

Hurdling into record books P.3

Heather Vachon, who runs hurdles for the track and field club, sets the bar for the team.

Thinking man's music P.4

Sam Roberts Band's new album doesn't disappoint listeners.

Exploiting labor? P.5

Weighing the morals of hiring a day laborer for almost nothing.

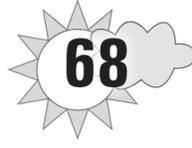
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Spartan Daily

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TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2009

Volume 132, Issue 29



WED	THU	FRI	SAT
70	70	67	63

ACTIVISM

Marching for a better college education

University students protest cuts in state's capital city

HARVEY RAÑOLA
Staff Writer

SACRAMENTO — There were plenty of brightly colored signs and homemade T-shirts among the sea of students who gathered at Sacramento's Raley Field to protest on Monday morning.

The sound of drums and chanting echoed down the Capitol Mall as students marched onto the steps of the California State Capitol demanding changes to the budget allocated to California colleges.

This year's march to the state capital was the second in two years by California college students, and although this year's march focused on the issues faced by community colleges across the state, SJSU Associated Students President Vosa Cavu-Litman was pleased with the support of students from the California State



Henry Morillo (left), an SJSU alumnus and senior Chris Temblado (center) participate along with other SJSU students in the march to Sacramento. Students from all over the state walked in protest against cutting the education budget.

DEREK SIJDER / Spartan Daily

See **MARCH**, page 2

MUSIC

Orchestra performs well-known works, pieces from students



A member of SJSU's symphony orchestra plays the cello during a concert in the Music Building on Wednesday evening. The orchestra began by playing "Vis Machina" by Jason McChristian, which is meant to represent the inner workings of a mechanical device.

SANDRA SANTOS / Spartan Daily

ANDREA MUNIZ
Staff Writer

Sounds of whimsical flutes, clarinets, violins and trumpets escaped through the doors of the Music Concert Hall Wednesday night for SJSU School of Music and Dance's Symphony Orchestra performance.

More than 100 people attended the concert, which included such pieces as "Concerto in C major," written by Domenico Cimarosa and featured special guest and faculty member Michael Ad-duci playing the oboe. Johannes Brahms' "Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73," and two student pieces were also performed by more than 50 musicians on 18 different instruments.

"My girlfriend is first clarinet,

but I love coming to the concerts here," said senior physics major Trevor Masters. "They're usually good. They don't disappoint."

This performance was important because it featured two pieces entirely composed by SJSU students.

"Musical tradition from the 18th and 19th centuries is very important, but sometimes, in my opinion, they get too hung on historical tradition," said SJSU music composition graduate student and composer Be'eri Moalem. "Then they just do it the same old way for generation and generation and not much new music gets out there."

Moalem's piece, called "Cairo: Across the Wadi," was inspired by a trip he made to Egypt last year. He said that Cairo's "super crowded" and "smelly," busy city streets

included sounds from cars, donkeys, chickens and pedestrians, all pushing against each other, he said.

In addition to city noise, the Azaan, Muslim mosque calls, were heard five times a day over loudspeakers. The contrast that Moalem saw between the sounds of Arabic music, deserts, chants and city all helped in composing his piece, but he said that the statement he was trying to make was greater than that.

"Many Jews in Israel hear the chants through filters of disdain due to the terrible bloodshed associated with the Arab-Israeli conflict," Moalem wrote in the program. "But after living in America for more than a decade,

See **CONCERT**, page 2

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SPORTS BLOG

Don't expect much from the West Coast teams in the NCAA Tournament.

Sports Editor Matthew Kimel discusses last weekend's Kentucky Derby prep races.

NEWS BLOG

Who is this St. Patrick guy, any way?

NEWS

The Great American Meatout at the Student Union meets with success.

Video: Check out a video of a student-run protest in Sacramento regarding the recent CSU budget cuts.

PHOTO BLOG

Audio slideshow: See images from the WAC Tournament by photographer Chad Ziemendorf.

See photos of SJSU students marching in Sacramento by photographers Derek Sijder and Michelle Terris.

See a new 'Around Downtown' photo.



CHAD ZIEMENDORF / Spartan Daily

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ATTENTION ALL STUDENTS!

Starting March 17th, 2009, the Student Health Center will launch a new electronic medical record system. This radical transition from paper charts to e-records will impact every aspect of how we provide health and wellness services.

To accomplish this change there will be several days in March and April when we will need to limit the availability of appointments. During the next two months visits may be a bit harder to get and may take longer to complete. We appreciate your patience as we work hard to keep improving our services to you.

SPARTA GUIDE

17 Today

Buddhism Studies
4:30 p.m. in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library, Room 734. Contact Albert at xifualbert@yahoo.com

Creative Arts Club
"Live Art Cafe," featuring a mix of performances and short films. 6 to 10 p.m. in the Loma Prieta room of the Student Union. Contact Teri Nguyen at 667-5315.

Department of Health and Science
"New Faces of Public Health Poster Project." 3 p.m. in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library, Room 225/229. Contact Rachael Madison at 924-2971.

Gallery Opening
6:00 to 7:30 p.m. in the galleries in the Art Building and the Industrial Studies building. Contact Ace Antazo at SJSU_Galleries@yahoo.com

Party With a Plan
Find ways to stay healthy and balanced while engaging in social activities where drinking is involved. 3 to 4:30 p.m. in Clark Hall, Room 118. Contact Veronica Mendoza at veronica.mendoza@sjsu.edu

Pride of the Pacific Islands
General meeting 5:30 p.m. in the Ohlone Room of the Student Union. Contact Kristen Tom at ppi_sjsu@yahoo.com

Spartan Smart Cart
Fresh fruit and veggies. 10:15 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Clark Hall, rain or shine. Contact Luisa Garrett at luisa@postmodern.com

Tuesday Night Lecture Series
Marguerite Perret discusses "The Beautiful and the Sublime: The Simulated Garden Redux." 5 p.m. in the Art Building, Room 133. Contact Ace Antazo at SJSU_Galleries@yahoo.com

Vocal Varietals
Voice studio of Professor Joseph Frank. 12:30 to 1:15 p.m. in the Music Building Concert Hall. Contact 924-4673 for more information.

18 Tomorrow

Campus Cookout
Free food and entertainment for students. Noon to 1 p.m. at the A.S. barbecue pits.

Graduation, What's Next?
Learn some of the steps that will make graduation smooth sailing. 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. in Clark Hall, Room 118. Contact Veronica Mendoza at veronica.mendoza@sjsu.edu

Weekly Discussion
Hangout with globally-minded people, discuss international issues and find out internship opportunities. 6:15 p.m. in the Pacheco Room of the Student Union. Contact Ryan Wu at GSC.SJSU@gmail.com

Zen Buddhism Club
"Releasing Ourselves from Obsession." 3:30 p.m. in the Costanoan Room of the Student Union. Contact Justin at 677-8681 or jstnjc@gmail.com

Sparta Guide is provided free of charge to students, faculty and staff members. The deadline for entries is noon, three working days before the desired publication date. Space restrictions may require editing of submission. Entries are printed in the order in which they are received. Submit entries online at thespartandaily.com or in writing at DBH 209.



MARCH | About 6,000 people participated, 90 from SJSU

SJSU students march in Sacramento against budget cuts to California's universities and colleges.

DEREK SIJDER / Spartan Daily

Continued from page 1

University and University of California systems.

"To have all three (college systems) represented at the same rally ... was a great way of stating that we are in support of higher education as a unit," he said. "I'm hoping that (students) start understanding that education is more than just what affects us now. It's the future of California and the economy."

Several speakers from California community colleges addressed the almost 6,000 protesters who gathered on the Capitol Mall lawn, including Mark Wade Lieu, the Academic Senate president for California Community Colleges, who likened the California government to a chainsaw-wielding villain in a horror movie.

"In a good twist like in any good

horror movie, the guy won't come after you with a chainsaw," he said during his speech. "What he does is he says, 'here UC. Here's the chainsaw. You decide what part you want to cut off. Here CSU, here's the chainsaw, are you going to chop off an arm or a leg? Here community colleges. Maybe you want to cut off a nose?'"

"We've had to cut course openings," Lieu said. "We've had to close admissions. We've eliminated programs. That's what's so scary."

Lt. Gov. John Garamendi was at the rally for his second straight year, and reiterated to students in attendance that they are the future of this state and that the student protest should continue when they return to their own communities.

"Stop the disinvestment. Make your voice heard back in your communities," he said. "Do not stop your protest until every qual-

ified California student has the best education anywhere in this world. It can be done. You can make it happen. Make your voice heard."

Of the thousands of students present at the rally, only about 90 students made the two-hour trip from San Jose, but senior sociology major Diana Victa said she expected more from the students at this university.

"There was a lot more last year and to be honest I'm quite disappointed at the fact that we had two buses that came, because De Anza community college had four," she said. "We have 33,000 students and only 90 showed up? I think we could do better."

Senior political science major Zachary Pallin, who helped promote and plan the march, said he was equally disappointed, but understood that students have their reasons for not joining the protest.

"In reality, I want all 32,000 students to come out to this event, because that would be great if they all cared that much," he said. A lot of schools have spring break this week, which is why it's so convenient for them to show up — but we didn't, so it kind of made it more difficult."

Pallin added that students should really be concerned about how the budget cuts are keeping qualified students out of college.

"In reality, it's not that we have to pay more, it's that other people who can't afford it definitely can't afford it now," he said. "It makes it impossible for people who deserve education to get it."

It wasn't just the youth who came out to make their voices heard. Henry Morillo, a 54-year-old Vietnam War veteran, completed his master's degree at SJSU last May, and said he does not see things getting better for

the economy or college students any time soon.

"What's good is that young people are still optimistic because they haven't experienced the real bad stuff," he said. "I've seen a lot of things happen in this country and we haven't seen the worst of it yet, which is sad. The bottom hasn't quite fallen out yet."

Julian Rosenberg, president of the SJSU chapter of Students for Quality Education and a senior political science major, said he is disappointed in the cuts but still believes that there is still time to make a difference.

"We have a really good group here but ultimately, it's going to take everybody standing up and doing something," he said. "They can't just leave it for someone else to do because they're too busy."

"We have faxes. You can write an e-mail. You can make a phone call," he added. "Everybody can do something for this."

CONCERT | Middle East the focus of one piece



A member of SJSU's symphony orchestra plays the violin during a concert on Wednesday evening. SANDRA SANTOS / Spartan Daily

Continued from page 1

I was able to zoom out and dissociate myself somewhat from the feelings of raw hatred."

Moalem said he is an Israeli Jew, and that he was able to accept Muslim culture after his trip.

"I think that's the first step toward peace," he said. "To find the beauty and appreciate each other's culture."

"Vis Machina," composed by senior music composition major Jason McChristian, also made its premiere at the orchestra's performance. According to the program, "Vis Machina," or "machine force," represents the inner-workings of a mechanical device.

McChristian said that after he decided during the summer that he wanted to write for the orchestra, he played around on the keyboard and came up with the four notes that would be present for the majority of his piece.

"Just getting that initial inspiration, for me it was the four

notes, but before that I was like 'what am I going to do?'" McChristian said. "It wasn't until I was actually experimenting around and something kicked in."

McChristian said another difficult aspect of composing a piece in general is writing parts for every instrument in the orchestra.

"You can get all of your ideas out into the piece and then you realize people actually have to play it," he said. "So you have to make it manageable for instruments, for musicians."

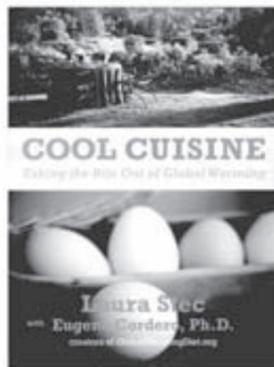
Janet Averett, director of the performance and conductor of the SJSU Symphony Orchestra, said that these students' "orchestration skills," knowing different instruments' sound, range and knowing where to use them, are one reason their pieces were picked for the performance.

"Jason's and Beeri's pieces were selected for their originality, creativity and good use of orchestration skills," she said. "The programming of the concert was richly varied and challenging."

UJSS University Scholar Series

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Dr. Eugene Cordero is an Associate Professor in the Department of Meteorology at San Jose State. His research interests are focused on understanding the processes responsible for long-term changes in climate through the use of models and observations. Dr. Cordero teaches courses in climate change and is also involved in various projects working to improve methods of public education that engage and ultimately stimulate social change. His collaborative book, 'Cool Cuisine: Taking the Bite out of Global Warming' is a hybrid cookbook and science book that explores the multiple connections between the food we eat and global warming.

This Series is co-sponsored by the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library, Office of the Provost, and Spartan Bookstore. For more information, call 924-2488. To contact the library, call 808-2193. This event is wheelchair accessible. If you need special accommodations, call 924-1828.



TRACK AND FIELD



SJSU hurdler jumps her way into record books

Heather Vachon, a junior hoping to get into the athletic training program, trains for last Saturday's track and field club meet at San Jose City College. Vachon is the first female athlete to run the 400-meter hurdles for the SJSU track and field club.

STEFAN ARMUJO / Spartan Daily

Junior gymnast is 'doing well for not having any experience,' coach says

BRETT GIFFORD
Staff Writer

SJSU's track and field club has a new up-and-coming athlete on the team.

Heather Vachon has sprinted and jumped into the record books as the first woman to compete in the 400-meter hurdles in the university's history.

"Heather is a gymnast who started hurdling last year for the first time ever and she's steadily improved," said Leo O'Neill, coach of the SJSU track and field club. "It's a very difficult thing to break into at the college level."

Vachon, a junior kinesiology major, said she decided to join after she saw a flier for the club and wanted to give

track and field a try for the first time since junior high.

"I did a lot of acrobatic gymnastics (in high school)," Vachon said, "so that's where a lot of my jumping and running comes from, but I've never done track before."

The 400-meter hurdles event is considered by some to be one of the more difficult events in which to compete.

"That (400-meter hurdles) is one of the most challenging, hardest events just to mentally get your head around," O'Neill said. "It's a full sprint all the way around (the track) with 10 hurdles in the way, so it's a very difficult event."

Vachon says she is happy with her performance so far and is looking forward to improving over the season.

"As of a couple of days ago, I got a 73 (seconds). By the end of the year, I'm hoping to get a 68 or 69," she said before competing last weekend at the Aggie Twilight Open at UC Davis.

Vachon ran a 72 at the Aggie Twilight Open, shaving down her time by 12-thousandths of a second.

"She's doing well for not having any experience. She's going against girls who have been at it for a while, like UC teams that are college recruited and all they do is run," said coach and club founder William Brown.

Vachon said there were some great runners at the event and it motivated her to want to push harder because she knows that she could be of the same caliber.

"I'm hoping that watching them and training harder will help push me along through the rest of the season," Vachon said.

SJSU's men's track and field team was discontinued along with cross-country in 1988 due to financial cuts.

"Funding cuts killed it in 1988, as with many other NCAA championship sports programs at San Jose State," O'Neill said. "Track and field was one of the top track programs in the nation."

Since then, there was a short-lived track and field club that died away after a few years, O'Neill said.

"A couple of guys started it again about five years ago, and then last year it really got going to the point that we had competitions again."

The current track and field club team is in its second year of competition.

"Because there was never really any girls except the cross-country team, most any track event is a school record for women because there never really was a women's team," Brown said.

Vachon said she is also training in pole vaulting and the high jump. O'Neill said he is trying to talk Vachon into doing a decathlon in May.

"I just have to keep training," Vachon said, "and when I feel more confident with my ability in those events, I'll actually go out and try it and see how I can handle it in competition."

"Heather is a gymnast who started hurdling last year for the first time ever and she's steadily improved. It's a very difficult thing to break into at the college level."

LEO O'NEILL
SJSU track and field coach



Heather Vachon trains at the San Jose City College's track on Saturday. Vachon is the first female athlete to run the 400-meter hurdles for the SJSU track and field club. According to SJSU track and field club coach Leo O'Neill, the 10 hurdle sprint around the track "is one of the most challenging, hardest events just to mentally get your head around."

STEFAN ARMUJO / Spartan Daily

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CD REVIEW: SAM ROBERTS BAND 'LOVE AT THE END OF THE WORLD'

Canadian band channels The Beatles' vibe

ANDREA MUNIZ
Staff Writer

If you're looking for music that makes you think, pick up "Love at the End of the World," the most recent album by the Sam Roberts Band.

Sam Roberts Band is a rock group based out of Montreal has made a decent name for itself in Canada.

"Love at the End of the World" debuted at No. 1 in their country when it was released in May 2008. The CD's U.S. release was in February.

I'm hesitant to classify this group as "rock." Maybe I've been socially brainwashed as to what rock is, no thanks to Bret Michaels or those hair bands of the '80s, but I would say that they have a light-rock feel.

The lead vocalist's voice, Sam Roberts, is similar to the croons of The Beatles' Paul McCartney, and many of the band's songs have a '60s vibe.

The first song, the title track, gives listeners a toe-tapping, feel-good beat and a good guitar part. The chorus is catchy and easy to remember: "This is love at the end of the world / There's still love / at the end of the world."

With its up-tempo beat,

it won't put you to sleep, unlike some of the other stuff on this album.

"Words & Fire," on the other hand, is not up-tempo, nor does it have a feel-good beat. This folk-like love tune, featuring fellow Canadian singer Angela Desveaux, sounds like it should be sung around a campfire rather than played for some emotional connection. The chorus is monotonously repeated over and over again, but the good thing is that there is another voice featured in the song other than just Roberts'.

A well-written piece on this album, "Stripmall Religion," is a good easy-listening piece with a serious reference to a shooting that happened in 2006 at a college near Roberts' hometown. "Now there's bloodshed / in my hometown / there was bloodshed / there were kids shot down."

Many of these songs have stories behind them, but without knowledge of the story beforehand, it is hard to catch their meaning.

If you're looking for something different than what pollutes the radio airwaves, I would give the Sam Roberts Band a shot. Their title track is a good indication of their style, and

can be purchased on iTunes for 99 cents. Or you can see it on YouTube for free.

Sam Roberts Band is currently on tour in the U.S., and they're scheduled to stop in San Francisco at Café du Nord on March 26. Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased through the band's Web site.

Recommendations

Songs to make you want to gather your brothers and sisters and hold up peace signs:

"Oh Maria" and "Up Sister"

Songs to bring you back to those fun-loving and carefree days without responsibility:

"Them Kids" and "Detroit '67"

Soundtrack songs for your "woe is me" days:

"Waking the Dead" and "Sundance"

Don't bother listening to:

"Words & Fire" and "The Pilgrim"



Lead singer Sam Roberts (left) and his bandmates.

Courtesy Shore Fire Media

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The exploitation of immigrant workers



ELIZABETH KANG
Staff Writer

I moved from a third-floor apartment to a three-story townhouse last weekend. The two properties share an unfortunate feature: three long, strenuous flights of stairs. Based on my exhausting experience the first time I moved, I knew I needed help. Help in the form of muscle, sweat and stamina.

My sweetie, being only one man, was not going to cut it. My girlfriends, who were an as-

set when picking out wall color, were of no help now. I needed serious manpower.

I called a moving company and after being quoted almost \$100 an hour, I sought a more affordable option. After all, I thought, I'm a poor college student.

So, I developed what I thought was, at the time, a great idea. I drove to Home Depot where I had seen them many times, standing, waiting and hoping. And much to my relief they were indeed still there.

Roughly 10 Hispanic men were huddled in the parking lot, wearing paint-splotted sweat-shirts and looking bored. Of the group, a younger, taller man stood out. I pointed to him, and he eagerly approached. In my very limited Spanish I understood that he considered himself

a package deal, and his friend would come too.

That suited me just fine. I needed all the manpower I could get. I was prepared to pay them \$50 each, but they insisted on an hourly wage and I agreed. We decided \$10 an hour was fair. That is more than the minimum wage, I reasoned.

The two men were polite, respectful and very hard working. After four hours of strenuous labor, I bought them each a sandwich, gave them both \$40 and thanked God I didn't have to do all that work myself.

At the end of the day, I sat back and sighed, thinking that I had just been part of a great mutual relationship.

A win-win situation in which I found affordable help for something I couldn't possibly have done alone and they earned

money they probably wouldn't have earned that day.

Days later, however, a guilty feeling began nibbling at me. A nauseating question suddenly popped into my mind.

Had I exploited those men?

I drove to Home Depot where I had seen them many times, standing, waiting and hoping.

Lessons from a cultural anthropology class reinforced my suspicions. I remembered my professor talking about a Nike factory in Vietnam that pays its workers about \$10 a week. That is, unfortunately, the pathetic minimum wage there.

In my recent situation, I was Nike and the two Hispanic laborers were the Vietnamese factory workers. Nike, which spends millions of dollars each year on advertising and endorsements, can afford to pay its workers more, I could have too. One pair of shoes or a few weeks worth of overpriced tart yogurt should have been sacrificed to pay those men what they were worth. Just because they agreed on the wage doesn't mean it's a fair price.

People who are out of work and desperate will likely agree to work very hard for very little, and people who take advantage of their desperation are guilty of exploitation, ashamedly, as I was last week.

Elizabeth Kang is a Spartan Daily staff writer.

Appreciating what we take for granted



ANGELO LANHAM
Yes, I Have a Point

Let's appreciate some stuff. It so rarely happens in this society that we step away from time spent complaining about the likes of a malfunctioning iPod or the drudgery of the endless seconds the microwave takes to prepare our instant oatmeal.

Since we're appreciating, though, just imagine if, before your busy schedule, you actually had to prepare oatmeal the old-fashioned way. Would you bother? Thank God for instant oatmeal.

And the iPod. In my day, we

didn't have iPods, just skipping CD players. And we liked it! But a few centuries ago, to have traveling music, you'd need to hire a stringed quartet to follow you around.

Just imagine a world without toast. So big a part of my life is toast that I'm not sure I'd even want to live in such a world. Just think about poor Grog, my direct ancestor, who had to toast his bread on a stick using the first fire, discovered by Zoog.

Imagine lighting your cigarette by rubbing two sticks together for half an hour.

Are you far-sighted? Stop whining about your dropped contact lens and imagine a time before glasses, when if you wanted to curl up and read a good tablet of stone, you had to make someone hold it for you across the street.

Indoor plumbing is pretty nifty. It would be pretty hard to go back to outhouses after the luxury of flushing toilets. Imag-

ine sharing a bath that came from a kettle. Imagine being third in line to take this bath, ignoring the gray water with mysterious floaters around. In a society in which we feel dirty after a day without a shower, wouldn't that suck?

Just think about poor Grog, my direct ancestor, who had to toast his bread on a stick using the first fire, discovered by Zoog.

Light bulbs. Thanks, Tom. The hell with kerosene.

Humor me. Ask yourself this question: "What is the technological advancement I most could not do without?"

If you answered "laptop computer," you're probably

right (all you wise guys who answered "beer bong" can go to hell).

Just think. Without a laptop, you'd have to pay attention in class. Without Facebook, you'd have to meet people and actually talk to them, maybe even meet them at places. If you're willing to go out on a limb and imagine a world sans cell phone, then to do this, you'd need to actually set a meeting place and time, and find your friends there.

Bollocks, you say? There's more. How many times have you been to a library to do research? If I zapped away your laptop with my magic laptop zapper-awayer, you can multiply that number exponentially.

To replace your laptop with 1970s-era technology, you'd need a room with a record player and about 5,000 records, the biggest bookshelf imaginable, a typewriter and, probably, scores of bank statements. And maybe a blue square painted on the

wall in place of the blue screen of death.

Can you imagine a world in which your phone only calls people? A telephone that doesn't take pictures, notes, have an alarm clock or make espresso? And — get this — is tethered to the wall?

It's the simple things that separate us from our knuckle-dragging ancestors who were completely void of oatmeal, instant or otherwise, who had to forage around hoping to knock dead a saber-toothed tiger with a really big rock.

Next time you're feel a tiff coming on, try to sympathize with poor Grog and Zoog.

Ha. Let's see you complain about last season's iPod now.

Angelo Lanham is a Spartan Daily copy editor. "Yes, I Have a Point" appears every Tuesday.

Forging new allies in the Middle East



ELISHA MALDONADO
... in love and war

It goes without saying that when disagreement arises between longtime friends, or in this case, allies, the two should work it out; at least, if the friendship is worth something.

It could also go unvoiced that if the two were ever really allies, it must mean they have a frame of understanding, a shared foundation. A homologous goal. A commonality.

The United States' sending of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Ankara, the Turkish capital, which it did this month, indicates the new administration's attempt to work on its relationship with Turkey.

If you will recall, the friendship (or alliance, both used interchangeably) between the U.S. and Turkey was ever so slightly sullied under the Bush administration when Turkish parliament refused to allow U.S. troops to use Turkey as a jumping point into neighboring Iraq in 2003.

The subsequent war cost the U.S. a little bit of glittering star power.

Nonetheless, I feel it must be said up front: Turkey is an ally worth having — and a relation worth improving.

As a sign of good measure,

President Obama is set for an outing to Ankara next month, further proving his willingness to follow through on his words — the ones that offered "a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect" to the Muslim world.

Nonetheless, I feel it must be said up front: Turkey is an ally worth having — and a relation worth improving.

A step in the right direction, if I do say so, at least in terms of foreign policy. God knows the same cannot be said about Iran, but that is beside the point.

Point is: Clinton's trek appears to have been rewarding.

She said: "I will tell President Obama he will find a warm welcome when he comes here to Turkey. ... He will find, as I have always found, not only a partner for the challenges and opportunities that we face together, but a friend for all times and all challenges that lie ahead."

And, unlike Bosnia, it would appear Clinton is telling some sort of truth. I'll cross my fingers for more.

For insurance, I include a statement from Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan: "The new administration is aware of Turkey's importance. Turkish-American relations have entered a new era."

And, so ... well, yes, Turkey is important.

With long-held ties to the West dating back to the beginnings of the Ottoman state, Turkey is perhaps the only Muslim country with a working democracy, which shows that their political and economic background is comparable to the United States' ideological belief in democratic government.

The visits by Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Obama are a big deal, because straddling Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, Turkey holds a certain amount of sway over a number of zones critical to U.S. foreign policy. Plus the following: Turkey has supported, and still maintains, diplomatic relations with Israel. Turkey has a membership to NATO, which is still an important military alliance.

They have fostered peace talks between Syria and Israel, and have proved instrumental in quelling — or at least continued attempts to quell — the repeated quarrels between Israel and Gaza.

They are self-made, economically speaking. And, perhaps most important of all, continue

to maintain a commitment to constitutional democracy.

All of that is in spite of the fact that Turkey is an Islamic-oriented nation populated by 99.8 percent Muslims.

So where Turkey is concerned, I will disregard Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini saying, in his 1979 "Message to the Pilgrims," that the Islamic religion is one that provides counsel on the conducting of affairs of state.

Turkey has remained democratic and has abided, by and large, by the rule separation of church and state.

To prove that this is some sort of feat, I call as my witness Bernard Lewis, historian, political commentator and professor emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University.

"It is not easy to create and maintain free institutions in a region of age-old authoritarian traditions, in a political culture where religion and ethics have been more concerned with duties than with rights, in which obedience to legitimate authority is a religious obligation as well as a political necessity, and disobedi-

ence a sin as well as crime," Lewis wrote.

"That much is obvious, and generally recognized. What is less obvious, and is insufficiently recognized, is that the task of maintaining free institutions have been made harder, not easier, by the processes of modernization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."

If Turkey is committed to the upkeep of a Westernized style of democracy in the Middle East, it is up to the U.S. to ensure that our friendship remains on good terms.

More important, it is up to the president to re-establish the good relationship that has always existed with them and us. Even if it is only a symbolic one. If he does so, the message sent to the Muslim world will be the one he intended to portray from the start: "The Americans are not your enemy."

Elisha Maldonado is the Spartan Daily investigations editor "... in love and war" appears every other Tuesday.

DID YOU KNOW...

Today is the feast day of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland? It is believed that he died on March 17 in the year 460 C.E. St. Patrick's Day is a national holiday in Ireland.

— history.com

COMMENTARY

The weird, the wild, the WACKy



DAVID ZUGNONI
Senior Staff Writer

RENO, aka "GOD'S COUNTRY" — There were 32 hours of basketball to be seen during the Western Athletic Conference Basketball Tournament at Lawlor Events Center last week, and I for one had a blast. But let's be honest: A grueling, athletic competition is sometimes just not enough.

Nope, we prefer to spice it up with silly stuff like big fuzzy mascots, dance-offs, displays of bad sportsmanship, such as the "Winning team, losing team" chant (I'll explain later), and coaches saying absurd things in post-game news conferences.

Nevada men's head coach Mark Fox had the sound bite of the week when he responded to a question about the university hosting the tournament. He was talking about how great it was that other teams and their fans could enjoy the splendor of Reno, and then it came:

"This is God's country."

I don't know about that one, Coach.

Not only did I witness a 50-year-old man drinking three shots of whiskey at 5:30 a.m., but I was also offered a prostitute and crystal meth within six hours. Maybe God had an emotional breakdown when he created Reno. These things happen.

When Mascots Attack

Pistol Pete, the New Mexico State mascot, is a nice guy ... but don't mess with his costume. I talked to him before the quarterfinals, and he knew more about the Spartans men's basketball team than 99 percent of SJSU students.

We sort of made a deal that I would root for his Aggies and he would root our Spartans in their respective men's quarterfinals games. I got the better end of it, though. I had already planned on rooting for the Aggies because of Wendell McKines, a guy I saw play for Richmond High School a couple years back who I was happy to see playing at the next level. I later found out that the Aggies were also a damn fun team to watch. If you catch one SJSU basketball game next season, think about checking out New Mexico State.

Aaaaanyways, Pistol Pete tried hard to get noticed all week, despite his lack of dancer's feet, and he finally got it done during a timeout in the last minute of a tense Utah State-New Mexico State men's semifinal game.

Apparently, a Utah State fan offered \$100 to Big Blue the Bull, Utah State's mascot, to go across the court and knock the fake mustache off Pete's real face. As Big Blue walked away, Pete charged after him and attempted a Ray Lewis-like tackle. But Big Blue is a bull and tough to take down, so Pete ended up holding him against the media table with his arms around the bull's fuzzy neck.

Pistol Pete was reprimanded by a leader of the New Mexico State cheering section, and once he cooled down, he apologized to his fellow students, Utah State fans and everyone else who would listen.

The next day we learned that Big Blue had to pass the \$100 on to charity.

You, you, you, yooooou suck!

Big Blue's assault on fake facial hair wasn't the only piece of bad sportsmanship that came out of Utah State's cheering section during the tournament. The school brought more fans to Reno than any school other than hometown Nevada, and they

perfected the art of heckling.

The Aggies (yep, another team named the Aggies) won the men's tournament, meaning their fans had three chances to do the brutal "Winning team, losing team" chant.

It's a call-and-response thing. Imagine the fans pointing to the appropriate places.

Call: "Is that the scoreboard?"

Response: "Yes, that is the scoreboard!"

Call: "Is that an 85?"

Response: "Yes, that is an 85!"

Call: "Is that a 68?"

Response: "Yes, that is a 68!"

Call: "Is that the winning team?"

Response: "Yes, that is the winning team!"

Call: "Is that the losing team?"

Response: "Yes, that is the losing team!"

... Picture the pointing now ...

"Winning team! Losing team!

Winning team! Losing team!

Winning team! Losing team!"

Utah State fans also didn't mind making a rather homophobic chant directed toward the Nevada Wolf Pack. During warm-ups of the men's championship game between Utah State and Nevada, the Wolf Pack faithful chanted "Wolf! Pack! Wolf! Pack!"

And an equally loud Utah State student section chanted "Fudge!" in place of "Wolf!"

And sexism was cool with Aggie fans, too.

While the Wolf Pack cheerleaders danced during a timeout, an "Ours are hotter" chant rang out from the Utah State section.

Not to rip on Utah State too much. I'll say that its men's head coach Stew Morrill and players Gary Wilkinson, Tai Wesley and Jared Quayle were polite and sociable with the media and answered all the questions as well as they could.

Utah State beat Nevada in the men's championship game, and while I feel for the Nevada play-

ers, I don't feel for its fans after what they did to SJSU forward C.J. Webster.

C.J. was a force in a hard-fought SJSU-Nevada quarterfinal matchup, but he fouled out of the game with 45 seconds left and had to walk off the court.

Excited to know that C.J. wouldn't give Nevada's big men any more trouble, Nevada fans yelled "Left! ... Right! ... Left! ... Right!" with each of C.J.'s steps.

He stood near the end of the SJSU bench and the crowd continued the verbal assault. I don't know if C.J. wouldn't give the fans the satisfaction or if he just decided to stand instead of sit, but, as every chant apparently ends, the fans shouted "Sit down!" but he never did.

The Big Dance

At stake at the WAC Tournament, aka the Big Dance, is an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament, aka the Big Dance. The Fresno State women's team will be going to the heels of a tournament MVP performance by sophomore Jaleesa Ross.

It might be wise for Jaleesa to take a few dancing tips from her 72-year-old auntie, Annie Grey, who won a dance-off during a timeout while holding a cane and wearing an oxygen tank over her shoulder.

Grey, from San Pablo, won a cell phone after being declared the winner by audience applause. After her victory, while sitting on her electric scooter, she said she was once a professional dancer.

A pair of awards

The award for best mascot goes to Boise State's Buster the Bronco.

The thoroughbred made a case for himself in an impromptu dance-off against Nevada's mascot during a women's quarterfinal game.

This guy was electric: shaking, shivering, trembling, gyrating.



Utah State mascot Big Blue finds himself in a headlock after stealing New Mexico State mascot Pistol Pete's mustache.

CHAD ZIEMENDORF / Spartan Daily

He did handstands. He popped his collar.

And add that to his good looks — baby blue eyes, great smile and a well-groomed tail — and there's no contest.

And the award for best school band goes to Idaho. I've heard all the usuals — you know, "Bom-bom-bom-BUM-BUM" and "Da-da-duh-da, HEY!" — but the Idaho band had a more diverse selection while staying in the barriers of what constitutes a school band, and also showed the best overall musicianship.

Slightly serious nods

I doubt any player looks forward to answering questions from the media after a heart-crushing loss that ends his or her season. But that's exactly what happens at the end of every game in a win-or-go-home tournament.

No player or coach was at fault for being rude to the media, but I think a few deserve credit for handling it the best.

On the women's side, Nevada's Dellen Criner had just lost the

last game of her collegiate career and teammate Cherlanda Franklin was on the edge of tears, but both players held their composure and gave robust, honest answers after a championship game loss to Fresno State.

On the men's side, credit goes to Louisiana Tech's Kyle Gibson and Magnum Rolle, who scored 25 and 24 points respectively in a semifinal loss to Nevada. It was an especially rough night for the Bulldogs, who lost two players in the game, one to a knee injury and the other to a concussion.

And lastly, the ultimate politeness award goes to Fresno State women's coach Adrian Wiggins. After his team's victory in the championship game, he actually

apologized to the media for taking longer than usual for him and two of his players to make it to the conference.

The Bulldogs had been celebrating and accepting awards on the court, with photographers clicking away during its players' emotional personal moments, and Wiggins felt bad that the media had to wait a few extra minutes.

What a guy. It's too bad his team will most likely get crushed in the first round of the NCAA Tournament against Cal, the 13th-ranked team in the nation.

David Zugnoni is a Spartan Daily senior staff writer.



Annie Grey, 72, gets her groove on in a dance competition at the WAC Tournament. Courtesy of Amy Beck / Nevada Sagebrush

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