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Got Recycling?

by Kathryn Furby

Bennington College prides itself on being home to organic veggie-eating, hand-knit scarf-wearing, Goodwill-shopping progressives. These people are apparently more concerned with pesticides on their vegetables than the swelling number of landfills.

The motivation to recycle on campus is paltry. Want to protest for your right to be nude? What about your right to enjoy the landscape?

Nestled in the hills of green Vermont, one would think Bennington could maintain a stable recycling program. As students, we have little knowledge of our own school's policies, and a futile amount of persuasion over them. With tuition almost \$40,000 a year, the school should be able to devote more attention and manpower to its recycling program.

In fall of 2002, House Chairs Hans Werner-Jatzke, Amrita Lash and Lillian Korlandt started a recycling committee. It was responsible for transferring the recyclable garbage from the houses to the bins outside the Dining Hall. Bins are now located in every house for students to separate their garbage.

In spring of 2004, the committee disbanded due to a lack of effort both from its volunteers and from the houses. Few sorted their trash properly, and even fewer showed up to collect it. This fall, the Student Endowment for the Arts (SEA) managed a small-scale attempt to collect refundable bottles. However, the bottles had to be refundable in Vermont and still have the label to prove it. The initiative was minimally advertised and only produced 13 dollars in profit, leading SEA to abandon it.

Another attempt at recycling was made by Bennington College students this term. The newly formed Environmental Forum produced a Recycling Committee. When this new generation of recyclers went to each house to pick up the trash, they were met with overflowing bins, torn bags, and Paris Borden's vomit-soaked blankets. The Fels recycling bins had a note informing its residents not to bother sorting their trash.

The Recycling Committee crammed the recycling into three trucks and hauled it to the Bennington Transfer Station. Staring at a term's worth of sticky beer bottles, students wondered what would happen to the recycling if they should fail in this third attempt.

According to Angel Brownell, head of Housekeeping, the school has "movers" who take the recycling from the houses to the bins. However, there are only three of these so-called movers and only two of them are ever on campus at one time. The "movers" are apparently responsible for moving anything on campus, which inevitably leaves them little time for recycling.

When confronted about rumors that Bennington's environmental scruples (and recyclables) had been dumped out with the trash, Brownell responded, "I'm not going to tell you that it was never thrown away."

Both the students and the administration are equally responsible for the botched organization of the recycling policy. There needs to be more open communication and cooperation between maintenance and the students. The program is lacking in labor and leadership, but some students are interested in keeping at least our corner of the U.S. clean. A collaboration is much needed and increasingly crucial in this era of over-consumption.

Fire!! Everybody Out!

by Wayne Goddard

Saturday, November 13, 2004, 3:18 am. A steady rain was falling. It was 42 degrees and windy.

The Bennington Rescue Squad, the North Bennington Fire Department and the Bennington Fire Department were called to Bennington College. There was a stubborn, smoky fire on the second floor of Stokes. The firemen worked hard and long and within an hour, the fire was put out and the building was cleared of smoke.

After the house was deemed safe to enter, fire and rescue personnel found two people dead in their rooms. One was a 20-year-old male found in bed with plugs in his ears. The second was an 18-year old female found sitting on the floor, a cell phone in her hand.

The preceding event is fictitious; the next event is real.

On January 19, 2000, a fire broke out at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, killing three students and injuring over 60 others.

"My concern about the college community is the lack of a serious attitude towards fire drills."

My name is Wayne Goddard. I am a 30 year veteran of a volunteer fire department. My concern about the college community is the lack of a serious attitude toward fire drills.

Since the beginning of this fall term, there have been numerous fire alarms in several residential buildings. Whenever security has responded to these alarms, there have been between two and six students remaining in the building. When asked by security why they were still in the house during the alarm, their responses have been frightening.

"I didn't hear the alarm."

"I was sleeping."

And the worst, in my opinion, "I'm on the phone."

Over the years, I have had the displeasure of witnessing the pain and disfiguring aftermath of what a fire victim goes through. My message to the residents of the college is very simple. During the sound of the fire alarm in your house, you have a choice: leave the building immediately and bitch and complain later, or stay inside. After the fire is out and the smoke clears, we can put your charred remains in a body bag. After the coroner identifies you, he or she will notify your mom and dad. When your parents ask why you were still in the house, they will be told you chose to ignore the fire alarm because it was an inconvenience to you.

If I sound cold and heartless, I hope so. If my attitude saves at least one of your lives, then I have done my job to my fellow man.

When you hear the fire alarm in your house, leave quickly and safely, and if it were Betty Crocker or Mr. Clean in the shower, you can give them hell later. If it were an actual fire and you got out safely, you will have something to tell your grandchildren about.



CCT Self-Study Needs Student Input

Dear Students:

It has come to my attention that there is a lack of information and a plethora of misinformation about the teaching program—the Center for Creative Teaching (CCT). There has never been a more vital time to remedy this situation. The CCT as we know it is in the process of being evaluated and is in danger of changing drastically and, in the opinion of some, for the worse. Student input has not been taken into account on this matter, which is why I appeal to you.

This term, the Dean's Office has initiated a self-study program of the CCT. While a committee comprised of faculty representatives from each discipline and some senior staff members has been meeting monthly to discuss the future of the program, at no point have they solicited any student input. Unfortunately there seems to be the incorrect idea that studying education at Bennington detracts from a student's study of other disciplines, particularly that in which s/he is seeking certification. There are currently only five required courses for the CCT (Teaching & Learning, Literacy & the Love of Words, a childhood studies class, the Senior Seminar, and the MAT seminar taught during the MAT/student teaching year), as well as many wonderful electives such as Telling Stories and, in past years, classes focusing on alternative education (Montessori, Waldorf, etc). On December 6, the committee met to discuss a possible ban on all elective courses—including education tutorials—for undergraduates. This is unfair since students might like to take an education class even if they don't plan on becoming teachers. If we're allowed to take psychology classes without promising to become psychologists, why is a restriction being placed on education classes when that is just as valid an area of study? This change would go against Bennington's usual policy of encouraging students to explore many different subjects.

The CCT is a unique program, especially vital during the era of No Child Left Behind and other such damaging and demoralizing legislation. It provides students who are passionate about teaching with the knowledge and certification they need to enter the real world and enact change without going through traditional methods classes. Bennington educates teachers to be creative and create plans for their classrooms beyond banal, habitual standardized instruction. As the literature for the program declares, "The education of great teachers cannot be dry or boring; it must be every bit as challenging and exciting as an historian's or a novelist's or a mathematician's." I fear that the program is in danger of becoming just the opposite. It is my experience that the CCT has succeeded wonderfully so far and I am personally grateful to be able to participate in this program. It has helped me better shape my own education at Bennington and helped me be a more thoughtful and careful student.

Please help me and other CCT students communicate to the committee our views about the importance of this program. Make sure our opinions are heard and considered. Contact Elissa Tenny to voice your opinion at x4406 or etenny@bennington.edu.

If you have further questions, I can be reached personally at x4794 or valerenta@msn.com.

Sincerely,
Valerie Wetlaufer

Anti-War Network Launched

by Jessica Alatorre

Students at Bennington College are getting proactive about the politics they disagree with, and working to make a difference in the world around them. Sophomores Johanna Neufeld and Jacob Perkins have brought to the college a chapter of the Campus Anti-War Network.

Campus Anti-War Network (CAN) is a nationwide group of high school and college students that have gotten together under the understanding that they are against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The CAN website outlines the group as a non-partisan. They describe themselves as an "independent, democratic, grassroots network of campus-

based anti-war committees." The two Bennington College CAN sponsors both said they felt that students at Bennington are passionate about a lot of political and social issues. They claimed that a lot of momentum was gained in the lead up to the election and there's a lot of energy that needs an outlet. Perkins says the group is looking for "anyone frustrated with election results but enthusiastic to keep going; positive, progressive individuals who want to continue using their energy and let their voices be heard. We need to let our voices be known to break through the monotone media". However, one student in the group was quick to point out, "This is not an anti-Bush group, or even an anti-Whitehouse Administration group, it's an anti-policy group."

CAN serves as a forum for discussions that will ultimately lead to action. This reporter attended CAN's meeting and heard suggestions that included hosting protests, going to local high schools when recruiters are there, and getting involved with existing local anti-war groups. Neufeld says, "ROTC recruiters can be manipulative and younger students may feel they have no other avenues left to them. We want to talk to kids and let them know you don't have to sign up for the reserves or go into the army. There are other ways of seeing the world." Their hope is to find like-minded individuals off campus as well, making this a Bennington community project that begins at the college.

CAN states on their website that they, "Stand opposed to all US wars of ag-

gression," though the group is not outlined as a pacifist group. CAN is more about dealing with specific events happening in the world today and reacting to the situation. Neufeld also adds, "Sometimes people feel that anti-war groups are not supportive of the troops or that we in some way hate them. This is in no way about hating the troops; it's about trying to save lives, bringing our own people home. We were lied to, our own American civilians are being killed and we should focus on bringing the soldiers home." CAN also advocates that federal spending be reallocated on education, healthcare and employment and not wars of aggression. Neufeld finished our interview by adding, "Knowledge as power, that's what we are all about."

Greenwall Hosts 2004 Multi-Cultural Show



Performers Yousuf Kerai and Jared Shapiro

by Mutaleni Mbumba

Thanks to combined efforts orchestrated by Yousuf Kerai, Humair Madhani and Galla Stambuk - this year's multi-cultural show was a treat. The three organizers set out to do things a little differently from past years by opening up the chance to perform to all Bennington students and not just to those of us with funky passports (i.e. international students).

More than just the traditional fashion show - showcasing gowns and outfits from around the world, there was also impressive diversity in the musical performances. From John Blum's startling piano improvisation, performed with fierce intensity, to Michelle Loftus' ethereal delivery of an Irish song, "Down by the Sally Gardens", in the non-melodic yet utterly mesmerizing tradition of Irish folk singing and everything in-between - an angelic choir of a cappella singers, a Nepalese pop song, vocals by Saurav Shrestha, an inspiring rendition of "Clair De Lune" (a French art song by Claude Debussy) performed by Megan Schubert and Laura Woodward

on piano, a Samoan song by Riley Arthur, the always-surprising duo of Laura Woodward and Yousuf Kerai on piano and tabla, respectively, with Laura's vocals and the closing act of a cello and tabla composition by Jared Shapiro, a special guest to the show, and Yousuf Kerai.

And that was just the music and singing! Belinda DeJesus delivered a poetic monologue, appropriately addressing the issues of blurred identity and accepting an untitled embodiment of two or more cultures. Mariel Hardy, with the accompaniment of Paul Garcia and Victoria Pringle performed a sensuous flamenco dance. And who could forget "Pasion Latino" - the comedic stage soap opera about love and discrimination in Latin America? It was directed by and starred Claudia Sparrow and her cast of friends - modeled straight from the unashamedly melodramatic characters in Latino television soap operas.

Here's to many more years of increased universal participation in the multi-cultural show!

letters

Don't Forget Danny!

To the Editor:

The recent article about this year's fashion show failed to thank Danny Michaelson for his support of the designers. This information was omitted by no fault of the reporter but rather the designers interviewed. To clarify, Danny allowed his Costume Design Projects to be a forum in which to present designs and product. Student Life should also be thanked for photocopying the programs, as well as Alex Rosenberg for stage managing the show at the last minute (you were amazing, Alex. Thanks so much!).

The show itself was coordinated outside of class during our weekly meetings. It is a chance each term for students (mostly those in costume design classes) to showcase their own ideas about design without the influence of a script, dancer or director, which is one of the reasons it is very important to those involved. True, Bennington does not have a "fashion program." If it did, the curriculum would offer classes like history, merchandising, construction, tailoring and patternmaking.

The conflict with the school regarding support lies with the administration, not the faculty (although I have heard rumors of some faculty members "hating the fashion show"). To be fair, there have been classes like Fashion and Contemporary Art and a number of tutorials including Fashion Photography and the History of Textiles.

However, getting "Fashion Studies" as a title on your B.A. isn't possible yet because an essential conversation hasn't happened: the conversation between the Dean of Studies, faculty willing to teach the classes, and students interested in pursuing that title, about what it means to study fashion at a liberal arts school. Even though it encompasses much more than design and a seasonal wardrobe change, there are stigmas of frivolity attached to its name. By examining it through lenses of other subjects such as history, anthropology, politics, psychology, art, or evolutionary theory, the fashion system becomes part of the dialogue of cultural studies. Dress studies is an academic focus that has emerged only in the last couple of decades and has developed into an academic discussion about the role of clothing in society.

It is important (as art is) in its questioning of people's attachments to pattern, form and composition; we dress in the privacy of our rooms each morning but end up looking similar to everyone else. How are the rules made, how do they work, and why? These are not questions the fashion show answers, and it is not limited only to designers asking them. It is an important process to the participants, and we hope the audience had as much fun attending the show as we had hosting it.

- Simone Duff

Write for the BFP next term!
Send letters and submissions to:
bfp@bennington.edu

Red State Blues: Words from Hendershot

by Keith Hendershot '04

"God, it's the Civil War, isn't it?"

That's what I'm led to think after being saturated with the base cartography of the red state-blue state map over the past several months, which, in this election of polarized values, depicts the South and Midwest as "unanimous" in its support of Bush. Also, there have been the e-mails—"F*ck the South" was one forwarded to me, as well as a re-drawn map of North America grouping the blue states with Canada and marking off the rest of America as "Jesusland."

And it does seem to ring true because of the polarization of issues in each candidate and the idea of "two Americas." The democratic picture painted by this election was of 200 million people voting for their own private autocracy. In the end, the final electoral count inflamed those age-old cultural divides—intellectual vs. theological, rural vs. urban, white against black, North vs. South—painting the final end picture of a 140-year social revolution beginning at Appamattox and culminating earlier this month when the crackers between New York and L.A. dropped the Confederate flag and picked up the Stars and Stripes.

Maybe you haven't thought about it in those terms, but you should for at least a brief moment, and then forget about it.

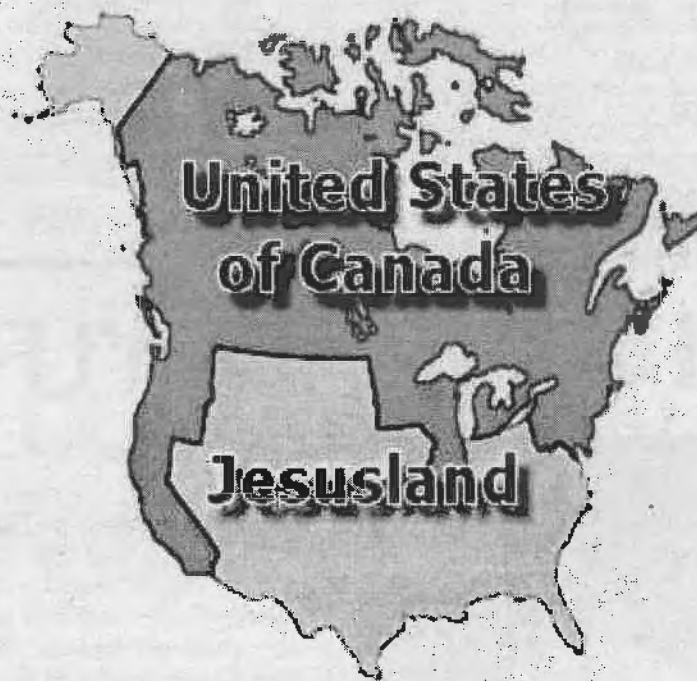
The red state-blue state representation reduced the infinitely diverse calculus of the American mindset to a crude, dribbling arithmetic of "two Americas." This fall in Jesusland, I watched Kerry put up a damn hard fight whether he knew he was in it down here or not. Zogby polls before the Republican National Convention showed Kerry and Bush neck and neck in Tennessee, well within the margin of error, and Tennessee was listed among the initial 20 battleground states. For the first time in as many elections as I can remember, the Monroe County Democratic Party—a party more concerned with picking the Road Superintendent than the national scene—opened a presidential campaign headquarters downtown. Its opening was well-attended, an inspired moment supported by police officers, preachers, lawyers, business owners, homemakers, young party activists and the mayor. Farmboys in faded overalls sat quietly off to the side as the old party dogs stood in groups outside, smoked cigarettes and mumbled about George W. Bush's riding on his daddy laurels and, "Yeah, he got his brother to steal the election." The 2000 Florida fiasco sits sore with most small town politicians, Republican and Democrat, because it seems so much like the kind of crackerjack ballot fixing that would go on around here.

What I'm saying is, there was some hope—it wasn't people holding hands and shouting, "I AM somebody!" nor was it a symposium of progressive dialogue; but you had the dependable, blue collar, hard-praying Democrats willing to look at the blue-blood, gay-friendly Massachusetts Episcopalian and say, "That's my man."

And why shouldn't John Kerry have won in Tennessee—or for that matter, any Southern state?

In Tennessee, you have a solid base of low-income Appalachians in the east and black folk in the west—groups that Democrats have claimed as their own. If Tennessee's a red state, then there's certainly a big streak of blue in it, with its

governor and half of its representatives Democrats. Tennessee went for Clinton both times before infamously ousting its native son by a narrow margin in 2000. But, remember, that year Gore by and large ignored Tennessee, especially after an early campaign speech in which he was accused of putting on "hillbilly" airs. Bush and Cheney did a considerable amount of footwork in the state to turn the tables, coining the "can't fool me again" blurb on our soil, which was too hillbilly for anyone to throw doubt on it.



Kerry followed suit in this past election, not just in Tennessee but in North Carolina, Virginia and Arkansas—where, damn it, he had a chance. The talk early on was, "You don't need the South to win"—and by gum, we heard it. The Democrats fought a 17-state electoral battle in the states Kerry felt comfortable winning, distancing himself from the heartland, winding up on the bastard end of those "guns, gays and God" issues that perturb us so, here in America.

Tennessee dropped too quickly out of battleground contention. There were more Kerry-Edwards yard signs in East Tennessee than ever I saw for Gore—or Clinton, for that matter. The Republican Party was set on its heels at the outpouring and opened their own campaign headquarters downtown. As evidenced by the turnout, both sides brought out the vote. Kerry lost Tennessee with 42.5 percent of the ballot, 35 percent in my county.

Studying the precinct breakdowns and looking at the more proportioned and gradient electoral county maps available on the internet, which depict America as a sort of psychedelic swirl, I pose this question: "Why do the Yankces come down here to vote for Bush?"

Yes, the most organized partisan majority of the election in this area are newcomers and retirees relocated to the South. Although the dingy, football-loving mountain city of Knoxville voted largely in the blue, it was unsettling to see the community of Farragut, sitting just outside the city limits, take Bush 3-to-1. Farragut is a bedroom community with the largest number of people who have moved from out of state to Knox County. The same urban-suburban polarity stood between the Democratic base of Nashville and booming Williamson County, a suburban county that also contains a high number of northern imports.

In my own county, it was interesting to see the rustic town of Tellico Plains—an all-white mountain town dependent on its

pulpwood yards to supply it with some of the lowest income and education levels in the state—favor Bush by only 65 percent. Mind you, this is a constituency whose solid Republican foundations are directly rooted to its Unionist sympathies in the Civil War—and nowhere would the "guns, gays and God" issues be more pertinent. Tellico Plains is about 15 miles and 150 years away from the TVA lake development of Tellico Village—a golf-course retirement and leisure community founded in 1986. The wealthy transplanted retirees in the Tellico

on cultural issues. Transplants have traditionally opposed famed Bible Belt issues like the sale of liquor by the drink, the fight to keep the Confederate flag and Ten Commandments on the courthouse, and prayer in schools. They likely support or condone gun control, gay marriage and pro-choice issues.

They are Christians, of course, and may even read Tim LaHaye's Left Behind series—a dogmatic fantasia of Armageddon wherein white, SUV-driving Midwesterners are found to be God's true and righteous people. Still, these folks don't leave religious tracts on doorsteps, espousing the Zionist conspiracy to change the calendar so Christians accidentally worship the Sabbath on Saturdays (such a tract I found on my own porch recently). Men like fundamentalist Bob Jones III are such people, however, and Bush Jr. has buddied up with this element, one that is, at times, a hateful and hypocritical breed of bugger.

DEAR READER—I'm ending here. My notes on this subject are many and various—the result of weeks of asking questions, introspection and jotting down everything that has come to mind. My mood and sentiments concerning this past election and my esteem for the place from which I hail have been embattled and aggravating. Needless to say, I have bigger fish to fry this week than to hash over these issues for a fee-simple student newspaper. Plus, I am stepping deep into many deadlines.

What I neglected, but feel obligated, to mention in this article include the rift of culture between blue-collar Southerner and the transplant, the hysterical dangers of having moral crusaders in your constituency, the flight of moderates from the Democratic Party during the Reagan Administration, the pragmatic agenda and diligent persistence of the true Southern liberal, the need to put God back on our side, the virtues of Bill Clinton, whatever happened to the Democrat Leadership Council, community organization during the Civil Rights Movement, the snobby attitudes of Freedom Riders, why poor people don't vote economic issues and a certain walk my Granddaddy took with Bobby Kennedy at Sen. Estes Kefauver's funeral.

Bottom line, this a many-fangled, snarling thing subject for a lifetime of study and observation. In these modern times, there is only the only most whimsical iota of difference between the general cultures of what is known fatuously as "Red America" and "Blue America." But that single inch of difference is near-infinite and consuming when one attempts to explain it through logic instead of contemplation and imagination. That is why I don't prefer to write true things about the South or any part of America—it feels too much like taking a scalpel to my own leg. In fact the only folks who could ever take an anthropological attack on the intricacies of regional difference in America and do a good job at it with the facts before them were aging planter's sons like Andrew Lytle and William Alexander Percy, who began their memoirs with lines like—"Now that I have begun to live in eternity..."

Furthermore, in my estimation, Senator Barack Obama could win any state in the South if he went for it. He is an old-school community organizer who could rally one type of Southerner and expose the very worst in another kind. Which is all I really meant to say.

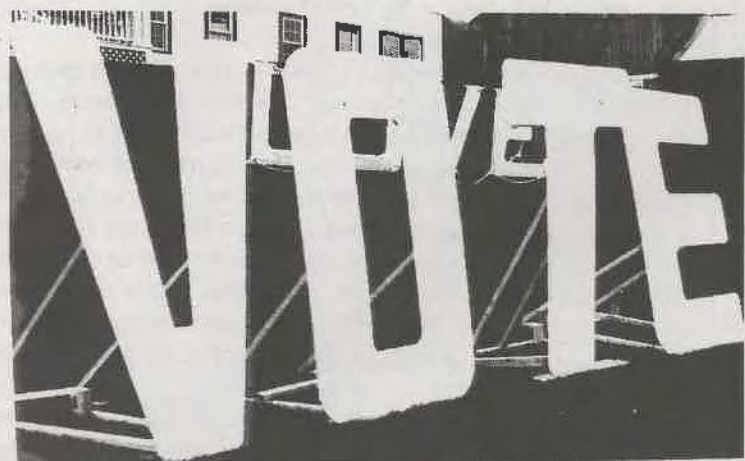
Village precincts took Bush with close to a 98 percent majority. Not even the black communities in Memphis and Little Rock took a Democrat with such solidarity.

I don't have to show you a picture of Farragut, Williamson or Tellico Village to convey to you that these communities—with their vinyl-sided McMansions, Panera Bread franchises and streets named after Pat Boone hits—are about as southern as a snowmobile. Faulkner died at least 30 years short of writing about these communities populated largely by couples who have moved from non-Southern states to live a more bucolic life and get a break on their property taxes. These are not old boys or evangelicals—they're economic Republicans down to the bottom dollar. They don't want to pay high taxes. Anyone who doesn't understand this priority won't get far in politics. They are pragmatic. They have been well-represented by moderate Republican senators like Lamar Alexander, Bill Frist and Howard Baker.

"God, it's the Civil War, isn't it?"

In attitude and background, the current president is a man common to their ilk—a plain-spoken baby-boomer who can't account for his own privilege and mistakes his pride as a mark of character. On cultural issues, however, there is likely to be a division between the president and the inland transplant. The president is a self-proclaimed born-again Christian and has alleged himself to evangelical agenda

Where did the youth go?



Artwork by Guy Snover

By Kara Bloomgarden-Smoke

By lunch time on November 3, the results of the 2004 election were clear. Not only did George Bush get his "four more years," but Youth, that promised demographic of 18-29 year olds, did not make a significant difference.

This was clearly not a result of lack of effort on the part of popular entertainment. Campaigns such as "Rock the Vote," "Vote or Die," "Choose or Loose" and entertainers such as P. Diddy, Bruce Springsteen, and Eminem campaigned in the final months of the election for the youth vote as hard as Kerry campaigned for Ohio.

These unrelenting efforts from a generation of musicians previously accused of being apolitical borrowed heavily upon proven advertising campaigns. The result was artists selling the 26th amendment like a new CD.

This media outreach program, which capitalized on the urgency felt by both parties, was successful to a degree. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and

Engagement (CIRCLE), almost 21 million voters under the age of 30 cast ballots in this past election.

In the 2000 election, 16.2 million citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 voted, which made up 16.4 percent of total votes. The 2004 election saw an increase in actual voter participation for every demographic, with youth voters increasing by 18.4 percent; 51 percent of citizens under 30 voted in 2004, as compared to 42.3 percent in 2000.

The youth vote was not as revolutionary as many had hoped, mainly due to this overall rise. In actual numbers, there were 4.6 million more young voters in the 2004 election. Actual youth participation was 51 percent, but since the entire voter participation increased in this election, youth made up virtually the same percent of the total vote in 2004 as in 2000.

Bennington College had an extremely high voter turnout, thanks in no small part to the tremendous efforts of the Student Action Network (SAN). SAN distributed surveys at the December

5 Coffee Hour aimed at determining the exact figures for Bennington College voter participation. Shira Sternberg, co-chair of SAN, will tally the numbers after the term has ended, but based on an initial perusal, she estimates that student participation was close to 90 percent.

When compared to the national average, this sounds dramatically high. However, a college education is a major factor in voting. According to CIRCLE, "18-25 year olds with college experience are nearly twice as likely as non-college youth to vote."

"We are the youth vote," said Sternberg. Sternberg went on to say that having parent participation in elections is a major factor in determining whether their children will be voters.

Sternberg and other SAN members set up booths to register voters in Commons and at neighboring Southern Vermont College and Community College of Vermont.

"When I was in Commons, Bennington students would approach me, but when I went to CCV, I had to entice people with food and approach them," said Sternberg. "Even at SVC, which is also private, this was true. I think that affluent colleges are much likelier to vote, but we need to change this."

Sternberg's solution is for candidates to make a concerted push to campaign at community colleges across the country, because so-called first time voters are likely to vote the way their parents vote and thus perpetuate the status quo. The only way Sternberg sees the youth vote impacting an election is to go after voters who have no strong predisposition towards a candidate or party. These would be the

true undecided voters.

"Our age group should insist on standardized national voting methods. After all, we are the ones who are most likely to travel throughout the country," said Sternberg. "There also needs to be a massive nonpartisan voter registration effort."

Thomas E. Patterson, a professor of government at Harvard and authority on the subject of voter participation, recently explained one possible reason that youth participation has been marginalized in the 2004 election.

"Some people—the media in general, pundits on TV—have a story line embedded in their minds: that the young people were going to deliver this election to Kerry," Patterson told *The Washington Post*. "Since he didn't win, they reason backwards: young people must not have turned out in big numbers."

The expectations placed upon young voters in 2004 is reminiscent of 1972, when the 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18. Political strategists and campaign managers saw the youth vote as a vital force in the 1972 election but were disappointed. Like 2004, the Democrats thought they could count on the youth vote, and in both elections, the Republican candidate won. After the 1972 election, people who had lobbied for the 26th amendment were dismayed by the relative insignificance it had made.

"The new 18-to-20-year-old vote, which some strategists predicted would dramatically change American politics, turned out to have little if any difference," reported *The New York Times* in 1973.

In Case You Missed Rules of Attraction

By Leah M. Wichler

There have been quite a few parties this term and these are the most memorable, for better or for worse.

Swoolley's "Donner Party" -- For some reason this party never quite got off the ground. People really tried to go and have fun but their efforts were in vain. Maybe it was because the members of these houses spent a lot of time preparing a multi-course gourmet feast for themselves and not much time on the party preparations... It also could also have been the theme. How does one dress for a Donner Party, my dear? Pioneer gear and blood?

Dewey's "Awesome 80's party" -- The music was amazing. The costumes were brilliant. You probably didn't go to this party. You should have. Yes, the theme was a bit cliché. But hey, who doesn't love the 80s?!

Booth's "120 Minute Dance Party" -- This party started at midnight and lasted exactly two hours. The music was wonderful—everything from Le Tigre to hardcore rap. Good clean fun and an aerobic workout for all!

Kilpat's "October 1st 'Hostile Environment' Party" -- The first night upperclassmen could officially hook up with freshmen. There was an abundance of trashy lingerie and make-out sessions happened everywhere, particularly in the hot tub. Overall, the evening was a bit dirty, as expected. After all, the party was in Kilpat.

Swan's "Halloween Party" -- Silent movies were projected on the ceiling, practically everyone came in costume and the evening was certainly well-lubricated. Not many people remember much about this party... We must have had a really good time.

Leigh's "Prohibition Party" -- This party was possibly the best organized event all term. There was not an aspect of the roaring 20s party life missing—there was a classy speakeasy, a hidden poker game, a swingin' band and a sizzling cigarette girl. The re-enactment of John Barleycorn's funeral was incredibly entertaining. And besides, how could you not adore a prohibition party with a beer garden?

Canfield's "Robots versus Fitness Instructors" -- The costumes at this party were very creative and "oh-so-Bennington." The music was bangin' and attendance was great. The Dresden Dolls partied with us! In addition, the robot mosh pit was certainly a sight to behold.

Dewey's first "Thirsty Thursday Party" -- This party was wildly successful. Practically all of campus attended. Most of the party's success came from lack of expectation, proving that alcohol and music equal a good time in most people's book. Upside-downs were abundant, if you knew where to look for them, and by mid-evening everyone was not only drunk enough to think they could dance, they were drunk enough to think they could dance well.

All those exclusive parties you probably weren't invited to -- Some of the top parties this term were very exclusive. Some of the most notable include a Vagina party, a Chilean Independence Day Party, an engagement party for two girls in Canfield, as well as several parties with "C-list celebrity" Justin Theroux. Not just anyone was invited to the "Dress for a Pedophile party," a girls' night thrown by two freshmen in Stokes. A certain someone's 20th Birthday party was also something you wish you had been invited to, and the "Beer and Boobs Bonanza" had plenty of 30 racks, several naked girls and a stripper, oh my!

Julianne's Canfield parties win her the "Best Hostess of the Year" award. She is especially deserving of this award when one takes into account the grace with which she dealt with a guest getting shot in the arm.

Lapse

by Corrina Collins

They stripped all the shrubs bare today.

The tops, drawn off with bronze by noon, lay around the swollen grass all day waiting for burial or a mistrial

I could have imagined a better way to wake up. But stayed in my frothy bed too long, missed all the daylight and the cuffing of the branches, a shame

At lunch, that bowl of spinach foamed against my teeth long enough that electricity came out from that photocell, my illuminated eye

Sense and thought should never marry that way

Marriage is between a man and a woman not like me; no, don't lay down there under my hair. So mossy and sweet and cool

On the other hand, I can't think of a better emission than that quiet nocturnal rhapsody.

Waving At The Ocean: Chapter Fifteen

by Cory Stauffer

Curtis stood in front of the class and took a deep breath. He showed the cover of his book to the class (a small boy frowning at a cringing white English bulldog), then opened the book to its front matter.

Curtis cleared his throat and said, "Dedicated to my mother, Alison."

Curtis turned to the next page and showed it to the class. He blinked and read, "One day Mom found a poop that Skittles, my dog, had left on the floor."

One of the boys in the back of the room tittered. Curtis paused, then turned the page. A tall, thin woman stood over a small boy; the small boy (who wore an orange and green baseball cap) spread his arms out wide from his body and protected the cowering white bulldog behind him. A large red question mark hung in the air above the small boy's head.

"Mom said, 'Scoop up the poop.'"

Curtis turned the page and read, "I do not want to scoop up the poop."

The boy who had tittered before continued to do so. Scotty turned around in his chair and looked at Marcus, who sat in the last row, eyes wide, his hands palm down on the desk in front of him. Scotty shook his head.

"Mom said, 'You must scoop up the poop.'"

Curtis paused.

"I will not scoop up poop."

The teacher, Ms. Redding, stared out at the class, her hands folded on her desk, her face unmoving as it slowly flushed from the neck up. Curtis glanced at her, turned the page and continued to read.

"So I ran away. I ran far away."

Curtis turned the page. The small boy hop-scotched across a map of the United States, east to west, the white bulldog on his heels, tail up, red tongue flapping. Curtis turned the page. The small boy swam across the Pacific Ocean, a large smile on his face. Curtis held the book out to the class, showing them the pictures. He turned the page. The small boy ran across Asia, a pair of chopsticks in hand, the white bulldog now dressed in an orange and green kimono.

Curtis turned the page and read, "I soon reached Paris, Skittles right behind me."

Curtis licked his lips and read, "One day..."

He held out the book and paused. A boy in the second row laughed out loud then crossed his arms on his desk and buried his head in his forearms. Ms. Redding glanced over at Curtis then quickly looked back. She stared at the boy in the second row and took a deep breath. The white bulldog sat at the feet of a black-suited Frenchman; the Frenchman stared hard at a large brown stain on his shoes; the bulldog raised his eyebrows apologetically.

Curtis turned the page and read, "The Frenchman said, 'Scoop up zee poop.'"

A girl in the front row wrinkled her nose and raised her hand. She waved at Ms. Redding, attempting to get her attention, but Ms. Redding ignored her. The girl snorted and crossed her arms in front of her chest. Curtis turned the page and continued.

"I do not want to scoop up the poop."

Curtis turned the page. "You must scoop up zee poop."

Curtis turned the page. The small boy stood in front of the Frenchman, hands on his hips, a frown on his face. The same large, red question mark from before hung over his head. Curtis furrowed his brow and read, "Why must I scoop up the poop?"

Curtis paused.

"Zees is life."

Curtis turned the page and read, "Then I will scoop up the poop. After I scooped up the poop, I went back home to America."

"Mom said, 'Have you learned your lesson?'"

Curtis nodded and read, "Yes. But has Skittles?"

Curtis turned the page and held it out for the class. The white bulldog sat at the foot of the stairs, one paw over his nose, a large brown stain on the stair closest to him. Curtis shrugged and read, "Oh well."

He shut the book and said, "The end."

Ms. Redding leaned back in her chair and unfolded her hands. She adjusted her glasses then put her hands on the desk, palms down. The class waited, the boys giggling, the girls whispering among themselves. Ms. Redding sniffed and said, "Well, Curtis. Not only have you made the second-grader you wrote that for the happiest kid in school, you've touched the second-grader in all of us. See me after class."

Frances

by Luke Fredland

One day when I was 10 I woke up with a dragon growing out of the side of my head. Just a little one. His name was Frances. Frances liked showtunes and sometimes whispered things to me in my sleep. I promised myself that, no matter what, I would never be ashamed of Frances. He had grown out of my head and that had to mean he was ok.

Eventually my parents got over their shock, my friends shrugged and said that's cool, the teasing of other kids became sporadic, half-hearted. After awhile, Frances was just another part of the landscape. But when I saw Jenny Cheever for the first time I wanted to die. Or at least not have an ugly-ass dragon growing out of my head. The truth is, I wasn't a bad-looking guy otherwise.

I avoided her. I sprinted in the other direction when I saw her in the halls. I wore big loose hats. You could still see Frances, though, writhing around under there. It was probably even creepier than when you could see him completely.

I stopped talking to Frances, and stopped listening, too.

I asked my dad about surgery. I remembered he and mom had mentioned something about that years ago, an option they had considered, but the idea had made me cry at the time. "But, son," he said now, "it's part of your head. And Frances is part of the family now. We're all so attached to him."

I cried.

When I came out of my room for dinner, a worried hush fell over my family. I smiled a little. "It's ok," I said. "I'm hungry. Did I miss dinner?" They were relieved and smiled, rushed to help me to the table. I fed Frances extra table scraps and they all smiled at us. After dinner, I said I was tired and was going to go to sleep early. They kissed me goodnight with their smiling faces. I went into my room and put my head and Frances down on my giant pillow and closed my eyes. "Goodnight, Frances," I said. He whispered something in my ear, something happy. He was drowsy already, his belly big with food, and soon he was snoring away softly. When I was sure he was asleep, I slipped out of my door, past where my parents were watching TV in the living room, and crept out to the garage, where I found the big garden shears mom used for the bushes along the side of the house. I cleaned them off as best I could in the sink in the basement and creaked softly up the staircase and back into my room, shutting the door silently behind me.

I pushed my pillow off the bed and leaned my head down so that Frances rested on the sheet. He was still snoring peacefully. I put the shears to the place where Frances's body merged with my temple.

I heard my mother screaming and tried to comfort her before I realized it was me screaming. Then my mother really was screaming. And my father was taking me in his arms and my head felt just like a balloon. I was worried that it wasn't going to stay anchored to my neck now. It felt like it might just go floating up and bounce along the ceiling.

There was an air show. Planes flying in formation making loud noises, death-defying maneuvers. My mother said, "It'll be fun." I went, smiling, with a bandage on my head.

The doctors said that it was really all healed up under there by now, but to keep the bandage on for another week or so, just to be on the safe side. I didn't mind. I enjoyed wearing it. It made me stand out in a crowd.

Jenny Cheever was there. She was wearing the weird pink shirt that I had always especially liked, but I almost didn't recognize her. She was there with her family, smiling and pointing up at the sky. My mom brought us to a spot close to where Jenny's family was standing. I didn't sprint the other way and I didn't try to get closer. I looked up at the planes. They were ok.

I was the first one to see the speck. I knew what it was immediately.

He'd never been able to fly before of course. I had never been the heaviest kid, but still my body was enough to weigh down his still-growing wings. Sometimes I ask myself what would've happened if we would've grown up to full size together. Would his wings have gotten strong enough to lift us both off the ground?

Jenny saw it second. "What is that?" she said. Soon everyone was pointing up at it.

The speck didn't move like any plane and no one was sure if it was part of the show or something unexpected. When my mom saw what it was, she looked down. But she was the only one. Everybody else was mesmerized. You would've thought none of them had ever seen a dragon before.

I heard Jenny say, "Look at it! Look at it, mom! Have you ever seen anything so beautiful in your whole life?"

Send us your contributions!

Excerpts, works in progress, final pieces:

BFPlit@bennington.edu

This That and Cast Around



By Maj Anya DeBear

For the first time this term, a show opened in Usdan gallery.

Usdan has been split in two for the show. One half contains a collaborative installation, "Cast Around," by Yoko Inoue, a visiting artist, and the students in her class. "Installation and Exhibition Ideas in Ceramics." The other half exhibits "This, That and Everything," a display of recent works from another visiting artist, Indrapramit Roy.

"This, That and Everything" is, in all likelihood, a reaction to finding oneself in a new milieu, a new country," said Roy about the collection on display in Usdan.

His work is certainly location oriented. Mostly done during his seven week stay at Bennington, the exhibition consists mostly of small, vibrant, thick pastel still-lives of everyday household objects: an ashtray, an old light bulb, a headless toy horse, etc. Roy's artist statement holds that "the most trivial things cry for attention."

Whatever surrounds the artist ends up on paper, and his reactions to these new objects in his space are documented in a series of quirky self portraits: the artist sullenly taking a drag off a cigarette, winking enticingly at the viewer, or dressed in a t-shirt printed with a mirror-image of the Bennington logo. "It's time to look inward, and I catch myself looking into the mirror," Roy said.

In a sense, Yoko Inoue's half of the gallery, too, is a reflection on her experience as a visiting artist at Bennington. She and the ten students with whom she collaborated consider the show to be one unified installation, despite parts of the exhibit being attributed to individual students. Inoue views the installation as experimentation in collaboration.

In preparation for the show, Inoue worked individually with students, helping them to develop their different aesthetics and ideas, finally merging them into one

piece. When observing the work, it is often difficult to tell where her work ends and the students' work begins. The merge is seamless.

Inoue's class had the exhibition in mind from day one. How to incorporate the actual space into the installation became one of the most important factors considered when planning their presentation of the work. The result is very elegant. Partitions are used effectively to accent the work, rather than distract from it, and the pieces flow smoothly into one another.

"For the first time this term, a show opened in Usdan gallery."

"Cast Around" is a multimedia extravaganza, making use of all aspects of ceramics, sound, video, home furnishings, astroturf and other materials. One piece by Forrest England goes so far as to translate human speech into squishy clay noises when microphones installed on the walls around the gallery are spoken into.

A piece by artist Eva Schmidt nicely pulls together the different themes and aesthetics represented in the show. Adorable casts of deer and lambs lying on kitschy seventies rugs and glittering, snowy cotton surround shiny globes on top of small pedestals. It is well-executed kitsch--garden ornaments turned into fine art.

"It is an investigation of construction versus deconstruction, beauty versus the repulsive, growth versus decay and dream versus reality ... celebration and elegance coexist with the vulgar and fantastic," read Schmidt's artist statement.

The dominating theme of the show seems to be mass production. Where do we get objects? How are they made?

And how many exact copies of them exist?

Virgin Mary figurines are stacked on a shelf within inches of dozens of plump peasant ladies and smiling Buddhas, as though they are on sale at the Dollar Store. It is a surreal yet familiar juxtaposition.

For Inoue and her students, the show was mostly an experiment in negotiation and collaboration. Putting together a large, unified group show is challenging. "Collaboration is hard enough even with two people," said Inoue. Eleven people participated in "Cast Around."

Completing and installing their work was an intense experience. "Many late nights, many hours of Domino's," said Nathaniel Philbrick, who worked with Benjamin Dotson on an interactive sound piece involving hundreds of tiny cast chicken bones being moved across a glass surface. "I slept on James' piece for a while."

James Albright's piece involves raw materials like gravel and clay pushed into a landscape on top of a wooden bunk bed.

However challenging the experience was, the students look forward to facing similar challenges in the future. "We need to see more conceptually unified shows," said England.

The fact that Usdan was practically empty for 3 months is upsetting to students and faculty alike.

"I think it's been underused. I've always used Usdan as a teaching tool, and I haven't been able to do that," said Andy Spence. The problem seems to be that there is not a good, organized way to plan shows. "There is supposed to be a faculty committee," said Spence, but curating shows and teaching at once is exhausting, and obviously teaching is the priority.

"It's not a great system," said Spence. "It may need to be rethought. I like the idea of student oriented group shows, and I don't see why there couldn't be a science project in here."

The main problem with leaving Usdan empty is that it means student and faculty work is, for the most part, unseen by the general student body. Spence points out that art faculty are unfamiliar with work by students other than those in their classes, and that these shows are a way for the work to come out.

Students share a similar opinion. "I wish that I could see more student work all the time," said Phyllis Trelli, whose installation involves kitschy grandma furniture and cast commemorative plates with pictures of strangers in place of Frank Sinatra-ish icons. "It's important that student shows happen--student-run shows. This has been an amazing experience, and if there were some initiative for doing it we could learn a lot."

"I've always used Usdan as a teaching tool, and I haven't been able to do that."

England shares Trelli's opinion. "It should be an easier process."

It seems to be a common opinion among students and faculty that more public exposure of student work would be fantastic. "The more people get a chance to show their work, the more it develops," said James Albright. "It makes you work harder because people are going to see it."

As Roy put it, "Under-utilization of any space pains me."

But at least the term is ending with a hugely satisfying exhibition. "It exceeds my expectations," said England of the final product. And because it's been the only one this term, the opening was especially exciting for the students involved.

"I wore my nice shoes," said artist Rachel DeCavage.



Indrapramit Roy



Althea Turner and James Albright



Nathaniel Philbrick

Brad Verter Refused Service at Stewart's



Brad Verter at Midnight Breakfast. Photo by Charlotte Sullivan

By Zubin Soleimany

History professor and current Head of APC, Brad Verter was escorted from a Bennington Stewart's shop after attempting to purchase a can of Spaghetios and a tire pressure gauge on Sunday, December 5.

Upon approaching the register, Verter was confronted by Stewart's cashier Brooks Henderson, who remained silent while tapping the "No shirt, no shoes, no service!" sign with a Slim Jim. "I just told him," said Henderson, "I don't care what you do up on the hill, but my establishment has rules."

Verter returned to his Subaru to retrieve a pair of Texas, but had trouble finding them under a mound of bootleg

Stereolab tapes. "Yeah, sometimes my car's so full of crap, it's impossible to find things," Verter later said. After ten minutes of searching, Verter eventually found the misplaced sandals. "Well, I finally got to them, it turns out they were under a beach towel the whole time. Can you believe that?"

He returned to the store where he purchased his items and threw in a pack of Certs for the road. "I felt bad," said Henderson. "If I'd have known he was gonna take so long, I woulda just let him go the first time."

Sarah McAbee contributed reporting to this article.

Red-room Socialite Serves Thanksgiving Meal to Purple-roomers



By Zubin Soleimany

On a gloomy Thanksgiving day in the Dining Halls, sophomore Janette S. Coltrane decided take a couple hours out of her busy holiday schedule to spend some time with the less fortunate, serving a Thanksgiving dinner to those in need. "I just think it's important to remember that not all us get to sit in the red room, you know?"

The meal included traditional fare along with Old World Chocolate frozen yogurt served in frosted glass bowls. "I mean it's pretty shitty that they have to eat here by themselves every day, but no one should eat without good company on Thanksgiving," Coltrane said. Appreciating the holiday charity, regular diners

presented Smolinsky with a velvet cape, which disappeared upon her first trip to the ladies room.

The dinner, she said, opened up a whole new world for the self-described, "King shit of fuck mountain." "You know, it just reminds you that, they're real people too, I mean it was awkward at first with all their LARPy shit but they bitch about FWT and pasta nights too."

At the meal's end, new bonds had been forged, appetites sated, and a whole new world opened up. When asked whether she might continue dining with her new-found friends after the break, Coltrane responded with the "out of game" hand sign and asked, "Are you fucking kidding? Ha ha." HAPPY THANKSGIVING, BENNINGTON!

Image manipulation by Jin Bolenbaugh

Bob Graves orders demolition of computer center, cites protection of single luddite student



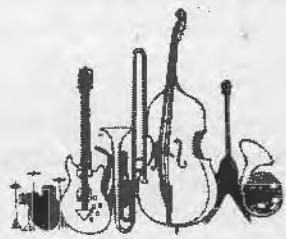
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Self Governance or Self Indulgence?

Liz Coleman Goes on Record

Interview by Jim Bentley and Zubin Soleimany
Transcribed by Daly Clement

BFP: A lot of students have been throwing about the term "self governance" as an ideal of this school that is one of its founding principles. From your perspective, where does self governance begin for students and where does it end?

L: The first thing I want to say is there are two words there: 'self' and 'governance'. I hear a lot about self and I hear precious little about governance. So, the first question is, what are we talking about? Self government is taking on an obligation and a responsibility. It's not something you give people, it's something you take. I would say that the event that we're talking about--whether it's the issue of public nudity or the porno tree--are not great examples of self government, but self indulgence. Quite different. Very different. I think the faith of this institution in the powers of self governance remains as bright as ever. The capacity of people to do it is not up to me or the powers that be to decide. It's an act of faith. Sometimes that faith is sorely tried, sometimes it isn't.

BFP: How much direct control do you think students should have in the processes that effect the academic and residential decisions that are made at Bennington?

L: I don't think control is an issue, again. These are real questions here. This is not about control. This institution, more than any I know, puts in students the responsibility for governance. So, for example, we do not have non-student resident heads. Or graduate students--some version of a non-undergraduate. That's very unusual. But it's about taking that responsibility. Sometimes people do, sometimes they don't. That hasn't changed. This college has maintained that through huge provocations...staying true to that has taken a great deal of commitment and conviction about values. When you talk about having control over things that affect you, that's a totally different question and control is a totally different matter. I am responsible for what happens to this institution. No student is ultimately responsible.

Self governance has nothing to do with the determinations about what constitutes a serious education for Bennington College students. That's for the faculty, and it is, frankly, what a student's tuition pays for.

BFP: Do you think that holds true within residential life as well?

L: No, it obviously doesn't. With residential life, the college maintains responsibility for [students'] health and well-being. If something happens to a student, students, by and large, are exempt--unless they're directly implicated. The college is responsible.

BFP: It's a legal issue?

L: It's not just legal, it's moral too. I think that's right; we should be responsible. We cannot give up that responsibility... This is not an option. I can't get up one morning and say, 'I'm tired of being responsible for this stuff. Let's hand it off.' That remains constant. What the college does sustain in its residential life is that a huge amount of challenge is given to students. They are accountable, however. You cannot have responsibility without accountability. Do you get that? It's very important to make that point. Where do you get accountability? That's very complicated business. That's where the house chair structure tries to establish accountability.

BFP: Don't you think that RAs would promote accountability and self governance more within residential life than the house chair system? House chairs don't have direct control over what goes on in the house in the way that an RA would. RAs are student authority figures in governing positions. Having them could make the house less dependent on administration and security.

L: Go out and interview people at Williams. Ask them how they feel about these matters and to what extent they decide and call the shots. If you're serious about this, investigate it. I'm not entirely an expert on this, but I would venture to guess that the extent to which students at Bennington have some role in shaping their own destiny in residential life is,

on a trajectory, more than most institutions.

My own view of self governance is that it's the best way, but it's not perfect. It's just better than any other. But it's about governance, it's not about self. It's where the principles of governing come from. This place talks about self all the time, but astonishingly little about what it means to take responsibility for being part of a community in which self is not an issue.

BFP: How do you respond to students who feel that they don't get as much say as they would like in governance--whether they should be entitled to that or not--but feel disenfranchised from the current process, as we have seen in the last direct elections?

L: I actually don't know...I just don't. That doesn't mean you aren't talking about something real, I just don't know.

BFP: ...About handbook policy being changed and eliminating direct election of certain positions like Head of Judicial and the Talking Heads....

"This place talks about self all the time, but astonishingly little about what it means to take responsibility for being part of a community in which self is not an issue."

L: I can't talk about something that I don't know about.

BFP: There is an article in the last BFP about the judicial situation. The headline is "Sketchy Democracy?" You might want to take a look at it. It just pertains to an issue with the position of Judicial. It's pretty interesting, because what we're seeing is that students don't take the electoral process very seriously. This may be an issue nationwide, not a college issue, but people aren't voting and think that, in the end, the vote doesn't mean anything. For example, in the Judicial situation, the person with the popular vote ended up not getting the position. The same thing happens with the house chair body.

L: Students at this institution have a great deal to say, much more than at any place I know, about faculty appointments. They actually participate carefully and precisely and in detail with respect to faculty searches. I think the access that people have to talk to people about what's going on is remarkable. I don't know of another institution that has that. I really don't. You can tell me there are but I don't know of them. I certainly know of none where the president is as accessible as I am. That doesn't mean you like what I say, but governance isn't about agreement. It's about participating intelligently and thoughtfully, hopefully, in a process. So, I honestly don't know what people are talking about. I've been hearing it for seventeen years--it's not new--but I find that, again and again, efforts to get the dialogue going often end up with nobody showing up. I've been in that situation, where I've said, 'Can we get bunch of people together?' And then, after great scenes about how important it is, very little participation. I'm as frustrated as you are about the quality of an engagement. Let's leave it at that. But I'm much more frustrated because I find it superficial typically and thoughtful. I just haven't found it, by and large.

I have to say, I do not find myself surrounded by people who are interested in suppressing other people's word. I'm not. I don't know anyone on the senior staff that comes to Bennington because they want to step on people. It's just not the deal here. Fundamentally, what I'm getting at, is that I just don't see it. And I don't see a faculty that is authoritarian in style.

BFP: I think there is a divide between the residential life and the academic life. I love the faculty, I love my accessibility to the faculty. I love this school, on that level. I think when you ask, 'Where does this authoritarian antagonism coming from?'--this may be a question for you: do you think the student body is reactionary? Like you said, it gets

hot and then it cools down.

L: You mean that it comes and goes? I wouldn't call that reactionary, I would just say that the rhythms of things here tend to be volatile.

BFP: On the residential side, we do confront a bizarre authoritarian situation where we confront security all the time. They are always in the houses. They come into the houses. They knock on doors--not when they're invited--they just come through whenever they want, under the auspices of enforcing fire code which I think is legitimate because these houses are old. Security is in the houses a lot, is what I'm saying. And I think it creates an antagonistic energy.

L: My impression of that is that, overwhelmingly, students think very highly of security officers here. Of course, no one likes it when security moves into a situation and they feel it's wrong at that particular moment. I could be wrong but my impression is that security is anything but a bunch of guys kicking doors down. That they use their authority to excess might be your view--that's perfectly reasonable. You have a right to that view. I don't have a view, no because I don't want one. I just don't have one. I don't have any reason, at the moment, to believe that we have a security force here that it is out of control.

I think, by and large, the security force here is trying to do a hard job. There is a lot of stuff that's hard to do. Drinking laws are a catastrophe, everyone knows that

BFP: Actually, John McCardell, the president of Middlebury, wrote in a New York Times op-ed that it's a disastrous social policy. Do you think the drinking age should be lowered to eighteen?

L: Probably, yeah. Let me put it this way--I don't know what's the answer, but I know, whatever we're trying to accomplish with the laws...we're driving drinking into people's rooms. The attempt to make the world a healthier and safer place is just not working. That's the only purpose of any drinking laws that I know of--it's health and safety. 3-year olds could drink martinis for lunch if people were persuaded that it wouldn't hurt their health and well being, and for all I know, it wouldn't. That's all the law is about to me. I can promise you that from the point of view of anyone in my position, the laws are counter-productive.

BFP: The school has had a pretty strong literary reputation for a while. I just wanted to know, especially in light of the Democracy Project, are you interested in having journalism become part of the curriculum?

L: I think that will happen now with journalism.

BFP: Is that in the works?

L: One of the exciting things about the democracy project is that it creates a framework in which there is a natural continuum between the practitioner and the academic. It creates an opportunity to invite faculty into the role of the college.

BFP: How soon do you think this will be happen?

L: That will start next year. If we can do a little bit this spring, we might try to get some people to do it.

BFP: Why has journalism been neglected for so long?

L: You could say that about so many areas. The amazing thing is what this college does do, not what it doesn't do. The college has one philosophy. The first question isn't 'Why don't you have journalism?' The question is, 'Why don't you have another philosophy?' We are going to get another philosophy. It's just, the priorities in a college like this, which is tiny--Bennington is one-half the size of a college you compare us to, one-half and one-tenth of most--when you say, 'Why don't we have something?', you immediately going to institutions that are infinitely large

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BFP: I'm thinking that at a school with a very high percentage of literature concentration students...

L: Most of the students here are interested in writing and the best undergraduate education in writing probably is writing. Journalism is an arguable, disputable undergraduate major. Talk to any journalist--I've talked to a lot, actually, because it's interesting--and they all say, 'Do not study journalism as an undergraduate. It's a terrible idea. Learn how to write, learn how to think, and take history.' I'm interested in journalism not in the way you're talking about it--as a career in the Democracy Project--I'm interested in it as an issue. The media and the role of journalism and how to think about what it is. I would imagine that journalist coming here not to teach you how to do journalism but to work with you on how to think about it. Does that make any sense? It's the same thing with law--we'll have lawyers here not to train you as lawyers but to gauge on the ground--not in theory, but on the ground.

BFP: Do you agree [with McCardell] that a college president shouldn't endorse particular influences or candidates?

L: I can't. Right now there's an election ongoing and I'm the most heated person on this campus. I promise you. Guarantee it. No one is second to me in heat. And whenever I'm outside of a very limited framework, I bend over backwards not to reveal who I support. It's real simple--you guys get that. It's hard enough for people to take a position on this campus that's overwhelming a minority position. Because of my job, I represent the college, so in that sense he's right.

"I don't think it has ever been a 'clothing optional' campus. Let's just be straight."

BFP: There has been talk going around about freshmen literature students needing a composition class and maybe literature students having required courses. Is this a good step and do you see these required courses and, in a sense, sequestering the freshmen student class, as stepping away from the founding pedagogy and idea of this school and if so, should we be doing that?

L: Well, that's a lot of questions. I don't know of what you're talking about, so that's the first thing I'll say. I can't really comment on that. I can say a few things about some of the various issues you've raised. I think sequestering freshmen, by and large, is terrible. There could be exceptions, but for me the default position is that you sequester nobody. That's not Dewey, it's Coleman. I think the issue of required courses is much more interesting and much more complex. For me the word "required" is misleading because it's so loaded. I think the challenge at Bennington is knowing if some things are so worthwhile that they should constitute a common experience. And is a common experience so worthwhile that you want to have it? Those are the two questions that Bennington, by its orientation in the other direction, raises; by the absence of any canonical tradition; by the absence of canonizing anything, except not canonizing anything, Bennington raises the question of what's the value of doing. There is a value, but whether the trade-off is worth it is the big question. The value is that if you require something of everyone, or in a group--let's say everyone in the democracy project is required to read six books--there is an order of discussion about those books and what they are that is very interesting. What you're saying is that some things are so valuable, however much we differ--in our orientation and perspective--everyone should still read them.

BFP: Are we looking towards required courses?

L: No, not to my knowledge. But you could be way ahead of me on that one. In the Democracy Project I do think

there should be some common experience but I don't know what it should be. There are things that everyone who is having the experience should engage in. What those are and how one does it is still a huge question. But I also think the idea of an intellectual community where people agree to share in an experience--intellectual experiences as well as others--is a very interesting idea. At the same time--and this is very important to me--there should be a spectacular diversity of options.

BFP: When do you plan on teaching your next class?

L: This spring.

BFP: Is it in the curriculum?

L: No, probably not. Part of my problem is I haven't the faintest idea of how to describe it. It will be a kind of seminar about the ongoing thinking that's going on about democracy.

BFP: Should nudity be allowed on campus the way that it has been?

L: I don't think it has ever been a 'clothing' optional campus. Let's just be straight.

BFP: The fact is, there was no policy regarding nudity.

L: There is no policy about murder, either. There are things you don't need policy about.

BFP: There is also Vermont state law that allows it.

L: I just think clothing is not an option. You've got to wear it. If you want to be nude in private or in quasi-private things, fine. As far as I'm concerned, where we are is where we ought to be. If you want to take your clothes off, take them off when you're not in people's faces.

BFP: Should it be allowed in the way it was previously?

L: I've walked into Midnight Breakfast, don't push me.

BFP: Would you say that it was condoned?

L: Let me put it this way: no one around here is looking to make this an issue. This was made an issue. Under certain circumstances you can just relax and let be and in others you can't.

BFP: Do you think Bennington should be a smoke-free campus?

L: Well...probably. I used to smoke and I smoked way past the time that people found out it was bad for your health. The day that the Surgeon General said that second-hand smoke was hazardous, I stopped smoking. I had to. Once that happened it seemed, rationally, any place where a lot of people congregate and have no choice should be smoke-free. I also have my own personal views--it just kills me to see people smoking. But that's a different matter.

BFP: You've been here for 17 years--what kind of school did you inherit as opposed to the kind of school you'll leave behind? And how much longer do you see yourself at Bennington?

L: That's three questions. I'm going to leave the third one alone. The first--what kind of school did I inherit? It had something that it has. There is an energy in this place. It's almost as if it's in the fabric. It's a passion and intensity that goes in different directions. Some of them can be really terrible, but it can go in the direction of excitement that it needs to. A lot of that energy is here. What I discovered--not as a total surprise, but the intensity was a total surprise--was that there is an order of darkness in that energy that was startling. Shocking. I don't want to say much more because there are people at this college now who are part of this college and deserve my respect as much as any others.

BFP: Red Sox or Yankees?

L: You're talking to an old Dodgers fan. I hate the Yankees.

The Month in Photos



Registration or Ellis Island?



Nicole and Indaia get their skates on early

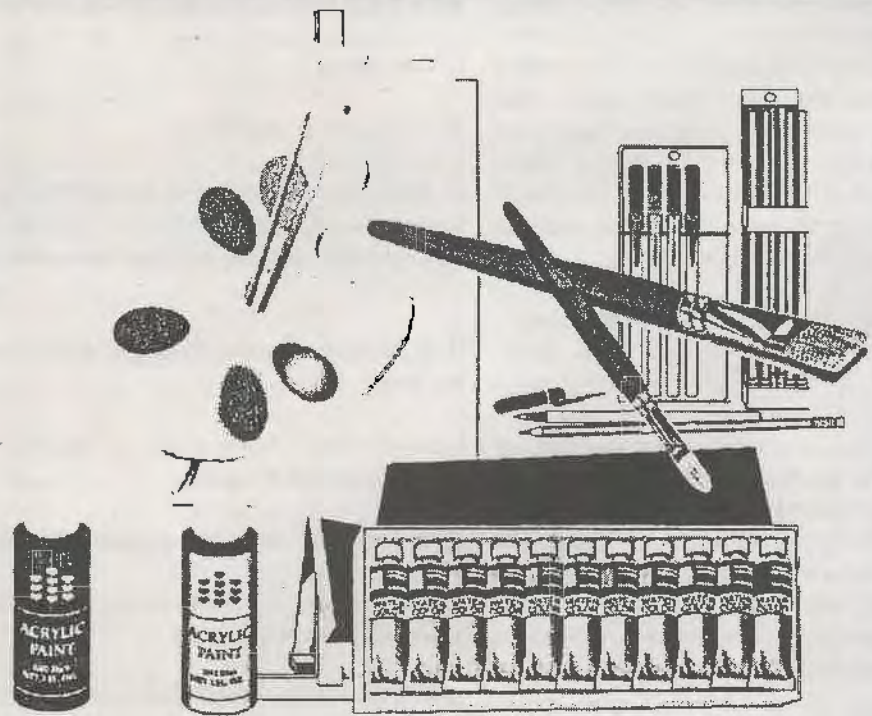


Sally takes home the winners cup



Upright Citizens Brigade: The Shoves perform in downcafé

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