

Christmas Break

by Jaz Johnson



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Common Sense for the Holidays

By Derrick Vallejos - Grade 12

Passing through the main entrance of Alexander Hamilton High School, it is nearly impossible to miss the seven-foot Christmas tree decorated with the names of every senior. It has been a tradition in Hamilton for many years. In a largely Christian community such as ours, it is not shocking that there has been little to no complaining about the tree.

In the past there have been huge debates throughout our country questioning how the holidays should be handled not only at school, but in the rest of society. Department stores seem to come up with new ideas on how to advertise during the season without offending anybody, yet people still seem to find commercials that they are unhappy with. In these discussions, it is common to hear people's disdain toward the phrase "Happy Holidays," while others have been upset about people's refusal to use this more culturally sensitive greeting. In reality, however, is it that big of a deal? Well, at Hamilton it isn't.

A few days ago, while decorating the tree, senior Sarah Wolin questioned the lack of a menorah in the hallway. She asked Ms. Abbate if she could put one up, and the answer was, "of course, why not?" The answer was simple, as was the solution. There was no arguing or heated battle, just a menorah next to a Christmas tree.

Elmsford has always handled the situation nicely. During the Holiday Concert, the band makes an effort to play at least one song related to Hanukkah. We also have a tree lighting as well as a menorah lighting. In this aspect, the rest of the nation should follow the lead of our small community: Live and let live. Let Santa Claus say "Merry Christmas!" and let Sarah get her menorah. ■

Land of the Mountains

By Nevline Petitfort - Grade 9

Nestled in the Caribbean, connected to the Dominican Republic, is a small island-like region that we call Haiti. "Haiti" is an Arawak Indian name that means

"Land of the Mountains." Haiti has an interesting history, and its history is a part of my own.

Haiti was discovered by Christopher Columbus on December 6, 1492. The French established a presence on Hispaniola in 1697. Haiti was the first free modern nation in the western hemisphere after the United States. They declared their independence in 1804, and they celebrate it on January 1. The capital of Haiti is Port-au-Prince. This is where my parents were born and raised. Haiti is 95% black and 5% white and mullato. The current president of Haiti is René Prével. The official language of Haiti is French and Haitian Creole. I speak Creole fluently. Haitian people normally eat foods such as rice, beans, chicken, goat, potatoes, and corn. Haiti is the third largest country in the Caribbean behind Cuba and the Dominican Republic. In 1925, Haiti was lush, with 60% of its original forest covering the lands and mountainous regions. The population has cut down all but an estimated 2% of its original forest cover, and in the process has destroyed fertile farmland soils, contributing to desertification. The soil erosion and deforestation has caused periodic flooding as seen on September 17, 2004.

In Haiti the most festive time is during Carnival or Mardi Gras. The festivity starts in February. The cities are filled with music, parade floats and people dancing and singing in the streets. Carnival week is traditionally a time of all night parties and escape from daily life. We also celebrate another day which we call Rara, which occurs before Christmas.

Living conditions, the weather, and the economy are much harsher in Haiti than here in America. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world, and we do suffer a lot. Nonetheless, I am proud to represent my culture because it makes me unique. I think it is very fascinating to learn about the past and to know who I am today. ■



An Interview with Mr. Egan

By Thomas Kearns - 10th grade



When I met up with Mr. Egan in his classroom to interview him, I was nervous because it was my first time interviewing someone. I didn't want to make a mistake because, after all, he is the head of the Hamilton Newspaper, *The Raider Reporter*. I asked him several questions about his career at Hamilton and some personal questions.

Thomas: What do you enjoy about teaching here at Hamilton?

Mr. Egan: I like the fact that it is small, and you get to know everyone. Some of our kids may think that they are tough or "gangsta," but overall we have some really nice kids here. Sadly, many of them are unmotivated and need a little bit of a push. I like to engage the students and encourage them to work to their full potential.

I learned many things about Mr. Egan that I had never known before. I learned that Mr. Egan worked at Briarcliff High school previous to working at ours. I also learned that Mr. Egan originally thought about becoming a priest rather than being an English teacher--Father Egan?!? Mr. Egan is currently in school again pursuing his third Masters degree--this one in school building leadership.

Thomas: What inspired you to become a teacher?

Mr. Egan: I always had a love for literature and, like most other teachers, I had a few teachers that inspired me along the way. As a teacher, I get to use my creativity and skills. I'm never bored teaching. There is

never a time when I'm staring at the clock; it's dynamic. Having summers off to spend with my family isn't so bad either.

Thomas: What helps you wind down from a long day at work?

Mr. Egan: I do like to exercise. I've been studying Krav Maga, which is Israeli Combat Fighting, for six or seven years now. There is definitely something very therapeutic about punching and kicking things. On other days I'll go for a run or a bike ride or lift some weights. I love to spend time with the family or find time to take a quick nap. I'm also big into prayer and meditation. Of course, I can always just get lost in a book or comic.

Thomas: What is your favorite book?

Mr. Egan: You hit me with a tough one...I'll go with Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*.

Thomas: What is it that you like about it?

Mr. Egan: I like the fact that there is an actual hero in it, and he remains incorruptible in the face of a corrupt world. The world could really use some heroes right about now...

This being the last question of the interview, I wrapped it up with a crisp handshake and thanked Mr. Egan for his time. In all, I enjoyed the interview and was pleased to have done it with Mr. Egan. I was happy that I had successfully completed my first interview. ■

January Movie Night

Transformers



Date:
TBA
Jan 2010

Keep a look out for our next movie night: **Transformers**, featuring **Shia LaBeouf** and **Megan Fox**.



We asked staff members: "What was the WORST Christmas (or holiday) gift you ever received?"

Ms. Brenna English Department	"A Roman theme table lamp that had to be filled with oil. When you turned the lamp on the oil would drip down and appear as though it was raining on the Roman columns."
Ms. Schulze Math Department	"Candlesticks that my mother-in-law regifted to me. The card to her, from the original gift givers, was still in the box!"
Mr. Vergara English Department	"[Someone] gave me a death-metal CD sampler as the culminating gift one year for Secret Santa.....true story"
Mr. Georges Assistant Principal	"A bar of "gently" used Irish Spring soap (It was meticulously wrapped)."
Ms. Sclafani English Department	"From one of my brothers, an offensive and inappropriate magazine subscription that he obviously got some deal on (like 5 for the price of one), because all the females in my family got this same present. Horrible."
Mr. Blondel Art Department	"A sculpture of a person made from dried cow poop!!"
Dr. Peters Superintendent	"The same nutcracker I had given as a gift to that person the prior year (it became a joke)."
Ms. Weill Teaching Assistant	"I guess a candle?!? I can't remember a bad gift..." Editors Note: We think you just jinxed it!
Ms. Silva English Department	"A snake. And I hate snakes."
Mr. Thompson Science Department	"Received a massage mat years ago. Placed it on a chair, used it the first time and, because of a short circuit, was shocked on the south end!"
Mr. Barone Tech Department	"A gift made of crystal that to this day, I do not know if it is a sculpture or vase."
Mr. Egan English Department	"I actually received a Chia Head. It was nice to have hair..."



These ten finalists will compete in the Alexander Hamilton High School Auditorium on Friday, January 15th to determine which three of them will advance to the Regional Finals.

1. Eugene Bender - "O Captain! My Captain!" by Walt Whitman
2. Mitchell Mirtil - "And Soul" by Eavan Boland
3. Sydney Bridges - "Hate Poem" by Julie Sheehan
4. Ebere Anokute - "Litany" by Billy Collins
5. Anish Thomas - "Second Coming" by William Butler Yeats
6. Ladora Cromwell - "I Am" by John Clare
7. Sheena Varghese - "Litany" by Billy Collins
8. Jennifer Glen - "Dona Josefina Counsels Dona Concepcion before Entering Sears" by Maurice Kilwein Guevara.
9. Madeline Hirshan - "Insomnia" by Dante Gabriel Rossetti
10. Shaina Rajan - "Happiness" by Jane Kenyon

The following students made it to the semifinal round. They have earned honorable mention:

Nevline Petitfort, Ashley Scott, Amanda Watt, Kathleen Gonzales, Laura Whittemore, Derrick Vallejos, Jacey Peers, Giselle Cornejo, Jahlil Shabazz, & Alishya Thomas. ■