

Student Bod

STORY BY JIM KELTY

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY NANCY O'CONNOR AND ANDREA FISCHER

VIVIAN IS IN MANY WAYS A TYPICAL MU student: She studies, works out, goes to bars and goes to classes—but not necessarily in the usual order. She likes to study all night and go to bed at sunrise. “I do my best work from about 2 to 6 in the morning,” she explains. She typically sleeps five or six hours, and then it’s go, go, go. She’s a Diet Coke fiend and a roller blade queen. She plays intramural soccer, basketball, volleyball, softball and flag football.

In the seventh grade, she was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, a condition for which she takes 20 milligrams of Ritalin daily.

“I have tendencies toward being late, forgetting people’s names, being unorganized,” she says. “I’m still working to overcome these problems, but they don’t really stop me from doing the things I want to do.”

Vivian, who attended all-girl Catholic schools most of her life, attends Mass at the Newman Center every Sunday evening. After communion, she’s set for another week of all-nighters.

“I’m easily disturbed by people around me,” she says. “I don’t have a room of my own, and there are very few places on this campus where you’re completely by yourself. But at 3 o’clock you’re usually by yourself. People tell me I’m going to have to get out of this pattern, but I don’t see myself ever doing it. I’ve always been a night person.

“Eventually I’d like to end up in a tourist city like Las Vegas, where everything happens at night anyway.”



VIVIAN COSTELLO

21 years old, non-smoker

HOMETOWN: Kirkwood, Mo.

ACADEMIC YEAR: junior

MAJOR: interdisciplinary studies (hotel and restaurant management, history, psychology)

RESIDES: Sigma Kappa sorority house

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What do college students have to say about eating, exercise and the meaning of their existence? For that matter, what will they divulge about dating and sex? A panel of MU's experts offers advice on living well.

ADAM DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS A YOUNG man with "hormones pumping through my veins like crazy." He likes to flirt with women, lift weights and have fun outdoors.

You wouldn't know it by looking at him, but he is a former leukemia patient. He underwent chemotherapy for three years as a teen-ager, including his freshman year at MU. "When leukemia is first diagnosed, usually it's in about 99 percent of the bone marrow, and it has spread into the blood and to organs and lymph nodes and what not," Adam explains. "I kind of lucked out, because when mine was diagnosed, it hadn't yet gotten into the bloodstream or the spinal cord."

Today, Adam lives the normal life of a college student. He attends classes, goes to parties and works part time at the Health Sciences Library. He doesn't know if his leukemia treatments will ultimately put him at higher risk for other malignancies, but he can talk for hours about the benefits of his experience with cancer—especially in terms of his mental outlook. He is a forward-looking person who believes every year of his life will be better than the year before.

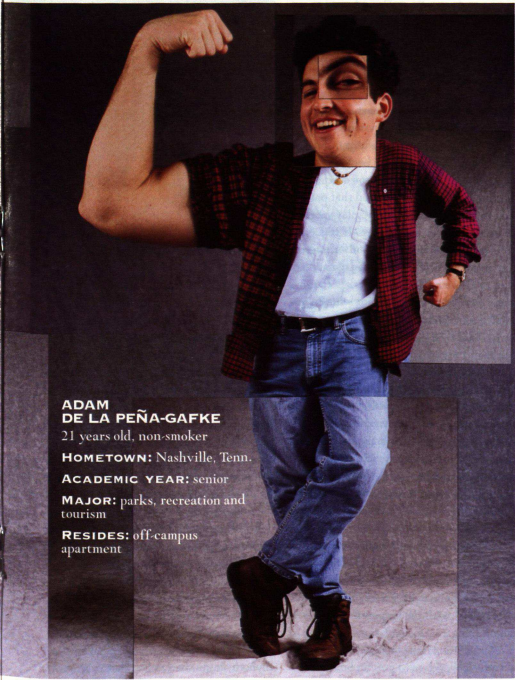
THE PANEL

HERE ARE THE EXPERTS:

JAN BAKER, family nurse practitioner, faculty member in the Charles and Josie Smith Sinclair School of Nursing.

ROBERT DOLLIVER, psychology professor, counseling psychologist at MU's Counseling Center.

SUSAN EVEN, family practice physi-



ADAM DE LA PEÑA-GAFKE

21 years old, non-smoker

HOMETOWN: Nashville, Tenn.

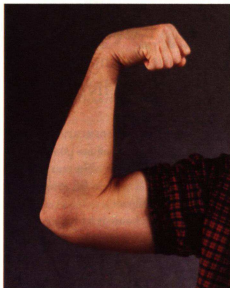
ACADEMIC YEAR: senior

MAJOR: parks, recreation and tourism

RESIDES: off-campus apartment

cian, Student Health Center director.

ROCKY RACHAL, minister of Calvary Episcopal Church, leader of the association of campus religious advisers.



PUMP IT UP

MIZZOU: From what you've told us about your lifestyles, you both feel that exercise and fitness are important. Adam, you work out with weights. Why do you prefer that form of exercise?

ADAM: Well, I want to be more sexually appealing to females, of course. But, also, I want to feel strong, I want to feel healthy. I don't want to feel sloppy, like I'm not doing anything with myself.

MIZZOU: How does the body you have compare to the body you want?

ADAM: I'm content with the body I have now, but I want to develop its potential. I look at other guys, bodybuilders and stuff. I don't want to be real bulky, but I'm always looking around, and, not in a sexual way or anything, I think to myself, "Well, that guy—he's got good arms. I'd like to have arms like that." Comparing myself to them. I think I could have the body I want. It's attainable. I would want to structure my diet really well to get that body. I would want to be a lot more disciplined in working out. And I'm not in a place in my life right now to be able to do that. So I'm just laying the

groundwork. Maybe when I'm out of college or even next semester, I'll be able to start working on that.

SUSAN EVEN: I think one thing people need to remember is that sometimes a person's vision of himself or herself can depart so far from reality that it becomes unhealthy. Not that either of you should worry about that. It's just something I'm always on the lookout for. The question is: What's the point at which you step over the line? What's the point when watching your weight, exercising heavily and putting off meals borders on an eating disorder? Or what's the point at which being more concerned with how your muscles look causes you to disregard good cardiovascular health? For example, maybe you have a family history of heart attacks at age 45, but you're still more worried about the bulk and contour of your body rather than cardiovascular health.

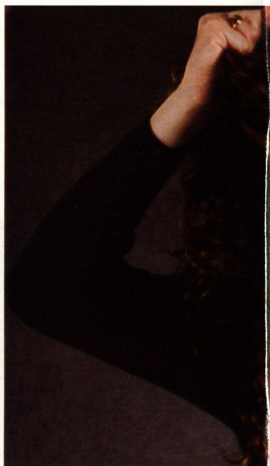
VIVIAN: I think when you start getting depressed you've reached that point. I mean you work out and you play sports to feel better, to relieve stress. If you think you've been working out for a certain amount of time and you're not seeing the results you want and that depresses you, I think you've hit a point where you've got a problem.

ROBERT DOLLIVER: If trying to be something means rejecting what you are, then that to me would seem to be a problem. And I go back to a line from the Rudyard Kipling poem "If": "If you can dream dreams and not make dreams your master..." You know, you can pursue certain goals but not with a dictator that's driving you to that.

MIZZOU: You said one reason you lift weights is to increase your sex appeal. Are you dating anyone these days?

ADAM: Right now I'm dating about three women. When I say dating, it's not serious. It's a real casual kind of dating. I'm not really in a place in my life right now to deal with the responsibility of maintaining a serious relationship.

MIZZOU: Have you been sexually active in college?



ADAM: Not so much this semester. I would like to find somebody that I could be sexually active with, but I don't want to go out and just—I've never picked up somebody at a bar, taken them home and had sex with them. There's a lot of risks with that. During my freshman and sophomore years, I got involved in the Sexual Health Advocate Peer Education program on campus, and I learned just how important safe sex is. When I say safe sex, what I really mean is safer sex. Some people define safe sex as intercourse using condoms, spermicides, et cetera. I would define that as safer sex, because no method is 100 percent effective against sexually transmissible infections or pregnancy—with the exception of abstinence. However, abstinence can still mean being romantic and intimate. I mean, the real basic definition of abstinence is no sex, but that doesn't mean I can't kiss anybody or give backrubs. There's a lot of



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not protect themselves all the time.

JAN BAKER: In college you're at the age where you think nothing is going to happen to you. But when a student comes to a clinic to be checked for chlamydia or some other STI, I remind them that you get HIV the exact same way you get these other infections. That brings it home a little more. I think binge drinking puts college students at higher risk for behavior like unprotected sex.

HAVING A BLAST

MIZZOU: A national study by the Harvard School of Public Health shows that nearly half of all college students are binge drinkers. According to an MU survey released in 1995, almost half the students on this campus binge. For men, that means five or more drinks in one sitting. For women it's four.

VIVIAN: I usually go out to the bars twice a week, once during the week and once on the weekend. I go out because I like to dance and talk to people. I do enjoy drinking, but that's not what gets me out. I have just as much fun on the nights when I'm the designated driver as I do the nights I drink. On an average night out, I'll have about four beers, or three beers and a shot, or two beers and two shots. But every now and then, about once a month, I do have those nights when I just drink way too much and just have a blast. That's usually on a Friday when you start with happy hour and don't get home till 2 in the morning.

EVEN: I like that you're active and dancing and talking to people, and you

have a designated driver. All of that sounds like healthy, responsible drinking. The issue of greater concern to me is the idea that one night you just start early and you drink continuously and there's no conscious effort to space it out or limit it. You've already described the once-a-month thing as too much, and so you're aware of that. But you may not be aware that even on an average night, when you have four drinks, you're at the upper limit of what would be considered appropriate. As you get older, you may find yourself going beyond that limit on a regular basis. Often people say, "I used to feel a buzz when I would have four drinks, but now when I drink four, I don't feel anything." Well, it means that your liver has revved up its metabolism of the alcohol such that it takes a higher amount to get that same effect. That's exactly how people get addicted to any number of drugs.



DOUBLE WHAMMY

BAKER: Vivian told me about her unusual eating and sleeping habits. She avoids fruits and vegetables, though she does consume one banana a day. She eats one meal a day, and she stays up all night.

VIVIAN: I usually don't have time for breakfast or lunch, so I have a big dinner.

EVEN: People do have different circadian rhythms and hormonal cycles. I guess I would be less concerned about your sleeping habits and more concerned about spreading out your caloric intake. Your body is burning energy all day long, and

other things you can do to fulfill sexual desires, besides just intercourse.

VIVIAN: Sex doesn't really have any relevance to my life right now, because I don't believe in having sex with someone unless it's a serious relationship. And I'm not looking for a serious relationship right now. I'd rather just date lots of guys and have fun.

MIZZOU: An estimated 10,000 to 35,000 of the nation's 13 million college students are HIV positive. A 1995 survey of 1,000 female college students, conducted by the American Social Health Association, revealed that almost half of the women use no protection against sexually transmitted infections. What's the situation here?

SUSAN EVEN: We see a lot of students with STIs at the Student Health Center. That includes genital warts, herpes, chlamydia and those kinds of infections. My sense is that many students do

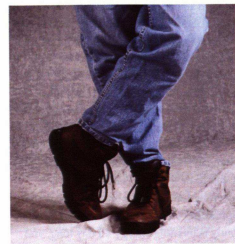
you're going extremely long periods without refueling. Some people may think that if you eat small amounts of food throughout the day, it means you're just going to have more fat to store. But if you spread your calories out instead of consuming them all at once, your metabolism seems to accelerate. When you only eat one meal a day, your body says, "I'm not sure when that next meal's coming," and it becomes really efficient at storing it.

VIVIAN: When I say I eat only one meal a day, that's just my one sit-down meal. I do eat snacks. I drink a lot of milk and I eat a lot of bread. I'm big on grains. I eat a lot of popcorn and cereal bars. People have always warned me that if I don't eat vegetables it will stunt my growth. But I've never eaten vegetables in my life and I'm 5'11."

BAKER: If it's any consolation, I've eaten fruits and vegetables, and I'm 5 feet tall. But, regarding the long-range consequences of avoiding vegetables, it's been shown that fruits and veggies help boost our immune system. Poor nutrition in general often puts people at risk later on in life for obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, et cetera.

VIVIAN: Osteoporosis is one of the reasons I drink a lot of milk. I want to avoid getting it by having a lot of calcium in my diet. That was something that was always beaten into our heads when I was in high school.

EVEN: In addition to milk, do you



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drink a lot of caffeine?

VIVIAN: Yeah, I drink a lot of soda. Diet Coke, I live on the stuff.

EVEN: The caffeine in soda may diminish the amount of calcium you have available for your bones since caffeine increases the excretion of calcium.

BAKER: They're also saying now that there may be a link between carbonated beverages and osteoporosis. So with soda, it's kind of a double whammy.

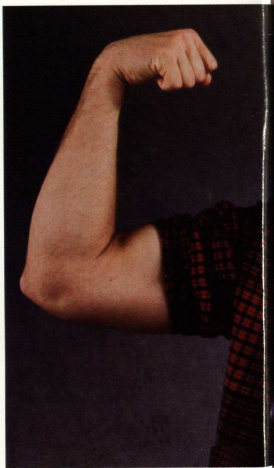
VIVIAN: Really? Hmm. I've been drinking all that milk, thinking I wasn't ever going to get osteoporosis.

WHERE DO I FIT IN?

MIZZOU: Studies show that 18- to 25-year-olds have a higher prevalence of mental health problems than any other age group. From your 30 years of counseling students, what are some underlying causes of psychological problems?

DOLLIVER: Students come for counseling because they have not found satisfying ways of relating to themselves, their acquaintances, friends, family, or to a romantic significant other. And there may be other factors, for example, concerns about the increasing competition they will face upon graduation, or concerns about other issues, like escalating violence and environmental problems. Students want to see that their lives are leading somewhere, and with all the uncertainty in the world, that's difficult.

VIVIAN: I would think a lot of people go because they're homesick. My first semester down here, I gained about 10 pounds—because of the "all you can eat" thing in the dining hall. And, like a lot of other freshmen, I was homesick. People were always telling me to go see a counselor, but I never did. I would just call my

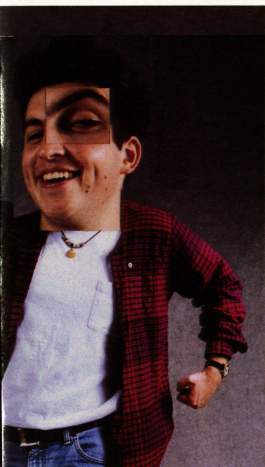


mom. She has always seemed to be the person I want to talk to. Of course, she's a psychiatrist.

MIZZOU: One national college poll that has appeared recently claims that college students regularly lie to their parents. Do you?

VIVIAN: Oh, all the time. It's just easier. I'd rather lie to my mom than get into an argument with her. She'll call one day and I'll say I was studying for a test, and then she'll call the next day and ask me how I did and I'll say, "Oh, an 'A.'"

ADAM: Yeah, she'll never know. Until you graduate with a 2.0 GPA. Myself, I lean more towards non-disclosure. Because, well, fall semester I was on academic probation. I messed my classes up winter semester 1995. And I was at home in Nashville when they sent out report cards, and every day I would check the mail. When I got the report card, I hid it. My dad would ask me, "Have grades come



USE THE FORCE

MIZZOU: Let's talk about spiritual health. Vivian, do you go to church a lot?

VIVIAN: I go to the Newman Center pretty regularly. When I was in high school, I went to religion class every day. So it's a major part of my life. But to me, there's a difference between religion and spirituality. For me, religion is more of a tradition. I don't see going to church as spirituality.

ROCKY RACHAL: Unfortunately, that is a common attitude, that our traditional religions have fallen into religiosity. You know, you just kind of do certain things and there's no spiritual feeling to the action. I think that is partly why there is such an attraction among students to New Age experiences, Eastern religions and some of the other experiences that aren't what people grow up with. They're trying on new things to see if it feeds them spiritually. They're hungry for something to help them express that part of who they are, because humans are spiritual beings as well as physical beings.

Spirituality is kind of the undergirding of our mental and physical well-being. One of the problems in higher education today is that students are so focused on getting a degree and getting a good job afterwards that they don't necessarily look upon their college years as a time for broadening or enriching their lives in other ways.

VIVIAN: I think that's true. It seems like hardly anybody ever takes a class just because they're interested in it. They're more interested in just getting through their program than they are in exploring new ideas.

RACHAL: I think students are under extreme pressure—parental expectations, societal expectations, their own expectations. The job market is just not as open as it once was. It's only when you're in the top 10 percent of your class that you can expect to get that, quote unquote, good job. And because of that, they tend to

focus more on their coursework.

This can create crises later on in life, mid-life crises. Folks get into their 40s and they start saying, "Gee, I wish I had done X, Y and Z." And suddenly they're leaving families and quitting jobs. They regret the choices they made and the opportunities they passed up when they were younger.

DOLLIVER: I'm not sure I know what you mean by spirituality. Is there some book or some movie that would convey what touches you spiritually?

ADAM: Well, I would start out by talking about my definition of God. This may be a cheesy comparison, but in the "Star Wars" trilogy, Yoda talks about The Force, an energy that's everywhere, and it binds everything together. The God I know is similar to that. It's an unconditionally loving, creative, life-giving energy with a consciousness. And it will always be with me.

VIVIAN: I just believe everything happens for a purpose. And maybe God's



out yet?" And I'd say, "Well, I don't know." So I guess I lied there. But I don't have to anymore. Now that I'm kicking butt in all my classes, I tell them about it.

MIZZOU: Do most students change a great deal during their college years, in terms of self-concept?

DOLLIVER: I believe many of them do. The main question for most college students is, "Where in the world do I fit in?" This is the time when they start seeing themselves out in society and constituting a whole life for themselves out there, made up of friends and interests and capabilities and so forth. It's valuable for students to get a sense of their own competence, their own ability, their chances to achieve satisfaction. That sort of thing is ego-strengthening. It makes a person more adaptable, more resilient, more able to deal with setbacks. People make messes in their lives without that kind of clear sense of themselves.

behind that purpose, maybe He's not. That helps me justify everything that happens. There's just some reason—some higher power that I don't know about—for the way things happen, good or bad. I don't really like to spend a lot of time thinking about God, who He is, what He is, because there are better things to do sometimes. In all honesty, that's the way I think. There's too many other things that are, not more important, but more relevant right now to my life, where I am. *