Nikki Giovanni Attends Coffee Night

Award-Winning Poet, Essayist and Scholar Reads Selected Poetry, Presents Afternoon Lecture

Roger Rags, Jr.
"Editor-in-Chief"

"Surgeons are crazy."

That was one of the many quoteworthy statements provided by Nikki Giovanni during her appearance as the featured poet of the College’s annual Coffee Night, held Thursday night, Nov. 13 in the Chapel. Coffee Night also celebrated the release of the fall issue of the Jimson Weed, the College’s official literary magazine, featuring poetry and prose by students, faculty and members of the community.

An award-winning poet, essayist and scholar, Giovanni was not only Coffee Night’s featured poet but also taught a class in Zehmer 109 and presented a special afternoon lecture on Friday, Nov. 14, also in the Chapel. The lecture focused on Giovanni’s new book, Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea, which was described by Gwendolyn Brooks as “remarkable for energy, venturesomeness, direct honesty and courage.”

“Nikki Giovanni needs no introduction,” said Dr. Gillian Huang-Tiller, a faculty advisor for the Jimson Weed. “Her name says it all through three decades of racial and ethnic progress.”

Indeed, Giovanni is a highly influential American writer. Giovanni was a powerful voice during the Civil Rights and Black Arts Movements of the 60’s and has published 26 books of poetry and non-fiction. Her Blues: For All the Changes and Love Poems were honored with NAACP Image Awards. The recipient of the Rosa Parks Woman of Courage Award and the Langston Hughes Medal for Outstanding Poetry, Giovanni is also the most widely read living poet in the United States today.

“IT’s the best thing in the world for an English major when someone you’ve read and written papers about is staring right back at you,” said Coffee Night co-host Stephanie Tolliver.

During Coffee Night, Giovanni read several of her own poems, which included “Possum Crossing” and “Twenty Reasons to Love Richard Williams,” offering personal anecdotes and background stories to each selection. “Possum Crossing,” for example, was humorously inspired by the poet’s neighbors who often run over small animals when speeding in their vehicles to work. “Twenty Reasons to Love Richard Williams,” on the other hand, was Giovanni’s praise for the father of tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams.

Giovanni’s comment that “surgeons are crazy” was made while she told about her battle with lung cancer, which eventually led to a poem about how watching two birds outside her window helped the writer to recover from the deadly disease.

Born in Knoxville, Tenn., Giovanni now resides in Blacksburg, Va., where she is a University Distinguished Professor of English at Virginia Tech. Giovanni was accompanied in her visit to the College by her best friend and fellow professor, Virginia Fowler, who helped arrange the poet’s Coffee Night appearance and afternoon lecture.

On Friday, Giovanni and Fowler were also invited to a special luncheon in Bowers-Sturgill Hall with Jimson Weed staff members and advisors, as well as Dean Amelia Harris and other selected students.

After Giovanni’s presentation at Coffee Night, hosts Stephanie Tolliver and Nick Vanover each read special dedications to the night’s other lady of honor, Dr. Catherine Mahony, who retired from UVa-Wise earlier this year and to whom the fall Jimson Weed is dedicated.

“A visit from [Dr. Mahony] brightens everyone’s day and forces a smile onto even the busiest of faces,” Tolliver said. “UVa-Wise, like myself, is blessed and thankful for her having been here.”

After the dedications, Dr. Mahony read a selection of her own fiction, followed by all student, faculty and community readers.

As for the latest Jimson Weed, Managing Editor Lacie Holmes said that she believes that it is the largest issue of the literary magazine ever released. Holmes was assisted in the completion of this volume of the Jimson Weed by Arts and Graphics Editors Nick Vanover and Stephanie Tolliver, editorial staff members Danielle Benton, David Lobiondo and Amber Mann, and faculty advisors Andrew Harvey, Gillian Huang-Tiller and Kenneth Tiller.

For those interested in submitting their work to the Jimson Weed, submissions are accepted at any time. Contact Holmes, Dr. Huang-Tiller or another member of the Jimson Weed staff for more information.

Coffee Night was sponsored by the Jimson Weed and the College’s Department of Language and Literature. Nikki Giovanni’s special lecture was sponsored by the College Lecture Committee and the Department of Language and Literature.
**U.S. Soldier Death Toll Breaks 400 in Iraqi Campaign**

**Staff Writer**

The war in Iraq may technically be over, but the death toll of American soldiers continues to rise. On May 1, after a 43-day campaign, President George W. Bush declared that the war in Iraq was over and America was victorious over Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime. But now, even after six months, the U.S. has been unable to establish or maintain peace in Iraq.

During the Iraqi Freedom campaign, 170 American soldiers were killed in Iraq, but since Bush declared America's victory over the Iraqis, 285 more American troops have been killed (by other friendly fire, accidents, suicide bombers or combat with Iraqi opposition). The two most recent attacks on U.S. troops occurred just last week when two American helicopters were shot down. In one of the helicopter attacks, 16 soldiers were killed, the largest number of American soldiers killed in one strike against American troops since it was first invaded in March.

The Pentagon announced on Nov. 6 that it will be sending 85,000 more GIs and Marines to Iraq for 12-month terms beginning next year only to help raise troop levels.

On Tuesday, Nov. 11, Bush summoned the top U.S. administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, from Baghdad to Washington for a meeting with the president and key officials about the increased number of attacks on troops, which has slowed the rebuilding process. Bremer had been sent to Iraq to set up a governing council.

Last week the president instructed Bremer to speed up the construction of a self-governing government so that the Dec. 15 deadline for establishing a constitution and holding democratic elections in Iraq will be met.

The terrorist group al-Qaida has now joined Iraqis in attacking Americans in Iraq and the Middle East. Just recently, a suicide attack has claimed 170 lives, and a second suicide attack has killed 17 in Baghdad, Iraq.

**Crafter Offers Christmas Gift Ideas for the Little Ones in Your Life**

**Jane Thrall**

If you are buying for a little boy, you might consider one of the many cars or LEGO's Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets building set. Both are sure to make a little boy Christmas morning even more special.

Trying to find the perfect gift for a special little girl in your family? Try a Diva Starz Doll from Mattel, which is sure to be a winner this holiday season. Another hit item for girls this season is the Barbie "Shop With Me" Christmas Cottage, because Barbies items are a must-have for all little girls. For more information on these and other toy choices for 2003, visit www.ivanenet.com.

**VA. Latin American Festival Presents the Poinsettia**

**Jessica Courbis and Jacqueline Wilson**

The Latin Ballet of Virginia will perform The Legend of the Poinsettia on Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the W. Campbell Edmonds Memorial Concert Series. The Legend of the Poinsettia is based on a Mexican legend and has become a traditional part of American Christmas celebrations. The legend tells of a young girl, unable to offer a gift of value to baby Jesus on Christmas Eve, picks a handful of weeds outside the church. She takes them to the altar, where the weeds magically transform into brilliant crimson flowers. From this humble offering came the custom of decorating trees with poinsettias at Christmas.

**Jim Post to Perform Tribute, Christmas Show**

**Timothy B. Schmidt**

Artist and tenor Jim Post is scheduled to appear in two programs in December, presented by the Pro-ART Association, Mountain Empire Community College and UVA-Wise as part of the W. Campbell Edmonds Memorial Concert Series. The Legend of the Poinsettia is based on a Mexican legend and has become a traditional part of American Christmas celebrations. The legend tells of a young girl, unable to offer a gift of value to baby Jesus on Christmas Eve, picks a handful of weeds outside the church. She takes them to the altar, where the weeds magically transform into brilliant crimson flowers. From this humble offering came the custom of decorating trees with poinsettias at Christmas.

**2003's Last Great Epic Films Offer Holiday Action**

The Legend of the Poinsettia is directed by Anne Ines King and will include live music arranged by Kevin Davis and Marc Langeller and performed by the Ban Caribe Ensemble and soprano Audra Harvey. The production is co-sponsored by Best Western and Norton Community College.

For more information, call the Pro-ART Association at 376-4522.
CAVS FOOTBALL ENDS LOSING STREAK WITH WIN AT UNION

Daniel Lechey  Staff Writer

The College ended their losing streak on Saturday, Oct. 18, when they traveled to Union College to take on the Bulldogs. The Cavs had lost five consecutive games before defeating Union with a score of 41-38. The Cavaliers were led by the return of quarterback Josh Mabe, the running of Ra Shad Morgan and last year's All-American, Dieontea Stewart. The Cahors offense was very successful running out of the shotgun, totaling 412 yards of total offense. The Cavs' defense also forced four Union turnovers. The Cavaliers made the score 17-14 in favor of the Bulldogs with a 59-yard scoring strike from Josh Mabe to Dieontea Stewart. The Bulldogs then fumbled on their next position, which set up a touchdown sneak for a touchdown by Mabe.

With the Cavs in the lead 21-17, kicker Robert Hammond connected on a 33-yard field goal to make the lead 24-17. Hammond's field goal was the first for the Cavaliers since the 2001 season, and he later added a 43-yarder. Running back Ra Shad Morgan has moved in very nicely to the starting role and became the first Cavalier to rush for 100 yards in a game this season. Overall, the Cavalier's offense was led by quarterback Josh Mabe, who was 7 of 15 for 147 yards and two scores. Dieontea Stewart had four catches for 121 yards and a score. Running back Ra Shad Morgan had 15 carries for 121 yards and a touchdown. Kicker Robert Hammond added two field goals of 33 and 43. The Cavs' defense was led by Kenneth Mitchell, who made 18 tackles and had a fumble recovery. Cornerback Tim Smith added an interception and one pass defended. Safety Haynes Morris added two passes defended.

This win moved the team to 2-5 overall and 1-4 in the Mid-South Conference. The Cavs' win was their first since their opening-day victory at West Liberty State College.

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