings in the break room that still reeks like mildew from a flood that happened in the days before the space was transformed into a Starbucks. Ah, now enjoy the next fifteen minutes it takes you to find a clean apron that doesn't smell like rotten milk (unless you are smart enough to take home your own and wash it yourself, but who does that?). Put on the Starbucks hat, look yourself over in the mirror, and head upstairs to actually begin working.

Depending on the season, the store could be dead or so busy you can't even see the door. Personally, I prefer the former, but seeing that it's Christmas time, people just love to walk around with a hot drink! Joy!

When it's dead, you either clean (if the manager is there) or goof off with the other "partners." (You see, at Starbucks we believe everyone is equal, so even the lowly baristas are referred to as "partners.")

When it's busy, you will find yourself stuck at the first place you are put. If it's the bar, then expect to be at the bar for three or four hours straight, and if it's the register, well then screw the smile on and deal with impatient customers. And, if you are lucky,

you get to take a ten-minute break downstairs and inhale the toxic mildew fumes downstairs.

Finally, after what seems like eternity, your eight hours are up and you are free, well almost, because you have to earn your right to leave. This could mean a condiment bar check, the dreaded bathroom check, mix frappuccino or mocha, or a floor check. Then you get to count up your till and collect your items from the break room (soaked by now in the mildew-y nastiness).

But if you close, then it's a different story. That means that you must stay there past closing time and clean up. If it's a Sunday, then you're out by 10 p.m., but on a Friday or a Saturday, you can be stuck there until 12 p.m. My personal favorite closing was the time the lock fell out of the door into my hand, and we (customers were still there, we only lock the door at 11 p.m.) were all locked in. Boy, what a night to remember.

Of course, there are the normal things you have to take into account, like pesky customers, annoying coworkers, the stench of coffee that refuses to leave your skin (even post-shower), coffee or hot water burns, etc. There will always be the dirty old men who wink at you as they drop money into the tip jar and tell you to "make the coffee as sweet as you." Or the people who hide from you as they count the change, palm the quarters and then drop the pennies into the tip jar hoping we won't notice. But customers come and go. I'm not even going to get into my coworkers, that's another story for another day.

I may complain about all the petty stuff, but Starbucks is actually a really good place to work. They pay well, there are great benefits, and the free coffee doesn't hurt either. Even though it's just a coffee house/after-school job, working at Starbucks could just be one of the best experiences I've ever had.



## The Anonymous Geniuses

By Melissa Rosen

They fill magazine pages, flash across television sets, and intrigue us with their sparkle. Celebrities. They are an unavoidable aspect of our society, well known because they are great at what they do. But what about the few that aren't seen on the covers of magazines? Probably the most commonly gossiped about kind of celebrity is the actor. Names such as Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, Brad Pitt, and Julia Roberts are extremely familiar even to the modest film fan. If asked who the best actor today is, the automatic response of any American would probably be someone like Robert De Niro, but is there truth behind this reflex? I think not. Not that any of the actors mentioned aren't good at what they do; it's just that they are not the best. What about the anonymous geniuses? What about Gary Oldman? Alan Rickman? Kenneth Branagh? Tim Roth? If your reply to those names was "Who?" you are not alone. For most people these players have familiar faces but unfamiliar names. These

are the most intriguing actors, the ones that don't get the big television interviews. These are the guys whose social lives seem relatively unimportant. These are the blokes that don't get followed by paparazzi. To me, these are the real actors.

*What about the anonymous geniuses? What about Gary Oldman? Alan Rickman? Kenneth Branagh? Tim Roth? If your reply to those names was "Who?" you are not alone.*

Anyone who knows me knows that my love for Gary Oldman teeters on the brink of obsession. His brilliant acting can only be described as chameleonic. This exceptional British actor is able to look and sound different for every role he pursues. With accents ranging from Russian to Irish, Transylvanian to American. And not just one type of American accent, oh no, he can do a New Yorker, Bostonian, and various

Southern accents as well. In fact, when he appears in interviews, his interviewers are often shocked to find out he is British. Gary even made his voice go down an octave for the movie Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Some people may have seen him in movies like *The Professional*, *Air Force One*, *The Fifth Element*, and *Hannibal*. Some of his better yet less known films include *Immortal Beloved*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Sid and Nancy*, and *State of Grace*.

The story of Gary Oldman's life begins at a poor working-class background with an absent alcoholic father and two much older sisters. Gary quickly grew comfortable in his own company and in creating his own imaginary situations. After his teachers told him he was stupid and would never amount to anything he dropped out of school. He then decided to become a classical pianist (a skill that helped him out in *Immortal Beloved*). Eventually, he gave it up and dove into acting. He applied for RADA

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# Athletes, Actors, and All That Jazz

By Lauren Levinson

It is becoming increasingly evident that, with Alex Harik's speech during December's town meeting combined with Jason Stein's FOCUS column and other countless debates dealing with the politics between the play and varsity sports, much tension has grown over the issue of club requirements. Blind Brook's actors and athletes are protesting against three main topics: the attendance policy, the Mock Trial's "rules," and the drug-free club pledge. Yet all voices must be heard before any action can be taken. Let's consider the different sides of this issue; each of these extracurricular activities is exceedingly demanding, so we must work collectively to establish rules fair to all.

While junior and varsity basketball player Alex Harik was away on the Model UN club trip at Harvard University, his teammate, senior Robert Frank, read aloud Harik's speech regarding his feelings towards the informal attendance policy for an athlete compared to that for an actor. Harik argued that if an athlete misses even one period of a school day, he/she is not allowed to participate in a game that afternoon, yet there is more leeway for an actor to miss school and be allowed to perform in a show that night. It is true that we choose to be in these activities, and that we must take responsibility for our actions and be in school at all times when we're supposed to be, but there must be some flexibility, considering the stressful situations we encounter.

A typical day in the life of athletes and actors is comparable. A basketball player on average has 2 to 3 hours of practice, followed by periodic lifting sessions and occasional informational sessions to analyze strategies. A cast member's afternoons can vary anywhere from a minimal of 3 hours up to 7 hours a night in rehearsal. During the month of October 2001, for the "New York, New York" fall musical review, at least once a week practice ran from 3:00 to 11:00 with only a two hour, 5:00 to 7:00, dinner break. For varsity basketball players, their afternoons are spent sweating, building up their bodies, and learning plays, whereas the thespians spend their afternoons dancing, singing, and learning lines and harmonies. In preparation for game nights, players must try to relax and contemplate their techniques and game plans, in addition to conserving their energy and strength. Before a show night, cast members must consider their lines and staging, rest their voices and bodies, and put on loads of makeup and costumes. Each activity is undoubtedly equal in pressure and difficulty, proving that the conflict does not lie between those of us who participate in theater and those who carry Blind Brook's colors on the court or in the field, but more between the expectations of teachers and of the coaches or directors. Evenings become a battle of "What comes first," sweating in the school gym and standing in your spot on stage, or sitting at home in front of your computer typing an essay?

Adults running classes and after-school activities both feel their home-

work or practice comes first, and when Driver's Ed, SAT tutors, and college applications are mixed in, a high school student's afternoon can become traumatic. How can we spend every minute from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. in the building repeatedly and not eventually crash? It is impossible to go to school, always having all homework completed, when participating in either of these activities without taking an occasional break. There are no "understudies" for the lead in the play or the captain of varsity basketball, and each team member and cast member is irreplaceable.

Since the school encourages participation in after-school activities like plays, sports, and clubs, there has to be recognition of the demands made on students' time and perhaps accommodations must be made. Either people who participate in activities need to be given a separate attendance policy, which allows a certain amount of time in school to be missed during a season, or limits must be placed on the faculty as to how many hours a night of homework can be assigned and how many different tests can be given contemporaneously. It doesn't matter if it is a varsity team player or a cast member, if members of these after school activities are so overworked that they have to miss school, something is obviously very wrong and the rules must change. Only if we work together, instead of against each other, will rules be created that benefit all of us who are affected.

Now, if as a school we address a varsity sport and the school play as being complete equals, then special rules cannot be made that only benefit one side and not the other. Mock Trial, Blind Brook's debate club, created a rule that does not allow the participants of their club to take part in the Spring Musical. No other club within the school has such a rule. Based on the argument that it is too demanding to participate in both, talented actors and brilliant orators must choose between the two. However, if sports and the play are treated the same, then why is it that the two captains of Mock Trial and other club members are allowed to play varsity basketball? How is that just? Why should the demands of basketball be treated any differently than the demands of the show? A member of the "starting five" on the court is not forced to choose whether to play or to debate, so why should one of the five leads in the play be forced to withdraw their talent? This "rule" is more of a tradition than anything, and it is possible that the logic behind it is not as relevant now as it used to be. If it is our choice to choose to take on the responsibilities of joining a sport, club, or the show, then it should also be up to us whether we do the play and Mock Trial, or a sport and Mock Trial. It is completely unfair to restrict one and not the other, and if Mock Trial can have restrictions, then all clubs should be allowed to have restrictions on the other activities its members participate in.

When varsity basketball captain and FOCUS sports columnist, Jason Stein,  
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Announcing  
What We Do  
on Our Down Time

## Coming Attraction: Conundrum

By Melissa Gentile

Conundrum, or by definition, an intricate and difficult problem, is a perfect title for this student produced movie. After nearly a year of filming, it is just about completed, and is ready to premiere this February.

*Conundrum* centers on the life of an average teenage boy. Performed by Brett Konner, writer and director of the film, the protagonist faces numerous problems. "It takes into account double-crossing, dishonesty, mendacious behavior, relationships, cover-ups, and drug deals," stated Konner. The talented cast includes Frank D'Angelo, Carter Niles, Lance Jackson, Spencer Howard, alumni Gabriela Barreto and Brett Spigelman, as well as Mr. Del Shortliffe and Mr. Chris Orphanides from our teaching staff. Scenes were also shot on location, from the Rye Town Hilton to Ace Hardware Store.

The production of *Conundrum* commenced last February. Showings are planned to be in the new audito-

rium where 65% of profits will go to the senior class, while the remaining 35% will be rewarded to the juniors. "It will most definitely be available only to upper high school students on account of drug use, crude humor, and handling of guns," avowed Konner. Particular conflicts surfaced while shooting because of this.

The movie itself is quite technologically advanced. Brett and CO-director, Brett Zuckerman, utilized Avid, Blind Brook's relatively high-tech editing equipment, which gives the film a virtually professional appeal. They are also considering the production of a DVD, which includes some edited scenes and camera tricks as well as a soundtrack.

*Conundrum* is the product of assiduous work put forth by various seniors and juniors. It is the foreshadowing of illustrious film careers for many Blind Brook students. From viewing just a five minute coming attraction, it is evident that the movie is exceptionally humorous and worth seeing in its entirety.

## The Anonymous Geniuses Continued from page 9

(The Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts) where they told him to give up acting and pick a new profession. Relentless, Gary decided to go to Rose Bruford College, and, after touring with the Royal Shakespeare Company and other various play groups, he starred in his first big movie, *Sid and Nancy*. Playing the infamous Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols, Gary lost about 60 lbs to look like Vicious, such a dangerous move that he eventually was hospitalized. Gary's father died during production of the movie, leaving his son with his own alcohol addiction.

Gary had to battle with his problem with alcohol for most of his career. He once got arrested for drunk driving with Kiefer Sutherland, and "detoxed" all over Demi Moore on the set of *The Scarlet Letter*. Gary even came close to starting a fight with Sean Penn when he danced around him singing "Like a Virgin" one day. Eventually, Gary sought help and kicked the habit. Nowadays he can get about five million dollars per movie, a hefty sum that puts him up there with the "big boys." He has starred in films directed by the best in the business such as Oliver Stone (*JFK*), Ridley Scott (*Hannibal*), and Francis Ford Coppola (*Bram Stoker's Dracula*). Gary has been married three times, one of the three lucky ladies being Uma Thurman.

With a life story like that you would think he would be included in every Hollywood headline, but he's not! Is it because he is British? Like most British actors today, Gary has been swept under the carpet in favor of big screen American actors. Perhaps that can be considered an exaggeration, but it should be acknowledged as an underlying fact. Or are people overlooking something vital? Is being under-appreciated a bad thing? Who is under-appreciating them? The answer is the general public.

The same people who horde around magazine stands to find out who is wearing what, but the people who do matter in Hollywood don't devalue actors like Gary. Quite the opposite. In his field, Gary is praised, commended, and respected by his peers. Gary Oldman is known as an "actor's actor."

In the end, what it really boils down to is that it's not important for high-quality actors to be household names, but that they gain respect for what they do. Ironically, being "under-appreciated" seems to be the ideal situation; low-key celebrities are valued, wealthy, and yet anonymous. Before I conclude my rant, I think it is important to mention a few other overlooked actors and some of their movies (in case anyone is interested in watching something worthwhile). Let's begin with the fabulous Alan Rickman, who can be seen in such movies as *Die Hard*, *Galaxy Quest*, *Rasputin*, and *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. Or, if you want, you can check him out in movie theaters now playing Professor Snape in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (which I definitely suggest everyone go see). Then there is Kenneth Branagh, the well-known Shakespearean actor who can be seen in *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, and *Othello*, along with non-Shakespeare films such as *Dead Again*, *How to Kill Your Neighbor's Dog*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, not to mention the next Harry Potter film! Lastly, Tim Roth who is also well known for some of his roles in Quentin Tarantino films like *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *Four Rooms*. One of my favorites is his role in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* along with Gary Oldman. There, it is all over. You may now continue to read about Blind Brook, but who knows, maybe the next time you go to see a movie, you will notice someone no one else knows.

A &amp; E Editor: Gillian McBride

## Arts &amp; Entertainment

# Leaving Behind a Legend

By Diana Landes

He will always be remembered as the 'Quiet Beatle,' but in his life George Harrison did so much more than play guitar for rock and roll's most celebrated band. He was a spiritual, humorous, and above all, talented man. Sadly, Harrison succumbed to cancer on Thursday, November 29th at age 58. He was at a friend's home in Los Angeles with wife Olivia Harrison and son Dhani at his side.

Born on February 25, 1943 in Liverpool, England to parents Harold and Louise, Harrison was the youngest of the "Fab Four." At the age of sixteen, Harrison became a member of John Lennon and Paul McCartney's band the Quarrymen. By 1962, after some changes in the band's name and the addition of drummer Ringo Starr, the Beatles (as we know them) were born. After only one year, with the release of their first single, "Love Me Do," Beatlemania had begun. From 1963 to 1966, the Beatles released six albums and with hits like *A Hard Day's Night* and *I Want To Hold Your Hand*. The four had become huge music stars. Harrison admitted that he was never really comfortable with his immense fame and in the years that followed he tried to maintain his privacy, straying from the public eye. In 1995, Harrison stated, "The Beatles exist apart from my self. I am not really Beatle George. Beatle George is like a suit or shirt that I once wore on occasion, and until the end of my life, people may see that shirt and mistake it for me."

As the years passed, the music made by the Beatles changed and developed, largely due to Harrison's interests in the world of Indian music. Harrison was greatly influenced by friend and teacher Ravi Shankar. Shankar taught Harrison how to play the sitar, which was used in the song "Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)" in 1965. Though Lennon and McCartney were the main writers of Beatles' music, Harrison wrote "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," "Here Comes the Sun," and "Something" in his Beatles career. During this time in the late 1960's, Harrison found faith in Eastern religion and became devoted for the rest of his life.

In 1970, the Beatles broke up, but Harrison's career wasn't nearly over. The first of any of the Beatles to release solo projects, Harrison unleashed *All Things Must Pass*, and hit the top of the charts with "My Sweet Lord." The following year, Harrison organized the first major charity concert at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Called the Concert for Bangladesh, it was held to raise money for the poor country that was famine stricken because of the India-Pakistan war. This concert led the way for other concerts like Live Aid and the Tibetan Freedom Concert.

In the next years of his life, Harrison released some albums that didn't really hit the mainstream. But in 1981, Harrison released *Somewhere in England*, a success largely because of the song "All Those Years Ago." It was in memorial of his ex-bandmate John Lennon. Lennon was killed in 1980 in New York City by a psychotic fan.

Harrison's next big hit was 1987's *Cloud Nine*, and from it came another top of the charts single "Got My Mind Set on You." And one year later on 1988, he was inducted into the hall of fame as part of the Beatles. In that same year, he joined as a part of the group Traveling Wilburys with such legends as Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, Roy Orbison, and Jeff Lynne. Their album, *Vol. One*,

earned the group a Grammy and gave the group two hits.

With 1995 came a Beatles album along with the *Anthology 1* CD with a new song titled "Free As a Bird." The next year, *Anthology 2* was released and with it another new song called "Real Love." This project earned the group 3 more Grammy awards.

Not only was Harrison a successful musician, but he dove into the world of movie-making as well. His production company, Handmade Films, created *Monty Python's Life of Brian* along with numerous other films.

In 1999, while in his home in London, Harrison and his second wife, Olivia, were attacked by a disturbed fan. Thirty-four-year old Michael Abram broke into their home and stabbed both him and his wife. Fortunately, the two survived.

Over the past few years Harrison's health had been failing, but he managed to keep a sense of humor and high hopes about it. In 1997, Harrison had a malignant lump re-

more short of breath than I used to be, so I don't see myself on stage lasting 40 rounds." He recorded a new song prior to his death called "Horse to the Water" (which he co-wrote with his son Dhani), and, with his dark sense of humor, credited the song to "RIP Ltd. 2001."

In November, Harrison went to Staten Island University Hospital to undergo a form of radiation therapy called fractionated stereotactic radiosurgery. And later it is said that Harrison was being treated at UCLA Medical Center with chemotherapy. His family released this statement on the night of his death: "He left this world as he lived in it, conscious of God, fearless of death, and at peace, surrounded by family and friends. He often said, 'Everything else can wait, but the search for God cannot wait.'" Tragically, he lost the battle against disease and leaves behind his wife, his son, and a legion of fans.

*"I am not really Beatle George. Beatle George is like a suit or shirt that I once wore on occasion, and until the end of my life, people may see that shirt and mistake it for me."*

moved from his neck, and, in 1998, he went through radiation therapy for the throat cancer that he says is from many years of smoking. He also had a cancerous lump taken from his lung in April of this year. He stated earlier this year, "I had a little throat cancer. I had a piece of my lung removed in 1997. And then I was almost murdered. But I seem to feel stronger...[But] I'm a little

## THE LEGENDS OF NINJA NATE by Jeff Gnerre



## Editorials

# Moving Forward to a New Blind Brook

By **Francesca Pomara, Editor-in-Chief**

I have often had to explain to outsiders that my high school was neither a school for the blind nor a place like any other. Within a year, I've seen the key points of my latter explanation slowly disappear, and I now know that the essence of Blind Brook has changed. Throughout my almost six years here, I have noticed a gradual shift in student attitudes and respect and experienced shifts in classroom ethics and moods as teachers left or switched subjects. I have accepted the inevitability of such changes, knowing that even my old Blind Brook was a change from some other Blind Brook from the past. But, I am left feeling paradoxically bittersweet. The grounds—the principles on which this school was built—are facing an ultimate change and a new era is upon us.

In six years, I have witnessed the hallways become more and more congested with students, seen new teachers join old, and watched trees be cut and walls be bro-

*So what do we want Blind Brook High School to become? We are the ones who can shape it and define what it means.*

ken as construction vehicles moved in. All the while, I have sat in desks and placed my books in lockers that were used by a whole line of students before me starting from the school's inception. 25 years back, Blind Brook faced a future, still needing to define itself and come into its own. Next year, a

new Blind Brook High School and Middle will face a similar task.

So what do we want Blind Brook High School to become? We are the ones who can shape it and define what it means. Through our school Congress, our school newspaper, our yearbook, our Student Senate, our attitudes and approach to learning, we can succeed in moving forward and improving the Blind Brook from the past. With this, we can remain loyal to our goals to achieve intellectually and emotionally.

Times have changed, yes, and the Blind Brook of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must face different obstacles than the Blind Brook of the 20<sup>th</sup>. How will advancing technology affect the learning environment? What place do new inventions have in school and in the lives of its inhabitants? Already, cell phones

have created conflict. Though prohibited by school law, they are carried by many as a necessity. What about teenage pressures of belonging? How will the school approach extreme acts of desperation from alienated or disenfranchised students trying to regain control of their lives and happiness? Will Blind Brook be a place where everyone can respect each other? Is Blind Brook that place now? Will trust be a problem? Will students not steal from each other? Will a policy on mandatory community service exist at the expense of students' understanding of what "selflessness" means? Will it be turning meaningful deeds simply into hours? Our high school is at a turning point, a transitional period where we must decide what road it is going to take. Think wisely, and move on into the future fondly remembering our BB with open classrooms and the beliefs its founders lived by.

## "There's No Place Like Home"

By **Craig Bergman, News Editor**

"There's just no place like home," commented Mike Dobbins with a shake of his head. "The high school will always be home to me." And Blind Brook high school has indeed been Mike's home — a home in which he, for over seven years, has worked tirelessly and with tremendous dedication, to provide a clean, safe, and healthy atmosphere for the kids about whom he so deeply cares.

As we prepare to shift venues for the second half of the year and move into the newly-erected middle school building, the loss of yet another institutional figure accentuates the wave of change sweeping through Blind Brook. With the retirement

of legendary security guard Tom Merrit two years ago and the departure of long-time Assistant Principal Susan Shirken at the end of last semester, Blind Brook has certainly experienced its share of turnover hits so close to home as the recent transfer of widely-appreciated and respected night custodian Mike Dobbins to a daytime position at BMP Ridge Street elementary school.

Few would disagree that Mike Dobbins is unusual. Over the course of Mike's tenure, he established exceptionally close, personal relationships with the students of Blind Brook. The interest displayed by Mike in the real lives and activities of the students cannot

easily be paralleled by others. An avid supporter of Blind Brook basketball, Mike rarely missed a home game during his stay at Blind Brook and was always eager to rehash games, provide encouragement to boost morale, and offer consolation after disappointing losses.

Perhaps it was also the evening environment of the school in which Mike was always encountered that was conducive to the development of less-hurried, more open and relaxed relationships. Without teachers around or classes to worry about, students arriving at Blind Brook for nighttime activities were able to transcend the formal relationship and hang out with Mike as a friend, a person on the same level.

"Mike's the man," stated senior David Stockel simply. "There's no one in the building who you can be more at ease with than Mike. You can talk to him as one of the guys, and he's a friend more than anything else."

Stockel's opinion is shared throughout the Blind Brook student body, and Mike is already sorely missed. It no longer feels the same to come into the school for a 5:30 basketball practice without Mike's being there to slap your hand, ask about the team, and go on to ask about your life and your family. Commented junior Kevin Aughavin, "Mike's just done so much for us in the last couple of years. He was such a major presence in the building after school that it feels weird not having him around."

In fact, Mike did do a lot for the students

of Blind Brook, and his transfer lands a major blow to the Blind Brook community. However, it must be looked at from a very important and different perspective. Our loss is Mike's family's gain. For seven

years, Mike worked, as he described it, "like a vampire." "I never got home before 11:30 at night," explained Mike, "And usually by that time, my kids were asleep." Such late shifts forced Mike to get his sleep at times when his children would be leaving for school, and, as a result, his contact with his family was severely limited. While Mike states that he certainly prefers working at Blind Brook where he could be around friends in the stu-

dent body with whom he could talk one-on-one, he recognizes that, after seven years, it is time to devote all the time and energy that he has devoted to the kids of Blind Brook to his own kids.

Thus, when a daytime position at Ridge Street was offered, he understandably jumped at the opportunity. Mike's heart and Mike's home remain in Blind Brook, and we're going to miss him. Still, we've got to realize that even in apparently leaving behind all of his Blind Brook friends, Mike is still sacrificing himself for kids. Be it by devoting countless hours to Blind Brook students or by transferring from a familiar, comfortable position to make himself more available to his own family, Mike is always giving of himself for the good of children, and you've got to love that about him.



Mike Dobbins

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## Letter to the Editor

I'd like to commend the entire FOCUS staff for the November issue. There were just so many diverse, well-written, interesting articles and excellent photographs.

FOCUS has always been a good newspaper but I think this is the best issue I've ever read. Keep up the great work!

Audrey Currie

## Correction

November Arts & Entertainment article, "The Perks of Being a Wallflower," was mistakenly attributed to Ben King; the

article was written by staff writer, Blair Mosner. FOCUS would like to apologize for the error.

# Editorials

## Did 9/11 Unite NY's Greatest Enemies?

By Matt Stolzar, Features Editor

It's a tale of two teams. Both operate in the same city. Both compete to produce more revenue. Both are in constant battle for the city's support. And both fight for the title of World Series Champ. Obviously, the Mets and Yanks are forced to dislike each other. It's only human nature.

So one thing that the two teams rarely ever do is try to help the other one out. This changed on Friday December 7th, when both teams swapped integral members of their clubs. The Mets sent away their clubhouse leader, Robin Ventura, the man who in his first year with the team helped lead the Mets to the playoffs for the first time in 11

years, and who had one of the biggest hits in Mets history (the famous "Grand Slam Single" versus the Braves). The Yanks gave back David Justice, the player who rejuvenated the Yankees offense when they traded for him in 2000, taking the Yanks from a below .500 team and making them the World Series Champs. The question that I pose is would this trade have happened if the city had not been united by the horrific attacks on September 11?

There is no way to really answer this question. It is clear that the city, and the nation for that matter have become more united, as people place American Flag logos on their cars, and fashion NYPD hats on

their heads. In fact, we even saw the Mets players hug members of the Atlanta Braves after the attacks, showing that patriotism goes beyond petty rivalries.

The Yankees and Mets have made trades before, but in their history, they have only made four that actually involved major league players, let alone players that have meant so much to the two teams. And their last trade was seven years ago. George Steinbrenner, owner of the Yankees, has hated the Mets with a vengeance, and the Steinbrenner of the past would likely fire somebody if a player he traded helped the Mets. Wilpon has always admired the Yanks' revenue, and would hate to see Ventura help win the Yanks another

ring. But maybe, just maybe, the hostility between the teams has lessened, as New York has united.

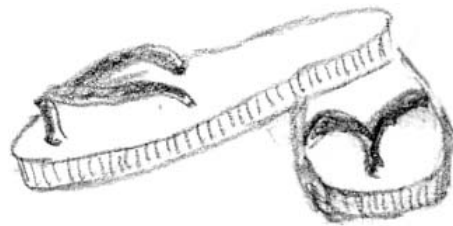
Any trade that was going to happen between the Mets and Yanks had to be a perfect fit, and this one clearly was. Both players were quality veterans who were marred last season by injury. Both have the potential for big seasons, yet probably need a change in scenery. And both players fit the needs of other team. Ventura, who the Mets tried to trade for months because of his salary, will be a great replacement for the retired Scott Brosius, and will help hold down third base for one more year as the Yanks wait for their top prospect, Drew Henson, to be ready. And Justice will provide much needed power to a Met outfield that that ranked lowest in home runs and RBIs last year. Justice's departure will give the Yanks the opportunity to search for a free agent outfielder, possibly Moises Alou, or Johnny Damon. The Mets may also take Justice and use him in a trade to cut salary, since he is more tradable than Ventura, and use the money saved from trading Justice to go out and sign a big time outfielder like Juan Gonzalez or Barry Bonds.

I guess we'll never know what the impact of the September 11 tragedy had on the New York baseball teams. But the fact that the two biggest rivals in New York overlooked their differences, and made moves that they knew would better the other's lineup, shows that maybe they've resolved their differences.

## Why I Wear Flip-Flops

By Gillian McBride, A&E Editor

Flip-flops. I know they're not remotely sexy, but then again neither am I. I like my ugly flip-flops just fine, and, if you know me, you'll know that I'd probably wear those bad boys all year-round. As we reach mid-December, though the weather isn't always permitting, I'm still standing by the thin slabs of rubber that are my shoes. Sure, I can't stay long in the cold outdoors, but once inside, I wouldn't trade open-toed sandals for anything. That's the beauty of central air: same temperature all year-round, despite our school's varied climate zones, that is. So, no,



Ms. Lobdell, my toes are just fine.

Why do I wear flip-flops? I'm no shoebabe; I've got limited options. Basically, I'm too tall, too cheap, and, uh, too big-footed. Somehow I can't walk in clogs. Then, of course, there are the J. Crew

dominatrix boots, probably a big mistake if you're freakishly tall because when you become 6'1," the boys kind of get scared away. Besides, high-heels can be dangerous when in the wrong, er, hands as not everyone has mastered the eight-hour day in arched heels. There's always the third option of sneakers and socks, which are great for gym, but where's the freedom, I ask? In the end, flip-flops serve as the non-pareil for footwear; gross as it is, feet need to breathe, too! Besides, as long as they are presentable, all feet can pull off the flip-flop, even yours.

### "SAY GOODBYE"

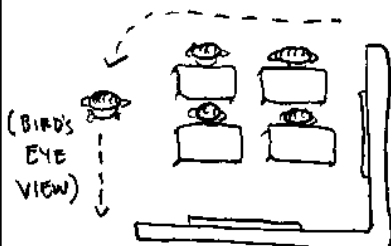
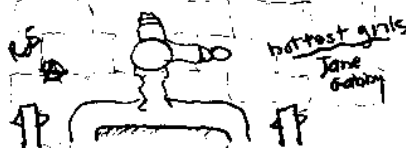
- AN EDITORIAL BY FRANK D'ANGELO

ONLY RECENTLY HAVE I REALIZED THAT MY DAYS HERE AT BLIND BROOK ARE NUMBERED, AND THIS HAS SPARKED A SORROW INSIDE OF ME; I HAVE COME TO REALIZE THINGS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME. I REFER NOT TO GRADUATION BUT RATHER TO OUR TRANSFER TO THE NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING. AS WE SAY GOODBYE TO OUR UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT, WE MUST ALSO SAY GOODBYE TO MANY OTHER WONDERFUL THINGS...



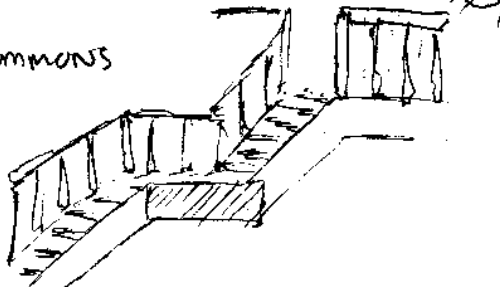
LIKE THE COUCHES - NONE OF THOSE BABIES IN THE TRAIT HEAT NEXT DOOR...

AND THE BATHROOMS WITH NEW DIVIDERS AND PRICELESS GOSSIP SCRIBBLE.



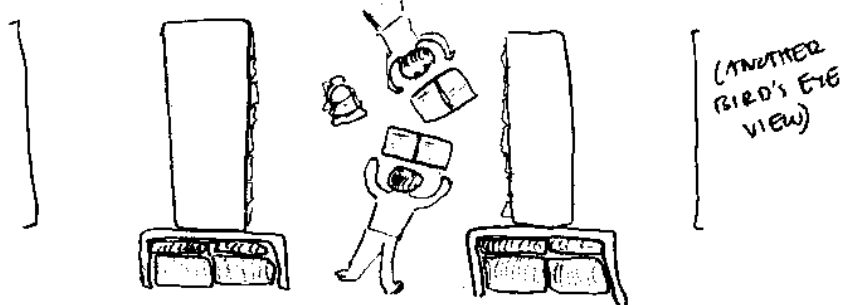
NO MORE TWO-WALL CLASSROOMS. SORRY KIDS, YU CAN'T SPACE OUT AND WATCH LITTLE MIDDLE SCHOOLERS SCUTTLE THROUGH THE HALLS ANY MORE.

SAY GOODBYE TO THE COMMONS BACONY - THE HUB OF SOCIAL PROMINENCE. THERE WILL NO LONGER BE A PLACE FOR THE "COOL" KIDS TO HANG OUT.



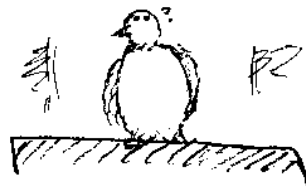
(CONT'D) →

SAY GOODBYE TO LAST-MINUTE STUDY-SESSIONS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CARPETED LOCKER AREAS; THERE WILL NEVER BE A CORRIDOR AS COZY.



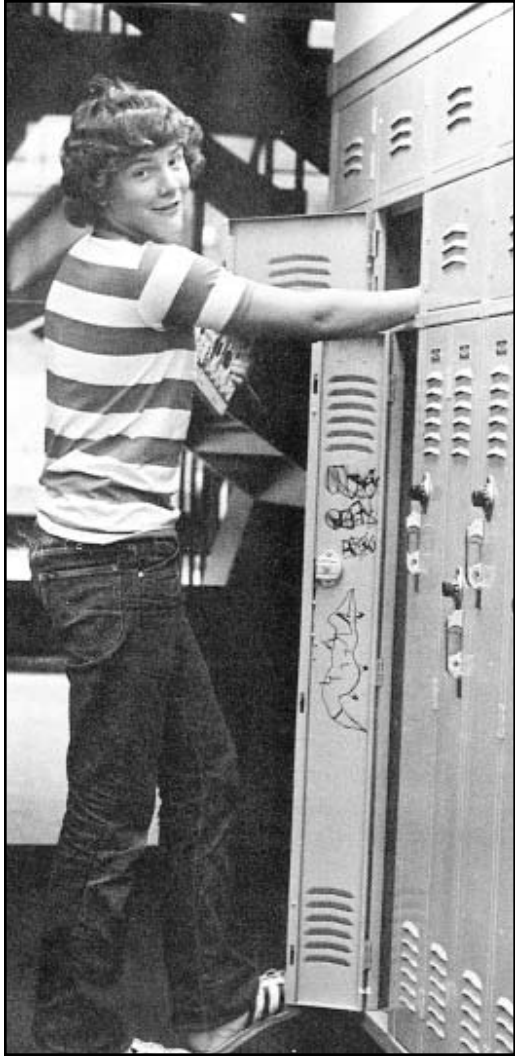
WILL THERE EVER BE PIGEONS PERCHING IN THE NEW BUILDING?

OF COURSE, WE'LL HAVE TO SAY GOODBYE TO OUR PARENTS' TAX DOLLARS.



IT SADDENS MY HEART TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE BUILDING THAT CHARACTERIZED MY ADOLESCENCE, BUT ALL THINGS MUST END. AS THE POWERS - THAT - BE ABANDON THE BIZ WE KNOW AND LOVE FOR A COMMON, COMMERCIAL BUILDING, WE ARE FORCED TO COMPLY WITH THE EDUCATIONAL CONFORMITY. SAY GOODBYE, STUDENTS, AND CHERISH YOUR LAST SCHOOL DAYS IN THIS BUILDING BEFORE IT IS DESPOILED.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Rest assured! The Commons is staying for good. We will only have to say goodbye to our "hub of social prominence" for the holiday break.

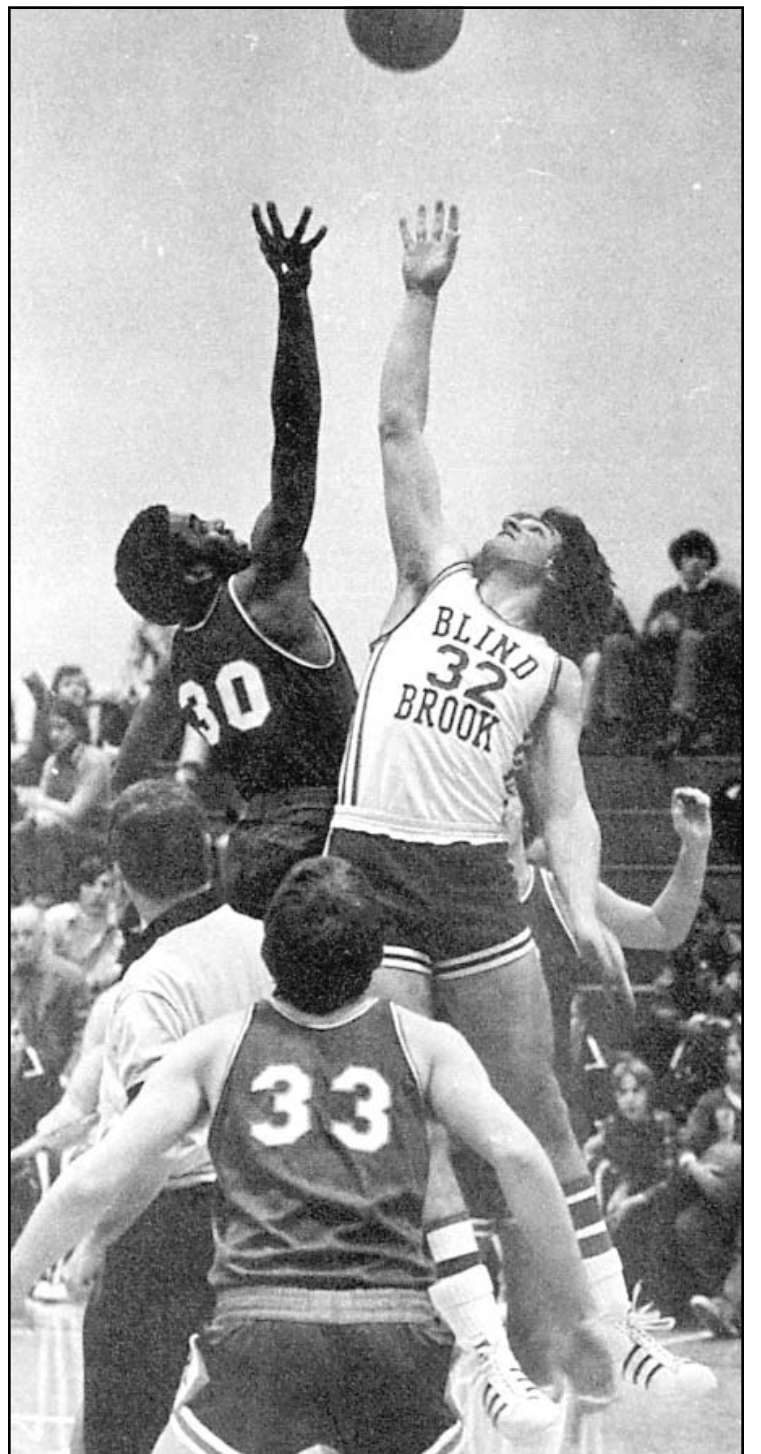


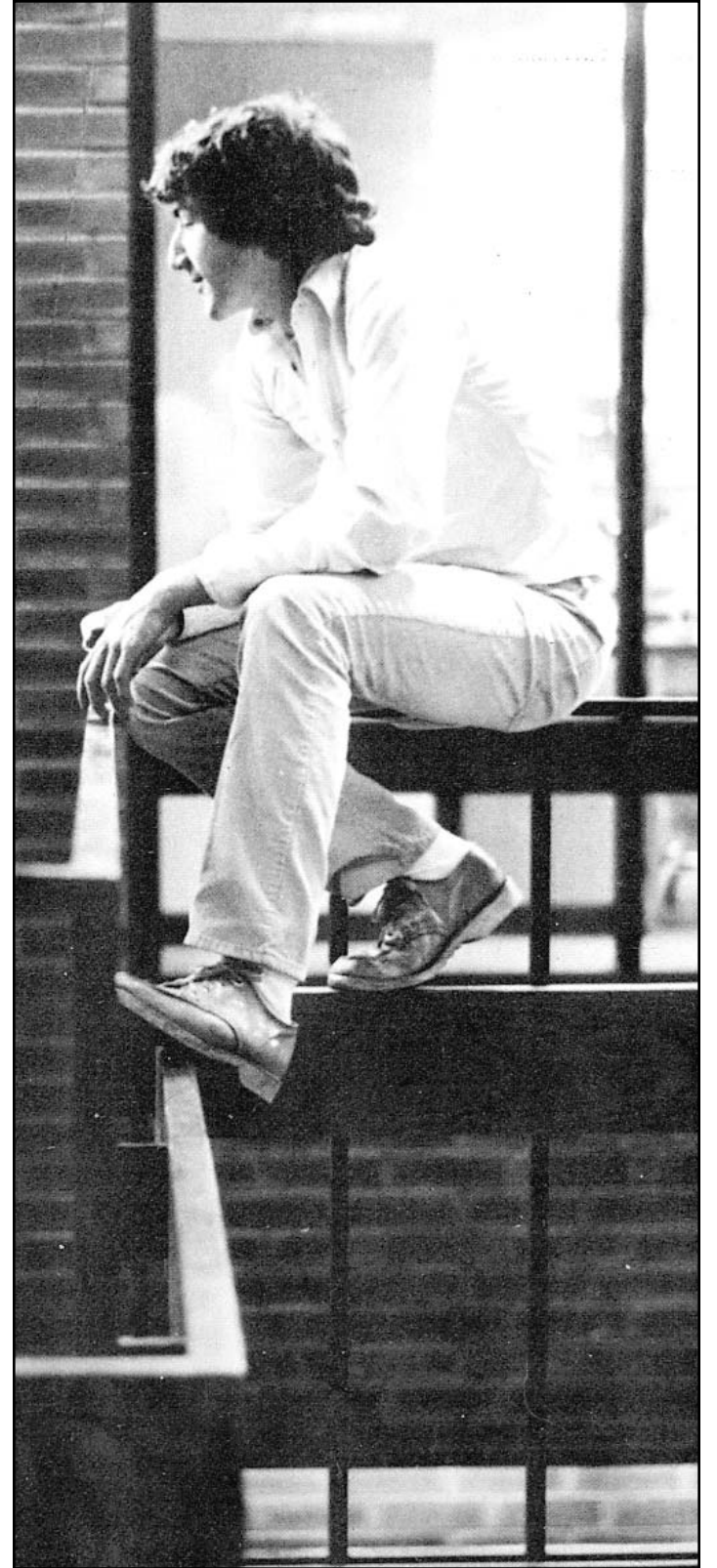
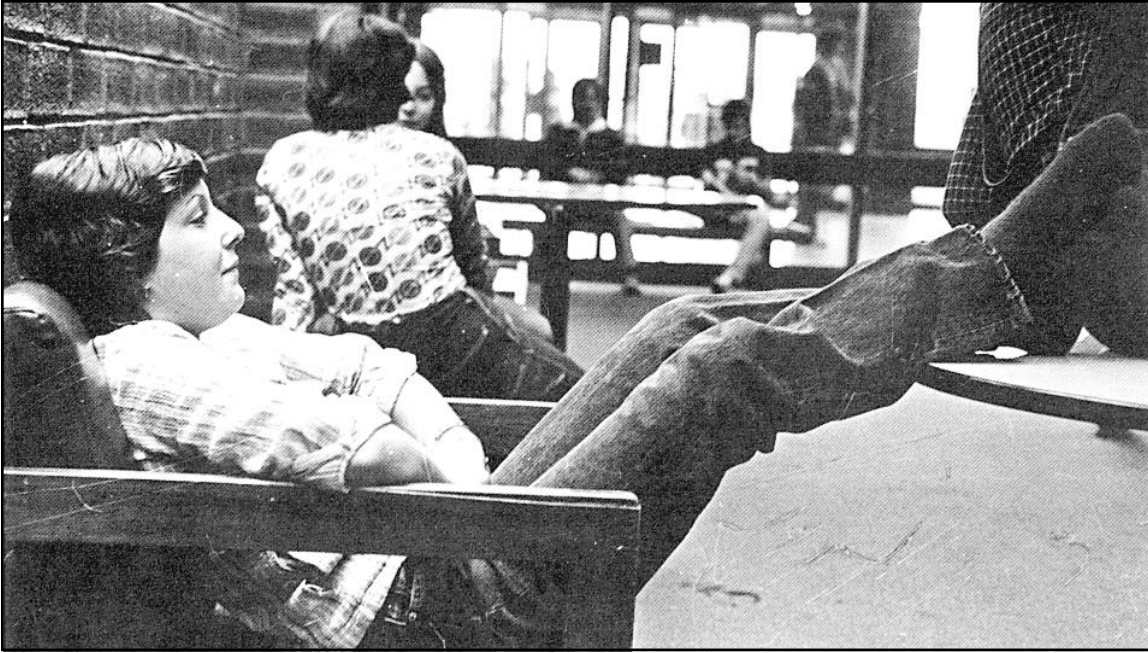
# SPECTRUM

## A Look Back 25 Years Ago



25 years ago, Blind Brook High School was a new, innovative learning environment. Yet today, as the building continues its transformation into a "normal" school, students and faculty will all remember Blind Brook as a unique home away from home—a brick place with open classrooms, huge glass windows, and carpeting . 25 years ago, during the 1976-1977 school year, Blind Brook students knew what we, too, know today. Here, in the 2001-2002 school year, we look back at Blind Brook's beginnings and how it came to be defined as it is.





## Spectrum 1977

***“What is Blind Brook High School?”***

A place to express yourself—violently and nonviolently. .  
 .A home away from home. . .A zoo. . .A place of music,  
 light, laughter and freedom. . .A large brick building which  
 is nowhere near a brook or a blind

***“Why do you feel Blind Brook is unique?”***

It’s one big family. . .It has a lot of freedom and gives the  
 student a lot responsibility. . . The willingness of the  
 teachers to go out of their way for kids. . . The small  
 amount of students.

***“Do you miss classrooms?”***

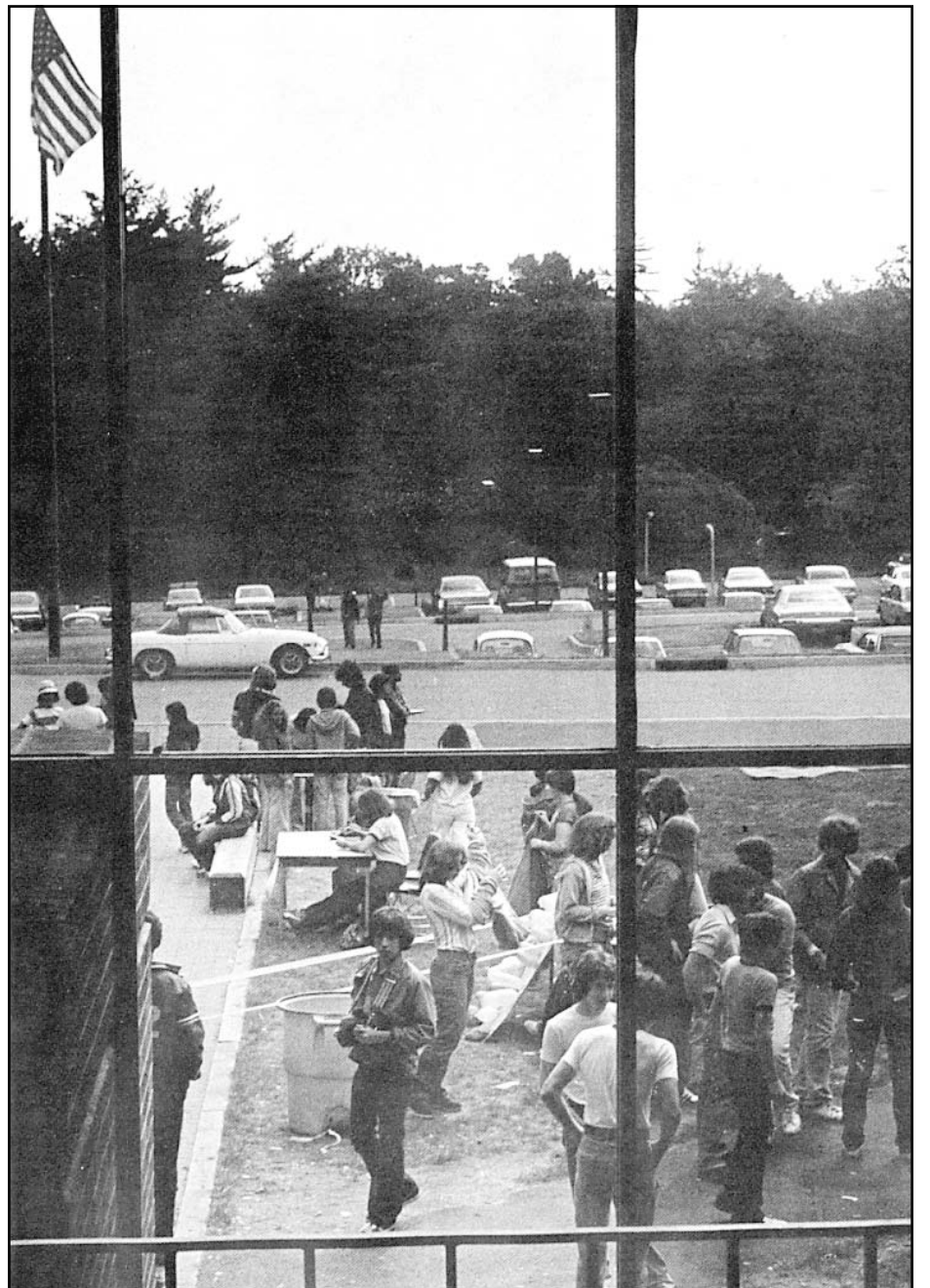
Every time I can. . . No, I can see them whenever I want to. .  
 . Only when I’m taking a test in glorious stereophonic  
 sound

***“What do you do with your free time?”***

What free time? . . . Wouldn’t you like to know! . . . Relax. . .  
 I spread happiness. . .Talk . . .Get my homework done

***“What does the word ‘Commons’ mean to you?”***

Kids perching on a rail. . . A place to relax, talk, visit with  
 the people. . .Us. . .The best place for people watching ever  
 devised. . . A student lounge. . . An uncommon luxury





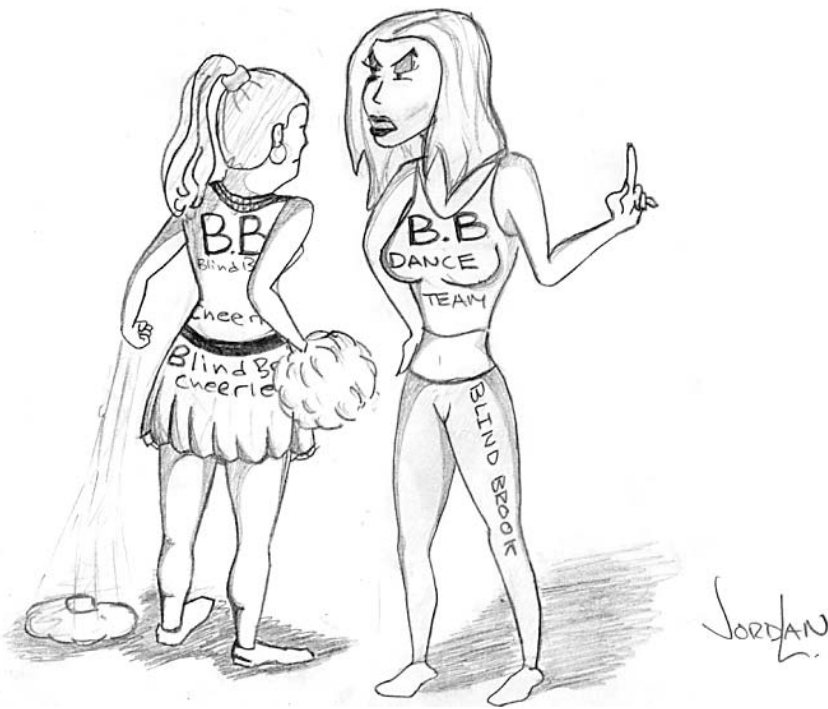
Cheerleader Emily Ware and dancer Lauren Levinson face off. Take that!

Photo by Jessica Nanus

## In the Next Issue of FOCUS

Behind those smiling faces and choreographed moves, do tensions lie between Blind Brook's own cheerleaders and dance team? Watch out for the next issue of FOCUS when our reporters go behind the scenes to investigate who are the queens of the court. Until then, "Go Trojans!"

BRUISES AT BLIND BROOK  
**BRING IT ON** 2  
COMING TO A THEATER NEAR YOU!



## Athletes, Actors, and All That Jazz

Continued from page 10

wrote about the Blind Brook's drug pledge policy last issue, he was not the first to address this controversial topic. It is a requirement for all athletes to sign a pledge stating that they will not use drugs or alcohol during their season or they can face serious consequences. Athletes argue that if they must sign it, participants of the play should as well. But where does it stop? Should members of Student Senate and the yearbook staff also be required to sign it? The reasoning behind the policy has to do with the health of the players and keeping them in shape during season. Alcohol and drugs could impair one's performance. It is ridiculous to make anyone who participates in any Blind Brook activity sign this pledge. How does smoking affect the way someone in the cooking club cooks? How-

ever, any activity that is intense enough to qualify for senior gym exemption should have to sign the pledge. It is these activities that require serious physical strength that would be hindered by drug and alcohol use. Since both a varsity sport and the play qualify for gym exemption, it is fair to make members of the play sign the pledge too.

There is no reason for cast members and team members of Blind Brook's extra curricular activities to battle each other over who receives more privileges. We are all working extremely hard to represent Blind Brook and demonstrate our talents to our friends and family. Nonetheless, it is necessary for certain rules to be changed so that equality is brought between the activities and the stress put on their participants is reduced. Compromising is the only way impartiality can prevail.

Happy  
Holidays

From the Staff of  
**FOCUS**



HOMECOMING  
2002

Saturday, January 12

At Blind Brook High School

From 7:30 PM to 11:00 PM

Tickets: \$10 in advance • \$12 at the door

## Write For FOCUS!

*NEW WRITING Sections*

*Open to ALL Blind Brook Students and Faculty*

**"I am a ..."** *The Diary of a Blind Brookian:* This focuses on what it's like to have a certain title—a Homecoming queen, basketball player, a straight-A student, a straight-C student, a new teacher, a new student, a lead in a play, a high school junior—and sharing the inner emotions, pressures, and responsibilities that come along with it. Entries can be written informally and printed (not submitted) anonymously.

**End Page:** The last page of FOCUS will be devoted to a featured column, photograph, or artwork (e.g. comic strip) that any BBHS student submits.

**Opinion Section and Letters to the Editor**

If you have any questions, please contact  
Francesca Pomara or Mr. Shortliffe.