

Park boss: Bristol will soon have a skate park

By MIKE NGUYEN
The Tattoo

Skaters, bikers, and boarders won't have to trek to neighboring towns or resort to practicing on curbs and city streets in Bristol much longer.

The city plans to build a new skate park within the next year or so, though final approval hasn't been given and a location not yet determined.

The park board recently approved the proposed skate park and put it on a list of future building projects slated for completion by 2007.

But Park Superintendent Ed Swicklas said he expects the skate park to be built this year or next year.

A lot of people in the town would use it, he said. "It's a growing sport."

Swicklas said the skate park

will be a good alternative for the town's extreme athletes, who currently have to resort to going to other town's municipal parks or to the streets and vacant lots of Bristol to ride for free.

The park director said he was spurred to propose a skate park after reading the papers and seeing that other communities — such as New Britain and Farmington — had added skate parks to their own recreational offerings.

Details on the proposed Bristol skate park are still a little sketchy, but the park department estimates it will cost as much as \$150,000.

Swicklas said he's considering three spots in Bristol that could hold the skate park: Casey Field, Page Park across from Bristol Eastern High School and the Roberts proper-

ty on Chippens Hill.

The dimensions of the park eyed by the city are about 80 by 120 feet, or about half the size of a regulation football field.

The skate park would include such equipment as a half pipe, a banker ramp, grind rail, tube kink, a large square ramp or tabletop, ramp bars and a big, 20-foot ramp, Swicklas said.

The park superintendent said there will be room for expansion, too.

The overall plan, he said, makes Bristol's future skate park "a little bit better than average" when compared with the ones in other towns.

"It shouldn't be much to maintain unless someone wrecks the place," Swicklas said, since the park will be made mostly of concrete.

One detail that still needs to be worked out about the skate park is its supervision.

Swicklas said park commissioners haven't decided on whether the skate park will be supervised or left alone with "no restrictions."

He plans for the park to run three seasons of the year, "pretty much from April to November" and leave it open seven days a week.

If it's decided that the park will be supervised, he said, it

will stay open until as late as 10 p.m. on weekends. Otherwise, the park will most likely stay open from dawn to dusk.

Swicklas said he hopes to have some supervision or schedule at the park because he's worried that people on bikes, skateboards and inline skates using the park simultaneously could be a problem.

Asked what young people could do to keep the project moving along through government circles, Swicklas said teens could write in to newspapers, call councilmen and attend public meetings and voice their continuing interest

in seeing the skate park.

Teens, said Swicklas, "are the voice of the city."

And if a skate park is a bit extreme for your taste, the park department also plans an ice rink next winter.

The outdoor rink is expected to be built within the same time frame as the skate park, and will be open during the months of December through February.

The next step for the skate park is to win approval by the capital improvements project committee headed by Mayor Frank Nicastro. It will decide which city projects are carried out in the fiscal year that starts July 1.

The panel is likely to meet soon so young people who want to see a skate park should make sure the mayor and City Council hear from them soon.

Tom Cruise winked at me

By KAISHI LEE
The Tattoo

"You're so lucky!" my friend gushed.

"Me? Hello, I'm going for 'Vanilla Sky,' not Tom Cruise," I answered.

It was "Vanilla Sky's" interesting trailer, "LoveHateDreamsLifeWorkPlayFriendshipsSex" that sent my heart a flutter, not the blown-up poster of Cruise with his tousled hair.

My horoscope read: There's luck this week but you'll need to do your homework if you are to get the most out of it.

I took a gamble, cut out two New Paper mastheads and won one of 188 exclusive invitations to the gala premiere in Singapore of "Vanilla Sky," with Cruise, Penelope Cruz and director Cameron Crowe in attendance.

Then, reality sank in.

Oh my God, I was to be in the same movie theater as Jerry Maguire, Ethan Hunt, Ron Kovic — and his current muse, Spaniard Cruz (that's the spoiler).

Ok, I'm not jealous. I've never been a prepubescent obsessive fan of Hollywood celebrities (charismatic Elijah Wood is an exception). Hollywood is a haven for tarted-up actors posing their slender frames cat-like, and purr for the cameras and give fleeting waves a la Queen Elizabeth II.

At the movies

Newspaper hype announced the stars' whirlwind Asian tour and added to my anticipation of catching this blockbuster.

So at 7 p.m. sharp on the night of the premiere, the stars walked a long red carpet — Cruz in a low-cut evening gown flashing her pearly whites — waving enthusiastically, giving hearty handshakes, chatting up with fans who had queued for ages and signing autographs on teddy bears, posters, cameras and bags.

Cruise was undeniably charming and down-to-earth for a good hour and 45 minutes.

Hordes of adolescent fans screamed and almost crashed the barricades.

The girl beside me started crying. Shouts of "Tom Cruise, marry me!" and posters with "My Mom Says Ure Invited 2 Dinner" made me awestruck.

Based on Spanish director Alejandro Amenabar's 1997 "Abre Los Ojos" (Open Your Eyes), "Vanilla Sky" revolves around David Ames (Cruise), a young, dashing and freedom-loving New York City publishing magnate with an unquenchable thirst for success.

He is a Casanova snowboarding through life, without giving a thought to his responsibilities or consequences of his actions. Julie (Cameron Diaz), his sometime girlfriend, is clearly besotted with him.

At a party, David meets and falls in love with the girl of his dreams, Sofia Serrano (Cruz), a Spanish dental assistant.

Sofia's boyfriend, Brian (Jason Lee) is a writer and David's best friend and client. David begins wooing Sofia with his wit and charm but she refuses his advances.

Julie becomes jealous and takes David for a drive the next day. She crashes the car into a tree and dies. David survives the crash but is facially scarred.

Like Emerson's "The things of a man for which we visit him were done in the dark and cold," David learns that when you meet tough situations, you have to be tough. He begins serious soul-searching, constantly haunted by the meaning of happiness.

Sofia declares her love for him and he undergoes plastic surgery. When mind-bending, strange things begin to happen again, he realizes that his life has taken a turn beyond his control but discovers the precious, ephemeral nature of true love.

Uber-director Crowe ("Jerry Maguire," "Almost Famous") is a one-man hit machine.

His brilliantly provocative and exasperatingly sensationalistic directorial style ensured the film reel never fast-forwarded to "Madame Butterfly" predictability. Instead, "Vanilla Sky" is emotionally-charged and deep with lots of symbolism.

The air positively hums when Cruz and Cruise share a frame. You wonder if their hush-hush romance in real life — Cruise filed for divorce last February from wife of 10 years, Nicole Kidman — is translating into screen chemistry, as if fireworks between the two are not enough.

However, the mile-a-minute pace is the movie's Achilles heel. Characterization is crude to the point of caricature, an annoying Crowe trait.

Cruise, though, proved an intense actor with a unique ability to tackle complex characters.

Rarely does an audience come face-to-face with the actual subjects of stories. The movie doesn't lull you into a fantastical world but reconnects you with reality — a long-forgotten important one — and reveals more about the process of human engagement than anything else.

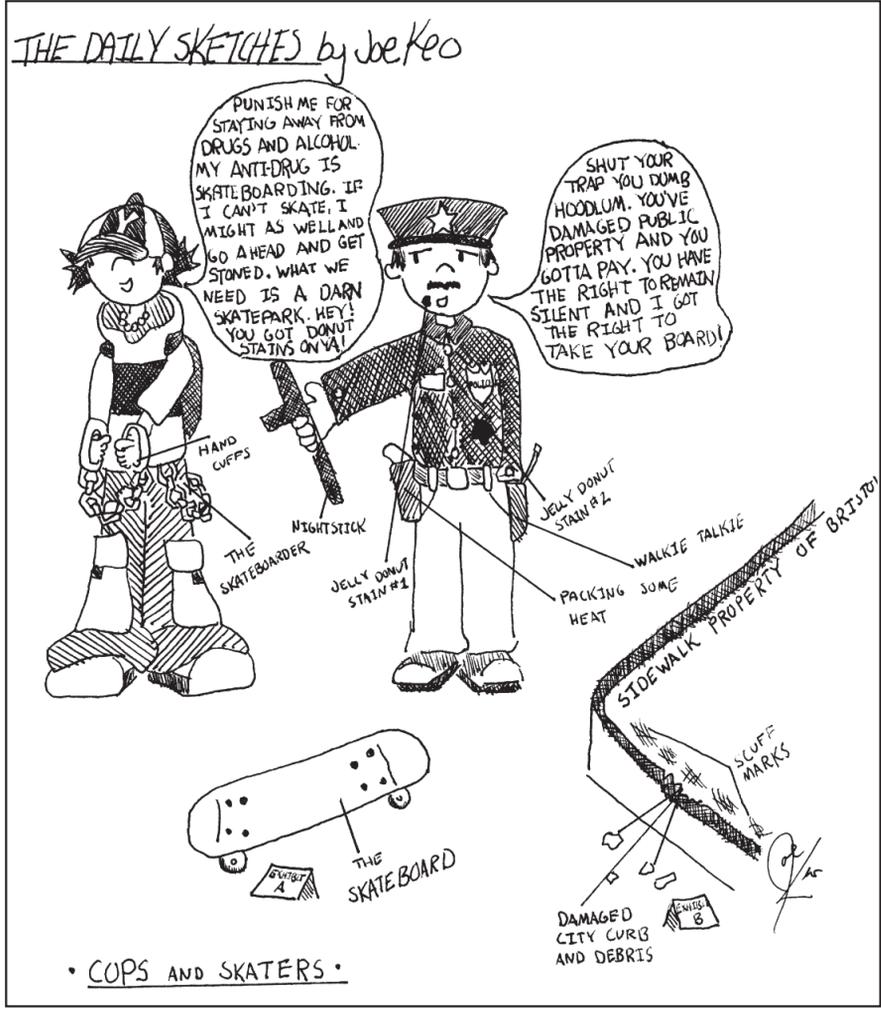
"Vanilla Sky" is a type of movie that leaves a bad taste in your mouth but only because you have a healthy conscience.

As the closing credits rolled, thunderous applause and shouts of "Bravo!" ensued.

Tom Cruise turned around, gave his megawatt smile and bowed.

And, I swear, he winked at me.

Or was it a smug grin?



Skeleton captures American spirit

By JACQUI MOREAU
The Tattoo

The eight-spiked shoes, mandatory helmet, face shield, and chin guards indicate the danger of the sport. The athletes travel as much as 80 miles per hour on a metal sled down a mile-long track — on their stomachs.

What is this? It's called skeleton. It's like a winter version of the X Games.

Skeleton is one of the most dangerous and unique Olympic events in history. So why hasn't anyone ever heard of it before?

Skeleton was founded in a Swiss town called St. Moritz in the late 1800s.

The metal frame of the sled apparently reminded the townspeople of a skeleton. Their nickname hasn't died after over 100 years.

Skeleton made its Olympic debut in 1928, but it wasn't seen again until 1948.

The sport again lay dormant, this time for over 50 years, but is alive again in Salt Lake 2002. In fact, it's expanded: it's not just for boys anymore.

The United States shocked the world as Americans Jim Shea of the men's team, and Tristan Gail of the women's team each won gold medals in skeleton.

In the sporting world, skeleton is on the cutting edge ... just like America.

How to be heard at City Hall

Want your voice heard on the skate park or other issue? You can send email to Mayor Frank Nicastro and all six City Council members.

Nicastro's email address is:

FrankNicastro@ci.bristol.ct.us.

The councilors' email addresses are:

ArtWard@ci.bristol.ct.us,

KenScott@ci.bristol.ct.us,

GerardCouture@ci.bristol.ct.us

EllenZoppo@ci.bristol.ct.us

JoeWilson@ci.bristol.ct.us

AlMyers@ci.bristol.ct.us.

The next City Council meeting is at 7:30 p.m.

on Tuesday, March 12 at City Hall. Council

meetings are open to everyone. At the beginning

of each meeting, there is a public comment period

when anyone can speak to city leaders about

issues that are important to them.

School 'mission' is impossible

By KATIE JORDAN
The Tattoo

Does anybody else hear the theme song of *Mission Impossible*?

In the past couple of weeks, I have been notified that Bristol Eastern High School has a "mission statement" which addresses the many optimistic goals that have been set for the school.

Looking around Eastern, I never would have guessed it, either. I mean, our school trying to accomplish a "mission?"

It's not that much more believable than little green men in flying saucers, but I guess it could be true.

Every so often one of our teachers points it out to us, very subtly.

They're careful not to throw around phrases like "acquisition of knowledge" or "cultivation of individual interests." In fact, I don't think I've ever heard one actually say, "We are committed to excellence!" Yet.

But I've noticed it in other ways. In drama class, we actually made up skits to demonstrate the "mission statement." That project will turn out to be very interesting, I'm sure.

One of my teachers actually drilled us on what to say if some stranger came up to us in the hall and asked, "Do you know what this school's mission is?"

I don't blame him for wanting to make a good impression. But really, doesn't the fact that he has to coach us on what our school is supposed to be doing speak for itself?

Even if they hadn't told us about it, I would have noticed something was up. I mean, the big blue "mission statement" posters placed strategically around the

school are kind of a giveaway.

Maybe this mission statement was made up years ago by bright-eyed young faculty members who really hoped for a bright future for the school. Or maybe it's just some new ploy to make Eastern sound like it's a better place than it really is.

Either way, it just didn't work out the way it was supposed to.

If you break it up and compare the idealized image of our school as described in the "mission statement" to the real Eastern, you can tell they're as different as apple pies and cow pies.

For example, we're told that we are supposed to be provided with a safe environment.

I guess they're making an effort. They banned jackets so that weapons or other items couldn't be smuggled into the school. And yet guys with cargo pants large enough to bring who-knows-what to class still roam the halls.

Meanwhile, we all get hypothermia because the heating doesn't work.

Our environment is also supposed to be "academically challenging."

In some classes, this seems to be working out well. But there are still teachers who think their teaching is rated by how much work they make us do. There are only a scattered few who incorporate class discussions and other activities that help to make what we learn significant to us.

It's amazing how little a student can actually learn by doing worksheets all the time.

The "mission statement" also explains

the importance of "respect for self and others."

Teenagers as a rule often have issues with their self-esteem, but if you looked around Eastern, you'd probably be disturbed by what you see. I was.

Among my friends, most have mentioned suicide once or several times, and I sometimes can't tell whether they're joking or not.

And I personally think that all the ado about "gifted and talented" students and such programs are founded on good intentions, but probably just cause the students who don't make the cut to feel bad about themselves.

And what about the CAPT test? Stressing us out with endless practice for a test half of us will fail isn't exactly the best self-esteem booster. And those who pass get a pat on the back and a cheery "Well, the test may not count towards anything, and all you're hard work has been a waste—but, gee, we think you're swell!"

As for respect for others, listen to kids fighting in the halls or picking on other kids from across the room. Take a look at the insults and gossip scratched into desks.

I understand that these are goals, and are not necessarily accomplished yet.

But it bothers me that these are things we have to put on a "to do" list. I think they are the things we should be able to take for granted.

This says something about not just our school, but the world we're living in. All I can say is, we have a very long way to go.

This newspaper will self-destruct in: 5...4...3...2...1....

What I say