

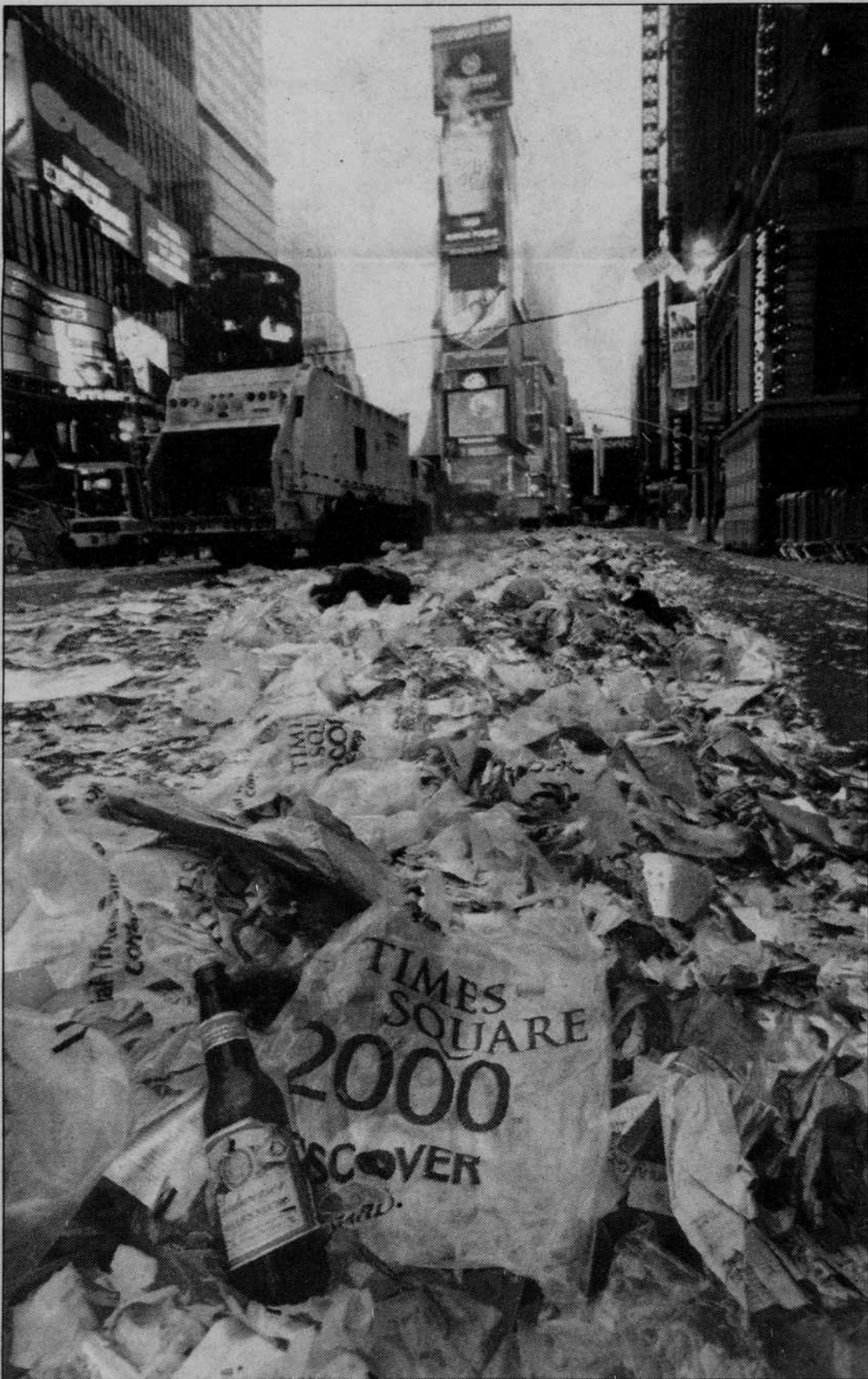
Photo Essay

A MILLENNIUM Wish

All photos by
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On the corner of 7th Avenue and W. 47th Street the crowd was so thick that even turning around was a challenge. Only about four blocks from the ball, people in this area were not able to leave until after 1:00 a.m., which made it nearly impossible to use a restroom or get something to eat or drink.



By Scott Barnett
Oregon Daily Emerald

I had been planning to spend New Year's Eve 1999 in New York City's Times Square ever since I was a little kid, so I wasn't quite sure how to feel as my train pulled into Penn Station at noon on Dec. 31.

Having heard rumors that people had been lining up a week in advance in order to get a good spot, I was worried that I would be forced to see the famous ball drop through a pair of binoculars from Central Park. With this in mind, my brother and I quickly hurried to find a good viewpoint, cameras in hand.

Stepping out of the train station, we immediately found ourselves being herded like cattle along with thousands of other revelers toward an unknown destination we hoped was Times Square.

Luckily, after two hours of walking — or more like shuffling — we found ourselves cozily nestled within the crowd, about four blocks from ground zero. Thus began our 10-hour wait to see a little glass ball made of Waterford crystal mosey its way down a shiny metal pole.

How this became a tradition, I have no idea.

Looking back at the drawn-out standing spell, it wasn't so bad. There were several exhibitionists, hoisted upon friends' shoulders, each one greeted with great excitement by the crowd. Dozens of police officers lined every cor-

ner to ensure that everyone was safe. Everyone seemed full of smiles and all were happy to rattle their noisemakers and toot their horns.

As surreal and incredible as my time was at Times Square, however, there were several instances that reminded me there is a price to pay for such an experience.

Like the bottles of urine in plastic bottles that were kicked along the ground because people did not want to lose their spot to visit a Port-O-Potty. Or the guy standing next to me who found out that half a pizza and a bottle of cheap champagne didn't taste any better partially digested; he eventually deposited the whole mess near my feet. (By the way, this is also the same guy who decided to give me a kiss on the cheek at midnight!)

Although the occasion seemed to drag on at times, I finally found out why I had yearned to be here, in this exact spot, for so many years. As that glowing ball began its descent, the tumultuous roar of the crowd counting down the seconds to a new millennium filled my whole body with chills of happiness and awe.

When it was all said and done I'm glad that I went. The experience may not have been perfect, but at least I can say I fulfilled my inner kid's dream. I celebrated the turn of the millennium in Times Square.



Clean-up crews started clearing the tons of confetti and garbage that littered Times Square at 5:00 a.m. on January 1, 2000. It wasn't until late afternoon that they finally managed to get the square to its pre-celebration level of cleanliness.