



The SP Officers' Winter Retreat

By **Michael Eilenberg**

Those who were there on January 30th know that the housemaster-funded Officers' Retreat was literally a blast. This year, in addition to the usual sit-down team-building and ideas generation, the retreat was highlighted by a trip to a local laser tag facility called Lazerzone, where officers had the chance to work together in a new way – by blasting each other with laser guns!

The retreat began here in the housemaster's apartment. Like most officer retreats, the state of the house was discussed, and ideas were brought up on how the SP government can help make things better. This time, though, to spice things up and get everyone in the mood for what was to come, a brainstorming competition was held to spark some new and exciting ideas. Not surprisingly, competition brought out the best in people, resulting in some great topics for discussion and the birth of some new initiatives for the coming semester and year. Some of the resulting ideas included adding a maga-

zine rack to lighten the load on the misdirected mail box, adding computer A/V cables to the inventory, and including a tentative online calendar for coordinating event planning. After that, it was hop on the bus and head out to compete on an entirely different level. The folks at Lazerzone were nice enough to close off the entire facility for us, so it was truly an SP-fest.

Despite the super-close ties SP officers have to each other, everyone somehow had it in them to turn on each other, break up into two teams, and duke it out in the misty UV-lit arena. The game is very much like capture-the-flag – get to the other team's base and shoot it as much as you can - but watch out for the other team's defenders who will shoot you on sight! People in each team often banded into smaller groups, as one would almost always be under "enemy" fire and getting backup was a necessity. One thing is for sure - the sense of team certainly means more when you rely on your teammates to "survive".

As if laser tag wasn't

enough, some braved the bungee-run - an inflated pathway with a bungee cord attached to one end. The task in a bungee-run is simple: try to bring a Velcro beanie as far down the path as you can. The problem is, you're strapped in to the enormous bungee cord, and that makes things a bit tricky and definitely entertaining to those watching! Once again, the competitive spirit in MIT students prevailed. Three officers at a time were in the bungee run trying to beat the standing record.

At the end of the night, when everyone had their fill of bungee-running and laser-tagging, the whole group collected in the karaoke theatre, where some popular (or perhaps not so popular) songs were performed by SP's very own. Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end, and the night was over before anyone thought possible. Warily but happily, people took their coats and score sheets, and returned to the bus for the ride back home. Once again, the SP officers' winter retreat was a success. The result: a whole bunch of new ideas and a whole bunch of happy officers.

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Image: Officers on the "red team" gear up in the briefing room

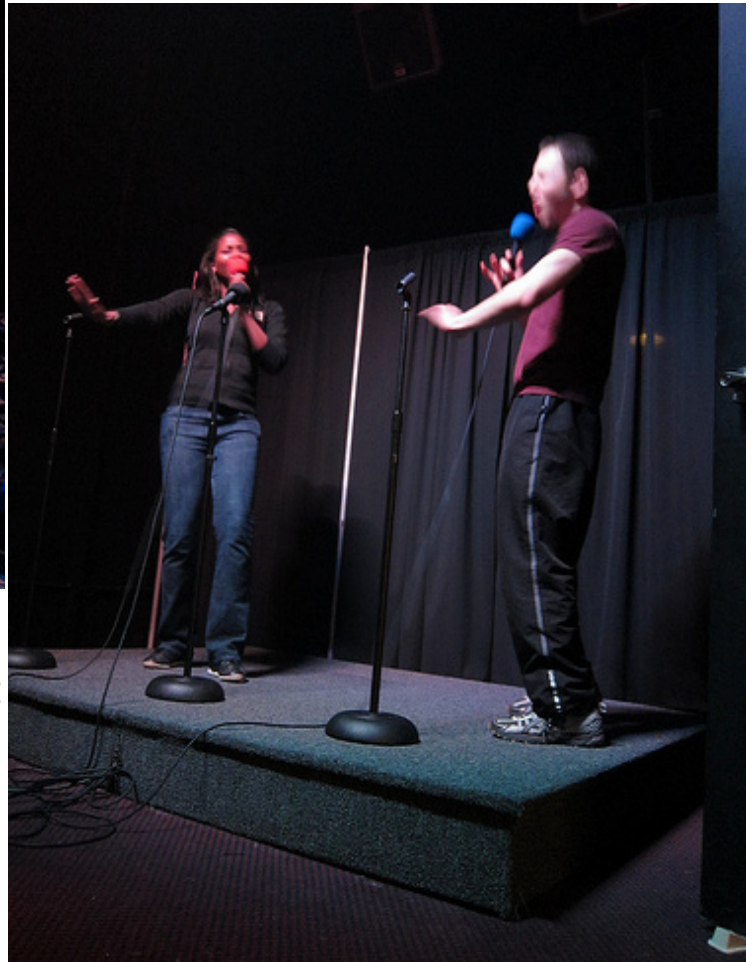


Image: Zenzi and Dan singing a duet in the karaoke theatre



Image: Leaping in the bungee-run for extra distance while others cheer on the sidelines

Spring and the Explosion of color

By **Rachna Pande**

1st March is Holi – the festival of colors celebrated throughout India as the onset of spring. For someone accustomed to a LOT of vibrant color, what hits someone from India is the absence of the rich earthy hues around us. At this time of year in India, as the weather changes in India and winter turns to spring, one peels off the thick heavy woolens and literally feels lighter and there is an elevation in spirits throughout the population. The skies change from a cold metallic grey to a fresh glorious blue which make you feel like the heavens have opened doors. The sunlight too no longer seems veiled and takes on a depth, hue and warmth that was absent in the months past.

The festival celebrates not just the change of season but also onset of color and light back into our lives. There is a great significance given to color in Indian traditions. Color denotes energy and having a vivid passion and vitality. Lack of

color is synonymous with death which is why most cultures associate death with black or white.

In the old days, color for Holi was made at home, from the flowers of the 'Tesu' tree which has bright red blossoms in this season. This tree is also called 'the flame of the forest' or 'palash'. The blossoms were collected from the trees and spread out on mats, to dry in the sun. Once dried, they were then ground to a fine powder which was mixed in water to give it a beautiful saffron-red color. Now of course, one can buy Holi colors in all shades of the rainbow in the market. Some people even manufacture gold and silver powder that you mix with oil to get a paint like consistency.

In the spirit of spring, the festival is one of change - a season in which we forget past arguments and grudges and embrace each other looking forward to a summer that brings hope and prosperity. In that spirit the people take to the streets ready to douse anyone they find friend

or foe, old or young with color. The slogan for the season being 'Bura na mano – Holi hai' which literally means 'Don't mind ! Its Holi !' The official drink of the festival is 'Bhaang' which is made of the leaves of the cannabis plant and an alcohol substitute. There are government authorized shops no less!

If you want to picture it, Holi would be Saint Patricks Day crossed with a paint ball. Except, there are no teams, no rules and you can use balloons, buckets and even your local fountain and everyone has to play !

Unfortunately, its 36F outside and my window overlooks a tree with no leaves, The sky is a sterile metallic color and even the little grass in the courtyard is a dirty mustard. Nevertheless, spring is on its way and I urge you celebrate the spirit of Holi by donning one bright color this week – it can be a hat / scarf / shoes/ accessories. One single dash of color and maybe the weather will take the hint.

When the President came visiting



President Hockfield along with Zenzi Brooks, SP President, and James Merrick, CoSI Chair. Zenzi and James were instrumental in getting President Hockfield to SP. This was her second visit to SP and she fondly remembered her first visit here! The event provided the ideal opportunity to meet the most important person on campus.



The event started with a lively discussion between the two Presidents on the professional and personal life of President Hockfield, leading up to her holding the most important position at the most prestigious technical institution in the world!

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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:
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