

Hmong new year

Nou Thao
Staff Writer

75,000 Hmong people attend the Hmong New Year celebration each year held at the River Center, according to Lao Family. At the Hmong New Year there are many things to do: watch the performances, watch the beauty pageants, ball toss, eat asian food or go shopping. For the past 28 years the New Year Celebration has been at the River



Celebrators in traditional costumes

Center.

"New Year is something that I always look forward to" said Kalia Vang, a tenth grader. Most of the people say they go to New Year for the food. Many students also go to meet old friends that they haven't seen for years.

In Laos the New Year usually lasts about a month. The Hmong have a folk tale about New Year Celebration. A long time ago, according to the story, a shaman-hero named "Txoov Siv Yis" or ChongSheeyee, defeated the evil spirit called "Liv Nyoog", a spirit who eats the Hmong people. When he defeated the "Liv Nyoog", he called out all the Hmong hiding in the jungle to come and celebrate their freedom.

"Ball toss is something that I love to do at the New Year and it's something that I do every year," said Shaeng Yang,

NEW YEAR CONTINUED ON 8

Schedule changes

Norma Romero
Staff Writer

The Open school SLC schedule has changed significantly this trimester.

Thematic Journeys is now in the morning and afternoon. For around six years the Thematic Journeys block had always been in the afternoon, beginning fourth hour and ending fifth hour. There will be four thematic sections total. Drama teacher Amy Kampf & English teacher Erik Peterson-Nafigaizer will teach english and English teacher Leo Bickelhaupt & Social studies teacher Susanne Hollingsworth will be teaching social studies. They will be teaching in different hours.

The reasons for the Thematic Journeys changes is to offer more variety of classes for 9th to 12th grades in the afternoon. The teachers will also get to work in there



Tom logged many hours reworking the schedule

Vending machine returns

Alex Plonski
Staff Writer

I was originally going to write a scathing editorial about the lack of an Open School vending machine, but then on November 13, 2006, when I came to school, a wondrous sight awaited me:

We now have a vending machine.

A vaguely rectangular prism of gray and off-white, standing on four posts. There is a control panel for the selection of food with the numbers 1-10 and the letters A - H, and below it, two slots for the insertion of money, and a lock for the removal of money. Then, to the left, a gray flap for the removal of food, and above it, visible through the smudged glass, the food itself. And of course, the variety of words and phrases inscribed all over it. From the cryptic "Flashing Credit Check Price," "Make

No longer do we have to hungrily scrounge, going so far as to pack food from home.

Another Selection," "Use Correct Change," and "Insert Bill Face Up" on the control panel, to the large engraved "PUSH" on the food flap, and to the magnetic words arranged in crude phrases on the right panel, our vending machine is a tome of literary enjoyment.

No longer do we have to hungrily scrounge, going so far as to pack food from home. No longer do we have to wait in the lunch line, or in that other line for the last few minutes of lunch, while being stared at by creepy cafeteria workers. For now we have a vending machine. (No offense creepy cafeteria

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Hallway problems

*Sonia Romero
Staff Writer*

It's 8:30. I walk out of advisory. To my left I hear someone yelling. To my right, I see a boy running. There is a large group standing near Tim's room, not moving. It's hard to get through. Believe it or not this is a typical day in the hallways during the past two months.

Some students are frustrated by what they see in the hallways. "The little crowds that hang out leave very little space for people to get through," said Jaime Avila, an 11th grader.

"It's really loud, and so crowded-short people can't even get through," said Mai See Lee, an eighth grader. "People wait till the last minute to get to class," said Stephanie Vang, an eighth grader.

Teachers have also noticed the problem, and are making efforts to be in the hallways more. Principal Todd Bartholomay, who is also regularly in the halls, also expressed concern. "There is a lack of consciousness about the needs of other people," he said.

The staff discussed this problem at a meeting last month. It was agreed that advisors would talk to their advisories about acceptable school behavior, and reinforce the "Five P's."*

Future Cities: boys, brooms, and hovercars

Middle schoolers design tomorrow

*Sonja Youngquist
Staff Achiever*

School is barely out for the day and I'm sitting in woodshop teacher James Iliff's room, writing or doodling, and dodging flying broom handles thrown by my teammates.

See, we're all part of FutureCities. FutureCities is this, as far as I can tell: A bunch of middle schoolers getting together, designing a city of the far future on SimCities, writing an essay about said city, and then building it out of found or recycled stuff for UNDER a \$100.

The competition happens in two phases. Phase one is when we send in our computer simulation of the city. That happens November 17. Phase two is when we present our model. That's mid January. If you win that, you fly to D.C. for Nationals.

If you win Nationals, 3rd place is \$1000 for the school technology lab, like maybe a functioning printer. 2nd is \$2000, for the same cause. 1st place wins a visit to Space Camp for the whole team.

To win, you need to have your city meet certain requirements, like showing futuristic engineering (and concepts). For example, the team who won last year had a hotel with climate controlled rooms, rooftop gardens to insulate houses, stuff like that.

The team is coached by James, our woodshop teacher. "I coach it because it will give students the chance to think like engi-

neers and city planners." His dream FutureCities team would be a combo of girls and guys all working together and glad to be working together. They would also be very creative. The hardest thing about coaching FutureCities? "Getting the students to think about the model, and getting them to work effectively as a team."

Some of the lessons you learn (other than the engineering and city designing parts) are: Lesson 1: If you are the only girl, you will be treated like the odd one out, because you are different from them. Lesson 2: Brooms are good for more than just sweeping; they also work well as an all-purpose tool. Lesson 3: It's really hard to get a monorail system when everyone's in love with the idea of hovercars. The list goes on and on.

Basically, what happens at one of our meetings is we start by brainstorming, mainly yelling our ideas at each other and fighting, then we get to work driving virtual cities into debt, although that part of the competition has passed. Then we whack at each other with a broom, realize our parents are waiting for us, and go home.

At the moment, we need to start working on the model, because we sent in our Sim-City yesterday. The city looks like it will score very well, which is good, obviously. We hope to win, of course, but winning isn't everything. *

Susie, a new face in the ELL department

*Say Khang
Staff Writer*

Susie Reynolds is Open School's new ELL teacher. Right now she works with the Kindergarten, 3rd, 4th and 6th graders.

Susie has taught as an ELL teacher for 10 years in St. Paul. Dayton's Bluff and Monroe are two other schools where she has taught. Susie attended Santa Monica College and the University of California at Berkeley. She majored in Comparative Literature with Spanish and German.

Susie was born in Venice, California. When she was little, she liked riding her bike and playing red light green light. She also liked jumping on her trampoline.



Susie

Now Susie likes to read, and spend time with her husband. She also plays water polo when she has some free time. Susie's hobbies are stamp collecting, playing water polo and softball. She has traveled throughout the United States, through Europe, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama in Central America. So you can tell, Susie loves to travel!

Does anyone one wonder who keeps following Susie around? Well he is Kellen Kautzman, a student teacher, and a student at the University of Minnesota. He also speaks spanish and he is really enjoying Open School.

Susie loves the idea that Open School is a K-12 school. "Everyone is very friendly. I also like the students and teachers dedication to learning," she said. She decided to teach as an ELL teacher because she loves languages. Susie decided it would both be fun, and a challenge to help others learn English!*

Ian Molloy-Busse

What are you planning to do next year?

Sit in my room and eat Oreos.

What will you miss most about Open?

Beating up kids in the hallway.

What is your favorite book, movie, or T.V. Show?

My favorite book is *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*.

What is your favorite class in high school?

Anatomy. *wink*

What is the last concert you went to/album you bought?

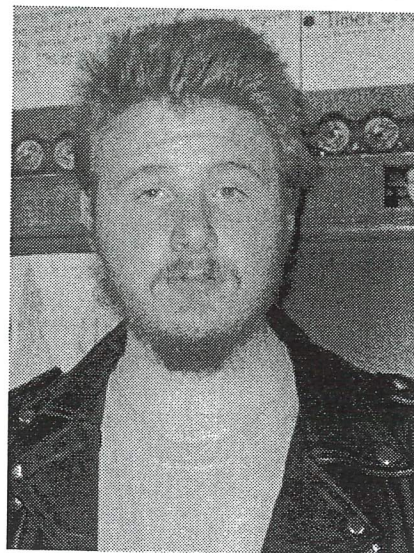
Concert: Buzzcocks. Album: Michael Jackson's *Thriller*.

What is one job you would like to have as an adult?

Senior Punching Manager at a large software firm.

If you could meet one person dead or alive, who would it be?

Ziggy Stardust.



Fraquetball, a season of hope?

Liam Shramko
Staff God

With another season of Fraquetball soon underway, there are a lot of questions that remain unanswered. New rule changes, new teams, new players, all in all a whole lot of crap that will certainly shake up the Fraquetball world. I'm here to answer all of your burning questions. Whether you like it or not. Here are the five most talked about issues entering Fraquetball's fifth year..



How will

the new rules affect the game? The new rule is that you can't use your hand to assist a shot. Liam, Jaime, Tim, and Jose all used their hands to improve their offensive game and give them the upper "hand," so to speak. Experts are predicting a fall in offensive production. Now that the use of hands is strictly prohibited, players will have to pull some tricks out of their hats in order to score. More backhands, screens, low and high shots, anything to keep the defense on their heels.

Can Liam win the Championship?

With a Championship Liam can cement his legacy as the most prolific player in Fraquetball history. But if he fails to capture the Championship, he will always be remembered as the player who

could never win the big one. The Karl Malone of Fraquetball. Talent has never been a question for Liam, entering the season Liam is the only member of the coveted 200-200 club, (200 goals, 200 stops.) His resume is quite impressive: MVP winner, Gold Glove winner, #1 in stops, #1 in saves, #2 in aces, #3 in goals, #5 in shot% respectively. He's made the Semifinals every year he's been in the league, advancing to the Championship once, but he's never won it all. His career will forever be tainted if he fails to get that elusive ring. Expect a monster year and championship appearance, but nothing more.

Will Leo bounce back to give the Los Geezers a chance at the title? Last year we saw the reemergence of Tim as a top five tier Fraquetball player, but in the midst of another playoff season, Leo continued to struggle at the defensive end. Statistically he's not all bad, (he was second in saves last year) but he padded his stats in games against poor offensive teams and struggled against offensive powerhouses. If the Los Geezers want to compete with the likes of Chivas and Fetal Attraction, Leo needs to step up his game.

How will Rookies affect the season?

There are 19 rookies this season, a Fraquetball record. What does that mean for the fraquetball world? A huge gap between the contenders and pretty much every other team. Inflated records

are sure to follow. In the past, Fraquetball has been a league of parody, where everyone seemingly had a chance, not anymore. Expect a drop off in quality of play, a lot of rookie mistakes and a maybe even a perfect record. The rookie class leads me to my next question...

Will Chivas go undefeated? During Fraquetball's brief four year history, no team has never gone undefeated during the regular season, however, the Chivas look poised to do so. Jaime is coming off an MVP season and is the most dominant offensive forces in the game. Jose is coming off a championship season and is one of the two best back defenders in the league. We know they're both competitors, but can they go undefeated? For that to happen, Jaime needs to improve on his front defense and they need to form together as a cohesive offensive unit. No room for egos.

That's it. Those were the questions you wanted answered. If you have a problem with my bias analysis you can take it up with my motorcycle sidekick, Tarantula.

Liam is a four-time All-Star, four-time all offensive team, three-time all-defensive team, one-time MVP, one-time Gold Glove winner, and one of the most respected Fraquetball experts in the world. This is his fifth year with the game of Fraquetball, fifth as a player, fifth as a committee member, and first as the Commissioner. *

That's What She Said!

Vox populi of Open School

Steal This Book

Beck Olson
Staff Writer

"It's embarrassing when you try to overthrow the government and you wind up on the best seller's list," Abbie Hoffman remarked. After being rejected by over 30 publishers, his third book, *Steal This Book*, was finally published in 1971 by Pirate Editions.

Steal This Book became the force behind the hippie revolution of the 1970s. It encouraged aspiring revolutionaries (or most anyone who read it) to question the status quo. "All power to the imagination!" was Abbie's motto, and is illustrated thoroughly in this book. "[It] is, in a way, a manual of survival in the prison that is Amerika," he writes. "It preaches jailbreak. It shows you where



Irrelevant book

and exactly how to place the dynamite that will destroy the walls."

Where do ideas come from? They are derived purely from experiences molding our imaginations. They should be shared, not sold; ideas are free. That was Abbie's perspective when writing this book.

There are three sections: Survive, Fight, and Liberate. The first section, Survive, is all about living for free in America. "America is the land of the free... free means you don't pay," he once said. This section is full of advice on things like getting free food (for example, Hoffman writes that "great places to get fantastic meals are weddings, bar-mitzvahs, testimonials and the like," because you can just saunter in and act familiar with a few comments like, "I'm an old friend of John's family,"), free medical care, free education, free communication, free transportation (hitchhiking, freighting, airplane scams, etc.), free pets, and so on. It also talks you through practices such as growing your own marijuana.

STEAL CONTINUED ON 6

Borat: unscripted hilarity

Emmett Ruff
Staff Writer

Borat!: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan is seriously one of the funniest movies I've ever seen. I laughed throughout the entire movie.

Borat! was directed by Larry Charles and was released November 3rd.

It was written by and stars comedian Sacha Baron



Borat himself

Cohen. The character of Borat was originally a reporter on Baron Cohen's *Da Ali G Show*, a British television show where Baron Cohen plays different re-

porters and interviews unsuspecting people.

Most of *Borat!* isn't scripted, it isn't staged and most of the characters are real unsuspecting people.

Borat! is a mockumentary (get it, mock-documentary) about Borat Sagdiyev, a reporter from Kazakhstan who ventures to the United States with Azamat, his producer, to make a documentary on America for The Government of Kazakhstan.

While in his hotel Borat watches *Baywatch* and falls in love with Pamela Anderson. Borat is determined to marry her, but later learns that she lives in Malibu, California. Borat convinces Azamat to travel across the United States to find Pamela and learn more about the American life. Borat meets a colorful cast of characters and has many adventures while he journeys across America in an old ice cream truck.

Borat learns to make American Jokes from a hu- BORAT CONTINUED ON 6

Running with Review

Isaac Ruff
Staff Writer

When I walked into the theater to see *Running with Scissors* I was thinking it would be a funny, family film, but the movie is actually very depressing. The movie was based on a book written by Augusten Burroughs and the book was based on his child hood, a true story.

I recommend this movie, it was very well done and the acting was great. It's sad but I would give it a 8.5 out of 10. I was shocked about the fact that this was a true story.

Running With Scissors is an odd movie starring Joseph Cross who stars in others hits such as *Jack Frost* and *Flags of our Fathers*, and Alec Baldwin star of *The Departed* and *Saturday Night Live*.

This movie is very bizarre, there is a lot of crying and there are some funny parts to it, but not many. Look for the part when they are walking in the street in the year 1970 and there is a Borders books sign in the distance.

The father of Augusten, Norman Burroughs(Alec Baldwin) has a drinking problem and Augusten's mother, Deirdre Burroughs(Annette Bening), says that he was trying to kill her. Later in this film, the son (Joseph Cross), is sent to live with the family shrink so the mother can work on her poetry and so that she would be safe from Norman. His mother,would come see Augusten on weekends, but never takes him home.

One day Augusten, tired of the insecurities of the house and the shrink, went to his mother's house. When he gets there he finds his mother kissing one of her female poetry students. His mother responds by producing adoption papers because she was going to have him live with the shrink, permanently.

"Joseph Cross dose nice job of acting when it comes to scenes of shock and sadness," said Open School student Emmett Ruff. After the adoption papers, Augusten started to cry a lot and the family started to fall apart. This movie was all about a family falling apart. It seemed very repetitive but I liked it because it make you think about it a lot after you have seen it. If your in the mood for a well done teenager movie go see *Running with Scissors*.*

Santa Clause 3: a colossal Christmas failure

Chloe Taipale
Staff Writer

The other day on Oprah, she was doing a show about the horrific conditions of America's schools or something. She sat all of these highschoolers in a room, and had them confront their bullies and confess their deepest darkest secrets; having them finish the sentence "If you knew me, you'd know that I _____. Well, if you knew me, you'd know that I feel alone in crowded roo--- er, love Christmas more than anything. Especially more than *The Santa Clause 3*.

I haven't seen the first two *Clauses*, but here's what I gather: Tim Allen killed Santa (not just killed him, he *deflated*. It was the scariest thing I've ever seen) and so he had to take on the Santa job... a rule, or clause, if you will.

A few years have gone by, and Tim Santa is still resplendent with Christmas joy. His pregnant wife, however, is not, because she never gets to see her family, living at the North Pole and all. Neither is Jack Frost, because he is a metallic little whiner. He thinks he should get his own holiday, and henceforth decides to sabotage Tim Santa's job and take it himself.

Since his wife's depressed even before she gives birth, Tim Santa decides to fly

her parents up for Christmas, meaning he has to think of a way to hide the fact that he's Santa. He also invites his ex-wife and kids, who *do* know he's Santa. Only it's okay that they know. Go figure. Anyway, the whole gang is there to help usher in the new pup, but what they weren't expecting was the falling out of the family. Eh? Eh? Pregnancy joke?

Two things about the movie after the relatives arrive bothered me. 1) I do not like children, and something about the little ginger just rubbed me the wrong way, and B) I'm still unnerved by Jack Frost getting fresh with grandma. He slowly permeates Santa's workshop and tricks him into resigning as Santa. See, every Santa gets a snowglobe and if he holds it and says "I wish I never became Santa" or something, he's transported through time to the exact moment he became Santa, so everything can go back to normal. Crazy, I know. Plus, I want to know why Tim Santa's wife was so sad about the broken tree-topper. There are pregnancy hormones, and then there's just an unnatural attachment to material things.

Now, Jack Frost is Santa. A sad, sad excuse for Santa, but Santa nevertheless. He has turned Christmas into a dreary showcase

SANTA CONTINUED ON 6

NBA2K6

Serena Garcia
Staff Writer

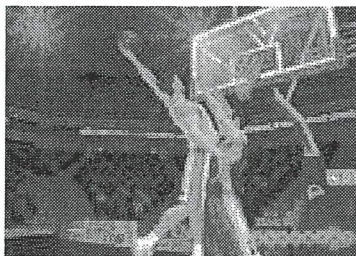
Even if you don't like sports, you'll still have fun playing NBA 2K6.

The graphics are realistic, especially the players' reactions. After you play for a minute, the players start to sweat. I liked the audio very much, too. The music is good to listen to while your trying to play basketball.

NBA 2K6 makes you want to keep playing. Even if you're losing, you still want to play, just so you'll eventually win. Even if you don't like sports, you could enjoy this game. There is even a practice level in this game, where all you do is practice and work on your jump shots.

Of course the game also has real players, and genuine NBA rosters,

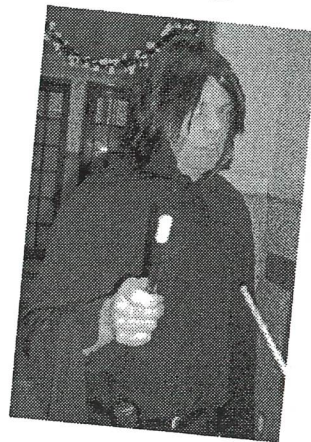
not to mention big time stars like "Flava Flav".



NBA2K6 in action

This game is worth buying. I personally wouldn't spend more than 30 dollars on it, but I like it anyway. It's likely to appeal to basketball fans, as well as people who just like to try new things. I never played basketball in my life, and then I played this game. I know how to play it now. You don't have to love basketball to get the hand of NBA 2K6.*

Fall Extravaganza '06



Shape roams halls



BYO Soap



Fairy tales can come true



Adorable corn

STEAL FROM 4

Some of the scams and tricks in *Survive* no longer work in today's society, due to things like heightened awareness, tougher security, and the fact that by now, people have seen a lot of these things attempted and have taken precautions to make sure they won't happen again.

The second section, *Fight*, explains things such as how to set up a printing workshop and start an underground newspaper, shoplifting techniques ("A good rule is dress in the style and price range of the clothes, etc., you are about to shoplift," he advises), how to street-fight against the police (referred to as "political pigs") if necessary at protests and demonstrations, how to knife-fight, how to make various small bombs (stink bombs, smoke bombs, CBWs, molotov cocktails, sterno bombs, aerosol bombs, and pipe bombs), and how to perform basic first aid.

The third section, *Liberate*, is about four particular cities: New York (including Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens), Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. It clearly annotates previously given advice for survival and warfare in the above cities. It also includes various places of interest where aforementioned advice can be easily applied.

Abbie completely advocates rebelling against and diminishing all forms of authority, whether it be corporate or

governmental. All of his books (*F*** the System*, *Revolution for the Hell of it*, *Woodstock Nation*, and *Steal This Book* being the most well-known) are full of original ideas and strong political stances.

Reading this book, you can tell the author has had an interesting life. He was one of the Chicago Seven (a group of seven defendants arrested and charged with intent to violently riot in opposition of the Vietnam War), remained underground for several years, and hid from the government by getting plastic surgery and living under the pseudonym Barry Freed. He has been arrested on charges ranging from possession and intent to distribute cocaine to defacing the American flag and wearing it as

"A good rule is dress in the style and price range of the clothes, etc., you are about to shoplift."

a shirt.

Abbie married Anita Kushner in 1967, but fell in love with Johanna Lawrenson seven years later while fugitive. They had only one child- a son named america Hoffman. His first name is deliberately lowercase to represent both patriotism and non-jingoistic intent.

Though *Steal This Book* was written over 30 years ago, most of the ideas are still applicable, and they are all interesting, clever, and sometimes helpful. Some of the information in it (addresses and phone numbers for example) is no longer accurate, but reading this book is still worth it because of its humor and perspicacity.*

BORAT FROM 4

mor coach, appears as a guest and starts trouble on a local news program, learns to dine like a high-class American citizen, and much more.

There is some controversy surrounding *Borat!*. The Russian government has denied public release clearance. The Kazakhstani government isn't too keen on *Borat!* either. They complained about his performance at the MTV Europe Music Awards and have run a four-page promotional advertisement for Kazakhstan in the New York Times as well as a "Heart of Eurasia" campaign.

Although I thought the movie was utterly hilarious, there were some scenes that I'd say were... icky. If you're easily offended you might want to pass on this one.

There is plenty to laugh at when it comes to Borat Sagdiyev. As Borat's and America's culture's mix and collide we see that Borat is very awkward, accidentally self-deprecating, misogynistic, anti-semitic and just plain offensive. But in the most innocent and funniest way possible. He's eager to be your friend and is a genuinely nice and innocent guy. He's just misguided, that's all.

Other than that, this movie is terrific. It has plenty of humorous lines and it doesn't get stale. The fact that almost everyone in the movie is real makes it even funnier. If you haven't seen *Borat!*: *Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* go see it now! I give it 4.7438 stars out of 5.*

SANTA FROM 5

for consumerism at its worst. Tim Not-Santa realizes he's a sad executive when he's not Santa. He needs his family's help to get his job back, but they hate him now. Egads! Will Jack Frost be stopped? Will Christmas be saved? Will Tim Allen ever be funny?!

Truth be told, I did not hate this movie. The problem is that the plot has been done 8675309 times before, and in better ways. The jokes were terrible ("Jack-Frost-of-all-trades," reindeer



Two washed up actors on the decline

flatulence), but I did leave the theater a little more pumped for Christmas, as did the twelve other audience members, I'm sure. I may have cracked a smile at the Christmas tree signs; they were kind of witty. Except, you know. Gross.

If you're looking to see your first holiday movie of the season, then this is not an appropriate place to start. Have you ever seen the "25 Days of Christmas" on ABC Family? Skip the theater and stay home, where you can see *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *Home Alone 2*, *Harry Potter*, and *Robbie the Reindeer* on repeat for 25 days straight. Try to hold yourself back. I give *The Santa Clause 3* 1.5 stars. Just burn your money instead.*

SCHEDULE FROM 1

specialty areas, according to SLC math teacher Tom Totushek.

Another change is that Amy now is a full time teacher, taking over Community Service. There is also an extra middle school Science offered 2nd and 3rd hour.

Tom was one of the people from the team that helped design the new schedule, along with IEP teacher Kim Totushek and principal Todd Bartholomay. The making of this new schedule left some classes that couldn't be changed, such as Leo's third hour, Elizabeth's 6th hour prep (so she can clean up), and 6th hour drama for afternoon rehearsal. Even though Tom designed the schedule, the whole SLC staff had to support the change.

This idea is long term change, that will continue through third trimester.*

The Evil Meerkat *a serialized adventure*

Sarah Plonski

Part 1

The Evil Meerkat was sticking a flower down an anthill. The flower had come from the tree he was sitting under, and he was in a daze, staring at his best friend. He was also bored, and being both bored and in a daze are a very interesting combination. His best friend was named Black Flame, and she was reading a book under the tree next to his, her fluffy red, orange, and yellow tail swishing. She must have been in an exciting part of the book, the Evil Meerkat thought, and suddenly his paw was bitten by a fire ant. He yelped and smashed his paw against the trunk of the tree. He jammed it into his mouth, and Black Flame glanced up from her book and laughed. The Evil Meerkat took his paw out of his mouth and examined it.

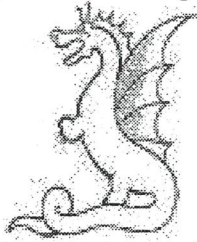
* * *

Many miles away, inside a dormant volcano, a small dragon was screaming his head off at two helpless kitties.

"You idiots!"

Bob shouted, wringing his scaly hands impatiently. "You'll destroy the delicate wiring!" The cats were named Sam

and Werb, and they were teetering under the weight of an enormous purple death ray that looked like an oversized crayon. As he shouted, they almost tripped again, and Bob started shouting even louder. Sam and Werb looked at each other, decided that anywhere else would be better than where they currently were, and put the death ray down.



"Hey! What are you doing?" shouted Bob as the two cats scurried away.

"Dumb animals. But they can't stop me. The Evil Meerkat will be dead before anyone can do anything! Muahaha-haha!"

* * *

The Evil Meerkat perked his ear. He could swear he had heard someone laughing like a maniac. But he had been wrong before.

"Are you okay?" Black Flame was saying, but he hardly heard her.

"Tokku?" She said, the Evil Meerkat's real name. He shook his head and wiped his paw on his tail.

"Um, it's nothing." He didn't want to worry Black Flame, even though she would probably know what was going on better than he would. She looked at his paw with a worried expression on her face.

"So you're sure you're okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine." Black Flame stared at him for a few seconds, then returned to her book. Her tail started swishing again.

The Evil Meerkat sighed. Not wanting to get closer to the anthill, he wandered down the lush hill to the stream at the bottom. He sat staring into the water and was just about to doze off when he heard a beep.

He jumped about two feet into the air. Regaining his balance, he cocked his head and listened for a minute. He heard the beep again, coming from a clump of tall grass. Carefully reaching his paw in, he pulled out a video camera. There was a little blinky red light on it. He flicked the off switch, and the light faded. He stared at the camera

suspiciously and made his way back up the hill, the camera still in his paw.

While Black Flame read, the Evil Meerkat found five video cameras in various places and turned them all off. He started smashing them with a rock. Black Flame looked up from her book.

"What are you doing? Whose video cameras are those?"

"Nothing. I'll tell you later. I'm busy."

"Well, that's obvious," Black Flame muttered as she leaned against the trunk of the tree and closed her book. "Well, I'm done. Tell me when you're finished destroying someone else's property." She meandered down to the stream.

* * *

"Well? What's the problem?" Bob asked the group of cats that were gathered around a bunch of blank TVs. "Or don't you know? Should I just fire you right now?" He tapped his foot angrily. "Well, you're going to find out what messed up the spy cameras or... else!" He stomped to his office as the cats continued to work.

Bob's office was the only place in the dormant volcano where there were no cats at all, ever. They had refused to go there as soon as it started smelling like an abandoned grocery store. So Bob had to make sure to clean it himself if he wanted clean. There were some black things that used to be banana peels on his desk, darts in the wall, shredded maps, moldy pillows with rats in them, a TV with a huge hole in the screen. Bob sat in the middle of it as if it were a castle, and came up with a foolproof way to kill the Evil Meerkat. Dun dun dunnnnnn.*

TAKE ACTION!

Are you unhappy with Open School's approach to bad behavior? Do you want to have a say about detentions? You have an opportunity to tell Todd what you think! After school, Monday, December 11th there will be a meeting to discuss Open's approach to disciplinary action. It will take place directly after school, and be led by senior Liam Shramko, co-chair of Site Counsel. All students are encouraged to attend. Rides home can be arranged.

VENDING FROM 1

workers. I'm sure if I got to know you you'd be much less creepy.)

I remember back in the good ol' days, back in the lost, partially forgotten era before the health craze spread to our higher ranking officials in the school district. We had Reese's Peanut Butter Cups in the vending machine, and Minute Maid Fruit Drinks (Which tasted suspiciously but tastily like Fruitopia...) in the pop machine.

I also remember clearly the decline, as our rights to delicious and supposedly unhealthy food were slowly but surely strangled. Looking back, I can see that I disregarded the in hindsight very clear signs. The Nestle milk machine on the first floor. The deactivation of the Pepsi machine first just during school, and then permanently. But I was blind to all of that, until my candy machine inexplicably disappeared.

It was a Thursday, near the end of last year. Or as I like to call it, Nerdday. Heh. The reason why I like to call it Nerdday is because it is the most important day of the week, the day where we stay after school and play Dungeons and Dragons in Tom's room. I would bring my backpack to Tom's room, and then get animal crackers from the adjacent vending machine, followed by a Strawberry Passion Minute Maid Fruit Drink from down the hall. Then I would go back to Tom's room and quench my hunger and thirst, while planning the campaign.

However, this day, my routine was painfully and violently disrupted by the lack of vending machine. I stared at the empty space for a while in disbelief, before finally going to Burger King and purchasing a large fries and a chocolate shake. It was a much inferior meal, and yet is cost twice as much, not including the physical strain of walking there and back or the time lost from D&D.

Then the pop machine left us, and struck yet another blow against thirsty



Vending machine in action

teenagers. Fortunately, pop selling entrepreneurs have picked up the slack, and their products are a much better value than the official pop machine pop was, because you get 12 ounces for 50¢ instead of 20 ounces for \$1. You don't, however, get a stayfresh™ resealable bottle. (Note: The resealable bottles are not actually stayfresh™.)

Unfortunately, the school banned any sale of pop on school grounds. Heh. But I know a few people who know a few people who know a few people who could probably hook you up. And they're not just selling Powerade and fruit drinks. Oh no. In an unregulated industry, they can sell whatever the heck they want. Which is much tastier than Aquafina water, because Aquafina sucks.

Bollocks to the rules. Can't stop, won't stop!

For much of the year though, there was no cure for being hungry at any other time than in the last few minutes of lunch. Until that fateful day, when another vending machine appeared.

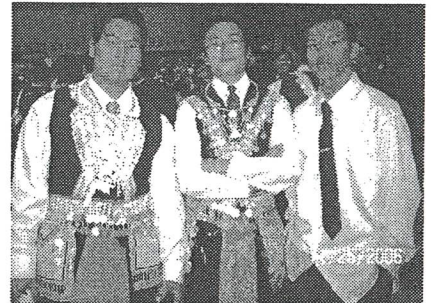
Alas, our victory is bittersweet. For now instead of approximately 250 Calorie packs of cookies we have 100 Calorie packs of cookies, for the same cost. Instead of regular chips we have Sun Chips, and not even Original. We have the crappy Harvest Cheddar kind. And, worst of all, instead of chocolate candy bars we have granola bars, dried fruit, and oatmeal. As if anyone would buy that.

I am still happy though, because my animal crackers are back. They are delicious, and filling, and they don't give me a stomachache when I eat several packages on an empty stomach. That's more than I can say about anything else in either the current or old vending machine. To use an elaborate Star Wars analogy: If taste correlates to weaponry, filling-ness correlates to armor, and stomach friendliness correlates to speed, then most of the old candy bars are like a B-Wing, with lots of weaponry and armor but little speed, and most of the current junk is like a TIE Fighter, with little weaponry or armor but lots of speed, or like an A-Wing, with little weaponry and armor but even more speed than the TIE fighter. But Animal Crackers are like an X-Wing, with a good balance of everything. And everyone knows that X-Wings are the best. That's why Luke flies one.*

NEW YEAR FROM 1

a tenth grader. The ball toss had always been a tradition. Ball toss is when all the girls stay on one side and all boys stay on the other. They toss a ball back and forth. Guys talk to girl if they are interested in dating, and if girls are interested they either exchange numbers or do something so they will keep in contact. Teens now often have their own girlfriend or boyfriend and they don't really do it anymore.

What has become very popular is to watch the dance competition. It has been extremely good in the past few years. They do all kinds of dances from Hmong dancing to Hip hop, from Thai to India. They do flips, throw people in the air, do cartwheels, and tell stories.



Xeng Xiong and friends dress for the occasion

In December there is another Hmong New Year Celebration. This New Year is hosted at the Metrodome and is two days long. At the Metrodome there is sports. There is ka toa (a game where they kick with a wooden ball), volleyball, ping-pong, badminton, topspin (a game where there is a wooden top and the bottom is very sharp, you throw it to make it spin). They have the beauty pageant and also prince charming. Prince Charming is just like the beauty pageant but with guys.*



The ball-toss game is a popular New Year activity