

The Official Newsletter of the Ashdown Community

Message from the Editor

Hello Readers,

Welcome to April! I hope you all had a good first day of the month. Did you know that today is National Hybrid Animal Day? It celebrates all hybrid animals, from the real (a mule is the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse) to the imaginary (a hippogriff has the body of a winged horse with the upper body of an eagle). Personally, I think my favorite is the lesser-known Wolf-Ape. First appearing as the monstrous child of Scylla and Charybdis in Greek myth, it has popped up in many stories since then, generally serving as the cunning yet feral adversary of the tale's hero. On my calendar, since "National Hybrid Animal Day" is too long, I write instead, "Ape-Wolf Rules Day!"

Big news! Newsletter Prizes are now TechCASH Gift Cards! For correctly solving a puzzle in Fall 2013-Spring 2014, you will win (or have won) \$5! For submitting an article, you will earn \$10! So get to solving and writing! Thanks!

In this issue, we have the eighteenth installment of the Puzzler Twins (Movie Sign!), reports on recent Floor activities (planes and crabs!), the second part of the story of an Editor's crazy 2013 adventures (Minnesota was like a sauna!), a glimpse into the Ashdown Photo Gallery (have you been caught?... in a picture, that is), an interview between cub reporter Ben Berinsky and our new AHEC Chair Jordan Romvary (with thanks to Ben's Grandma!), and the next chance to Choose Your Own Adventure (introducing Noah Boddy).

Wow, that last paragraph was one long sentence. TL;DR is below. If you have any questions, comments, concerns, complaints, or constructive suggestions, I'd love to hear them, so please e-mail me!

Happy reading!

Sakul Ratanalert, Ashdown Newsletter Officer, ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu

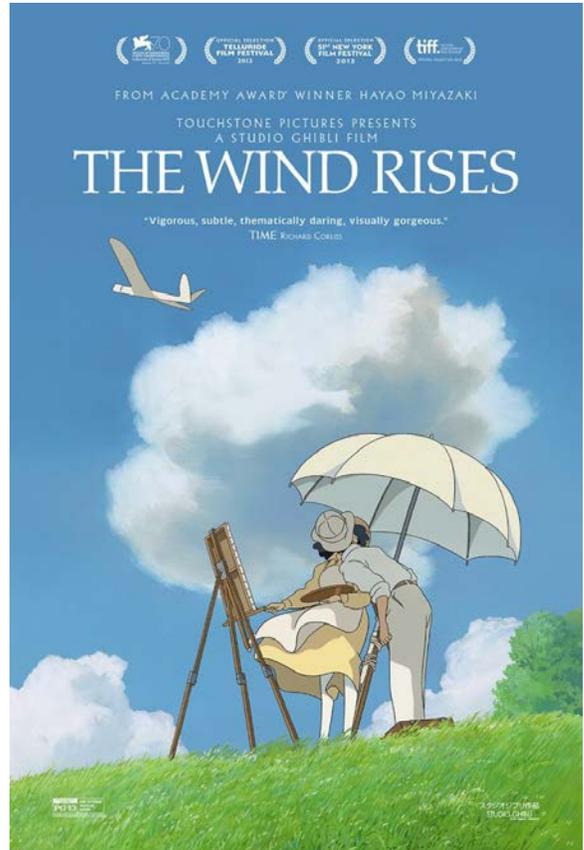
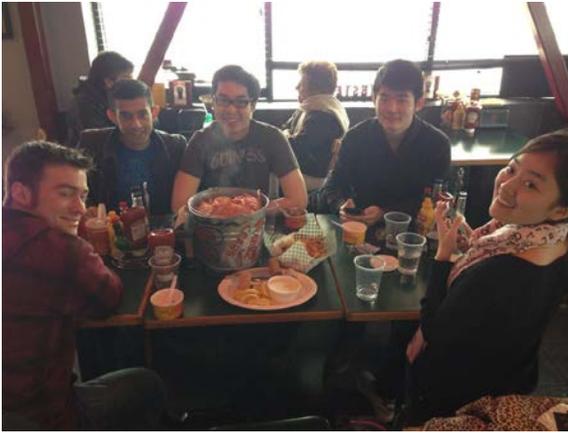
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Floored with Activities

On February 27, Edbert Sie treated his **Floor 1** to *The Wind Rises*, the last feature-length film by Hayao Miyazaki as he retires, shown at Kendall Square Cinema. With a simultaneous screening of *Suits*, the USA Network Drama, we not only got free* tickets, but also got free popcorn and soda!

On March 2, Tuan LeMau brought his **Floor 2** to dine on Yankee Lobster Seafood. They had a great time, having fun and eating lots of free* crab!



* free = subsidized by Ashdown. Thanks!
(Photo courtesy of Tuan LeMau)

Event Correspondents Wanted

Are you going to an event (for **FREE FOOD** or whatever)? Do you like to earn **AWARDS**? Try being an

EVENT CORRESPONDENT!

Before an **Ashdown event**, e-mail me saying you are interested in being a reporter for the event. Then, after the event (say, a week or two), e-mail me a small report of what happened at the event! **IT'S SO EASY!** And you'll be rewarded for your efforts (which just involves changing observations to words)!

They don't all even have to be your words! Feel free to get quotes from other attendees about what they think of the event! Take some pictures if you want to add 1000 words to your submission! (Though at least 100 non-picture words would be nice.)

So, if you were planning to attend an event anyway (or now you feel inspired to), spend a few minutes to write a summary and see it in the next issue of the **3AM!**

Practice School 2013, Part 2: Wild Midwest

For those who don't know, as part of my Master's Program I participated in MIT School of Chemical Engineering Practice, or "Practice School." This required me to take four months off from my PhD research to work as a consultant at two companies, solving chemical engineering-related problems. (And no, the problems were not related to my research. All we were expected to know we would have learned in our first-year chemical engineering core classes. Whoops.)

The second company was General Mills, so from October through December we were stationed in warm, sunny, Minneapolis. There was plenty of free time, since everyone works strictly eight hours a day. Neither us students or the dedicated employees ever woke up before dawn to make sure our experiments had enough time for completion, or had late evening meetings to make sure the information exchange was clear and accurate.



Fortunately, we did get all weekends to ourselves. My birthday fell on a Saturday this year, and boy was I glad that I could sleep in and explore the area (or, you know, just sleep). I do not envy the poor students that had to come into empty offices every Saturday and work on their presentations for the coming Monday. Nosiree.

For a city buried deep in the United States (deep as in very far from an ocean coast. Hi Canada!), there were a lot of different cultures mixed in the population. Every week, our Station Director would take us out to a restaurant of our choosing. With Yelp gurus among us, we sampled many cuisines: Thai, Spanish, Italian, Ethiopian, Chinese, among others. Because Thanksgiving also fell during this station (read: first Thanksgiving away from family... =[) we had a traditional Thanksgiving feast at an Indian buffet, complete with naan, chicken, lamb, and lots of rice. (So yeah, not quite traditional at all. But it was still good food!)

"What kind of work did you do for General Mills?" you might be asking. Well, I'm glad you might have asked. Most of our projects had to do with Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Donec lobortis imperdiet turpis eu ornare. Donec euismod sapien erat, eu vulputate ligula bibendum quis. Nam ornare, orci quis facilisis commodo, sapien magna vulputate nulla, vel feugiat tellus lacus non nunc. Vivamus rutrum felis velit, eu aliquet arcu fermentum vitae. Mauris sit amet tristique ipsum. Fusce in arcu sollicitudin sem sodales molestie suscipit eu massa. Vivamus quis suscipit ante, eget sagittis ante. Donec pellentesque facilisis mi at elementum.

After eight presentations and two reports, each document weighing about two boxes of Lucky Charms, we left the tropical climate that knows no word for "wind chill" and many words for "tire traction" and returned to our homes for the holidays. Our station director happened to be quite happy with the work we did, so we could enjoy our week or two off before 2014 struck without worry. (I'm not a worry wart at all, so this wouldn't have applied to me anyway.) So, after a whirlwind year, our adventures in Practice School were complete. Continuing toward my PhD should be a piece of cake in comparison, right?

Ashdown Photo Gallery

Our Ashdown Photographer and History Officers, Aarthy Adityan and Jian Feng Kong, work tirelessly to capture Ashdown moments for future generations to cherish. See the full Photo Gallery on the Ashdown website!



Officer Appreciation Dinner, February 15



AHEC Nominee Speech Night, March 6



Ashdown Pi Day, March 14



St. Patrick's Day Brunch, March 16

Ben's Corner (a.k.a. A Kid Asks Stuff!)

Cub reporter Ben Berinsky interviews an Ashdown resident in his ongoing quest to figure out what it is these MIT grad students are all about... If you would like to volunteer to be interviewed, please email Ben at ben.berinsky@gmail.com or the Editor at ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu. Thank you!

This month, Ben interviewed (with some help from his grandma) our new AHEC Chair, Jordan Romvary!



Ben: What exactly is your job at MIT? I guess I mean, what are you studying and how long have you been here?

Jordan: I am a second year graduate student working toward my Master's Degree in Electrical Engineering, or "EECS."

Ben: Where did you attend college and what was your major?

Jordan: I graduated from Rutgers University with a double major: Electrical and Computing Engineering, and Mathematics.

Ben: What do you research?

Jordan: I study systems of people, or "agents", who are all in the same environment. They are all working together to accomplish the same task and I study this working-together function.

Ben: What do you like to do in your free time?

Jordan: I really enjoy everything sports-related. I watch, read about, and listen to everything I can that has any relation to all Philadelphia teams. Besides football, baseball, and basketball, I also very much enjoy "English football" (or soccer). I like the Liverpool FC, or the "Reds", as they are called.

Ben: Is there any aspect of your Master's Degree that you do not enjoy?

Jordan: Well, right now my enthusiasm is somewhat dampened by the fact that the program I am creating isn't going as well as I would like. The script is buggy and of course I dislike the fact that the research isn't going the way I want it to. I am trying very hard to work out the "bugs" as I am hoping to finish the road toward the Master's in May. Then it will be on to the last phase.. The PhD.

Ben: What did you like to do when you were a kid?

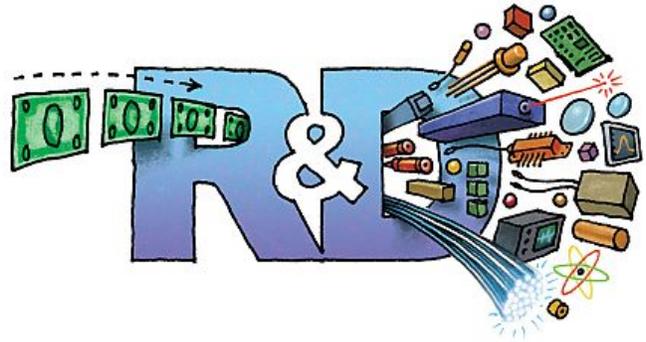
Jordan: I loved to play soccer and baseball, and I read all the time. Reading helps you think and broadens your vocabulary. I always had a book nearby.

(continued next page...)

Ben's Corner (a.k.a. A Kid Asks Stuff!) (cont)

Ben: Looking toward your future and the completion of your studies here at MIT, what would you consider an ideal job?

Jordan: The perfect job would be in the R&D (Research and Development) area of a company with enough money to fund any research project that I might be working on, and be a company with the top to bottom philosophy of sharing its staff's findings, not just for the company's profits but also for the good of everyone.



Ashdown Reviews

*This column, Ashdown Reviews, aims to provide 3AM readers a chance to read what other readers have thought about restaurants and other places around Cambridge and Boston. **You can contribute too!** Submit a review of a restaurant or other recommended locale you have been to recently (pictures would be nice, too), and if it is selected you will be rewarded with **Ashdown 3AM Merchandise**. Let Ashdown know where they should go when they have (gasp) free time!*

Citizen's Corner: Submission Guidelines

Do you have a flair for writing?

Do you have an experience you would love to share? A cause you want to speak out for? An event you would like publicized and reported?

The ears of Ashdown are thirsting to hear your story!

The "Citizen's Corner" is a section of "3am" aimed at reflecting the lives and perspectives of Ashdown residents. All Ashdown residents are invited to contribute, and all kinds of material are welcome. In the past, we have received everything from overseas exchange program stories to essays about environmentalism. We are especially keen on the views of international students comparing the way of life (in terms of culture, atmosphere, education system etc.) here to the ones they were used to.

If your contribution is selected, you will be rewarded with **Ashdown 3AM Merchandise**.

Guidelines in a nutshell:

- Submissions should be between 100 and 1500 words.
- No politically sensitive, religiously sensitive, or pornographic material.
- Pictures to accompany text are welcome.
- Email Sakul Ratanalert at ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu.



Why did the graduate student read this at 3am?

Because she took an hour off work in honor of spring break! Okay, that probably wasn't very funny, but hopefully the rest is more entertaining:

Q: Why can't a bicycle stand on its own?

A: It is two-tired!

Kids' Corner (a.k.a. Ask the Kids Stuff)



**Got questions you want to ask Apolo, Ben, Dante, Lila, and Max?
E-mail the Editor!**



**Also, check out
Ben's new column!**



Choose Your Own Adventure, Part 6

In an effort to generate more feedback and hear from you readers, this new section will let you choose what happens to Annie Boddy, a graduate student at MIT living in Ashdown. After a little bit of story, there will be four options, one of which is "Other." E-mail the Editor to pick what happens next!

Story continues on the next page...

She asked, "What is the square root of 1764?" The vandal replied, scared, "42! 42!" Annie ripped his mask off and said, "Noah, I thought it was you! Only you know that square root off the top of your head. What are you doing here?" Noah picked himself up and said, "I was hired to sabotage the lab, and I got hungry." "Who hired you?"

- a) "I'd tell you, but then I'd have to kill you, dear sister."
- b) "Your lab mate paid me a lot of money. And chocolate."
- c) "The CIA. You're doing work here that endangers national security."
- d) Something else! Suggest something!

Solution to Puzzle #17 (Dec/Jan 2014 Edition)

(See the Dec/Jan Edition for the Puzzle Statement, designed by Sakul Ratanalert.)

The words the Minions sing are all three letters, the same number as the jars given. Unscrambling them by noting "the second jar [is] first and the first jar [is] last", meaning the given order is "2 3 1", the message becomes... not too much clearer:

*"Arg.
Leu ala asn gly asp gln asn!

Phe ile arg ser thr,
Asn gln val glu leu!

Phe ile arg ser thr,
Trp gln arg asp!"*

Those who are familiar with amino acids may recognize these as some of the three-letter abbreviations. (If you weren't, the jars filled with protein powder may have tipped you off.) The amino acids have both three- and one-letter abbreviations. Converting the message to the one-letter variant:

*"R.
LANGDQN!

FIRST,
NQVEL!

FIRST,
WQRD!"*

Because there is no "O" among the amino acid one-letter abbreviations, glutamine (Gln, Q) had to be used instead. (The use of Q instead of O also appeared in "Enjqy"/"Enjoy" and "Miniqns"/"Minions" on the card.) "R[obert] Langdon" first appeared in "Angels and Demons" by Dan Brown. (The letters "D A N" in Dawn's name were colored **brown** on the card, as another hint). So, the first word of that first novel is "ANGELS". SECRET CODE WORD FOUND.

Contact the Editor

Please direct any comments or queries about "3am" to Sakul Ratanalert at ashdown-newsletter@mit.edu