



# the Breeze

James Madison University

THURSDAY JUNE 27, 1991

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*Diversity in education cited in ruling*

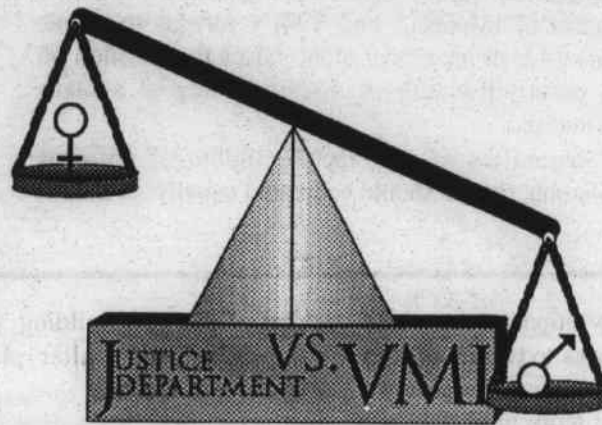
## Court rules to keep VMI an all-male institution

by Kimberly Brothers  
News Editor

Virginia Military Institute can continue to keep its barracks closed to women, a federal judge ruled June 17. The ruling rejects the U.S. Justice Department's argument that sex discrimination is unconstitutional at a state funded institution.

U.S. District Court Judge Jackson L. Kiser, a 1982 Reagan appointee, upheld VMI's 152-year-old policy of denying admission to women because that policy provides diversity in higher education.

"I find that both VMI's single-sex status and its distinctive educational method represent legitimate contributions to diversity in the Virginia higher education system, and that excluding women is substantially related to this mission," Kiser said in the June 18 issue of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.



Kiser also said women couldn't experience the education offered by VMI because their presence would critically change that experience for themselves as well as the male cadets. Allowances for personal

privacy and a reduction in physical training requirements would have to be established for the women, he said.

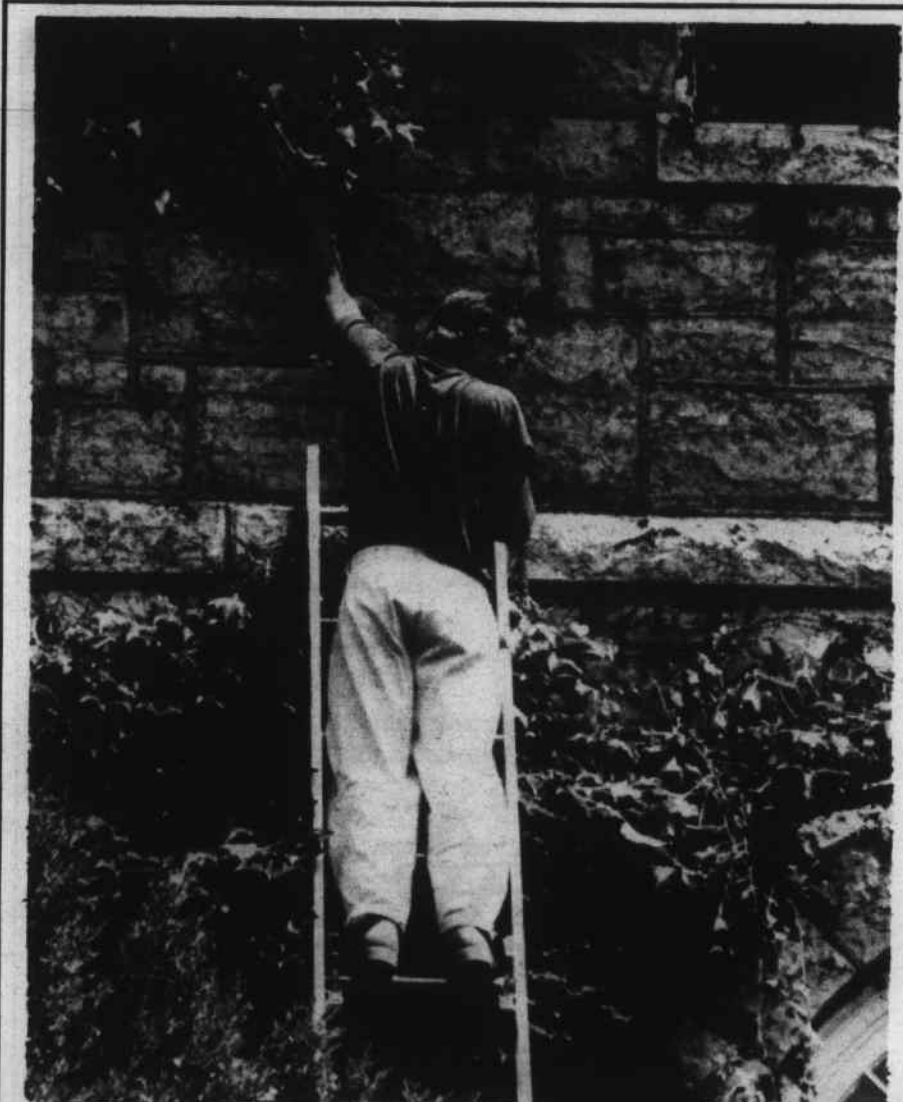
Currently, cadets live in unlocked rooms, use communal showers and experience physical and psychological hazing from upperclassmen.

The Justice Department brought suit against VMI, claiming its all-male admissions policy violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Justice Department couldn't be reached for comment concerning an appeal to the decision.

VMI is pleased but cautious about the decision. "We're not gloating," said Tom Joynes, VMI's public information officer. "We're waiting for the next step."

VMI's superintendent Maj. Gen. John Knapp said in a public statement, "We look forward to continuing

VMI page 2



### Rip it up

Keith Taylor does some maintenance pulling ivy off Converse Hall.

SCOTT TRIBBLE/THE BREEZE

## Marble thefts may delay business building completion

by Kathryn Peterson  
Features Editor

An apparent theft may delay completion of the new College of Business building up to two months.

Two 27 inch by 24 inch marble slabs reportedly disappeared from the construction site June 5 and 6, according to Alan MacNutt, director of campus police and safety. Each of the slabs cost about \$300.

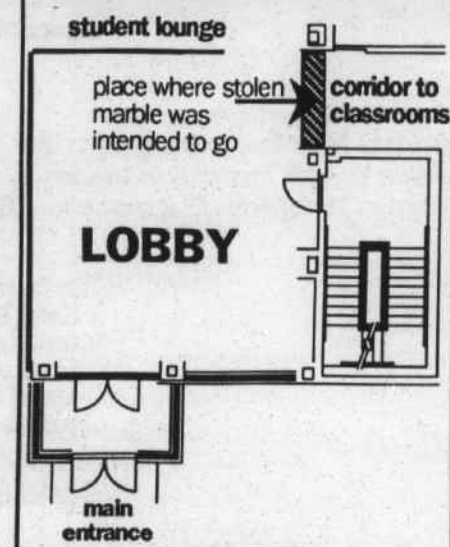
MacNutt estimated that the first 40-pound panel apparently was stolen between 5 p.m. June 5 and 8 a.m. June 6 and the second panel reportedly was taken June 6 between noon and 1:30 p.m.

Steve Knickrehm, director of facilities planning at JMU, said, "The interesting thing about this particular case is that it certainly wasn't easy to carry two very heavy, very awkward pieces of marble off the site without being seen.

"But because they did, somebody's going to eat \$600."

Standard Tile Co., a subcontractor of Nielson Construction, will have to cover the loss. Although owner Robert Sweet said that two pieces of marble

### Blueprint to Business building marble thefts



MARNIE PENNING/THE BREEZE

and \$600 aren't much of a financial loss, he considers the apparent theft "an insult more than anything else. It bothers me that someone would take something that didn't belong to them."

Sweet feels especially insulted by the second loss. "When that piece was

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# VMI

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our exemplary service to the nation and to the Commonwealth [of Virginia]."

Brian Kelly, a first private at VMI, said, "It feels good to have won the first round in a long legal battle."

"I see it as if I would lose my right to a single-sex education if women are allowed to attend VMI," he said.

Reactions around the state and at JMU were mixed. Dr. Robert Roberts, an associate professor of political science at JMU, said, "I wasn't surprised that this decision was made at the district court level."

Dr. Roger Soenksen, an associate professor of human communication at JMU, said, "What we've seen is the tip of a very long and drawn out ordeal. I wouldn't be surprised if [the case] would be appealed to the Supreme Court."

Roberts said, "It's an unusual decision because there wasn't a lot of precedent behind it." He called

the ruling "conservative."

VMI lawyers called the decision a victory for single-sex education.

"If we are to continue to enjoy this diversity and excellence, we must resist the needless conformity that the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice has sought to force upon us in this case," Robert H. Patterson, VMI's lead lawyer, told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

Kent Willis, the director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia, said, "The ACLU is extremely disappointed with the decision."

"It is either a fundamental misinterpretation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, or an alarming trend in our court system to refuse to recognize gender equality," he said.

Soenksen said, "The civil rights concept is a concept of fairness," and VMI's refusal to admit women based on gender alone raises the question of the constitutionality of discriminating at a state institution.

"Regardless of sex, race, religion, or political affiliation, people should be treated equally in a state

institution," he said.

Lynn Bradford, president of the Richmond chapter of the National Organization for Women, said the decision is "grossly unfair to women."

"The decision says it's okay to discriminate against women," she said. "We will concentrate on the state level to make VMI stop discriminating against women or, at least, to stop using state funds to discriminate against women."

Kristan Mackey, a JMU senior, said, "I think that it's good [for VMI] to stay all-male because it's the school's tradition and that's the way VMI is structured. But, I believe it should be private."

Tom Economou, a JMU junior, said, "I don't agree with the decision because times are changing and women should be admitted."

Alice Davis, a JMU graduate student and teaching assistant for the English department, said that Virginia doesn't have the money to "pour into VMI to accommodate women."

Dr. Bruce Johnson, an assistant professor of English at JMU, said, "VMI is a public institution and should enroll both males and females."

# Marble

CONTINUED from page 1

taken, my people were working in an adjacent room, without even a door to separate," he said. "Someone must have been pretty nervy to get past us."

Since there were no extra pieces of marble, the construction company has

had to order a new shipment that could take from two weeks to two months to arrive. "It's just frustrating, because we can't do anything more until they get here," Sweet said.

Administrators and staff have continued to move in to the completed

part of the new building, hoping that the delay won't alter plans for its opening in the fall.

"We're just trying to look at this as one minor thing compared to the overall picture," Dr. Robert Holmes, dean of the College of Business said.

"But it is unfortunate it had to happen."

"All the slabs arrived precut, ready for installation, just like pieces of a puzzle," Holmes said. "Now that two of the pieces are missing, we can't complete the puzzle."



*"To the press alone, chequered as it is with abuses, the world is indebted for all the triumphs which have been gained by reason and humanity over error and oppression."*

James Madison

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# News

## Rose gets promoted

### Carrier shifts duties, won't retire

by Gayle Cohen  
Production Manager

The JMU Board of Visitors appointed Dr. Linwood Rose as JMU's first senior vice president

— a position created to shift some responsibilities away from JMU President Ronald Carrier. Rose, who has served as vice president of administration and finance since 1987, will retain all of his former duties as well.

"The intent in creating the position is really to try and free up the president so he will have more time to spend with the faculty and students and so on," Rose said. Carrier said he plans to devote more time to fund-raising.

Rose described his new position as "a coordinator among vice-presidents." As such, his responsibilities include day-to-day operations of the university, organizational skills. He has been an administrator at JMU for 16 years.

Carrier says this shifting of responsibilities does not mean he plans to step down as JMU president. Carrier said he has had the idea of having a senior vice president for at least a year, and many other universities have similar positions in their administrations.

"The intent in creating the position is really to try and free up the president so he will have more time to spend with the faculty and students and so on."

Dr. Linwood Rose  
Senior Vice President

working with the Administrative Council, and working with the University Council. He will take these on gradually, he said.

According to a press release, Rose was selected because of his knowledge of the university, his ability to address "emerging issues," his energy, and his responsibilities, he says he will not have fewer. "I want to do more work with people," he said. "This is my job. I'm not going to retire."

Carrier included raising money for the library and giving more attention to off-campus needs as part of his upcoming goals.

### Memorial rock garden to be built for student killed in diving accident

by Ken Luzzatto  
Staff Writer

A rock garden will be established in the Arboretum in honor of JMU student Larkin Smith, 21, who died June 9 as a result of a diving accident June 5. A memorial service for Smith, who had just completed her junior year as an English major, was held Sunday in the Arboretum.

Smith and some of her coworkers from Pargo's Spirited Foods had gone to the Panther Falls area in Amherst County, in the George Washington National Forest. The group had been jumping feet first and diving from the rocks into a waterfall pool.

Smith dove off the 14-foot-tall rock and plunged head first into a submerged rock, suffering a broken neck and a fractured skull. She died at 1:55 a.m. June 9 at the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville.

Darrin Witten, a JMU senior and close friend of Smith, said, "Larkin was an extremely rambunctious, fun, loving, sensitive, beautiful woman. She was always meeting new friends."

According to her parents, Wilton and Linda Smith of Falls Church, Virginia, Smith had always enjoyed the outdoors. "[One] of my most dear memories of Larkin is the time we spent floating over the coral reefs in the Florida Keys," Mrs. Smith said.

Witten said, "People in college take a lot of risks. We constantly push ourselves to have as much fun as possible, so much so that we forget the risk involved. We need to think twice before we do risky and dangerous things, such as drinking and driving for example."

Mr. Smith said, "People should not be afraid of taking risks, but should be careful how they approach them. You can't know all the answers. She didn't have a clear picture. Larkin was capable of a lot of things, and sometimes your enthusiasm takes hold of you and you lose that calculated risk."

## Henderson gets life for his part in Whitlock murder

by April D. Hefner  
Editor

Ronald Lee Henderson, 25, was sentenced June 17 to three consecutive life terms for the abduction, robbery and murder of JMU sophomore Leann Whitlock in January 1990.

Henderson's lawyer, Jeffrey Ward, requested the sentences be served at the same time, or concurrently, because Henderson has no prior record of violent crimes. But Staunton Circuit Court Judge Rudolph Bumgardner III followed the recommendation for consecutive terms given by the Winchester Circuit Court jury who convicted Henderson March 27.

Although he was charged with capital murder, Henderson was convicted of the less severe crime of first degree murder.

During his trial in March, Henderson admitted to the abduction and robbery of Whitlock but denied any



COURTESY OF DAILY NEWS-RECORD

Ronald Lee Henderson  
part in her actual death.

The sentencing will make him eligible for parole in about 17 years.

Esther Whitlock, Leann's mother, said the sentencing "was the best we could get. It was fair."

Henderson was arrested July 10 in Baker City, Oregon and extradited to Virginia in October.

Tommy David Strickler, 25, was convicted June 21, 1990, in the same case on charges of abduction, robbery and capital murder.

Strickler was later sentenced to death, and the Virginia Supreme Court has denied his appeal. But he has about eight appeals left which could postpone the death penalty for another eight to ten years.

Strickler was also sentenced to separate life terms for the abduction and robbery charges.

Esther Whitlock said, "It's not over. It's never really over. The suffering goes on each time one of them asks for leniency."

Whitlock, 19, of Roanoke, was abducted January 5, 1990 from Valley Mall in Harrisonburg. Her body was discovered eight days later in a wooded field five miles north of Waynesboro.

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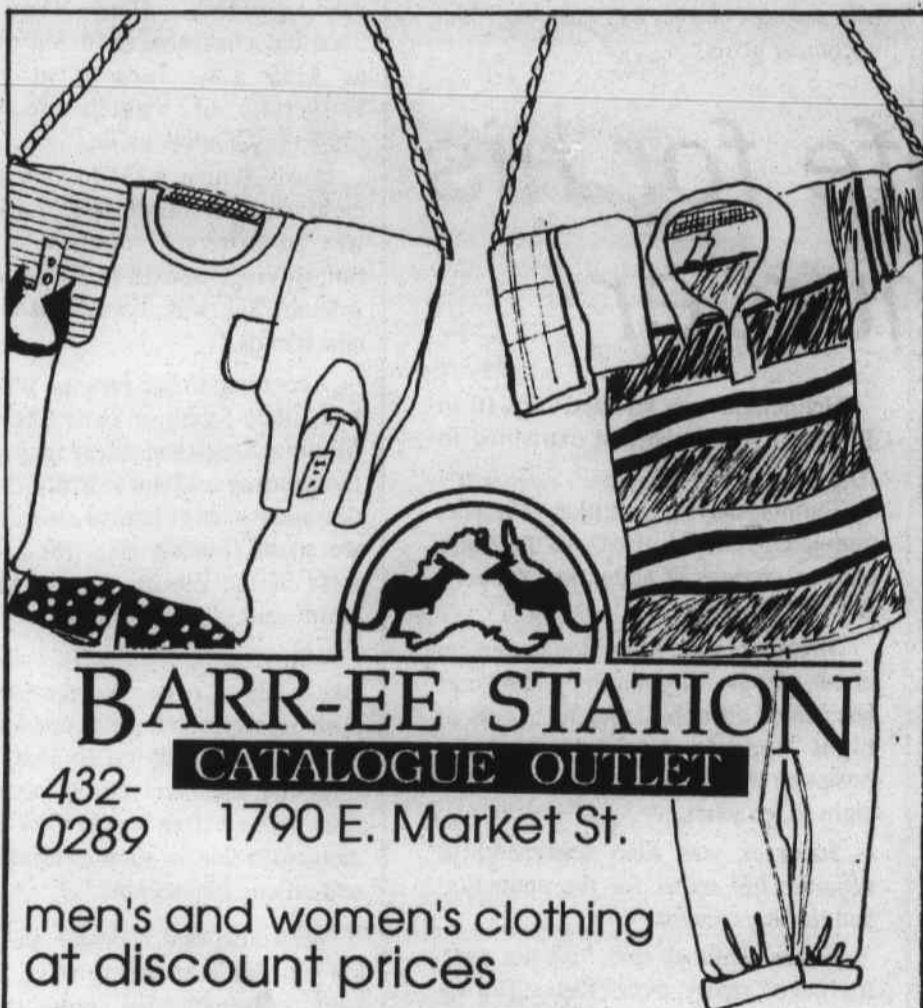
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## Summer enrollment steady

by Rhett Bigler  
Staff Writer

For many JMU students, summer means vacations, but for a few it means attending summer school. Enrollment for JMU's summer classes remained steady this year at 1,942 students, compared with 1,939 last year, according to Dr. David Zimmerman, associate vice president of academic affairs.

This figure isn't final because it excludes registration for the second four weeks, he said. But Zimmerman doesn't expect the figures to change much.

May session enrollment only rose two percent from last year, he said. Enrollment for May session was higher than summer session, with an enrollment of 2,763.

Some students stay during May and summer to get caught up in their course requirements. Junior Jennifer Ready said she is taking her summer class to meet "requirements to graduate on time."

Junior William Shannon, however, is taking summer classes, "to lighten his load during the regular school year."

Sophomore Kristie Gladwell said she was enrolled in summer classes "to get done with my general studies."

Senior Laurel McArdle said, "I have to graduate by a certain time because my major is phasing out so I have no choice but to stay over the summer."

During the summer there is also an increase in nondegree-seeking students taking classes. These students take courses to transfer the credits to their own school. Staci Swack, a senior at Randolph-Macon College, said she is taking her course "to meet requirements needed for an education minor at Randolph-Macon."

Dr. J. Christopher Arndt, an assistant professor of history, said the main reason he is here in the summer is for a "supplemental income."

Arndt said that compared to the regular school year summer session grades "are better, because they [the students] have more time to devote to the material despite its intensity."

Arndt said the attendance to his class is "great, because I am dealing with incoming freshmen who are gung-ho until the last week or two when they run out of gas."



RACHEL STECKLER/THE BREEZE

Junior Matt Walker sweaters on the pedestrian plaza as he studies French.

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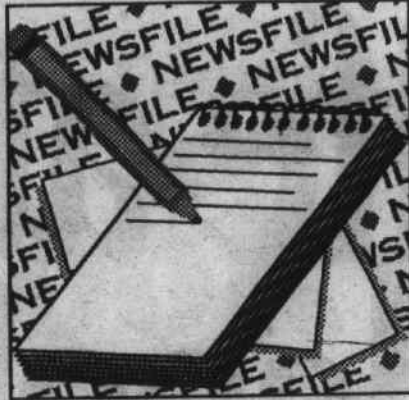
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# Briefly

## Memorial contributions:

A memorial rock garden will be established in the Arboretum for JMU student Larkin Smith, who died June 9. The Smith family has stated contributions may be made toward the rock garden. Checks may be sent to the JMU foundation, restricted to the Larkin Smith memorial rock garden.



## Young children's program reaccredited:

JMU's Young Children's Program has been reaccredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood. The program is located in Wine-Price Hall and has 27 children ranging from age three to five enrolled. The accreditation process included a study of JMU's program and a review by a national commission.

## Persian Gulf parade to be held:

Virginia congressman John O. Marsh, Jr., also the former Secretary of the Army, will speak at the July 6 Victory parade in Harrisonburg. Marsh, whose two sons served in the Persian Gulf War, is also the former assistant secretary of defense and assistant for national security affairs. The parade will include armed vehicles, personnel carriers, jeeps and around 30 different floats.

The parade will begin at 10 a.m. on the Cantrell Avenue bridge and end at the county office building at Gay and Main streets.

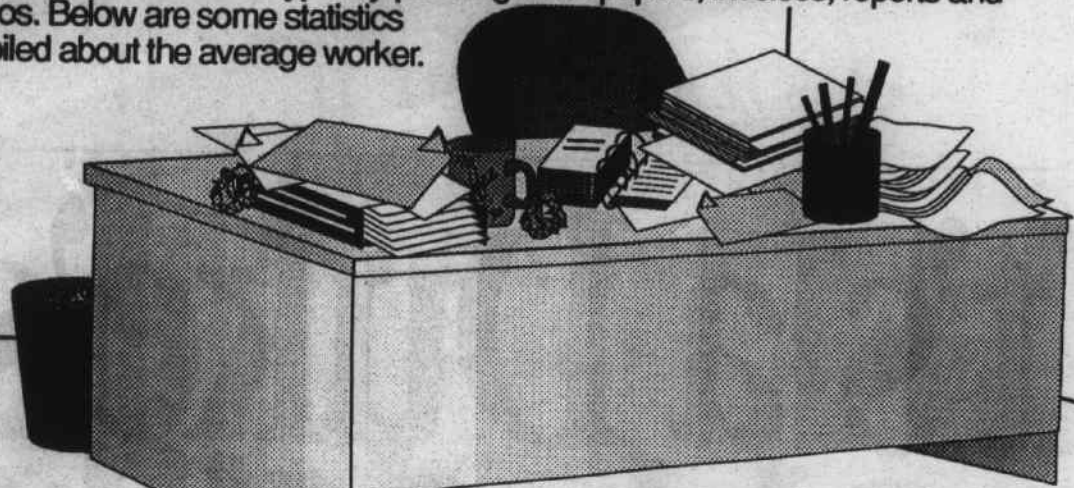
## Living sciences major dropped:

A major in living sciences will no longer be available to JMU students. The programs and courses of the living sciences department will be covered under other colleges and departments. Students interested in interior design will major in art. Students majoring in fashion merchandising will be in the College of Fine Arts and Communication. The dietetics major will be under the department of health sciences.

*Breeze Newsfile* is offered when space permits to publicize information on job opportunities and campus and area activities. To have information reviewed for publication, call 568-6127 or send information to the news editor, c/o The Breeze, Anthony-Seeger Hall, JMU, Harrisonburg, Va., 22807.

## Desk Facts

Messy desks are a fact of life for many people. A recent *USA Today* article said office workers' desks are typically piled high with papers, invoices, reports and memos. Below are some statistics compiled about the average worker.



- On an average day, the office worker has 36 hours of work on his desk
- Of the 36 hours of work, the worker has only 90 minutes to spend on it each day

Source: *USA Today*, June 1991

- An average executive spends 45 minutes daily looking for something lost on his desk
- Within 10 years, U.S. businesses will file 120 billion new sheets of paper a year, filling 5 million filing cabinets
- 209 cleaning days remain before the National Clear Off Your Desk Day in 1992

DOREEN JACOBSON/THE BREEZE

## Republics declare independence:

Slovenia and Croatia, two republics in Yugoslavia, declared independence yesterday, prompting the Yugoslav legislature to ask the federal army to preserve the six-republic federation. An emergency meeting of the Yugoslav federal executive council was called last night to discuss other possible avenues to deal with the secession of the republics. Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic stated Monday that "all legal measures" would be used to keep Yugoslavia intact.



## House abortion fight ends:

Abortion foes in the U.S. House of Representatives abandoned plans yesterday to fight a bill to continue to let federal funded clinics counsel for abortions. Members of the House Pro-Life Caucus were planning to try to defeat or weaken an amendment to the 1992 labor, health and human services appropriations bill. But Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-N.J.) said they would depend on President Bush's promise to veto.

## Sununu blames GOP, press for problems:

Colleagues of White House Chief of Staff John Sununu reportedly have been told that the recent controversy concerning his travel habits was stirred by members of the Republican party, people on the White House staff, the media, and Zionist groups. According to a Republican source, Sununu is concerned GOP members are attempting to lessen his influence in the 1992 Presidential campaign, that liberal media members are attacking him because of his conservatism, and that Jewish groups resent his Lebanese heritage.

## Senate votes expansion of death penalty:

The Senate voted to approve the use of the death penalty for nearly 50 federal crimes, but defeated President Bush's proposal to lessen restrictions on the use of illegally obtained evidence in court. These two important parts of the 1991 omnibus crime bill marked the Senate's upcoming struggle over the proposed seven-day waiting period to purchase handguns. Proponents seem to be slowly gaining momentum, but some Republican foes have said they may filibuster through the Fourth of July recess to prevent the proposal's approval.

## International force formed to help Kurds:

The U.S. and other allied nations have formed a preliminary pact to leave some military forces in Turkey in case intervention is needed to protect the Kurdish minority in Iraq, accorded to U.S. and diplomatic officials Tuesday. Turkey has not yet approved the plan but is expected to do so soon.

## Cabinet members subpoenaed:

Subpoenas for Secretary of State James Baker, Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher and Defense Secretary Richard Cheney were ordered Tuesday by the House Foreign Affairs Committee regarding the reported delivery of sensitive technology to Iraq within the last ten years. Representative Sam Gajdenson (D-Conn.), the chairman of the committee, charged the administration was perpetrating a "cover up" of transactions between the U.S. and Saddam Hussein.

Source: *The Washington Post*, June 26, 1991



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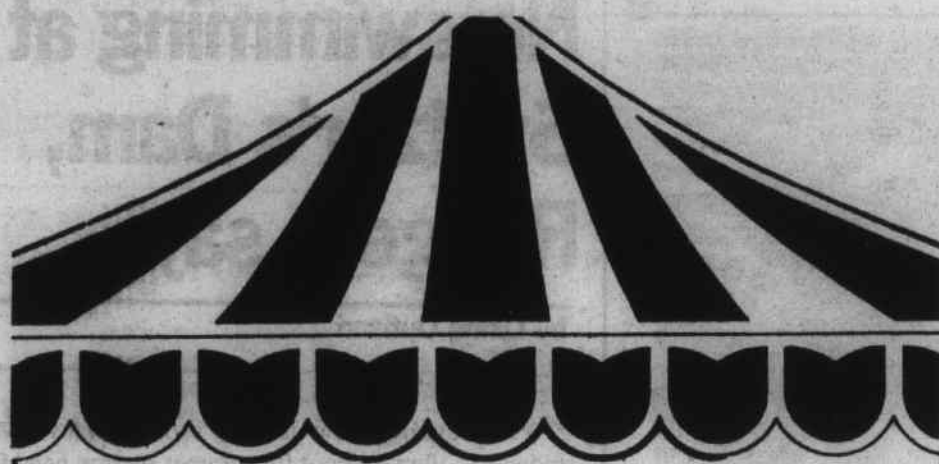
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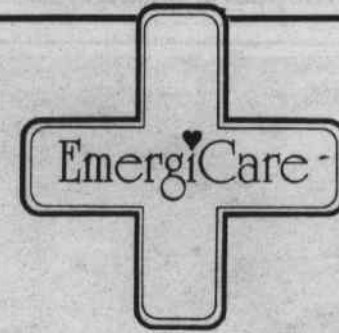
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RACHEL STECKLER/THE BREEZE

Incoming freshmen (from left to right) Lauri Hauck, Catherine Ingalls, and Alison Moore chat about their upcoming year at JMU during this week's freshman orientation. The next issue of *The Breeze* will include a story on orientation and how it affects rising freshmen, their parents and the community.

## No swimming at Switzer's Dam, Rangers say

by Lynne Outland  
Staff Writer

With summer now in full swing, many JMU students in Harrisonburg for summer session head for the mountains to cool off in the numerous swimming holes and lakes in Rockingham County. One of the more popular places to camp, fish and swim is Switzer's Dam, located about 30 minutes up Route 33 West. But Switzer's Dam has been closed to the public for swimming since it was constructed.

Swimming is not allowed at Switzer's because the water is part of Harrisonburg's water supply, and swimming in this water has been deemed unsanitary by the city.

Law enforcement agents regularly patrol the area, and anyone caught swimming in the water will be issued a ticket, according to Bud Ryan of the U.S. Forest Service, Dry River Ranger District.

Matt Bender, a recent JMU graduate, said, "I never knew one way or another whether it was legal or not, but it doesn't really matter — it has nothing to do with the legality of it. If I wanted to go swimming, I would go swimming."

Fishing and camping are still allowed at Switzer's, but JMU students and the Harrisonburg community should find somewhere else to swim.



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# Features

*Summer in Harrisonburg*

## Say bye bye to boredom



by Sharon Lovering  
Staff Writer

It's summertime in Harrisonburg, and the temperature is soaring into the 90s. The only action to be seen is construction on Main Street and emergency vehicles screaming around town. There's nothing on television, the ice cream's gone, and you're tired of watching people sunbathe on balconies, on the Quad or in parking lots. You've played Pictionary, backgammon and checkers so many times that you know all the capabilities of your opponent. You've alphabetized your entire collection of cassettes and CDs, and your apartment is spotless. The next three weeks are only empty spaces in your calendar.

Don't worry. There are things to do around town and on campus this summer. It's just not as easy to find out about them. But here is a list of activities and events going on during the next six weeks that may help fill those empty spaces.

### • Swimming

Savage Natatorium (Godwin Hall)  
hours: Monday through Thursday 2-3 p.m., 5-6 p.m.  
Friday through Sunday 2-4 p.m.  
cost: free with ID

Westover Swimming Pool, 305 S. Dogwood Dr.  
hours: Monday through Saturday noon-7 p.m.  
Sunday 1-6 p.m.  
cost: \$1

### • Bowling

Valley Lanes, 3106 S. Main St.  
hours: Monday through Friday 9-11 p.m.  
Saturday and Sunday 1-11 p.m.  
costs: shoe rental, 75 cents; one game, \$1.75

### • Aerobics

Godwin Gym A  
Monday through Thursday 5-6:15 p.m.

### • Tennis

Tennis  
JMU: call 568-6561 or visit the issue room for reservations. Intramural tennis tournament sign-up deadline: 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 10 in Godwin 213. Other courts available at: Purcell Park, Waterman Elementary School, Eastover Park, behind Harrisonburg High School, and at Ralph Sampson Playground (behind Simms Alternative School).

### • Racquetball

JMU: call for reservations, 568-6561.  
Other courts available with a reservation at Westover Park. For reservations, call 433-2474.  
Costs: \$1 per person per hour, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Monday through Friday; \$2 after 4 p.m.

### • Jogging

JMU: stadium track and nature trail  
hours: 1-7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 1-5 p.m. Friday through Sunday  
Trails are also available at Hillendale and Purcell parks.

### • Roller skating

Skatetown USA, 100 Miller Circle  
hours and prices (excluding \$1 skate rental fee):  
Tuesday 8-10:30 p.m. is group night (2-5 people). \$3.50  
Wednesday 1-3 p.m., \$2. 8-10:30 p.m. is ladies night (free except skate rental). Men, \$2.50.  
Friday 1-3 p.m., \$2. 8-10:30 p.m., \$2.75.  
Saturday 2-4:30 p.m., \$2.50. 8-10:30 p.m., \$2.75. 10:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m. ("late skate"), \$4.50.  
For details, call Skatetown USA at 433-1834.

### • Games

Warren Campus Center game room (billiards and video games)  
Monday through Thursday noon-4 p.m.

### • Fitness centers

Godwin: Monday through Thursday 1-7 p.m.  
Friday through Sunday 1-5 p.m.  
Hillside: Monday through Thursday 3-7 p.m.  
Friday through Sunday 1-5 p.m.

### • Intramural sports

Sign-up deadlines/meetings are as follows:  
Horseshoes tournament: 1 p.m. Tuesday, July 2 in Godwin 213.  
Two on two wallyball: 1 p.m. Tuesday, July 2 in Godwin 213.  
Three on three over-the-line softball: organizational meeting Tuesday, July 9 at 4 p.m. in Godwin 205.  
Frisbie golf open tournament: 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 17 in Godwin 213.

### • Other events

Fund Fest  
June 29 at 3 p.m. on the field next to Godwin  
2 bands: 3 Dog Night, Chairmen of the Board  
tickets: \$5 in advance, \$8 at the gate (kids under 12, free)

### • Campus movies

shown at Grafton-Stovall Theater at 8 p.m.  
cost: free  
July 1-"The Jagged Edge"  
July 3-"Body Heat"  
July 5-"Masque of the Red Death"  
July 10-"Meatballs"  
July 17-"Godzilla vs. Megalon"  
July 24-"Lethal Weapon"

### • Places to visit

Skyline Drive  
Reddish Knob  
Switzer Dam  
Union Springs  
George Washington National Forest  
Riven Rock Park  
Shenandoah Acres  
Todd Lake

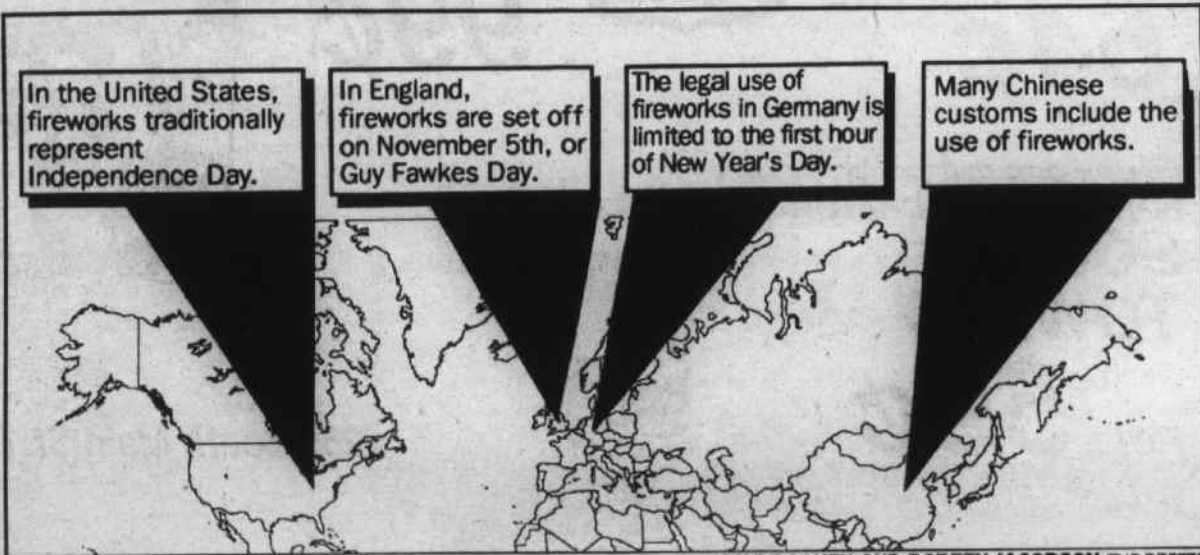
## ... And here's what's happening on July the Fourth

### Staunton

- Where: The Museum of American Frontier Culture  
When: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
What: Games and contests typical of a mid-19th century American celebration. Picnic lunches are encouraged.  
Cost: \$5
- Where: Gypsy Hill Park  
When: 8:30 p.m.  
What: Happy Birthday U.S.A. concert performed by the Stalter Brothers  
Cost: free

### New Market

- Where: New Market Community Park  
When: all day, starting at noon  
What: parade, food, games, rides, parade, fireworks, performance by the band "Liberation"  
Cost: \$5 parking fee



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 June 23 thru Saturday June 29, 1991.

# Nerf: It's the best way to get this country's goat

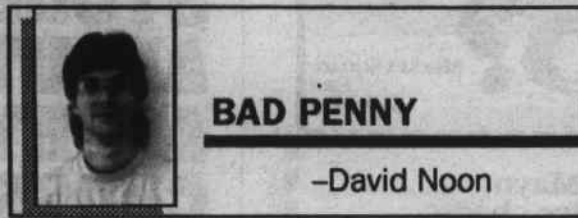
About a year ago, I wrote a *Breeze* editorial suggesting that JMU could do well to find a suitable scapegoat for its problems and disputes. The spring semester had labored through an unusually festive series of scraps and squabbles between every campus faction imaginable, and by early April it was clear that an armistice would be impossible unless someone volunteered to strap himself around the proverbial whipping post and accept the blame. With no takers in sight, it seemed a better plan was needed.

So to the confusion of many readers, I trumpeted the merits of a 50-foot Nerf goat to be constructed in the middle of Hillside field.

It would be great, I said. Anyone with a student ID could go there and yell, squeal, kick, curse, bend, fold or otherwise mutilate this symbolic scapegoat whenever he or she wanted. No one would get hurt; students could release that end-of-the-week stress without winding up in Policelogs; it would make less noise than the Marching Royal Dukes' practice sessions; and since it comes in non-racial colors, won't quote subversive Western religions and can't talk back when you argue with it, the Nerf Goat is so damn Politically Correct I can hardly stand it.

Sadly, though, the Nerf company never called to offer their services, and JMU decided to go ahead with the new business building instead of the Goat. But I haven't given up. In fact, I have bigger plans for this goat now, and the nation's capital might be the place for it — but more on that in a moment.

America, as we know, is a nation that secretly adores excuses. Almost as much as we lust for succulent murder scandals and brief, victorious foreign wars, we have historically been a melting pot of



## BAD PENNY

—David Noon

marvellous self-justifiers and wildly creative liars. Accordingly, we have always searched for the catch-all excuse and unassailable rationalization that, like the alchemists' search for the philosopher's stone, will make everything bad seem OK after all.

Everyone has tried to find it, but few have succeeded. One of the more notable attempts of late came from Geraldine Richter, the Prince William County orthopedic surgeon who was acquitted of DUI charges two weeks ago by reason of "premenstrual syndrome." While the PMS plea was a step forward for anyone wanting to absolve themselves of liability for their drinking, the defense is obviously not for everyone. Males, as anyone who watched the filmstrips in 8th grade health class understands, lack the biological *raison d'être* to follow Richter's lead.

Legal affairs in particular have always welcomed innovative self-defense. Mark Twain — no fan of the U.S. judicial system — recognized this perennial search long before the Goat idea came about. In 1870, after hearing about a San Francisco woman whose plea of temporary madness shook off charges that she murdered her lover, Twain nearly dedicated his novel *Roughing It* to Cain. "It was his misfortune," he explained, "to live in a dark age that knew not the beneficent insanity plea."

But even outside the umbrage of the judicial system, Americans could use a scapegoat to take care of those touchy day-to-day questions of ethics or morality. Sen. Chuck Robb might have benefited from a conveniently placed scapegoat after he got a . . . um . . . backrub (nudge, nudge, wink, wink) from Tai Collins all those years ago. Bush Administration chief of staff John Sununu, who has been on the road lately more than Jack Kerouak and Charles Kurault combined, certainly could have used one last week when he announced that he needed to keep in touch with the President even while collecting stamps and running errands in New York. What could make their excuses work?

Enter the Nerf Goat. I can see it now.

"Mr. Sununu, why did you use those government vehicles to go skiing?"

"Hey, I cleared it with the Goat."

"And Senator Robb, why might you have cheated on your wife and slept with this beautiful woman?"

"Well, it was either her or that 50-foot goat."

Put the Goat on the White House lawn, within easy reach of Bush's failed domestic program. Move it to Capitol Hill and gloss over the civil rights and crime flops. Even commoners could make pilgrimages to the Goat and wiggle out of taxes, homework assignments, parking tickets, and mid-afternoon flings with co-workers. Make it a national symbol like those recent Desert Storm parades — anything to confuse us and make us forget our problems. Somehow, I think we'd all understand.

Senior David Noon is majoring in English and history.

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Medium ..... 79¢  
Large ..... 99¢
- ..... Regular ..... 69¢  
Medium ..... 79¢  
Large ..... 99¢
- ..... Regular ..... 89¢
- ..... Regular ..... 69¢
- ..... Regular ..... 79¢  
Medium ..... 79¢  
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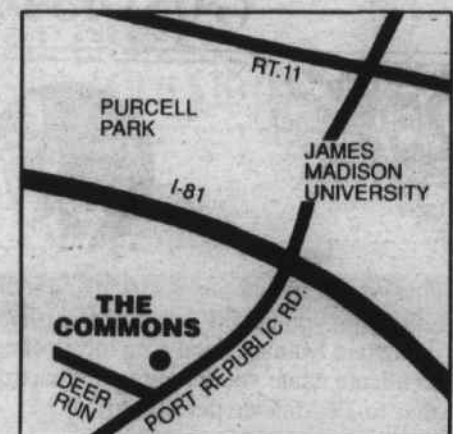


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- COME SEE...** Why for so many students The Commons is not just an address but a way of life

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