



# Hilltopics

University Honors Program

Volume 11 | Edition 4 | March 2015

## Moody Sadness

by A.J. Jeffries

As we move closer to March, SMU basketball continues to rise. We are finally ranked again, only half a game behind Tulsa for the AAC regular season title, and the Legend of Larry continues to grow. Surely we can't be snubbed by the NCAA tournament selection committee again this year, but as I look at the resume we've put together one question keeps coming to me. How much better would our record be if we'd had star big man Markus Kennedy all of first semester? Would we have lost our second game to Cincinnati if Keith Frazier had been on the court answering the threes they were raining down in Moody?

Academic ineligibility is a serious issue for NCAA student-athletes. Despite the allegations made recently by people like Richard Sherman regarding the NCAA's priorities (he claimed academic success was meaningless to an organization profiting from the efforts of athletes), the NCAA does have GPA requirements for participation in college sports. This year, some of our basketball players failed to meet them, to the detriment of the team.

*See the full story on page 2*

### In this issue:

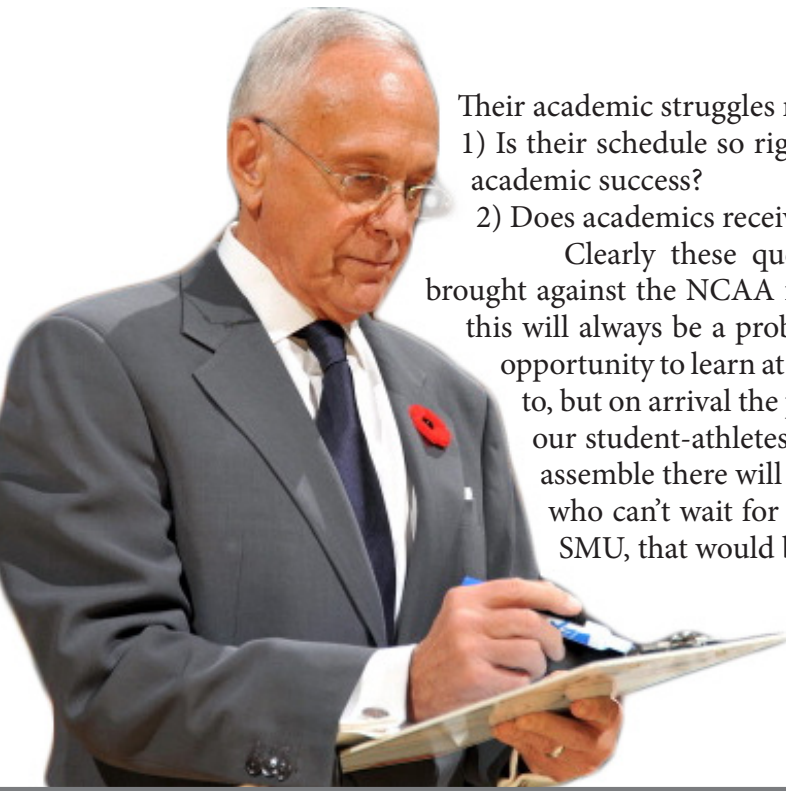
*Changes to the UHP  
coming in the future  
page 2*

*Opportunities with  
Tower Scholars  
page 3*

*Opera Takes Over  
Meadows  
page 6*

*Singles Awareness  
page 8*

*continued from page 1...*



Their academic struggles raise two questions:

1) Is their schedule so rigorous that they simply do not have the time necessary for academic success?

2) Does academics receive the appropriate emphasis?

Clearly these questions need to be answered, because unless legislation brought against the NCAA forces them to change their definition of “student-athlete” this will always be a problem for SMU’s athletic teams. Athletic gifts can offer the opportunity to learn at a school that would normally be difficult to gain admittance to, but on arrival the playing field is level again. If we do not find a way to ensure our student-athletes succeed consistently, then no matter how good a team we assemble there will always be a risk that said team won’t last the year. For fans who can’t wait for the day a victory parade brings the NCAA trophy back to SMU, that would be a heartbreaking way to lose a season.

## Honors Program Redesign in the Works

*by Camille Aucoin, UHP Office Coordinator*

Change is brewing in the University Honors Program. Currently, a task force comprised of Dr. Doyle and Sally Spaniolo of UHP, Marta Harvell and Stephanie Amsel of the Hilltop New Century Scholars Program, and other staff and faculty affiliates have been meeting periodically to evaluate the current state of the Honors Program and determine its future. Task force members are hopeful that the result of these efforts will produce a more cohesive program that will have many more opportunities for students to be involved and to seek academic excellence. The task force plans to have a student forum to hear current UHP students’ opinions on the matter once they have created proposals for the future of the program. Keep an eye out for announcements of this special meeting.

Until then, follow us on Facebook to keep up to date with UHP events. In early April, we will be screening the film *12 Years a Slave* to relate to the curriculum of Discernment & Discourse 2306. Details on this event will come soon. Additionally, the Fall 2015 course list is in the works! UHP will host a reveal event featuring professors and delicious food sometime in the near future!



# Tower Scholars Program Offers Real-World Experience

by Kenny Martin

If you have an interest in public policy or international affairs, the new Tower Scholars Program may be just the thing for you. Accepting applications for its second class of students in Fall 2015, the Tower Scholars program offers a select group of students the chance to obtain a 15 credit-hour minor in Public Policy and International Affairs while gaining unique and valuable experience in those areas.



During sophomore year, Tower Scholars will take Gateway to Global Policy Making. During junior year, they will meet with actual clients, work on real policy issues, and then report back to those clients with recommendations on those issues. This real-world experience is part of the junior year Policy Seminar. During the fall of senior year, Scholars will have an internship in an area of personal policy interest, and they will also be required to take Principles of Public Policy, which is open to all SMU students and can be taken at any time in a Tower Scholar's undergraduate career.

It's only five classes, and the program presents a wonderful opportunity to learn about and make a tangible impact in policy issues that you care about. It's also a great chance to work to improve the lives of people across America and perhaps the globe. There are a few prerequisites to application, and students are only able to apply during the fall of their sophomore year. The program accepts 10 students per year.

***For more information, visit the Tower Center website.  
[smu.edu/towercenter](http://smu.edu/towercenter)***



# SMU Freshman's Buzzer Shot Pays \$18,000

by Jacquelyn Elias

Time slowed for SMU freshman Shameek Malviya, or Meek, as his friends call him, as Jim Goldsworthy, State Farm Insurance Agent, handed him the first of many white and red basketballs, marking the beginning of his State Farm half-court shot challenge at SMU ESPN College GameDay on Saturday, Feb. 14th.

As soon as Meek took the basketball, his 18 seconds to make the highest-paying shot of his life began to tick. Meek threw one shot after another, each one hitting the backboard but not quite landing in the hoop. Meek's skillful shooting captivated the audience as the crowd stood on their feet and gave energetic "oohs" and "aahs" after each near miss.



The clock kept ticking; Meek kept shooting. With just three seconds left on the clock, he released his seventh and final shot. The ball flew through the air as the clock ticked from three to two and finally to one. With just one second on the clock, the ball fell in the hoop, and Meek instantly won \$18,000, his success broadcast live on national television.

Meek's journey to this event began just four days previous on Tuesday, Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> at the SMU Women's basketball game. During halftime at this game, a preliminary and voluntary half-court shooting contest was held where participants could line up and try to make a shot. The first person to make the shot would then be given the privilege of competing for the \$18,000 prize when SMU hosted ESPN's College GameDay. No stranger to making half-

court shots, Meek, who was fourth in line, made the shot on his first attempt.

From Tuesday until Saturday, Meek dedicated his time to prepare for the big moment by throwing up countless shots each day in Dedman. Granted, Meek is no stranger to basketball. He has played both recreationally and competitively since he was young, and he continues to play on a SMU Intramural team, which, undoubtedly, gave him an upper hand in the contest. "Just regularly, in practice, I would put up those shots," said Meek. No amount of preparation, however, could prepare one for the pressure of the actual moment.

"I just pretty much had to walk into it, and in the moment, I was trying to ignore everything around me... If you focus on everything else, you can't focus on the shot. I just had to focus on the hoop," Meek said.

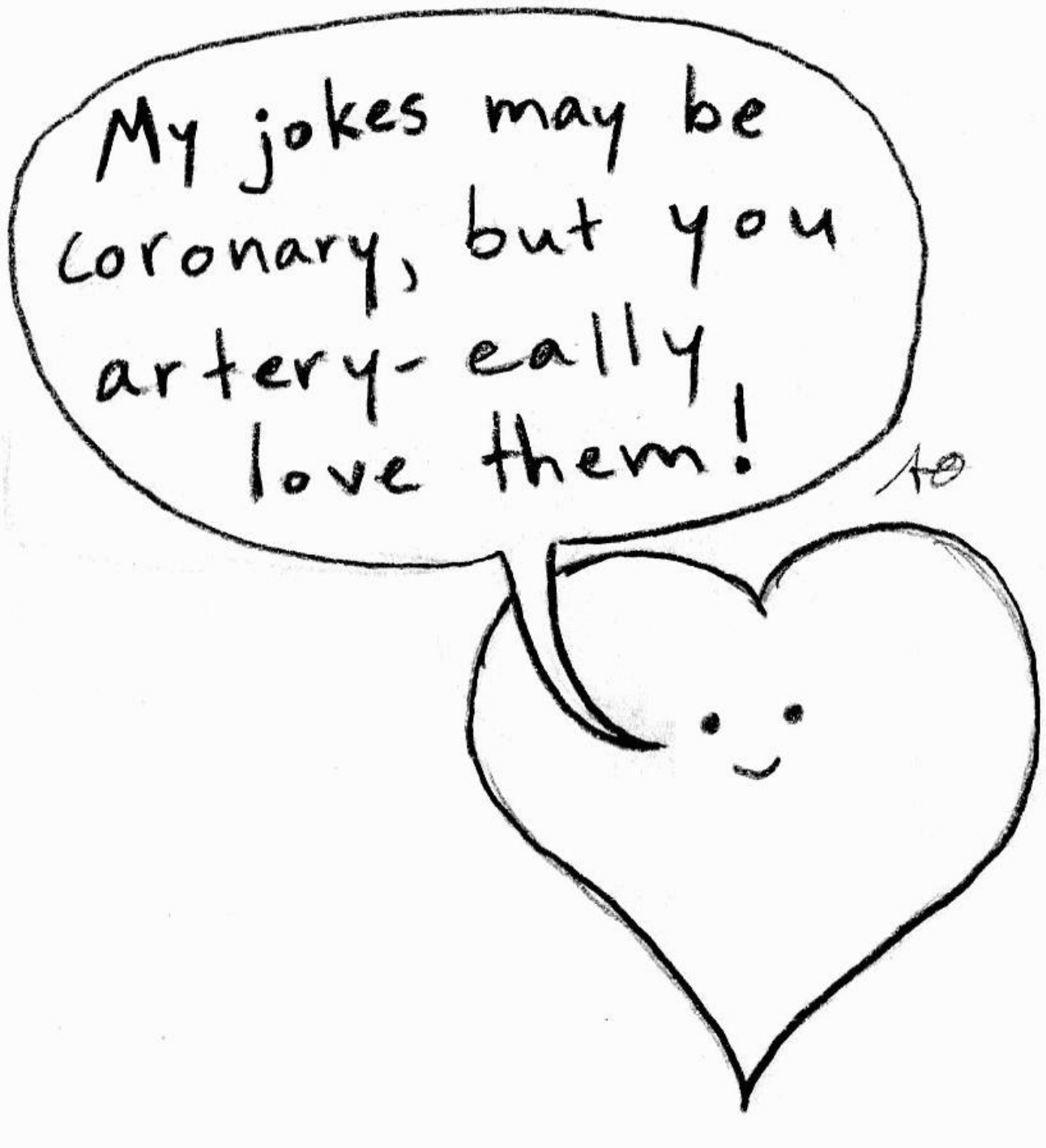
Such self-discipline and focus made the after celebration even sweeter. After landing the shot in the hoop, Meek acted on a pure rush of adrenaline. He immediately rushed to the two men from ESPN with whom he previously had organized a handshake. Nothing but excitement emanated from both Meek and all attendees in Moody.

"I was in disbelief, it covered my happiness for the first few days for the most part," Meek said.

Once GameDay ended, Meek seized the opportunity to share the moment with those who matter most. After leaving Moody, Meek left campus to visit his home in Plano, bringing his mother flowers. Both of his parents had been following the live broadcast on ESPN. Meek has decided to put his winnings into savings to put towards future expenses or tuition.

While he is not nailing half-court shots, Meek is pursuing a degree in business. He is involved in several SMU events such as the Mob, Intramural sports, and the Hilltop New Century Scholar Program.

*Comic Relief* →



*Comic by Andrew Oh*

# Great Opera-tunities in

## Why You Should Care About Opera

by Matthew Anderson

**S***usannah*, a contemporary opera by Carlisle Floyd, just finished its four night run in Meadows. But before I go further, let me say that I am partial to all things opera. I was excited to see this year's show, as I am every year, since productions from Meadows Opera Theatre are always quite good. But this time, I saw things from a different perspective: I worked as backstage crew. As a result, I spent nearly three weeks watching the show from the wings of the stage, and I learned a few things.

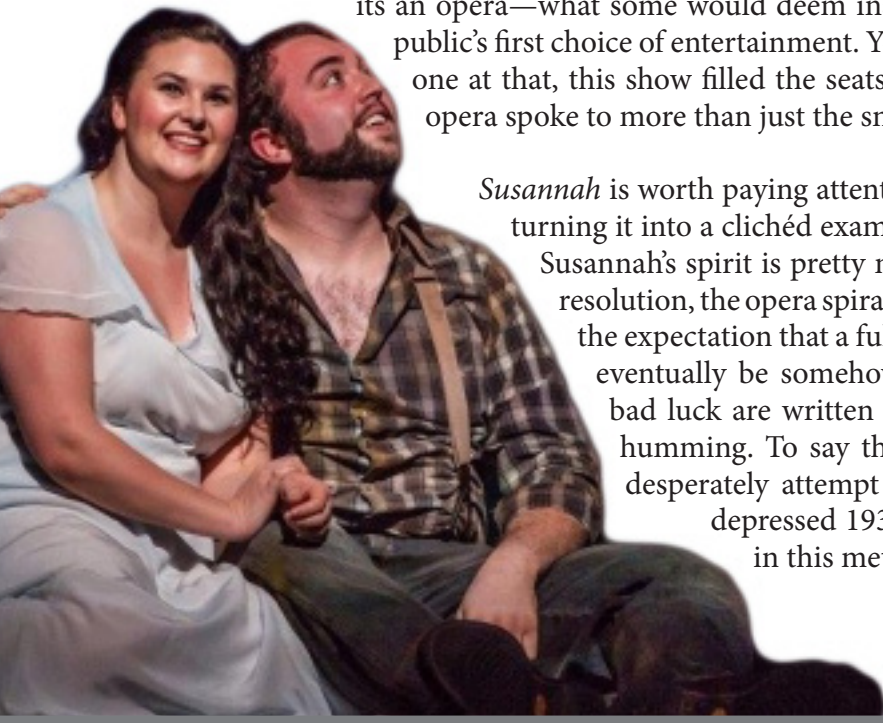
The opera is the tragic unfolding of 18 year-old Susannah Polk's life: she is spotted innocently bathing in a creek near her home, then shunned by her community and church (which in Depression era Tennessee are basically one and the same), and eventually raped by a traveling preacher. Plenty of other drama takes place as well, but the opera ends as Susannah stands on her front porch warding off the townspeople with a shotgun as they attempt to run her out of "New Hope Valley." It's just about the saddest thing you can imagine. And to top it all off, its an opera—what some would deem inaccessible and elitist, and certainly not the general public's first choice of entertainment. Yet for being a classical art form, and a heartbreaking one at that, this show filled the seats of the Bob Hope Theatre each night. Clearly, this opera spoke to more than just the snobbish music enthusiast.

*Susannah* is worth paying attention to because it aestheticizes a tragic plot without turning it into a clichéd examination of the triumph of the human spirit. In fact, Susannah's spirit is pretty much squashed. Instead of coming to a comforting resolution, the opera spirals into despair and misfortune, effectively destroying the expectation that a fulfilling and meaningful piece of entertainment must eventually be somehow triumphant. In *Susannah*, hatred and pain and bad luck are written with beauty—haunting tunes that leave audiences humming. To say there is a triumph at the end, though, would be to desperately attempt pinning a happy ending onto the tail of a really depressed 1930's donkey (To be clear, *Susannah* isn't the donkey in this metaphor. The awful townspeople are.).

So why would anyone pay to come see a life fall apart set to music? To me, it's this: art, in any form, resonates with meaning when it follows us out of the space it which it is first consumed—

when it can't be packed away and forgotten once we stop looking at it (or in this case looking *and* hearing it). Working on the set, night after night, I saw *Susannah* suffer at the hands of her community, and there are certain things that I won't be able to forget. I won't be able to let go of the innocent creek that Susannah bathes in. I won't be able to un-see the witch-hunt that ensues as Susannah's virtue is condemned. I'll never be able to rid myself of the unguarded yet foreboding melodies that erupt from the simplistic setting.

With all my love of classical music aside, I must objectively say that this is what opera does best. It tells stories that stick with us forever.





# Fine Arts around Dallas

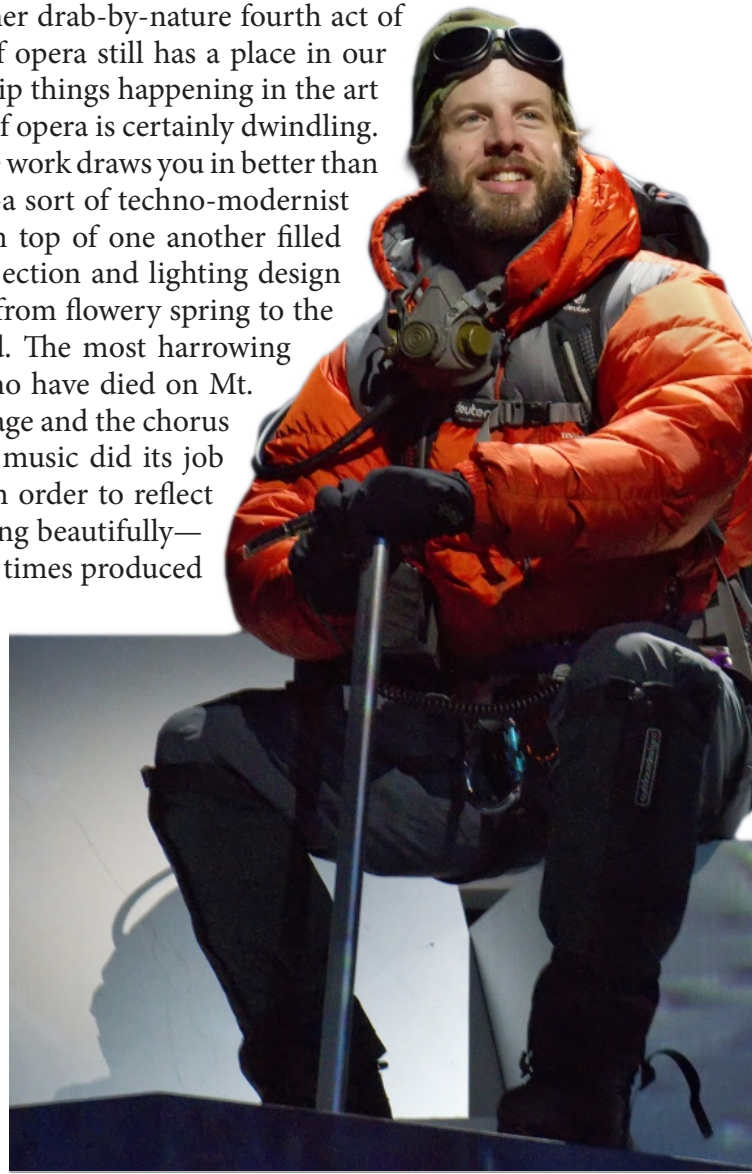
## Everest Makes Its Mark on Dallas

by Kenny Martin

The Dallas Opera stirred up quite the storm with its recent world premiere of “Everest”, an opera by Joby Talbot and Gene Sheer that tells the story of a climbing expedition that goes woefully wrong. Based on the true story of Rob Hall and his May 1996 expedition that was the inspiration for Jon Krakauer’s *Into Thin Air*, the opera was a phenomenal success.

After the evening opened with the well-done but rather drab-by-nature fourth act of “La Wally” by Alfredo Catalani, I found myself wondering if opera still has a place in our modern creative consciousness. After all, there are so many hip things happening in the art world these days, and especially for young people the appeal of opera is certainly dwindling. But “Everest” quickly banished all my fears—from the start, the work draws you in better than any modern movie or musical. The set design was brilliant—a sort of techno-modernist arrangement of white cubes stacked seemingly randomly on top of one another filled the entirety of the stage. Onto this set were beamed the projection and lighting design elements, which miraculously managed to evoke everything from flowery spring to the beach to icy and unrelenting death on the top of the world. The most harrowing effect was the steady projection of all the names of those who have died on Mt. Everest, even as we witnessed the death of the characters onstage and the chorus lamented the fact that “it’s time to add another name.” The music did its job nearly perfectly, employing several non-traditional sounds in order to reflect the harsh conditions of wind and cold. And the opera was sung beautifully—while the use of noticeable accents in two of the characters at times produced sounds that were less-than-musical, it gave the characters authenticity and overall the cast produced some remarkably touching moments of lyricism.

The production did draw an immense amount of attention to Dallas and the city’s arts scene, which is always a good thing. Scott Cantrell, classical music critic for *The Dallas Morning News*, gave the opera a generally bad review, which resulted in some angry emails from readers and caused quite the little dramatic episode. While I on the whole disagree with Mr. Cantrell’s review, especially his complaint about the nonlinear narration of the story (I thought this was one of the opera’s strongest points, and something I’d like to see more operas doing), it should be noted that he has a right to his own opinion and that he did in fact give the opera a second chance. Perhaps people are right and his style of criticism is outdated; either way, it is nice to see community members forging a dialogue with a critic and taking a personal interest in the health of the Dallas arts community around them. It isn’t enough for people like me and Scott Cantrell to write reviews; people have to read those reviews and then judge them for themselves if they are to mean anything.



# Singles Awareness Day

by Alec Petsche

As many of you have undoubtedly noticed, I took a semester off from writing for Hilltopics. I was taking a hiatus in order to do some soul searching and fight crime in the greater north Texas area (complete failure on my part. If anything, I increased petty theft in Plano by fifteen percent). Last month however, when I was being thoroughly pummeled by several members of the surprisingly vicious gang known as the Pink Pansy Crew, I began to ask myself an important question: Is it necessary to be in love to be happy? The answer? Yeah, probably. Was that going to stop me from seeking validation in my current state of loneliness? Absolutely not.

As everyone knows, the greatest holiday for couples and the most miserable for single people recently came and went: Valentine's Day. Though I write this before the date itself, I intend to watch bad movies and goof off with friends on that night. A respectable plan if there ever was one. Were you miserable and alone on Valentine's Day? Then next year you should take a page out of the book of Surround Sound, SMU's poetry club, and have your own Anti Valentine's Day. With fun little exercises such as ironic "roses are red" poems about crude subjects like sex and loneliness written on colored paper and decked out with glitter like traditional valentines, readings of breakup poems, and the consumption of refined sugar that you don't have to share with a significant other.

What is this gathering though? A group of people enjoying their emotional freedom, or a gathering of bitter artistic types that are laughing at relationships to prevent themselves from seeing how lonely they are? I can't say for certain, but if I had to speak for myself, probably a little bit of both. But on a holiday about love in a world where we're constantly told that we have to be with a significant other to be happy, it's nice to take a few hours off and just spend some time goofing around with friends.

And now, because it's against my personal code of writing to end on a positive note, I'll leave you with a little poem that I've written:



*Roses are red  
Violets are blue  
One day we'll be dead  
And we'll be alone too.*

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