

LATEST DOPE

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Volume 1, Number 1.

STUDENT DISSERVICES

I can still recall reading a college catalogue, a whole page of which was devoted to saying that in effect, bureaucracy of Bennington College was handled on a minimalist, common sense basis. And I still recall the bumptious joy that I, then seventeen, experienced at the thought: I can go somewhere where bureaucracy is considered a necessary evil. Five years later, I find myself thinking, with a creeping taste: I am somewhere where the bureaucracy is unnecessarily evil.

I here must call attention to the banning from campus of John K. Offenhardt an alumni of the college (class of '86). The ban was enacted Sept. and still has not been repealed. For those of you not aware of the specifics of this incident, I suggest that you inform yourself. The incident itself is trivial enough, its consequences, and the implications of those consequences are not.

I will list only the most pertinent facts. On Sept. John was seen kicking out a screen door in Booth house by the Director of Student Services. In the words of this individual: "He kicked it clear across Commons. John confirmed the essence of this description, that he did in fact kick the screen out, if not with its hyperbolic spirit. Further-

the decision to ban him. However, John's past record is in fact a pair of accusations, neither of which has been substantiated by witnesses, nor confessed to by the accused. This all was basically a moot point while John was a paying student, as his rights to be a student and participate in the school community has been given scant consideration. John's "crimes" were judged only when he'd lost his right to any sort of trial. Incidentally, John's supposed record pales in comparison with that of other alumni, who have not been banned simply because they have not had the misfortune to be caught making that one, fatal post-graduate move.

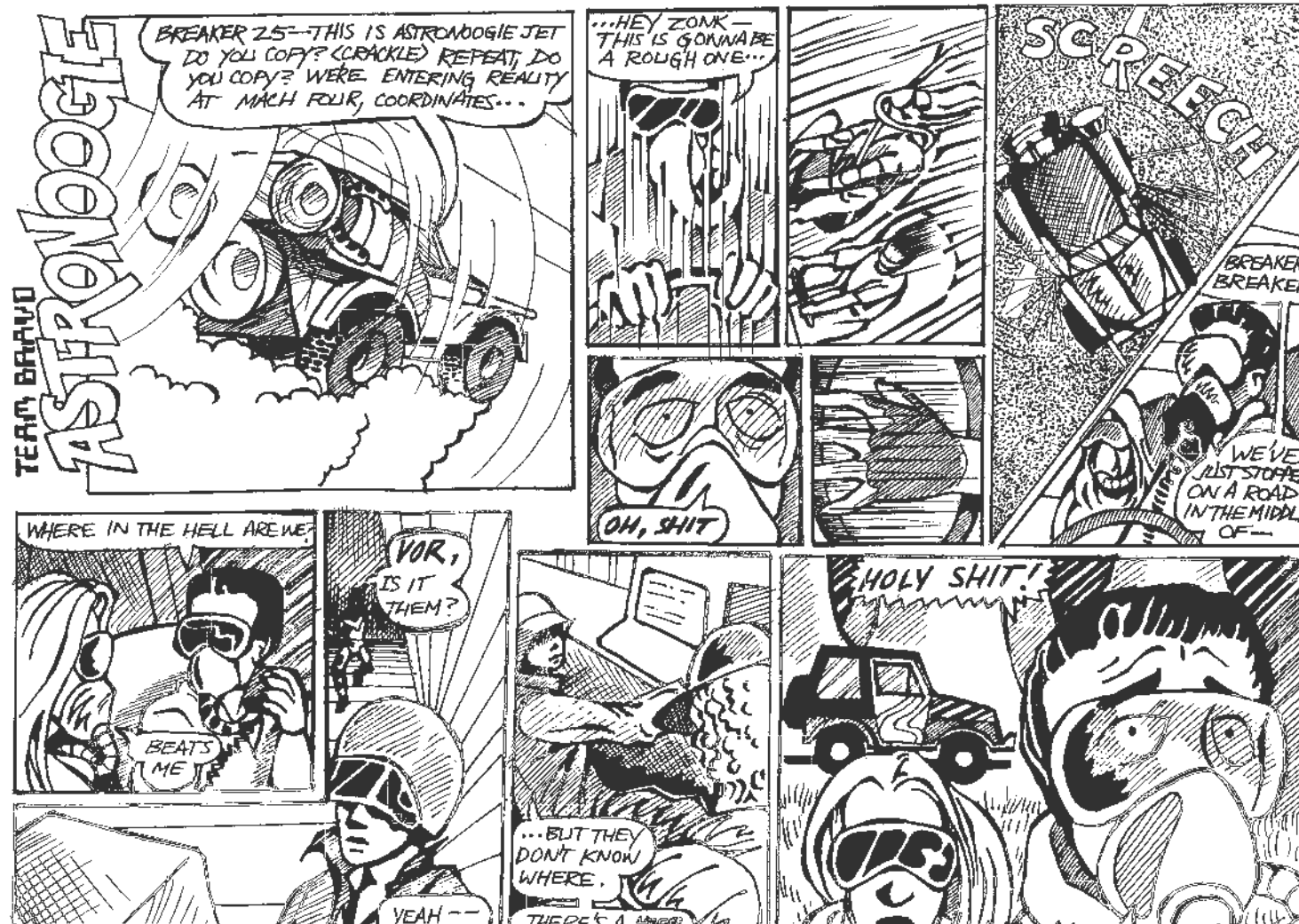
And so, we are now ready to list the more salient features of John's treatment since his ban: I have not found or heard of one single person, barring those who have the power to do something about the ban and those who are constrained by their position from expressing an opinion, who does not find the ban a gross overreaction, if not downright offensive, (i've talked to a lot of different people of varied roles in the community). Faculty, students and student leaders have petitioned members of the administration to do something about this ban, to no avail. This ban was

administrators. Of course administrators' inconvenience has been a part of their salaried duties (not to mention self-inflicted); for the rest of us, it was and is merely an annoying aspect of our human duties.

Alex Sokoloff

editors: Andrew Cohen
Vincent Royce

Jason Fleming



Meet the President

Elizabeth Coleman, who begins her presidential duties at Bennington officially on July 1, 1987, ordered a biale bagle and coffee and announced right off that she was "not coming up to Bennington with a plan to whip everybody into shape or anything crazy like that." We were in a corner coffee shop in New York City, and Liz seemed comfortable.

"One of the reasons that I am so looking forward to visiting the campus before my term officially begins, is that I will have the opportunity to be able to listen to everyone, not as an administrator yet, but as simply a very interested listener without any of the stigmas of official or administrative roles."

The usual Bennington College interview questions about the character of Bennington students, specific problems at the College, or her specific plans for the future of the school were all answered similarly. Our "interview" turned into more of a conversasion, with Liz asking as many questions of me as I of her. I have left out most of my input in the hope that our future president thoughts and personality could be shown more clearly in this way.

"I can't say exactly what I plan on doing upon my arrival at Bennington without feeding you lies. What I can say is

more, he admitted that his action was technically wrong and, in appearance, destructive. He went on to explain that his motive in removing the screen door was that of having witnessed several people walk into it (it blocked a much used entrance), and that he resorted to (moderate) force only after unlatching the screen door and finding it stuck. Nothing was actually damaged a fact that administrators involved do not contradict simply because they find it not to be an issue. Nor in fact does anyone deny John's assertion of what his motives were. To those deciding, his use of force was simply illustrative of a lack of respect for college property.

It must also be noted that John has a past "record" of damage to student property, which allegedly includes the destruction of a tile in commons with a motorcycle, and the creation, during a party, of a large hole in the wall of Booth living room, "through which liquor was passed." (This last fallacious detail is evinced by the Director of Student services with a sort of pathological readiness. Indeed, one wonders at the fact that this individual's leanings towards the poetic has not led her to mention that the motorcycle supposedly used in the former was large, powerful, and dangerous.) Finally, John was a long time resident of Booth House, that nexus of hedonism and irresponsibility where, paradoxically, the majority of student leaders have lived at one point or another.

When talking about this incident one must pay attention to the paradox presented in John's transition from student to alumni status, for both the past and the present were at issue in the decision to ban John. The Director of Student Services admits that John's "past record" was a factor in

enacted, at most, three days after the incident, and yet weeks after one finds administrators saying they'll "look into" the issue and failing to make contact for periods of over three weeks with colleagues who work thirty feet down the hall from them. There are no rules in the college constitution concerning alumni, and their right to be on campus is a privilege. In fact, that right is a near-frivolity, as far as I can judge. Most important are the two following tendencies. Firstly, although there are only a handful of administrators directly involved in the arbitration of this ban, and two (The president of the Business Office and the acting college president) that could lift it, administrators are disturbingly evasive about their own position on the issue. I am told "the administration" has ruled thusly, when in this case, the "administration" consists of my interlocutor and perhaps four other people. I applaud the courage of the Director of Student Services, who will go so far, when baited, as to defend the upholding of the ban, however irrationally. And this leads me to my second point: when talking to this person on whether or not she can sense the absurdity of what she is saying. It is as though she has set out to prove the assertion that you can argue anything, no matter how stupid, if you have a suitably warped premises to your argument. And this, is how a perfectly trivial incident has resulted in the persecution of an individual unfortunate enough to be gainfully employed in North Bennington while his social and creative ties remain within the college community, and the waste of a ridiculous amount of time for too many people, including the



John Offenhartz seated at right in front of the machine that goes "BING!"

photograph by Katherine H. Kellogg

that I will listen to everyone who will talk to me. And one thing that I am wondering about Bennington is are people ready to listen and trust. When you listen to someone it is different from just hearing someone. To listen you must have a feeling of confidence in the judgement of the person speaking. This is the only way you can hear a person's point of view, without your biases and corrections changing their words. I am beginning to sense that there are some problems at Bennington in the way people hear the things going on around them. You have to ask yourself who is talking to whom about what? If the answer is only interdepartmental personnel talking about financial issues, I think that is a problem.

"I would like to put what I feel should be center stage at Bennington (and perhaps is not at the moment) in the spotlight; that is, academic questions and ideas about the quality of a student's experience and the quality of the Bennington community as a working unit. People don't go to Bennington to discuss financial difficulties. I would like to see people talking about the reasons that they are there, the real issues of an academic institution.

"At Bennington, what I call the hunger to be a student is encouraged. Roughly, I feel all people can be divided into two groups. There are those who love that moment of discovery (essential to the student's mentality) when, in casual conversation, or listening to a lecture, or reading a book, one says Oh! I never thought of it that way! Oh yes! That's true! There are those people that love this moment (that's what I'm all about) and there are people that hate this moment. The trick is to coerce and encourage this kind of moment in everyone frequently.

Meet the President continued

"I am very concerned about establishing a truly strong current of communication and exchange between every part of the community. There are at least two people in every room. There has to be some kind of dynamic created there. There should be an opportunity for education of all kinds in this dynamic. I don't like constant confrontation. I don't operate that way, it is unproductive or even counter-productive. I discuss. I listen. I expect that people will work with me in this way."

Liz asked me about rigidity on the part of the students and the faculty and the administration.

"There has to be a certain amount of good faith between a community and the said leader of that community. Bennington will have to let me have some leeway and not sat to my every idea 'Oh we've heard that, it won't work because...' Bennington has to let its president be a president. I am going to listen to people and formulate my own ideas and opinions. I plan to be up there for a while. I predict this will be a long marriage."

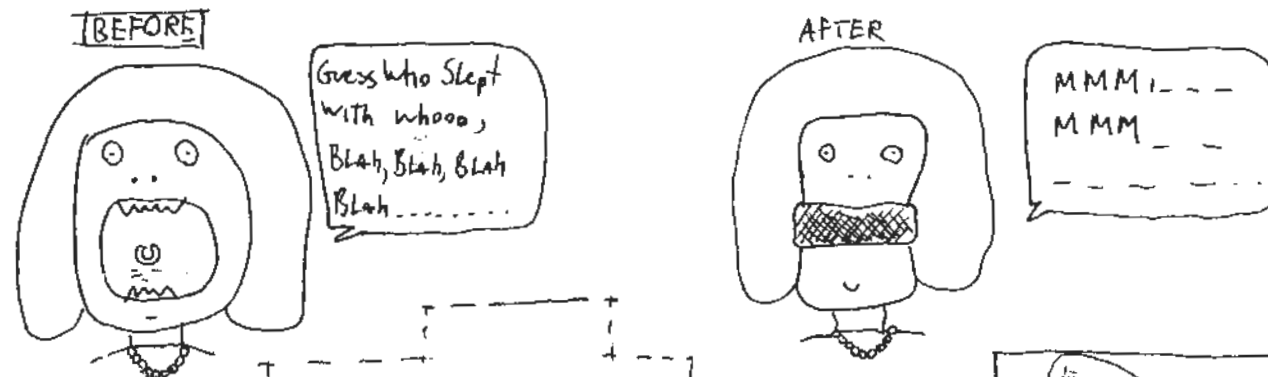
"I must point out that I don't see fundraising and leading the college as separate jobs. I will be addressing potential donors as a representative of Bennington College. And when I am at the school I will be one part of an entire community."

Claudia Rowe

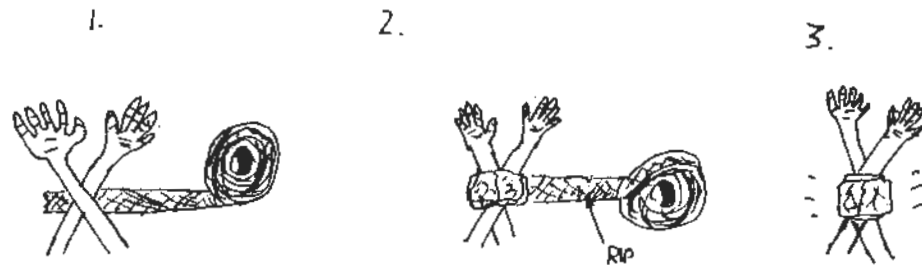
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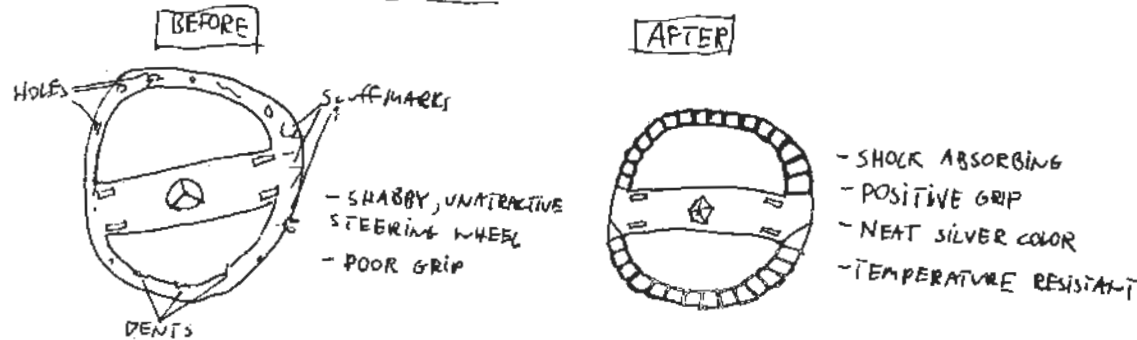
① INSTANT MOUTH GAG



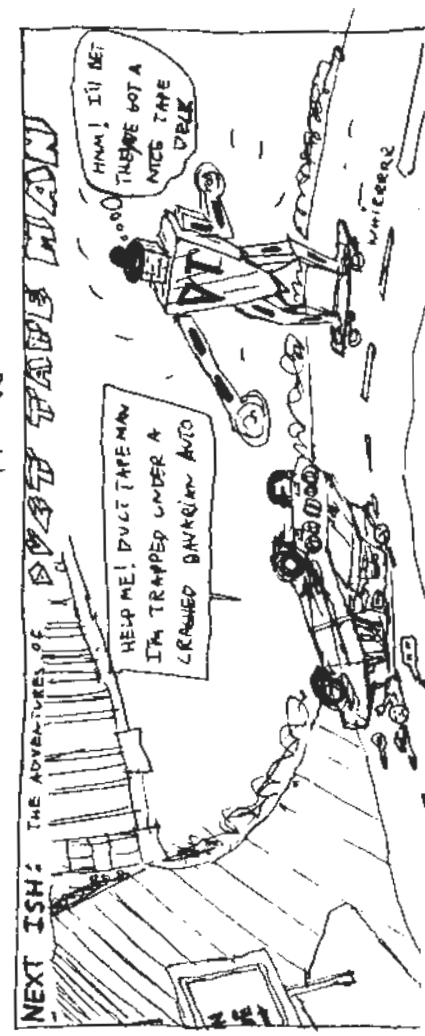
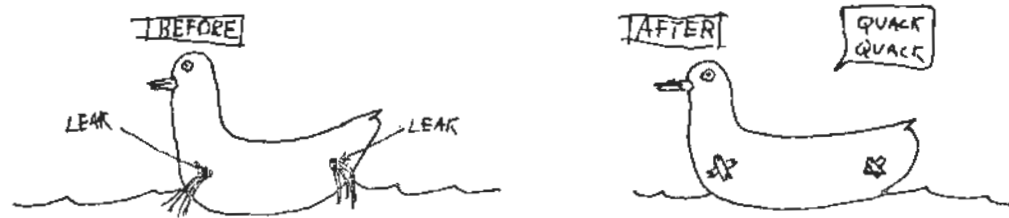
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presumably other administrators were either neutral or busy with other things, and so she upheld her judgement over objections from students and faculty. Even if I were to make a concerted effort, I don't think I could overcome my disgust at how this situation and the students and alumni concerned were dealt with. If we, two students, went to discuss the situation openly and honestly, then why was our understanding of it so slyly manipulated? What good does the Director of Student Services hope to effect through such tactics? It is very difficult to divine this persons' motives in this situation. In the light of the way it was handled, motives such as "acting in the interest of the community," or "appropriately and effectively fulfilling one's duties" don't seem to be among the possible choices.

Consider the following: the position of the director of Student Services is nowhere defined in writing. A message repeatedly transmitted by the Dean of studies and the Director of Student Services is that, in the light of pervasive student immaturity, that is, inability of the student community to be self-censored and self-regulated, the administration is forced toward the regrettable expedient of a more disciplinary test, one taken, of course with the ultimate goal of preservation and improvement of an academic institution going through troubled times. Before ever addressing this argument (which evokes a rather intractable problem) I would point up first how this

Are you with me, patient reader? the amount of conjecture I've been forced to make use of should make one thing clear above all: it is next to impossible to decide upon an appropriate response to a decision made by the college administration that is so flagrantly unfair because it has been deliberately made difficult to figure out exactly what they are doing and why. One must keep in mind that the administration is dealing with specific problems that need to be dealt with by someone, and, furthermore, that bad situations tend to breed unpopular decisions. Persecution of an individual is another matter. I think that from recent trends in administrative actions can be drawn: POWER. In a college community, the student body is numerically weighty, and conceptually, they are the biggest reason for the college's existence. They are also as individuals, much less constrained by career considerations in the expression of their opinions. However, they are an amorphous group that are, above all transient and young. It should be obvious then that a perception of the students on the part of administrators to deprive students of their responsibilities. At this point, the idea of any attempt to segregate "trouble maker" alumni from the student body begins to have an eerie significance. PROGRESS: Problems plaguing the college community are classified under inadequate titles such as "Student Apathy" or "Student vandalism" (or "Administrative Bungling" or Administrative

Shiftiness-A Meditation

I would like to use John's banning from campus, and my experience dealing with it, to make a few points about the concept of "good faith", both in how it applies to administrators and students. An assumption I confess to having is the following: there are things which are self evident. While children and neurotics might be tempted by the question: "What would happen if I stopped breathing?", most of us do not bother to test this one out. They are duped, as it were, by banal common sense and remain among the living. The upholding of John's ban from campus is another self evident thing. One can argue about it indefinitely, but one's time is "nearly wasted". It is obviously counter productive and obviously persecutory. One's time is better spent examining the issue in a broader context.

The more convoluted a situation becomes, the more factors that determine its out-come, the more this margin of the obvious disappears. Denial of the obvious is both trait and tool of hideous apparatuses of power. The Reagan administrations manipulation of the media is an excellent illustration of this tendency. A curious Bennington student might well be appalled that the shiftiness and maneuvering that characterizes large institutions has somehow been reproduced here on such a small scale.

I must try to convey the strength of certain impressions left upon me from interviews granted me and another concerned student with the Director of Student Services and the Dean of Studies. In the case of the former, I will resort to connotations that I felt was directed towards drawing from the individual's words and actions. I deem this both warranted and unavoidable; it is up to the reader to decide whether this is fair play.

The Dean prefaced our discussion by stating that he was in no way obliged to devote any time to John's case. We tried to make our arguments rational and clear and listened carefully to his presentation of the administration's position, both in regards to John's case and property damage in general. Beyond the fact that property damage had become generally exasperating to the administration, we could not ascertain who it was that actually saw fit to uphold John's rather pointless ban, or why. The ban seemed to be defended from the heavens as the ruling of the administration.

Period. The Dean was careful (and helpful, ultimately) in explaining that, in dealing with alumni, the administration was responsible to no one, although appeals can be made to the acting President. Presumably, alumni relations is an inconsequential grey area in administrative duty, at least until it's time to recruit them financially. At any rate, the Dean conceded that we might have a point in John's case, and said he'd look into the situation. We don't know where it went from there.

Our earlier discussion with the director of Student Services had a different bent. This individual listened very carefully to what we said, and seemed to show some concern for our sense of the injustice of the situation. While the director was of a different opinion than ourselves on the issue, it was conceded that John's treatment might seem harsh. We were told to tell John to be patient, as though his case were a particularly difficult one, and any arbitration of his situation would take time. The director of Student Services dealt with us a bewildering mixture of what looked like sympathy and hard-nosed evasion.

Seeing as we were talking to the person who had initiated the ban, we assumed we could at least ascertain whether John's clear, prompt, and respectful written explanation of the incident shed a new light on the situation. We also wanted to know if she considered the accusations that she had based her demand for the ban on were fair; an official ban is a drastic and fairly infrequently used measure. Finally we wanted to ascertain from this person, whose position presumably demands a positive effect on campus life, whether the "human element" might have some importance. Judging by the indignation this caused by so many students, perhaps this was a rather misplayed attempt to make a statement about respect for college property. These questions made the director of Student Services extremely uncomfortable. She stonewalled them

with phrases such as "I am not free to discuss this." More importantly she affected an absurd air of gravity and secrecy and she spoke as though what little she had already told us about this banal incident were somehow confidential and sensitive information. She gave the impression that it was now completely out of her hands and bigger than all of us. I attribute this bizarre behavior to chagrin on her part at having misconstrued John's action, and a consequential desire for the situation not to be fired back at her. At least, I thought she showed some respect for our concern, even if it was always completely subordinate to her concern for what she saw as the "larger" problem of property damage. Before we left she told us where we could appeal the decision, but did not seem particularly encouraging. The next few times I ran across this individual she made a sort of deliberate eye contact with me and asked me how I was doing.

I have since learned the following. Prior to John's banning, another alumni was called into student services in connection with another event, and was dismissed when it was established that he was nowhere near the scene of the incident. A third alumnus was banned in connection with another incident for refusing to turn in those responsible for it.

I have also established, at least to my satisfaction that the Director of Student Services has been the dogged defender within the administration of the ban,

implemented through John's case. In the past, being Director of Student Services involved heading a rather harmless body that attempted to aid students. The position has increasingly to include implementing discipline in recent years. More importantly, its methods have become increasingly reprehensible.

Why does the Director of student Services gun for alumni? Perhaps from a perception that the dead had come back to haunt her; students seen as rowdy come back after graduating to perpetuate the rowdiness. Or, from a conviction that alumni, being no longer, in effect, consumers, have less "excuse" to deviate, from behavior considered appropriate. One thing is certain: alumni are excessively vulnerable to being made examples of by insensitive administrators. They, again, are guaranteed no rights in a school constitution singularly lacking in checks and balances, and are thus entirely dependent in their treatment upon the fairness of individuals deciding the case. Of course it is very rare that all these factors surface so detrimentally...hence the importance of John's case. Most galling about the entire fiasco is the deflection that was practiced by the Director of Student Services: although its obvious that John's been screwed, probable that the Director of Student Services is the only person on the planet that finds the ban truly justifiable, and demonstrable that this is a nasty example of building owned by the college given obscure precedence over individuals valuable to the community, the Director of Student Services has persisted in maneuvering to obscure these facts, which, incidentally points to her being aware of them.

Hopefully many productive things can be done the student body, by systematic cooperation with and resistance to the administration. In light of the abusive disciplinary measure implemented this term (I have focused on but one) the students have to attempt to make their own definition of what this community is, and find their own destination. It is imperative that we find a way to effectively deal with problems within the community ourselves as problems that are arbitrated by the administration are increasingly becoming disasters.

Alex Sokoloff

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by John Jay Knapp Jr.

A N EDITORIAL

When at least there is something to remember,
hearts beat, moments move on, as the ceiling
rises to the occasion, while our T.V. gets a
bath

only enough stuff could be seen through the
avenues of recourse, and penniless promises
holding.

Today Prismaio concerned himself to hold to
the most holdable of holds, which defined
16 invasions, 4 fools, 4 geniuses, and
2 large bottles of wine.

Praise to buttermilk, Gary Martin, sensuousness,
her delectable ass, playing harpsicord while
fondling dessert.

Give to me your ears, your long underwear, and
your impressions of Kandinsky and his fathers
evenings.

To reap havoc with orange roes: to notice
that blue herets come and go in time with
busses and silver cars.

To travel to foreign countries, become fluent
in a language, and hopefully become a polyglot
before it's too late.

To redeem a theme of Spanish princess,
to unveil being scared of having no judgement,
to keep pushing and keep pushing.

Anthony Cafritz, Alumni, was
officially banned from campus
this term for an event which
it is known by Security that
he did not commit. The admi-
nistration has placed the ban
because they feel he knows who
is responsible for the inci-
dent (the rolling of a bowling
ball down Booth hump) and will
not own up as to who the
guilty parties are. Anthony
was banned on grounds of guilt
by association (I'm hearing
music from another time) due
to being seen near the scene
of the crime. Despite the
fact that Anthony was not re-
sponsible for the damage which
took place (knocking out three
bannister rails) he made the
mistake of sending the College
a check for more than the dam-
age value as a sign of good
faith in hopes that Student
Services was interested in re-
placing the rails and not in
looking for a scapegoat to an
incident which they have no
clue as to who is responsible.

Anthony Cafritz along with
John Offenhartz (see article
by Alexander Sokoloff) were ar-
bitrarily banned from campus.
Both of these individuals were
deeply emotionally affected by
their newly imposed status for
a multitude of reasons. This
is evident in such events as
Anthony overpaying for some-
thing for which he is not re-
sponsible, and John's long, en-
ergetic and fruitless campaign
to have someone in authority
give a moment's consideration
to his case. Both Anthony and
John are extremely outraged by
their banning; one issue which
has been somewhat overlooked
is exactly why they feel such
despair.

Anthony Cafritz, as exhibi-
ted in the latest Quadrille,
has made accomplishments as a
sculptor. I would like to look
for a moment beyond the obsce-
nity of Bennington College ex-
ploiting Anthony on one level
and chastising him on another.
John Offenhartz presently works
for his former Electronic Mu-
sic teacher, Joel Chatiby.

John's work involves writing
innovative computer programs
for electronic music which is
a relatively new and highly
competitive field. John is on
the cutting edge of this field.
Neither John nor Anthony any
longer have the comfort of
doing their work for satisfy-
ing purely academic or artis-
tic growth. All of the compli-
cations and fears of trying to
be an artist in the real world
are upon them. At this point
in their lives, John and An-
thony are trying to establish
themselves in their respective
fields; their work is their
lives, it is them: if their
work fails, they fail.

All of the items I have men-
tioned above which make up a
vast part of John's and Antho-
ny's lives stem from Bennington
College. The intense despair
which people experience at Ben-
nington doe to the nature and
significance of the situation,
to a certain degree makes peo-
ple what they are. It is no
wonder that people feel such a
strong bond for Bennington once
they have graduated, consider-
ing what they experience here.
Bennington is a liminal ex-
perience. There is a necessary
connection between what one
goes through here and who they
are. It is not hard to see why
one would become upset when a
decision is made arbitrarily
that one is no longer welcome,
and is told that "you are not
part of the community" despite
what your status is concerning
your "privilege to be on cam-
pus". Telling someone like
John or Anthony that they are
not part of the community is
telling them that they are not
part of the human race. John
and Anthony are both Bennington
success stories. They have the
courage to take the difficult
course of laying what they are
on the line and what they are
is being judged constantly.
They are making it despite the
unbelievable difficulites. The
relationship between Benning-
ton and the people who make use
of it must be reciprocal. What

are the goals of this institu-
tion? And how does a misunder-
standing weigh against the be-
ginning of a life's work?
What is important?

All I am really trying to say
is that this place holds great
meaning for Alumni such as
John and Anthony, and they de-
serve a moment's consideration
for they have contributed to
this institution in a much
more abstract way than such as
John donating his time to tutor
students in electronic music.
The Quadrille plans on doing a
piece on Electronic Music in
which they want to interview
John: another Bennington alum
makes good. If you're going
to go swimming with sharks,
make sure you wear an iron
jock strap, for the waters are
full of them.

by Andrew Cohen

INTRODUCING!

**DEVELOP
ONLY**

Coffee House

November 22 at 2:30 PM

Paul Robeson House

Tony Wilson
electric guitar

Ehran Elisha
percussion

Kenny Dell
electric bass

Jay Knapp
alto saxophone

photo and caption courtesy of Quadrille showing sculpture
by alumnus who is now banned



"Bethlehem Rogue" is a 9' x 15' mild steel sculpture created by
Anthony Cafritz '85 and commissioned by the Usdan Center for the
Arts. Cafritz worked on the sculpture in the summer and fall of 1985
and it was installed last January in the Suzanne and Nathaniel
Usdan Center for the Creative and Performing Arts in Huntington,
Long Island. The center was established in 1967 by Samuel
Lemberg, who named it in honor of his daughter, Bennington trustee,
Suzanne Lemberg Usdan '51 and her husband.

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Dear Editor:
With respect to the sincerity of the discontent expressed at the emergency Student Council Meeting last Wednesday night, we would like to call attention to what we deem most important here in our experience here as students, that is, our academic and creative growth as individuals. When individuals actively engage themselves in their creative endeavors, they then generate creativity which is beneficial to the community.

Take initiative. Be more autonomous, resourceful, self-reliant. The greatest way to eliminate what is perceived as administrative pettiness is to eliminate the need for administrative intervention.

There is no need for the administration to assign councilors to any students beyond their first term here. Approach faculty members directly, secure a councilor, inform the Dean of Studies office. Keep in mind that counseling is not restricted to the councilor-counselee relationship proper.

We unfortunately need administrative intervention concerning vandalism. We resent not only the destruction of common property, but also the shared cost incurred. Fire extinguisher play presupposes a lack of respect for human life.

Take advantage of and make effective the already existing Student Educational Policies Committee. Many classes this term are still without SEPC representatives.

We are tired of hearing about what Bennington was, is supposed to be. We need to be creative about what it is now. We need to take an active role in our education. If complaining is activism, we want no part of it.

Ann Margaret Russ
Rebecca Morton