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## Electronic Harmony



Professor Saleem Ali's students are teaming up with Chinese counterparts to explore environmental problems. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

An innovative course on resolving environmental disputes taught by Saleem Ali has a UVM student trying to explain to his counterpart at Peking University the potential consequences of a recent decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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## Facing Down Fermat

The man who is possibly the world's most accomplished living mathematician, and certainly its most famous, blinked through his spectacles at the crowd filling every seat and most aisle steps of Carpenter Auditorium, then put a sheet on the overhead projector and filled the screen with Babylonian cuneiform.

**Café Crossroads** For the past six years Steve Cavrak has started his day by talking with colleagues over a cup of coffee on the first floor of Waterman.

## THE WEEK IN VIEW

**March 12 4 p.m.**  
**University Scholar seminar: Childhood Obesity.** Rachel Johnson, CALS dean.  
**Information: [View Article](#)**

**March 13 12:30 p.m.**  
**SNR seminar: "The Geography and Diversity of Global Oil Supply,"** given by Charles Hall, SUNY.  
**Carpenter Auditorium, Given. 656-3269.**

**March 13 3:30 p.m.**  
**African studies lecture: The Herero Genocide,"** given by Jeremy Silvester, University of Namibia. 403 Williams Hall. 656-3884.

**March 18 6 p.m.**  
**Community medical school: "The Science of Heroin Addiction and Its Treatment,"** Warren Bickel, psychiatry. Carpenter Auditorium, Given Building. Information and registration: 847-2886.

**March 21 all day**  
**43rd Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association. Students and faculty will discuss research. Separate locations within Lafayette Hall. Information: [www.neaa.org](http://www.neaa.org)**

**March 25 10 a.m.**  
**Talk and workshop: "Basho's Journey and Ours,"** given by Bruce Ross. Memorial Lounge, Waterman. Information: 656-1117.

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## NEWS BRIEFS



First-year student Jamie Kingsbury won national title in the giant slalom, and helped lead UVM to a surprising second-place team finish in the NCAA championships. (Photo courtesy of Athletic Communications.)

### For 2003 Ski Cats, Second a Sweet Victory

It wasn't a sixth NCAA team title for Chip LaCasse, director of skiing, who is finishing up his 34th and final year here, but it was perhaps the best second the legendary coach has ever notched.

"Second is a miracle," LaCasse told the *Burlington Free Press*. "I'm as proud of this team as I would be winning."

Vermont entered the 2003 championships on March 5 shorthanded, with only 10 of the requisite 12 athletes qualifying. Heading into the last day of the four-day event, the Catamounts were in a disappointing fifth place. Then Jimmy Cochran and Scott Kennison finished second and third in the men's slalom, and the women racers performed as well. The team finished with 551 points, well behind national champion Utah, but narrowly ahead of Colorado.

"We drove down here with four zeros," LaCasse said. "You just can't go in losing four scoring opportunities before the thing even starts. But we took it as a challenge, and to finish second in the country, that's a huge, huge thing. It's a credit to this team and to these kids."

Vermont athletes earned 10 All-America certificates and seven of those were named either first- or second-team All-Americans. Leading the way was Jamie Kingsbury, a first-year student who became the fourth UVM skier to win the women's Giant Slalom title.

### War Forum Showcases Diverse Faculty Expertise

Five professors gave varying reasons why an impending war with Iraq would be a mistake for the United States and have potentially disastrous consequences for other parts of the world at a recent panel discussion titled "Is Iraq the Problem? Is War the Solution?"

A sixth faculty member, political scientist Robert Kaufman, supported a military conflict with Iraq, saying it's a "misnomer to say it's not popular domestically."

The university-sponsored event drew hundreds of students, faculty, staff and community members to Ira Allen Chapel on March 5. Following brief opening statements, professors took about 15 questions from audience members, answering them in relation to their respective disciplines.

In addition to Kaufman, the panel included assistant history professor Bogac Ergene, associate economics professor Stephanie Seguino, history professor Mark Stoler, economics professor emeritus Abbas Alnasrawi and assistant religion professor Sufia Uddin.

The five faculty in opposition to a war with Iraq argued that the cost – both financial and in terms of human suffering – hadn't been justified by the Bush administration. Alnasrawi said that approximately 10 million people would be either injured, starved, killed or adversely affected in some way to a war with Iraq. He estimated the cost to all sides would exceed \$1 trillion. (For more on Alnasrawi's thoughts, see his recent [INTERview](#).)

Seguino said the Bush administration continues to claim its plans are designed to improve security when it should be focusing on improving "human security." With containment being a much cheaper approach to dealing with Iraq, Seguino said the money saved from such a war could be used in alternative ways that could alleviate poverty and suffering in the world.

Stoler said a war could isolate the U.S. from the rest of the world and cause regional powers to potentially rebel against it. America is in danger of alienating its allies and can expect a "combination of both good and bad" to come out a war with Iraq, he said.

Kaufman, who referred to himself as the only "(pro-war) game in town," disagreed with Stoler, saying more good would come out of a war than bad. The longer the U.S. waits to attack, the greater the risks and the cost of war, he said.

"We skied a championship as good as you can ski it," LaCasse told the paper.

The second-place national finish was the coach's 13th. For more detailed coverage of the championships, see [Athletic Communications](#).

### Senate Recommends Honors College

The Faculty Senate passed a resolution on March 10 officially recommending the creation of an Honors College. This recommendation will be brought before the trustees at an upcoming meeting. The university plans to enroll its first 90 students in the Honors College for the fall of 2003. It is anticipated that as successive classes enter the college approximately 800 students will be enrolled.

"This is a great day in the history of UVM," said Provost John Bramley, who made remarks in support of the Honors College proposal at the opening of the session.

The Honors College experience, in addition to its courses, laboratories and experiential learning opportunities, will include various co-curricular elements including an "Honors Trek" for first year students and a series of symposia, cultural events, dinners, seminars, and informal gatherings for honors students called "Honors After Dark." Additionally, special residential opportunities, called "Hall of Honors," will be available to students.

"There is still a lot of work to do, but the faculty, Faculty Senate, the Honors College Council and my colleagues have worked tirelessly in the initial planning phase." Bramley said. He continued, "while this will attract more gifted students to enter the university, the Honors College will benefit the entire university academic community and the student experience as a whole."

"Not only are we *going* to fight the war, but we *should* fight the war," Kaufman said. "It will save much blood, toil, tears and sweat. More good will come out of it than bad."

Kaufman discussed his rationale for supporting the war in more detail in a [Summer 2002 Interview](#) with *Vermont Quarterly*.

Uddin said Bush's "good versus evil" and "God is on our side" comments were overly simplistic and could severely damage the relationship between the United States and Islamic countries.

The panel discussion was followed by an unrelated "Stop the War" rally outside Ira Allen sponsored by the Burlington Anti-War Coalition, Students for Peace & Global Justice, SPARC, Patriots for Peace.org, Peace and Justice Center, International Socialist Organization and Students Against War.

Earlier the same day, many students participated in a "student strike" against the war. The daylong "alternative learning day" was largely organized by students and was not officially sanctioned by the university, though some faculty and staff took part. Will Miller, an assistant professor of philosophy who is on sabbatical from teaching "but not the anti-war movement," said that 70 people attended his early morning presentation and the debate was lively.

"Students strike me as much more informed than the population at large, and much more willing to look critically at what they have believed," he said. "They show a willingness to examine assumptions they haven't challenged before. I find students more willing to engage in risky inquiry, and generally more hopeful, than us discouraged older folks."

theview

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Maya Angelou, author of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, visits campus on March 26 courtesy of the Class of 2003. (Publicity photo.)

### Maya Angelou to Speak on March 28

Maya Angelou, one of the great voices of contemporary literary and popular culture, will be the featured guest of the Senior Speaker Series on March 28 at 7:30 p.m. in Patrick Gymnasium. The UVM Senior Class Council is bringing the world-renowned writer and personality to campus as a gift to the university community from the Class of 2003.

Tickets are free to UVM students, faculty, and staff. Faculty and staff can pick up tickets with ID on March 13 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Billings, subject to availability. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. on March 28, at which time any remaining tickets will be sold to the general public at \$10 each.

A mesmerizing vision of grace on stage, Maya Angelou captivates her audiences with her ability to speak with authority on the countless subjects that have captured her intellect and imagination during the span of an extraordinary life of the mind.

Angelou's background is as complex and interesting as the woman herself. Born in St. Louis, Mo., she spent most of her early childhood with her grandmother in Stamps, Arkansas. In 1940 she and her family moved to San Francisco, where she completed her schooling. At 15, she discovered that writing poetry brought relief from the problems of ordinary living. Determined to carve out a stage career, she studied dance and drama every night while working a variety of jobs during the day.

Angelou is acknowledged the world over as a gifted writer, performer and cultural

### Sustainable Forestry Forum Aims to Spark National Conversation

A sustainable forestry forum sponsored by the School of Natural Resources is intended to spark a national debate about the future of forestry education. The event takes place on March 16 and 17. John Gordon, director of the Yale Forest Forum, will give the keynote address.

The forum will consist of panel presentations by recognized leaders in forestry practice, policy, and education, followed by working sessions to develop goals and recommendations for action in developing sustainable forestry curricula.

Registration for the free event officially closed March 1, but there may be a few slots available or opportunities to see selected speeches or presentations. For more information, contact Tom Lautzenheiser at 656-4280 or see [Sustainable Forestry Forum](#) for background information and a complete events listing.

### "Recycled Realities" Exhibit to Debut at the Coburn

John Willis, a photographer and professor at Marlboro College, will speak on March 25 in 301 Williams Hall to celebrate the debut of an exhibition of his work at the Coburn Gallery.

Willis will show examples of his work from a number of photographic projects and discuss the ideas and experiences behind his most recent project, "Recycled Realities," which is on display through April 4. A reception will follow his presentation.

"Recycled Realities" is a series of still-life photographs documenting an event in the paper recycling process, the stacking of baled paper at the plant ready to be re-processed.

"The variety of images one can find in these bales by searching through the random placement of paper scraps continues to amaze me on formal and conceptual terms," writes Willis. "It is magical how the juxtaposition of imagery presents individual and cultural voices of the past, whispering, calling out, validating both wonderful and sad memories."

"Recycled Realities" has been exhibited at The Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, N.Y., the Light Factory in Charlotte, N.C., The Houston Center for Photography, Hampshire College, Philadelphia Art Alliance and the Photographic Resource Center in Boston.



commentator. She speaks six languages fluently and has received numerous academic honors and awards, including honorary doctorates from the University of Vermont, Mills College, Lawrence University, Columbia College (Chicago), Occidental College, Central State University and Smith College. She received the Chubb fellowship from Yale University and holds the Reynolds Chair at Wake Forest University.

Angelou's journey into the public spotlight began in 1952, when she received a scholarship to study dance with Pearl Primus in New York. Returning to San Francisco in 1954, she made her first professional appearance as a singer at the Purple Onion. She then joined the European touring company of *Porgy and Bess*. She sang the role of Ruby and was the lead dancer in this production, which traveled to 22 countries in Europe and Africa during 1954 and 1955. Between times she taught modern dance at the Rome Opera House and conducted classes in modern dance technique at the Habima Theatre in Tel Aviv.

While living in Africa she became the associate editor of *The Arab Observer* in Cairo, the only English language news weekly in the Middle East. She also wrote freelance articles for *The Ghanaian Times* and for the Ghanaian Broadcasting Corporation in Accra. She concluded her stay in Africa in 1966 as feature editor of *The African Review* in Accra.

Angelou has written many bestselling books, including the acclaimed accounting of her youth, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*, which was also produced as a two-hour television special for CBS in 1979. She received the coveted Golden Eagle Award for her documentary, *Afro-American* in the Arts, for PBS. She also has been a writer and producer for numerous other national television projects and magazine articles. Her musical, *And Still I Rise*, for which she is librettist, lyricist and composer, will debut soon.

## Calling Campus Cartier-Bressons

If you have a prize image from studying, traveling or working outside your home country, the Office of International Education wants to see it for their 10th annual photography contest.

The contest is open to UVM students, faculty and staff. Organizers request that individuals submit no more than three entries, which can be in color or black and white as long as they are at least five by seven inches in size. Entries are due April 1 to OIE in Living/Learning.

Winning shots will garner prizes such as dinner certificates and will go on display in Bailey/Howe Library starting April 14.

Information: 656-4296

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March 12 – March 25, 2003

### Publications and Presentations

A landmark article, co-authored by **Dr. Richard Colletti**, professor of pediatrics and a pediatric gastroenterologist at Fletcher Allen Health Care, was published in the February 10, 2003 issue of the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. The article, titled "Prevalence of celiac disease in at-risk and not at-risk groups in the United States: A large multicenter study," demonstrates that celiac disease is a much more common disorder than has been recognized in the United States.

**Connell B. Gallagher**, director for research collections at Bailey/Howe, gave a slide-talk titled "The Art of the Book: From the 'Book of Kells' to Picasso" to the Elder Education Enrichment group in South Burlington on Feb. 14. He will give a slightly different version of this talk as part of the Fletcher Free Library "Booked For Lunch Series." The presentation is scheduled for March 20 at noon in the library's Fletcher Room.

March 5 – March 11, 2003

### Awards and Honors

**Catherine Donnelly**, professor of nutrition and food sciences, recently was appointed to a two-year term on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods. She is among 30 scientific experts, representing various aspects of human health, food safety and public health issues, chosen to serve. The NACMCF, established in 1988, provides scientific advice on public health issues relative to the safety and wholesomeness of the food supply, including development of microbiological criteria and review and evaluation of epidemiological and risk assessment data and methodologies for assessing microbiological hazards. The committee serves the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Food Safety and Inspection Service), Health and Human Services (Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), Commerce (National Marine Fisheries Service) and Defense (Veterinary Service Activity). The Secretary of Agriculture appoints committee members following consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

**Paul Reider**, who earned his doctoral degree in chemistry at UVM in 1978, will be honored March 25 by the world's largest scientific society for his pivotal role in the development of new therapies for AIDS, asthma and arthritis. He will receive the 2003 Earle B. Barnes Award for Leadership in Chemical Research Management from the American Chemical Society at its national meeting in New Orleans. As a vice president at Merck Research Laboratories, Reider and his team synthesized and helped deliver to patients in 1996 the first effective treatment for AIDS, called Indinavir, which still holds the FDA record for the fastest drug approval ever: 42 days. Through that project, and a similar approach he took with drugs to treat asthma and arthritis, Reider helped to change how pharmaceutical companies conduct research and expedite development of promising new medicines. A resident of Thousand Oaks, Calif., Reider is a member of the ACS division of organic chemistry.

### Publications and Presentations

**Gale Burford**, professor of social work, traveled in February to Amsterdam, where he gave the keynote address to participants at a symposium at vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Center for Kinderstudies, "Community Care and Professional Care: What Helps When?" He also gave an invited lecture, "How Can Family Group Conferences Halt Family Violence."

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## Electronic Harmony

### Students learn how to solve environmental conflicts through Web dialogue with their counterparts at Peking University

By Jon Reidel



Professor Saleem Ali's students are teaming up with Chinese counterparts to explore environmental problems. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Continuing education student John Clark is trying to explain to his counterpart at Peking University the potential consequences of a recent decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to decline the California spotted owl protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Clark, a 37-year-old activist with a passion for resolving environmental conflicts, is struggling to convey

via e-mail to 22-year-old environmental science major Xiaojie Bai how the decision paves the way for logging companies to come into the ancient forests of the region, and ruin the natural habitat of the elusive owl.

The exercise is part of an environmental studies class that pairs students at UVM and Peking University to discuss, and potentially solve, environmental issues in both countries. Despite Bai's strong English and relatively good knowledge of U.S. policy, there's a communication problem that appears to lie in the differing environmental regulations of the United States and China. Clark's UVM teammate, 41-year-old continuing education student Michele Marcotte, suggests in her e-mail that the spotted owl decision is part of a larger pattern by the Bush administration, evidenced by a recent article in the *Sacramento Bee*.

#### Dialogue of diversity

Bai explains that in China, unlike the U.S., all land is owned by the government. "We seldom trap ourselves into conflicts with the government's actions," she writes in a return e-mail.

"And in your country," she continues, "the alternation of administration may change the attitude towards forests... like the Bush and Clinton administrations adopt completely different attitudes in logging. The benefit is that the civilians, especially the environmentalists, stand in a strong position for supporting or objecting to the acts and regulations. But in China, we can merely give advices or support."

Clark, Marcotte and Bai realize that they'd better backtrack and do some research on the governmental structures of China and the U.S. before they attempt to solve the environmental problems of the world, and the conflicts that surround them.

"You have expertise in your own locale, but we knew nothing about how Chinese government forestry works," Clark says. "We tried to explain the setup in the U.S., but it meant nothing to her (Bai). We had to step back and get some basic background information on both countries."

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#### Facing Down Fermat

The man who is possibly the world's most accomplished living mathematician, and certainly its most famous, blinked through his spectacles at the crowd filling every seat and most aisle steps of Carpenter Auditorium, then put a sheet on the overhead projector and filled the screen with Babylonian cuneiform.

#### Café Crossroads

For the past six years Steve Cavrak has started his day by talking with colleagues over a cup of coffee on the first floor of Waterman.

That's what Saleem Ali, assistant professor of environmental studies, was hoping the students in his "Environmental Conflict Resolution" class would do. The purpose of the Web-based dialogue portion of the course is to provide a collective learning experience for students on environmental conflicts and how they are resolved in different economic circumstances amidst varied cultural traditions.

Ali came up with the idea for cross-cultural Internet conversations after meeting with a professor at Peking University on a trip to China last summer. Ali says he was impressed with the way students there were responsive to American concerns.

"They would say things like, 'in America they would do it this way,' he continues. "We don't always think about how people in other countries would do something. I thought 'maybe we should capitalize on this idea.'"

### **Language barrier**

Ali, who grew up in Pakistan before attending Tufts for his undergraduate work and Yale and MIT for his master's and Ph.D, says the Web-based dialogue is still "a work in progress," but that he hopes to expand it after the rough edges are ironed out. One of those issues has been a language barrier, although it hasn't been a major problem since most of the students at Peking University were picked for the pilot program based on their ability to understand English.

Some of the dialogue is translated, but most is written in English. Chen Xiaoguang, a student at Peking University, writes that "maybe we have some language barrier ...as you know every student study English very hard. And in this way I can learn some cases better in U.S."

He Xiaoxia, a faculty member in the center for Environmental Science at Peking University, says most of the time he can understand his UVM counterpart "well enough" and that it wasn't a problem to "express my opinions feely." Xiaoxia agrees with Marcotte and Clark that the tougher obstacle is the lack of knowledge of U.S. and Chinese policy.

"The political system and legislative system in these two countries are quite different," writes Xiaoxia. "The level of public involvement are quite different in the two countries."

### **Conflict resolution**

Once the language and policy barriers are broken down, students have been able to discuss serious environmental issues and find ways to resolve the conflicts that surround them. The 20 teams discuss a wide range of environmental topics ranging from urban sprawl to ecotourism to the relationship between timber companies and local communities in China and the U.S. with a focus on the battles over forestry in endangered habitats. Students give a brief presentation at the end of the course based on their Web-based conversations and answers to some questions assigned by Ali.

Discussion of this kind when used to solve environmental or political conflicts is at the heart of Ali's research. In one of his research papers, "Catalyst of Sustainable Consensus," he shows how the tools of negotiation used in the resolution of environmental disagreements can be applied to conversations between hostile countries on more politically charged issues. Ali is teaching a seminar on the topic next summer at the Cambridge, Mass.-based University of the Middle East Project, which will bring people from various Middle Eastern countries to Toledo, Spain.

"At the end of day," Ali writes in the paper, "most environmental arguments boil down to a matter of perceived threats to the global ecosystem and an appreciation for the nexus of life that constitutes our environment."

Ali concludes that just as the word catalyst means "setting free" in its Greek roots, the "inclusion of environmental factors in consensus-building processes at any scale can potentially liberate us from short term approaches to problem-solving, and inculcate sustainability in every elusive sense of the word."



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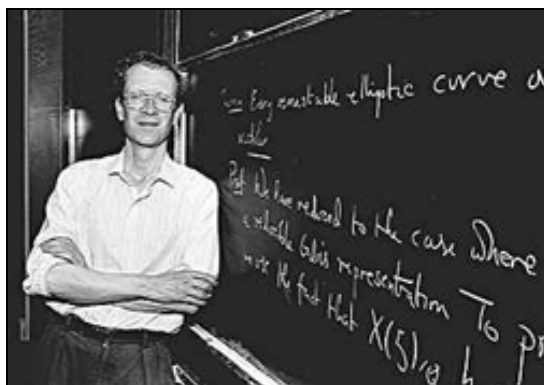
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## Facing Down Fermat

**A legendary mathematician inaugurates the President's Distinguished Lecture series with a talk on his famous proof – and the universe of inquiry beyond it**

By Kevin Foley



Andrew Wiles, the legendary mathematician who solved Fermat's last theorem, initiated the President's Distinguished Lecture Series on March 10. (File publicity photo.)

The man who is possibly the world's most accomplished living mathematician, and certainly its most famous, blinked through his spectacles at the crowd filling every seat and most aisle steps of Carpenter Auditorium, then put a sheet on the overhead projector and filled the screen with Babylonian cuneiform.

"Solving equations," said Andrew Wiles, Eugene Higgins Professor of Mathematics at Princeton

University and the man who solved Fermat's last theorem, "has been a pursuit of mankind for at least 3,500 years."

When complexity and scope is called for, Wiles has it. His proof of Fermat's proposition that there is no solution for  $x^n + y^n = z^n$  when  $n$  is a cube or more – a theorem which the French lawyer teased in a scribbled note that he had "found a truly wonderful proof, but the margin is too small to contain it" spanned 150 tightly reasoned pages. But Wiles is equally appreciative of understatement. The austere two-word title of his March 10 lecture, which was the debut of the UVM President's Distinguished Lecture Series, was "Solving Equations."

### Simple questions, infinite answers

The lecture series, which is intended to bring Nobel-caliber scholars to campus, asks visitors to conduct specialized discussions during their stay and also deliver a public lecture comprehensible to laypeople. The esoteric nature of Wiles's work made his talk difficult for many in the audience, but Wiles met the series challenge and took the audience through thousands of years of number theory. Jonathan Sands, professor of mathematics, was excited by the sweep of the talk, its evocative generality.

"I got quite a bit out of it as a mathematician by seeing his perspective on how all of these problems were related," Sands said. "He talked about the inverse Galois problem, and then he talked about points on curves, he briefly mentioned number fields and quadratic forms. I had never thought about how all these problems are different aspects of the same thing."

True talent finds unity. Wiles began with Babylonian triangle calculations, then touched on the Pythagorean theorem and Fermat's variation on it, then moved to the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture, which he himself proved part of, providing the foundation for the Fermat proof. As he spoke, unwinding an ever more complex skien, even non-mathematicians got a sense of the field's enduring mystery, epic accomplishments and frustrating inability to fully resolve some seemingly simple propositions.

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### [Conflicts Across Cultures](#)

An innovative course on resolving environmental disputes taught by Saleem Ali has a UVM student trying to explain to his counterpart at Peking University the potential consequences of a recent decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### [Café Crossroads](#)

For the past six years Steve Cavrak has started his day by talking with colleagues over a cup of coffee on the first floor of Waterman.

Numbers, after all, are infinite. So methodically blacking out that universe to prove that an equation has no possible solution, as Wiles did with Fermat, is extremely difficult. Sorting through that infinitude to find that an equation has answers is, in many cases, impossible.

"We have had some success at finding there is no solution to problems, but relatively little in finding solutions," Wiles said. "We have only scratched the surface..." he said later, resuming the theme. "This subject is in its infancy."

### **Boundless possibility**

As Wiles moved through his transparencies, the discussion grew complex for those unfamiliar with the language of number theory. (Modular forms, anyone? The Kronecker theorem?) But he repeatedly emphasized points that anyone can understand: That mathematics has expanses of uncharted territory, with one-variable problems so vexing that they may not be satisfactorily resolved for centuries.

"You can't know which problem can be solved now, and which will depend on 200 years of development," he said. "You need a sort of special intuition to pick a solvable problem."

Non-mathematicians may see the discipline as closed to discovery. But Wiles, despite all of his accomplishments, emphasizes just how wide open and mysterious it is. The particulars of some of those mysteries, like Taniyama-Shimura, are opaque to those without years of background in number theory. But often, easy terms –  $x^n + y^n = z^n$  – yield intricate and beautiful answers.

"His solution was difficult, but the question was something anyone can comprehend," said Alison Pechenick, lecturer of computer science, of the Fermat proof. She found much of Wiles's talk challenging, despite her background in math, but was impressed by Wiles's humbleness and humanity during the post-lecture reception. "He is a regular person," she said. "A connection between the sublime and ordinary life."

David Dummit, a math professor and special assistant to the provost for graduate education who has known Wiles for years and arranged his visit, found a different kind of excitement in Wiles's talk.

"He took a major conjecture, the Birch Swinnerton-Dyer, and implied that we may be very close to solving it," Dummit said. "The impression you have working in this area is that there needs to be a big idea, something new, for us to make real progress. To hear him say that he thinks some of those big ideas are already out there was inspiring."

Dummit calls Wiles's Fermat work something of a "sexy corollary" to his real accomplishment of proving part of the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture. "It bears mentioning that Wiles wasn't standing out there by his lonesome," Dummit said. "As Newton said, he was standing on the shoulders of giants. But he saw farther and clearer than most of us. There's almost a school now of Wiles techniques, a whole toolbox for number theorists."

### **The effort of insight**

Wiles told an audience curious to learn about his current work that he "wanted something different" and had to some extent left that toolbox behind. That left Jonathan Sands admiring, and just a little incredulous.

"He's generously left other mathematicians much to work on," Sands said.

After an hour of discussing his Fermat work primarily by inference, Wiles concluded his lecture to take questions and was, inevitably, asked about the proof. The mathematician described the lengthy process of internalizing the problem and hacking away at potential solutions that, eventually, led to a blinding realization.

"When I get depressed, I sometimes think mathematicians are just monkeys pounding away at typewriters," said Wiles of the years of work, study and dead-ends that "sudden" inspiration requires. "But it's much, much better than that."

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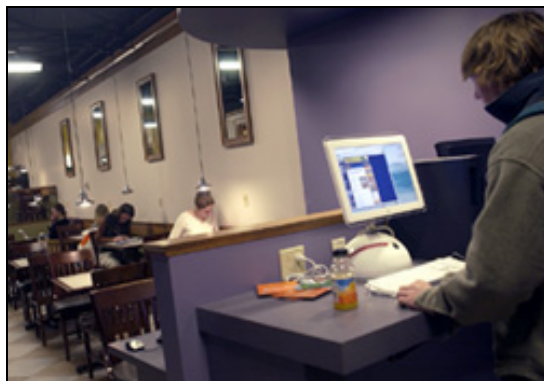
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## Café Crossroads

**After offering years of dining a la cart, Waterman's Fast Breaks has been replaced by a larger, more elegant café**

By Jon Reidel



iMacs to ice cream: New Waterman restaurant offers fancy frills aplenty, even individually dimmable table lights. (Photo: Sally McCay)

For the past six years Steve Cavrak has started his day by talking with colleagues over a cup of coffee on the first floor of Waterman. The assistant director for academic computing services says the spot where the coffee kiosk had stood since 1996 served as a sort of unplanned social center – a coffee crossroads, if you will, where UVM faculty, staff and students could interact outside the classroom.

One of the complaints with the coffee cart, however, was the lack of seating around it, which consisted of two small tables. Most conversations were held standing up. The opening of a new cyber café on March 3 behind the location of the former coffee kiosk is expected to alleviate that problem, and further enhance the location's reputation as a university gathering place.

"It's always been lively there," said Cavrak who has worked on the basement floor of Waterman since 1984. "The nice thing about it is that there's always a lot of traffic so it's easy to meet people. It's kind of like downtown."

### Urban renewal

If the kiosk was the building's vital but slightly seedy downtown, the new Waterman Café is its equally active but tonier uptown avenue. The restaurant's trim is gleaming wood, and its countertops are pure Vermont granite.

The dozen tables and plush booths seat about sixty comfortably as they dine on an expanded menu (including sushi) or get down to business on on-table computer ports wired for 24-hour Internet access. The back of the room is home to four Dell computers and a trio of flashy flat-screen iMacs. The new amenities contributed to a strong first day of 800 café transactions.

"The coffee kiosk was always very busy so we saw the need for something more," says Darina Mernicky of architectural and engineering services. "The UVM community has always met in this area by accident and has taken care of business while getting coffee. It's an informal hub that we wanted to enhance."

The new facility has lengthened hours to go along with the new menu and amenities. The café is open for service from 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday (the Friday close is 2:30 p.m.) during the academic year, but remains open at all times for computer use, studying or socializing.

The morning hours have been occupied primarily by faculty and staff buying coffee, egg wraps, bagels and other breakfast offerings. There was a line during lunch on most days last week with some people taking salads, sandwich wraps and pizza back to work, while others ate at the café.

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### [Conflicts Across Cultures](#)

An innovative course on resolving environmental disputes taught by Saleem Ali has a UVM student trying to explain to his counterpart at Peking University the potential consequences of a recent decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### [Facing Down Fermat](#)

The man who is possibly the world's most accomplished living mathematician, and certainly its most famous, blinked through his spectacles at the crowd filling every seat and most aisle steps of Carpenter Auditorium, then put a sheet on the overhead projector and filled the screen with Babylonian cuneiform.

"In general this seems like a good step forward," says Greg Manske while studying for a German exam prior to heading to his job as a lab technician at the Health Sciences Complex. "It seems stylish. I think students will use it once they find out about it."

Vending machines and tables to accommodate 16 patrons are planned for outside the café in the hallway. A large-screen television may also be added later.

"Tables have been filled with people having meetings and students working and talking with each other," says Josef Quirinale, director of auxiliary services and marketing for Sodexo, food services provider for the university. "I think most people were shocked after having been served out of the hallway for so many years."

#### **A farewell to Formica**

Building a café at Waterman has been talked about for that past decade or more, according to Sodexo General Manager Richard P. Riani, who also manages Waterman Cafe. Riani said moving the café out of the hallway is part of a larger master plan to create more spaces around campus for students and employees to congregate.

"Part of our overall renovation renaissance was to get the old coffee cart out of the hallway and create a multi-use space," Riani said. "I think the café does that."

Essex-based architect Anke Tremback designed the café in conjunction with Burlington architect Brad Rabinowitz. Tremback, who also designed The Grille at Middlebury College, says she wanted to create an "intimate space with a very different feel from the classrooms and offices." In order to accomplish that goal, Tremback incorporated controlled lighting for atmosphere and to reduce glare on computer screens, and new wave rotating ceiling fans. She also left the ceiling's ductwork exposed.

"I wanted to create a café with a coffee house feeling to encourage communication – a place for people to hang out and talk," she said.

Construction Manager Craig Adams of Ken Adams Inc. in Milton, said the construction of the café, which started in October, was unusually intricate because of the specialty items in Tremback's design.

"It was challenging, but I think it turned out pretty well," Adams says.

theview

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