

October 8, 2007

## GET READY TO RAP AT TECH'S "WELCOMING EXPERIENCE"

On Thursday evening, Nov. 1, Georgia Tech, my third favorite team in the whole wide world (UGA is first, anybody playing Tech is second, you can figure out the rest) meets Virginia Tech at Grant Field in Atlanta. To those of us unsophisticated in such matters, we would assume there was going to be a football game occurring that evening. We would assume wrong. It will not be a game, according to what I read recently. Instead, it will be a "welcoming experience." So says Jennifer Pierce, recently implanted from the fruitcake capital of the world, California, to the staff of the athletic department at Georgia Tech, where she serves as director of promotions and events.

It should be quite an evening. If all the old architects and bridge builders in their tweed coats aren't sound asleep and drooling on their ties by halftime, they have a unique experience — welcomed or not — awaiting them. Instead of the Pride of the Mighty Wasps Marching Band tromping up and down the field playing perky fight songs and majorettes tossing their slide rules high in the air, they will be treated to an honest-to-goodness rap concert by none other than hip-hop legend Antwan "Big Boi" Patton, also known to his adoring fans as "Daddy Fat Sacks," "Sir Lucious L. Leftfoot," "Hot Tub Tony" and/or "Francis the Savannah [Chitlin' Pimp](#)." (Trust me on this. I'm not clever enough to make up a name like Sir Lucious L. Leftfoot.)

Ms. Pierce, who spouts marketing jargon like a geyser spews hot water, says it is her hope that "our brand (meaning the Georgia Institute of Technology) and his brand (meaning, I suppose, 'Daddy Fat Sacks') can align." Gosh, I hope so. I don't mean to be critical, but most of the old architects and bridge builders when I know still insist on wearing their pants well above their fannies and are loathe to flaunt their bling. It is about time somebody aligned their brands. Whatever that means.

Pierce's boss, associate athletic director Wayne Hogan, told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that Atlanta is a "vibrant, thriving community of young, progressive adults" and that a key to attracting them to Grant Field is to make Tech less of a "closed shop." That's marketing talk for "the old alumni in tweed coats can take a hike because they aren't hip."

Here is the best news of all. The Georgia Tech athletic department marketing gurus want to assure those assembled on Nov. 1 that the Big Boi Welcoming Event and Brand Alignment concert won't contain any dirty lyrics. No need to give the old folks a heart attack.

Reliable sources inform me that Francis the Savannah Chitlin' Pimp (not to be confused with Francis the Talking Mule) is busy as we speak modifying the legendary Georgia Tech fight song into what is sure to be a rap standard for the ages. Admittedly, I'm no expert, but what I have heard thus far sounds like Grammy-winning material:

"You a Ramblin' Wreck, you ol' fool.  
Walkin' around with your T-square tool.  
Even tho you an engineer  
who claims he can drink his whiskey clear  
How can you be a jolly good fellow  
when you jus' sit there all white and yellow?"  
I doubt there will be a dry eye in the stadium.

Meanwhile, at my alma mater, the University of Georgia (the nation's oldest state-chartered university, located in Athens, the Classic City of the South), a very unhip UGA athletic department just keeps selling out 92,746-seat Sanford Stadium — almost twice the size of Grant Field — year after year after year with nary a marketing cliché to be found. As embarrassed as I am to admit this, I really don't think they give a rat's whisker in Athens about aligning brands.

Assuming that you were not planning to reorganize your sock drawer that evening, I hope you will mark your calendar to be at the "welcoming experience" between Georgia Tech and Virginia Tech on Nov. 1. There will be lots of hip-hop. Lots of vibrant, young, progressive adults. Lots of brand aligning. Who knows? They might even find time to squeeze in a football game.