

“Faculty, trustees, students, parents, friends, and fellow graduates...”

We are the Clark University class of 1997; a group of highly talented individuals; individuals who have pursued such diverse academic interests as psychology, geography, women's studies, biology, government, holocaust studies, and the arts; We are a group that represents the interests and hopes of 365 individuals. We are a group that has helped each other through the difficult times, and there have been a few, and revealed through the good. We are thankful that there have been many.

But what is the class of 1997? What is the attraction that drew us to Clark? What is the force that binds this motley crew together? What are the commonalities that, despite our varied and diverse histories make us Clarkies?

We didn't live in the same residence hall... or did we? We didn't take the same classes... or did we? We don't speak the same language... or do we? What is the bond that makes us the class of 1997.

Ask yourself. “What *experiences* do we share?”

Did you ever lose your orientation group? Did you collect your mail everyday in the UC? How many classes did you have in Jonas Clark? Did you ever fall asleep in the library? Did you dance to the music of the Spree Day bands? Did you ever call Escort for a ride to George's Flowers? Did you ever listen to the Counterpoints in Tilton? Did you ever play basketball at noon in the Kneller with all the oldies? Did you ever participate in Academic Spree Day? Did you ever go down to the basement in Hughes Hall? or should I ask, “How often?” Have you ever staggered out of a residence hall in your jammies at three o'clock in the morning because of a fire alarm? Did you ever get lost in Dodd Hall? How many funerals did you attend as an excuse for turning in late papers? And how many of the “deceased” came to graduation today?

These are the small things that shaped our class, that make us what we are today. But there is more.

Clark's professors, staff, and friends have given the class of 1997 its global

perspectives and unqualified respect, not only for people, but for our environment and the way we interact within it. Above all, they have taught us to respect and protect our individuality and the individuality of others.

We all came from communities that look at people's differences with varying degrees of acceptance. At Clark, we have come to see each other not as “*the other*,” but as the *same*, equal but different. We have shared an experience that has given us more in common than contrast. We have lived among and become friends with people who under other circumstances would have been seen as “*the other*” or even the enemy. But under this circumstance, in the classrooms of Jonas Clark, Sackler, and Jefferson we have grown to be friends.

Clark is a place like no other. We live in a microcosm that harbors and encourages individuality, diversity, and independent, critical thought. Clark shelters and protects us from those who would choose to threaten these mores. The protection Clark provides, allows us to live without fearing violation of the respect and values we hold so dear. Clark is safe. Clark is a haven for people's divergent beliefs and practices. Clark is an Ashram, a sanctuary.

Clark has instilled in each member of the class of 1997 a bit of Clark's ideologies and mores. Within us these values thrive. Each time you are witness to the suppression of diversity and the forces of conformity, you will feel this part of you cry out. Each day you see the tether of conformity constraining your neighbor, your family, or your lover, you will feel your stomach twist and knot in angry pain. This part of you cannot be ignored. It must come out.

Now, we are leaving Clark. We will not have the shelter or protection that Clark afforded us. We will be living in the “*larger world*” where differences are not always given the same respect as they are at Clark. But it is in these places where Clark values will be most important; it is in these places where we will be most suc-

cessful.

- We will be living in central Africa helping to resolve the conflicts in Rwanda and Zaire between the Tutsis and the Hutus.

- We will be living in South America, mediating understanding between the Peruvian government and the Tupac Amaru.

- We will be living in Asia effecting peaceful resolutions to disagreements between Pakistan and India.

- We will be living in Europe helping Albania and the new states of the former Yugoslavia to establish governments that represent their individuality.

- We will be living in the Middle East restoring the dialogue of hope between Israelis and Palestinians.

- We will be living right here in the United States where we will be successfully fighting the effects of poverty and class divisions.

We, the graduates of Clark University are not however, totally exposed and without resource when faced with these challenges. We will confront these conflicts and resolve them using the tools Clark has taught us.

We have the power to bring to the world the Clark values inside us all: to advocate for diversity and never to tolerate oppression. Clark has instilled its mores and beliefs in us. It is our responsibility to disseminate its teachings and ideals from within the Clark community, from within ourselves, out into the open where others can experience its comfort, feel its safety, and recreate its haven.

Clark will change tomorrow through its accomplishments of today. We, the class of 1997 are Clark's most recent triumph. Clark is about to unleash the class of 1997!

Congratulations my friends, and in the words of some of our classmates *Badhaii-ho, Mubarik-ho, Felicitaciones, Sotsugiyomedetoã, spraznikom, Yin dee duay krapom, Pozdravleniya, Mazeltov, Alf Mabrook*, and again, congratulations.

We are all Clark University Alumni, **CLASS OF 1997!!**

#### SCENES FROM ACADEMIC SPREE DAY...



Dr. (Not) Steve gesticulates wildly at Prof. David Joyce. Somewhere in the picture is a brick.



Prof. Steve Guo eyes the fruits of Dr. Steve's seven-year itch. Dr. Steve eyes Professor Guo. Meanwhile, Dr. Gilpatrick smirks at someone's philistine attempt at scholarship.