



SidneyPacific SPeaker

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Looking Back on a Sidney-Pacific Year: Events and Accomplishments of 2007

By **Matthew Walker**

As this week's snow ushers in the beginning of winter, time continues to pull 2007 to its inevitable conclusion. 2007 was a notable year in many respects. The year began with Nancy Pelosi becoming the first female Speaker of the House. In July, the Dow Jones Industrial Average crossed 14,000 for the first time in history. India and Argentina both elected their first female presidents. Sadly, Boris Yeltsin, Arthur Schlesinger, Kurt Vonnegut, and Anna Nicole Smith all passed away during 2007. Both the iPhone and the fourth Die Hard movie were released.

This year saw the fifth anniversary of Sidney-Pacific as a graduate community and the forty-second anniversary of our housemasters, Roger and Dottie. In SP, we saw a lot of the usual stuff. There were thirty nine coffee hours, twelve brunches, and too many fire drills.

Orientation was an astounding success, with the Rock N'Roast Barbecue and the Return to Lythion Dance Party each drawing

over 700 guests.

For the first time, Sidney-Pacific hosted a pool party. Unfortunately, MIT safety deemed that the three foot deep swimming pool posed a severe hazard to graduate students, so it will also be the last time. Before Halloween, SP residents carved pumpkins to decorate the courtyard for the first time, with the results making it onto the web.mit.edu front page. SP-MORE, a new program started to facilitate sharing of appliances, furniture, and other apartment goods between incoming and outgoing residents, attracted some 150 participants.

A number of expansions were made to the resources available to Sidney-Pacific. A new Zipcar is now available to make running errands easier. In the computer lab, six of the PCs were upgraded. New DVDs were added to the movie library, including such classics as Babel and An Inconvenient Truth. A number of upgrades were made to the SP web site, the most impressive a new Publicity Interface for advertising events. As the result of

flooding in the seminar room, SP will be replacing the carpet with a new wood floor and buying a new piano for the room.

On the outreach front, Sidney-Pacific residents gathered enough turkey points to donate 43 turkeys to charity at Thanksgiving. In September, a team of residents braved the rain to help clear brush from a stretch of the Charles River as part of Graduate Student Volunteer Day. This weekend, the outreach team will help make the holidays a bit brighter for a group of children by participating in a treat wrapping event.

The SP neighborhood expanded with the start of construction on the new Ashdown next door. The appointment of a new Dean of Graduate Students this year marked another change in the community.

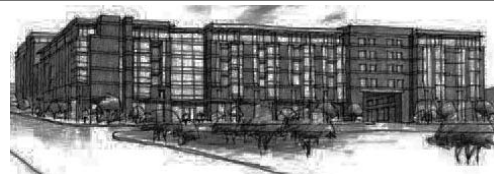
We welcomed a new group of residents into our community and said goodbye to the triumphant graduates. Friendships were forged among ourselves and with our colleagues around campus. Overall, a successful year.

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Residents Enjoy Outing to Blue Hills Reservation, Reach Peaks

By **Matthew Walker**

Audiences were treated to a pleasant surprise as "Blue Hills Hiking Trip" opened in limited areas last month. Produced by SP Pictures, "Blue Hills" recounts the story of some graduate students who set off on a day of innocent hiking that goes horribly wrong.

Adrienne Li ("Arnold Arboretum", "Fall Plant Sale") returns as both director and one of the film's main characters along with newcomers Paul Aparicio and Christine Hsieh. Each of the main characters lead a different group of students, drawn from the supporting cast of twenty one, through the Blue Hills Reservation in Milton, MA, which is about a thirty minute drive from Boston. The movie was filmed on location.

The opening chapter starts slowly, following a variety of the students as they prepare for the trip, starting with an information meeting the Wednesday preceding the Saturday hike. Forecasts of rain and a minor problem with drivers foreshadow more troubling events later on.

Things really start picking up on the day of the trip. The students awake to find beautiful weather so spirits are high. We spend time getting to know some of the cast during the ride from their nameless Cambridge graduate school to the reservation and while they make lunch when they arrive.

One of the strengths of the movie is that it not only develops the main characters in Li's quirky Plant Chair, Aparicio's laid back Outings Committee Member, and Hsieh's deliberate Hiking Group Leader, but we also meet a number of the supporting cast members like hiking aficionado Wendy, photographer Tien-yun, and almond-sharing Leonid.

My only qualm is that the bulk of this progression follows the largest group of hikers. Though the other two groups play a role once the actions starts, we see very little of them once everyone sets off on their different hikes.

A particularly powerful scene occurs early in the hike as the students discuss mortality and near death experiences, unsuspecting that some of them will not return or that an out of body moment will provide critical information to help the survivors

get home.

The film makes wonderful use of the natural beauty of the Blue Hills Reservation, though I'm told that an unseasonably warm October kept the foliage from being at its best. For this genre, the array of colors provides an unusual, but superb backdrop to the day's events.

As part of the publicity campaign, a number of photos taken by the hikers were posted on the movie web site. If you enjoy looking at some stunning pictures of fall colors, they're definitely worth checking out.

Overall, Li, Aparicio, and Hsieh deliver standout performances. Furthermore, the supporting cast offers so much depth that its hard to imagine the film without them. The overwhelming cast strength along with the beautiful filmography will make this one of the break out hits of 2007.



Courtesy of J. Lee

SP residents pose before heading off to surmount a variety of challenges as they traversed the Blue Hills.

Happy Holidays From the SP House Council!



Sidney Pacific Speaker

Newsletter Chair
Matthew Walker

The Speaker is published on a monthly basis to serve the needs of the Sidney Pacific Graduate Community. Submissions of articles, photos, events, and other items of interest can be sent to:
sp-newsletter-chair@mit.edu



The Other Side Of the Milky Way

By **Shamim Nemati**

Beautiful things, beautiful people and beautiful smiles
Innocence and the promise of a domesticated civilization
The blue sky, the green ocean, and those twinkling eyes
The northern breeze and the sweet fragrance of your hair

Was it me or the world wasn't quite ever fair?
Because when I found those colorful feathers in the air
I wondered whose diligent hand they did prepare!
But then I saw that ascending desperate bird in the air
Who fluttered too far with those wings which were impaired

Why was she fleeing away; wasn't it just another sunny day?
Maybe she was running away from a dream that had gone astray!
But then, she was too far away and the sky was turning gray
So I whispered: see you on the other side of the Milky Way!

P.S. Around the time of the Graduate Orientation week at MIT, a Chechen mother with her four daughters ages 2, 6, 10 and 13 attempted to cross the Bieszczady Mountains to seek refuge in Poland. Four days later, the Polish police found the emaciated mother, carrying her 2-year-old daughter. This poem is dedicated to the memories of those gentle souls who never made it to the other side.

Professional Portfolio Selection Techniques: From Markowitz to Innovative Engineering

Wed Jan 16, Thu Jan 17, 03-05:00pm, 34-401

Enrollment limited: advance sign up required by 07-Jan-2008

Limited to 100, participants requested to attend all sessions.

A review of the most important and widely used state-of-the-art Portfolio Selection Techniques will be presented. Such techniques could be used by capital firm wealth management institutions as well as for a personal financial portfolio. An introduction to some innovative methodologies, including the GAM model as a tactical asset allocation technique, will be illustrated. Gentle introduction to the subject, specifically targeted at first year undergraduates in Economics, EECS and other fields with interest in quantitative finance, economics and management, with emphasis on innovation and research.

Pizza and beverages will be provided

Contact: Dan Weller, dweller@mit.edu

A Hopeful Message for the Nice Guys

By **Lady Love**

Even though I'm barely old enough to drink, I've gotten three marriage proposals (and accepted one).

Bachelor #1 was one of Cosmo Girl's 10 most eligible bachelors under 25. Despite this guy's charm and good looks, even at age 16, I knew he was too crazy for anything serious.

Bachelor #2 is a successful techno-journalist for Wired Magazine. He is passionate and wanted to elope. Unfortunately, he's also kind of a jerk.

Bachelor #3, my fiancé, has never been in a magazine. Only MIT people would consider his job glamorous (he's an engineer and consultant). However, I plan to marry him because he's the nicest guy I've ever met.

Throughout high school and college, nice guys are ignored. They don't get dates to prom unless they're "just friends." They never make it out into the college hook up scene, unless you count how they "hook up" the cords for their female friends computers. Worst of all, when many nice guys try to ask someone special out, they get the standard "I-don't-want-to-hurt-our-friendship" line.

It's easy to understand why some nice guys would give up on dating. Just last week, I asked one such guy tried why he hasn't ask out the girl he has been obsessed with since undergrad yet. He told me, "I don't want disappoint my adviser by

spending less time in lab." I told him, "Yeah, right."

He doesn't realize though that Miss Wonderful's preference in guys has changed. She (or at least I) dated the star quarterback. He was fun to watch on game day, but too much ego the rest of the week. Jerks are fun when you're young and stupid, but as women get older our preferences change.

We realize that we don't need guys who lead us on, stand us up, and won't call back. At this stage in life, most nice girls are mature enough to start looking for a nice guy.

To all the nice guys out there, it's your turn for some female attention. You just need the confidence to go out and claim what is rightfully yours—a lady as nice as you are.

So how does a nice guy who's been benched in the dating game, get back on the field? First, you need to meet people. Go to Coffee Hour, to hall events, to the famous S-P dances. Once you arrive, do what you do best. Nice guys always seem to say hello to everyone and to make friends easily. Once, you've made a female friend, just be yourself.

So far so good, right? You haven't done anything out

of the ordinary yet. If you get a chance, try to say something like, "I'm heading over to the game room. Do you want to play ping pong?" or "Well, if you like warm apple cider too, let's go get some." The key is to extend a discrete invitation with a binary answer either "Sure!" or "Ha, ha. No."

Most of the time, women in their mid-twenties (or older) will appreciate nice guys. As long as you aren't the creepy-nice predator type, we'll usually give you a chance.

I've got my nice guy, and there are lots of other ladies (even more lovely than I am) out there waiting for their own nice guys. It could be you, assuming you're a guy and you're nice.

