



KRISTINE KHOURI/News Photo Editor

Geoff Emberling, museum director of the Oriental Institute, points at a ceramic offering stand from Megiddo, in the newest gallery "Empires in the Fertile Crescent: Ancient Assyria, Anatolia and Israel."

Oriental Institute unveils new artifacts Middle East treasures will open to public Saturday

BY DANIEL GILBERT
NEWS FEATURES EDITOR

Nearly 9,000 years ago, a worker in the Amuq Valley used a small, bronze knife to prepare his evening meal. The worker is now long gone, but the tool he used can be found on display at the Oriental Institute's new gallery, "Empires in the Fertile Crescent: Ancient Assyria, Anatolia, and Israel."

The gallery, which opens

Saturday, January 29, marks the opening of a new wing of the museum's permanent collection, featuring a wide variety of artifacts excavated by University archeologists, many of which have never before been displayed.

The new gallery is part of an ongoing reinstatement project, which dates back to 1996, when the Oriental Institute closed the museum for renovations. Gil Stein, director of the Oriental Institute and

professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, said that the most important feature of the new gallery is its climate control. "Humidity can explode artifacts," Stein said. "These collections are unique, they are from our excavations in the 1920s and '30s, and there is no way we could ever replace them."

The gallery, which focuses on three civilizations in the Middle East during the Bronze and Iron Ages, **OI continued on page 4**

Theories swirl as Ida Noyes remains missing

BY DANIEL GILBERT
NEWS FEATURES EDITOR

Investigators have come no closer to identifying a suspect or motive since last Saturday, when University administration discovered a portrait of Ida Noyes missing.

Tim Banks, associate director for facilities and event services at Ida Noyes Hall, was first alerted of the incident last Saturday, when the event staff for the International Food Festival noticed that the painting was missing. The incident is being treated as a theft, and both the University of Chicago Police and the Chicago City Police are investigating.

According to Banks, the thieves cut the painting out of the frame, and escaped, leaving the frame behind.

The Chicago Police Department sent a team of experts to dust for fingerprints on Saturday, but Banks said he has received no word of any possible leads. Banks remains puzzled by the case. "If it's a prank, it's not really one that can be taken back," he said, referring to the dam-

IDA continued on page 3

New speedbumps highlight pedestrian safety concerns

BY HASSAN S. ALI
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

With the newest additions of the Comer Children's Hospital and the Graduate School of Business, and the commercial developments in surrounding neighborhoods, Hyde Park's growth has led to concerns over traffic safety.

The Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference (HPKCC)—a neighborhood organization—has voiced concerns over traffic safety in the past, especially for local elementary and high schools. In coordination with Fifth Ward Alderman Leslie Hairston, parents

and school administrators have pressured the city to ensure safer roads for children, resulting in the installation of stop signs, speed bumps, and police presence in many areas.

In response to the heightened security concerns, a number of speed bumps were installed on Kimbark Avenue in the parking lot shared by the GSB and the Lab School. The installations were initiated by Lab School Facilities Director Tony Wilson, in coordination with the Parents' Association, after months of talks with the city. This past week, however, the speed bumps—which are rubber—were

BUMP continued on page 6



DREW HUENING/News Photo Staff

Russ Hittinger, second-year in the College filters vodka through a Brita filter.

Does filtration make vodka better?

BY DREW HUENING
MAROON STAFF

A massive extracurricular science project in Hyde Park and around the country has intrepid college students asking the question, "Can my roommate's water filter improve cheap vodka?" Some feel that Brita plus Skol equal Grey Goose, while others think Dmitri plus Pur equal placebo effect. Though results vary and theoretical analysis is not quite conclusive, the phenomenon shows no signs of slowing.

Of the experimenters on cam-

Online registration may get facelift

Administrative websites could be streamlined in upcoming year

BY JOEL LANCETA
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

Choosing classes and other uses of the Registrar's office may become easier for students in the upcoming year, if a proposal is approved to consolidate all the Registrar's internet sources into one website.

The SG Committee on Academic Concerns met with University Registrar Thomas Black and Therese Allen-Vassar, the director of web services in NSIT, on January 21 to discuss the future of web services at the University.

One of the main topics was limited scope of the cMore project. Many of the committee members said their ideal plan would be for the Registrar to combine aspects of other University websites—Chalk, Bidding, Add/Drop, Time Schedules, the Course cata-

log—into cMore.

"cMore is seen as a program with little purpose now, but with lots of potential," said Christian Brockman, a first-year in the College and a member of the Academics Committee, in an e-mail interview. "Chalk is seen as confusing to navigate around. Also, there are complaints with teachers not using it or putting documents in confusing places."

David Clayman, the chair of the Academic Committee and a second-year in the College, said that many came to him with complaints and grievances regarding the registration. "Several students I talked to did not fill out their health insurance survey for one reason or another," Clayman said. "Then they were blocked from registering for the next quarter, and when they tried to fill out the survey, **CHANGES continued on page 6**

Stone lectures on rocky topic



KRISTINE KHOURI/News Photo Editor

Professor Geoffrey R. Stone spoke yesterday on his recent book, *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime: From the Sedition Act of 1789 to the War on Terrorism*. He discussed governments' actions during wartime to curtail free speech and look back at those decisions as a mistake while relating it to the Patriot Act and our current situation.

Karl Siebert, Cornell biochemistry researcher—more rigorous scientific consideration tacitly supports filter effectiveness.

Like so many other campus memes, vodka filtration's beginnings are mysterious. Hittinger heard about it in his hometown of

FILTER continued on page 3

Inside the MAROON

VIEWPOINTS.....	7
PHOTO	10
VOICES.....	11
CLASSIFIEDS.....	19
SPORTS.....	20

THE UNCOMMON INTERVIEW

GREG WENDT

As we reported in the January 21 issue of the MAROON, Greg Wendt, A.B. '83, made a personal donation of \$100,000 to the University's Blue Chips student investment club in order for the club members to manage their own real portfolio. A former Alpha Delt, Wendt has gone on to become a portfolio manager and investment analyst for Capital Research Company, one of the country's largest mutual fund management companies. The MAROON caught up with Wendt to ask him a few questions.



Chicago Maroon: *Other than your involvement with Blue Chips, what has your relationship been like with the University since you graduated?*

Greg Wendt: I suspect that I am pretty typical of alumni from my era. When I left campus in 1983, I started to drift away from the University. But, at a point about 10 years ago, I really began to appreciate the impact that Chicago had on me and I began to get involved in supporting the school. At first, I was purely just a donor. But then I was asked to join the College Visiting Committee, and began to return to campus on a fairly regular basis. The more time an alum spends at the University of Chicago, the clearer it becomes that Chicago is a special place and that preservation of its unique qualities is best achieved through active support by alumni. So, little by little, I have gotten more deeply involved and have

really enjoyed doing so. I now co-chair the College portion of the Chicago Initiative. I suppose how I got to this point is through a realization that my MBA, which I received elsewhere, certainly opened doors but those open doors would have been meaningless without my Chicago education, which opened my mind.

On a less cerebral note, I probably should also say that I remain a strong supporter of my old fraternity, Alpha Delta Phi. All of my best friends from my undergraduate years were Alpha Deltas, so I can seldom resist swinging by 5747 South University Avenue when I am on campus. In fact, my last beer as a single guy was one quick Bud Light that I had at Alpha Delt on the way to my wedding at Rockefeller Chapel in 2000.

CM: *What kind of extracurricular outlet existed for students interested in investing*

and/or banking when you were a student? Was there any kind of student group that would be considered analogous to Blue Chips?

GW: Not that I can recall. I also only remember one Wall Street firm recruiting on campus the year that I graduated.

CM: *How well do you feel the rigorous liberal arts education provided at the University prepares students for the real world of banking/business in general?*

GW: I am a mutual fund manager, not a banker. But, in general, there is nothing so complex about the finance industry that it cannot be learned later in life. Still, any liberal arts major needs to be financially literate. I feel strongly that the topic of financial literacy is relevant to everybody regardless of their career aspirations. Be you a baker, banker, poet, or surgeon, you should understand saving and investing. Frankly, I graduated Chicago with an embarrassingly low level of financial literacy.

CM: *What was your reasoning for donating \$100,000 directly to the students involved in Blue Chips, as opposed to giving the money to CAPS or the Graduate School of Business, for example, and having them allocate the funds for student use?*

GW: Trust me, until the dollars are real dollars, investing is an abstract concept. Managing an imaginary portfolio feels very different than managing real money. I wanted any student who met the requirements to be able to understand what it feels like to invest real dollars. I never had

the money to own real stocks until later in life. Knowledge about this aspect of financial literacy should not be limited to those with more substantial means who could invest on their own.

CM: *How do you think your donation allowing Blue Chips to manage its own portfolio with real money will specifically impact the club and its members? Do you think it will aid in giving the club a more serious reputation? Do you think it will cause increased student interest in the club?*

GW: Some of the most impressive folks I know in the investment world got interested in the business through student-managed portfolios. The University of Wisconsin program is particularly renowned. If everything goes well over the next couple of years, I hope Blue Chips becomes a bigger deal that people take seriously and want to get involved in. Importantly, I hope that this does not become focused on being a quasi-pre-professional program. I really hope that Blue Chips casts a broad net and get students involved who just want to learn about investing because they know that it is an important tool in life.

CM: *Any final comments you'd like to make?*

GW: For what it is worth, as somebody who attended the last Lascivious Costume Ball—I think it was in 1982—you all need to bring that back to campus.

—Jennifer Glickel

Is it just me, or does this water taste like cheap liquor?

FILTER continued from front page

Tulsa, from “20-something no-ones who like to drink.”

Bailey first heard about it “through the ether of the Internet”—more specifically, the blog-like website www.ohmygoditburns.com (OMGIB). Filled almost entirely with vodka filtration content, the site provides a comprehensive “lab report” from an informal evening of “boozahology” that include non-blind taste tests and Saltine “science” crackers for palate cleansing.

Procedures vary slightly, but all sources recommend multiple passes through a pitcher-style water filter. Warm or cold, Hittinger and OMGIB agree with Bailey, who states that vodka filtration takes “a very long time, much longer than it takes to filter water”—about 15 to 20 minutes for the standard 1.75 liters. While performing a demonstration, Hittinger provided his own explanation of the slow drip: “That means it’s working.”

Once filtered, the difficult task of testing begins. Actual procedures varied significantly. Both Bailey’s team and OMGIB sampled progressively, simultaneously comparing unfiltered, filtered, and control (expensive) vodkas. Bailey’s team went a step farther, using a single-blind testing methodology to avoid bias.

Given that the federal government defines vodka as “neutral spirits...without distinctive character, aroma, taste or color,” experimenters struggled to accurately convey their experiences.

After five passes, Bailey’s testers “could very reliably tell the difference between the different samples.” The OMGIB team noted reduction of “offensive taste and odor” starting on the first pass and continuing through the fifth. One OMGIB tester

felt that the inexpensive but multiply filtered “Vladimir Vodka” surpassed the control vodka—a pricey bottle of Ketel One.

Hittinger reported that after four passes, his \$13 Popov tasted like vodka for which he’d expect to pay twice as much. When asked to describe results in more detail, Hittinger and other team members, who chose to remain anonymous, opted for “smoother,” “less throat burning,” and “more drinkable.”

Were these results valid? One Hittinger team member suspected the placebo effect, and all testers pointed out the uncontrolled variable of intoxication.

When polled by e-mail for a more rigorous scientific perspective, professor Laurie Butler—the only respondent amongst seventeen University Chemistry faculty members—stated that “students can filter their vodka however they’d like.”

A less subjective perspective was provided by Siebert, who currents the Cornell undergraduate course, “Understanding Wine and Beer.” In addition to working at the Stroh Brewery Company for 18 years, Siebert has in his travels toured a Stolichnaya factory outside of Moscow.

From Siebert’s scientific perspective, vodka is “as close to pure ethanol as you’ll get,” albeit diluted with water. Extensive distillation and filtration creates this purity, and variations in these two processes account for nearly all differences between vodkas. From an analytic chemistry perspective, even a single rough distillation creates an alcoholic spirit that is “99 percent pure.” Unfortunately, these trace impurities “can be strongly flavored,” in a way that sensation scientists don’t completely understand.

To “clean up” these remaining impurities, producers pass vodka through filters filled

with active carbon—the same active carbon which fills consumer water filters. Could the Brita filter pick out impurities missed by industrial carbon filtering processes? “Good vodkas,” according to Siebert, “are normally passed through ‘mountains of charcoal,’” thereby reducing the possibility of consumer filter effectiveness. For cheap vodkas, though, Siebert speculates that corners are cut on both distillation and filtration, creating room for a Brita intervention.

Does this analysis agree with on-campus investigations?

Bailey’s team, though noting significant differences, decided against further trials or permanent implementation. Bailey, an economics concentrator, summarized his personal dissatisfaction with an alchemical allusion: “Rather than lead into gold, we spun lead into slightly less filthy and offensive lead.”

After the testing phase, Hittinger’s team was so impressed they moved to permanent implementation. Surplus filters allowed for a two-filter switching system that quickly solved what one roommate termed the “milky water or smooth vodka” tradeoff.

Much as these experiments have shown that the vodka world can be finicky, *The New York Times* Dining and Wine section published a taste test of high-end domestic and imported vodkas in a late breaking development. Smirnoff beat out other brands for the top spot. Grey Goose did not even make the top 10.

All experimenters agree that filtration makes a perceptible difference, yet some found the exercise essentially pointless. Without a rigorous diagnostic analysis, one recourse seems to remain—more research.

Portrait was cut out of its frame

IDA continued from front page

age already done to the painting.

Sharlene Holly, director of the Office of the Reynolds Club and Student Activities (ORCSA), noted that the University has a number of portraits with alarms, and while the stolen painting was not alarmed, the frame was very securely attached to the wall. “That’s why they had to cut it out,” she said.

Holly still views the theft as a possible prank. She emphasized the responsibility of students to inform the police of anything they learn regarding the theft. “There are thefts that happen on campus every day,” Holly said. “Someone leaves an office unlocked, or a book bag unattended—[it’s] mostly personal items,” she noted, casting robberies as a reality of living in an urban setting.

Banks said that ORCSA has held meetings to discuss how the theft may have happened, and how to prevent similar occurrences in the future. Suggestions offered at the meeting included increasing staff numbers and the frequency with which a security guard makes his rounds. Banks said that the University will wait to hear back from investigators before they make any policy decisions.

Banks and his staff are considering replacing the stolen painting with a portrait of another woman from the Judd family. Interestingly, the possible replacement was itself recovered from a robbery 10 years ago, Banks said.

University administration believes the painting was stolen in the hours between Friday night and Saturday morning, which raises the concern that although Ida Noyes Hall closes at midnight on Friday and Saturday, the Pub is open until 2 A.M. on those days.

Victor Vogt, the Pub’s chief bartender, said that no one from the administration had come to speak to him about the robbery. “It’s alarming, but that painting can’t be of any value to anyone here. It’s probably a prank,” he said. When informed that the painting had been cut out of its frame, Vogt was surprised. “If it’s a prank, then it’s a bad one. If it’s vandalism, then it’s stupid,” he said.

CRIME REPORT

An attempted armed robbery occurred on January 26 at 11:09 A.M. A woman was trying to dig her car out of the snow when an assailant approached her and said, “Give me all your money.” After

briefly entering the vehicle, the offender left the area on foot.

An attempted burglary occurred at 900 East Hyde Park Boulevard on January 26. A female resident of the

building reported she heard someone attempting to gain entry. But a robbery never materialized and the assailant is still at large.

—Anthony Serritella