



BLUE RIDGE JOURNAL

YEAR 39 ISSUE 5 BLACK MOUNTAIN NORTH CAROLINA
CELEBRATING 100 YEARS AT THE MOUNTAIN

The last official day of the 39th annual Conference on National Affairs has finally come. After the closing campfire, many will leave these hollowed hills and return to their respective state as more responsible, enlightened, and patriotic citizens. This conference has changed us all for the better.

As everyone arrived at the Blue Ridge Assembly, approximately two-thirds of the delegates took their first step on the campus. For the others, the time had finally come to see friends of old and to add onto the ever-growing list. Everyone has made new friends from

across the country because of the fellowship and camaraderie offered at CONA.

This week has seen debate that rivals that of Capital Hill. From California to Massachusetts and everywhere in between, Northerners, Southerners, conservatives, liberals, Democrats, and Republicans have united in the name of the "common good" and debated what is best for Americans. Whether it was about annexing the moon or switching to ethanol gases, the debate was intense and filled with passion and conviction.

Ah, but what of the press? This week has pre-

sented us with several challenges of our own. Before we even arrived here, the staff was down a high capacity copier. This forced us to make out daily contributions to the fine people at Kinko's. It also limited the amount of pages we could publish in a day. So on behalf of the staff and myself, I would like to show our deepest gratitude to MO and JO for driving all the way to Asheville multiple times to print our pride and joy, *The Blue Ridge Journal*.

As the final embers of tonight's bonfire slowly die, each of us will take a piece of that flame away with us and try to ignite that same

passion and energy into our daily lives. The lessons we take from CONA are universal in relevance and importance. It has been my honor to serve as the 2006 Editor-in-Chief of *The Blue Ridge Journal*, but more importantly, it has been my privilege to work side by side with some of the greatest minds our generation has to offer and to call them my friends. CONA is more than just a weeklong affair; it is a time when one comes to the realization that they have a voice and it is time to use it. Best wishes and good luck in 2007.

~Andrew Wilson, EIC, OK

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE

Thank You For Your Love

When I began my senior year, my life was similar to many of yours. My YMCA Youth Legislature conference was fast approaching and I was eagerly anticipating presiding over the program as Governor. That summer, I had been to the YMCA Youth Governor's Conference in Washington D.C. as well as CONA and I had made some dear friends among the delegates I there. My biggest worries at the time revolved around finding red and black face paint for our first football game, "debating" with my parents over curfew, and, of course, the ever-looming college applications.

On August 28, 2005, my family evacuated for what everyone believed would be another inconvenient hurricane. I could not have imagined the horror and devastation that would soon follow. As the Hurricane struck,

we spent days not knowing if our loved ones were even alive, or if our communities still existed. When we returned home and witnessed the catastrophic extent of the destruction, my family, like so many thousands of others, had no choice but to move temporarily. During the physical and emotional upheaval of this time, it was to my YMCA Youth & Government friends that I turned for support. They listened to me, assured me of their prayers, raised supplies and money, petitioned their Congressmen and many even came down themselves to volunteer. As rebuilding

slowly began, the intense suffering of our region was alleviated only by the intense compassion shown to us by friends and strangers alike.

To know that you have friendships that are not limited by distance and a community not confined by physical boundaries is an incredibly hopeful and empowering realization. As my fellow delegates return from across

the country to attend events like Youth Legislature and CONA, it is a tribute to the necessity of programs like YMCA Youth & Government and the friendship and support offered within these pro-

grams. On behalf of all of the students affected by Hurricane Katrina, I would like to say "Thank You" to the all of the participants in YMCA Youth & Government across American. Thank you for your passion and for your compassion. Thank you for your love.

Laura Kergosien
2005 MS Youth Governor

The Mississippi Delegation would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the California, Minnesota and Missouri Delegations. Your donations to the Mississippi Youth & Government program enabled many of our students to participate in YMCA Youth & Government programs this year. These students lost everything they had to Hurricane Katrina, and for many of them, being able to attend the YMCA Youth Legislature conference was one of the few bright moments in a very dark year.



DELEGATES IN AWE BY BILTMORE

Emily Ertel

Amanda Kohl

Wisconsin

The ride to the Biltmore Estate seemed long, but the beauty of the trees along the way was pleasing to the eye and made the long journey worth it. Brick arches and a wrought iron gate protected the entrance to the Biltmore House as one might expect for a 2.4 million cubic square foot home. The driveway wound for a few miles, and finally the two coach buses pulled up to the entrance of the 250-room home (America's largest privately owned home and host to more than 800,000 visitors each year).

Upon entering the home, delegates noticed the amount of stone carvings, pictures, and tapestries. They also saw how in many rooms the fabric on the walls matched the room furniture and draperies. Delegates wandered the house through rooms of many styles including Neoclassical, Re-

naissance, Rococo and Romantic.

As delegates snaked through the roped corridors, history lessons permeated the atmosphere, and delegates pondered the lifestyle of the Vanderbilt family. The ceilings reflected George Vanderbilt's love of learning and the arts. For example, the ceiling of the library, home to over 10,000 books, was brought to the Biltmore house from Venice, Italy. A painter by the name of Giovanni Pellegrini created the canvas masterpiece that now adds to the Vanderbilt's home décor and visitors awe.

Much of the home was elegant, but the antiquity of the home made some rooms rather creepy. In the basement there was an empty pool that exposed the white tiles and a creaky wooden ladder. More creepiness is found in the Halloween Room where Cornelia Vanderbilt Cecil's guests painted unusual scenes on the walls. The room was filled with a gallery of pictures, which chronicle the construction of the Biltmore house.

The maze of different rooms included servant quarters, a two-lane bowling alley, several pantries, laundry rooms, kitchens, and many other specialty rooms. However, only a portion of the house is open for viewing, and delegates also had limited time. Many did not spend the whole time appreciating the art of the Vanderbilt house.

After touring the house, delegates headed to a plethora of shops. Delegates snacked at the estate's ice cream shop and bakery that offered sandwiches and general snacking food. When stomachs were full, delegates meandered to multiple shops such as the traditional gift and wine shop, bookbinder's shop, toyshop, confectionary shop, and another café. Everyone seemed pleased with the selection of gifts available for family or just a treat for their sweet tooth. In fact, after spending much time touring the house, there wasn't quite enough time to thoroughly look through all the shops.

Just before leaving at 4:30, delegates headed out onto the large front lawn and played a game of Frisbee, took pictures, and simply relaxed. Biltmore loomed large over the lawn and front fountain. Due to the low clouds, the view was hampered of the mountains, but the surrounding gardens were overflowing with blossoms and perfectly manicured. The building itself was beautiful in the French Renaissance chateau style. After what seemed like only a short time, delegates boarded the bus, participated in the ever-inspiring role call, and headed back to Blue Ridge. The road out of Biltmore was just as beautiful and manicured as the road in with vine-draped trees, flowers, and ponds, along with flowing streams. Over all, most delegates were pleased with their experience and the estate. In fact, most wished for additional time to also explore the gardens, trails, and maybe even the winery and village.

LOSERS LEAVE FLOP CONTEST SORE

Lindsey Morrison

Missouri

On Wednesday delegates of CONA could be found hiking up the mountains, touring a mansion, playing an intense game of football, or at the pool throwing themselves off the diving board participating in an American tradition, the belly flop contest. Many delegates who decided to stay on the mountain, but were not at the pool stopped their basketball games or set down their crafts to come watch the contest. All the delegates who wanted to impress their fellow CONA delegates with their belly flopping skills have been signing up since Tuesday in Lee Hall. On Wednesday afternoon they were finally able to compete.

The competition consisted of 13 boys, 3 girls,

and 5 judges, including the 2004 belly flop champion. New York had the most competitors in the competition.

Before the competition actually began each person had a

practice jump that allowed him or her to see how much bounce they could get from the board. Then the competition began. Each person was guaranteed 2 belly flops in the first round, and then only

those with the higher combined scores from both 'flops' were able to move onto the second round. The judges were looking for a variety of things when scoring. The main criteria for the 'flops' were height of the jump, 'smack factor', style, and 'pain factor'. The judges gave each 'flop' a score from 1- 10, 10 being the best. After an intense 2nd round, RobBob Hogan from Minnesota came out on top. His 2nd jump being the most impressive when he got great height and initially formed into a canon ball potion and then laid him self out flat just in time to hit the water. However, RobBob's biggest competition was not one of the other competitors it was Skippy, a young kid belly flopping off the 2nd diving board. Although Skippy was a crowd favorite, RobBob still won the 9th annual belly flop competition.



A TRIP OFF THE MOUNTAIN RELAXES

Jake Laraid
South Carolina

A trip to the town of Black Mountain offered a handful of delegates a great opportunity to have some food and good times. The small town provided good spots to cool down and eat lunch during the hot summer months, and visiting the local shops was a great way to kill some time with fellow delegates. Once in town,

students chose from a variety of comfortable restaurants.

South Carolina decided to eat a pizza lunch at a popular parlor in the center of Black Mountain. "My Father's Pizza" provided delegates with a very enjoyable experience in a relaxed setting.

When the food was finished, students walked all over town to browse the variety of shops Black Mountain has to offer. Almost every-

thing can be reached by foot, and delegates reported having a great time walking around with the rest of the state.

The townspeople and shop owners never seemed too distressed with the large number of kids invading their streets and stores, and none of them seemed to know about the conference that was taking place in the hills above them. When the ideas behind CONA were explained to one shopkeep-

er, the woman excitedly offered her support and encouragement, just as long as we promised to "fix the heap of junk in place today."

The town of Black Mountain gave delegates a chance to get away from CONA and get in touch with civilization again. Delegates seemed to enjoy taking a break from governmental procedure, and a trip to town proved to be just what they needed.

HIKE TO HIGHTOP BUILDS CHARACTER

Hannah Wesley
Oklahoma
Jennie Stolte
New Jersey

For the hikers to High Top, Wednesday free time brought an experience that is difficult to describe. The delegates gathered behind Lee Hall to prepare for their hike. Kentucky Joe, the leader of the climb, addressed the group about teamwork, safety, and respect for the mountain. Shortly after, the intense climb began. Once the hikers hit the trail, many thought by judging the terrain that it would be simple; then, they reached the WARNING sign.

The trail quickly elevated and included huge boulders to climb. The lush green landscape, resembling a rainforest, was breathtaking. As delegates enjoyed the scenery and persisted on their trek, they had the chance to make new friends. They soon learned the meaning of teamwork and that they could trust each other. Everyone was encouraging or offering a hand to those that seemed to be struggling. Just when it seemed like it would

never end, the trees cleared and a huge boulder appeared. The destination of our hike was just as incredible as the ascent. Delegation pictures were taken with the town of Black Mountain and a tiny Lee Hall as their backdrop. Once everyone had reached the top, Kentucky Joe asked the delegates to be quiet and listen. In a later interview he said, "The

finally calmed, the natural silence was serene; if they listened closely, delegates could here the birds chirping and winds whispering.

The voice of Captain Danny Cooper, Florida advisor and Air Force Director of Public Affairs for MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, broke the silence. He spoke about his time on active duty and the honor held in sharing his experiences with a group of future American leaders. Cooper stressed his major point by saying, "Essentially no matter how bad it may seem when you're in a heated debate, the

have to live without hope."

In conclusion, delegates sang patriotic songs: "America the Beautiful," "God Bless America," "The Star-Spangled Banner." After the singing, many stayed longer, but some began the treacherous hike back down the mountain. The hike to High Top truly was a strenuous activity, but it was well worth the time and energy that all the hikers invested into it.

Leading the hike holds great personal meaning to both Kentucky Joe and Captain Cooper. "I feel like because of my experiences that I have something that I can pass on due to my military background. I've had the chance to experience cultures most people won't ever have a chance to see," stated Cooper.

"[The hike] is a reminder of what it is like to be a delegate and of the spirit of youth. There are so many responsibilities and details to worry about as an adult, but on the hike you get to stop and be a kid. There should be little bit of that inside of everybody," explained Kentucky Joe.



reason I ask the delegates for silence is because hiking, for me, is an attraction of all five senses." When the delegates

Constitution and the principles on which this country was founded guarantee that nobody in this country will ever

HISTORY OF BLUE RIDGE CONT.

Tyler Twilley Delaware

Upon completion of the Blue Ridge Assembly, Dr. Willis Weatherford hoped that students attending summer conferences would not only gain a heightened awareness of the meaning of religion but would also find the time and the inclination to be alone at some point.

The first conference hosted by the Blue Ridge Assembly brought 100 of the best and brightest students from southern colleges. The conference gained enormous popularity, and the following year, Blue Ridge received over 1000 applications for the 100 slots.

Blue Ridge began to extend beyond summer conferences, as well. During World War I, Blue Ridge doubled as a training center for nearly 2,400 YMCA members who went on to the front line in the war, delivering food, coffee, and toiletries to many of the soldiers. In addition, Blue Ridge served as the home for Black Mountain College during the non-summer months between 1933 and 1937.

In 1929, and also in the early 1930s, Blue Ridge took a major financial blow from the Great Depression. In fact, without a \$180,000 bond underwritten by the Tennessee Life Insurance Company, Blue Ridge might not have survived. The Depression did, though, benefit some of

the guests who were able to travel to Black Mountain.

"[The Great Depression] had a severe impact. People were just trying to get by, so luxuries like conferences were limited to just a few people," said Mr. Hibbard. "It did, however, give Willis the chance to personally interact with people more."

Perhaps Blue Ridge's – and Dr. Weatherford's – greatest contribution to the world came in their stand against racial intolerance in the South during Dr. Weatherford's tenure. Blue Ridge was a safe haven for African-Americans in the South, as Dr. Weatherford placed a major emphasis on embracing people of all races. For some time, Blue Ridge was one of only a few places in the South that was completely free from prejudices.

"It's a tribute to Willis Weatherford," said Mr. Hibbard. "He was willing to stand up and say, 'no.'"

In 1943, Dr. Weatherford, who lived in a house built at Blue Ridge, turned the assembly over to the YMCAs of the South. Dr. Weatherford died in 1970.

Through the years, as buildings were added and knocked down, the one constant to the Blue Ridge Assembly is the famed Lee Hall. Designed by an active YMCA member who received architectural training in Paris, Lee Hall, built between 1911 and 1912, continues to draw guests and visitors

with its three-story tall columns and picturesque view.

"To me, the two landmarks of Blue Ridge are the view *of* Lee Hall and the view *from* Lee Hall," said Mr. Hibbard.

Through the middle to late twentieth century and particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, Blue Ridge began to add numerous buildings to the grounds, including the \$1.8 million Blue Ridge Center and the Charles R. Younts Maintenance Service Center.

The Blue Ridge Assembly was also the site of training camp for the 1966 Atlanta Falcons and served as one of the locations for the Sandra Bullock film *28 Days*.

In 1970, Blue Ridge began hosting a fairly new YMCA conference called the Conference on National Affairs. The conference had

moved from its original location in Stone Mountain, Georgia, due to growth. 26 years later, CONA still finds a home in Black Mountain.

"[CONA] involved southern states, and other states wanted in," said McGaughey. "So we started adding additional states."

Blue Ridge was a natural fit for the conference.

"It was an ideal place because it was a facility owned by the YMCA of the South, and it removed everyone from society," said McGaughey. "It was a chance to create a utopian society."

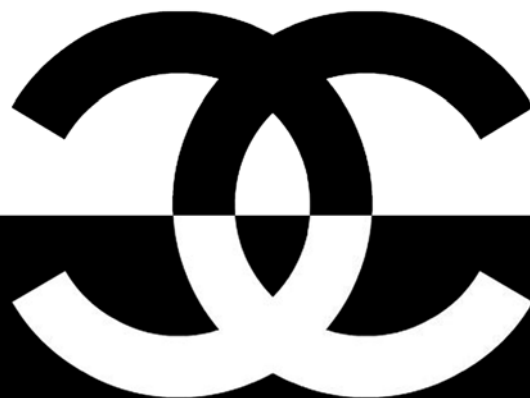
Although the Assembly has grown, the original intention to help young people still holds true.

"We've stayed in touch with what Dr. Weatherford would have wanted," said Mr. Hibbard.

FROM SoCAL TO THE BAY (TO THE BAY)

Congratulations to an amazing delegation.

xo
Pam, Cathy, Rolf,
Dustin & Melissa



CALIFORNIA LOVE

Utah Anyone?

FREEDOM FIGHTER ROCKS THE WORLD

Tyler Twilley
Delaware

I've found an unquestioned winner of the Outstanding Patriot Award: Mike Mulraney of the Model UN. Mike proposed a repealing of the Posse Comitatus Act, an act that prohibits the use of the armed forces for law enforcement. Brilliant, Mike. In fact, I think the armed forces *should* be our law enforcement. The crime rate would plummet. Imagine, if you will, egging a neighbor's house only to turn around to face the barrel of a tank. Granted, many rebellious youths would suffer irrevocable psychological damage, but I would welcome the sacrifice to ensure less crimes. Besides, the youth isn't the future. *Select* youth are the future. For anyone who dis-

agrees, I present Exhibit A: Hanson, Lindsay Lohan, and the cast of *That's So Raven* and *High School Musical*.

I noticed several proposals mentioning an official language for the United States. Although intriguing, I want to see an official color scheme: camouflage. Think about it. Citizens sporting their camouflage outfits could not only blend into the forest/, but they could express national pride while



doing so. I would also, though, ban non-green or brown camouflage. On the off chance that the government has to infiltrate a hardhat factory, orange camouflage could be used. Otherwise, it's all traditional.

By the way, conscription for all adults into the military... bad idea. Conscription for all above the age of eighty and below the age of eight... great idea. If a group of elderly people were brought to quell a riot,

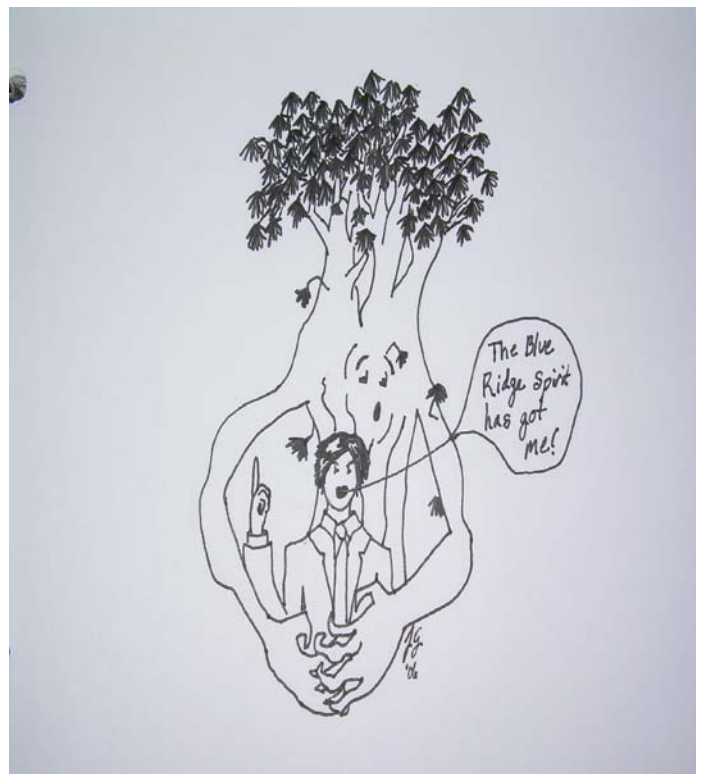
tell them the protestors want *Matlock* and *Murder, She Wrote* to be removed from syndication and the riot would be over in five minutes. An alternative tactic is to send the old folk out into battle in a fleet of Oldsmobiles. I can guarantee you that an enemy can still be slain by a Cutlass Supreme going twenty-two miles per hour...even if the driver has had a right turn signal on for two hours and eight minutes. As for the children? Human shield. Kids are malleable. They'll bounce all through the battlefield thinking they're on a loud, loud moon bounce. Eventually, the opposition will weaken, allowing the geriatric militia to cane, walker, and Rascal Scooter their way to victory.

And you thought old people didn't serve a purpose...

So many articles ...
So little Toner!
Y'all are an awesome
team!
~Mo - Jo

Le Ann, Caitlin, Katie,
and Victorine y'all are
swamp-a-licious!
Love,
Ms. Mo
Louisiana Delegation

CARTOON BY JULIE GISS, WISCONSIN



INDIVIDUALITY HERE AT CONA

Paloma Ellis
Washington DC

Throughout the past week at the Conference on National Affairs (CONA) we have heard plenty of inspirational talk on unification and togetherness. It has been repeatedly stated that we gather here on the mountain to become a social unit of American fraternity. While the ideology of a cohesive interstate brotherhood certainly sounds both peachy and reminiscent of Woodstock '69, to what extent are we losing our individuality that makes us so vital to the CONA process? In no way do I believe that we

should not observe each other as equals and find common ground, yet there is much more to be learned from our unique differences. A fused and uniform society leaves no room for growth or knowledge. This conference thrives on a variety of opinions, life experiences, ideologies; all of these as creators of that positive controversy that allows us to think and mold our knowledge to absorb a greater world view. Yes, we are all citizens of the United States and we can all chant "USA," "kumbaya," and praise our sameness, but it is just as vital to remember that we are, in fact, not the same.

We are a diverse group, with no two delegates being identical in nature. So, in conversation, do not attempt to maintain yourself in a "comfort bubble" by relating to the familiar, but allow yourself to breathe in new perspectives and mutually return the favour with your own bit of rare, individualized knowledge. For those who require a metaphor for better visualization, consider the following scenario: a fisherman who speaks only to other fishermen will never learn about dry land. If he does meet a man from dry land, realize that they both love soccer, and proceed to only talk about soccer, two

World Cup games and maybe a bag of chips later, the fisherman still does not know anything about dry land. It has been long preached that we should put away our differences, find common ground, and frolic through rainbow showers of congeniality. Instead, find your differences, express them (in a peaceable way, of course) and share them. Allow the reciprocal to be done unto you. The beauty of CONA lies not in the fact that we have joined together, but we have done so in such a motley manner. Our diversity should never be wasted; it is too good a learning experience to foolishly dispose of.