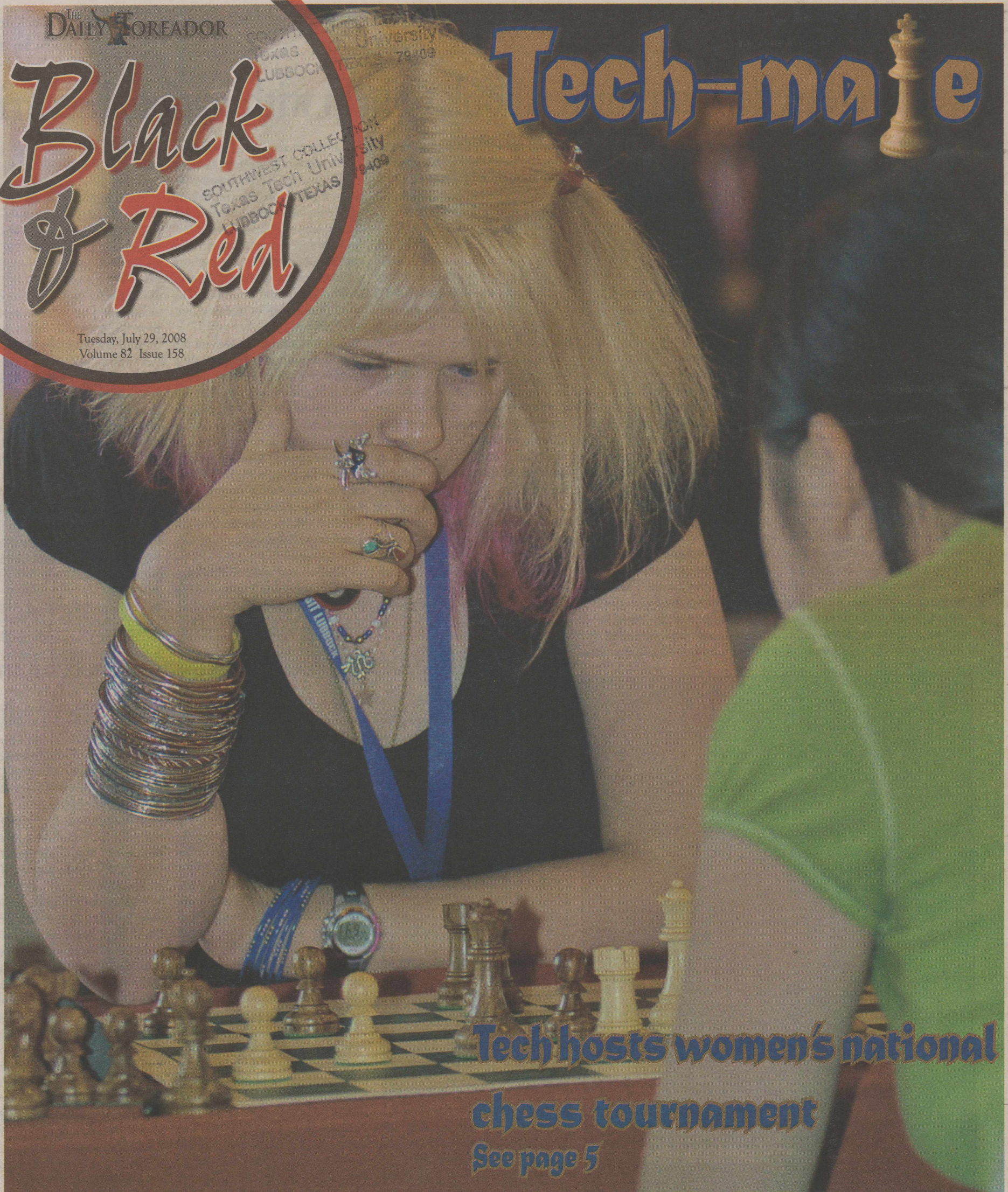


THE DAILY FOREADOR

Black & Red

Tuesday, July 29, 2008
Volume 82 Issue 158

Tech-ma i e



Tech hosts women's national
chess tournament
See page 5

Tech researchers author textbook to help with national security

BY ANGELA FARMER
STAFF WRITER

Texas Tech has found a way to help the country with national security.

After approximately seven years of studies, researchers at the Tech Institute of Environmental & Human Health have compiled a book on countermeasures to biological and chemical terrorism.

The book is titled "Advances in Biological and Chemical Terrorism Countermeasures," and was authored by more than 15 researchers and edited by four. It was published by Taylor & Francis, CRC Press and funded by the U.S. Army Research Development.

The book gives a current report on the world of biological and chemical countermeasures research, said Steve Presley, editor of the book and research coordinator at Tech's Institute of Environmental & Human Health. It includes researchers' findings on ways to combat, detect and prevent exposures to weapon agents.

Presley said the book targets re-

search scientists in similar fields, which can be used as a textbook to teach courses on toxicology. It also aims to provide useful information to operational military personnel, operational force commanders or local emergency responders.

"It benefits them primarily in training and in understanding what the threats and vulnerabilities really are," he said.

The book is widely being distributed and has received a great deal of feedback, and, with terrorism evolving, this research process will do the same, said Ronald Kendall, editor of the book and director of the institute.

"When you look at the science in that book, you've got modelers, engineers, analytical chemists, biologists, toxicologists and statisticians," he said. "So you've got a tremendous amount of scientific expertise that had to be integrated into one piece of knowledge, and that's not easy to do. That's why we were very pleased with the ultimate outcome of the book."

The book was intended for a broad audience and benefits

academic researchers as well as military personnel and emergency responders, said Philip Smith, editor of the book and assistant professor of environmental toxicology.

"With all publications," he said, "it primes us to share our research that we've been involved with - with our colleagues across the country and around the world. Our colleagues who work in similar areas, at least they'll know what we're doing and maybe they will compliment our reference."

The chapters of the book are broken down into different focus areas, Kendall said. Information provided in the book has been thoroughly evaluated and focuses on homeland and military defense training.

Kendall said researchers at the institute believe it is a contribution to improve national security.

"This is really cutting-edge material and strategies," he said. "We think more and more people

are going to need to be trained in these areas to protect our nation in the future. The terrorist threats are not going away, so this is kind of like the ultimate opportunity in an academic environment."

Some recognizable threats discussed in the book include anthrax, nerve gases and human health issues like smallpox. The book also describes threat-detection sensors.

Scientists and researchers began approaching and discussing issues of biological and chemical terrorism in 1998. Kendall said one factor complicating the process is that technology allows potential terrorists to genetically engineer threats to human health. Vaccines may exist for flu viruses or smallpox, but if they are genetically engineered, homeland security officials must go through a process of developing new countermeasures.

Kendall said another challenge of the process is transitioning from contemporary studies in

environmental toxicology to the use of and countering chemical and biological weapons.

"Certain chemicals we were using could be turned around and used to kill us and kill a large number of people," he said.

Kendall said the process of assembling and editing the book also was complicated, but researchers put it together in a record time.

Kendall said researchers are developing strategies to a variety of countermeasures which include better protective suits, decontamination wipes, masks, air ventilation systems, improved models to look at effects of exposure and improved treatments after exposure.

"Looking back on it," he said, "I'm very glad that we took the challenge and I think the outcome from this will hopefully improve national security and academic respect at Texas Tech."

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Turkish officials link recent bombings to rebel Kurds

ISTANBUL, Turkey (AP) — Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan served as a pallbearer at a funeral Monday for some of the 17 people killed by bombs in Turkey's biggest city, an attack the government blamed on Kurdish rebels who have targeted civilians in the past.

The rebel Kurdistan Worker's Party immediately denied responsibility and attributed Sunday's attack to "dark forces" — hard-line Turkish nationalists who allegedly seek to foment chaos to strengthen the political influence of the military.

No one has claimed responsibility for the bombings, and Turkey is home to a variety of violent groups besides the PKK, including Islamic extremists and alleged coup plotters with ties to the secular establishment.

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At the funeral, thousands of mourners surged around 10 coffins draped in the red and white Turkish flag at the foot of a mosque in Gungoren, a mostly residential neighborhood near Istanbul's international airport that houses many poor migrants.

Erdogan said the bombings — the deadliest against civilians in five years — appeared to be a reprisal for air raids on PKK positions in northern Iraq, as well as a cross-border ground offensive by the Turkish military in February.

"Unfortunately, the costs of this are heavy," Erdogan said. "The incident last night is one of them."

Some analysts agreed. "The PKK seems to be the most likely instigator if you look at the type of explosives and the bomb mechanism used," Sedat Laciner of the Ankara-based International Strategic Research Organization told NTV television.

"The terrorist organization has been trying to stage attacks that would shock people at times of high tension, especially recently."

One analyst did not rule out PKK involvement, but said the use of coordinated bombs in a place of no obvious relevance or symbolism to the rebels' fight against the Turkish state did not resemble tactics previously used by them.

"It's not the sort of thing they normally do," said Aliza Marcus, author of "Blood and Belief: the PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence."

In the past, Kurdish militants have bombed more high-profile targets such as tourist resorts.

Marcus said the relative sophistication of the twin bombing was more reminiscent of attacks by al-Qaida-linked militants, but cautioned: "There's never any shortage of suspects in Turkey who want to cause some sort of disarray."

The twin blasts happened on the eve of a Turkish court's deliberations on whether to ban the Islamic-oriented ruling party for allegedly trying to undermine secularism, and the timing raised questions about whether there was a link.



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Tech's Vice President for Research resigns to work in Germany

BY BRIDGET DE STEFANO
STAFF WRITER

Dean Smith will say "goodbye" to Texas Tech and "guten tag" to Heidelberg, Germany.

Smith, Texas Tech's vice president for research who manages approximately \$48.7 million in research funding, is resigning from his three-year position at Tech to teach and do research in Germany at the University of Heidelberg during the 2008-2009 school year.

Upon his return to Tech in 2009, Smith said he plans to teach in the Department of Biological Sciences.

While he is away, the neuroscientist will work with the medical faculty at the German university, which Smith said is "arguably the best in the world" for his specific area of interest: stem cell research.

Lou Densmore, associate chairman in Tech's biology department who signed Smith's leave of absence, said he was slightly surprised by Smith's decision to resign, however, he is looking forward to his return as a professor, and the possibility of receiving a fund from the National Institutes of Health

for Smith's stem cell research.

"I think it will be a loss to the university," Densmore said. "Dean has been very helpful to a lot of people here and it's always difficult when there's change."

The department, Densmore said, has not begun looking for a replacement vice president for research.

Smith said "it was time" for his resignation as vice president.

"I like Tech," Smith said. "I like Lubbock, and, most important, I have such a wonderful staff and wonderful colleagues. I'll miss the people."

Smith said he will be conducting research on stem cells and hopes to share his findings with Tech students and faculty when he returns to teach. Although stem cell research is a controversial topic of science, Smith said researchers have begun to venture beyond this procedure and develop new techniques to generate stem cells in new, cutting-edge way.

"We take stem cells," Smith said, "and try to get them suitable for transplanting them to patients that have neurological diseases."

He said researchers have tested this procedure, in which they produce stem cells without using human em-

bryos, through experiments—such as taking a piece of skin off of a human arm and inserting four identified genes into skin cells that will revert to stem cells.

These stem cells, Smith said, may have multiple capabilities. They have the ability to form into cells for the brain, muscle, even sperm or egg.

"(The new procedure) caught everybody's attention and made tremendous progress," Smith said. "This could be the big breakthrough that we've been looking for, and I just want to be there."

Densmore said Smith is doing advanced research with hopes of receiving a grant from the National Institutes of Health, which is a difficult grant to get at universities.

Despite the controversy of stem cell research, Densmore said, he believes Tech would be open-minded to the idea of teaching a course about

stem cell research if the university received a grant from NIH, which would better supply the school with more research funding and development.

Smith said he is accustomed to the study of stem cells after working in the discipline for years before he came to Tech, but since filling the vice president position, his lab fell to the bottom of his priority list.

At Tech, he published a paper about embryonic stem cells and protein types.

Before his work at Tech, Smith said, "Tech was actually going downhill in research."

However, as of July 1, Smith said research at Tech has grown 22 percent in the last year.

While he said he does not take credit for the increase, it remains one of his biggest accomplishments while working at Tech.

"Getting us turned around so that we're now growing as a research university is the most important for me," Smith said. "That gave me great

satisfaction when that happened."

Tech generates roughly \$60 million for research each year, Smith said.

Smith has had the duty of reviewing project ideas that he thinks might be best funded, Densmore said, in order to bring in more money for Tech from large foundations, such as the NIH and National Science Foundation.

Although it is a large amount of money for research, Smith said, Tech still is "not in the league with UT or Texas A&M," who each generate about \$800 million in research per year.

Tech is not a big research university, Smith said, and it is rather young in comparison to better-funded schools that often are larger and older.

"We're well established where we are," said Smith, "and we are good at what we do and we're growing."

Smith said it will require major changes on a state level for Tech to catch up to larger universities.

"If the state of Texas decides they want a third major research university in addition to A&M and UT," he said, "we're hoping that they'll look at Texas Tech and invest much more money in Tech, and that will allow us to make a major move in research activity."

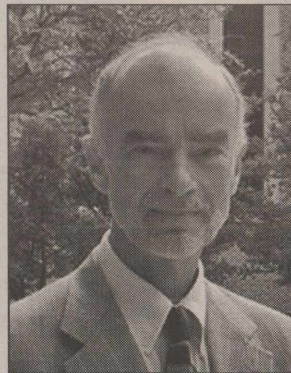


Photo Courtesy of Katy Henderson
Dean Smith will move his research to Germany for one year.

Four female bombers strike in Iraq, killing 57

BAGHDAD (AP) — Four suicide bombers believed to be women struck a Shiite pilgrimage in Baghdad and a Kurdish protest rally in northern Iraq on Monday, killing at least 57 people and wounding nearly 300 in one of this year's deadliest attacks, police said.

The U.S. military is recruiting and training women in Iraq's police force, and trying to enlist them to join U.S.-allied Sunni groups fighting against al-Qaida in Iraq. But such attacks are becoming increasingly common, even as overall violence is at the lowest level in four years.

Women are more easily able to hide explosives under their all-encompassing black Islamic robes, or abayas, and often are not searched at checkpoints because of sensitivities.

On Monday, three bombers believed to be women blew up their explosive vests in the middle of

pilgrims in Baghdad moments after a roadside bomb attack, killing at least 32 people and wounding 102, Iraqi officials said.

In the oil-rich northern city of Kirkuk, 25 people were killed and 185 wounded when a blast tore through a crowd of Kurds protesting a draft provincial elections law, officials said.

Police spokesman Brig. Gen. Burhan Tayeb Taha said the Kirkuk bomber was also a woman, and that he had seen her remains at the site. The U.S. military confirmed a suicide bombing but said it had no indication the attacker was a woman.

Ryan Crocker, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, and Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, condemned the attacks.

"The targets of these vicious and cowardly attacks were innocent Iraqi men, women, and children who were freely practicing their democratic rights and

religious faith," their joint statement said. "It is crucial that the Iraqi people remain united and steadfast in the face of those terrorists who would use violence to destroy a free Iraq and set back the progress for which so many have so bravely sacrificed."

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Obama's coy handling of his drug use and McCain's dilemma

Now that America has a pretty good idea of who the two nominees will be going into the November election, it's time for reflection, because both parties are going to be prying apart their opponent's past with every available detail.

Nobody is perfect, and presumptive Republican Party nominee John McCain and presumptive Democratic Party nominee Barack Obama are no exceptions to the rule. Certainly, an issue in Obama's camp that involves morality is the issue on drugs. While drug abuse is seen as a harsh crime in matter of the law, Obama's past drug history most likely won't cause a big splash. How has America changed since Clinton's "I didn't inhale" days?

The drastic evolution in politics is both riveting and frightening.

Not only has Obama admitted that he has inhaled marijuana, but he has admitted to trying cocaine as well in his younger years. American voters don't seem to care. Obama came out with the information early in the campaign — a wise move on his

Jaclyn Thies



advisors' part. Truthfully, if his drug use had become known later in the race, America still wouldn't have cared.

With celebrities practically endorsing drug use, and shows like "Intervention" capitalizing on bringing substance abuse to the forefront, Americans are not shocked anymore. It seems as though any American without a past drug or alcohol problem is the rarity in an age where 42 percent of the population, according to Time magazine, has at least tried marijuana, the highest percentage of any country.

Obama's drug use just doesn't make him a bad guy in this case. Instead, it makes him even more relatable. It is no secret that minorities tend to side with Obama because they can relate to the colored candidate, and

Obama bonds those ties with news of his substance abuse.

Before you start slinging mud, keep in mind that Obama allowed that to happen. In his book *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, Obama talks about overcoming the labels of "junkie" and "pothead" and deterring from "the final, fatal role of the young would-be black man." It's quite clear that he wants the public to relate to his story of overcoming addiction and a rough lifestyle. Instead of being labeled a drug abuser, Obama is transformed into the strong, black man who overcame the odds society set against him. He is a role model for any young minority child, and a beacon of hope for older minorities across the country.

Unlike Obama, Bill Clinton didn't have that relation to the public. By the time Americans found out about the drug use, Clinton was an aged white man. To make matters worse, his claims that he did not inhale the marijuana only made matters worse, especially when done under the press' magnifying glass.

On the other end of the spectrum, a history of drugs will not stop Obama. His campaign, after all, is set under the light of hope in his slogan, "Change Americans Can Believe In." And by bringing out an aura of optimism and understanding, McCain's camp will not get much out of any attack on Obama from his past drug history. If McCain were to bring up Obama's drug use, he would be seen as a person set in the past and an unforgiving soul. Even worse, it would further set him apart from younger voters if he made that sort of accusation — one he cannot afford.

In the unlikely case John McCain happens to be called under question about drug use, chances are that the candidate is going to get less slack than Obama. McCain barely has a carefree sense about him, and any moral flaw in a conservative candidate will not go overlooked. Not to say that McCain has that type of drug history, but do not be alarmed to find that every part of the candidates' lives will be picked apart and examined in the next few months.

At this point, anything's possible.

Barack made a few wise choices with how he dealt with his drug use. By using the media and the public to his benefit, his substance abuse background is hardly an issue. While I do not think that drug use should be taken so lightly, especially when deciding who the next president of the United States should be, there is not much of a choice. A new age of voters has arrived, and morality has taken a back seat in all arenas, not just politics. Look around — television shows, the music industry and public opinion in general could care less about that skeleton in the closet. The country has yet to become appalled by extreme exploitation. Obama is more of a survivor than an abuser in America's eyes and nobody will be able to change that.

So the evolution of America has occurred: drugs might be bad, but they really are not as big of a deal as they were, especially as younger generations change outlooks.

Thies is a sophomore English major from Plano. E-mail her at jaclyn.thies@ttu.edu.

Oil woes can only be solved by both short-term local and long-term national solutions

BY BAILY LEWIS
IOWA STATE DAILY (IOWA STATE U.)

A quick fix is never perfect. But some quick fixes are less perfect than others.

Example: In order to decrease oil prices, Sen. John Warner has proposed a national speed limit of 55 or 60 miles per hour, similar to the one imposed in 1974.

According to Warner, the last national limit saved 167,000 barrels of gas per day.

Many people just assume that means it will save that much again.

Warner says, "Given the significant increase in the number of vehicles on America's highway system from 1974 to 2008, one could assume that the amount

of fuel that could be conserved today is far greater."

Don't assume so quickly.

Gas mileage does seem to go down at speeds higher than 60 mph. According to the United States Department of Energy's Web site, "Each 5 mph you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.30 per gallon for gas."

Google Maps helped me figure out that traveling on I-80 from Omaha, Nebraska on the eastern border of the state to Pine Bluffs on the western border currently takes about six hours and fifteen minutes. If the speed limit that whole way was 60, it would take about seven hours and forty minutes.

I'm not sure how much gas

you'd really be saving.

There are other, less intrusive methods we should be trying before national legislation.

One of the gas-saving tips given by the United States Energy Department's Web site is to "avoid excessive idling." How many times have you been sitting at a red light for an extended period of time when no other cars were in sight?

Our local governments should re-time all the lights or even make them motion-sensored so that they're more efficient in traffic flow. In fact, after a certain time of night a lot of the intersections would probably be fine with a blinking red light. However, this would be something for

each locality to decide on its own.

Long-lasting construction detours and closings also cause people to waste gas as they drive the long way around to get to their destinations.

In larger cities, there are constant traffic jams. Local authorities could take measures to minimize construction length as well as allow better traffic flow in constantly jammed areas.

Public transportation is another method people are already turning to. In Ames, we are lucky to have CyRide, but how about a bus that goes from Ames to Des Moines and back on a regular basis?

Instead of passing legislation, Congress could instigate a campaign to make drivers

aware of how much gas they expend over 60 miles per hour. It might be enough to make people consider driving more slowly or buy a more fuel-efficient car.

Of course, measures like traffic lights and buses won't fix the problem. They're just quick fixes. However, they would be less intrusive and more convenient.

People are already making changes to use less gas: carpooling, making fewer trips, taking the bus, etc. Utah has established an experimental four-day workweek for its state employees. Sounds pretty good to me.

Let individuals and the local governments work out the quick fixes. The national government needs to be working on the long-term solutions.

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Queens of chess attend chess invitational on Tech's campus

BY MIA WALTERS
STAFF WRITER

These girls are not afraid to put the boys in check.

The Susan Polgar National Chess Invitational for Girls began Sunday in the Frazier Alumni Pavilion. Fifty girls, all under the age of 18 years old, came to Lubbock from each state in the union to compete for a full scholarship to attend Texas Tech.

While this year is the tournament's fifth year, it is the first time it is held on Tech's campus.

Susan Polgar, director of the Susan Polgar Institute for Chess Excellence, said the tournament will be held at Tech for the next 10 years.

Tech's Associate Vice Provost James E. Brink said Tech is a university full of champions, so it is fitting to have such a prestigious tournament on its campus.

"We see a correlation between chess skills and good academic skills," Brink said, "so we really want people to realize we are a chess-oriented university."

Polgar, who works in Tech's provost's office, was the first woman in history to qualify for the Men's World Chess Championship in 1996 but was not allowed to compete because she was a

woman, said Paul Truong, director of marketing and public relations for the institute.

The name of the tournament was changed and now allows women to compete because of Polgar and she said she hopes more girls will be encouraged to play chess.

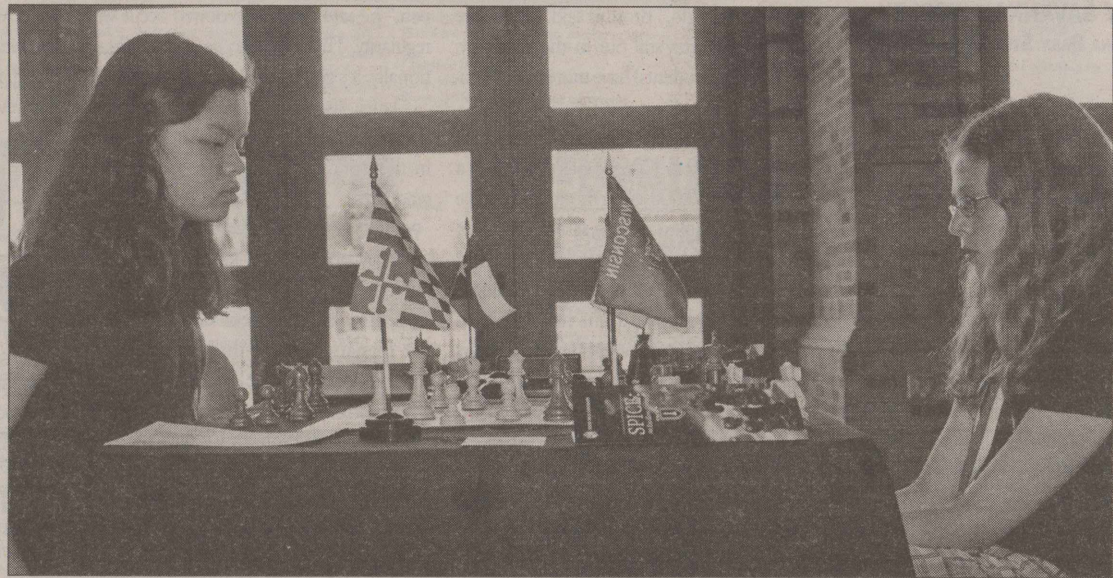
"I wanted to provide an opportunity for young girls to get together, because this is a special event," Polgar said. "Since it is only one girl from each state, you have to qualify - not just anybody can compete - so that makes it very special."

During the opening ceremony Polgar spoke to the tournament participants and encouraged them to carry their knowledge of chess with them and spread it to other people, especially girls.

"My dream was to establish a partnership with the idea that the girls will carry the responsibility to promote chess," she said. "I hope that they will all do their share to get girls to play chess all around the country, in every state."

Truong said many people still do not take girls seriously in chess. He said the lack of opportunities for girls to play chess is a primary reason few girls play, but this event hopefully will encourage more girls to play chess.

The youngest girl to compete in the



Fiona Lam from Maryland and Mira Ensley-Field from Wisconsin face-off Sunday at the Susan Polgar National Chess Invitational for Girls in the Frazier Alumni Pavilion.

Photo Credit: Ruben Castillo/ The Daily Toreador

this year's National Chess Invitational is 6-years-old. She is the youngest to compete in the tournament's five-year history.

"It is something special to see a lot of young girls out here competing," Truong said. "Chess is a game that basically transcends race, gender, social and economic stature - everything."

The Invitational may have a large

impact on recruiting students to Tech, Truong said. The institute hopes Tech will be viewed as a "chess school."

Another tournament, the Susan Polgar Institute for Chess Excellence Cup, is scheduled in September at the Student Union Building.

He said the tournament could eventually help with recruiting at Tech.

Truong said it would be valuable for

Tech to recruit chess players because all of the participants have high grade point averages ranging from 3.8 to 4.0.

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'Extreme Makeover' house may be victim of foreclosure crisis

LAKE CITY, Ga. (AP) — More than 1,800 people showed up to help ABC's "Extreme Makeover" team demolish a family's decrepit home and replace it with a sparkling, four-bedroom mini-mansion in 2005.

Three years later, the reality TV show's most ambitious project at the time has become the latest victim of the foreclosure crisis.

After the Harper family used the two-story home as collateral for a \$450,000 loan, it's set to go to auction on the steps of the Clayton County Courthouse Aug. 5. The

couple did not return phone calls Monday, but told WSB-TV they received the loan for a construction business that failed.

The house was built in January 2005, after Atlanta-based Beazer Homes USA and ABC's "Extreme Makeover" demolished their old home and its faulty septic system. Within six days, construction crews and hoards of volunteers had completed work on the largest home that the television program had yet built.

The finished product was a four-bedroom house with decorative rock walls and a three-car garage that towered over

ranch and split-level homes in their Clayton County neighborhood. The home's door opened into a lobby that featured four fireplaces, a solarium, a music room and a plush new office.

Materials and labor were donated for the home, which would have cost about \$450,000 to build. Beazer Homes' employees and company partners also raised \$250,000 in contributions for the family, including scholarships for the couple's three children and a home maintenance fund.

ABC said in a statement that it advises each family to consult a financial planner

after they get their new home. "Ultimately, financial matters are personal, and we work to respect the privacy of the families," the network said.

Some of the volunteers who helped build the home were less than thrilled about the family's financial decisions.

"It's aggravating. It just makes you mad. You do that much work, and they just squander it," Lake City Mayor Willie Oswald, who helped vault a massive beam into place in the Harper's living room, told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.



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THE FRONT PAGE: Taylor Baily from Oregon plans her next move Sunday afternoon at the Susan Polgar National Chess Invitational for Girls. Photo by Ruben Castillo.

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Jobs for college graduates still available despite 'softening' economy

BY SAVANNAH WORLEY
INDIANA DAILY STUDENT (INDIANA U.)

Students might be worried that a job won't be waiting for them after they graduate, but Indiana University officials say with proper career planning during college, they have little cause for concern.

The national unemployment rate is at 5.5 percent, a .9 percent increase from last year, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. But Kelley School of Business Undergraduate Career Services has only seen a slight decline in full-time job acceptances last year for business students who use their services, said Mark Brostoff, associate director of Undergraduate Career Services. He also noted a 4 percent increase in internship acceptances. He said despite the "softening economy," companies still seek to hire college graduates.

"Companies have recognized that although there is a slowdown, there's still a

lot of work to do," Brostoff said. "There are strong industries still out in the economy, and (college students) have more opportunities than others."

Throughout this year, the U.S. economy has lost 50,000 to 100,000 jobs a month at a time when 150,000 jobs a month need to be added for a stable economy, said Bruce Jaffee, professor and chairman of IU's Department of Business Economics and Public Policy.

Jaffee said the current housing crisis lowers the amount of money consumers have because people's homes make up the majority of their wealth. He said the housing problem, along with the rising cost of gas and food, causes consumers to spend less money. This causes a decrease in demand for companies' products, thus forcing companies to hire fewer people, Jaffee said.

Despite the weakening economy, Jaffee said IU graduates should not have much to fear if they prepare themselves properly.

"We're at a weak point, but it does hap-

pen," he said. "Ups and downs occur with regularity. They ought to be aware that, nationally, it's going to be a tough market."

Jaffee also said the recent increases to the federal minimum wage affects those in the working class more so than college graduates.

"It hurts city employment, but college grads are not getting a job that pays \$6.55 an hour," he said.

Career Development Center Director Pat Donahue noted that 82 percent of students in the College of Arts and Sciences who use his center's services found work last year. He said some areas have more opportunities than others. Fields that currently have a high chance of employability include life sciences, federal government, health care and information technology.

Whatever their majors are, Donahue said students need to be assertive in their career planning and seek part-time jobs, internships and volunteer opportunities in their fields. He suggested that students be flexible in what jobs they want and where they want to live. Students should start their career planning during their freshman year, Donahue added.

"Majors do not matter that much," he said. "Getting experience and getting involved is important."

Junior Krestina Johnson is considering applying for medical school after she graduates, but she said she is concerned with job security. However, she said she is willing to do what it takes to get a job, even if it means moving to a different state.

"You have to try everywhere," she said. "If you get a job anywhere, you might as well go."

Students can also stay in school longer to obtain a higher degree in their field, Donahue said. He predicts an increase of students applying for graduate school because of the lack of job security.

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Donahue said there is no guarantee that students will get a job after they graduate, no matter how much planning they do. However, he said, college students should

be active and take job opportunities instead of just waiting for them.

"It's a two-way street," Donahue said. "There's a lot that the student has to do."

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Green Bay not moving on until Brett Favre does

(AP) — Brett Favre and the Green Bay Packers are even. He gave them the best years of a stellar career and a Super Bowl title. In return, they gave him a boatload of money, all the help they could afford, and as many chances to make up his mind as any reasonable man could want.

So the dispute isn't personal, even if it's been portrayed that way at times. It isn't about next season, either.

The Packers would probably be better off come September with Favre starting at quarterback instead of Aaron Rodgers. The gray beard is coming off an MVP-caliber season, even though he finished a distant second to New England's Tom Brady in balloting for the award.

Favre threw 28 touchdown passes, 15 interceptions and compiled a very respectable quarterback rating of 95.7. He led the Packers to the NFC championship game, even though it was his ill-considered pass that New York's Corey Webster picked off in overtime to book the Giants' passage to the Super Bowl.

On the other hand, Favre's totals from the two previous seasons were 47 interceptions and 38 TDs. And he will turn 39 in October. Then

there's the cautionary tale of Steve Young, who spent the better part of four seasons on the sideline in San Francisco backing up Joe Montana. Those were Young's prime years as an athlete and the only thing he got better at was holding a clipboard.

There's no guarantee, of course, that Rodgers will turn out to be anywhere near as good as Young was. But after the way Favre has behaved the past few seasons, it's time for the Packers to find out. And blaming the club for refusing to stop the bus and turn it around every time Favre decides he might want to get back on — considering his record the past few offseasons, isn't just shortsighted, it's stupid.

Coach Mike McCarthy repeated one more time Saturday that Rodgers was his choice to play quarterback. Green Bay's rebuilt defense and solid ground game — assuming the club comes to terms with running back Ryan Grant — should buy him enough time to find out whether that's the right call, but just barely.

Favre said he agreed with a request from Packers general manager Ted Thompson to miss the opening of camp so as not to be a distraction, even though everything he's done

the past couple of offseasons said otherwise. He talked about retiring year after year, then finally, tearfully, announced his retirement just this past March, then hinted he wanted to come back again.

Yet when the Packers expressed a willingness to take him back at the end of March, Favre changed his mind one more time. But no sooner had the team committed to Rodgers than Favre stage-managed yet another unretirement, selectively leaking his side of the story to the continuing embarrassment of the club.

If just about any other athlete behaved like that, he'd be ridiculed as selfish. Terrell Owens and Chad Johnson are tagged as mercenaries for much less and not too long ago, Favre ripped then-teammate Javon Walker for holding out for a better contract, claiming he was hurting the team.

Yet Favre never hesitated to leverage his own situation to cash in and worse, to force McCarthy — not to mention predecessors Mike Sherman, Ray Rhodes and Mike Holmgren — to let him play despite injuries to keep his consecutive-game streak going. Talk about hurting a team.

Reigning gold medalist Paul Hamm withdrawing from Beijing Olympics

(AP) — Paul Hamm won't be going to the Beijing Olympics, after all.

The reigning Olympic gold medalist announced Monday that he is withdrawing from the U.S. team because his broken right hand is not sufficiently healthy enough for him to compete.

He also hurt his rotator cuff in his accelerated recovery effort.

"I have put my heart and soul into my comeback and done everything I could to get ready in time to compete in Beijing," Hamm said in a statement released by USA Gymnastics.

"After returning home from the preparation camp, I had a few physical setbacks, and it became clear to me that my physical preparations would not be sufficient to properly represent the United States and contribute to the team's efforts to win a medal.

"At this point in time, the success of the team and fairness to the team, and the alternates,

is most important. While I am very disappointed, I feel I can wait no longer to make this decision."

The U.S. men are scheduled to leave Wednesday, and competition begins Aug. 9.

One of the alternates — Sasha Artemev, David Durante and Raj Bhavsar — will take Hamm's place.

Hamm's injury is a blow to the Americans, who were fourth at last year's world championships and hoped his return — and that of twin brother Morgan — would get them back on the podium. It also clears the way for China's Yang Wei in the all-around race. Yang, the two-time defending world champion, is so technically superior that Hamm is believed to be the only one who could challenge him.

Hamm broke his hand May 22 at the national championships, just 11 weeks before the start of the games. He had surgery five days later and pushed his recovery in hopes he'd be healthy enough to help the Americans win a medal and defend his all-around title.



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