

Worrying about CIA Wilson-gate

Last year former diplomat James Wilson was sent by the CIA on a now infamous trip to Niger to investigate supposed attempted uranium sales to Iraq.

After coming up empty-handed, Wilson, who was none too fond of the war to begin with, wrote a scathing op-ed in the New York Times on July 6 of this year, criticizing President Bush for mentioning the disputed uranium claims in his State of the Union address.

A few weeks later, "Crossfire" host Robert Novak mentioned in his column that Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, was an "operative" in the CIA. He wrote that "senior administration officials" had given him this information.

Now, in the past few weeks, the U.S. political scene has been rocked by allegations that the Bush administration deliberately attempted to discredit Wilson by leaking his wife's identity to the press, and in the process broke federal law and endangered national security by compromising the anonymity of Plame, supposedly an undercover CIA agent.

Newspapers and cable channels have jumped all over the case, proclaiming it a scandal of massive proportions:

You are probably wondering if you have misunderstood something. You did not.

It does not make sense. Why does the fact that Wilson's wife works in the CIA discredit him? Could it be an attempt to show that Wilson only got his job because of his wife's influence? That is possible, but it seems like a weak gesture; if the administration really wanted to commit character assassination against Wilson, they probably could have dug up something dirtier than his wife's nepotism.

Contrary to the accusations directed at the Presidency, there is no certainty that a crime has been committed. For the leakage to be illegal under the 1982 Intelligence Identities Protection Act, the agent whose identity is willfully compromised must be "covert" and "serving outside the United States or has within the last five years served outside the United States.

There is no solid evidence that Plame was operating covertly or serving abroad. She may merely be a CIA analyst, as Novak now contends. We simply do not know yet.

But many pundits and journalists have given no quarter to the reality of the situation, with no facts to back up their exaggerated statements. They gleefully jump to the conclusion that the Bush administration "has turned to weapons of personal destruction," as the always fair and balanced Maureen Dowd wrote in her column.

Wilson himself proclaimed that senior Bush adviser Karl Rove should be arrested, though he has since backed away from this egregious claim; he now says Rove merely "condoned" the leak.

CNN's Wolf-Blitzer said "we're talking about Watergate, maybe."

Much like the analogy of Iraq to Vietnam, there is no factual basis, at least yet, to compare the leakage to Watergate. We do not even know the identity of the leaker, much less that he or she was in cahoots with the President, Rove, or anyone.

There may be a day when enough facts are known for Wilson-gate to merit the front page. But the media refuses to wait for that day, thrusting allegations and rumors into the limelight.

Once again, scandal and intrigue rule the American political scene, and the media is only too happy to help.



MATT BANDYK

Racism a bigger problem than students realize

BY MBEY NIJE
Guest Columnist

Two Sundays ago, Sept. 28, 2003, three fellow students told me that they had noticed two locations on campus in which the letters KKK were spray-painted.

I immediately went to check it out and took pictures of these paintings for evidence.

I took the pictures of the spray paintings because I felt as if this was an incident that could not be overlooked by this school because another incident such as this had already occurred this year.

The theme for second Belk this year was "Schwarzenegger" headquarters.

Several students noticed on the second weekend of school that the "Schwarze" had been torn off, and that the "e" had been replaced so that it read "nigger headquarters." To be honest, these signs and painting didn't bother me that much.

What really worried me was trying to figure out what people really feel like. I will be the first to say that I honestly do believe that the majority of the students on this campus are not racist or hate mongers at all.

What bothered me was that while I was outside taking the pictures of the KKK paintings, I noticed many people walking by me. I only saw three people that actually stopped, noticed what was written, and had a reaction to it. Others walked by, saw what I was taking a picture of and walked away without hesitation.

While this may seem an insignificant incident, it honestly made me question what was going through their minds.

Another aspect of this KKK incident that has bothered and

angered me is how some people have claimed that it was some drunken person trying to pull a prank, or that it was someone from off-campus that did this.

Does the fact that this might have been a prank or that it might have been someone from off-campus make it less disturbing?

If it were someone from off-campus or a drunken prank, then how to explain the incident that occurred on second Belk.

I cannot even fathom telling prospective students to come to this school.

Anytime that something happens that is deemed to be prejudice in any way the school always loves to hold forums about these incidents. The problem with these forums is that the wrong people always show up, and nothing ever gets accomplished.

I am tired of talking and only talking.

If this school were really dedicated to addressing the problems of hate, and prejudice it really needs to take a look at itself. It is very funny to hear how happy the admissions office is with the number of black students this year. This was the largest freshman class in Davidson history with around 500 students and the school was pleased with having only 29 of them being African-American.

To be honest, I cannot even fathom telling prospective students to come to this school.

I have seen how the school has reacted to actual acts of racism and not just signs and symbols of prejudice and hate.

How am I supposed to also support and sell a school that is related to have a 5.8 percent African-American population in their freshmen class?

Nothing wrong with enjoying a stupid movie

There is a lot going on right now—both around the world and at Davidson. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to burn, the situation in Iraq is tense, many Davidson students, including myself, underwent the hell of the LSATs this weekend. To top it all off, someone spray painted "KKK" on campus.

With all of these interesting topics, I had a tough time deciding on which subject I would grace the campus with my brilliant insight.

However, as I simultaneously watched football and several bad movies on cable this afternoon (including "The Substitute 3: The Winner Takes All"), a thought shone through the fog that is my brain: everyone should watch more bad movies.

To provide a bit of background, you have to understand both my love for horrible movies and the utter-awfulness that "The Substitute 3" embodied.

The movie revolved around a former mercenary turned do-gooder substituting as an English professor at a college. There, he learns of a steroid drug ring involving the college football coach. With a swift kick, some revisionist Vietnam art history, and a large gun, the killer turned teacher sends the bad guys into the afterlife.

Let's just say that it was a thoroughly horrible movie.

Surprisingly, I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I love bad movies. Van Damme and Seagal are two of my favorite actors. Well, actors may be too strong a word. They are two of my favorite performers.

Ridiculous amounts of explosions and random fighting keep

the story moving and the piss-poor dialogue keeps me laughing. What more can you want from a movie?

Now, don't get me wrong. Movies like "The Royal Tenenbaums" are far superior. I will always take good acting and good writing over poop.

However, there is very little material flowing out of Hollywood that does not have a bit of a stench. If I am going to watch something bad I am going to watch something that is REALLY bad.

Why go halfway? A mediocre movie teases you along with hopes that it will be something more. Imagine having to watch "The Replacements" or "It Could Happen To You" over and over again.

Yet, Van Damme could write his own script to a movie and it would still be fun. It may only be fun because it is awful, but it is still fun.

Perhaps it's lowered expectations. You would expect someone like Seagal to make a movie as bad as "The Postman," not Academy Award winning Kevin Costner.

Anyways, my point is this: revel in the stupidity of others. Let yourself enjoy that some people just suck enough at life that they will spend millions of dollars to make bad movies. Then, wallow in the fact that you are both dumb and smart enough to enjoy watching them.

Stupidity in real life is frustrating, but watching people perform it on TV is entertainment.

After all, remember that a group of executives had to gather in a room and read the script to "The Substitute 3" before it was made. That alone makes me laugh for a couple of hours.

I don't know about everyone else, but surviving Davidson makes me appreciate every bit of laughter I can find.

Sudden freshman syndrome hones more than just laundry skills

BY DARCIE DRAUDT
Staff Columnist

Well, it is October, I have just finished my first whole month of college and all I have to say is, "Hello? Davidson?? I'm here! No, seriously—I do exist on this campus."

So, yeah, I am a freshman. And for the first time in a long time, I am anonymous.

When the Davidsonian asked for articles from the "freshman perspective," I had two words for them: identity crisis.

I have come to that point where college has stopped being a summer camp with lots of reading and has turned into its true form: difficult work accompanied by virtual anonymity.

I know—chill, Darcie. It has only been a month and I have a long way to go, but it really is hard not to suffer from first impression anxieties. Wait. Did I say "first impression?" I am afraid of my lack of an impression.

For the entire span of my college career—the long time it has been—my class has put people in empty boxes.

First it started with "name and place" introductions. Then we freshmen found the next step of conversation: weather and dialects. Seriously, folks. I have had way too many conversa-

tions about how 60 degrees is not cold and how the word "Coke" applied to every kind of carbonated beverage makes no sense.

My anonymous identity-searching self has now alienated the Independent Sovereign of Texas.

Since Hurricane Isabelle we have moved to categorizing the such-and-such-sport player, the insert-religion-here kid, or the this-genre-of-creativity girl.

Adaptation ain't that bad. In fact, it is quite enjoyable.

I guess meeting so many people encourages these empty categories, but—and this might just be me—I hate to think of the stories people might tell of a certain awkward curly-haired girl who knocks over milk glasses when shaking hands over a Commons table introduction.

At this point, my spastic column may lead you to draw the most important conclusion anyone could make about me: this Darcie girl is a huge dork.

Because Davidson students do not know my history and do not know my whole personality, I have learned the importance

of myself on a smaller scale, just as I have learned the importance of the waffle iron at Commons. Small scale, yes. Big mmm? Definitely. Waffles with chocolate chips...the quality way to the Freshman Fifteen.

Anyway, over the past two weeks or so, I've been learning how to redefine myself, not in the eyes of others, but for me. I am trying to adapt to my new old self—same personality, less trimmings.

And, my comrades, adaptation ain't that bad. In fact, it is quite enjoyable.

For once, I do not have to be the serious leader anymore. I can be the random dorky freshman. I can go to Super Target (pronounced "Seuww-pairrr Tar-zhay," mind you) on a Saturday night for fun. I can go to 30 minutes of a semi-formal dateless in my hot attire of a \$2 WalMart tube top and red lipstick. I can have a self-proclaimed weekend of solitude for a bit of me-time when the girls on my hall leave for a weekend retreat. I am growing into the self-proclaimed dork I am destined to be.

While this all seems negative, I am actually finding solace in my anonymity-centered crisis.

So, we will see what happens. Wait for my next column. By that time, maybe I will have a solid freshman identity.



MIKE GALDO