

This Spring at mid-term it was surprising to note that the campus was possessed by a peculiar calm. This was unusual for this time of year. Looking across the barren lawn I tried to convince myself that it was natural, as a graduating senior, to feel that I was on top of things, that through osmosis I too was actually picking-up on mid-term productivity. After all, being a senior meant that I was capable of dealing with Bennington's overwhelming energy and naturally, hard work would flow out of me. Everyone was tucked in various corners, in the library, V.A.P.A, dickinson and many other spots that imposed inspiration. There, they assumed the role of students, busy compensating for previous bouts of procrastination. Yet somehow none of the urgency that coated this campus compelled me to start dealing with my workload. I resigned myself to this and strutted to and from class, confident, and slightly cocky that I had finally gained the privilege to take this time. During these casual strolls I would run into classmates and note that they displayed similar symptoms of lethargy, this, I thought, was maybe senioritiss. Certainly this meant that it was all part of what we so often termed the Bennington experience and once again I withdrew fretting.

But it was on a day when the weather was as changeable as my mood, that this burst of confidence left me. As I stared out, yet again at the infamous lawn, soggy snow

poured out of a cloud of insanity. It slowly landed, and stuck to the grass. A friend of mine burst out of Commons, he scrutinized me, offering the word "Graduation" in guise of comfort. The sound of this word sent me into convulsions followed by fits and tears. As the snow grew heavier and wetter I found myself spouting words like "ephemeral" and "pointless." I sobbed at my friend, describing the emotional no man's land I had been living in, finally admitting to this shrouding pride that had now become burdensome. I looked out again and watched a thin white coat form over the lawn, slowly masking the surface that to me was now a patchwork of experiences. I sighed as I sat there without needing a coat in this absurd April snowfall, feeling equally absurd, as I asked questions about the nature of this educational marathon. After all these years of trying so hard to organize, structure, and finalize work, what I was left with felt shapeless, and lacked meaning.

Then I remembered the colors that emanated off of Benninton's spirit. How impossible it is to describe the waves of experience that float over this campus in any given day. How often a kind of emotional jet lag exists at the end of each term. The result of packing in so many choices, forcing us to shape our own lives, giving us a set of values that belongs only to each individual. Bennington, so vibrant and alive with its palette of human demands, constantly testing our "wills," taunting us with survival.

I remember the times I needed so desperately to be told what to do, but was taught to find my own answers--- I thought of all the times I struggled with personal growth and resisted grasping for friends and lovers, and finally how so often, as students, we used each other as pillars for leaning, only to gather a little more strength. At the very least these battles have entitled us to character and at best have taught us to seek out our own personal integrity--- I remember a visitor telling me that he would be intimidated by coming to a school with so many strong individual artistic souls. I was compelled to respond that we had gained this singlemindedness after struggling with painfull experiences. Our fervor is the result of much effort, of many hair raising days where often we have been asked to risk far more than we knew possible. We have in our grasp the ability to gently probe, and we know how to gather the consequences of any given circumstance and to turn them into valuable lessons. For we have been taught to listen to the voices that live deep within our hearts.

Thwarted against a world that perpetually masks its pain, Bennington is a gem which strives to expose the facets of its humanity. Maybe this is the reason why Bennington is so often termed weird, erratic, and crazy--- but this is specifically why I label it sane. For here life constantly highlights the value of struggle. It lends us the power of introspection and lets us know when we are faking it.



Reckless at times, it gives birth to omens, exposes the ghosts that we've tried to conceal, and confronts us with our hidden sides. Life happens here, and we immerse ourselves in it fully. We have loved each other, hated each and loved each other once again. Bonded by our struggle we have watched each other grow up and have the ability to forgive each other for petty differences. Despite these differences, we have learned to care for each other, and follow our own laws of nature, seeking to shelter our own. We are now ready to be a class that stands as a whole.

For the past several years Bennington has been my home and I must now pack up and find myself another--- Mostly it has become my family and this family will be a part of me always. But as I try to convince myself that it lives within me, I am torn, frightened and anxious about whether I will ever see such vibrant colors again. I picture Bennington as an old rickety summer house, on a beach maybe, with crooked wooden shutters, and I imagine myself locking up. Closing the shutters, leaving behind the smell of mildew, and the dim memory of the friends I entertained. I am somewhat bitter about having to give this up. Yet when I toy with the idea of staying I know I am ready to move on. And I know that after seeking for so long to grab hold of some kind of educational ideal that there is no such thing--- How ironic that when I am finally ready to close the shutters, I have finally learned that the only thing to do, is to leave them

wide open and to let even the strongest wind blow tempestuously through them.

I have spent so much time trying to control circumstances, and imprint a kind of culmination, on my life here at Bennington. But I now realize that the most valuable lesson is that there is absolutely nothing so precious here at Bennington. We cannot burden our lives with conformity and there is nothing to control. Bennington has taught me to live at one with each given circumstance, to always expect surprises, and to greet them all with an open mind. As absurd as the snow falling in April, life constantly startles us with the unexpected. We are now ready to live within this reality and as seniors, can realize that this long awaited culmination is the rest of our lives.