

# The Dean's Almanac

## Skunk Survival Tips

*October 10, 2006*

Well, if that wasn't the prettiest darn Family Weekend UConn's ever had...perfect weather, great events, big wins for just about everyone (at least those playing at home). I remember those days when I was a student (cue music, something from the early 1980s, maybe Talking Heads or Toto). Mom and Dad would drive up from New Jersey, marveling at all the space between houses in rural Massachusetts, chat up my professors (that's life at a small school, folks), and then take me out to dinner at one of the ubiquitous seafood restaurants that can be found on the North Shore. I would surreptitiously glance at my watch and wonder when I would be able to get back to my real life, sans parents. Of course, my folks weren't helicopter parents. They were more like ferry parents, making regularly scheduled, but infrequent, stops and bringing me groceries.



But times change, and now I'm the one getting chatted up by parents (which I actually enjoy). I had a great time at Jon Stewart's show (who knew canine explosive diarrhea could be funny?) and watched parts of women's soccer, field hockey and volleyball, all of whom won. I have to admit to liking volleyball best because I can see the players up close and I find few things more satisfying in sports than a massive kill right between two stunned defenders, something Sade Chambers and Devon Farrell do pretty darn well.

And what else is new on my end? Looks like the State Police are going to be sharing more info with us about off-campus arrests, especially at parties in neighborhoods where the local folks are getting pretty exasperated. Come on, Huskies. These people have small kids and yards they care about, and some of the others are elderly and you make them nervous. How would you want someone treating your grandparents? So be considerate if you want to socialize at someone's rented house near campus. Keep your friends quiet, pick up your trash, and don't walk through the flowerbed to get to your car. You don't want to end up arrested and facing a judge (bad), or me (worse, especially when I wear a robe).

Oh, and (speaking of both sports and boorish behavior) sorry about the Yankees. A St. Louis-Detroit World Series is a UConn Dean of Students' dream.

Some interesting questions arrived since the last Almanac, a couple of which have indeed stumped me. But I soldier on.

**Kali** asked about Dining Services putting a café in the Ag School for those poor folks who find themselves too far from coffee to replenish between classes. Now **that** is a good idea. I asked Director of Dining Services Mr. C. (stands for a-Ccomodating) Dennis Pierce about this, and he said that Dining Services stands ready to provide the goods if the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources can provide the space and prepare it for a café. So Ag students: get your professors on board and go to Dean Kerr and see what can be done. The former School of Family Studies did this a few years ago with Lu's Café, and it's been a nice addition to their academic space.

Our neighborhood skunks provoked a question from **Kristin**, who wants to know if anyone on campus has considered doing something about them, especially the ones that follow after you like a kid sister. Director of Facilities Gene Roberts says that when they're made aware of a skunk's presence, they call an exterminator who sets up traps. The skunks are trapped and removed. I think they take them to UMass. So if you see a skunk, **DO NOT APPROACH IT!** Don't feed it. Don't harass it. And above all, don't mistake it for a crosswalk, despite its color scheme. Call a trained professional at 486-3114.

Like many of you, **Johnathan** asked why the Wachovia ATM was removed from the Student Union. This was *Wachovia's decision*, not the Union's. They (like all banks that have ATMs in the Union) pay a fee to have their machine there, and I guess it wasn't generating enough business to justify this. I'd like to point out that I'm a Wachovia customer, that I fussed for days at the Union folks to find a way to keep it, but alas, Wachovia doesn't care about me and that's why I've switched to People's.

Another pothole question came in from **Philip**. I guess the potholes in I Lot are growing by the hour. Turns out this is not as simple as filling them in, as I-Lot is adjacent to wetlands, and every time it rains, water pools and doesn't drain well. But Ann Denny, Director of Parking Services, is working with Dave Lotreck, Manager of Building and Landscape Services, to get these repaired quickly, hopefully by the time you read this.

**Michelle** sent me enough questions to last all semester. I'll start with a couple: Why do dining halls close at 7:15 pm around campus (except for Buckley)? Because it simply doesn't make fiscal sense to keep them open when the demand drops so much after 7. I know you like maximum flexibility in dining, but you don't like maximum price all that much. Keeping a dining hall staffed for a few extra hours each night can cost thousands of dollars a week, and that cost would be passed on to you. When Dining has experimented with different hours, they have not seen enough need to justify the expense. So walk to Buckley, the Union, order out or eat cereal in your room. I ate about four boxes of Frosted Mini-Wheats a month when I was in college, and it didn't kill me. It made me stronger (and gave me a lifelong aversion to Frosted Mini-Wheats).

**Michelle** also asked why we don't have the Discovery Health Channel in the dorms. Our cable package is just that-a package, determined by our cable provider. If enough students demanded a channel, we would ask about adding it, but they do those things in "tiers," which means no single-channel add-ons.

If any of you are interested in serving on a student committee to study our cable options, including those of you who want ESPN 8 (The Ocho!) and a chance to watch "Really Bizarre Surgery" on DHC, as well as other requests, let me know and I'll get you in touch with the cable czars on campus.

Where's Jonathan the Husky? That's what **Adrien** wants to know. Do we still have a live Husky mascot? Not at the moment. The most recent Jonathan has retired to an adult community for mascots in Florida, and we haven't replaced him yet. Jonathan is "handled" by the Alpha Phi Omega Service Fraternity, and they are, from what I hear, working on this. I learned from the inimitable Kevin Fahey that one problem is this: the particular breed of dog we have as a mascot is not especially good with crowds and needs a single handler to do well in those environments. Hey, that was good planning on our part. Let's choose an introverted and skittish breed and make it our mascot so it has to appear before crowds and have a lot of interaction with strangers! We could have gone with the Golden Retriever, but no. On the other hand, we could have gone with the Rottweiler and had some very different problems.

**Tracy** wrote complaining about the incessant fire drills in McMahon. "I know that UConn wants us to be safe, but five fire drills in four weeks isn't needed, especially in the middle of the night." You are so right, Tracy. We do want you to be safe. But we don't like these any more than you do (I am using the royal "we" here, as I don't have to get up when these happen, but my hard-working colleagues in Residential Life do). Hopefully by now, you all are better at not burning your ramen noodles so are not setting off the smoke alarms as often as you did the first month of school.

I've got more questions from you, but I am plum tuckered out from answering these, and need a nap or lunch or something. Oh-speaking of food: I'm looking forward to lunch with a group of you this week. I've also got a table reserved at Chuck and Augie's on Wednesday, Oct 25 at noon, and a couple of spaces are still open, so if you want to join me, send me an email at [lee.williams@uconn.edu](mailto:lee.williams@uconn.edu). And for those of you who have class at noon on Wednesdays, I'll make the next one a different day or time. Maybe a dinner or something?

Be good, Huskies, and keep in touch.