

NEWS & BLUES

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December 2001

Those Who Do Not Remember McVeigh...

by John Cottone,
USB alumnus

Editor's note: This essay was written in October as a response to the accidental bombing of a Red Cross warehouse in Afghanistan. Given the recent events in Kandahar and the apparent progress that is being made in the U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan, we have decided to print this essay as a reminder that we must remain steadfast in our commitment to learn from the mistakes of the past.

"Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

As I sat watching the "War on Terror" from the comforts of my living room last week, I heard Bush Administration officials downplaying reports that innocent civilians had been killed in several of the US-led bombing raids in Afghanistan. It was then that I began to think again about Timothy McVeigh. It wasn't very long ago when the uproar from Timothy McVeigh's biography reached the decibel levels of an Anthrax (the band, not the disease) concert. Since it was only about eight months ago, I still have some recollection of the things that were expressed regarding the publication of his book. A mass e-mail was even sent to me (an perhaps to you too) that apparently summarized the opinions of many in the mainstream. The e-mail proposed that no one buy Timothy McVeigh's book about the Oklahoma City bombing; that buying his book would reward a heinous monster, a man that showed no remorse for his actions; a man that has callously referred to the women and children killed

in the Oklahoma City bombing as "collateral damage." I remember part of my inner being agreeing with the sentiment in the e-mail, and so I resisted buying McVeigh's book. Within days of that e-mail however, as I was paying more attention to the rhetoric being passed around on various sides, I came across a couple of review articles for the book, forcing me to examine the issue a bit more closely. One of the review articles included statements made by McVeigh; these quotes made some interesting points about the United States, and Americans in general. McVeigh stated that he found it interesting that Americans (including government officials and US citizens) only seemed to be affected by the loss of human life when it was American human life. McVeigh claimed to have witnessed and/or participated in military strikes against countries such as Iraq, that resulted in the deaths of countless innocent women and children (more than those that had died in the Oklahoma City bombing). To his dismay, there was no outpour of remorse or sadness for those victims among the American public. Making this statement, he concluded, was part of his motivation for the bombing. While I cannot overemphasize the fact that I can never, and will never condone Timothy McVeigh's heinous actions, I must admit that his comments, if nothing else, forced me to think about times during the Gulf War when I had not blinked an eye during an air strike upon Iraq. How repugnant it was for me not to express sorrow for the deaths of those innocents, and yet cry for the victims of Oklahoma City; how hypocritical it was for me to cheer at

the grainy green footage of Patriot missiles destroying a supposed military target without concern for "collateral damage," and yet chastise McVeigh for disregarding the women and children of Oklahoma City.

As I've watched the "War on Terror" recently, Timothy McVeigh has occupied my thoughts once again. When I think about McVeigh these days, I am often watching the same grainy footage on CNN that I watched 10 years ago (it might as well be the same footage, you can't see anything anyway). I think about him when I see Afghan civilians mourning the deaths of their family members the way my friends Chris and Pete Ganci mourned the death of their father (NYC Fire Chief Pete Ganci, who died in the attacks on the WTC). This time I cry, both for our innocent victims, as well as for theirs. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to live life long enough to remember the mistakes of my past, so that instead of repeating them, I can learn from them and overcome them.

There have been times during the last couple of months when I've been unsure about whether our nation has tried to do the same. Unabashed American jingoism is understandable during these trying times, but at what point does it blind us from other realities? When this is all over, we may get Osama bin Laden, just like we got Timothy McVeigh. But if we do not learn from the mistakes of our past, will we be prepared for the next bin Laden? Will we be prepared for the next McVeigh, a terrorist within our own borders - sharing the skin color and ethnic features of the majority of our citizens? My point is not

that we should abandon all military action to defend our freedom. This conflict, which has been brewing for over 10 years, is much too complicated to be resolved exclusively by pacifist negotiation. Even a liberal like myself can admit to that. But what I hope we can all learn to share in, is the sentiment echoed at the end of John Donne's classic poem - For Whom The Bell Tolls

"Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

It is my hope that we are able to adapt John Donne's message to this current conflict, and remember that whenever a human life is taken, whether it is an American child, a NYC firefighter, an innocent Afghan woman, or even Osama bin Laden for that matter, that a piece of all of us is taken with it because we are all a part of mankind. It is my hope that our leaders, rather than minimize the ramifications of the collateral damage caused by our "smart" bombs, begin to think harder and longer about the ways to minimize the loss of human life. For it is only when we learn from the mistakes of the past that we are less likely to repeat them.

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News & Blues

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News & Blues is published by the Stony Brook Graduate Student Organization and serves the Graduate Student Community at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. It is currently being published on a monthly basis. We welcome submissions in the form of letters, opinions, poetry, news items, art works, photographs, announcements or anything else that could conceivably be of interest to graduate students and the larger University community. Please include your name and a way that you can be contacted with anything you submit. All submissions are subject to editing for length and content. In theory, submissions to News and Blues should be made one week prior to each Senate meeting—or by the first Thursday of each month. Items may be submitted directly to the Editors by e-mail at newsandblues@hotmail.com

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From the Onion, an Olympic Preview

Improving Olympic Security

The events of Sept. 11 have prompted a security overhaul for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Among the measures:

Testing athletes' urine for traces of terrorism

Eliminating Men's 200m Embassy Bomb event

Turning Salt Lake City into hyper-paranoid, walled-off religious compound

Assigning athletes from Arab nations around-the-clock "security buddy"

All open flames to be immediately extinguished

Investigating any and all reports of fine white powder

Strictly prohibiting foreigners from Olympic village

Warning athletes not to make any sudden movements

Hoping that terrorists, like everyone else, have no desire to visit Salt Lake City



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Campus Events Calendar

Friday, December 14, noon

Recital Hall, Staller

**Undergraduate Recitals:
solo and chamber music**

Free Admission

Friday, December 14, 8:00 pm

Recital Hall, Staller Center
**Stony Brook Chorale and
Camerata Singers**

\$8/general admission, \$4
students and seniors

Friday, December 14, 8:00 pm

The Spot

GSO holiday party

Free admission

**The GSO Senate meets on the second
Thursday of every month in SAC 302 at
6pm (refreshments served at 5:30) All
graduate students are welcome to attend
(but not to vote).**



That's It, We QUIT!!

By Tanya Smith & Peg Walrad (VP & P)

Having almost officially hit the half-way office term point, this year's Graduate Student Organization **Executive Committee** is ready for some hard earned vacation rest and relaxation. Well, at least for a few days, before we gear up for another full semester of humbly working to advance graduate student concerns. No really, we're not kidding! In case you've missed it- we've been pretty hard at work since July. If you haven't heard about some of our events and programming this fall- try the health center- they'll check your pulse for FREE thanks to your mandatory infirmary fee.

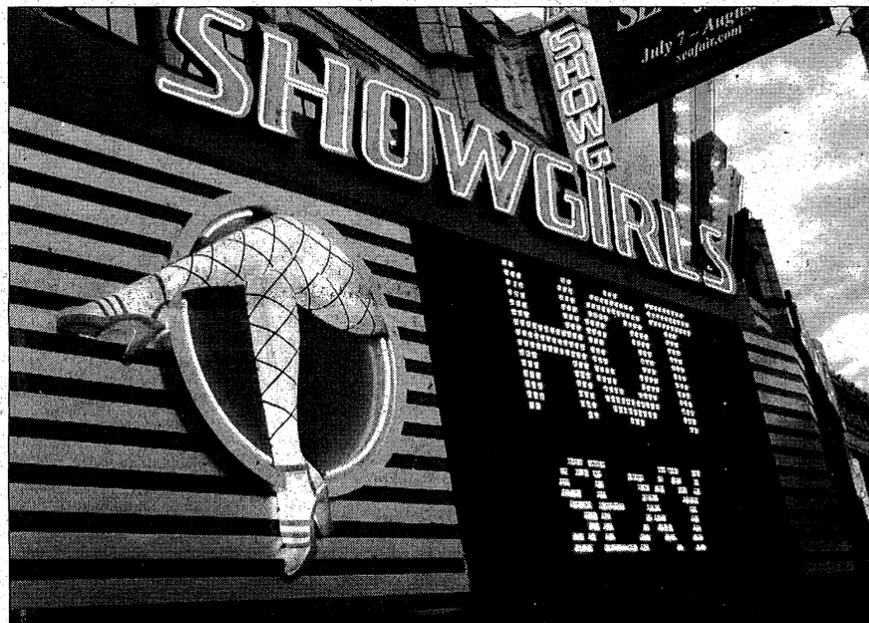
Now if you don't think you've gotten your money's worth for your modest **Student Activity Fee**- consider what you've financed this semester. This past August, the GSO revamped our classic '**Survival Guide**' and distributed hundreds of copies to new students during orientation. If that guide and our rather comical presentation didn't endear us to those new grads - our September **Welcome Bash** at the Spot must have! Dozens also flocked to monthly **Senate Meetings**- lulled by the scent of fine ethnic cuisine (**FREE FOOD**) and fascinated by the parlance of university governance proceedings. (OK, maybe WE need our pulses checked). A number of events were hosted this semester by graduate student clubs and funded by the GSO, including the **Moon Festival**, the **Drag Show**, the **Festival of Lights**, and the **Cabaret** at the Spot. We also put together our annual rockin' **Halloween Bash**, and hosted the first event in our **GSO Concert Series: Antigone Rising**. In response

to the events of September 11th, we organized and funded several lectures and events, including the **Tolerance and Healing in the Aftermath** forum and the recent lecture by Fahima on **Afghan Women under the Taliban**. The GSO has also given donations of \$1000 to the Red Cross and the Malai Hospital, and worked to establish an on campus **Peace Partners** program.

Thanks to our fine diplomatic skills and subtlety of administrative nuances, we've even managed to remind the university administration that graduate students DO take up space on this campus. A number of

the construction of a campus **Convenience Store** in the Chapin Complex. We've also worked hard to maintain a space on campus for **The Spot**, and look ahead to the construction of a **Graduate Cultural Center** in the next few years. The GSO has also provided active representation for a number of university committees and organizations, including the **Graduate Council**, the **University Senate**, and the **College of Arts and Sciences Senate**. We've also worked hard to levy pressure on the campus **Graduate Student Employees Union** and the local CWA Union, bringing together lead-

funds graduate student conference travel, or your annual **Departmental Allocation**. If you don't know what these are, just bug your friendly **GSO Departmental Senator**. Details on these programs, your friendly department representative, and much more info can be found on our soon to be updated **GSO Website** (<http://sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/gso/>). We're more than happy to fill you in on our tentative spring events, including the potential premiere of a film on Afghanistan and an upcoming discussion on civil liberties and human rights. If socializin' is more your style than politicizin', join us for our upcoming **Monthly Social Hour**, or our **Celebration of Graduate Clubs and Organizations**. Our annual **St. Patrick's Day Party** and **Springfest** aren't too far away either! We've also working on a **Women's Leadership Conference**: a daylong consortium of student, faculty, and staff leaders, and our very own **Graduate Student Advocate** is putting together the **Graduate Colloquium Series**. Our internal committees are also working hard to ensure much more effective elections for the spring, including an **Online Elections Process**, and smoother transitions and guidelines for the incoming Executives and Graduate Student Advocate. And if that wasn't enough, we're also lobbying **McDonald's** to offer Happy Meals to graduate students... alright, maybe that's taking it a wee bit too far... But we are more than happy to hear your concerns, questions, and complaints this year- over 6000 graduate students served! Please **JOIN US** for a eventful spring semester and have a great holiday season!!



Next Semester's Offerings

meetings have been held with the likes of **Shirley Strum Kenny**, **Fred Preston**, **Robert McGrath**, **Carmen Vazquez**, **Dick Mann**, and **Lawrence Martin**. Our **Housing Committee** has worked very hard to fight for fair rent increases, additional housing options, and more efficient room assignment and administrative procedures. Thanks to the GSO sponsored **Housing Survey** conducted in the spring of 2001, we're currently working with the administration on future plans for the creation of additional on campus graduate housing. In conjunction with the Faculty Student Association, we're pushing for

ers over the summer and encouraging more efficient administrative practices. And let's not forget the success of the **News and Blues**, which has run as many issues this past semester as the entire last academic year.

Wow, where does one go from here? Only 'upwards on onwards:' our favorite chant during our monthly all-female Wiccan Executive Moon Meeting in the woods. Just kidding- but have you been by the **GSO Office** in the SAC 227? Come on over for a cup of java and more info about our **Research Allocation Program**, which

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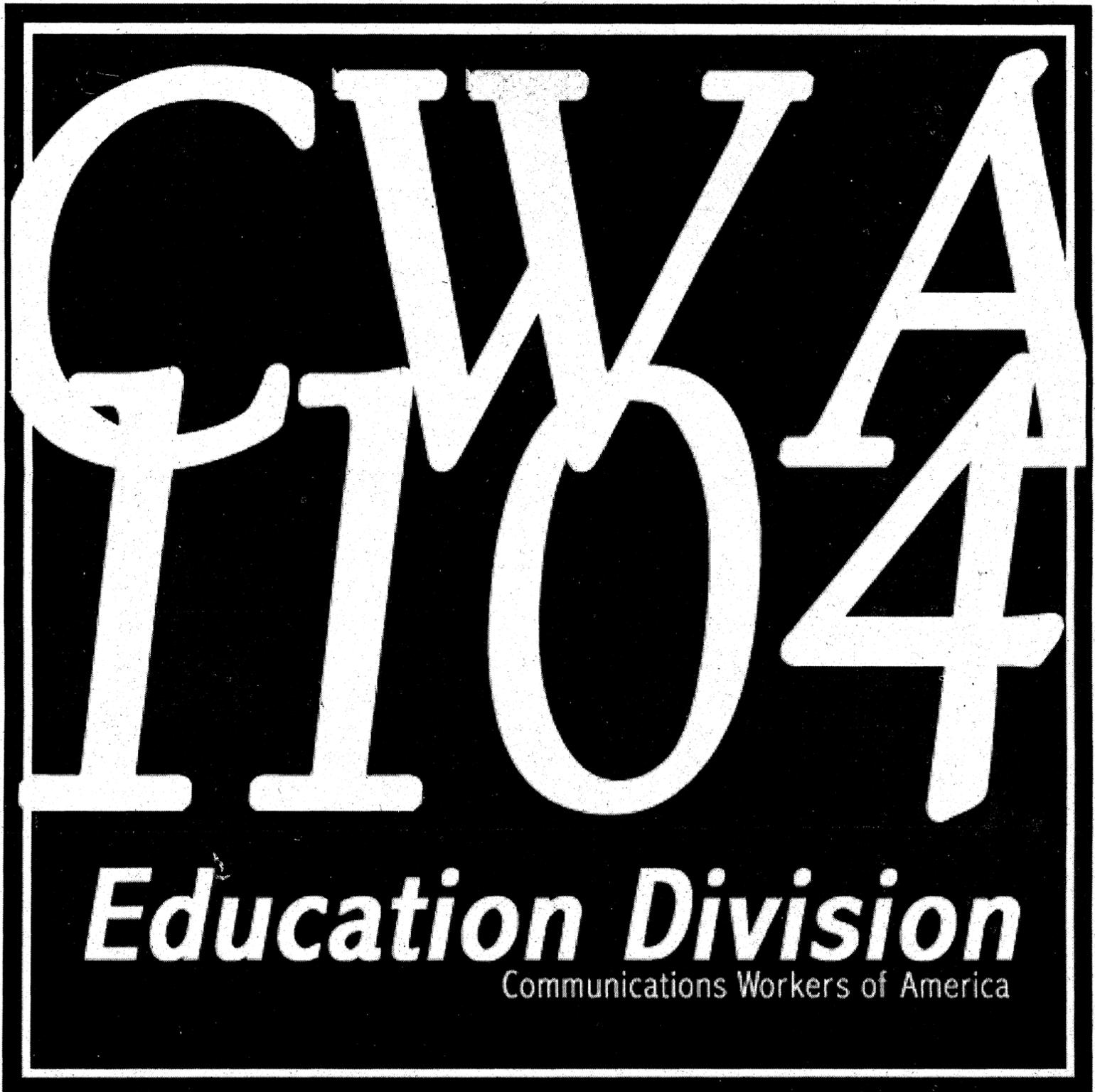
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RAMBLINGS

by Rich Yi

For those you turning to this last page of the News & Blues expecting to find the musings of pop culture philosopher and chocolate chip cookie baker Sue Denim, I am sorry to announce that Sue has decided to devote all future time and resources to promoting the new Segway scooter, the next evolution in personal transportation. So in the place of our usual "Distractions" piece, I present my own musings as a very sorry excuse for a replacement.

It's approaching that time of year when we excitedly peel the plastic wrapping off our new "Fairly-Priced Food Items at the SAC" calendar. Twelve months of different jumbo drinks from the soda fountain - I can't wait! Anyway, I digress - early to mid December provokes more anxiety for me than any other time of the year. Why? Because I usually have not confirmed any plans for New Year's Eve. I guess I fear having nothing to do for New Year's Eve, though I guess I shouldn't worry too much. There's nothing wrong with having no plans for New Year's Eve. It even has a bit of that bitter-sweet, melancholic movie scene quality to it; like the scene at the end of "When Harry Met Sally" when Billy Crystal is walking the streets of NY alone on New Year's Eve. Then he decides to find Meg Ryan and tell her that he loves her. He finds her at a party, tells her how he feels, and this leads their marriage three months later. It is possible that something like this will happen for me this year. Probably not though; I think Meg Ryan lives in California.

Have you heard that "all-star" version of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On"? I have to say, there is something to be said about the ability of today's pop stars to mangle one of the greatest songs of all time. You give me a group of 18 year-old, belly-bearing, believe-that-I'm-a-virgin-though-all-my-songs-have-a-booty-knockin-subtext, wanna-be divas the opportunity to sing a soul classic, and I'll give you oversinging like you haven't heard before. Somehow, all the emotion that's contained in the lyrics disappears when some made-for-MTV boy band decides that vocal gymnastics

should take precedence over passion. With few exceptions, these recording artists are to TRL what JM J. Bullock was to the old Hollywood Squares. And to complete the disaster, the producers had Fred Durst rap the closing of the song. How on earth does the poster-boy for middle class, white males with misdirected anger get included in this song? I believe that his part goes something like "somebody tell me what's going on/we got human beings using humans for

"Sue has decided to devote all future time and resources to promoting the new Segway scooter..."

bombs/but everybody wanna live/don't nobody really wanna die/you feelin' me right/I can't be watching people die/and watching people cry....." If you don't wanna be watching people cry, Fred, let someone with a bit more lyrical complexity take over your part (maybe Barney the dinosaur). Are YOU feelin' ME? We're all very sorry, Marvin.

Ideas initiated many years ago because they proved useful at the time, but serve no purpose today:

1) Daylight Savings Time - I think this used to have something to do with farming. But all our food is made in labs now, so it serves no purpose. Next cre-

ation: cobless corn.

2) Fifty-five mph speed limit - I think this used to have something to do with an oil crisis. But Walker Bush said that we'll get more from the Alaskan Wildlife Refuge, so it serves no purpose now. However, I'm sure I'll still get stuck behind the old guy going exactly 55 mph in the left lane of the LIE.

3) Warning labels on cigarettes - I think this used to have something to do with reducing the risk of birth defects. But there's human cloning now, so it serves no purpose. If the tobacco companies are smart, they'd start investing in cloning the Marlboro man.

4) Chapin Complex - I think this used to have something to do with providing reasonable housing to graduate students. But there's nothing reasonable when you can find more appropriate housing in Afghan caves, so it serves no purpose. On the plus side: it's really close to the hospital!

5) Religion - Does anyone know how this got started? It seems to be doing little more than serving as justification for a lot of crap lately, so I say we just get rid of it. But let's not know overboard; we'll keep the holidays.

On my Christmas wish list this year:

- 1) A gas mask - Practical AND stylish (for the modern man who is willing to let fear of an unlikely event completely alter his life).
- 2) A silo of Cipro - Doctors say it doesn't work as a prophylactic. Doctors also appear in Ron Popeil product infomercials.
- 3) A license to carry a concealed handgun - You never know when you'll be face-to-face with a terrorist.
- 4) The new Nike Air Jordan pumps - They may look like orthopedic shoes, but don't be fooled. Squeeze the pump about 20-30 times - no air goes into the sneaker, but you can overinflate your ego. Just like the master.
- 5) A new writer for the back page of the News & Blues - Where have you gone Sue Denim? Is there any way to make the News & Blues into a pamphlet?

Have a safe and happy Holiday season, everybody!