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HARVARD

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As Harvard College's weekly undergraduate newsmagazine, the Harvard Independent provides in-depth, critical coverage of issues and events of interest to the Harvard College community. The Independent has no political affiliation, instead offering diverse commentary on news, arts, sports, and student life.

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NEWS

Behind the Counter: Pinocchio's Pizza

The history behind the famous square slices.

By **PATRICK SLIZ '27**

Square pizza. Where do you get it? Any self-respecting Harvard alumnus would know the answer to that,” Louis Litt, a corporate attorney in the legal drama series “Suits,” claimed in the first season of the series.

Pinocchio's Pizza, located in the heart of Harvard Square on Winthrop Street, is considered a Harvard tradition to many. Famous for its Sicilian-style square slices, Pinocchio's is typically packed with students, either grabbing a quick bite in between classes or a late-night meal after partying.

“Despite the recent economic challenges and rising costs, DiCenso thinks some pizzerias focus too much on the bottom line, leading them to cut costs too aggressively.”

Established in 1966, Pinocchio's has lived through the Read Block redevelopment and gentrification that killed its 80-year-old neighbors: the Wursthau in 1996 and the Tasty in 1997, both Harvard Square staples replaced by chain stores. The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected small businesses; Pinocchio's responded by scaling back employees' hours but kept most of its business thanks to its takeout model.

“Ever since COVID, things have gotten much, much more expensive, and unfortunately, we have to raise the prices a little,” owner Adam DiCenso explained in an interview with the “Harvard Independent.” “Every three to six months, we kind of sit down and look at the numbers and try to figure out, should we go up a little bit? Should we stay?”

DiCenso's family purchased Pinocchio's in 1983, only 17 years after its founding, while he was still in high school. He worked part time throughout high school and college, and in 1992 he joined full time.

The original owner, Luciano, opened the shop in 1966. “He actually opened another shop out in Western Massachusetts ... so for several years, he was running both,” DiCenso recalled. “I guess at some point in the early 80s, he had decided he wanted to just focus on [the Western Massachusetts shop] and sell [the Cambridge] one. So that's when my father and my uncle came in and bought this place from him.”

While the ownership changed, the recipe remained the same. “One company we buy our flour from, another company we buy the cheese from, and we have been using the same exact flour and the exact same cheese for all these years,”

DiCenso said. “We make the dough and cut the cheese and mix up the sauce fresh every day.”

Despite the recent economic challenges and rising costs, DiCenso thinks some pizzerias focus too much on the bottom line, leading them to cut costs too aggressively. His aversion to this approach has allowed Pinocchio's to maintain its quality and consistency. “Generally speaking, any given place can spend 30 or 40 cents more a pound on their cheese, and their quality can go from here to here,” DiCenso commented, making an upward sweeping gesture. “[With] pizza, you can mark them up quite a bit for what's going into it ... so you can get away with spending a little more money per pizza, and the level of quality goes much higher.”

The establishment itself is a small space, with a line often filling the room and extending outside. The walls are plastered with photos of Harvard athletic teams and celebrities who have passed through. “When we first [got] the place, we didn't make any sort of major structural changes, but just brought in a little more brightness,” DiCenso clarified. “The biggest thing, around 1986, was when we put in the painting.” His family commissioned a local artist and frequent visitor of Pinocchio's to paint a mural on two of the blank walls, featuring “Pinocchio” feeding pizza to a whale and a mermaid.

While best known for the Sicilian square slices, Pinocchio's also sells subs and round pizzas. DiCenso explained their typical daily breakdown: “I would say it's probably 75 to 80% pizza, 20 to 25% sub.” Of the pizzas, he estimates that 90% of slices sold are square, except for catering. Pinocchio's has 15 to 20 different accounts from Harvard that place consistent catering orders. In those instances, the round pie is more popular. “When people are doing events with a lot of people, I think people are more used to having traditional pizza,” DiCenso explained.

Of course, catering has taken a new shape in the form of delivery apps, which roughly one-third of American adults now use. “We started using our first delivery app around maybe 2012 or 2013, and then it kind of slowly rose all those years,” DiCenso recalled. “But then, when 2020 COVID hit, it kind of took them to the next level, and it has kind of stayed there. We get a lot of orders.”

York City in 1975, opened its Cambridge location in 2023 right across the street from the Harvard MBTA station. Joe's location is advantageous because of its visibility and proximity to Harvard Yard, while Pinocchio's is tucked away off JFK Street.

While the current Joe's Pizza is a new rival in the Square, a 1974 article discussed an old Harvard Square pizza rival that coincidentally shared the name Joe's Pizza. The old Joe's was located on Linden Street and was known for its thin-crust slices, much like the current Joe's Pizza, which thin-crust lovers favor. Across both generations, Pinocchio's remained a favorite among those who prefer thick crust.

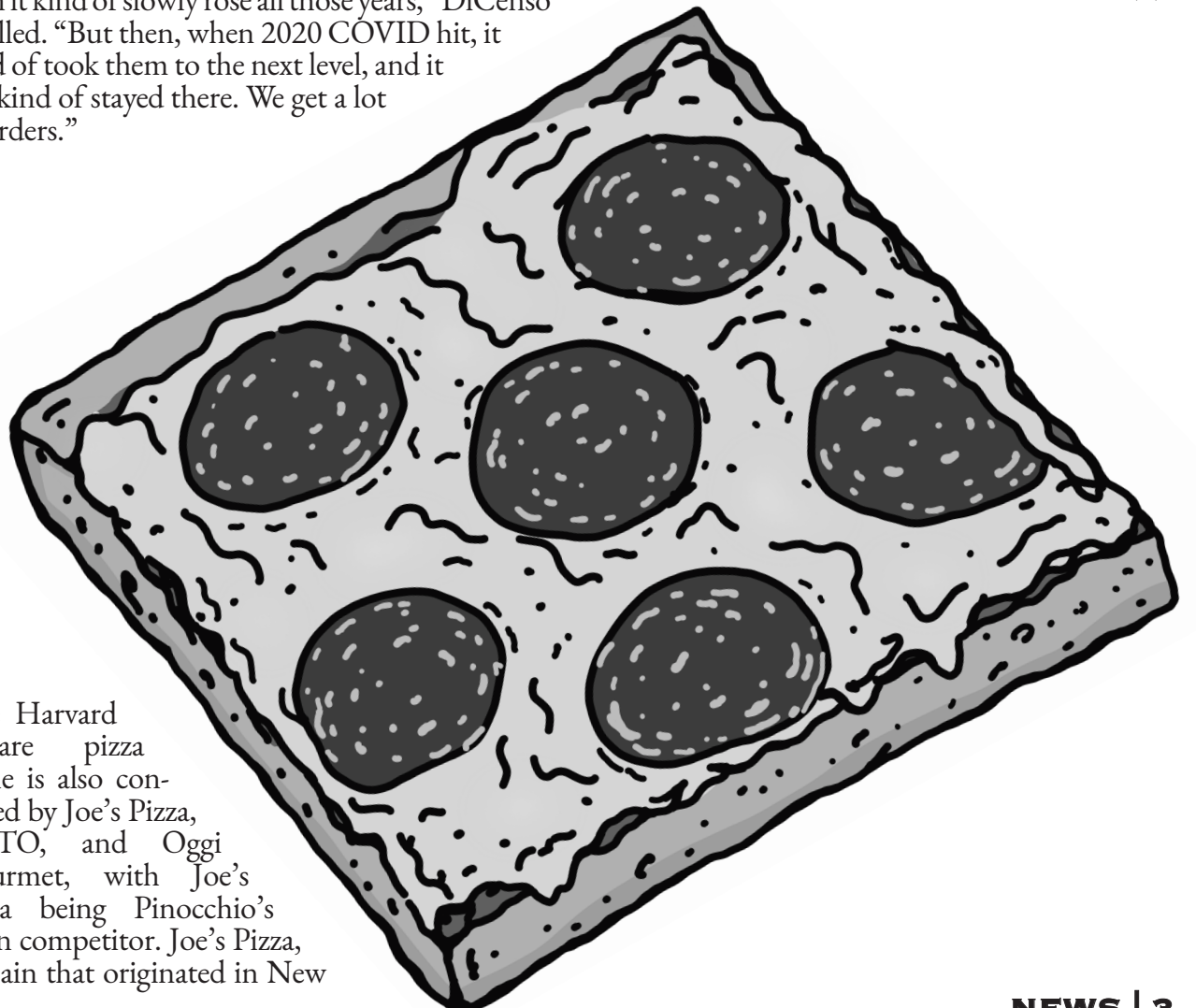
The “Harvard Independent” conducted a poll on Sidechat, a social media app that lets Harvard College students communicate anonymously, asking which Harvard Square pizza they preferred. Of 450 respondents, 51% preferred Pinocchio's, 38% preferred Joe's Pizza, and the remaining 11% selected OTTO, Oggi, or said that they do not eat pizza. While Joe's has diminished the square slice's dominance, Pinocchio's remains the most popular.

“They opened up, and I was a little worried, but honestly, three, four months later, it just kind of went down and we're just still going,” explained DiCenso. “My own theory is that the more places that are here, I think it's better.”

As Harvard Square continues to evolve, Pinocchio's remains a window into the past, with a focus on tradition and consistency. “I feel like we've kind of established the formula here. I think our product is honed in and it's pretty tight,” explained DiCenso. “I don't want to change a thing.”

PATRICK SLIZ '27 (PSLIZ@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) OWNS A PINOCCHIO'S T-SHIRT. HIS GO-TO ORDER IS ONE SLICE OF CHEESE WITH A DRIZZLE OF RANCH AND ONE SLICE OF BARBECUE CHICKEN.

GRAPHIC BY NESHAMA RYMAN '28



The Harvard Square pizza scene is also contested by Joe's Pizza, OTTO, and Oggi Gourmet, with Joe's Pizza being Pinocchio's main competitor. Joe's Pizza, a chain that originated in New

Harvard College's Future Grade Cap is Already Reshaping Classrooms

Dean Amanda Claybaugh's recent comment on the incoming grade cap has sparked campus discussion about the policy's implementation in Fall 2026.

By **COURTNEY HINES '28**

On Aug. 24, a week before the start of the 2026 fall semester, Dean of Undergraduate Education Amanda Claybaugh told Peer Advising Fellows that Harvard College would automatically turn all course A grades into A-minuses if professors refused to comply with the new grade cap. Claybaugh then retracted her statement on Aug. 27, claiming the grade change was only a proposal. A week later, students returned to campus to find that some courses had already drastically changed their grading policies in preparation for the Fall 2027 grading cap, while others remained unchanged.

Discourse on grading policy changes is nothing new for Harvard. In October 2025, Claybaugh released a memo pointing out that A grades accounted for 60.2% of grades awarded in 2025, up from 40.3% in 2015 and 24% in 2005. In addition, the 2025 GPA cutoff for summa cum laude was 3.989, and 251 students finished their first year with a 4.0.

On Feb. 6, Claybaugh shared an email with University students and faculty titled "Grading Policy Proposal." It proposed a new grading policy that would take effect once the College's faculty voted in favor. The plan suggested a 20% cap on A grades, with the instructor's discretion to add up to four additional A grades.

After the decision was postponed following pushback from both students and faculty, nearly 70% of voting faculty members approved the proposed grading cap (458 to 201), with implementation set for Fall 2027. Faculty also voted 498 to 157 to adopt a companion policy that would introduce an internal "average percentile ranking" for calculating Latin graduation honors and prizes rather than GPAs.

by the Harvard Student Association.

Though Claybaugh amended her recent statement, saying that automatically lowering A grades to A-minuses was simply a potential proposal, it still sparked discomfort for many students across campus. "I think hearing it makes me really skeptical for what's to come, because [Claybaugh] does have a lot of influence," Eva Santelli '30 said to the "Harvard Independent." "It just shows sort of where her intentions are lying. And I don't really think that's a realistic thing to implement ... especially this year when the A grade cap isn't even implemented yet."

Other students understand Claybaugh's intentions despite skepticism about her decision. "From her perspective, it makes sense for there to be some sort of enforceable penalty, because obviously, if there's a policy and nobody's following it, then it's not very useful at all," August Damiani '28 said.

"I do think that this sort of academic system that we have thrives on—I guess you could call it the 'informed consent of everyone.' It's easier when the professors, the students, the administrators—everyone is cooperating together for the same goal of a college education."

Claybaugh's "automatic A-" proposal directly responded to dissent from professors who publicly stated they did not intend to comply with the grading cap. On Feb. 26, William Petschek Professor of Mathematics Clifford H. Taubes published an op-ed questioning the ethics of the "20% A-grade" policy, calling into question the fairness of treating students as statistics rather than individuals "graded solely on the merits of their own achievements."

"What if the proposed grade cap comes to pass? I will ignore it and give A's as I see fit," Taubes wrote. "And, if it turns out that the Registrar rejects my grade sheet because of 'too many' A's, then I will let the kind and gentle folk at the Registrar's Office choose which students get the A and which do not."

Kyle Davis '28, a Government concentrator taking "Statistics 110: Probability," said Professor Joseph Blitzstein similarly didn't see a fair way to implement the new grading policy in his class next year. "Blitzstein talked about how he doesn't think necessarily that the

stats department has actually experienced any grade inflation, according to some data that he's seen," Davis explained. "And so he said he's going to continue to grade the class like he always does—which I think includes giving ... 50% of the class either an A or an A-minus."

Blitzstein's analysis echoed the experiences of many students in STEM concentrations. "I'm a CS concentrator, and most CS classes have already had a 20% sort of rough distribution of A [grades]. So a lot of those classes aren't even impacted," Damiani said.

Though Taubes is among a group of professors who oppose the incoming grading policy, many have already begun preparing for the policy's implementation. "Economics 10" professors David Laibson '88 and Jason Furman '92, for example, already plan to include the 20% A-grade cap in their classes for the Fall 2026 semester. This follows their op-ed titled "60 Percent of Grades at Harvard Were A's. Enough Is Enough."

"Everyone's just kind of in the same boat of trying to figure out how it's going to work, and so a lot of my professors do have to really try things out this year," Santelli, who intends to concentrate in Environmental Science and Public Policy, said. "I know my professor mentioned doing some more quizzes or exams that ensure students have a really deep understanding of the material solely for the purpose of grade differentiation between students."

As students begin to see the effects of the incoming grade cap, they are considering how it might affect their future course selections. "This is maybe a little naive, but I would hope that the culture around grades and academics broadly chills out a little bit," Damiani said. "Maybe counterintuitively, this kind of forceful limiting of grades will make people more open to doing the material just for its own sake."

Other students, especially those who did not experience Harvard before the proposal, thought the grading cap would produce a less intellectually curious student culture. "I feel it myself—and I've heard it from a lot of other incoming freshmen—that they're scared that this A-grade cap is just making everything feel very competitive," Santelli said.

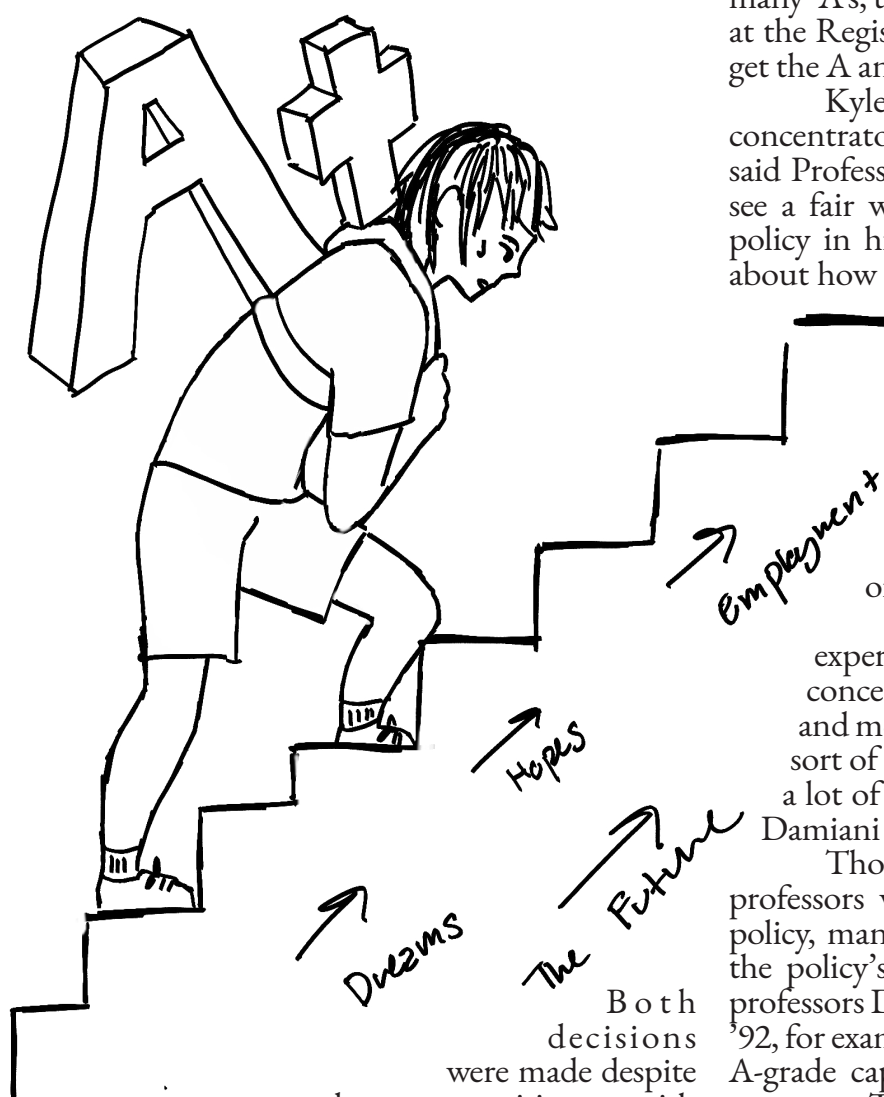
While peer institutions like Yale University have begun to consider changing their own grading policies, Princeton University plans to maintain the rules it has followed since 2014—the year the college abandoned its own 35% cap on A grades (A+, A, A-). A committee at Princeton found that the policy, instituted in 2004 to deflate grades, had caused students significant stress.

"There are probably going to be some folks that think because it's harder to get an A that they can't collaborate or they can't share anything with anyone because that could give them a leg up or something," Davis added.

Claybaugh's recent comments left a lasting impression on many students. "This is not something that is being offered up offhand," Damiani said. "It's a very serious policy, so I saw that statement in line with previous [grading proposals]."

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GRAPHIC BY NUALA MERNIN '29



Both decisions were made despite student opposition, with approximately 94% of students opposing the policies in a survey of about 800 conducted

FORUM

Indy Rewind: September 1976

A trip through the “Harvard Independent’s” archives, one issue at a time.

By **LAUREN MITCHELL '28**

*H*ave you ever noticed the bronze plaques or informational signposts as you pass through the Yard on the way to your 9 a.m. class? Have you ever thought about all the people who have existed in these spaces? When we, as members of the Harvard community, reminisce about its long history, I do not think we recognize how substantial it actually is.

Most students know that Harvard was founded in 1636, making its 390-year history relatively short within the grand scheme of human history. But when we consider that the United States was founded just 250 years ago, it puts the University in a more prominent

“When we, as members of the Harvard community, reminisce about its long history, I do not think we recognize how substantial it actually is.”

context.

By that metric, then, in comparison, the “Harvard Independent” is quite young. Founded in 1969 amid student unrest during the Vietnam War and concerns about censorship in campus journalism, the paper has spent nearly six decades documenting campus life and student experiences without censoring its coverage. And despite the historic yardstick by which we measure time on a campus like this, much can still transpire in six decades.

This past summer, I was lucky enough to spend much of my time

exploring Harvard’s history through the physical archives in the institution’s library networks and “The Crimson’s” digital archives. I knew I had struck gold when I was given access to the printed issues of the “Harvard Independent” from the publication’s inception in 1969 to as recently as 2014. From advertisements with JPMorgan to schoolwide cheating scandals and fated football wins, it was incredible to see how similar yet how vastly different student life was at Harvard just over half a century ago.

So, what was happening in the “Harvard Independent” and on Harvard’s campus 50 years ago this month?

In September 1976, the “Harvard Independent’s” first two issues of the semester were published and sold for 25 cents. The paper covered everything from the Cambridge City Council’s three-month ban on certain types of recombinant DNA research—prompted by fears that Harvard scientists were on the brink of creating a “monster”—to changes in house maintenance and assignment procedures. But perhaps the most unusual story involved a little place many of you call home: Quincy House.

Charles W. Dunn, Master of Quincy House, performed his twelfth consecutive exorcism in the Quincy courtyard to expel all evil spirits from the vicinity. Writer Carla Hall ’77 interviewed then-College students who noted that Dunn had changed the script for the exorcism each year “so the goblins can’t build an immunity to it.” Senior tutor Marshall Pihl ’55 emphasized the exorcism’s effectiveness by claiming that he “[hadn’t] seen a demon around all year.”

Elsewhere in the news, six works owned and insured by the Fogg Museum were reported stolen from University President Derek Bok ’71’s private residence, including two \$100,000 French Impressionist paintings by Eugène Boudin. Harvard Summer School’s introductory physics course, Physics S-1, was also disrupted by theft—and this was the second incident in three years involving a crowbar and a stolen answer key.

Meanwhile, the first presidential debate between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter was

just around the corner, scheduled for Thursday, September 23 at 9 p.m. at Harvard’s Institute of Politics, 78 Mt. Auburn St.

And because some things never change, the pages are filled to the brim with advertisements offering students a glimpse into the opportunities and interests of the time, including private language classes in Boston, restaurants in the Square, and a drug to help you get rid of crabs.

So why does this matter?

Harvard often feels frozen in time—as if the world is moving around it. And the dark red brick buildings look the same, so too do many of

“Harvard often feels frozen in time—as if the world is moving around it.”

the traditions and institutions that have shaped Harvard’s culture for generations. From entering finals season with Primal Scream to enjoying a performance by the Hasty Pudding Theatricals, many aspects of student life have endured long after the students who created them have left. Yet Harvard’s culture continues to evolve with each new class that graces its campus.

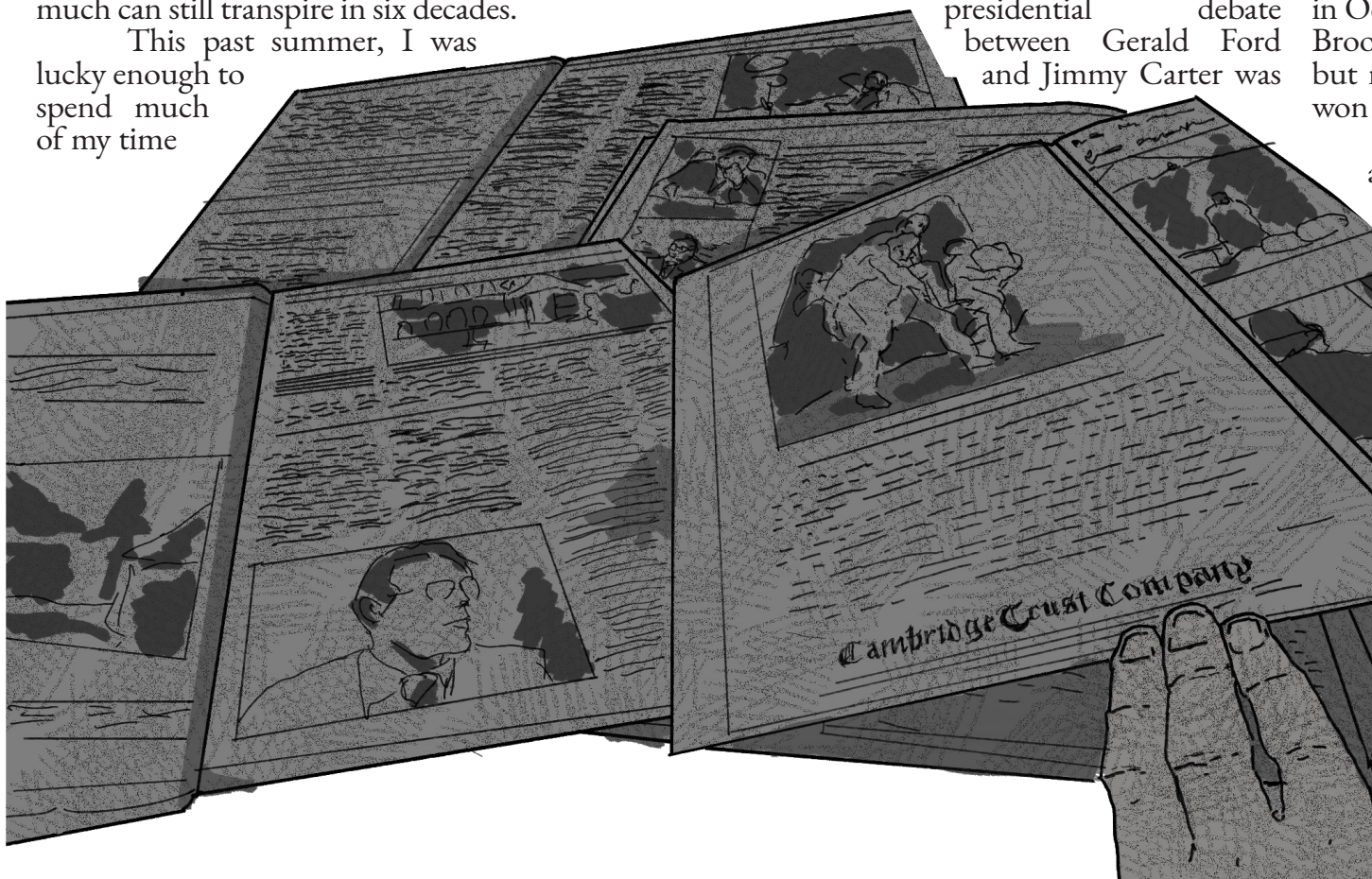
Though it has captured only a small portion of Harvard’s history, the “Harvard Independent” lets us see both phenomena at once: what has changed and what has not. The weekly news updates, advertisements, scandals, complaints, and bizarre stories were once just ordinary happenings of a semester.

Today, we know Dunn’s annual ritual lasted from 1964 to 1981, before the ritual evolved into a playful Quincy House tradition and stress reliever for rising sophomores moving into the House. Additionally, the paintings stolen from the President’s residence were later recovered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in October of the same year; four were found in Brookline and two in Rhode Island. And last but not least, sorry for the spoiler, but Carter won the presidency.

These stories are preserved in these pages as a unique piece of Harvard’s history. So why shouldn’t we talk about it and show off the work that our fellow Indy alumni put into these issues? Maybe the stories we are writing today will be revived in another 50 years, offering students the same opportunity to dive into the past and see a Harvard that looks and feels both familiar and entirely foreign. After all, this issue will just become a document of tomorrow’s history for all to see.

LAUREN MITCHELL '28
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GRAPHIC BY SAGE WILEY '29



An Argument for Doubt

For the sin and the sinner.

By NOAH BASDEN '29

I previously published an article in the “Harvard Independent” on the subject of faith and our need for it, of any kind, in these trying times we live in.

However, I neglected to say fully that faith is not enough. It is my firm belief that as much as one believes, not only when it comes to politics, as I previously related, but in the practice of faith itself. Even Jesus doubted at the end, to borrow a line, again from Cardinal Lawrence, in the 2024 political thriller “Conclave”: “Dio mio, Dio mio, perché mi hai abbandonato?” / “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Most Christians disagree with this interpretation of Jesus’s cry to the heavens on the cross; nevertheless, it is a fascinating understanding of his last words, though even the topic of his actual last words is one of feverish debate. It raises the question: if even the Son of God doubted, who are we to be so sure of our faith?

An unshakeable faith, whilst impressive, is a mystery, a weapon in the hands of some, and

violence, but when questions stop being asked, danger arises. There are too many examples to name, but what I find central to all is that violence was not perpetrated by the most faithful but by the most certain. When “God willed it” becomes the go-to answer, we are in dangerous territory for potential “its.” As we know all too well, it is ordinary people who, more often than not, think they are doing the right thing and yet commit horrific acts because they stopped asking questions.

Every child buried, every hostage taken, and every family devastated is the direct victim of certainty. I often quote another line from “Conclave,” which precedes the first quote I referenced. Cardinal Lawrence says: “Certainty is the great enemy of unity.” In this case, it goes so much further than unity; certainty is the great enemy of the innocent. It is the great enemy of the child who never knows their first breath before it is taken from them or the mother who knows not whether she will ever see her child again. Rarely do atrocities come from those who are uncertain.

I wonder how many lives would have been saved with a little bit of doubt. We must ask ourselves: What if I was wrong? History will not look kindly on leaders who deny what the naked eye can see in the same way it will not look kindly on leaders who praise the horrific violence committed by their followers. To question one’s decisions in matters as grave as these should not be treated as a betrayal of conviction but as the development of a conscience.

If faith demands that we never question, then it stops being an exercise in the search for truth and becomes a demand for obedience. From the sacrifice of Iphigenia to the wars that have raged over the thousands of years since, we have seen the price of humanity choosing obedience over compassion for its fellow man.

Faith without doubt is certainty, and certainty breeds obedience; obedience has so often led to the

for someone else’s certainty. For their sake and our own, we should ask ourselves the questions our history textbooks so often neglect: What if I am wrong?

“If doubt makes us sit with suffering and re-evaluate our decisions, then we must doubt rather than be blind and pray to God for forgiveness for our lack of vision.”

**NOAH BASDEN '29 (NHBASDEN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)
DOUBTS HIS ABILITY TO GET HIS READINGS DONE THIS WEEK.**

GRAPHIC BY TRISCHELLE AFIHENE '27

“If faith demands that we never question, then it stops being an exercise in the search for truth and becomes a demand for obedience.”

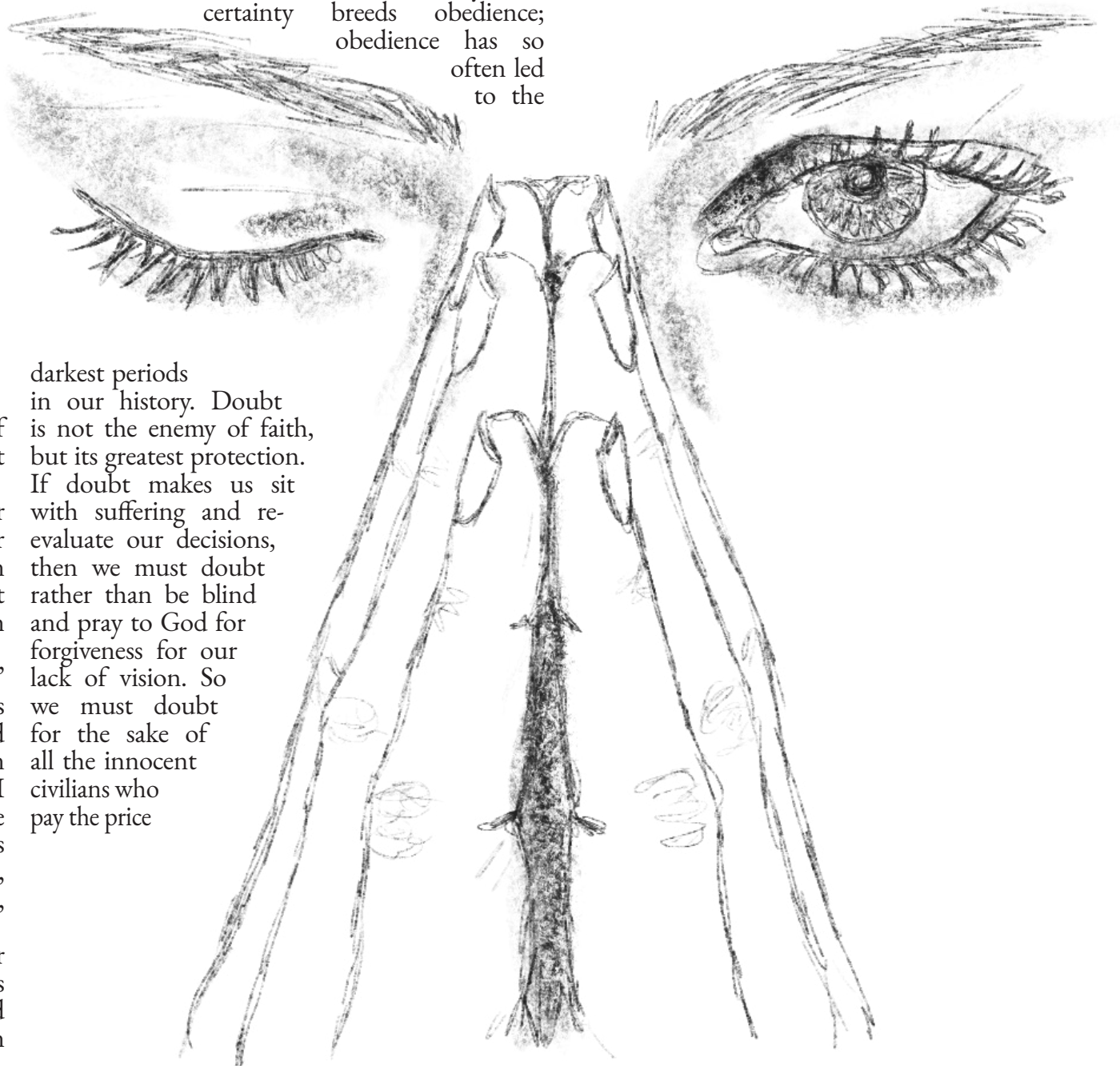
concurrently a beacon of hope in the hands of others. For that reason, I argue against it and put forward the case for doubt.

Generally speaking, we are, across the major faiths, taught not to doubt the will of God, for our minds cannot comprehend what our Gods have in store for us. However, I do believe this to be a fault of religion because if we do not doubt, then faith becomes nothing more than obedience.

In the Season 6 finale of “Game of Thrones,” a scene reminiscent of the sacrifice of Iphigenia sees Shireen Baratheon, daughter of Stannis, burned alive in service of a higher cause. A line, in reaction to her death, has stuck with me in the years since I watched the show. When the action of the sacrifice is defended by the religious priestess Melisandre as being permissible because her Lord commanded it, he replies, “If He commands you to burn children, your Lord is evil!”

The cycle of atrocities carried out over history as a result of religious obedience reveals a tragic pattern. When convictions of any kind become unshakeable, our ability to question our actions diminishes. Faith itself does not breed

darkest periods in our history. Doubt is not the enemy of faith, but its greatest protection. If doubt makes us sit with suffering and re-evaluate our decisions, then we must doubt rather than be blind and pray to God for forgiveness for our lack of vision. So we must doubt for the sake of all the innocent civilians who pay the price



Ode to FOP 20: Onwards We Go!

A week in the wilderness with the First-Year Outdoor Program.

By CLORIS SHI '29

I began my first year at Harvard in peak physical condition: a bruised hip, aching legs, ten wasp stings, and—possibly—an incubating giardia infection (but thankfully not). I had just survived my first wilderness backpacking trip.

I attended Harvard's First-Year Outdoor Program the week before setting foot in any college classroom. FOP is one of Harvard's oldest, most popular, and largest pre-orientation programs. For five days, around 300 incoming freshmen strap on their backpacks, drive hundreds of miles off campus, and explore New England's natural beauty. FOP introduces Harvard—the people, the scenery, the sentiments.

“Yet, I always seemed to make it through—climbing slowly, yes, but climbing upward.”

I do not consider myself outdoors-inclined, or even athletically inclined for that matter. Growing up, my outdoor experiences had been limited to California tide pools, hikes on well-serviced trails, and an occasional part-drive, part-hike to catch a sunset. My past adventures were never far from the heart of a city, never far from a telephone, a restroom, or, frequently, a restaurant to end the trip. Except for a sixth-grade week-long camping trip, I had yet to stay overnight in the middle of the woods—much less live out of a backpack for five days.

Despite my flagrant inexperience, I was determined that FOP was the one and only pre-orientation program for me.

After all, what could be more suitable for a new year and a new school than to try something crazy? Acceptance to FOP, though, was purely a lottery: applicants had an equal chance. In an attempt to game the system, I confidently rated my athleticism a generous seven out of ten, hoping to open myself up to all the trip options. A couple of weeks later, I was thrilled to learn I was placed on a medium-intensity backpacking FOP trip. The reality of

this wilderness foray, however, only set in a week before the initiation date.

With a long list in hand, I headed to a nearby REI store

and walked out with a couple hundred dollars less in my pocket.

My FOP group (FOP 20!) consisted of three leaders and seven pre-frosh. Our trip was a hike on the Presidential Range along the Appalachian Trail, a path that contains some of the highest peaks of the White Mountains. Each day, we advanced a handful of miles through the mountains, then settled in an open clearing. Per FOP tradition, we left our phones and watches at home, relying solely on the break of dawn to start our day and the holler of a FOP leader to end it. We scrambled through rocks, balanced on logs, and passed stories, jokes, and riddles one by one down our hiking line. We broke bread—namely, peanut-butter-and-jelly-smothered pita—at the top of waterfalls, posed together on bridges, and gazed wistfully off a tall peak. At rest stops, we inhaled handfuls of GORP (a snack mix of pretzels, chocolate, Goldfish, and nuts) and rationed our fresh oranges and pears. We even bumped into Yale's (inferior) equivalent of FOP. Through these milestones, we also endured swollen ankles, burst blisters, and legs scratched up by low foliage.

I felt so exhausted at the end of each day that I couldn't imagine climbing any more the next day. Yet, I always seemed to make it through—climbing slowly, yes, but climbing upward. Over those five days, my FOP trip felt so difficult, so impossible to finish. Despite the occasional stumbles and never-ending days, FOP was a lesson in resilience, in never underestimating oneself, particularly when accompanied by nine other supporters who literally have your back(pack).

There's no doubt my three amazing FOP leaders are extraordinary people. One was an army veteran, entertaining us with stories of his deployment, strict officers, and disgusting ready-to-eat rations. Another was always excited to carry anything we struggled to fit in our bags, or rather, anything we didn't feel like hefting on our shoulders. And the third always knew the way, corralling us to get back up despite our pleas for longer water breaks and more rest stops.

Beyond their outdoor expertise, I will forever remember how comforted and safe I felt following their lead. I recall how one night—the only day we arrived at camp early—we gathered around, wrote down a fear, anxiety, or excitement about Harvard on a paper slip, and received answers from our FOP leaders: Find your people. Focus on your classes. Try crazy new things.

And my fellow FOPpers? Well, as I write this, I have just reunited with my full FOP group, and am in the midst of planning a surprise birthday for one of them—just as we did last year. It has been a full 365 days since we made that fateful journey to the mountains. Since then, we have remained close—uniquely so among FOP groups—and some even live next door to each other. We come from different backgrounds, different interests, different places. Just looking at how we arrived here: while one FOPper

flies nearly twenty hours to Harvard, another drives just over twenty minutes. FOP not only broke the ice between us but also tied us together in intricate ways. For the five days of our trip, we unconsciously reached out an arm

“At Harvard, we have yet to summit or to reach our end.”

to steady each other whenever we stumbled, offered an extra bite of our snacks, and shared our backstories. It was no harder to reach out to each other on campus, to offer open arms as we each transitioned to our new home.

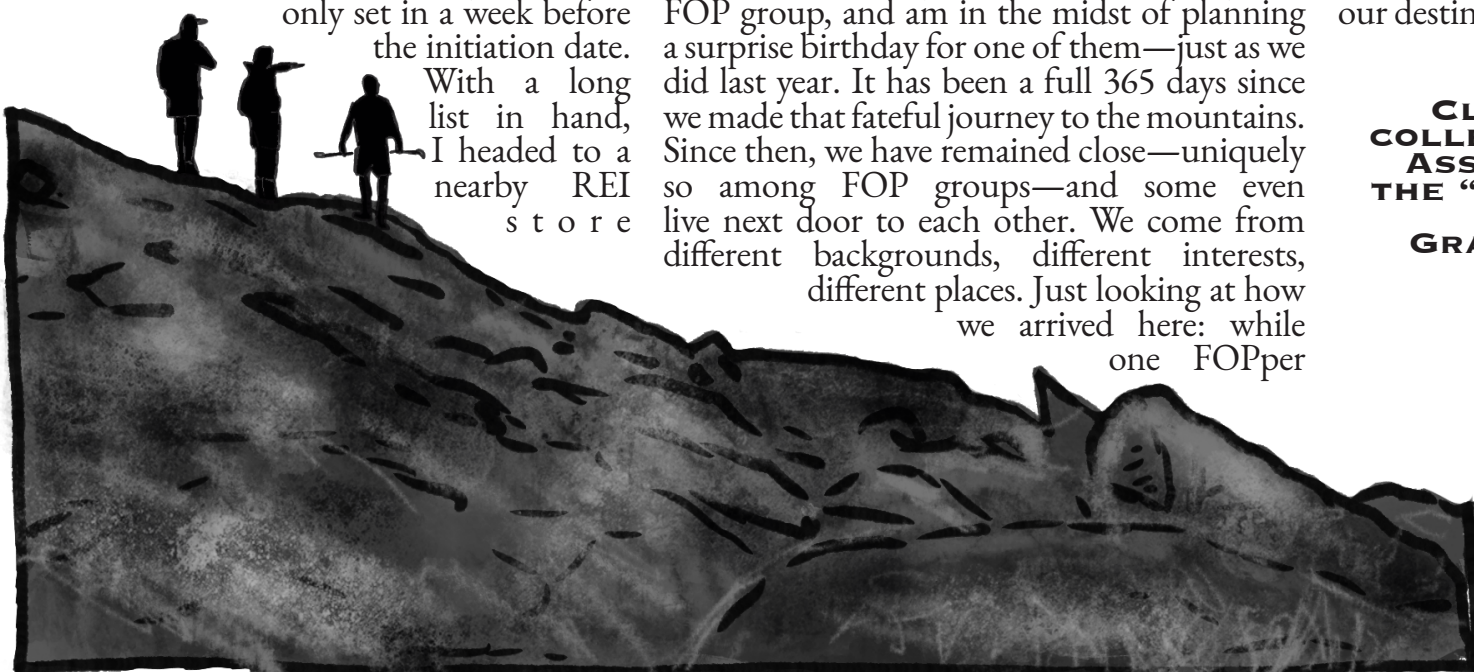
It would be an understatement to say that my first year was transformed by this pre-orientation program. The feeling that one is displaced from familiarity, from the comforts of home, childhood, and community is inherent to college. Frankly, I was unsure whether anyone would understand me as well as my high school friends, or that I could open up so quickly to someone else. But FOP—gathering people under the same roof, or tarp, for five days—showed me that intimacy is possible with vulnerability, often enhanced by a bit of shared sweat and a few tears.

Now a sophomore at Harvard, I am still surprised by the jolting experience of moving away from the rhythm of summer, away from my lovely hometown. Texting my FOP 20 group—which is still active with “anyone grabbing dinner soon?”—I know that I can always return to the comfort of these people when a bout of the lonelies hits.

It's beautiful to see my FOP group moving forward. My leaders are in their final year, while my fellow FOPpers have just settled into their Houses, both along the river and in the Quad. At Harvard, we have yet to summit or to reach our end. But as we watch our FOP leaders guide us—always a couple of steps ahead—we can't help but treasure the journey: the ups, downs, stumbles, stings, conversations, and slow but steady trek toward our destination.

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GRAPHIC BY LINDEN MCCARL '28







ART

My Neighbor, Dolly

Remembering Dolly Parton, an American hero, philanthropist, and legend.

By SEYI AMOSUN '29

Living around my hometown of Brentwood, Tennessee, I would always crane my neck to see if butterflies were affixed to the gate of 9510 Crockett Road. Only seven minutes away from my childhood home, the red-and-white mansion was barely visible from the street. But when the butterflies were there, we knew something important: Dolly Parton was home.

Growing up in a medium-sized suburb right outside of Nashville, I cannot claim much besides an inculcated enthusiasm for high school football and a staunch belief that Southern food is superior to all else. But after the tragic passing of Dolly Parton just weeks ago, I have been reminded that my Southern roots should be a source of dignity, inspiration, and drive to be more like her.

After seeing the whole country (and world) come together to celebrate her life, I cannot help but feel a sense of pride in this new—or renewed—love for someone with whom I share my heritage. To most Tennesseans, Dolly was not just another singer or celebrity whom we loved. She was a philanthropist, a neighbor, a friend. Her legacy is woven into my life in ways I haven't taken time to reflect on, but I want to now, as I honor her memory.

...

I have vivid early childhood memories of running home from the bus stop and excitedly opening the mailbox at the beginning of the month. I developed a love for checking the mail—and though I definitely sought out the American Girl monthly magazines and Tinker Crate craft boxes, I particularly loved receiving brand-new books from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

In a state that ranks 31st for education and is plagued by the ongoing literacy crisis, the Imagination Library has made an immeasurable effort to help children in Tennessee, across the United States, and around the world. The program has delivered 332,411,218 (and counting) books completely free of charge. Started in Sevierville (seh-veer-vulle, not “ville”), Tennessee, in 1995, the Imagination Library began as Dolly's way of giving back to her hometown. It has since massively expanded, with more than 1 million books delivered by 2003.

In the early '90s, she pledged to donate \$500 to every seventh- and eighth-grader in the county if they and a buddy both graduated high school. This “Buddy Program” effectively cut dropout rates from 35% to 6%.

Though I may sometimes disagree with the decisions made by my state legislature, Tennessee secured full library coverage in 2004 and recently announced plans to pursue full funding for the project next year. Dolly was one of the very few individuals with a legacy that looms so large. Her singular initiative has helped so many children who call Tennessee home. The program helped me develop a love for reading and

literature; it is surely a reason I can write for this publication as a Harvard student today.

...

I will be completely honest—I did not know Dolly Parton wrote “I Will Always Love You.” I had always associated it with Whitney Houston. Though many likely consider the latter's rendition of the song to be far more famous, that never stopped Dolly from using her talent for good.

Houston's version of the song eventually topped the charts, earning a Grammy Award for Record of the Year in 1994. Dolly Parton eventually made over \$10 million in royalties during the '90s.

The money was rightfully hers, but I will forever admire Dolly's penchant for sharing the wealth and spreading the love. Instead of opting for an office on Nashville's

Growing up with a sibling who has sickle cell anemia, I have always been grateful for the staff and donors to the hospital. Unsurprisingly, this list includes our favorite philanthropist, Dolly Parton.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dolly made a massive \$1 million donation to Vanderbilt's vaccine development program with Moderna. She also used her fame and household-name status to encourage others to get vaccinated. The CEO of Vanderbilt Health, Jeff Balser, touted her contributions that have helped thousands: “Dolly was a global icon and a friend of Vanderbilt. Her amazing generosity, particularly in pediatric cancer and infectious disease research, has had a transformational impact on patient care and treatment,” he said.

In my book, there is no greater gift than good health. And I will truly be grateful to Dolly for influencing the masses to get vaccinated to the tune of her hit song, “Jolene”: “Vaccine, vaccine, vaccine, vaccine, I'm begging of you, please don't hesitate.”

...

Dolly has quite clearly shown us a lot of love in Nashville and Tennessee as a whole. In turn, we are doing our best to show her the same love. The state has announced plans to rename Nashville International Airport in Dolly Parton's name as an enduring tribute to her.

At the American Legion Auxiliary Volunteer Girls State in Tennessee, delegates are randomly assigned to one of 14 “cities,” each with a team of counselors, for the week. I attended the program in 2024, and by then, organizers had already venerated her by naming one of the cities in her honor: Parton City. I expect countless other institutions in Tennessee, including libraries, schools, and clinics, to bear the name of one of America's greatest heroes.

Tennessee will not be the same without Dolly. The world will not be the same without Dolly. But as I remember the pink lights that illuminated the houses in neighborhoods back home after she passed, I still feel hope that her memory can continue to unify us in community, just as she did.

SEYI AMOSUN '29
(SAMOSUN@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) IS PROUD TO
CALL NASHVILLE HOME.

PHOTO BY SEYI AMOSUN '29



Music Row, home to some of the biggest country music stars, she invested some of the song's proceeds into an office complex in 12 South, a neighborhood in South Nashville. The predominantly Black neighborhood, formerly home to a strip mall, was revitalized after her investment.

She specifically chose the area as a tribute to Whitney, calling it “the house that Whitney built.”

...

I have spent more time than most at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Glazed with Love

Harvard Ceramics Program's steady rise.

By JULIA BOUCHUT '29

Since the Ceramics Program's founding over 55 years ago, it has served as Harvard University's dedicated ceramics center, giving Harvard's community pottery enthusiasts a space to explore their passions. As its popularity has grown, the University has expanded its offerings by building ceramics studios across campus, developing curricula for students, and bringing in experts such as ceramicists Kyungmin Park and Chenlu Hou to teach students.

Jim Rippe '69 founded the Ceramics Program in the basement of a Radcliffe dorm in 1969. The first studio started in an abandoned kitchen. "One thing that made it different was that where it was in Cambridge, they were very welcoming to non-Harvard affiliates, people who just lived in the neighborhood," Director of the Ceramics Program Kathy King said in an interview with the "Harvard Independent." "I always joke, 'Well, it was the '60s. Of course you're gonna invite everybody over to make pottery.'"

Two years later, it expanded into a larger studio in Radcliffe College, and in 1973, the program joined the Office for Arts, a University center dedicated to promoting creativity across campus. "It wasn't really part of a House. It was taking [on] a life of its own, and it was a combination of community and Harvard staff and Harvard students," King said. "So they put us under the umbrella of the Office for the Arts under the College, and since then, that is where we've been."

The program then moved to Allston as one of the first projects in the area's Harvard Development Program, King explained. In 2013, the Ceramics Program moved to what used to be the Harvard Recycling Center. "It was just a big, old, spooky cinder block building, and they turned it into this beautiful studio space," she said.

When building the new Allston studio, Harvard University helped buy some of the expensive machinery, such as kilns, but the program had to cover the rest of the furnishings. "The program just didn't have the money, so we went to Harvard Recycling, and we just looked for everything that we could DIY," she continued. "We have carts that are next to all the pottery wheels, and those used to hold books for students in dorms ... Our work tables are from the Harvard libraries. So we just took everything, we painted them, we sanded them, we put new polyurethane on them."

Currently, the Ceramics Program offers 20 classes for students at varying skill levels, none of which students can take for credit, King explained. Classes in the studio's main space are capped at 20 students, while those in smaller classrooms are capped at 15. The classes teach techniques from wheel throwing and sculpture to digital clay printing and glaze chemistry. Today, classes continue to welcome both Harvard affiliates and members of the Allston community.

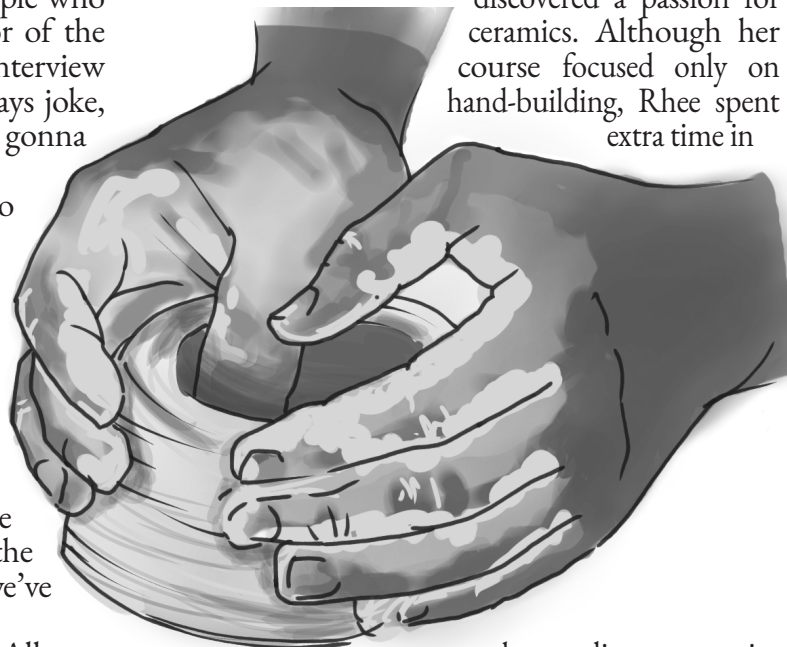
The Allston ceramics studio has endured due to a sustained community effort, King said. The Ceramics Program receives 85% of its funding from registration fees, with the remaining 15% coming from the OFA. Because undergraduate students pay \$150 for the 10-week program while other students pay \$1200, the program balances the types of students registered to cover the costs of materials and classes for everyone, she said.

The Ceramics Program also hosts two fundraisers per year, with about 100 artists selling their pieces and over 1,000 guests coming through, King explained. As a part of the event,

the program asks all artists who display their work during the fundraiser to make a mug, which they sell to fund undergraduate scholarships. "This semester we were able to give like 17 to 20 scholarships for people to come in, and we always try to help any undergrad that applies to our scholarships," she said.

In addition to its Allston studio, the Ceramics Program oversees ceramics studios in Quincy, Cabot, and Mather Houses. Each house determines its own policy for who can use the space and runs both classes and open sessions.

Kirkland, Quincy, Cabot, and Mather all host weekly classes, ranging from five to 10 weeks, with capacity to accommodate up to seven students. During her senior year of high school, Grace Rhee '29 discovered a passion for ceramics. Although her course focused only on hand-building, Rhee spent extra time in



the studio to practice other techniques. "I would come in early, and my teacher let me use the wheel and taught me how to throw," she explained.

When she came to campus in the fall, she began looking for studios in the Boston area where she could work. "I needed some time alone," she said. "I wanted to feel grounded in a space that felt familiar."

However, she quickly realized these studios were out of reach because of steep membership prices, with places in the Greater Boston area like Feet of Clay starting at \$185 per month and The Potters Shop and School starting at \$160.

Rhee discovered the University's ceramics resources in upperclassmen Houses after a friend told her about a display case showcasing pieces made in the Mather ceramics studio. She emailed Resident Tutor Daniel Garces, who oversaw the studio, to ask if she could participate. "They were super welcoming, and that's where I started to find a space where I could continue my love of ceramics."

Sam Chung '27, on the other hand, took his first ceramics class last summer, when he was on campus working on research. He took a beginner's ceramics course on wheel-throwing called Basics and Challenges with instructor Katie Fee for nine weeks, at the Ceramics Program's building in Allston.

Through the class, Chung also realized his love of ceramics, even going to the studio outside class time. "I really enjoyed it because you lose track of time. It's a very tactile experience, and it's a good way to take a break from anything more academic," he noted.

As an engineering student, Chung also finds that ceramics gives him an outlet to explore his creativity. "I played a lot of music in high school, but I haven't played since," he said. "So I feel like it's filling that gap for me."

Rhee, too, appreciates ceramics for the physical experience of throwing. "You have to use

your strength, and [I love] when you kind of realize that you've maybe progressed a bit, and you are more confident in [for example] centering, which is where you make it consistently symmetrical."

According to King, one of the Ceramics Program's main goals is to find the intersection between ceramics and different disciplines. She's worked with departments ranging from anthropology to engineering. "It's amazing how many different places, from art history to anthropology, that ceramics is part of. And what we can provide is that hands-on interaction," she explained. "We want students to understand materiality, to understand what the material is and why it acts the way it does."

Over the years, the Ceramics Program has increased from hosting 180 to 350 students per semester since first moving into its new space in Allston. In addition, the program includes a 38-person staff, 19 of whom are instructors.

While the Ceramics Program has grown steadily since its founding, the pandemic marked an inflection point in its popularity. At first, the studio had to adapt to teaching ceramics online, King said. One way the program did so was by working with curators at the Harvard Art Museum to introduce and recreate ceramic objects. "There was this incredible conversation. So we gained a lot of international attention through those classes."

When students returned to campus, demand for ceramics classes had drastically increased, King said. Around 700 students attempted to enroll, crashing the website and forcing HUIT to implement a lottery system. Now, in order to enter the lottery for classes, students must rank their top four choices, and from there they are placed into a class.

King believes this renewed enthusiasm came from students wanting a break from their screens, she explained. "I think people were just really hungry to work with their hands." Since then, the excitement has slightly diminished, but the current waiting list for ceramics classes sits at about 600 students.

The house studios, however, experience lower participation numbers. At the beginning of the year, Rhee noticed that a couple of students would come to the studio's open session, but as the weather grew colder, she was often alone. At its peak in the spring, attendance increased to 10 students at a time, she noted.

During her time at the studio last year, Rhee made four pieces, all of which she gifted to her mother. "I am [proud], and I also think the glazes are so beautiful," she said. "I think I'm growing and the progression I can see."

Over the next few years, King hopes to offer ceramics courses for credit, in partnership with other Harvard departments. She has already created an academic model for how the University might approach this process, drawing on her experience at Georgia State University. "I would love to see students ... whether it's engineering or anthropology or art history, that they might be able to do something here and have that count towards their studies."

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GRAPHIC BY EMMA CRAGO '28

The Art of the Dorm Layout

Your guide to interior design—in 80 square feet.

By ELLIE GUO '29

Are you a freshman who just got assigned a dorm of dubious legal status (multiple-occupancy rooms in Massachusetts are required to contain at least 50 square feet per resident), or a senior in the Quad who has to take an Uber to the other side of your single? Either way, everyone has school-provided, bulky furniture used by generations of students, awkwardly arranged in a room that does not seem to mesh.

Free yourselves from the doctrine of the default dorm layout! The typical arrangement of parallel beds for doubles (or a bed tucked into a corner for single rooms) reeks of conformity. The furniture is made of particle board for a reason, and not just because of budget. It is made specifically for students like you and me to rearrange and push the limits of our creativity.

Why should you take my word for it? My roommate—we will call her SP for privacy—and I spent a week designing the layout of our 168-square-foot double on [planyourroom.com](#). The results were incredibly rewarding: not only do our friends gasp and shout in celebration of our interior design genius when touring our dorm, but we also have never felt more... intellectually stimulated by furniture.

I realize your room will not look exactly

To reduce awkwardness, arrange your wardrobes so they are staggered and open in opposite directions. Make sure that when both sets of doors are open, they overlap, creating a private changing space for both residents. Never accidentally flash your roommate again.

This does mean the somewhat unattractive back of the wardrobe is exposed; however, in my case, I have compensated by slathering it with pictures of Paul McCartney's face.

Beds

This is the section that everyone has been waiting for. Perhaps the most innovative aspect of our dorm room layout, our beds elicit reactions such as, "What even is this?" and "This is not the move," which only shows the magnitude of our genius and innate talent for interior design. Many artists were ridiculed in their day but were recognized as visionaries after their deaths, such as Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, and Andy Warhol.

Our artistic vision prioritized comfort and privacy. Arranging the beds in parallel formation is suboptimal for several reasons. First, the precious real estate between the beds goes to waste. Furthermore, sleeping against a wall makes a twin XL feel even more cramped. By allowing yourself room on both sides of the mattress, you can feel the luxury without having to spend hundreds of dollars on Harvard Student Agencies' bed extenders. Also, in traditional Chinese feng shui, sleeping with your feet pointed toward the door is considered extremely disruptive. Before you dismiss this as superstition, a study showed that living in an environment that follows feng shui rules does have psychological benefits, including decreased stress and other negative emotions.

Based on these factors, SP and I decided to arrange our beds in what we call a "Z" formation. By orienting them feet-to-feet with the beds offset, we have minimized the feeling of being watched while we sleep. The only times I have seen SP's sleeping face are during her daytime naps, which I dutifully document through photography for future blackmailing purposes.

Even if you were lucky enough to get a single, I would still recommend these tips. My bed is currently against the wall with a window, like a larger version of a cozy reading nook, which everyone knows is the pinnacle of relaxation. Moreover, I get to wake up to natural light, which is scientifically proven to be the best way to start your day.

Before everyone starts rioting (in celebration of our genius, of course), know that whatever we did with our room is not nearly as egregious as Thomas Jefferson's bed



at Monticello, which required him to climb over his bed to get to his office.

Concluding Remarks

I hope I have opened your eyes to the infinite possibilities of dorm interior design. It pained me (my soul and my lower back) when, upon moving the furniture in my room, I found that it seemed to be stuck to the hardwood from years, or even decades, of staying in the same exact place.

Some have called us "the brightest and most creative students in the world." However, most do not realize that our creativity can and should extend to the most mundane aspects of our lives. My recommendations are merely points of inspiration for more efficient and avant-garde interior design. Remember, arrange your dorm based on your personal needs and priorities.

As alumnus John F. Kennedy '40 famously said when he moved into Winthrop House, "Ask not what your dorm room can do for you—ask what you can do for your dorm room."

ELLIE GUO '29 (EGUO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ENCOURAGES EVERYONE TO BREAK FREE FROM THE PARALLEL-BED DOGMA.

PHOTO BY ELLIE GUO '29

*"Never
accidentally
flash
your roommate
again."*

like mine; nonetheless, here are a few tips to get your creative juices flowing.

Desks

Have you ever wished that you could bring the comforts of Lamont Library back to your dorm? Well, it is easier than you think. If space permits, simply push two desks facing each other, and you are done! Even better, you could furnish the desks with lamps that only work sometimes.

However, most doubles will not have the space for such a luxury, including mine and SP's. Instead, we opted to place our desks side by side. Studies on child development show that parallel play, in which children play near each other but engage in their own activities, has many benefits. You and your roommate can greatly boost your fine motor skills and empathy, and learn to set boundaries within interpersonal relationships.

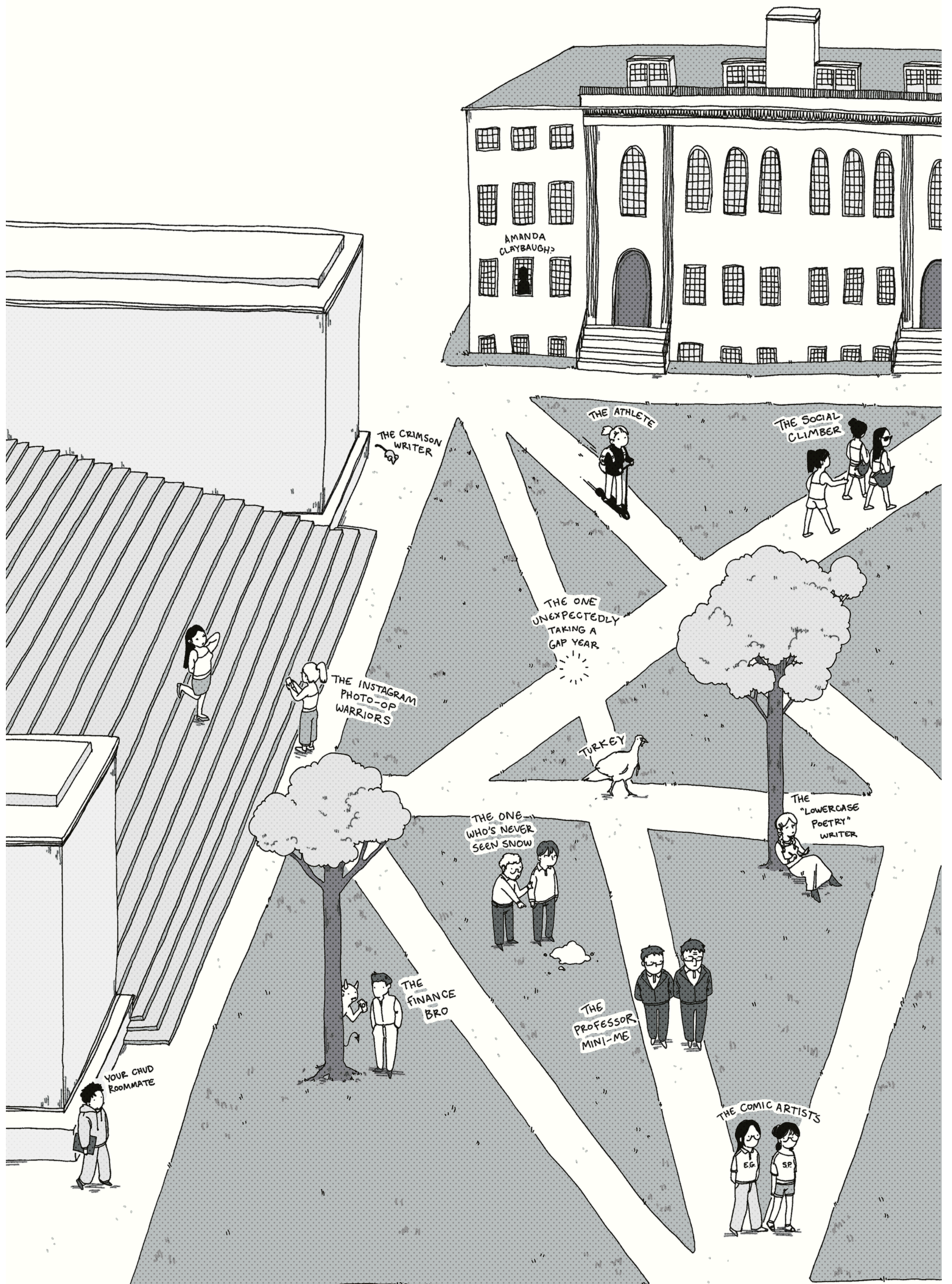
Unfortunately, if you are over the age of three, you may have already passed the window for these benefits. Nonetheless, parallel play for adults has been shown to strengthen relationships, especially between roommates.

Wardrobes

"Can you turn around while I change?" Everyone dreads that awkward question.

THE TYPES OF PEOPLE YOU'LL MEET AT HARVARD

DESIGNED BY SAM PARK & ELLIE GUD



SPORTS

An Ode to Those Friday Night Lights

Reminiscing about the community that sports provide.

By TYLER DANG '28

Every Friday in high school was the same. Drive home from school, excited for the weekend's freedom. Kill a few hours fueling up and preparing for the predetermined student section theme. Head over to a friend's house to chill before carpooling back to the school campus. Lose my voice cheering on our team in the game. Regardless of the season—football, basketball, or soccer—it was always the same ol' routine.

“It did not matter who your friends were or if you even enjoyed the sport; you were in the bleachers screaming at refs or celebrating touchdowns.”

At my all-boys school in Memphis, Tennessee, no one ever asked, “What are your Friday plans?” It was not necessary. It did not matter who your friends were or if you even enjoyed the sport; you were in the bleachers screaming at refs or celebrating touchdowns. Like any other routine, there was comfort in not having to find a creative way to spend a Friday night. No need to reach out to plan an impromptu hangout or figure out who is hosting: everyone is going to the game.

Sure, not everyone really cares about the events of the game. As long as we score more than the opponents, we can celebrate. But people largely ignore the individual plays and passes. Instead, most people faced their neighbors, catching up on the past week or making inside jokes that aren't even funny if you don't know the context. While it is a shame for the individual players, whose efforts might have gone unnoticed, the conversations interrupted by periodic screaming were my favorite memories from high school.

When I arrived on Harvard's campus, I knew that it would be different. Obviously, my classes would be harder, my classmates more diverse, and there would actually be snow in winter. What I was most nervous about, however, was Friday nights. No longer was there the safety net of “the game,” where I knew I would see all my classmates and friends.

More than halfway into my college career, Friday nights are less daunting. They have certainly lost the luster of the monumental experiences they once were, filled with blackouts and mistakes that will haunt me for years to come. A night in has actually become a favorite pastime to recover from a long week. But I always find myself

school Friday nights, missing the community that represented our school.

My high school experiences are not the first example of sporting events drawing people together: they have been a large part of society throughout history. Whether you look at today's myriad professional contests or the more elaborate sporting traditions of centuries ago, sports have played an integral role in bringing communities together. Gladiators in ancient Rome killed boredom in an age without the luxuries of TikTok, but the sport also encouraged camaraderie among Romans. Similarly, the Mesoamerican ballgame played across Mayan and Aztec civilizations bound cities together. Even the Olympics, in their earliest form, required a truce between competing societies.

Whether you're a superfan, a casual enjoyer, or someone who could not care less about sports, going to a sporting event or watching on TV gives spectators a chance to relax with friends and escape life's stresses. Baseball, for instance, is considered boring by many—with long periods of inactivity in any game—yet it offers a fantastic opportunity to decompress with friends without staying consistently engaged with what is happening on the field. As such, almost every game draws hundreds of viewers. While movies or shows require constant attention to truly appreciate the media, part of enjoying sports is also enjoying the company of those around you.

Perhaps the respite from the expectation to be focused is why sporting outings became so popular for students. No one judges if your back is to the field. No one judges if you ask for a recap of the previous play. No one judges if you have to step away. During a period of life often filled with peer pressure, those Friday nights had none.

While there is definitely a strong community here at Harvard, it is much more splintered. There is no single place where you can be sure to see most of your peers; instead, Friday nights are split among small hangouts, restful evenings, or outings to bars. There is no single answer for what people do after each week of school. Maybe it is just

growing up, and people choose to spend their time in more varied ways. Maybe it is a testament to the diversity on campus that everyone has different hobbies and values.

“During a period of life often filled with peer pressure, those Friday nights had none.”

Still, I miss those Friday nights.

TYLER DANG '28 (TYLERDANG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ONLY EVER SAW THE “FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS” MOVIE, NOT THE SHOW.

GRAPHIC BY JUSTIN MA '29



Weekly Sports Preview: September 10-17

What to look for in Harvard Athletics this week.

By LUCY DUNCAN '28

For many, the start of the semester means a return to academics, but for Harvard sports fans, the first day of classes also means fans returning and conference play beginning. This week brings several home openers, giving fans the chance to cheer on their favorite Harvard teams as new athletes debut and familiar favorites return to the fields, courts, and pools.

Men's Soccer (1-2)

After a modest 1-2 start to the season, the men's soccer team will hold their Crimson Kickoff at 1 p.m. on Saturday against the University of Connecticut—a rivalry that dates back to 1946, with Connecticut leading the series 16-8-7. This will be its first meeting in Cambridge since 2015, when the Crimson suffered a tough 1-2 loss. Their most recent meeting in 2025 ended in a 1-1 draw after both teams received red cards, so the Crimson squad has proven they can hang with the Huskies. This year, the team has a chance to win the series for the first time since 1992. Crimson Kickoff is always the most exciting game of the season, so come out for a thrilling match, food trucks, free giveaways, and postgame autographs.

The team will then head to the University of New Hampshire to compete on Tuesday at 6 p.m. This has historically been a tight game for the Crimson squad, with the series record standing at 8-7-1. Their most recent matchup in 2025 saw Harvard's first victory over the University of New Hampshire since 2016, ending a five-game losing streak. This road test, coming so soon after another rivalry home game, will test the squad's depth and endurance as the men look to secure a second consecutive victory.

Women's Soccer (3-2-1)

On Thursday night at 7 p.m., the women's soccer team will face Northeastern University at home. This rivalry dates back to 1998, with the Crimson leading the series 7-2-3 and securing three consecutive victories from 2021 to 2024. Their 2024 victory was a total blowout: Harvard won 4-0 with four different goal scorers—the largest margin of victory since their inaugural season. Last year, however, the meeting ended in a 1-1 draw at Northeastern. The Huskies have proven to be worthy opponents recently and will be returning this year in hopes of securing their first victory against the Crimson since 2019.

The team will then head to the

University of New Hampshire, where they will look to defend their impressive 25-3-3 record on Sunday at 2 p.m. Their last meeting resulted in a close 3-2 battle, so Harvard should not get too comfortable if they want to continue their unbeaten streak dating back to 2014.

Field Hockey (2-0)

Returning from their NCAA semifinal run in 2025, the field hockey team are looking to secure their first-ever first-place finish this season. After kicking off their season



with a two-game win streak, the Crimson will play their historic in-state rivals, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, at home Friday at 3:30 p.m. This series is remarkably close, with Harvard leading just 9-8 since their first meeting in 2002. Harvard's victory over UMass last October extended their program-record 15-game win streak, but their last two matchups have been close—a 1-0 win and a 0-1 loss.

The field hockey team will then host Boston College on Sunday at 1 p.m. This will be their first meeting since 2019, with both teams on completely new rosters. Look out for high scorer Lara Beekhuis '27, returning after a career-best season in goals and points. She's already secured one goal and an assist in just two games this season. Also watch goalkeeper Linde Burger '29, who, in her freshman year, led the nation in goals-against average and was named a third-team All-American by the National Field Hockey Coaches Association.

Women's Volleyball (3-0)

The women's volleyball team is headed to Wilmington, North Carolina, for a three-match non-conference weekend. They will play the University of North Carolina Asheville on Friday at 10 a.m., Norfolk State at 4:30 p.m. that day, and UNC Wilmington on Saturday at 1 p.m. They will then head to Merrimack College on Tuesday for a 7 p.m. game. These road tests give the team a chance to build form and confidence ahead of Ivy play, where Harvard was predicted to finish with a modest sixth-place mark in the preseason poll. Look out for returning All-

Ivy Honorable Mentions, Sofia Rossi '29 and Ryleigh Patterson '27, as the team look to continue their three-game winning streak to start the season.

Women's Rugby (1-0)

Harvard's women's rugby team is indisputably the best in the country right now, returning after their fourth consecutive National Intercollegiate Rugby Association national championship. After their perfect 9-0 fall season in 2025, the squad's home opener is this Saturday at 4 p.m. against Brown. The squad have not lost to Brown since 2015, and their last meeting was a total blowout, with Harvard securing a 47-8 victory. Look out for captains Ava Ference '27 and Courtney Taylor '27, named to the All-NIRA first and second teams, respectively, last year. Also watch returning player Madelyn Hubbell '29, who spent the summer traveling with the USA Falcons U20, U23, and senior women's teams, and was named the most valuable player of the U20 South African tour.

Men's Water Polo (2-5)

This weekend, the men's water polo team will head to New Jersey for the Princeton Invitational, where they will play San Jose State on Saturday at 11 a.m., Santa Clara University on Saturday at 6:30 p.m., and the U.S. Naval Academy on Sunday at 11 a.m. Their San Jose State game is particularly notable as it is a season rematch—the two teams met at the Aggie Roundup on September 5, where Harvard suffered a tough 8-14 loss. This game gives the men a chance at redemption against a strong West Coast team, currently ranked No. 10, compared to Harvard's

No. 18. This tournament also offers two fresh opponents, giving the team a chance to find their footing and build confidence after a 2-5 start to the season.

Whether you make the trip across the river or stream from the comfort of your dorm, be sure to tune into Harvard's athletic teams this week. From soccer to water polo, we are heading into a week of new beginnings and decades-old rivalries that will have something for everyone. Before classes start to get busy, take time to watch some familiar favorites or learn about a sport you've never seen before, and support Harvard's athletes as they prepare for a new season.

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