Soldier relives his time at war

CHARLIE GRAU
Editor in Chief

Every Sunday, Angel Garcia and the rest of the Army squad would drink ice-cold Starbucks frappucinos to celebrate making it through the week alive and count down another week until they all returned home.

On the seventh anniversary of Sept. 11, Garcia remembers those weekly drinks he had with his fellow Soldiers in Iraq.

"After deploying to Iraq, Sept. 11 serves as a reminder that freedom isn't really free. It is a day that I honor the loss of all those innocent victims involved in the tragedy and a day that I reaffirm my commitment to do all within my power as a soldier to protect our nation," Garcia said.

Now a coordinator at the Center for Leadership and Services, Garcia first thought about joining the armed services while watching a Marines commercial in 2002.

"I thought to myself, 'Wow, what an experience to go through basic training and go through all that physical endurance,'" said Garcia, who was a junior living at the University Apartments at the time.

Right after that, Garcia walked into an Army recruiter's office and enlisted for eight years. From there, he was shipped off to Fort Knox, Ky.

Going from the warm tropical climate of Miami to snow, mountains and 17 degree weather was a shock for the Cuban-American.

"Basic training really toughened me up," Garcia said. "When you're out there in the middle of nowhere and you are stripped away of all the comforts and amenities of home, you really dig deep inside yourself and see what type of leader and person you are and see what you can endure mentally and physically."

When he got out of basic training, his army recruiter reassured him that he didn't have to worry about getting shipped to Iraq. But that all changed when he arrived on the first day of classes at FIU on Aug. 24, 2004.

"You want to talk about surreal. You want to talk about your life flashing before your eyes," Garcia said. "All I could think about were those images you see on TV of soldiers fighting and you think you're going to be a part of that."

In less than month, Garcia was assigned to the Civil Affairs Special Operations Unit which was composed of five soldiers. Their main objective was to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people. Since he was still in college, Garcia’s major assigned him to speak to deans of the local Baghdad universities in order to help them get the materials they needed to restore and repair each college.

He also partook in tactical missions like Operation Iron broom, in which the Army caught 50 or so terrorists in one night in various locations in Baghdad.

Watching the news was a nerve-wracking experience for his family back home.

"Almost every time I would talk to him, I would hear guns and bombs going off in the background," his sister Michelle said. "I was an emotional wreck. I didn't even want to see him, I was so worried and scared, I didn't know what to expect." During his 10 months in Iraq, Garcia’s family would send him gift packages to remind him of home.

At 6 a.m. every morning Garcia would start his day with a Colonel. His family sent him enough cof- feee and Starbucks frappucinos that his squad had a refrigerator just for coffee.

"We had our own frappucino drinking ceremonies and we would do it every Sunday. As the frappucinos went down, we knew we were getting closer to going home, that we were doing a good job and getting our mission done. And that’s how we lived it, week by week. Let’s just make it to that next frappucino and we made it. Everyone made it home safe."

Even though his object was non-combat oriented, Garcia still faced his fear of danger.

One morning, while waiting for clearance to leave the base, a car bomb blew up in front of the base killing civilians that were waiting to enter.

"When you go through those types of situations, the Palmetto doesn’t look so bad at 4 a.m. wait- ing in line at a bank isn’t so bad when you’re there alive and can get in your car and go wherever you want,” Garcia said.

"When you are over there, when the bullets are flying, the rockets are coming into your base, you are getting motored everyday and have to deal with car bombs in front of your base, you really appreciate life,” he said. “Something as simple as going to Wendy’s and ordering a No. 7 is appreciated until it’s gone.”

Charlie Grau can be reached at charlie.grau@fi usm.com.
Poll numbers rise after Palin’s addition

REPUBLICAN, page 1

The Hope credit and the Lifetime Learning credit.
These credits directly subtract money from a family’s tax bill, if claimed.
McCain thinks that a simplification of programs will help more Americans take advantage of them.

“Consolidating programs will help simplify the administration of these programs, and help more students have a better understanding of their eligibility for aid,”
states McCain’s Web site.
Looking at McCain’s historical vote on educational issues may also shed some light on what his possible presidency might mean for college students.

Consolidating [aid] programs will ... help more students have a better understanding of their eligibility for aid
Policy statement on John McCain’s Web site

Since the Clinton administration, McCain has sponsored, co-sponsored, and voted for bills which would create tax-savings accounts for individuals saving up for college, according to www.emhellassays.org.
However, concentration on postsecondary education is not the main concern for some politically aware FIU students.
Republican Edgardo Santos, a junior and military veteran, said his main concern is not education but his military benefits. He feels he’s covered for his education and votes Republican because he believes the party is more pro-military than the Democrats.

Also contributing to the Republican appeal is the nomination of Sarah Palin for vice president during the RNC.
Graduate student Ana Gonzalez said she can relate to Palin because she exhibits family values and conservatism.
For FIU Republicans, McCain’s concentration on issues other than education is enough for their vote.

Obama aims to simplify financial aid applications

DEMOCRAT, page 1

The check-box would eliminate the need for the five-page, 127-question Free Application for Federal Student Aid form and decrease the number of eligible students who fail to apply due to the complicated process.
Terrill, who considers her family low-middle class, knows these measures will help her continue her education at FIU.

“We can’t achieve all we want to without our financial aid. [Without aid] a lot of us won’t go to college or we have to stop going to school to get jobs and never get a degree,”
Terrill said.
If platform policies won’t make college students vote blue, the introduction of the vice presidential pick — who happens to have a long history of education reform — just might.

Since the 1980s, Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr, vice-presidential nominee, has spent six congressional terms championing college affordability.
In his short 2007 Democratic presidential run, he supported replacing two existing federal tax breaks for college expenses with a refundable tax credit of up to $3,000 per year. He also introduced bills to increase the Pell Grant and expand student loans and grants for nursing education.
However, Biden’s long education reform history can only be rivaled by his equally long history of plagiarism. In fact, his 1988 presidential run ended in controversy surrounding speeches plagiarizing Robert F. Kennedy and Hubert H. Humphrey.

Some might wonder whether these allegations might hinder a candidates’ appeal, especially in an academic institution.
Not so, said FIU’s Students for Barack Obama volunteer Anthony Perez, a senior and political science major.
“I think it’s an issue that’s in the past. They’ll vote for Obama, not for the vice president. A V.P. can help but he can’t hurt,” Perez said.
Independent and senior Jose Perez-Roura, who is waiting for the presidential debates to make his decision, agrees that the vice presidential pick won’t play a role in his final decision at the voting booth.

“The RNC and DNC are big infomercials. You don’t get the nitty-gritty until the debates,”
said.

With a convention that can boast one in six delegates under the age of 36, and with Gallup polls that put 18- to 29-year-olds favoring Obama 54 percent, the Democratic Party stands secure within its already proclaimed young voter base.

Junior, health science administration major and undecided voter Christopher Llanes thinks education reform will do little to sway voters one way or another.

“Education is important, but depending on other issues at hand, you might need to sacrifice [education] for other things that would really swing people one way or another.”

The Beacon office is located in the Graham Center, room 210, at the University Park campus.
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Club combines love for wine, culture

ALEXA SANDOVAL
Contributing Writer

Good friends, good talking, good food and good wine – all right here at FIU.

Friends of Wine is a student club in which members have one thing in common: their love of wine.

“I love [Friends of Wine] because it has helped me to get out there more,” said Samantha Newton, Friends of Wine president and a senior in hospitality management. “It has been a learning experience.”

According to Newton, the club’s goal is “to expand your mind and explore the wonderful world that wine has to offer,” from an educational perspective.

The club’s history goes back 22 years, originating from the monthly public tastings Professor Patrick ‘Chip’ Cassidy held at his wine store, Crown Wine & Spirits. One day, one of his students went to one of his tastings and liked it so much he suggested Cassidy have a wine club at FIU.

The school first rejected the idea because it involved alcohol. Newton, who is also the club’s advisor, “They were determined.”

“I’m not sure their reasoning was because it involved alcohol,” said Newton. “I think it was because it was a contraption that whirred and slid, and finally showing off our dyed tongue.

And then it happened. It was the way I Boba, and the blended green tea drink. The sweetness of the tapioca pearls was overcome with the delectability of a slimy gummy bear in your mouth.

My verdict: Boba is the equivalent of a slimy gummy bear in your drink.

For those of you who are afraid of odd food textures, take your word for it. It's all means, you need to try this. Odd food textures, take your word for it. It's your frequent Boba card, because after every 12, you get one free. The restaurant is closed on Tuesdays, and they

Boba: The drink you can chew

BIANCA ROJAS
Staff Writer

Some of us can remember our first Sharpee experience – the cooling down of a hot day with a Brain Freeze, and finally showing off our dyed tongue.

It was like a plop onto my tongue. A Godzilla straw and into my mouth. And then it happened. It was the way I Boba, and you are still interested in trying something new, I have found a place in North Miami Beach that has it.

Out of all the glasses of this treat I have consumed, Shing Wang (237 NE 167 St., 305-654-4008) has the best. Their Boba is perfectly cooked; tastes fresh and the chewiness is not too firm, nor too gummy.

Like Goddie Locks found, it is right just right. If it doesn’t sound heavy enough yet, their green tea slush is made with green tea ice cream to add that creaminess that a milk-based green tea latte just can’t give you.

If you do give bubble tea a try at Shing Wang’s, make sure to pick up your frequent Boba card, because after every 12, you get one free. The restaurant is closed on Tuesdays, and it offers things besides Boba, like an all-vegetarian menu and Taiwanese shaved ice treats.

But that’s another topic, and another adventure in food for future articles.

Shing Wang means lucky in Chinese, and I hope your experience reflects that.

Read ‘Foodgasm’ every other Wednesday for more food trends.

E-mail your food ideas to Bianca Rojas at bianca.rojas@fi usm.com

BOBAUCIOUS: Columnist Bianca Rojas sips her Bubble Tea, better known as Boba (above). Close up looks show Boba’s texture: slimy on the outside, chewy on the inside (below).
Politicians should put their souls up for bid on eBay

Now, at first glance, I thought this was a neat concept; it would definitely give me some leverage in the work force. I mean come on, two souls! Plus, an extra “soul in a jar” could fit well within my Ancient Greek Literature collection, ant farm and shrine of Jordan sneakers.

But it’s obvious no one can sell an inanimate object, of this kind, to another person. Here are three good reasons why it won’t work:

(1) It violates Einstein’s Theory of General Relativity.

(2) It could be illegal in some states; most likely Hawaii, Kentucky, Idaho and the other 47 states.

(3) Finally, the consumer must partake in the same amount of crack cocaine, LSD, taxidermy and/or Dr. Phil self-help books, as the soul-seller currently does in order to make it work.

Now the real question comes: do politicians have souls? Even an Aristotle-Darwin-Galileo-Newton mix would argue that one out, but I’ll take a jab:

Now that we’ve hopefully concluded that selling souls online is a bit creepy/sac-religious, where does this leave our two main presidential candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain, and their flip-flopping parallelisms?

It can be argued that they, like most politicians, have sold their entire beings to all 50 states, voters and lobbyists while perpetuating false glimpses of hope and promises.

In 2000, John McCain was the presidential nominee for change within the conservatives; he was the maverick of the party.

Today he is whoever you want him to be. Before, he would say that Christians were “agents of intolerance”; now he sings a different tune, sipping coffee with Billy Graham at his ranch in North Carolina, re-materializing the Southern Baptist Conventions’ elites and claiming himself to be a man of strong conserva-tive values. I don’t argue the latter, but I’m a bit suspicious.

Obama on the other hand is like a puppet to his campaign team and the poster child for political correctness. One day he says “not wearing flag pins does not make me un-patriotic” and the next day he wears six, just to keep people happy. In one speech he said, “ Reverend Wright [his controversial pastor] is just one in the norm.” The next town hall he attends, though, Obama disassociates himself from him.

So what does this all mean? I don’t know. However, if the candidates have gone this far with the concept of flip-flopping, then they might as well sell their souls on eBay too. Think about it, they could increase their campaign money, and capture the hearts of millions of Americans – weird Americans, but Americans.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
Publisher justified censoring ‘Jewel’ novel; Ruckman misses crucial point

Congratulations to the Beacon contributing writer Mathew Ruckman, for informing us about the censorship of “The Jewel of Medina.”

Ironically though, for all his articulate criticism of censorship, he himself censored a key fact in the budding fire-storm: namely that the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, married a minor by the name of Aisha when she was just six years old.

They later “consummated” the relationship when she was nine, and during this consummation Muhammad was approxi-mately 50 years of age.

This fact is critical to un-dersanding the reaction of the Muslim community, for therein lies the heart of the controversy.

First, the relationship be-tween Muhammad and his underage wife is deeply embar-rassing to many Muslims, who would rather not have them associated with them. She is not listed in the top 10 highest paying majors; those slots are re-served for engineering degrees, as well as degrees in physics and economics.

Yet the skills a student gains as an English major are valuable; employers need these speakers,” Sutton said.

McIntire, on the other hand, explained the degree’s power to allow students to have “imaginative sympathy.”

“Get inside the heads of others. You learn when you write, and if you’re mindful of your audience – there’s not enough of that in the workplace,” McIntire said.

The English degree should not be stigmatized solely because of average salaries. Critical reading and thinking skills are sought after by many employers across various fields and disciplines. Once English majors realize this, finding a job shouldn’t be as large of a challenge as others suppose.
A video showing a skinny, pale, long haired drummer playing the song, “When the Levee Breaks” by Led Zeppelin in the middle of the University of California, Berkeley football field. All of a sudden, the school’s football players run into the field from all directions and begin to practice, surrounding the drummer while he continues to rock on.

The drummer and the football team are both exuding masculinity in two completely opposite ways; the athletes are the epitome of hyper-masculinity while the drummer portrays masculinity with his music.

The concept for this video, called “The Year of the Doppelganger” by the artist Slater Bradley, was one of the many ideas expressed at the Museum of Contemporary Art Miami with their summer exhibit “Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll since 1967.”

The exhibition is about the relationship between contemporary art and rock and roll – it had absolutely nothing to do with memorabilia or commercial art sold for bands. This is about what Andy Warhol imitated in his attempts at creating art with the involvement of the Velvet Underground in the 1960s. In this exhibit, each piece made a statement about rock through art. There were some pieces that stood out because of what they were trying to say and how their message was conveyed.

An example of this was Robert Lounge’s untitled (Men in Cities) drawings. In the '70s and '80s, being a high power business man was the American dream and Lounge drew the American dreamers dancing and getting funky to the no wave music of the time.

In these drawings, business men and women dressed for their jobs are seen dancing in a no wave manner, and they are doing it so well that you can almost hear the musicians which they are jamming.

Another intriguing piece was a room with an artist’s untitled (Men in Cities) drawings. In the '70s and '80s, being a high power business man was the American dream and Lounge drew the American dreamers dancing and getting funky to the no wave music of the time.

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Radiate FM demonstrates the value of video gaming

**Nikki Perez**
Contributing Writer

Video games can be criticized as unproductive means of entertainment, but four employees from the FIU radio station, Radiate FM, debated that idea by actually spending almost four days playing The Legend of Zelda games to raise money for a charity.

Sean Gonzalez, Andrew Julian, Robert Martinez, and Pablo Penton came together as the “Zeldathon” team with the goal to play a series of seven Zelda video games in an attempt to raise money for the Child’s Play charity, which donates video games, toys and money to sick children in hospitals all over the nation. The marathon was displayed on the web directly from the actual station where everything took place.

Interested donors who watched the event from home sent their portions through Pay Pal which was then contributed directly to the marathon for a period of six weeks.

“We really wanted the equipment to work,” said Penton, general manager of Radiate FM. “Without equipment there is no marathon.”

During the time of preparation, Zeldathon concentrated mainly on the materials that were going to be used and their quality to avoid any disruption. They decided on a Nintendo Wii, a video capture card, a web cam and two game cubes.

The Zeldathon began Aug. 8 at 8 p.m. and ran through Aug. 15 at 4:45 a.m. Their goal was to finish in 72 hours but instead the series lasted 105 hours.

Determined to finish on time, they switched turns when they were tired, sometimes even falling asleep in the Graham Center hallways.

“Critics question whether or not the money reached Child’s Play, but that doesn’t stop Zeldathon from building their legend.”

“The money never touched us,” Penton said.

It was such an achievement on their part that the team has already planned some more upcoming video game marathons with similar goals.

CNET found them online while they were playing and were interested enough to even publish a story on the “Zeldathon” team.

The inspiration to set this event up came from the Mario Marathon, which consisted of seven Mario video games. Gonzalez first found out about Mario Marathon when he noticed one of their links as he was browsing through webcomics.com. Shortly after, he informed his team mates about the idea and they gathered to plan their own marathon for a period of six weeks.

“The goal is to get everyone hanging out with friends and playing video games in an attempt to give more than anything hazing the way it [should],” said George Aspros, president of Beta Delta Chapter.

“The inspiration to set this event up came from the Mario Marathon, which consisted of a group of former college roommate playing Mario games for a charity as well.”

Zeldathon surpassed their expectations and managed to raise $1,468.66.

“Just knew we could do it,” said Gonzalez, traffic and training director of Radiate FM.

“It was a lot of fun for a good cause.”

The marathon was displayed on the web directly from the actual station where everything took place.

Interested donors who watched the event from home sent their portions through Pay Pal which was then contributed directly to the marathon for a period of six weeks.

Selected donations that don’t make an impact in their community.

**HAZING, page 5**

Students, faculty fight increased incidence of hazing among Greeks

Hazing under our Fraternal Code and under the Florida State Law,” but that’s not all, behind all the talk about the National Hazing Prevention Week who makes it all happen? And why is it so important in such a diverse school?

“I’ll admit it, we are a very diverse school, but stereotypes still exist and people get discriminated [against] all the time,” said Katrina Stalken, a junior and an active member in NHPW.

When joining a group, it’s not about where you are from, or the way you look; it’s about finding common ground with others and about the tolerance and respect that make you grow as a person.”

During this week, sororities and fraternities work nonstop to provide a good outcome and increase hazing awareness.

Hanging out with friends and playing video games for a charity was the coolest thing I’ve ever done,” Gonzalez said.
The Golden Panthers visited the 5th ranked Florida State Seminoles, and were blanked 5-0 on Sept. 5. The Seminoles outshot FIU, 27-3, and the shots on goal were also grossly in favor of FSU, as they held a 12-1 advantage.

Lauren Switzer, (31st Minute) and Tori Hunter (46th Minute) each tallied a goal and an assist for the Seminoles, who improved their record to 4-0-0 on the season with the victory.

Head coach Thomas Chestnutt, spoke highly of the Seminoles, last season’s NCAA tournament runner-up.

“They have done an incredible job at FSU and really deserve their current ranking,” he said. “They are good both individually and as a group.”

UNF 1, FIU 0

FIU was shut out for the second time over the weekend, on the road against the University of North Florida, who picked up their first victory of the season, in Jacksonville on Sept. 7. UNF scored the only goal of the game off the boot Katelin Smith, as she drove home a rebound in the 52nd minute; it was her second of the season.

The Golden Panthers managed to out-shoot the Lady Ospreys (1-2-1) 9-7, but couldn’t manage to find the back of the net, and they fell to 0-5-0 on the season.

Despite the loss, coach Chestnutt was encouraged with the play of his team.

“We controlled the midfield and the girls played hard to the end but we just need to keep improving,” Chestnutt said.

The FIU women’s soccer team will continue its four game road swing with its next two contests coming in California, Sept 11 at Fresno State, and Sept 14 at Cal Poly.

FIU will return home for two contests after an eight-day break to begin its conference schedule, taking on Middle Tennessee, Sept 26 at 7 p.m., and Western Kentucky, Sept 28 at 1 p.m.
Volleyball team’s reinvention nothing short of magical

Do you believe in magic? When she arrived to FIU in 2005, first year volleyball head coach Danijela Tomic inherited a team with a 3-23 record. Like a magician, she showed the team an awful 23-loss season in a hat and made it vanish. Like a trick, she recruited volunteers from across the globe. At her next trick, she recruited volunteers from across the globe. Six new hand picked recruits, including outside hitters Yarimar Rosa and players’ memories; by pulling out a 15-13 record her first season.

For her next trick, she recruited volunteers from across the globe. Six new hand picked recruits, including outside hitter Yarimar Rosa, helped the team become co-Sun Belt Conference Champions in her first season.

This 2008 season, four seasons removed from a horrible record, the volleyball team is off to its best start in program history and has already defeated No. 19 Clemson.

So was it magic that the volleyball program’s fortunes? Or was it Athletics’ governing motto: “You need the right personnel to build a program?”

Judging by Tomic’s immediate and drastic impact, Athletics’ motto does work. However, with so many up and coming programs at FIU, the volleyball team is the only one that has shown signs of actual change and improvement. Tomic has become the prototype and the primary example of how to rebuild a program.

Magicians never reveal their secrets; luckily, Tomic is a head coach willing to divulge some of the principles she used while turning the volleyball program around.

“My recruiting philosophy is to get the best volleyball player that you can, no matter where they’re from,” Tomic said.

She is referring to the team’s diversity and foreign recruits, which have given the team an international mix and ideal results.

While some programs are not finding significant talent in the Caribbean or Europe, Tomic’s methodology goes beyond the cliché “student-athletes willing to work hard on and off the field.” She carefully selects students whose character fit her coaching style: specifically, who are willing to do exactly what she says.

“They have to have passion and be willing to take on challenges,” she said. “You have to work hard, stay in shape, be disciplined and be competitive. All those things don’t depend on how tall you are or how high you jump.”

Her ability to gaug a recruit’s willingness to listen to her and be part of the team makes it a big reason why she has yet to coach a losing team during her three years as FIU’s head coach.

Persistence and a little luck don’t hurt either.

The best example is the team’s main offensive force and two-time First-Team All Sun Belt Conference player, Yarimar Rosa. Tomic admitted that it’s rare to recruit a player of Rosa’s caliber, but it wasn’t an accident either.

“Going into recruiting I believe I can recruit anybody for FIU, and that’s the key,” she said. Tomic says bringing Rosa to FIU was done, “By keep in touch with her mom, her and never giving up.”

Recruiting the best players seems like the obvious explanation as to how a team excels in college, but that isn’t always the case. An elite player in the country is of no use, if they aren’t academically eligible or are constantly suspended.

Tomic makes sure none of her players ever fall into any of those categories. She sets the goal, and rather than having to push her players to reach the goal, they alone fight to obtain it.

“The players we have here want to do extra things and that’s not usual,” she said. “Our goal every year is to get to the NCAA Tournament because we can do it. It’s about transferring that confidence and belief onto them, then it’s up to them to do the work.”

I’ve heard several FIU coaches talk about his or her vision for the future for a couple of years now. But I’ve never heard an FIU coach with the confidence and conviction that Tomic possesses.

If she told me all humans were going to live on Mars tomorrow, I would pack my bags tonight.

That’s the same way her recruits and current players buy into her system.

As of Sept. 10, the volleyball team is the only FIU intercollegiate program to record a victory. In fact, they’ve already got a 6-1 record.

Volleyball right now is the head and shoulders above every other FIU team in terms of progress and direction, and the team’s success can be directly attributed to Tomic’s arrival.

She may not be able to successfully saw a man in half, but Tomic will be leading the volleyball program towards prestige as long as she’s in charge.