

# Bernie Iser Speaks Out



Photo by Mara Koltanow

Business Manager  
Bernie Iser

By JOHN HOLLAND

NP: What was your position at Queen's College and what did it involve?

Iser: The title of Business Manager and its responsibilities covered anything related to money at all, both in day-to-day operation and planning. The business office itself is divided into units of budget, bursar, personnel, employee benefits, payroll, purchasing, accounting, internal audit, stores and warehouse, and then service on various faculty and student committees relating to the operation of the college union, periodically it includes food service, bookstore, and student activities. In all it entails a staff of about 130 people.

NP: How did you work together with President Murphy there, and is it true that one condition of his acceptance of President of Bennington was that you come as Business Manager?

Iser: The second part of this question you'll have to ask him. I doubt it. I believe when we spoke about it for the first time he had already accepted the position at Bennington. It was beyond the point of his thinking about it. Our relationship there was, (I think), very similar to what it is here.

In the six years we worked together there, we quickly developed an understanding with each other of the type of things he wanted to know about before the fact and the type of things he wanted to know about after the fact. His general approach to the college was that you had your job and you did it. If you do it right I probably won't know very much about your being here, because I'll just hear the complaints. At Queens our offices were in the same building. I had complete access to him at all times. I would guess most areas, despite what organizational charts might show, really reported directly to him.

NP: Could you respond to the accusations that certain of your decisions have been made without regard to the recommendations of the appropriate committees.

Iser: In part I would guess that these are, on the face of it, true. An explanation of it would be just learning the Bennington way. Instead of stopping to think about the fact there is a committee that deals with it. I just look at a question raised by someone and respond to it instead of referring to a committee. I think from those instances where it had backfired I've learned that it won't happen again. I think most of the points that were raised, of that type, occurred between terms and they were decisions based on "Let's do it now."

Whatever it was that had to be done, could be done, and would, in the opinion of those few people who were considering at the time, be better for them, if they were not done in traditional Bennington Way.

In those instances where I have dealt with these committees and they have made their comment, I think I have made the appropriate apologies and said mea culpa.

It was not intentional bypassing. I think

most of these are things that occurred between terms, and that with these committees we have now set up schedules of when the committee should have their recommendations available for either NRT of summer projects and that in the administration we're aware of things that have to be done, and should be considered by a committee and that we will meet the same deadlines.

NP: So you think there should be more coordination than there is now?

Iser: I think that both committees and administration understand that there are certain emergency projects that might have to go forward. In a few instances there will be temporary solutions implemented, and then the committees will be consulted when they return for a permanent solution. The temporary ones will either be inexpensive, in the event that they have to be undone, or be of a type where the materials, if any are involved, can be reused in other areas without wasting money.

An example of that would be the chairs in the new dining room! Where the college needed additional chairs, a decision had to be made about what to do about the director's chairs, but the plastic chairs were needed in any event and we got an extremely good price by buying the chairs when we did. The subcommittee involved has made, I believe, a decision, and we will abide by the subcommittee's decision.

But even though those chairs will be taken out of the new dining room the fact that we will not have to rent chairs for some events now, will enable us to pay for those chairs over a period of three years.

NP: On arriving at Bennington last year what financial policies did you have and how have they changed after becoming acquainted with the politics and personalities of Bennington College?

Iser: The only real idea was that there was a large deficit, it was a growing deficit. Ways had to be found to eliminate it. It was

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## THE

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# NEW PAPER

December 1977

### News Analysis

## Sparse Crowd Shows For Community Meeting

By ELIZABETH SHACKNOVE

Fifteen people came to the meeting held by the Constitutional Committee Monday night, November 28, at 8:30 p.m. in Tishman Hall. The sparse turnout was attributed to a Senior Concert and a Social Science Division Lecture scheduled at the same time as the community meeting.

Claude Brachfeld, Constitutional Committee Chairman, explained that the Constitutional Committee is a body designated by Student Council to review, update, and make suggestions to Student Council concerning the current Constitution. The Constitution delineates a set of rights and the jurisdiction that student government has. Brachfeld said, the intent of holding a meeting open to the College community was to discuss the purpose and future of student government and to encourage thought and discussion about how people feel and what they want from student government.

Feeling was expressed at the meeting

that student council now seems to be a purely reactive body rather than a group which initiates issues. Instead Student Council President could inform Student Council about issues the group might act upon; another possible form of student government would be Community Meeting, at which anyone in the college community could speak.

Student Amy Spound, said that twenty years ago Bennington College student government did function in the form of a community meeting, but that this format did not allow students a strong power base. Ms. Spound further stated that as it is, Student Council does little more than allocate money but it has the opportunity to talk about anything or issue any and can be the most organized voice of students, representing the student body, a voice to which the administration will listen.

Student Colm Dobbyn put forward the idea that what would a sub-committee be a sub- of if not student council? Different sub-committees, perhaps branches of Student Council, could be created to study a particular issue, make suggestions, and report to the entire voting Student Council. He said that this might alleviate the present problem of dominant personalities bull-doing motions through Student Council.

The meeting was concluded with the suggestion that a sheet of ideas should be distributed throughout the community, so that people can communicate their support of or opposition to changes. Mr. Brachfeld ended by thanking those that came and "not thanking those who did not come" thereby expressing their lack of interest.

Whatever may finally be established for the role of student government at Bennington College, the Student Council should not be solely concerned with entertainment and allocating money — it could serve a far more active and important part in student's lives while at the College.

## New Paper Chooses New Officers

Judith Berman, an interdivisional anthropology and literature major in her junior year will be taking over the position of Editor-in-Chief beginning next semester it was learned at a recent New Paper meeting. Amy Spound, who will be a first term senior in the spring, will be stepping down from the position which she has held since Spring of 1977.

Other officers who were chosen at the meeting are Kevin Farley, who will replace Nate Williams as assistant editor, Liz Shacknove who will take Julie Miller's current position as Arts Editor, Maryann Mazzacaro, who will fill in for John Holland as Business Manager, and John Bertles the paper's cartoonist, who will also assist with proofreading next semester.

Colm Dobbyn will keep his position as News Editor, Anne Soorikian will stay on as copy editor with assistance from Ms. Spound. Barry Weinbaum will continue as Lay-out Editor, assisted by Angela Combs.

## FEPC Reverses Decision on Science Controversy

In meeting, on November 30th, the Faculty Educational Policy Committee reversed its earlier decision to create a "rotating" position in biology. This action followed a lengthy presentation by the science division at a meeting with the committee before the Thanksgiving break, during which all divisional faculty were present.

The move provides recruiting for the position (to become open in June) can be done under terms of a normal three year contract. If another position is vacated at the same time, these provisions would again apply, although the EPC has final authority on educational matters. One committee member said that it was "99 percent certain" that hiring in this event would be on a normal basis.

Science faculty members and students queried about the reversed decision, demonstrated relief, and a common feeling of "now we can get back to what we're here for." Some anger at "the arbitrary manner in which the idea was foisted upon us in the first place," lingered.

Dean of Faculty Don Brown expressed pleasure that the division's special interests could be accommodated within the EPC's general policies, but retained some reservations about a "paired down curriculum" argument. He noted that the committee would now work on other matters, some dating from the days of the "futures committee", such as whether the college should have a core curriculum.



Judith Berman  
New Editor-in-Chief

## An Editor's Reflections

By NATE WILLIAMS

I hope no one thinks me selfish if I take a moment to reflect on the editorship of the "New Paper." It is healthy to periodically sit back and evaluate the road you have individually and collectively traveled over. The paper is a year and a half old this semester, some how forced into existence by a few determined souls. The "New Paper" is not Bennington's first paper. The "Bennington Biweekly" was its predecessor and was a more professional looking rag, (perhaps only a question of style).

It was sometime between the "Biweekly" and the appearance of the "N.P." which was started by characters some of whom knew nothing about newspaper production. As it often happens in new collective endeavors, too many cooks spoil the broth. Organization was shaky at best, so much so, that four people alone produced the last issue in the Fall of 76.

The staff has grown and centered its energies considerably. The paper has become a lucrative business, and the organization is not without its prestige, now that it has its own office, (complete with chairs, desks, newspaper tools and a used IBM). This semester, the average staff size was twenty-two, an impressive number for any extra-curricular activity at Bennington. The paper's history has evolved during the interesting transition from the Parker era to the Murphy era.

Mr. Murphy is a well spoken (some say too well spoken) man with strong convictions (some say they are mistaken convictions) and a sense of organization that Bennington needs. The new team of Murphy and Iser are still becoming accustomed to the "Bennington way." Decisions are made by committees and radically new changes are frowned upon. The schism between what Murphy thinks is best for the school and what the faculty thinks is best may remain a positive system of checks and balances or a continuing source of unproductive friction, (perish the thought).

There are faculty and students that are convinced that Murphy has a 'master plan'; bring in the big names, cut down on tenure, direct more power into the president's office and in doing so, undermine the quality of teaching and learning that goes on here. Were this to be Murphy's plan or any part of it, we would be in serious trouble.

So far, the only 'big names' to come to Bennington, are those recruited by the faculty to replace temporarily available positions or those coming in as Hadley Fellows. The paper has interviewed Murphy on several occasions and on the surface, his opinions are incongruous with the accusations. People still feel that Murphy has something in mind for Bennington that he is not telling us.

Maybe what Murphy has in mind is something the paper ran into constantly — cowardice. Bennington College in any area, is plagued with cowardice; on the part of faculty in honestly evaluating itself individually and collectively, on the part of the student body, in Student Council and in our evaluation of academic standards. Our small community is often afraid to step on some toes which might result in the freshening of water in the stream. I can understand why students do not get more involved with decisions being made. They do not have time. But I am curious as to why Student Council has not dealt with some of the issues that the paper has dealt with.

I do not believe that the paper will ever be a politically stimulating force here. But one wonders what would happen if

students became more active? Would student input into faculty review be taken more seriously? Would SEPC gain the effective power it should have? Would we learn what the true criteria are that FEPC uses to fire teachers? Could we apply ourselves to the weaknesses that exist in academic evaluation? Could students enforce honest and open minded consideration of policy changes? At some point we must face these questions for to submerge them would be foolish.

Dewey's philosophy of learn by experience is not without its problems in an increasingly specialized world. Is that philosophy working here? Do we have the opportunity to learn the specifics later? Is it surprising that so many plan to go on to graduate school? The paper ran into this identity crisis in every major issue it covered.

(If the above dissertation is completely erroneous, then feel free to write a letter to the editor, but I will not be there as assistant editor nor will Amy Spound be editor-in-chief. This school is just not conducive to extra-curricular activity.) It would do well for administration, faculty and students to take notice, for though my opinion might be false, the existence of my beliefs are a reality and are not held solely by myself. It is time for someone to answer to these accusations in rebuttal or in support.

Let us hope the paper survives the forces working against it. Many do not like the paper but please understand, we have no real skill or training — we are doing it "the Bennington way." The "New Paper" has a long way to go and hopefully it will go a long way.

By AMY SPOUND

Although student life at Bennington College will never resemble student life at more conventional institutions (because many student activities usually thought of as extracurricular such as chorus or theatre curriculum) there are still definite possibilities for improvement.

While it would be impossible and undesirable to change the basic educational structure of Bennington there exist other ways of improving student life on campus. The most important tool potentially at the students' disposal is that great watchdog of student activities, Student Council.

Student Council, composed of a group of noteworthy and notorious individuals, meets once a week every Tuesday to deliberate on almost anything and everything from cats and dogs to senior parties to student registration. When a crisis breaks or comes to a boil the council is always there to defend the rights of the students or the dignity of the council itself. That is all very well and good. But is it enough just to be there to defend positions of student power and authority when that power and authority is not even in existence to begin with?

Furthermore, the dignity of the council, the respect that it commands, is at times dubious. Sometimes it is difficult to determine how seriously each member of council regards their duties as representatives. While meetings are decidedly less cynical than they were a year and a half ago one wonders whether members of Student Council are not almost as apathetic as the rest of the student body.

Recently, a community meeting, sponsored by the Constitutional Committee, was held in order to discuss the future of Student Council and alternative

To the Editor:

New York City's electrical power shortage continues to grow. A proposed plant that would cost \$480,000,000 and consume 2,100 tons of the 80,000 tons of garbage generated by New York City each day is being opposed by Mayor Beame, and the Mayor Elect Koch as well as the runner up in the mayoralty campaign, Mario Cuomo.

Koch and Cuomo received 89 percent of the vote in the general election. Apparently 89 percent of the voters in New York City oppose the construction of the PASNY (Power Authority of N.Y. State) plant in Travis on Staten Island. To them, it doesn't make any difference whether there is electricity in N.Y. City or not.

If the people of the City of New York do not care whether they have electric power or not, it surely is not necessary for people in Vermont or Quebec to cut back their own electrical consumption in order to provide electrical power for elevators in the summer time.

The power plant on Staten Island is favored by most of the people who live there and opposed by a few lawyers and people who recently moved to Staten Island within the last 3 years.

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Dear Editors,

This letter is in response to the controversy over grades. I am still receiving grades (happily so) and have no personal quibble with the system as it now stands.

I am, however, violently opposed to the attitude taken by the college. To my thinking, the system that now exists is contrary to anything like consideration of "individual" concerns that students may have. What in the world is possibly wrong with allowing students the OPTION of choosing grades, if in their superior in-

dividual wisdom they so desire?

Who is it in the administration that has decided to offer, at a very high price, a product (namely each student's transcript) that no one is SURE will be of future benefit to the student? Granted that I certainly could not judge one way or the other for grades over comments, but I would insist on the right of the student at Bennington to be allowed a choice. If we are to glorify the individual over the institution we should at least grant ourselves the common decency of individual choices.

Sincerely yours,  
Richard Dailey

### THE NEWPAPER

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## Student Council: A Study In Apathy

forms of government. A grand total of twelve people showed up. What was even worse only two or three members of student Council bothered to come. This factor was especially frustrating because the meeting was primarily called for the benefit of Student Council.

Thus far, the Constitutional Committee has received little support from the Student Council in general even though the Council would benefit from what the Constitutional Committee is attempting to accomplish. At the last meeting of Student Council the Council voted to hold a referendum in the near future on an important amendment which must be approved by the student body before any further amendments of the Constitution can be made. Unfortunately, no one from the Council volunteered to run the referendum. According to the current Constitution the Council is required to run all elections and referenda. (NOTE: Hopefully, by the time this issue appears in the mailboxes, the Council has changed its attitude.)

While Student Council wallows in its own apathy various independent or semi-independent student organizations take a much larger role in improving student life on this campus than Student Council was ever wont to do. The New Paper, Silo, The Gay Community Organization, and Svaha are all student activities that have refused to watch the Bennington College student community drown in its self-made social chaos. The Recreation Committee, while still an arm of Student Council, has worked semi-independently of the Council. The Sports "department" has especially made headway this year establishing a sports program at Bennington College. But all of the financial support has come from

Business Manager, Bernie Iser, and Director of Student Services, Short Aldrich, and not from the Student Council.

As various organizations become more and more independent on both a financial and operational level Student Council clings more tightly to its cache of student money. By refusing to evaluate their role at the college they have become little more than a financial clearing house which stores money as it travels from Mr. Iser's office to the Student body.

Even though, they are the only representative student body on campus they have declined to take a leadership role at the college. Occasionally, an attempt is made to organize the Student body into a political power, as with the recent student boycott of registration. Aside from the fact that the boycott was called half-way through registration after many students had already paid, Student Council did make an attempt to establish some sort of power base. That is commendable but this type of action should be a rule rather than an exception.

One wonders what precisely is to be Student Council's future role on campus? Will they continue on their path of blissful impotence? Or will they take it upon themselves to rid the organization of its image as an apathetic, anemic representational body and become a powerful student voice? If they choose the former route than they have little choice but to eventually disband since more student organizations are going through other channels for financial support. If they follow the path of the latter then they will gain for the students of Bennington College a true voice which will help to determine in which direction the future of Bennington College will turn.



## "A Doctor In Spite of Himself"

by Anne Schwarz

Patricia Reynolds, who teaches directing this term at Bennington, chose "A Doctor in Spite of Himself" by Moliere (1622-1673) for her Hadley Fellow production. It was performed December 1, 2, and 3 with a cast of seven, a small portable stage, and a fairly simple set. The scenery was designed by Cedric Flower and music was written by Michael Starobin.

Moliere's plays are not often performed in England or America. Some people feel that the problem is the difficulty in translation. Moliere wrote plays in a certain unique style and many people don't feel that a translated version can capture this.

Patricia Reynolds feels that there are reliable translations. The version that she is using is one which was written by several well known American actors, including Alfred Drake and Morris Karnovsky. She feels that since it was written by actors it captures the kind of dialogue that actors are comfortable with. It is fairly faithful to the original and at the same time is free enough to capture the flavor of the play and introduce it to English-speaking audiences.

Moliere was one of the most famous actors and dramatists of the seventeenth century French theatre. He began by touring with a traveling troupe and later established a theatre in Paris and played for the royal court. He was writing at the same time as the "Comedie del Arte" and was influenced by it. It is this flavor that Ms. Reynolds has tried to create in her production. Moliere's court plays were more refined and had more polish and were done very elaborately. "Doctor in Spite of Himself" is one of his earlier plays and Ms. Reynolds tried to give it more of what she calls a "pastoral" feeling. That is, the feeling of a less sophisticated country play without the overdone mannerisms and satire of the court plays. There is also the feeling of a traveling troupe of players which she drew from her strong background in street theatre.

The play was done in such a way as not to emphasize the time period. The story is a very universal one and really has as much relevance today as it ever did. Ms. Reynolds feels that by de-emphasizing the time period she has brought the play closer to the audience, and given the audience more of a chance to identify with the characters. She has added several mime scenes which are really an extension of the story line and fit well into the framework of the play.

The overture, which was written by Michael Starobin, has a whole mime sequence which goes with it and serves to introduce the characters and the main themes of the play. At the climax of one scene the characters stop and one of the

actors comes out and does a commercial for a box of crackers. This is obviously a spoof of television, where there is always a commercial at the moment when something important is about to happen, but Ms. Reynolds has done television one better — she interrupted her commercial with the play. Actually, it was not unheard of in Moliere's day to stop a performance for a community announcement or something of that nature.

She feels the students here are very well suited for the production. Some of them had done some scenes from Moliere in their acting classes with Larry O'Dwyer, and so they understood something about performing that style. She is also amazed that the students are so well versed in improvisation and could take things from the improvisations she had them do and incorporate them into the play. She says that the students work very hard and that the cast works well as a team. The energy levels are very high, and some of the scenes are very exhausting. The students seem to be really serious about what they are doing.

Now that so many colleges and universities are doing so much with theatre, Ms. Reynolds feels that Moliere and many playwrights who have not often been produced until now will be performed again and students will get a fuller range of experience which they will certainly benefit from. She feels that "Doctor in Spite of Himself" is her contribution to a growing trend in theatre training.



Photo by Deborah Chu

Scene from "Doctor In Spite of Himself"

## Music And Dance Students to Tour

by Dan Cameron

Through the joint efforts of the Offices of Special Projects, Alumni Affairs and Admissions, three separate groups from the college community will spend NRT rehearsing for and going on regional tours of the United States. Their performances will take place at private schools who have an interest in Bennington College. In the words of Polly Runyon, Admissions Officer and one of the chief organizers of the tour, "The best way for people to really find out about Bennington is for us to go to them and do what we do."

There is also the added benefit for students here to be able to present their achievements in a working performance context away from the security of the Bennington College environment. Heidi Stonier, one of the student organizers of the dance tour, refers to it as "an even exchange between the college's and the students' personal ambitions."

The members of the dance group include Heidi Stonier, Caitlin Corbett, Mary Lyman, Trina Moore, Andy Tierstein and Paul Temple who is another student

coordinator of the tour. These six students are presently assembling a repertoire of about a dozen works, all conceived in various collaborations with one another, and with any member's specific outside interests aiding in the conception — i.e., Tierstein's composing, Lyman's painting and Temple's instrumentation and conducting will each prove to be the basis for at least one dance apiece. Among the dances presented will be full-group compositions, solos, duets, a "disaster piece" (for socks and shoes should facilities not lend themselves to standard barefoot techniques), and a living room piece to be performed in a more intimate space than an auditorium.

The dance tour is a revival of a once-strong tradition at the school, taking place every other year under far more grueling conditions. The tours were stopped in 1972 because of occasional damage to students' health from a 25-city tour. This winter's dancers will begin traveling after 3½ weeks of on-campus rehearsal, and are planning on several performances in the Northeast, notably Boston, Hartford, and

Westchester and Fairfield Counties.

As the dancers leave Bennington, members of the touring student string quartet will be about halfway through their rehearsal schedule in New York City.

The members of this group are David Jaffe, violin, Doug Biow, violin, Lynn Bertles, viola and Kirsten Vogelsang, cello. Under the tutelage of Jacob Glick the four musicians are putting together a full program of chamber music, including a Haydn string quartet, a faculty piece, a work by Jaffe for two violins, and the Debussy Quartet for strings. The students will give a performance in New York on or around February 20th, then leave for the West and Midwest, with concerts in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, and two or more stops in other major cities (possibly Detroit, Denver, Minneapolis and/or Chicago). As with the dancers, the members of the quartet will make themselves available for giving information and advice about Bennington to alumni and prospective students.

On a somewhat smaller scale is a 3- or 4-day tour by faculty and an alumna which will take place in February and will include Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Philadelphia. Jack Gluck, Henry Brant, David Starobin, Maurice Pachman, Polly Runyon and Gunnar Schonbeck will make the trip, bringing with them a repertoire that includes several pieces by Villa-Lobos — Distribution of Flowers for flute and guitar, Baccian Brasilieras for flute and bassoon, a solo guitar piece, as well as a Hindemith sonata for viola, an improvisation from Henry Brant, and a solo guitar work by William Bland. This tour also differs from the others in that it is being partially underwritten by the Esther Williamson Ballou ('37) Fund, which set aside a designated amount of money for just such an undertaking for Bennington music division. All faculty and students involved are donating their services to the college for the tour.

## Falcone Plays Chopin, Falcone

by Barry Horowitz

Last Friday night I had the good fortune to be attending the brilliant performance of "Marc Falcone recent works-Chopin." Having been at the Carriage Barn Thursday night, I was captivated by Marc Falcone's dress rehearsal which was in progress in the next room. From what I could pick up, it seemed that the concert would be quite a production. I was not disappointed.

The first part of the concert consisted of four of Chopin's works: a polonaise, a mazurka, an etude, and finally another mazurka.

While none may have been that technically challenging, they were all

played with such style and sensitivity that one could not help being captivated by their beauty.

After the intermission Mr. Falcone's own compositions were played. The first piece was an example of drumming used as musical therapy, and was entitled "The Page Intentionally Left Blank". The next two pieces were entitled "The Magic Number is Five" and "Incidental music for Shakespeare's Twelfth Night". The former was a piece for pianos and percussion, played by music division faculty and students. Mr. Falcone's ability at contemporary composition: the latter a piece utilizing woodwinds and strings, with quite impressive or-

chestration. However, none of the other works equalled the creative genius of the work "The instruments of the orchestra: part three the percussion section." In a nutshell, it was a hilarious satire of religion and its subsequent philosophy of existence, expelled through the mouth of a spiritual soothsayer.

The spiritual soothsayer was Marc Falcone, and his ability to mix the dramatic aspect of words and voice control with that of music is what made the piece so fantastic. All in all the concert was quite an experience. Judging from the enthusiastic reception of the audience Mr. Falcone will be heard from for many years to come.

# "Jam In New York"

by Andrea Poole

Four weeks ago, I was taken by a friend to CBGB's located at Bleeker and Bowery in New York, to see two punk rock bands. One of the groups was "The Jam", an English band just beginning their first American tour.

The clientele came as no shock. I have "researched" CBGB's and was expecting the complete gamut of punk dress from torn t-shirts to the ever-popular black mesh stockings, cat glasses, Danskins and satin short shorts. The people, on the whole, though, were fairly subdued. I was disappointed. Only one woman had the mesh-stocking, satin hot pants costume on and there were few torn t-shirts to be seen. Basically the crowd was imported from suburbia and they looked like any group of kids you would meet at your parents cocktail parties, but they all looked as if they were playing hookey.

Word went round the tables that Patti Smith had been in last night and that DeeDee Ramone was sitting at the table two over from mine. I dutifully craned my neck and saw a man of about twenty-five, slightly chubby and short in a cashmere turtleneck sweater and corduroy blazer.

The music was incredibly loud and people were packed like sardines. Through a great amount of gall and pushy nerve our party obtained a front row table and we observed "The Jam" at close range. They all wore black suits cut very tightly with white shirts and very narrow sixties black ties. Their hair was cut very much like the Beatles in the early sixties.

The whole place was absolutely electrified by the suppressed energy which they threw out when they played. There were no breaks between songs; "One-two-three-four" and another song would start. The music was very much like early rock and roll.

English punk is very different from its American counterpart and comes from a long-standing tradition of 'rebellious youth' groups. The Teddy Boys of the late fifties, Carnaby Street and the entire idea of the swinging English hippy are now being re-lived by the younger brothers and sisters of old sixties' hippies.

Unemployment, believe it or not, is one of the perpetrators of English punk. People leave comprehensive schools in England at sixteen. There are no jobs. Unemployment is at a peak in the U.K. and there are large masses of English youth "on the dole". An English friend of mine sees a direct connection with the dissatisfaction caused among British youth by the absence of jobs, and the energy being transmuted into punk rock.

Then again we must not forget that punk is a helluva lot of fun to listen to, nobody outside the age of 16 to 20 understands it. It is good and raucous, one does not have to interpret it or place heavy meanings on each phrase. Nihilism, like pornography, is great fun; you don't have to think about it. Basically English punk is Dada, nihilism with mild political overtones commenting on the state of decay of society, accompanied by a great deal of noise.

American punk is something else again. The Ramones, The Talking Heads, Richard Hell and the Voidoids, all these groups, are American punk, not New Wave and not English punk. The Talking Heads, are graduates of the Rhode Island School of Design, of the Harvard Business School. The Ramones all have degrees from institutions of varying quality and two have their Masters. One theory about American Punk is that it is nothing but the revolt of the intellectuals.

People interpret punk rock in different ways. It is political. It is "Anarchy in the U.K." It is gangs of punk rockers running around with chains beating little old ladies over the head. It is sick. It is a sign of decadence. It is more intellectual than anyone could possibly dream. It is different. It is dangerous.

I beg to differ. It is simply fun.



## Growing Young in Bennington

by Mary Ellen Stringos

Alice Houran will be 94 next April 12th. She lives on Main Street in Bennington. I met her by asking around for "oldtimers", and one man suggested that I go see his mother.

She is a small woman, but nevertheless very lively and full of energy. Her hair is short, wavy, and light brown; not a single gray hair on her head. She says that people think that she dyes her hair but if they came early in the morning when she shampoos her hair, "they'd see".

"Times have changed especially if you get to be as old as I am, but I don't think I am old. They all tell me I am. I don't feel it much. I'm lively all the time; I'm on the go all day long. Today I've done a little hand washing, and done all the ironing and all the cooking; there's four of us to cook for." She attributes her good health to working, and her doctor guarantees that she'll live to be at least a hundred.

Things have changed in the "village", as she still calls it. She was born in Canada into a French speaking family and came to Proctor, Vermont when she was ten. Three years later she moved to Bennington and has been living here ever since. Most of her time was spent in the mills until she married when she was over 21.

"When I was a young girl I worked in the factories. I worked in the Thomson Mill. First, I worked in the big brick mill on Benmont Ave. It was a lot different then; it isn't as big as it is now. I worked there for quite a few years and when I'd get tired of it, I would just drop out. I'd say to the boss, 'Oh, I've just got to have a vacation.' And he'd say, 'Not again,' because I was a sample maker for the cloth. I'd quit there and go to the other mill. I was on the sewing machines making hem stitches on pillow cases. I'd get tired of one job, and I'd go back and say to the other boss, 'How about a job.' 'You again,' he'd say, 'You're coming back?', well come on, your machine will be ready in the morning.' So I went like that back and forth until I was married."

Bennington was a very quiet place. She can't get over how the people are so rough and noisy today. There was never any quarreling, and the people were very friendly. A month ago a stone was hurled through her closed window and upset her. Apparently three brothers had been fighting across the street at a restaurant.

Bennington has grown since she was young. The Thomson Mill is still here but it has changed. The Catholic Church, St. Francis, was built when she was a girl. The museum was once a church that she used to attend. There was no college and no such thing as nursing homes. Even the cemeteries are different. Park Lawn Cemetery "is all new and pretty well filled up now." The names of the streets have changed too. Benmont was originally Mill

Street. At the Four Corners there used to be the best hotel in town, The Putnam Hotel. Across the street was The Cottage Hotel. On the corner of River and North stood the American House, and down the street on River was the Columbia. She says the hotels were always full of show people who gave weekly performances.

She got to know most of the people of Bennington through her husband's meat market and grocery. They had a great name for first class meat and for molasses which was sold by the barrel. She says that she still meets people, old customers, who rave about the meat which "isn't cut right any more."

On Mrs. Houran's 91st birthday she was surprised by a visit from her family. All her sons and their wives came with their children and children's children, as well as friends. She says she had company all evening and didn't know whether she would be able to walk the next day as she was so tired. She has 7 children, 16 grandchildren, 44-45 great grandchildren, and 6-7 great-great grandchildren. She says that it is foolish to get married so young, but she says that she has had a good marriage and family. As for people, she likes them to be jolly. She likes to travel and has flown twice. "I surely love to fly, if I could afford it I'd be in the air all the time."



Photo by M.E. Stringos

# "A Season In Hell": A Review

By DAN CAMERON

The poetry of Arthur Rimbaud continues to draw attention over a century after its writing, not just because of the timelessness of his vision and the poems' ability to elude concrete definition, but because the works respond freshly to each era or temperament through which they are read. When Rimbaud is seen in an historical context, both as a man and as a writer, the sense of mystery evoked by his poems is heightened by other considerations: firstly, the extent to which his verses broke through almost every existing restraint of his time, and the subsequent use of him as a renegade embodying freedom in all the arts. Most astonishing, is the realization that all this

was accomplished before he was twenty years old.

Rimbaud, almost demands to be approached as a legendary figure, and it is in this light that one can understand how nearly all biographies and critical studies of him have fallen short of their target. A good solution to the problem of appreciating a writer like Rimbaud arises when we try to meet the man on his own territory and speak his language, not trying to decode, justify or otherwise patronize some of the most enigmatic poetry ever produced.

It is in this precarious limbo between biography and collaboration that Margaret Holloway's *A Season in Hell* seems to find a place. The script was patched together from selections of Rimbaud's poems and prose, biographies, and Ms. Holloway's own original material.

The seams never showed. Transitions were well-coordinated, and the interplay between the real and fantastic components of young Rimbaud's world were at times abrupt and disturbing, at other points ambiguous — just as they must have appeared to his mystical imagination.

On the other hand, the projected relationship between his mother's tyranny

and young Arthur's retaliation against brute mastery of words was an overly problematic (and psychologically flimsy) stab at uncovering the source of his fierce self-liberation. Much more effective was the scene between Rimbaud, Verlaine and The Foolish Virgin, where the possessed hero, freshly nourished by an episode with My Dear Satan, torments his comrade with an unrelenting fiendishness that is recognized as the fully-formed.

Rimbaud, completely distinct from his origins, but interplaying with the real world while fully under the spell of his private Satan.

Technically, *A Season in Hell* was one of the finest productions launched at Bennington in quite a while. Debby Levine's set was particularly well-designed, mixing elements of Symbolist imagery, stark geometry within a cavernous space, and elements borrowed from the Max Ernst school of surrealism. Melissa Walz' lighting was highly inventive though always appropriate, and Bill Dixon's environment of sculpted sound moved between the actors and their words with subtlety that was nevertheless always penetrating the consciousness of the audience, an inseparable firmament of Rimbaud's mental landscape.

The only aspect of the play that I found problematic (and then only at points) was the acting, which embodied three distinct modes of character representation for each of the major roles. Paul Lazar demonstrated that he must have an old character actor's heart by delivering cautious but very accurate glimpses of Verlaine's soul while sustaining the historic vehicle of a drunken poet's banter, sobbing pleas for Arthur's faithfulness, and even a grotesquely hilarious anecdote from his childhood.

Mitchell Lichtenstein, was a walking embodiment of Rimbaud, to the point where he seemed to have been pulled from a turn-of-the-century French Catholic boarding school and dropped onto the stage, complete with built-in blasphemies of sexual distractions that such an environment spawns. While his character was most energetic and assured, it did not go as deeply into his sensibilities as Lazar's portrayal. This was noticeable when an occasional line delivery and the attention paid to specific imagery and inflections that one would expect from the author of those words was missing.

Heidi Stonier's delivery was sometimes flawed, though this can be attributed mainly to the strength and variety of her voice, not to emotional expressiveness. Her presentation of "My Dear Satan" was the most deeply experienced in the play and Satan's deliberated movements served as a perfect foil to the thrashings of young Arthur.

On the whole, Margaret Holloway's production was a highly successful recasting of one of the most puzzling and moving bodies of literature in literary history into an equally effective visual-musical-theatrical counterpart.

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Continued from Page 1

apparent to me and to Mr. Murphy (we did discuss it before both of us arrived on the scene.) that the most glaring problem was the high cost of maintenance and utilities, and that was the first area of attack. This resulted in the Allied contract, and the energy conservation program.

We have established within the business office some different types of control to make information available on a more timely basis to the administration and the trustees so that we may keep track of what is happening. Otherwise there have been no real policy changes and any other changes that would seem apparent to the community would be matters of personality, and how different personalities are administering what have always been the college's policies.

I think that in the business office, from what I have been told, both by staff and by students, there is a more open policy, that students, faculty, staff feel more free to come in and just discuss a problem and work out a solution which is acceptable to the college, without putting undue pressure on those individuals... I think that is one of the things, you do not expect — an automatic no as an answer to any question.

NP: What is the financial status of Bennington at present? What is your opinion of Bennington's financial status?

Iser: You can't really say what the financial status as of a moment is. As of this moment you can say that on a pro rata basis, whether account by account, you

**Iser: this year's budget the comprehensive fee represents 87 percent of the operating budget.**

are within, or above, or below this year's budget. But that's not the significant question. It's a long range question. The college is healthy on a long range basis, with certain assumptions. And there are two or three basic ones. One is external. The external one being that the economy of the country does not collapse. Assuming that we don't have a major depression, now, the two factors that are of prime importance for continued health is that the capital campaign is successful. This will increase the endowment and provide funds for other specified projects which will ease some of the pressure on the current operating budget. Also the college will be able to attract the number of students that it deems desirable. And this, I don't think, is necessarily a fixed number. This year we said we were basing our budget on an average enrollment of 600. That's this year's number. From our experience this year, that number can move up or down, depending in future years, upon demographic data. Our experience with that pool, and what the college (meaning the faculty and their plans for the college's curriculum and program, and the trustees as they exercise their financial responsibilities) deem to be the proper path for the college to follow over the next decade. Individuals will have proposals ranging from increased enrollment by "x percent" to others saying decrease by an equal percent. These proposals can be costed out and discussed and we can get all of the implications, and then arrive at the method of operation, the level of operation,

and the method which is healthiest for the community.

NP: The student's tuition pays for how much of the total operating cost of the college?

Iser: How nice you asked. I did the figures yesterday. In this year's budget the comprehensive fee represents 87 percent of the Operating budget. Of the remainder, six percent of this year's operating funds come from annual giving and other gift sources. About 3 percent from endowment income and the balance from miscellaneous income such as the rent the faculty pay for their houses, the snack bar, other rentables of campus, outside groups, application fees, and transfer fees.

NP: 87 percent is a large figure for most colleges.

Iser: Yes, very large.

NP: So, a goal is to make that percentage smaller and smaller as time goes on.

Iser: Yes, you have to remember that the philosophy of Bennington for many years was that the college should be supported completely by the fees paid by its current students. There was no attempt to create an endowment or to subsidize operating purposes.

Our relative position nationally with colleges as far as "most expensive college in the country" is dropping. We are no longer, and haven't been for a couple of years, in the top ten as the most expensive college.

NP: Do you feel that increasing the endowment and money from other sources would be better than lowering the standards of the academics by increasing student to faculty ratio?

Iser: The last thing that you ever touch are those parts of your program that will affect the academic quality in a detrimental way. No matter what happens, one must remember as an administrator while a college is a business, its business is education, not making money. You don't want to lose money, or you don't want to lose too much in any one year more than you can recoup by gifts from interested people who help you, so that you don't get yourself into financial trouble. But you don't make decisions that will destroy the educational character of the particular institution. You can't use the Harvard faculty-student ratio, and say, "look at Harvard's reputation. Why can't Bennington operate at that ratio and have a good reputation?" Bennington can't operate at Harvard's ratio which is about 15 or 16 to 1.

NP: Could you explain specifically how endowment is increased?

Iser: The Endowment is increased by receiving gifts from interested donors. One of the principal purposes of the capital campaign is to increase the endowment. Endowment is stocks, bonds, cash, real estate that you keep and only spend the income. Either forever or for whatever period of time the donor specified at which

time you can spend the capital if the Board chooses to, or they can leave it there. But a donor can give a gift to the college with any restrictions that the donor wishes to place upon it that meet two criteria: Those being that the college finds these acceptable restrictions within our academic program, and that none of the restrictions violate law. They cannot in any way be discriminatory.

NP: How do you envision the financial future of the college and what major projects do you see the college embarking upon?

Iser: The Board subcommittee on investments and then the Budget and Finance Committee of the Board over the next two months will be reviewing the entire investment policy of the college, since we assume the success of the capital campaign and will have considerably more funds available over the next three years to invest.

We will set ourselves a goal, not just on the capital campaign, but on the investment policy, with an eye towards growth. The income from the investment pool or endowment is relatively low. Because it's a small pool, only three million dollars, and we have 5 percent return. We are going to consider increasing the percentage of return which involves a change in the type of investments we make, and possibly not worry very much about that small income for the next few years and concentrate more on growth investment. When we achieve a goal, whatever it may be, we will diversify the portfolio so that it has some growth in it and some income. If we can do it, we'll be healthy.

There are no plans for new buildings, any significant new buildings. There may be some small facilities put up for a special purpose, or additions as we just

added to the Early Childhood Center. But the campus has enough space. We are right now, as anybody can see, putting siding on Kilpatrick, and will, on a continuing basis throughout this year redo the exterior of all the student houses on campus. After the exteriors are done we will attack the interiors, both from a redecoration standpoint which will be administered through the subcommittee of Art and Architecture. The other major project is to complete the replacement of all the bathrooms, some of which have been done, and the rewiring of them. That should make the student houses quite inhabitable. There are various projects floating around concerning the library. Some of these are keyed to the philosophy of the library as not being a research collection but one tied directly to the curriculum. Before you can go into a major expansion on the library you have to review that policy. There are some proposals from Mr. Egard that we're looking at which don't involve changes in the structure, but some internal changes in the decor, the type of furniture, depending upon financial ability. Perhaps we'll get some of those done this coming summer. We may get some of it done with donors. We'll see where that goes.

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# College Plans Sports Program

by Kevin Lawlor Farley

Bennington College will soon have a sports program. Despite the fact that efforts to establish a sports committee failed, there are many projects planned for future.

The beginnings of the development in the area of athletics started in the spring of 1977, when Tim Daly went before the Student Council with a proposal to establish a sports committee. Instead, he came away with money for softball equipment. The softball team at Bennington has had occasional games with the Taylor Rental softball team in the town of Bennington. Tim Daly says that this spring will see another softball team and he estimates that the Taylor team will again be willing to play the Bennington College nine.

This fall term the school made more moves towards more athletic environment. With Tim Daly's initial efforts and a great deal of work on the part of Mark Tratten, a soccer team was organized and they played three games. As an indication of the new note of competitiveness the soccer team was outfitted with uniforms and games are already being scheduled for next year. The chairman of the Board of Trustees, Merrel Hambleton, expressed great delight at hearing that Bennington now had school colors and that the process of selecting the colors was determined by what the sports store had in stock for soccer uniforms. Mrs. Hambleton has decided to pool the

Board of Trustees for 10 dollar contributions and in turn they will receive their very own Bennington T-shirt. The contributions will go to the operating expenses of the sports "department."

Also this fall Tim Daly appealed to the Student Council for money for new basketball backboards to replace the crumbling backboards west of the tennis courts. Nothing came of the effort in the student council except for their expression of support and their permission to go ahead and look into possible backboards and the costs involved. As it turned out, Bernie Iser went ahead and approved money for the purchase of the backboards, independent of the student funds. The new backboards have already arrived and will be put up when suitable spring weather arrives.

The sports "department" which has had much direction from Tim Daly and Short Aldrich, now has its own operating budget.

The budget started when the soccer team had to find a way to pay back Bernie Iser's authorization of funds for the new soccer uniforms. The Svaha Cafe offered their establishment for a night so that the soccer team could serve drinks and take half of the profit to help pay for uniforms. The \$106.00 left the team with a deficit of only \$50 to still pay.

The solution to the deficit was an "attic" auction which was held in Greenwall. The auction was composed of books, clothes, and other various objects that were

collected from the attics of the dorms. The auction was very successful and produced \$375 profit. Short Aldrich, Director of Student Services, organized most of the auction with assistance from members of the soccer team. However, paid workers moved most of the items on sale. Ms. Aldrich hopes that in the future the members of the sports teams will take sole responsibility for the auction. Ms. Aldrich says that more auctions are planned for the future. There will be boxes put in all the attics for students to discard objects that they might otherwise throw away. During the second week of each term an auction will be held with the profits going to the sports fund. In this way the sports fund will financially support itself.

Plans for the Bennington sports program this spring include a co-ed tennis team which will compete in tournaments

in the area, a softball team, and a soccer team which will play against club teams. Ms. Aldrich is already thinking about buying tennis uniforms which will be paid for with profits from the auction.

Ideas for the future include a basketball court in Greenwall, a swimming pool and sauna in the new student union, or a new gymnasium, says Ms. Aldrich. These "futuristic" ideas are not part of the administration's plans.

According to Ms. Aldrich the Bennington College administration is agreeable to the establishment of sports at Bennington and they have been more than helpful in efforts that have been made so far this year. Ms. Aldrich paraphrased President Murphy, "The school is for the students and our job here in the administration is to help the students live the kind of life they want to live."

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