

E PLURIBUS PLURUM

America still remains the land of opportunity for many throughout the world. At The Rockefeller University a high proportion of workers have come to this country from a foreign shore. To commemorate America's birthday, the 230th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, Natural Selections asked some RU foreign nationals about their experiences as immigrants and their opinions about America. Responses have been published anonymously to allow people to express their views candidly. Due to space constraints, we have not been able to print every response to every question. On our website http://selections.rockefeller.edu the complete set of responses may be viewed.

A) Why did you decide to come to America?

Anonymous (Anon) #2: What's the best reason for moving? Love!

Anon #6: Great research environment, great researchers from all over the world, lots of information. Also to learn English.

Anon #7: To get a broader horizon and see the world from a different standpoint.

Anon #8: Came with my dad, but for my dad we came here because he wanted a better life for me.

Anon #9: I came here to get a better education, as I believed the American education system encouraged freedom of expression and true learning.

Anon #15: They give you a lot of opportunities. I came to America to finish my studies and to live the American Dream, nice house, education etc.

Anon #21: Because Rockefeller University was the best for me and my son, compared to offers in Germany and England.

Anon #22: Childhood memories play tricks on you. I came to America to find Joyce Davenport, a character from the show Hill Street Blues I fell in love with in the early eighties, while in Portugal. Back then, America was everywhere, and not only on TV. I had immigrant relatives living on the outskirts of Boston, and they shipped enormous cardboard packages with goodies to my grandparents.

The first time I saw the word "sex" printed was in the single and precious Cosmopolitan issue my grandmother got from her sister in America. I couldn't read yet, but the photos of Brooke Shields may have helped me figuring out what the text was about. They would

also send me gifts, and by far my favorite was a Boston Red Sox T-shirt. I had no idea what Boston Red Sox meant, but I loved to put on that T-shirt to play, well, soccer. And then there was my uncle. He went from Lisbon to Texas to work as a plastic surgeon and came back metamorphosed into a cowboy: boots, hat, and leather

jacket. It made quite an impression I have to say; my father wore a suit and tie everyday. Whereas most people come to America to get more money, move up in the social scale, or out of attraction for a country they admire and know, I moved here to relive my childhood. Joyce? Call me.

B) What was your first impression of America? How did it match your expectations?

Anon #1: The horrible hallway of JFK upon landing in the US for the first time. Didn't I arrive in the richest nation on Earth? Once in the taxi, I was overwhelmed by the energy and enthusiasm of New Yorkers. The USA is a gigantic sweet and sour country, a land full of paradoxes.

Anon #2: During my first visit in the US, I experienced the blackout while I was desperately trying to reach the airport. What impressed me most was the positive attitude of the people in Manhattan. Everyone was partying in the street, trying to help each other. Can anything stop New Yorkers?

Anon #3: I stayed in San Diego for two months before coming to New York. At that time, I found everything was much bigger than in Japan. It was sort of what I had expected since stereotypical Americans like anything to be big.

Anon #4: I found ugly, huge cars everywhere

on the way from the airport. I still don't quite understand Americans' fascination with huge gas-guzzlers. I was also surprised when people ate during scientific talks and casually relaxed with their feet on the table. These things would never happen in India where science is

Issue 28 July 2006



considered very formal.

New York City is quite different from the rest of the USA in terms of meeting my expectations. I found it vibrant, liberal, and multicultural where one can do anything one wants. In that respect it met and exceeded my expectations. I also spent a year at Cornell University in Ithaca. There I saw small-town America which is more family-oriented, religious, and traditional.

Anon #5: The first impression was good, but (referring to New York) I was expecting to find more integration of cultures. While I think it is multicultural, each culture remains on its own.

Anon #7: I came without expectations, to avoid major disappointments.

Anon #9: Clean, well-organized, considerably more liberal people than in my home country in terms of accepting differences or eccentricities. Now that I've been here for over 15 years, there are parts of the country and certain pockets of people that are ignorant, and as I've become more knowledgeable about politics etc. things aren't as well organized as they seem. But I still love being here-nowhere is perfect.

Anon #11: Generally met my expectations. I was horrified though by the level of maturity continued on next page expressed by college freshmen of privileged background and their general lackadaisical attitude toward foreigners. To this day, I honestly think they define the phrase "spoilt brats."

Anon #13: I spent my first night at Newark Airport and I could see the Manhattan skyline; this was rather just as I had imagined it from pictures, if a bit less grandiose. The next morning I flew to the Midwest and that's when I was surprised by America. I remember thinking that everything was so perfect: very broad roads, trees and flowers everywhere, square blocks, and perfectly aligned cloned houses with uniformly cut grass. It seemed like a movie set.

Anon #14: My first impression of America was positive. The first place I moved to was NY and I felt the people were outgoing and free. I say free because they had the freedom to say whatever they wanted to say. In Haiti, you criticize the government, you need to hide for your life.

Anon #19: I didn't like it at first, I was in the Midwest and that part of the country seemed "fake friendly" and I felt like I did not belong there. I didn't think that it would be so different from my home country, but it was. As soon as I moved to NYC things changed. I love it here!

Anon #20: As the first impression depends on the state/city visited, which in my case was California, I was surprised to see how much one is dependent on the car. I missed being able to walk without being asked if something is wrong. Also, I expected to see the giant food portions, but I didn't know that these will also translate into an overemphasis of grandeur in everyday life, as everything has to be big and great.

Anon #22: I guess this boils down to my first impression of New York. It was like being on the set of a movie I had seen too many times. As the Pentagon would probably put it: "Shock and Familiarity." This is, I guess, a common reaction, particularly amongst cinema fanatics. But there was something else, a bit disturbing. During the first hours in downtown Manhattan, I felt quite Lilliputian. For a moment, I thought someone would grab and lock me in a cage, like a hamster, to amuse their kids or impress their guests. There were those huge buildings, those huge portions in restaurants, huge limos, and huge, huge people.

As far as my expectations go, things didn't start exactly as I had planned. I wanted to get to America with only \$10 in my pocket, because it would look good in my biography, and that's how a real immigrant should enter a new country. Instead, I had a scholarship and real estate investments. It felt like cheating. Anyway, given the salary of a postdoctoral associate and the cost of living in Manhattan, I may actually be able to leave the US with only \$10 in my pocket, which would be a nice twist.

C) What do you like most about America? Anon #4: The informal attitude to research, the ability to generate resources if the need arises. Anon #5: In theory, one can do what one really likes. Also, you can reinvent yourself at almost any age.

Anon #7: You work hard, you succeed! And the beautiful landscape outside the city. Anon #9: I think I've found my true home in NYC where it is a true melting pot for people of all races and backgrounds. While there is some element of social stratification, the expectations aren't as high or rigid as they would be where I'm originally from. Anon #10: Enthusiasm for new ideas, and individualism (in the good sense of the word). Anon #11: I can be who I want to be and people are not quick to judge.

Anon #12: I like that meritocracy exists and it is possible to reach one's goals as long as one works for it. This is not always the case where I come from.

Anon #13: Although not everyone can be in the tenth percentile, in America everyone has a reasonable chance of getting ahead. As importantly, due to the broad definition of what it means to be American, immigrants are truly integrated in society much faster than in any other country in the world.

Anon #14: The freedom of press, the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion.

Anon #17: What I like most is the fact that you can find anything you want here: clothes, food, any type of technology, ANYTHING... and you can usually find it at a good price from at least one place.

Anon #18: I love the people in my lab. They have made my start here go much better than I could have hoped for. Pork is really cheap here.

Anon #20: I like the directness of Americans in stating their point of view (especially in New York), and the conscientiousness in their work.

Anon #22: American TV and politics. American TV is so bad these days that I stopped watching it, ending a long lasting addiction. American TV got me hooked 30 years ago, and then it cured me. This is something the tobacco companies will never manage to do. It's not that I like American TV. I just feel compelled to thank whoever put all those terrible shows on the air. Politics is a different matter. The US foreign policy is a bit tragic, but internally it's just fascinating to see how people can be so



Natural Selections

selections.rockefeller.edu naturalselections@rockefeller.edu

passionate about civil liberties, their rights, a cause, any cause, including no cause at all. It can be ridiculous and entertaining (the constellation of conspirationists this country accommodates), annoying (creationists and intelligent designers), worrisome (Republicans dealing with science), exciting (media personalities, particularly radio hosts), and convincing on universal and urgent problems (Gore's slide show on Global Warming, just to give a recent example). This is probably the result of having a mature democracy in a mature multicultural society. My contribution is modest but hopefully engaging: a moratorium on the by default habit of putting ice cubes in our glasses of water. It doesn't quite match what the Founding Fathers did, but it's a start.

D) What do you dislike most about about America?

Anon #2: The lack of consciousness about energy saving, from air conditioners to plastic bags. How would the world end up if every nation behaved in the same way? The world would be a big garbage [dump].

Anon #3: I realized that what foreigners love to hate about America wasn't necessarily based on facts. As far as New York is concerned, the bad manners of drivers here annoys me the most.

Anon #4: Every place essentially looks the same in America, except for the weather. I don't like big American corporate chain stores that spread all over the US and the world stifling local ingenuity.

Anon #5: People are friendly but not friends. Most of them think only about what they want to do in their careers without thinking they live with other people. Also, I think people are not so willing to accept other cultures. They can stand them, but not accept them.

Anon #6: Danger (guns, robbers etc.) or drugs. Anon #7: You work hard, you succeed, but if you get sick on the way, bad luck. Uptight and conservative people. The mixture of politics with religion.

Anon #10: The focus on money.

Anon #13: America does not know how to relax. It seems that the joy of just sitting around or being with others (not in a club) has been lost. Americans think that relaxation can only be had during vacations, and that it is proportional to the money spent. Anon #14: Racism.

Anon #16: It is now much more difficult to go home and then be able to come back to America without any problems.

Anon #17: The politics. Let's not get into it... Anon #18: I struggled for quite a while to make a decent cup of tea, didn't like that much. America is very conservative; I often find it hard to understand.

Anon #20: The power of religion in manipulating people's decisions in everyday life and in creating excuses for sending someone to die in an unjustifiable war. Also, the fact that the governmental income obtained from regular people is not invested back in improving the security and dignity of their lives.

Anon #21: The old moral standards, double moral standards, abortion of wanted pregnancies, racism against blacks, the killing in the name of democracy, suing for everything.

Anon #22: Americans can be slightly autistic or self-centered. This is a characteristic of all cultures, but it gets exacerbated here due to the economic, military, and cultural power of America. Interestingly, there is also a minority of Americans who are obsessed with foreign cultures, but they go overboard in their enthusiasm about what's exotic. It's just the other side of the same problem. Not having to learn a second language, not having a foreign cultural superpower to complement your own culture without any major effort from you, all this must have some consequences. It's very hard to find an American with a balanced view of the world.

E) What do you miss most about your home country?

Anon #1: Quality of life and modesty. Human scale of most cities. Existence of a free social assistance service for all.

Anon #6: Food!!! Natto...

Anon #8: Relatives, food, my childhood

where I used to be innocent.

Anon #12: I really miss my family, as I don't get to share my life with them on a regular basis. I also miss the fact that everyone is friendlier and strangers will lend a helping hand without being asked.

Anon #14: Ability to live in a big house with lots of land. Family. The ability to see the reflection of yourself everywhere you go.

Anon #15: The ability to create a network of friends, everyone is busy in this fast paced country.

Anon #17: I miss the feeling of being completely comfortable and that feeling of knowing where everything is. While I have been here for some time, there are times when I feel like a tourist.

Anon #18: I miss my family and friends of course. I miss the weather, my local pub, some food, especially meat pies and some candy we have, and I miss people being able to understand my slang.

Anon #19: My family, friends, food, and the slower pace! Anon #21: My family, and the

Mediterranean climate.

F) How do you think being in America has changed you as a person? Do you feel American?

Anon #1: I am, and shall remain, European. Although I have a lot of admiration for the US, my stay in America has just reinforced my European nature. I belong to Europe in many ways. However, America has deeply changed my state of mind in showing me that nothing is impossible if some human beings share a common dream.

Anon #3: Being in the US has certainly influenced me. It is associated with so many changes in my life. However, I'm not sure if it was being in the US or something else that changed me the most. Although I can't see myself a part of the American society, you can carry an American passport while considering yourself as a national of some other country. That flexibility is probably what America is about.

Anon #5: Being here made me grow up...but I cannot say I feel American. In addition, I don't think there are characteristics common to every American.

Anon #8: I definitely do for the most part, and I definitely believe that I would be a totally different person if I hadn't come here. At the same time I try to preserve my native heritage as much as possible.

Anon #11: Yes, in many ways I do. I really do admire Americans (my experience has been exclusively East Coast) for giving one the benefit of the doubt and for not nurturing preconceived opinions about anything. They also leave you alone pretty much. The sense that I can achieve whatever I put my mind to is unique. I am, in many ways, already living the American Dream.

Anon #12: I have always been a very independent person, but living here particularly



It's another day living the American Dream

during my adolescence has made me stand on my two feet even firmer. I don't quite feel American, but I feel that I belong here especially in New York. I don't think it is really possible to integrate as well and as easily in many other places.

Anon #13: Coming from a homogeneous country, the largest impact of living in America has resulted from its diversity. I feel closer to other people, if only because I have visual confirmation that they exist and are just like "us." Also, living in the most powerful country in the world makes you feel more responsible for what happens around the globe. I am afraid I came into this country too old to be indoctrinated with the American spirit.

Anon #16: I realize how important my family is to me. Absence does make the heart grow fonder. Yes, most of the time (when I am not traveling outside of America) I feel like an American. I look around me and I see someone from every country that I can imagine. Anon #17: I think that being in America has made me more open. You can be a little more vocal here with your opinions and it is OK. I *continued on page 12*

The Road Home

ESTHER WU

Day 1—Palo Alto, CA: The car destined to transport us across the country is in the shop. While we wait, I ask my fellow traveller B, who has just graduated with a Ph.D. and is driving to his new job on the East Coast, what he wants to see on this trip. He replies, "To see the red states, the flyover states. What do you want to see?" Hmm, not sure. Things and places I've never seen and may never see again. We go a short distance to Berkeley, CA into the throng of aging hippies and modern über-hipsters at Amoeba Records. We dine on delicious Persian burgers with tabbouleh and falafel.

Day 2—The car is fixed! B packs and says his good-byes. We get supplies for the trip



Joshua trees line the road in the desert of California.

and head off at sunset. We stop for dinner at Harris Ranch, along the I-5. Ugh. Smells like a real ranch! We hurry inside the restaurant as fast as possible and feast on meat, like Men. We are talky and excited, hopeful.

Day 3—We drive through dusty, picturesque California towns (Bodfish, Lake Isabella, Onyx), dwarfed by expanses of grassy hills that eventually turn into rocky ones. Cactuses and Dr. Seussian Joshua trees emerge. Bigger, craggier rock formations rise up. We pass China Lake Naval Weapons Center and wonder what could be going on behind (or underneath) those hills! By early afternoon the soil becomes sand and there are no more Joshua trees. Then we enter Death Valley National Park, the hottest place on earth.

The low (down to 280 feet below sea level) valley surrounded by mountains, in the high desert, Death Valley creates a perfect storm of heat. There is no moisture and no shade. Today it reaches 115°F in the shade. It strikes me that Death Valley is an American landscape: a vast flat of rugged terrain against a mountain range, a place where the Marlboro man might rope a steer or share a smoke with the Lone Ranger. Five years ago, we visited the Badlands of South Dakota and the iridescent sulfur pools of Yellowstone—both quite alien by comparison.

In the evening, we arrive in Las Vegas, Nevada, home to ersatz Paris, Venice, New York City, Camelot, Hollywood, Ancient Rome, Egypt, and a vague, nonthreatening version of the Middle Day 4—The Grand Canyon is, or course, inconceivably big—as infinite as the sky above it. Neither words nor pictures can do it the least bit of justice. Go see it.



We drive through the Painted Desert and into Navajo Territory's Monument Valley. Our guidebook (*The Rough Guide to USA*, 7th edition) put it most eloquently: "Only when you arrive at Monument Valley do you realize how much your perception

The Brooklyn Bridge, Las Vegas. The Manhattan Express roller coaster is nearby.

of the West has in fact been shaped by this one spot." The valley is full of the craggy sandstone buttes made iconic by countless Westerns. Picture John Wayne or Clint Eastwood riding astride a palomino or shooting a Colt from behind a red rock.

Day 5—We head into Colorado around Four Corners. We spend the day at Mesa Verde National Park where the main attraction is hundreds of adobe dwellings built by "ancient" Anasazi who disappeared from the area about 700 years ago. They left elaborate adobe complexes cut into the mesas overlooking the canyons. As its name suggests, Mesa

Mesa Verde National Park: this Juniper Pinion and thousands like it died in the fires of 1996 and 2000.

East-the quintessence of American consumerism and diversity. It is perhaps the only city in the US where you can find a representative sampling of every kind of American, a throwing-up of democracy. Vegas is essentially a Disney World for adults, a place out in the desert set aside for nothing but indulgence and pleasure; everyone's agenda is to have fun. The city is an unironic pastiche of stereotypical cultures with the Eiffel Tower, Colisseum, Grand Canal, Statue of Liberty, an Egyptian pyramid and much more all within walking distance of each other. The Bellagio's buffet is fantastic: implausible variety and everything actually tastes good. We spend about 24 hours in Vegas, four of them sleeping...uh...nothing to report.

Verde is a lush, green place compared to the dryness we've experienced the past few days. The air is still dry and the sun still very hot, but since we are past the Rockies, it's much more temperate.

Let me take this moment to extol the virtues of our National Parks system, which celebrates its centenary this year (Theodore Roosevelt established the Antiquities Act in 1906). There are nearly 400 national parks or monuments in the system, each preserving its own piece of our national heritage. Instead of Roman baths and medieval cathedrals, America has majestic purple (and every other color depending on the time of day) mountains, spacious skies, and fruited plains. Being a city-dweller, it's easy to

* * * * * * * * * *

INTELLECTUALLY I KNOW THAT AMERICA IS NO BETTER THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY; EMOTIONALLY

think of the US as a nation of ideas, and it is. But seeing these parks and the matterof-fact magnificence and diversity of our lands, it is a revelation to see that our country has a physical heritage, too.

Day 6—Mostly driving today. We see flat ranchland and no looming mountains for the first time. We stop for a Mexican lunch at Lena's Cafe in lonely Tucumcari, New Mexico. It's a local, family-run restaurant adorned with murals showing the whole of Lena's family. Yummy enchiladas smothered in either red or green chile. We drive the rest of the day towards Texas. We see Cadillac Ranch, a classic roadside attraction: ten Cadillacs upended and halfburied in the middle of an empty field. The cars are covered with a thick layer of graffiti, spray painted by decades of passersby. replication that Umberto Eco (*Travels in Hyperreality*) likened to Superman's Fortress of Solitude: "it suggests that there is a constant in the average American imagination and taste, for which the past must be preserved and celebrated in full-scale authentic copy."

While the house is indulgently decorated, it's excess on a human scale. The house



Not being a particularly adventurous soul, I embarked upon this trip to encounter sights and sounds I'd not come across before. Writing this article afforded me moments to reflect on what I had seen and why the road trip seems to be an integral part of the American experience. That being said, I fully expected to resist the openness of the "flyover

> states" and the romance of the road. I never expected my view of the US or of myself to change much, if at all. It wasn't the size of the Grand Canyon that knocked me over, nor was it the immense and impressive vistas that pervade the Southwest. Not the sun-

Cadillac Ranch: a spray painted roadside oddity.



The red buttes of Monument Valley are featured in many films including *The Searchers*, *The Eiger Sanction*, and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

In New York or many places in Europe and Asia, it's crowded, physically and psychologically. A big chunk of the lower 48 is vast stretches of wide-open spaces. The car is key to America's characteristic restlessness. The openness out here on the road lets us leave things behind, heading out in search of adventure in the land of second chances.

Day 7—Going through Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas we pass through familiar interstate-close towns homogenized by Starbucks, Wal-Mart, and the like. We reach Memphis, Tennessee. Gleefully, we head for Graceland, an attraction infamous for its tackiness. On the off chance you don't know, Graceland was Elvis Presley's home from 1957 to his death in 1977. We tour the house, luxuriously decorated in high-seventies kitsch: shag carpeted ceilings, waterfalls, velvet upholstery, mirrored ceilings. Elvis's planes rest in a faux airport complete with boarding gate and "Elvis Fan Detector." The "airport" is a site of perfect is no bigger than many of today's suburban homes, with nothing much more extravagant than a racquetball court and small kidneyshaped pool. The exhibits too are unexpectedly tasteful. They walk a fine line, glossing over The King's darker side



Yes, it's drive thru Starbucks.

of drugs and general nuttiness while *not* being annoyingly deifying. The only real crassness comes from the innumerable gift shops offering Elvis apparel, CDs, and useless tschotchkes. All in all, Graceland is a loving and human-scaled tribute to a still beloved entertainer. Even The Beatles don't seem to engender this kind of adoration.

Like so much of the US, Graceland is utterly without irony, a foreign concept to a couple of snarky East Coasters like B and me.

One of Elvis's many glittering jumpsuits on display at Graceland in Memphis, TN. set over the Mississippi River. It wasn't

even that the stars were innumerable and bright. It was in fact the guilelessness at the heart of everything we'd seen that won me over. It made me realize the discon-

nect between my own nature and the people who created these earnest monuments, parks, and sites. I may be a sarcastic New Yorker, but it gladdens me to see that America still wears its heart on its sleeve. •

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road, Healthy, free, the world before me,

The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

- "Song of the Open Road" by Walt Whitman

KNOW SHE IS BETTER THAN EVERY OTHER COUN

- SINGLAIR LEWIS

Symbols of American History Within 30 Minutes of New York City

ILEANA M. CRISTEA

July, an important month in American history, bearer of Independence Day, presents a good opportunity to take a brief walk on the path of some of the American history marks within easy reach of New York City. At only 30 minutes (by car or rail) from NYC, the Hudson Valley is home to many historic sites in and around Sleepy Hollow.

A small overview of the Hudson Valley treasures can appropriately be started with the Rockefeller Estate, completed in 1913 for the founder of our university, John D. Rockefeller. The Rockefeller Estate (Kykuit, "lookout" in Old Dutch), located on the Pocantico Hills of Sleepy Hollow, was the country home to four generations of the Rockefeller family. Donated by Governor

Rockefeller in 1979 to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the estate is open to tourists from April to early November. The estate, featuring a neoclassical revival style villa and gardens designed by architect William Welles Bosworth, is a nice treat not only for history lovers, but also for art aficionados due to its extensive collection of sculptures, paintings, and antiques. In

addition to the classic art collections, an unusual highlight of the underground art gallery is the series of tapestries commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller based on his favorite paintings by Picasso. Although not quite Picasso, the tapestries were woven under the artist's supervision.

The most impressive art collection at Kykuit is that of 20th century sculpture. Although Nelson Rockefeller made numerous gifts to museums, 120 of his finest collected sculptures remain at Kykuit. Brought to life in three-dimensional garden settings are works by European and American sculptors, such as Constantin Brâncuşi, Pablo Picasso, Henry Moore, Jean Arp, Alberto Giacometti, Alexander Calder, Isamu Noguchi, Louise Nevelson, and David Smith. Enclosed gardens, terraces at different levels, and pavilions are created to highlight each work. One of my personal favorites is the innocent, but still majestic appearance at the entrance of the house of one of Brâncuşi's famous Birds

in Space. The Rockefeller garden is considered the greatest American accomplishment of Bosworth, who also supervised the restoration of the palaces of Versailles and Fontainebleau and the cathedrals at Rheims and Chartres (projects all funded in large part by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.).

A visit to the estate also includes a tour of the coach barn, which houses a collection of classic automobiles and horse-drawn carriages. A warm spring or summer day is most suited for visiting the Rockefeller Estate, as it can get windy during the garden viewing. Tours start at Philipsburg



The villa at Kykuit

Manor, from where a shuttle bus takes visitors to the estate. Purchasing tickets1 in advance might be a good idea, as weekends can sell out.

One of the most charming and my favorite Hudson Valley treasure is Sunnyside, the home of Washington Irving, author of classics such as The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Rip Van Winkle, and The Alhambra. Located on West Sunnyside Lane in Tarrytown, the riverside house is set in an intimate romantic landscape, so well suited for the beloved national icon who was for "curing the world by gentle alternatives, not by violent doses"2. Considered one of America's early emissaries of style and taste, through his numerous travels Irving initiated many Americans in aspects of European culture, along with an understanding of America to Europe. Reflecting this intertwining of cultures, Irving's house combines a stone cottage redesigned in a colonial New York style, and a tower inspired by Spanish monastery towers. The cozy rooms

and the mixture of objects from Irving's numerous international travels unfold a tangible biography of the author. In collaboration with his neighbor, artist George Harvey, Irving designed Sunnyside and its surrounding grounds to reflect his romantic view of

art, nature, and history. Garden paths, trees, shrubs, and water features are arranged to appear natural and an exotic wisteria vine envelopes the house. The house and grounds were restored by Historic Hudson Valley to look as they did in 1850s, and opened to the public as a historic site in 1947. Since Sunnyside was the home of Irving descendants until the twentieth century, the house still displays original furnishings. Guides in Victorian dresses give tours of the house and host events throughout the year, such as celebrating Inde-Brâncuși's Bird in Space pendence Day and organizing

day camps and food festivals³.

Also located in Tarrytown is Lyndhurst, which although sometimes called Lyndhurst Castle is really a Gothic Revival mansion. Designed in 1838 by Alexander Jackson Davis for William Paulding (a former mayor of NYC), the villa underwent major transformations as it passed between owners of various statures (businessman George Merritt and railroad magnate Jay Gould). In 1961, the estate passed to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Although it gave me an impression of bought taste and mixed styles, the mansion provides an image of the evolution of fashion of the American high-class society during those years. A walk in the extensive grounds surrounding Lyndhurst is worthwhile, offering beautiful views of the Hudson River.

A real treasure of the Hudson Valley is the Union Church of Pocantico Hills. The simple stone country church appearance hides remarkable examples of modern stained glass art: nine windows painted by Marc Chagall, and the last work of Henri Matisse, the Rose Window, completed in design just two days before his death. While still housing an active congregation, the Union Church is now owned by Historic Hudson Valley and open to tourists⁴.

Although our guide for that day insisted

THE UNITED STATES 15 ESSENTIALLY THE GREATEST POEM

that the past and present of Union Church are not strongly connected to or dependent on the Rockefeller family, its history gives us a few interesting stories to tell. In the early 1920s, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., a strong supporter of the ecumenical movement among American Protestant denominations, helped the Union Church congregation that decided to erect the present church building by funding the project and providing the tower and its bells in memory of Laura Spelman Rockefeller. The Matisse and Chagall stained glass windows were also commissioned as memorials by members of the Rockefeller family. David Rockefeller states that these windows carry a "very special significance to me and to the members of the Rockefeller Family"5. He also relates the story of Chagall, an expatriate Russian Jew who was one of the last artists to be rescued by the Emergency Rescue Committee, an American refugee organization established in the early 1930s, headed and funded by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to assist artists and intellectuals facing oppression. The window of The Good Samaritan, commissioned in memory of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., is thought to represent a personal connection Chagall had to the parable of the good samaritan. A trip to the Union Church and its charming country settings is especially recommended.

If you do not get the opportunity to travel upstate, an exploration of American history can be pursued closer to home. The amalgam of NYC buildings of various ages and styles provides many architectural layers through which history is revealed.

Taking Irving's advice from his words in the beginning of *Tales of a Traveller*, "If the tales I have furnished should prove to be bad, they will at least be found short; so that no one will be wearied long on the same theme," I draw to a close this small overview of some American historic sites in the Hudson Valley. ●

- http://www.hudsonvalley.org/kykuit/index. htm
- 2. Tales of a Traveller, Washington Irving.
- http://www.hudsonvalley.org/sunnyside/index.htm
- http://www.hudsonvalley.org/unionchurch/ index.htm
- http://www.hudsonvalley.org/unionchurch/ learn__windows.htm

* * *

The Fourth of July

AILEEN MARSHALL

The Fourth of July holiday, also known as Independence Day, is in just a few days. Most people think of it as the traditional American summer holiday for picnics, barbecues, and fireworks. Although there are these activities (see later in this article), it was originally the day to celebrate the United States' independence from England. Some people might think of it as the end of the Revolutionary War, but it is actually the day that the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress. The Revolutionary War didn't end until eight years later.

By the mid-1700s, the American colonists had grown increasingly unhappy with their situation of "taxation without representation," having to pay taxes to the King of England without any representation in Parliament. It was this unrest that spurred the famous "Boston Tea Party." In 1773, King George III had put a tax on tea. In protest, colonists dressed up as Native Americans and emptied a cargo of tea into Boston Harbor. British soldiers shot and killed a few of them and it was dubbed "The Boston Massacre."

In June of 1776, the Continental Congress was urged to declare independence. A committee was formed, including Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, to draft such a document. After several revisions, the Continental Congress adopted the final draft in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. Copies were made to be distributed. The first public reading was held on July 8 in Philadelphia's Independence Square, accompanied by ringing bells and music. This practice was repeated in many other towns where the document was read. On July 19, the Continental Congress officially ordered the Declaration to be signed by members. It took until August 2 for delegates to begin signing.

On the first anniversary, July 4, 1777, Philadelphia had an official celebration, adjourning the Continental Congress, and people rang bells, had bonfires, fireworks, lighted candles, and ships fired guns. In 1778, General George Washington provided his troops with a double allowance of rum and ordered a Fourth of July artillery salute. The first official state celebration was in Massachusetts in 1781.

In 1801, the White House held the first public reception for the Fourth of July. On June 24, 1826, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter, replying to an invitation to the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in Washington, D.C., "For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them." In 1870, Congress established Independence Day as an official holiday. In 1938 they confirmed it as a holiday with full pay for federal employees.

So now that we know why we celebrate this holiday, what is there to do? The biggest event in town that day is Macy's fireworks display. The FDR is closed to traffic at 7:00 p.m., from 42nd Street to 14th Street, and from the ferry terminal to Pearl Street. It pays to get there early! At 7:30 p.m. FDNY fireboats will sail between 23rd and 42nd Streets, spraying arcs of red and blue water up to 300 feet in the air. Set off from three barges on the East River by the Grucci family, the fireworks usually start around 9:30 p.m., right after sunset. The best place to watch is the FDR Drive, although it can be seen from anywhere in Manhattan, Brooklyn, or Queens with an unobstructed view of the East River and the harbor (yes, that includes this campus). There is musical accompaniment on 1010 WINS AM radio. The Circle Line has cruises with great views of the fireworks, plus food and music.

One traditional event on the Fourth of July is Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest. The 91st annual gastronomic competition, with 20 international finalists, begins at 11:30 a.m. at the corner of Stillwell and Surf Avenues in Coney Island, Brooklyn. See if five-time champion Takeru Kobayashi, from Japan, can beat his record of 53 and half hot dogs. The Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum, at 46th Street and 12th Avenue will be starting a new exhibition, *Heroic Journeys: Or-dinary People, Extraordinary Stories*, starting at 11:00 a.m. Roosevelt Island has a Family Festival. For \$18, you can enjoy food by Brother Jimmy's BBQ, or bring your own. This no-alcohol event, starting at 5:00 p.m., also has activities for the kids, and live bands. Then watch the fireworks from the southern tip of the island. Tickets can be purchased at http://www.rioc.com/ or at the festival entrance. Other local celebrations are held in Chinatown, Battery Park, and Fulton Street. On July 5 and 6, The New York Philharmonic has annual Independence week concerts—Rhapsody in Red, White, and Blue—with compositions by Gershwin, Copland, Bernstein, and others. Tickets range from \$19 to \$49 and can be purchased at Avery Fisher Hall.

More information about these and other events can be found at http://www.newyorkled.com/.

*

* *

AMERICA HAD OFTEN BEEN DISCOVERED BEFORE COLUMBUS, BUT IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN HUSHED UP.

- OSCAR WILDE

Book Review: Amerika (The Man Who Disappeared) by Franz Kafka

Kenta Asahina

A remark of the translator, "The least read, the least written about, and the least 'Kafka," summarizes Kafka's unfinished novel. I must agree. Not until a traveler I met in Ottawa mentioned this book did I come to realize that it even existed. Yet, or because of its low profile, I think *Amerika* is an indispensable piece of Kafka's work to understand what he tried to pursue in his short career.

Intriguing enough is its title. Kafka had never visited America; as a matter of fact, he seldom left Prague, his hometown. Presumably, therefore, he liked to let the hero, Karl Rosmann, freely explore the rather imaginary world called America. That was what Karl needed. His parents forced him to leave following his scandal with a maid. Where else could he start his new life? In the early 20th century, America was still somehow a mysterious land to Europeans, with a mixed image of liberty and danger, dreamers and exiles.

In *Amerika*, Kafka tried to introduce an element rather foreign in his novels: brightness. Karl's sinful past quickly fades out as he accidentally encounters his uncle, now rich and respectable in New York. With the aid of his uncle, Karl starts the life of a fortunate immigrant; he enjoys English and horse riding lessons with private tutors. An image of hope fills the story. The carefree beginning might look stunning if you are familiar with the dry cruelty of *Metamorphosis* or the invisible web of fear entangling the hero in *The Trial*. Even after Karl was expelled by his uncle and set off on a trip as a wanderer, his future still looks bright with troublemaking comrades Delamarche and Robinson. How un-Kafkaesque it is!

However, Karl's fate begins to be doomed. He is suddenly fired from the hotel where he found a job as a lift boy. The chief cook and her secretary, who have been his friends and guardians in the hotel, try to save him, only in vain. Here all the mishaps attack Karl. Through an unjust and incomprehensible sequence of events, he is beaten up, stripped of all his possessions, and somehow ends up becoming a servant of Delamarche, who managed to seduce Brunelda, a rich woman, and became her lover. Chased by the police, Karl has no choice but to work under abusive Delamarche and unbalanced Brunelda. You may see the nature of Kafka coming back. The peculiar sensation assures you, 'Yes, it is surely Kafka's work.' Devastating absurdity always traps his heroes.

Just as other Kafka's novels, *Amerika* is incomplete. Although reconstructing what he originally intended to write is a challenging task, Kafka clearly wanted to conclude Amerika with a happy ending. The edition I read contains one of the fragments in which Karl starts a new career in the Theater of Oklahoma. Everything looks hopeful and secured. The image of the bright opening seems to recur as Karl mysteriously comes out of his misery.

What did Kafka try to say? What did "happiness" mean to him? What makes Kafkaesque absurdity special is its realism. Even in his short stories, Kafka masterfully weaved utter irrationality into the raw lives of humans. It is as if you saw a nightmare awake. The fear and solitude he conveys are undoubtedly real, while the reason why they are real is nowhere to be found. Perhaps he once wished that life could be different. Perhaps he wished that the "happiness" could be palpable. *Amerika* could have been a crystal of his hope to realize what he adored the most but obtained the least. Sadly, he also knew that he was unsuitable for the job. The fragment of the original ending floats like the heavens, detached from the real life in which Karl has been trapped. Kafka was a missionary of modern loneliness. His novels resonate with what Kierkegaard or Camus tried to tell in their books. Thus, it is quite understandable that he failed to build a staircase leading the reality to the happiness in *Amerika*. His works collectively assert that happiness is forever in the heavens: it's inaccessible.

Amerika (The Man Who Disappeared)

by Franz Kafka, translated by Michael Hofmann, 1996, New Direction Paperback, ISBN 0-8112-1569-5

America: Read, White, and Blue

Mary Abraham

There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them.

—Joseph Brodsky

How can one, especially a foreigner, ever hope to know or understand America? A good place to start is on the written page. What could be included in an America 101 reading list? Tocqueville's Democracy in America, written by a Frenchman who came to America in 1831, has been frequently called the most perceptive non-fiction book ever written about American society. If you would like to try the Great American Novel, some good authors to investigate include Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, Herman Melville, Ernest Hemingway, Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, J.D. Salinger, Harper Lee, Don DeLillo, Willa Cather, and Edith Wharton. If it's poetry you're after, try starting with Robert Frost. And for an introduction to American humor, how about James Thurber or Mark Twain?

If you already have some grounding in the basics and would like some advanced reading suggestions, below is a list of books about America kindly provided to *Natural Selections* by Toby Cox, the owner of the bookstore Three Lives & Company.

- A Thousand Acres by Jane Smiley—a reworking of King Lear set on an Iowa farm.
- What We Talk About When We Talk About Love by Raymond Carver—the downtrodden and overlooked in America.
- Shadows on the Hudson by Isaac Bashevis Singer—post-War Jewish immigrants in New York.
- *The Corrections* by Jonathan Franzen—devastating family portrait in late 20th century America.
- *Fury* by Salman Rushdie—a recent immigrant's view of New York City in the year 2000.
- Another Country by James Baldwin—African American twenty something in Bohemian NYC in the 1950s.
- *Light Years* by James Salter—1970s collapse of an American suburban family.
- *The Known World* by Edward P. Jones slavery in a Southern plantation in 1859.

IN THE UNITED STATES, THERE ONE FEELS FREE ... ERCEPT FROM THE AMERICANS

- *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich—life on and around an Indian reservation
- *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien linked stories around the Vietnam War experience, both at home and abroad.
- A Good Man is Hard to Find by Flannery O'Connor—Southern gothic master.
- *Empire Falls* by Richard Russo—working class New England, after the mills have closed down.
- A Way of Life, Like Any Other by Darcy O'Brien—Hollywood childhood of the son of B-actor parents. ●

If you are in the West Village, a visit to Three Lives

& Company is highly recommended. This small independent bookstore probably has the best selection of books in the city, and the staff is extremely helpful if you would like professional advice in uncovering something new and interesting to read. The store is located at 154 W 10th Street on the intersection with Waverly Place. http://threelives.com/

Are you an American Citizen?

Natural Selections provides a selection of questions from the official citizenship test.

1. What is the most important right you enjoy as an American citizen?

- (a) Right to vote in presidential elections.
- (b) Right to vote for the American Idol.
- (c) Right to bear arms.
- (d) Right to bare arms.

2. What is meant by "free speech"?

- (a) Anything you say is worthless.
- (b) Cell phone companies offering free night and weekend minutes.
- (c) Your phone calls can be recorded for quality assurance purposes, and for other reasons by the NSA.

3. Who becomes president of the United States if both the president and the vice-president die?

- (a) Arnold Schwarzenegger.
- (b) The speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (c) The losing candidate in the previous election.
- (d) Britney Spears. Did you know she is expecting again?

4. Your boss asks you to do some pinch hitting at a conference. Do you say:

- (a) "Sure, no problem."
- (b) "I draw the line at physical violence against our competitors."

5. What can you see by the dawn's early light?

- (a) A mall about to open on the day after Thanksgiving.
- (b) Our flag.
- (c) It's time to finish work, go home and get some sleep.

6. What is likely to be the next amendment to the Constitution?

- (a) Fox News is the only news channel allowed to broadcast.
- (b) The death penalty is prohibited.
- (c) Marriage is restricted to being between a man and a woman.
- (d) All presidential candidates must take an IQ test.

7. Which of the following was responsible for the end of the Cold War?

- (a) Flu Vaccine.
- (b) Global Warming.
- (c) Operation Desert Storm.
- (d) Collapse of the Soviet Union.

8. In winter should you:

(a) Wear warmer clothing.

- (b) Turn up the heating to remind you summer is coming.
- (c) Turn on the air conditioner if your heating is turned up too much.

9. What is a good way to start a conversation?

- (a) "Did you hear the joke about Jesus, Moses, and Mohammed trying to catch a cab?"
- (b) "Do you think Hillary will become president in 2008?"
- (c) "Did you hear Britney is expecting again?"

10. What are the three branches of the US government?

- (a) Left Wing, Right Wing, and the Center.
- (b) General Assembly, World Bank, and Security Council.
- (c) FBI, CIA, and NSA.
- (d) Legislative, Executive, and Judiciary.
- (e) Brad, Angelina, Shiloh.

11. Which recent historical event has had a profound effect on the American psyche?

- (a) The September 11 terrorist attacks.
- (b) The Boston Red Sox winning the World Series after 86 years.
- (c) The Chicago White Sox winning the World Series after 87 years.
- (d) Wardrobe malfunction during the 2004 Superbowl.

12. What is the national anthem of the United States?

- (a) I'm Lovin' It.
- (b) The Star Spangled Banner.
- (c) Let's Go Yankees!
- (d) U-S-A! U-S-A! U-S-A! U-S-A!

13. What do you think about universal health care?

- (a) A good idea.
- (b) No thanks, comrade.

14. Can you ever own too many electronic appliances?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

15. What is the American Dream?

- (a) Gasoline should cost less than water.
- (b) Sorry, I always take two Ambien tablets and don't remember my dreams.
- (c) 0% APR.
- (d) Enforced global freedom

- BUT EVERY PEARL HAS ITS OUSTER

FANDALL JAFRELL

Album Review We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions by Bruce Springsteen

MARY ABRAHAM

The best music often happens at the crossroads, at the "dangerous edge of things." America, the most immigrant of nations, is particularly lucky therefore to be situated at a musical crossroads through which travelers have passed from every corner of the globe. Robert Johnston, the renowned American blues player from the 1930s made music that was so astonishing, the legend was he had gone to a crossroads at midnight and sold his soul to the devil. Today if we chance upon the American musical crossroads at midnight, the unlikely figure lurking mischievously in the darkness is Bruce Springsteen, the eponymous "future of rock 'n roll." Mr. Springsteen has just taken a rather unexpected turn in the road and been reborn as a folk musician, recently releasing the album We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions and completing a live tour of the music across Europe and America.

According to Shelley, "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," and we can extend this description sometimes to musicians as well. During the Civil Rights era, folk music made an important contribution to the mood of change that was sweeping the country. At that time when Bob Dylan sang lines like "How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?" the raw elemental power of music to reach the heart and mind in one elegant phrase was readily apparent. This fact that folk music is unafraid of tackling issues of political relevance undoubtedly appeals to Springsteen, and therefore perhaps makes this flirtation with folk music appear more plausible. If you listen to the lyrics, Springsteen's most famous song "Born in the USA" is actually all about Vietnam. Bruce remains outspoken and engaged in current events, for example a song on his concert setlist has been "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live." He has added some verses to this song, dating from the Depression, which comment on the handling of the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

The musician Peter Seeger played a critical role in the blossoming 1960s New York folk music scene, reviving and popularizing some classics including the song "We Shall Overcome." In 1997 Bruce Springsteen recorded a version of one of Peter Seeger's songs for a tribute album, and his introduction to Seeger's work provided the genesis of this new recording.

This glorious circus of an album provides many delights. Springsteen is a magnificent singer, and his voice has the perfect character for these folk songs-it isn't smooth, but has a rumpled, flinty charm. It is the voice of someone who has lived life at the deep end. If you are singing about the harsh realities of the world, the voice's imperfections perfect the music. The CD comes with a short DVD on the making of the album. In it, as the musicians are sitting around at the recording session, the host Springsteen offers beers, informing the vocalists they need a "wild sound, a beer-drunk, whiskey-drinking sound." At this point any remaining skepticism vanishes. The man in charge knows exactly what he is doing. Folk music frequently suffers from an uncool reputation for being boring, or lacking passion. For folk music to live it needs some fire and to be played with co-operative rowdy abandon. And what makes this album so irresistible is the overflowing, enveloping vitality of the sound.

The songs chosen for the album encompass a range of musical styles, moods, and subject matters. The instrumentation is a gumbo stew of traditional folk instruments like the fiddle or banjo, as well as piano, drums, guitar, and a notable horn section adding a New Orleans style of jazz-blues that has a decadent melancholy beauty. The most whimsical and ancient tune is "Froggie Went a Courtin" a tale of interspecies romance that originated in Scotland over 450 years ago. Other crowd pleasing numbers include the gentle and poignant "Shenandoah," "Old Dan Tucker" the story of a man who had an unorthodox personal grooming regime, and "Jesse James" a ballad about that gallant outlaw. Working life is a common theme for folk music, and three pieces fit into this category. "John Henry" tells the classic story of man versus machine, "Pav Me My Money Down" is a rousing anthem for impoverished students and postdocs ev-

erywhere, and "Erie Canal" is a tender little song on the ebb and flow of daily work as man and mule haul coal and hay on the upstate New York waterways. Some songs of troubles past have obvious resonances with troubles present. "My Oklahoma Home" concerns the mass migration following the American Dust Bowl calamity of the 1930s. "Mrs. McGrath," which originated in Ireland in 1815, is about a son returning from an overseas war in which he has lost both his legs. As the lyrics put it, "All foreign wars I do proclaim live on blood and a mother's pain." The remaining songs on the album, including "We Shall Overcome" and a spine-tingling version of "Eyes on the Prize," can be grouped together as songs of struggle. Many of them were particularly associated with the music of the Civil Rights era and such songs often originated from African American spirituals. This album reinforces how essential the contribution of the African American musical tradition has been to the overall development of American music.

Thomas Paine, one of the Founding Fathers wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls." These words hold true today, here and abroad. This gritty little album is an unsentimental ray of sunshine to reminds us of some of the reasons to love America. American folk music has a hybrid vigor from the diverse inputs of the diversity of its people. Folk music—the music of, by, and for the people-has a distinctly democratic appeal because it illustrates that the life of ordinary working-class people can be a rich, complex, fascinating, and worthy subject for making music. The dominant theme of the songs in this album is struggle, personal or societal. In these songs the response to struggle is neither self-pitying nor self-righteous, it is hopeful and resilient-a truly optimistic American attitude. And the energetic joy radiating from this music is a lesson that although life can be tough, we should try to pursue as much happiness as possible traveling along the road. This time maybe it's not the devil, but Bruce Springsteen who has all the best tunes. •

For more information and to hear some tracks visit: www.brucespringsteen.net

HY FELLOW CITIZENS OF THE WORLD: ASK NOT WHAT AMERICA WILL DO FOR YOU, BUT

This month, Natural Selections features Christopher Woodrell, Lab Manager and Assistant to Dr. Werner, Laboratory of Molecular Biophysics Country of Origin: USA

1. How long have you been living in New York? I moved to New York right after college in June 2001—so five years this month.

2. Where do you live? I live on West 25th Street in Chelsea. Strangely enough, the block seems to be the mannequin portion of the garment district: we have a number of mannequin suppliers on 25th Street. When I first moved to the city I lived with another research assistant, Rachel Adams, on East 70th between First and York, and at the time my lab was in Flexner—a shorter commute to RU than the people in Scholars!

3. Which is your favorite neighborhood? I am enjoying living downtown now. I really love the Upper West Side near Riverside Park, and it's always nice to visit Greenwich Village-it's like traveling back in time to eighteenth century New York, and the 70s. As a dancer, I've spent a lot of time rehearsing and performing in unexpected (industrial) spaces, and I find myself getting sentimental when I go back to parts of the city I used to visit quite a bit. Since moving here I've been fascinated to see what lengths people go to for their work, and as any artist can tell you, it's difficult to produce work on a substantial scale. Christopher Caines, a Bushwick-based choreographer has always had what I call his urban log cabin. He and other artists create live-work spaces in areas not zoned for residential living. He would build a beautiful dance studio into this warehouse, along with his apartment, quite some distance from the nearest residential neighborhood. Until recently, I rehearsed almost nightly in a distribution warehouse on Johnson Avenue, but the cast size and the choreographer's eviction necessitated a move to more centrally convenient venues, like City Center. It's nice to have the funds available to rent more traditional rehearsal space, but I get nostalgic thinking of all the evenings I traipsed to rehearse down deserted streets that seem so far away. It was almost like being on a retreat.

4. What do you think is the most overrated thing in the city? And underrated? I think New Year's Eve is the most overrated thing about New York. This year we had a party in the apartment and everyone was very grateful not to have to be out on the town. It seems like it would be a nightmare, but people inexplicably travel from far and wide to be in New York City on New Year's Eve, battling impossible (and drunk) crowds, in subzero temperatures, without any available—er, plumbing. We had a great time at home with friends, Champagne, heat, and flushing toilets.

I think New York's water is underrated. I think a lot of people forget that this is a coastal city, and that four of the five boroughs are on islands. It's great to see conversations stop in Weiss Cafeteria as a huge ship passes on the East River. While we're on the subject of water I have to add that I've lived in California, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and New York City has the best tasting tap water of any place I've lived. I still own a Brita filter of course.

5. What do you miss most when you are out of town? When I leave town I always miss the nocturnal parts of city life. I don't think New Yorkers are insomniacs, but there's a critical mass so that something is always happening. It might sound cliché, but it's true.

6. If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be? Horns. Lester Lambert, a postdoc that used to work with us, had the best solution for eliminating, or at least attenuating, the honking. He suggested a horn on the inside of the vehicle of equal or greater volume. Similarly, he proposed a car alarm to sound simultaneously on the front door of the offender's home.

7. Describe a perfect weekend in NYC. The perfect New York weekend: mild, sunny weather, a clean apartment, and a balance between commitment and

leisure. 8. What is the most memora-

ble experience you have had in NYC? My most memorable New York experience was a performance I did last June. The dance company I work with did a week mini-season at St. Mark's Church on East 10th Street and Second Avenue—a number of people from campus came which was really nice. As a performer, it was one of the most exciting experiences—personal,



New York, or performative—I've had to date. We performed in this church that is something of a landmark in the dance world, with a forty-voice choir singing Thomas Tallis behind us.

9. If you could live anywhere else, where would that be? San Francisco. I grew up in California and I still miss it sometimes. 10. Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker? Why? As to whether I consider myself a New Yorker, it's relative: if I'm with a group of lifelong New Yorkers, then I'm a Californian. If I'm in California, then I'm a New Yorker. ◎

ACADEMIA NUTS



cartoon by Sean Taverna

WHAT TOGETHER WE CAN DO FOR THE FREEDOM OF MAN.

KENNEDY

Update from the Copa Mundial 2006

Kevin O'Donovan

After 19 consecutive days of at least two games or more, we've arrived at the quarterfinals of the 2006 World Cup. By the time you read this it may well be time for the World Cup Final. To begin though, let's see how my first round predictions went. I got things right for the most part though Ecuador, Ghana, and Argentina tripped me up. Ecuador proved they could win at sea level; Ghana showed

they were world class when they rebounded strongly against the Czechs; and Argentina, well, they proved it's all about *ganar*, *golear*, *y gustar*. My bold prediction was that the Ivory Coast would progress and while they showed they could compete with the likes of the Argentines and Dutch, they could only manage a victory against the already eliminated Serbia and Montenegro.

I was fortunate enough to have been able to attend three matches in Germany. The Sweden v. Paraguay match in Berlin's renovated Olympic Stadium was a sight to

behold with upwards of 60,000 yellow-clad and partying Swedes who rejoiced into the wee hours following Ljungberg's injury time winner. The Paraguayans were buoyed by their enthusiastic though severely outnumbered supporters.

Next up, it was USA v. Italy at the Fritz Walter Stadium in Kaiserslautern where the atmosphere was electric. K-town, as Kaiserslautern is known to US military personnel, and its surroundings are populated by more than 30,000 Americans as the massive Ramstein



An enterprising lab at RU has seamlessly integrated soccer and science, projecting games on the wall above a hood.

ceived generous support from the locals in their 2-1 victory against the US. Unlike the US v. Italy match where I was seated amongst thousands of Americans, in Nürnberg, I found myself in a "neutral" section made up of mostly Germans who opted to support Ghana.

Before I sold the pair for a modest profit to an Englishman, I also had tickets to the 2nd round England v. Ecuador match in Stuttgart. In the months leading up to the tournament, ticket brokers and people like myself did a furious business selling tickets. For those of you who may be curious, some friends who were using scalpers (buying tickets from ticket brokers at the stadiums on the day of the game) on their way across Germany routinely paid from $\varepsilon_{200}-\varepsilon_{500}$ for first round tickets on game day. Most of the tickets were printed with the original buyer's name, and this information along with each person's nationality and passport number were digitally encoded into each ticket. The rules were very clear that at each venue everyone would have to match their identity to the tickets in order to gain entry into the stadium. However, the only thing they were concerned about at the stadiums was safety. Everyone and all bags were thoroughly searched and throughout my entire stay in Germany, I observed no fan violence. And I must add that save the sweaty rides on the jam-packed S-Bahn to and from the games,



An enthusiastic us supporter before the usa v. Ghana match

Air Base is nearby. As such, the

American presence was strong at the match and helped the US

earn a valuable point while play-

ing with sheer grit and determina-

tion against a tentative Italian side.

That said, heart alone is not enough

if you want success on the soccer

pitch, and the US lads will have

to, as we say over here, raise their game if they want to compete for a

Finally, on to Nürnberg where

sentimental favorites Ghana re-

trophy in future World Cups.

the matches were an absolute delight.

So I'll go out on a limb here and see how my prediction holds up. Finally, it will be the Klinsmann led Germans who win it all. A Huntington Beach, California resident now, Klinsi played football with an infectious exuberance and he has brought this energy to a German squad that usually is lacking in this regard. His attack-minded strategy takes shape with a core of creative players who feed the Polish-born strikers Miroslav Klose and Lukas Podolski. Indeed, the duo have scored seven goals in four games and if they continue at this rate the German captain Ballack will surely hoist the Cup on July 9.

Natural Selections is not an official publication of The Rockefeller University. University administration does not produce this newsletter. The views expressed by the contributors to this publication may not necessarily reflect views or policies of the University.

'E Pluribus Plurum' continued from page 3

like that. Many times I don't feel like an American; but the longer I stay here the more I feel like an American. Anon #18: I don't think I have changed much at all. I definitely don't feel American, if anything I feel more Australian. I appreciate more the idiosyncrasies of Australia after having lived away from there for a while.

Anon #19: I think that you are lucky if you can learn more about other cultures. In America, you can have influences from many other nations besides America. That certainly is an amazing experience. I believe that it has made me more open-minded and richer. I do feel American sometimes, in New York everyone does.

Anon #21: I have always been an American: South America is also part of America. Or has North America or the US some royalty over the continent's name? I have learned a lot about other cultures thanks to NY, and I am a much stronger person after the experience of surviving alone with my son in this city.

Anon #22: "Don't ask how America has changed me, ask how I can change America." This has to resonate like a pure American way of thinking, but I sound fake, thus answering your second question. So far, I see no investment from America or me in nurturing this relationship. I experience the same with girls, but for a change I won't complain when America turns me down for good. A home country is not like a former girlfriend, and going back is not necessarily embarrassing or a route for disaster. I'm actually well buffered from a complete American influence. My close circle is still a melting pot of globetrotters, foreigners just like me. I do have a few American friends, but there is only one I send letters to on a regular basis—the IRS. @

I	DESIGNER WANTED
Ν	NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY
ľ	Natural Selections needs a new layout designer.
P	lease visit selections.rockefeller.edu or e-mail
n	aturalselections@rockefeller.edu for details.