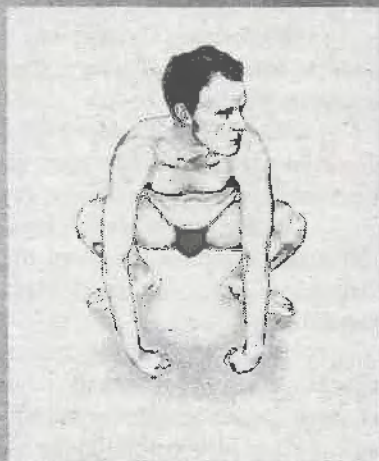


Inside This Issue



Calvin Johnson
Page 7



Boston Powers
Page 5



Breathtaking
Page 3



Silent Minority
Page 4

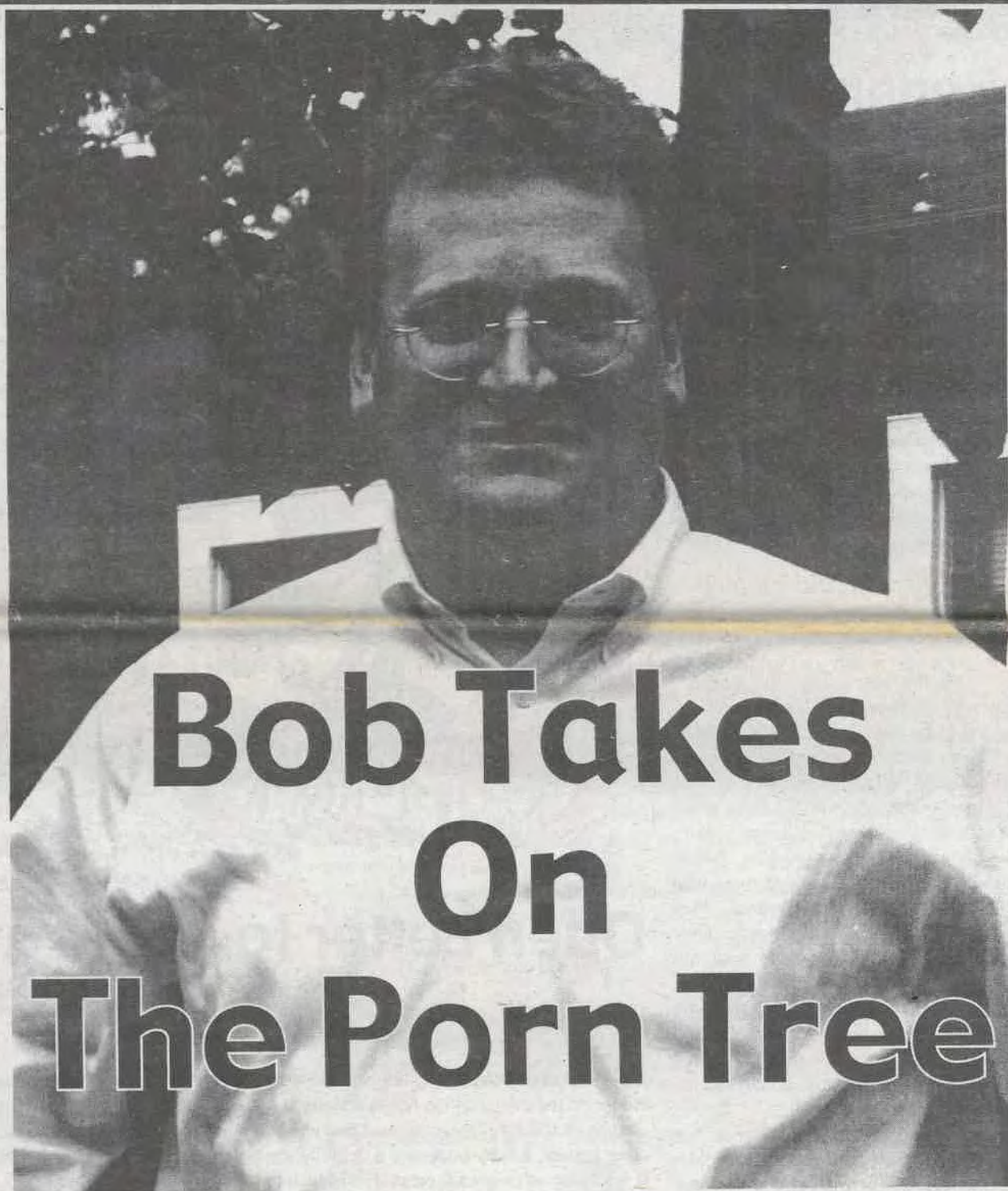
BFP

bennington free press

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Bennington College

September, 2004



Bob Takes On The Porn Tree

By Zubin Soleimany

On the afternoon of Friday September 11, the Kilpatrick porn tree and all its strange fruit were burned by its creators only days after its planting. While this might not be an unusual or early end for a plant that's usually mutilated by drunken vandals days within its first week, the reason behind its destruction this year is entirely sober and intentional.

After hearing of the porn tree from a colleague, new Dean of Students Bob Graves took a look at the tree for himself and soon asked Kilpatrick's house chairs to either take the tree down by the following Monday or else it would be removed. Given the options, the house decided to send their pornicultural hybrid off ceremoniously, as a house.

As their house activity, in accordance with a tradition that so began anywhere from seven to more than thirty years ago (according to one school employee), Kilpat residents severed a maple limb, brought it home and decorated it with clippings from a variety of mostly graphic pornographic magazines. In a new step of the process, the house's chairs, Samantha Ambrose and Eben Packwood, gave the their residents an in-depth disclaimer before the activity, telling the freshmen that participation was not mandatory, and that uncomfortable students could participate in an alternate activity.

"After that," said Packwood, "we just threw the magazines on the table and they went at it pretty enthusiastically." Not everyone cut and hung the pornaments, though. Packwood said he checked again with the few

students who weren't participating to make sure they weren't distressed. "A couple of people were shy, but I asked anybody who had a problem to come tell me in confidence and no one did."

At their September 12th coffee hour, Kilpatrick residents discussed the weekends events and planned what action to take. Several students made the point that no students, housekeepers or maintenance workers had actually complained to Graves about the tree. One Kilpat freshman, Gina Caviale, worries that Bennington is pushing a more sanitized lifestyle at the cost of free expression. "I feel like I'm being censored," said Caviale. "I chose a college based on its principles and then I come here and they're reversed."

Porn continued on page 8



Drawing by Adam Freed

Bennington Bans Butts

By Daly Clement

Freshmen, welcome to Bennington. Or "first years", I should say, in keeping with our school's recently adopted agenda; in case you're new, we're striving hard for a top rating in the Princeton Review's "most cushy-liberal" category. You're at America's most progressive college, where the Kilpat porn tree is a hazing ritual, naked Frisbee is sexual harassment, and the school administration decides what I can put in my lungs. Frankly, I've had enough.

"I'm here because it feels like home."

If this sounds like the rant of a sheltered, upper-middle class, liberal arts student, it is. Sure, in the rest of America (with the exception of most towns in Vermont, coincidentally), you'll be arrested for public nudity. But this is Bennington College, and we're here because it isn't Hampshire or Bard or Bowdoin. I, like many of you, was raised by parents who didn't blush at the sight of a buttock. They advocated safe sex, not abstinence. They smoked pot when they were kids and admit it. I'm here because it feels like home. Sure, lines must be drawn somewhere - there are federal and State laws to comply with and no one expects legalized marijuana or a bar that doesn't card - but to go beyond the law?!

By most signs Bob Graves, our new Dean of Students is well spoken and intellectually consistent. He sees the college community, made up of students as well as faculty and employees, as a place where every person should feel comfortable and unthreatened. A porn tree or game of naked Frisbee could offend someone, he says, even if he or she doesn't admit it. Of course, he's right - many things could offend someone. I'm offended by something at least once a day - biased news reporting, poor service at restaurants, people who wear socks with their sandals. To feel offended by something is different than feeling threatened - for this reason, biased news reporting is legal while libel is not; serving a poorly cooked meal is not a crime but spitting in someone's sandwich is. Everyone agrees that Bennington should be a non-threatening environment, but people are offended for many reasons. Graves raised a good point by asking whether majority should rule, if we should ignore

Daly continued on page 9

A Warning Shot Learning Art

By Cory Stauffer

Let us pretend for the moment that the students at Bennington College are the best and the brightest (because we may be). What do we do with this talent?

There is such a thing as too bright. There is such a thing as "too much of a good thing."

The brains around here pulsate with new ideas and concepts and a fertility of imagination that is frighteningly powerful. There is strength to the thought formed here.

But when used wrongly, in inappropriate ways, that strength turns destructive. Just because a thought comes into our heads does not mean we should act on it. We should look at it first. Understand it. Listen to it and figure out how best to use it.

Sometimes, the best way to use it could be letting it go, letting it slip out the same way it came.

Bennington College is, if nothing else, a place to explore. Too often, however, the word "explore" is used as an excuse.

Partly, we students at Bennington College must explore the edges, the fringe elements of art. We must explore the boundaries.

But, as in all things, there must be balance. When we explore the boundaries, we must do so with responsibility. We must explore responsibility with the same vigor and reckless abandon that we explore the boundaries.

We must learn discretion. We must learn when to act on our thoughts. We must learn to separate impulse and inspiration.

We are learning art at Bennington College. Do not mistake this for learning an art. We are learning art, as in "the art of compromise," "the art of negotiation," and "the art of kindness."

"We must explore what it means to be responsible."

We are learning to live artistically, whether that be as a writer, painter, actor, accountant or secretary. Our lives are directed by our intentions, and it is right intention that we are learning in our time at Bennington College.

We should learn our intentions because intentions are slippery and subtle things. The difference between doing something as art and because we wish to annoy someone is often thin and deceptive, especially in an environment as dedicated to exploration as Bennington College.

We must explore what it means to be responsible. We must explore the link between responsibility and selflessness, because selflessness is the ultimate expression of responsibility, the responsibility to those around us.

We must strive to become as great and bright as we can be, so long as that brightness is tempered with appropriateness. Up close, stars are inconceivable; the light and heat destroy anything near them. From far away, in the sky with thousands of other stars, they illuminate darkness.

Let us make this our foremost activity and our utmost art.

Two Aprils ago, a few of us began writing and editing a poorly planned rag in response to our poorly planned newspaper tutorial. Rather than give you a cute, well-formatted, non-political paper that never showed up on time, we aimed for an uglier paper that was in your box reliably and got you your facts.

Hoping to dispel so much student rumor and knee-jerk antagonism towards the administration we shot for straight civic journalism - assuring you that no teachers were fired or film projectors burned to pay for new tennis courts. After being demonized by previous independent student presses, veteran administrators were often tight-lipped with us at first or kept referring our interviews to other colleagues. Hoping to win back the trust, we shot for a puritanically unbiased standard in our straight reporting. Students and administrators liked our work and we were damn proud of the legitimacy we'd earned.

As you might've noticed, a lot of that puritanical stuff went out the window in this issue. Maimonides said that to straighten a bent rod, you have to bend it the other way for a while. We did - and now we're letting go. We at the BFP no longer want to write Bennington politics the way the AP would. The Barn gives us the news as they see it every day with enough notes in our boxes to ticker tape a returning shuttle crew with, so the way we see it, this campus needs an official student voice. We will, of course, still report all relevant facts from both sides of the story, but the student voice in the BFP will no longer be muffled by our own journalistic good intentions.

-- The Editors



Drawing by Jim Bentley

Open Letter to Mr. Graves

Dear Bob Graves,

This letter is designed to outline some of the concerns from the perspective of Kilpatrick House on the matter of the house activity (i.e. the porn tree). In understanding the activity of the porn tree, one must first and foremost know that, while it is distinct from other houses, it is by no means a defining characteristic. It serves as an ice breaker. It is at once an over-exaggerated introduction to the personality of our house, and an awkward situation the freshmen can choose to overcome. It was made clear by several people and at several times that those who chose not to participate could instead join in a second activity without social repercussions. It was never mandatory. Also, to our knowledge, there have been no previous complaints in the past ten or so years that this has been a house activity.

An obvious starting point is the physical removal of the tree. From discussions with our house chairs, we came to understand that it was your desire that the tree be removed by Monday September 13 by the members of the house, and that if this did not happen, it would be removed by a third party. This decision, we feel, was made too quickly. As Sunday, September 12, was our first coffee hour, we did not have sufficient time to discuss our collective response. In addition, this gave you little to no time to speak with members of the house individually or as a group (such as the freshmen), separately from other members of the household in order to ask their opinions or feelings concerning the activity or the environment it created.

This leads directly to another factor your time here at Bennington. While we understand and appreciate your experience with other colleges and similar types of issues, we feel that perhaps you have moved too fast in judging the atmosphere of the campus. Classes had barely begun - we had not even had a whole week - when this became an issue. This timing does not allow you to become aware of the students or the lifestyle at Bennington, nor does it allow for the proper introduction of yourself, your opinions, and policies to the students.

Kilpat Letter continued on page 9

Painting Removed

By Marina Boynton
and
Holli Jakalow

In light of recent incidents on campus, students have expressed concern about a painting that was recently removed from the Upstairs Café. The painting of a nude woman depicted in yellow and green, was made by senior Jeff Barnes and is one in a series of paintings that had been displayed in the space.

Barnes' paintings had been shown in the Upstairs Café since the middle of spring last term.

The paintings were selected from Barnes' orifice series. Barnes started the series last Field Work Term and tried to use a variety of orifices in his paintings to contradict what the viewer would expect of that subject.

"I didn't want the subject matter to be misogynistic or erotic," Barnes said, "so I used a fifteenth century model and cut off one of her legs just to kind of push it away from a sexual connotation."

Barnes said the emphasis of the painting is color. "I was told on the eighth it needed to come down because the subject matter was inappropriate, and the subject matter may make people feel uncomfortable," said Barnes. "I think they took it down because it was a vagina, but the vagina wasn't elaborately drawn or the center of focus."

Only one painting from the series remains in the Upstairs Café. Barnes took his other paintings down after he was asked to remove the one in question. The one still on display is a self portrait.

This is not the first time one of the paintings from Barnes' series has been deemed too inappropriate to be displayed. Barnes' depiction of an anus was not allowed in the President's Gallery. Joan Goodrich said that she felt it would offend some of the administration, said Barnes.

"I definitely felt censored, but it was my intention to take the paintings down anyway because I didn't want that body of work to be seen now," said Barnes.

Joann Upper, who runs the Upstairs Café and made the authoritative decision to take down the painting, said she has nothing against nude art but thought that "the piece didn't seem like eating kind of art."

She also thought that it was too large for the wall and had wanted to put up new art.

After housekeepers and mothers with young children came into the Upstairs Café and commented on Barnes' work, Upper decided it was time for the painting to come down.

This issue—of viewers outside the student body finding work offensive—was also brought up in the meeting with Bob Graves that was held in Downstairs Commons on September 21.

"I am not surprised [about the censorship]," said Barnes. "I always thought this school was more conservative than it needed to be. And I am glad that the students are as concerned as they are."

"It's perhaps the only way we'll win back our reputation of being a progressive school."

Queer Students Unite

By Valerie Wetlaufer

Though Bennington tends to be recognized as a gay-friendly campus, there has not always been a well organized Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian and Transgender (GLBT) group. At least not until last term, when recent graduate Adina Singer started the Queer Student Union (QSU).

QSU is an educational and social group that meets every Monday from 1-2pm in the Wooley living room. Meetings are open to everyone.

The label "Queer" was chosen because of its inclusiveness.

"Straight people who are not mainstream sexually can also be included," said Singer.

The group was created in response to the lack of a cohesive gay community at Bennington.

"Most people at Bennington assume that since it's a liberal school, GLBT stuff

is taken for granted," said Singer. "But it can get lonely if you are just coming out or don't have any gay friends around, so I wanted to have a group that could be a place for people of all sexualities/genders/etc. to have a safe space to discuss issues."

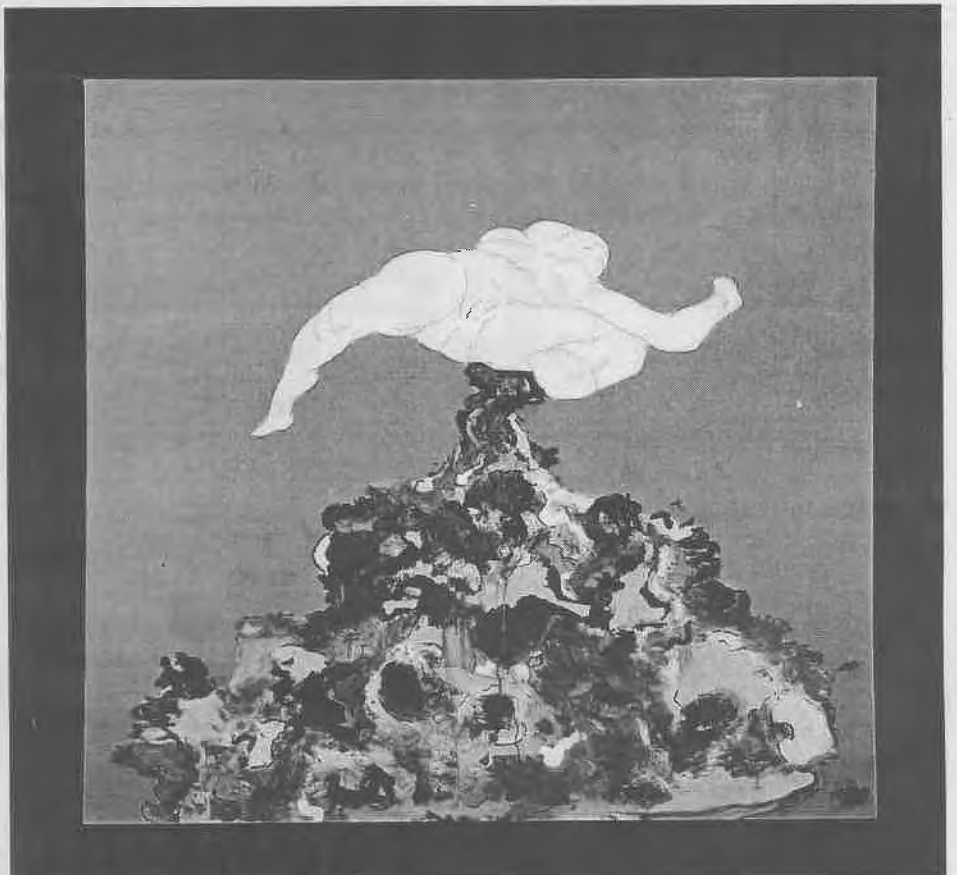
Topics to be discussed this term range from gender, BDSM, labels and stereotypes, and pop culture.

At the moment, members are in the process of creating a "Queer Reading and Movie List." This list serves the group's function as a social club. The group also hosts Queer Movie Night on Fridays.

There is also hope of joint activities with similar groups at Southern Vermont College and Williams College.

"It's important to make a GLBT presence more visible on campus, even if it is small," said Singer.

"Creating awareness and having a known, publicized safe space is important."



The Barnes painting removed from the Upstairs Café

Security Will Take Your Breath Away

By Daly Clement

On September 17, at around 10pm, 12 students were watching "Wayne's World" in a student room in Swan when security knocked on their door.

The occupants knew they were in trouble. The room was over its occupancy by four, and there were open cans of beer lying in plain view. But they had no idea that the situation would become what it soon did.

After noting a discrepancy between the number of beer cans and legal drinkers in the room, one security guard, angry that several occupants whom he thought had obviously been drinking insisted that they had not been, made an unusual proposition.

"How many beers open and how many people in here are 21?" asked the guard.

Three occupants said they were of age.

"Everybody that says they're over 21, are you ready to take a breathalyzer?" asked the guard.

The students agreed. A breathalyzer was fetched. As it turned out, the students had been drinking.

Although no charges were filed against the students, the incident raises a number of questions.

Is this a new policy? Why was something so drastic done in a rather normal occupancy check?

Ernie, head of security, defended the action. "It was not the first time," he said.

The breathalyzer has been used in the past, usually in situations where students seemed unfit to drive but also "when we felt the students were not being honest with us."

It is uncommon to see a breathalyzer used as it was last Friday.

According to Ernie, policy has not changed, and the breathalyzer test has always been available. He stressed that the test is voluntary and was offered to the students, not forced on them.

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By Jim Bentley

The Princeton Review's "The Best 357 Colleges" recently rated Bennington College number 13 under, "students most nostalgic for Bill Clinton."

On the surface, this would appear to be an accurate assessment.

Bennington has historically been known as a progressive, and, dare it be said, "liberal" institution. It has a proud tradition of free thinking, stemming back to the gospel of John Dewey, which is why some in the student body were drawn to Bennington over other colleges.

Yet in a BFP survey conducted at random last week, results show a far more complex political climate than the Princeton Review might lead one to believe.

Though over 85 percent of polled students described themselves as either "Left" or "Center Left," and over 90 per-

cent plan to vote for John Kerry, only 41 percent of left-leaning students opposed supply-side economics, a traditionally conservative economic theory based on tax cuts.

44 percent of left-leaning students were in favor of a free market, which has been criticized in recent years by many left-wing activists as an exploitive economic system that perpetuates rapid globalization.

Only 14.5 percent opposed an unregulated free market economy.

With the issue of racial equality, students were once again divided. On the issue of racial quotas for school admissions and job employment, over 58 percent were against it, with 32 percent answering "Don't Know."

Liberals continued on page 6

Interest Is The New Disinterest

By Sarah McAbee

So you bought your "Not My President" T-shirt and the Kerry/Edwards sticker for your car. You snort theatrically at the mere mention of the word Republican and reply "Anybody but Bush" when people ask you your choice for president.

But wait! Turns out you're not registered to vote! All your debating, every rally you've attended, every dollar you've given to a candidate doesn't matter anymore.

Over 50 freshmen registered to vote or requested their absentee ballot at Orientation. The jig's up, upperclassmen. No longer is it cool to feign apathy at every cause or opt out of voting because you're skeptical. Stand up and have your vote counted.

Student Action Network (SAN) is running a registration drive until late October. Already registered? We can help find you the absentee ballot for your state. Don't know where you should vote? We'll tell you if you live in a swing state.

We're also sponsoring "Democracy on the Lawn" every Sunday.

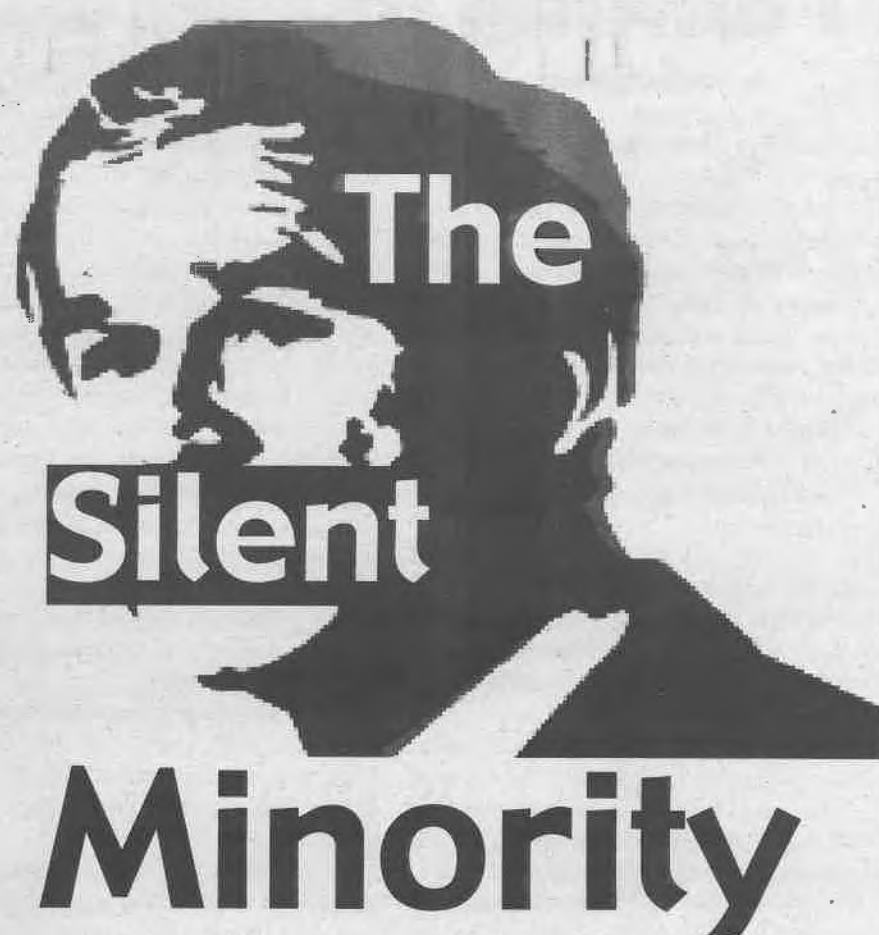
I've seen all of you kids with your cell phones. Put that call time to good use! Show up on Commons Lawn on Sunday afternoons or just drop your phone off for a few hours. We'll provide you with a list of voters in swing states, and you call them to remind them to exercise one of their most important rights and responsibilities as an American.

All ready to vote, but you need a little help?

SAN's going to keep you up-to-date on Bennington's local issues so you can make informed decisions if you're registered in Vermont. We're also running shuttles to the polling place on Election Day.

If you're voting at home, make sure you call your county clerk or county Supervisor of Elections to check on your absentee ballot. It should be coming through the mail in the next few weeks, and all you have to do is send it back in time to be counted.

Voting continued on page 9



By Kara Bloomgarden-Smoke

Though it is never easy to be part of a minority, it is especially hard at a school as homogenous as Bennington College.

Because of the liberal nature of the school and the dearth of contrasting opinions, it comes as a surprise to most that there is a Bennington College chapter on the "College Students for Bush" website. Twenty students have signed up.

Allie Stillwell created the chapter after seeing that Middlebury College had one. Although Stillwell lists her e-mail address on the site, the other nineteen members don't and have not contacted her.

"The Republicans on campus are scared to talk about their ideas, so nobody really communicates."

"The Republicans on campus are scared to talk about their ideas, so nobody really communicates," said Stillwell.

Stillwell knows firsthand the reasons for not talking. Over the past year, her VW Bug, which sports a Bush/Cheney bumper sticker, has been keyed twice while parked in the Ohio parking lot.

"When people are having a bad day, they will just tell me that Bush sucks," said Stillwell. "They don't usually have a reason, though."

"I would welcome talking to somebody who has evidence and proof. Then it is their opinion and an interesting debate."

Other Republicans on campus appreciate any kind of debate.

"It's great to be a minority because people want to have discussions," said Jordan Baker. "I don't take the animosity personally. People respect my opinions for the most part."

Baker said the only time he has had a hard time with his mostly unpopular political opinions was in a foreign policy class he took last term. Becker noted that this had more to do with the instructor than with the students.

There is currently a national movement amongst right-leaning college students to band together and demand professors of more politically diverse

opinions.

In Colorado, an "Academic Bill of Rights," calling for "academic diversity" amongst professors, guest speakers and assigned readings, was introduced to the state legislature. This bill is being studied to see if political diversity is indeed threatened by the four largest universities in Colorado.

It seems that a large part of the national movements—with young-right wing groups such as "Students for Academic Freedom," "Young America's Foundation," and "The Intercollegiate Studies Institute," among others—are prompted by the need to rebel against perceived liberal biases often found on campuses across the country.

This is not the case with the Republican students at Bennington.

"People at Bennington have been very surprised and curious," said freshman Kathleen Mahoney. "They are very interested in talking about [politics] and making sure that my opinions are not just reactionary."

Mahoney was raised with conservative Catholic ideals. She has found it interesting to talk about her beliefs to people with differing opinions. Her California hometown was mostly conservative.

Mahoney admits that her upbringing has influenced her politics, but she is quick to point out that she makes her own decisions.

"People here always assume that I am a Republican just because my parents are, but we don't agree on everything," said Stillwell. "I definitely have my own views."

The liberal nature of Bennington College was made famous by Theodore Newcomb's study charting the political changes of Bennington students between the years 1935 and 1939.

The study showed that 66% of students came from Republican families. In the 1936 presidential election, 61% of freshmen and 43% of sophomores voted for the Republican candidate.

By students' junior and senior years, the figure dropped to only 15%. Two follow-up studies showed that 25 and 50 years later, the vast majority of Bennington alumnae remained liberal.

Republicans continued on page 6

The Second Coming Comes to the South End

Senior Devin Powers Shows in Boston

By Maj Anya DeBear

The first thing one notices when walking into the Courtyard Gallery in Boston's South End is ex-Bennington student Keith Hendershot squatting in blue briefs.

But this is no hokey performance art piece. Hendershot is about five inches tall and suspended on a canvas.

Devin Powers has used Hendershot as a model for several of his recent paintings, one of which is the second of two on display at the Courtyard Gallery.

About the painting, Powers said, "It's less about Keith than it is a self portrait."

Powers, a senior at Bennington College, organized the first, hugely successful Silo show at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) in North Adams last spring. The show featured works by approximately twenty Bennington students. Powers said that this year the show will be bigger, better, more "robust" and longer—possibly running as long as a month.

Before coming to Bennington College, Powers studied painting privately with Tom Ouellette. At the time, Powers was primarily a figurative painter, and, by his own admission, his work "was incredibly melodramatic and romantic."

After studying with Andy Spence and Ann Pibal, two members of the Bennington College art faculty, Powers adopted a whole new conceptual and technical approach to painting.

Powers drew his inspiration from artists such as John Currin, Wayne Thiebaud, Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons.

"One way I got interested in art was through comic books. There was always a Pop interest, a kitschy aesthetic."

This aesthetic emerged in his "Pill Pop" paintings, which were a great success at the 108 Gallery in Somerville, Massachusetts, earlier this year.

Powers was praised by Karin Behnke, curator of the CAC, in her article, "Devin Powers Resurrects Painting," for "remaining committed to reinventing, and reestablishing, painting in the contemporary art world."

Powers' recent work has once again made a splash in the Boston area.

Powers' new work, which has strayed away from his previous theme of meticulously painted pharmaceuticals in floral arrangements, contrasts psychedelic distorted flowers and Disney cartoons with realistic figurative painting. It's certainly a change from his Lucian Freudian nudes.

"Andy [Spence] and Ann [Pibal] come from a long tradition of formalist aesthetic started by Clement Greenberg, who taught here ... they're abstract painters," said Powers.

"I've had a strange mixture of influences ... a lot of my work now, you could say, is the blending or collision of the figurative and abstract."

Powers' work not only merges contrasting techniques, it challenges the viewer's perception of seemingly contrary ideas—machismo and homosexuality, kitsch and highbrow, etc. It is ridiculous and yet sincere.

Powers' concepts are maturing almost as fast as his career.

Powers has already been shown several times in Boston and North Adams. In addition to the exhibition in Boston, his work is currently included in the CAC's Residency Show.

And if that's not enough, Stacy Bueschel, owner of the Courtyard Gallery, has agreed to show him again and to sign him to the Courtyard Gallery.

Bueschel, who also represents up and coming artists Damien Hoar de Galvan and Erick Thomas, made her money buying Mailbox Etc. franchises. She retired from corporate life in order to paint more frequently and soon opened the Courtyard Gallery.

Bueschel plans to show some of the Gallery's younger artists in conjunction with a collection of David Hockney and Robert Rauschenberg prints that she has collected over the years. She hopes this will attract attention for the younger artists, as well as establish them as professionals.

Powers is clearly on a rising trajectory, but as he said, "I'm not yet a part of the art world where it gets really sleazy."

Let's just make it clear that if this is indeed the second coming, it came to Bennington first.



From top: "Untitled" and "Crouch" by Devin Powers

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Brecht, Sophocles, Long and Vogel

By Jennifer Funk

Bennington's fall theater season is officially underway.

Auditions took place September 9 and 10, with callbacks the morning of the 11. Cast lists were posted the week of the 13.

The four major productions being mounted this term are as diverse as they are interesting, with subject matter ranging from Greek tragedy to environmental awareness.

"The Measures Taken," by Bertolt Brecht, is the first play to be performed. Senior Penn Genthner is directing.

"The Measures Taken" tells the tale of four Russian communist agitators traveling through China who are forced to kill one of their own.

"It's not a communist story so much as a story about communists," said Genthner.

The small cast consists of Sasha Heer, Tom Mixon, Allison Zajac-Batell and Dan Wilcox. "The Measures Taken" runs November 5 and 6 at 8pm in Lester Martin Theater.

Hot on "Measures" heels is the premiere of "Exxon Butterfly."

Directed by faculty member Kathleen Dimmick, "Exxon Butterfly" promises to be an intriguing hybrid of drama and societal issues.

The first half will be a performance of David Belasco's one-act melodrama "Madame Butterfly," which served as the basis for Puccini's opera of the same name. Collaborative writing efforts from the cast, Ms. Dimmick and playwright Quincy Long will comprise the second half of the production. Act Two will present a performed response to both "Madame

Butterfly" and Exxon-Mobil's "aggressive campaign to minimize the dangers of global warming," said Dimmick.

The cast is Kat Yeary, Sultana Noon, Caleb Rupp, Danny Herter, Daniel Trigg, Lara Hoffman, and Stephen Reinstein. Performances will be November 12, 13 and 14 at 8pm in Margot Tenney Theater.

Sophocles' "Antigone" is the next production slated for performance.

Directing in her last term at Bennington, Stephanie Vella intends to marry classical imagery with contemporary visuals, a blend of Greek tragedy and modern relevance with thematic tie-ins to merge the two.

"Antigone's" cast includes Sarah Harvey, Emma Givens, Christian Panaite, Jacob Wolfe, Toby Levin, Brian Thompson, Leah Bell, Tony-Kay Dawkins and Alex Bleeker. Vella's production will run December 3 and 4 at 8pm in Lester Martin Theater.

"The Baltimore Waltz," by Paula Vogel, is directed by senior Lucy Skeen. Employing a cast of three, "The Baltimore Waltz" is an engaging tragicomedy that tells the story of Anna, her brother Carl and their frantic journey through Europe, despite Anna being diagnosed with ATD (Acquired Toilet Disease).

Anna will be played by Mollie Remillard, Carl by Tom Shoemaker and The Doctor/Third Man by Gabriel Meyers. "The Baltimore Waltz" runs December 11 and 12 at 8pm in Margot Tenney Theater.

There is such a variety of theater being produced this fall that Bennington students can be assured at least four weekends of interesting entertainment from the drama department.

Republicans continued from page 4

I definitely don't think that my political views will change while I am here," said Mahoney. "People are always trying to convince me that I am wrong, but I don't think that I'll change."

Both Stillwell and Mahoney said that when they decided to come to Bennington, they did so because they liked the education and did not think about the political leanings of the student body.

"It doesn't say on the website that you have to be liberal," said Stillwell. "Maybe it should."

Mahoney said that, though she

didn't anticipate any problems, she did prepare for Bennington by making sure she was well informed on her opinions.

All three students interviewed cited Bush's economic policies as a strong part of what they support. Though not all agreed on whether the United States should have become involved in Iraq, the general consensus was that the country needs to finish what it started.

Although it is a challenge to be a Republican at Bennington, being one does provide necessary alternate viewpoints.

As Mahoney said, "Having to fight for your beliefs makes them stronger."

Liberals continued from page 4

Most surprising were the responses pertaining to school vouchers.

Over 68 percent were in favor of school vouchers. Vouchers have been a hot button issue politically since the 1990s and have been viewed by some as a proposal in which the government could indirectly contribute to dismantling the public education system.

The numbers appear to point to a much more independent student population than the jarringly loud anti-Bush co

mmments and liberal bumper stickers on campus would indicate. Many of the responses reflected a desire for individual freedoms and less government involvement. More students are registered as "Independent" than any other political party.

Encouraging numbers were collected in terms of planned voter participation. 96 percent claimed they had registered to vote, and 98 percent said they planned on voting in the upcoming presidential election.

calendar

September

30 (Thursday) 7:30-9:00pm Lauren Scheer: Media Studies Lecture Series in Barn 100

October

2 (Saturday) 10:00pm Calvin Johnson at the Downstairs Café

3 (Sunday) Field Work Term First Year Retreat

4 (Monday) 7:00-8:30pm 2004 Vote * Understanding the Issues Forum in the Downstairs Café

5 (Tuesday) 7:30pm Visual Arts Lecture Series in Tishman

6 (Wednesday) 7:30-9:00pm Eileen Scully: Media Studies Lecture Series in Barn 100

7-10 (Thursday-Sunday) Family, Alumni, & Trustee Weekend

8 (Friday) 8:30-10:00pm Student and Alumni Performances in Martha Hill

8-10 (Friday-Sunday) The Reel Bennington Alumni Film Festival in Tishman

9 (Saturday) 7:30-9:00pm Acoustic Evening in the Upstairs Café

9 (Saturday) 9:00pm On-Air Library performs in the Downstairs Café

9 (Saturday) 9:00-1:00am Zydeco Café in Greenwall

11 (Monday) 7:00-8:30pm 2004 Vote * Understanding the Issues Forum in the Downstairs Café

12 (Tuesday) 7:30pm Visual Arts Lecture Series in Tishman

14 (Thursday) 7:30-9:00pm Mirka Prazak: Media Studies Lecture Series

14 (Thursday) 10:00pm Sea-Ray Band performs at the Downstairs Café

15 (Friday) 10:00pm Hilight Tribe (a seven man drum instrument group) performs at the Downstairs Café

16 (Saturday) 12:00pm Drum Circle Workshop with the Hilight Tribe Outdoor Location TBA

18 (Monday) 7:00-8:30pm 2004 Vote * Understanding the Issues Forum in the Carriage Barn

19 (Tuesday) 7:30pm Visual Arts Lecture Series in Tishman

19 (Tuesday) (Time TBA) James Moore: Science Lecture in Dickinson

23-25 (Friday-Monday) Long Weekend: No Classes Friday or Monday

25 (Monday) 7:00-8:30pm 2004 Vote * Understanding the Issues Forum in the Carriage Barn

26 (Tuesday) 7:30pm Irit Batsry: Visual Arts Lecture Series in Tishman

28 (Thursday) 7:30-9:00pm Heather Burns: Media Studies Lecture series in Barn 100

31 (Sunday) Halloween

-Leah M. Wichler

Oct 2

This Guy Has Been Around For A While

Calvin Johnson, indie legend and proud owner of the recently purchased Temple Beth Hatfiloh, is slated to play Bennington College on October 2nd at 10 pm. Known as the co-founder of K Records and for his collaborative work in Beat Happening, Halo Benders, and the Dub Narcotic Sound System, Calvin will, at last, be promoting his first solo album. *What Was Me* further unveils his skill as a songwriter and performer. With his crooning, slightly off-key baritone and his acoustic guitar, Calvin explores the coltish games of love.

Come and here him sing "Can We Kiss?" or experience his earnest a-capella and you will understand why he's the D.I.Y. music scene's most endearing weirdo.

Oct 9

A Sad Sad Zoo

Formed by Philip Wann and twin sisters, Alley and Claudia Deheza, On!Air!Library! is a diaphanous experimental rock trio. They will be opening for Solex at the Downstairs Cafe on October 9th at 10 pm. Working under a name borrowed from an African documentary entitled "The On Air Library," this group favors a mercurial and meditative fuse of keyboards, guitars, programming, and vocals. They will be promoting their 2004 self-titled, debut album.

The Dot On the I Between the H and the T

Headlining on the 9th is Solex. Entirely conceived and performed by Dutch sound-experimentalist, Elisabeth Esselink, Solex is a danceable mix of techno-pop assembled from what Esselink describes as, "Old vinyl, crappy un-sellable CD's (again), television (Wheel Of Fortune!), the 'better looking' talk show hosts (they seem to sound better as well), noisy deaf people, films, bootlegs (again), radio, street-noises and animals." Combined these aspects form a cartoonish, fun house world-- technicolored, quirky, and addictive.

- Airin Miller

Other Music Events

Oct 9

7:30-9:00pm Acoustic Evening in the Upstairs Café

Oct 14

10:00pm Sea-Ray Band at the Downstairs Café

Oct 15

10:00pm Hilight Tribe at the Downstairs Café

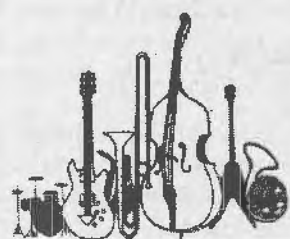
Oct 16

Noon Drum Circle Workshop with the Hilight Tribe

Outdoor Location TBA



From top: Calvin Johnson. Ally or Debra? Two Elisabeth Esselinks.



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Porn Tree continued from front

Wasting no time trying to change the culture of the campus, Graves himself started the push on this one and seems driven to see his vision through all the way. While most folks previously viewed the porn tree as an inane provocative decoration at worst, Graves would like the school to reconsider the porn tree and has himself labeled the activity as "hazing" and "sexual harassment." "Is it a rite of passage to live in this house, I don't know; these are new eyes looking at a new situation," admits Graves. "But we should ask is this normal, is this a tradition... and I'm all for traditions, but I need you to know that there are some traditions that I don't agree with, some that aren't healthy or good and I don't mean to minimize this in any way, but slavery's an American tradition."

Graves also discusses the issue with a sense of legalistic detail that strikes most students as overblown for a situation that could easily be so innocuous. He notes that Vermont State hazing legislation states that someone who willfully submits to an activity, if it is presented by someone in an obvious position of authority, could still be a hazing victim. At the Sep. 19th meeting with Kilpat, Graves said, "Security and custodians may say that they aren't bothered [by the porn tree] but could later change their minds and file suit." Generally, he seems guided by a philosophy that would protect any hypothetically offendable parties over the will of a large, but in his mind misguided, majority.



Kilpat residents cling to the last branch

Treading on the more sensitive topic of sexual harassment, Graves is worried that the porn tree "creates a hostile environment [see page 41 of your student handbook], a climate that might not feel safe for someone, if they've ever been assaulted—that's not appropriate in a residence hall." Vermont sexual harassment law states that sexual harassment does not occur unless an offensive action occurs after a complaint has been made. No students complained about the tree, Graves admits, but says that "one or two" students have stopped by to thank him for asking for its removal. Although not offended by the tree, Junior Jonathan Leiss said, "From a legal standpoint, I can understand why they'd want to [remove the tree]."

The presence of a hostile environment, however, can constitute sexual harassment before any complaints are made, a concept that seemed unclear to many at the open discussion. However, since none of our other image-conscious senior administrators acted in previous years, some students wonder how much Graves' personal views define what is "hostile" or not in our homes.

The definition of public versus private space is a key point of contention here. Graves often referred to Kilpat as a workplace and repeatedly mentioned that he and his children also live on this campus. At a meeting with Graves on the 19th, Kilpat residents vented their frustration over what they see as the college intruding more and more into their lives. He seemed to miss their point. Before Kilpat or any house is

a workplace for security or maintenance, it is the home of a self-selecting community with supposedly shared values. Faculty and their children should be heard in this discussion but some students want to know if their voices should have as much weight as the house's full-time residents.

Here, the linguistic implications of the term of "house," not dormitory or residence hall, seem strong. Kilpat residents don't feel like they're merely occupying a school-owned structure, but making themselves at home, forming their own social architecture, a space of self-governance and communal standards. Particularly at a school where those under 24 or unmarried must live on campus, students will feel more entitled to determine what behavior is appropriate or hostile in our own homes.

On Tuesday, September 21 Graves made himself available for two hours of teeth-grindingly well-mannered discussion peppered with a few angered outbursts. Some students wondered why Graves would try to change the campus's culture before he had grasped it. Graves, however, doesn't feel that he's jumped in too deep, too quick: "I don't feel like I know the culture yet but I do understand my responsibilities," he told me. "We can debate the tree, but at some point somebody needs to decide if that's really ok." By now, the campus knows who that "somebody" is.

Bob Graves: Past and Present

By Jessica Alatorre

Father of two, fifth child in a family of eight, and originally from central Massachusetts, Robert Graves is the new Dean of Students.

In the past, Graves has worked at four schools in various residential life positions, including stints at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Dartmouth College and Kenyon College in Ohio. Most recently Graves was Director of Residential Life for nine years at Bowdoin College.

"I value a sense of place," Graves said. "Bennington as a whole, the staff and students here, seemed to offer this."

Bob, as he is more commonly known on campus, said that in college he listened to Blondie, the Talking Heads and the B-52s. Nowadays, he is an avid listener of folk music, acoustic rock and ballads. One of his favorite hobbies is cross-country skiing.

Graves is a family man, and outside of work he spends most of his time with his sons, playing tennis or cycling. Graves said he has always loved Vermont and is excited to be living here now.

The initial hiring process for Graves' current position was conducted through a series of interviews with students and staff. Graves said he was looking to advance his career and heard about the position through his old boss, who knew Elissa Tenney, Dean and Provost of Bennington College.

When asked about why he chose to accept the position at Bennington, Graves said, "Because it's not like other colleges. Students seemed really fun and enthusiastic. The college is on the up-swing; it is really alive."

Graves also said that during his interview he was very impressed by the people he met, the performances he saw, and Bennington's possibility.

The term "Dean of Students" is new, taking the place of the old Director of Student Life. Many aspects of the college are under the responsibility of Graves' new position.

All divisions of the Student Life office are under his power. Health and counseling may report to him. Residential issues, the recreational barn, the cafés, being a part of the senior staff, relaying information back to Elissa Tenney and overseeing the judicial process are all part of what the Dean of Students is responsible for managing.



As one student pointed out on September 19, 2004, at an open meeting with Graves, "[Graves] is our highest representation. He is the dean of our voice."

Graves is a strong advocate of a social life outside the classroom. He encourages more student-faculty interactions and enjoys having people over to his home for dinner to meet his sons and his wife.

Graves comes off as a people person. He has been involved in the local communities around the schools he has worked at in the past.

It is this aspect of the job that keeps him here. Graves said, "There is something about this work and getting to know students, seeing them getting on with their life and careers even long after they graduate."

A hot topic on campus has been whether Graves has a "secret" agenda. When asked, Graves gave no direct response to this question.

Graves said that he has been given a year in which to evaluate the system and programs we have here and then provide feedback to Elissa Tenney.

Graves outlined some of his plans and said he would like to make sure the judicial process is fair and that all programs are effectively run and advertised.

He would like to see intramurals such as the Outing Club thrive and wants to find ways for faculty and students to come together outside the classroom.

He hopes to get a better understanding of the handbook, its policies and tenets. "What do we value as community?" Graves asked. "What is our residential

purpose, what do we want the goals and aspirations to be as a community through dialogue?"

Googling Robert Graves yielded an assortment of articles concerning his past involvement at Bowdoin College.

Fraternities had been a part of Bowdoin residential life for 135 years when a decision was made by the Commission of Residential Life to phase them out. Graves was not a signatory to this committee, though he was involved on a more personal level with the incidents that prompted this change.

On record, Graves would not say whether or not he agreed with the abolishment of fraternities.

Graves was also involved in turning Bowdoin College into an indoor smoke-free campus. When questioned by students at the September 19 open meeting, Graves said he had no plans as of yet to do something similar at Bennington.

Graves consistently returned to the idea of respect as his foremost value and suggested that he would like to work with students to create an environment where they feel comfortable. Graves said that he believes deeply in a pluralistic community.

"As a new person coming in you are always looking to see what you could do better, more beneficial, how to reduce bureaucracy, how to spend money effectively, how to generally make things easier," said Graves.

One more piece of information came up when googling Graves, the case of Goodman v. Bowdoin College.

An incident occurred in which one student, Goodman, threw a snowball at a school van being driven by a Korean student. The situation escalated, a fight ensued and both students were brought before a judicial process. Although both students were initially charged, it was Goodman who was later found responsible and suspended for two years.

Goodman appealed and brought charges against Graves and two other administrators, labeling them reverse racists. The first circuit court rejected the charge and found all administrators free of blame.

Graves said this was his first court experience and not a position he enjoyed being in. He felt the process was fair, however, and that a just verdict was reached.

Graves concluded with hopes that people will be open minded to him being the new guy. Graves said it takes a while to learn the "culture and lingo of a place" and insists that he will get there in the end.

16 New Faculty Join College

By K. Morgan Sasser

Amidst the chaos, greetings and massive amounts of information "under the tent" at Orientation, I found myself next to Jason Zimba, a newly hired physics professor, both of us filling out our W-4s. I was confused when he slipped a piece of paper in front of me that said nothing about my income taxes.

Zimba stopped filling out his forms and asked, "Do you enjoy studying physics?" I realized the paper was a course description for his "Physics: Forces and Motion" class.

With all honesty, I replied, "No, not really."

He answered with a word I assure you will be repeated throughout this article, simply because it's the best way to describe Bennington College's new faculty members: "Great!"

Despite an afternoon's conversation about physics and its points of interest, I decided not to take Zimba's class. Many others did, however. Case in point—sophomore Emma Givens, currently enrolled in one of Zimba's classes.

"[Zimba] knows the material and is very passionate about it," Givens said. "It's a great class for non-math students. He's really great."

There it is again: "great."

One of the best things about the new faculty is their willingness to put themselves out there and really try to get students interested in a multitude of subjects. For example, Jonathon Pitcher, new Spanish professor.

He said that at the University of Miami, his former employer, over 2000 students go through the school's Spanish program. At Bennington less than 100 students study the language.

When asked why he decided to come to Bennington, Pitcher said that his last position lacked "academic freedom." Pitcher said that Bennington College possesses a "liberal academic environment."

"I love teaching here, spending time with the students, and getting to know them," said Pitcher. "I love it."

With his wit and eagerness to teach, Pitcher makes getting up at eight o'clock four times a week well worth it.

I also took the time to speak with fellow students and listen to what they think of the new faculty.

Matthew McConville, new painting and drawing teacher, is described by Josephine Carlo as "a great teacher."

"He's not like any [other] drawing teacher," said Carlo. "He doesn't expect you to adopt his own style but gain one of your own through his guidance."

Laura Parnes, new video professor, is a great addition, according to Sara Crystal. "She has me really interested," said Crystal. "She motivates me to get more involved with video."

Elissa Tenney, the Provost and Dean of Bennington College, is proud of the new faculty. She calls them "a talented group with a lot of energy and ideas."

"The teachers at Bennington give students a way of connecting to the world," said Tenney.

There are 16 new faculty members this term and 500 words aren't nearly enough to write about all of them. Biographies for each new professor are available in the Dean's Office.



Thanks to the master plan, the college entrance is no longer a five-way death trap.

Daly continued from page 2

something that is potentially offensive when most people aren't bothered, but he neglected a simple fact: restricting freedom of expression is offensive, particularly at an art school. Taking political correctness to such an extreme creates a hostile environment for the politically incorrect. Depending on the source, it was either Voltaire or Evelyn Beatrice Hall who said, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

In last week's campus-wide meeting concerning the porn tree and public nudity, Graves, arguing that the porn tree does not deserve protection only because it has become a tradition, referenced slavery as another "American tradition" not worth supporting. Most students in the room were noticeably bothered by the comparison, leading Ron Cohen to defend Graves' analogy. Many years ago, he told us, an event was held to raise money for charity in which students offered their labor at a mock antebellum slave auction. The college, with Cohen's support, deemed the event overly offensive and it was prohibited. This was his example of where the school must step in. I would like to think that we are a more sensitive group today, that a slave auction in southern-plantation style is not something most would support. But if a student finds it a valuable use of their time and effort, so be it - I wouldn't attend the auction and have faith that my friends wouldn't either. Isn't that enough? It may be embarrassing to watch students behave with such insensitivity but this is no reason to stop them.

There are logical reasons to take sides with Cohen and Graves. Most students, however, do not. We are reasonable adults who understand both sides of the argument and would prefer to

make our own choices. Thanks for the help but I'll decide on my own whether to live in a smoking house or take my pants off on the lawn.

One of the most constructive statements made at last week's heated meeting was made by Maria Murphy Mayberry, a House Chair of Stokes, who said, "We don't have a choice of whether or not to live on campus. This is our home and we should be given the right that any other Vermont resident has in their own home." It struck the heart of the issue—the school's "culture" should be decided by students, not administrators. They're the landlords.

How would these proposed changes affect our school? Would we remain a progressive institution? The Democratic Party's recent attempt to dodge the word "liberal" and become "progressive" has probably made the two terms more interchangeable than they should be. Most colleges are liberal but few are progressive. Although we pride ourselves on a unique, "progressive" approach to education, many schools have adopted and sometimes improved the "design your education" model, including some state colleges. It has become a national trend for several reasons, one being that students applying to the most competitive schools are more likely to crave (or accept) a "rounded" education, math included, while second and third tier colleges vie for the kids who wouldn't mind replacing physics with a ceramics class. So what makes us different than anywhere else? It's that we live what we do. If the freedom to learn what we please is not coupled with the freedom to do and say what we please, Bennington College will be another second tier liberal arts school where kids dye their hair green.

Kilpatrick Letter continued from page 2

The biggest parts of these concerns are the accusations that have been issued to the house as a whole. Using such words as "sexual harassment" and "hazing" elevates this problem to a new and powerful level. We take these accusations very seriously. Firstly, there is not a person in the house that would respond positively to a situation described by these terms. Some of us, in fact, hold extremely strong views and would be quite offended and displeased should we be associated with sexual harassment or hazing. Before this problem can be assessed fully, we (Student Life and Kilpatrick) need to agree on definitions and fully understand the basis on which we make our claims.

In addition, the fact that the leadership or academic/artistic abilities of members of the house are being questioned can be put to rest by looking at the current members of the house. Among others, there are two house chairs, three peer mentors, three interns of the admissions office, three orientation assistants, one member of the judicial committee, and one member of SAPAT. All of these positions are coveted and highly respected on this campus. Not only are they chosen by their peers, but they are interviewed by various other members of the Bennington community, including peers from other houses, and members of the staff/faculty (including Student Life). Also, several members of our household have been consistently prominent in their areas of study and have conceptualized, created, and presented their work to great reviews.

Though we realize that our actions may be misinterpreted, they are never done in an atmosphere of negativity. This issue concerns us because it appears as though you do not understand our community and what this issue means to the students at Bennington College. Also, we feel that this may lead to other issues that will cause more and bigger problems.

Thank you,

The Members of Kilpatrick House.

Voting continued from page 4

If you've requested an absentee ballot through SAN, the requests have gone out to your state and you'll be getting your ballot soon!

SAN doesn't care if you vote for Bush, Kerry, Nader or anyone else. There's no such thing as a "throwaway" vote, and how are you going to take Democracy Project classes when you're not even participating in your own? What would Liz Coleman do, everybody?

Student Action Network will be registering people to vote every Monday and Wednesday, 11:30am-1pm, during

lunch in Downstairs Commons.

SAN meets every Thursday night at 7:30pm in the Welling living room. If you're interested in community service, protest marches, political issues or any cause we might have forgotten, come talk with us.

We're also going to be screening movies like "Unpresidential," "The Manchurian Candidate" (the original, folks), "Wag The Dog," and "Iron-Jawed Angels" on certain Thursdays.

If you can't make it or have more questions, give Shira Sternberg (x7774) or me (x4211) a call.

Viva la voter!

Hey You Knock It Off!

To the inconsiderate schmucks breaking glass on Second Street:

Sure, I understand the cathartic thrill of smashing a whiskey bottle after a hard week and a well-earned night out. I'm not at all suggesting you reign in your carefree lifestyle or asking that Joan Goodrich build an enclosed pen next to the graffiti wall in which to smash your bottles at the end of the night (That would ruin the spontaneity of the moment, right?) However, looking at all your methodically shattered glass all in the middle of the streets and on the pathways I have to wonder why the hell you couldn't have thought a little harder before you let go of your bottles and any responsibility to your neighbors.

My street is home to at least three cats, some occasional dogs and an unknown number of barefooted hippies who have to walk all over your reckless idiocy in the morning. Just so you know, students *have* cut their feet on your glass—I'm sure there are plenty of opportunities for destructive catharsis that won't harm anyone else: there's a tire swung outside of Dewey that, in my more raucous days, I loved to give a good drunken kicking; there are hundreds of harmless inedible apples to be chucked all over campus; or if you start chugging it early enough, why not stick it to the kung fu mannequin in the Fitness Barn?

The administration's doubts aside, I believe that Bennington students can and keep their own homes in check and consider their neighbors. It'd be nice if a stroll down the street wouldn't tell them otherwise.

--Zubin Soleimany, Editor, house chair and pissed off old man.

OPEN CALL TO STUDENT ARTISTS

Calling all submissions for a regional student art show at the Contemporary Artists Center in North Adams, MA, a not-for-profit artists' studio facility established by working artists for working artists. Undergraduate student artists from the Berkshires and surrounding areas are invited to submit their work for consideration. The exhibition will open on November 6th.

Please send an artist's statement and/or resume, up to 10 images (labeled slides with a slide list or a CD-ROM), and a SASE if you would like your slides returned to you. If you would like to propose a project that is in process or incomplete, please provide images of past work and a detailed proposal of your project. Work in all disciplines and media* will be considered.

If you would like to be considered in the first round of applications, your correspondence must be received no later than October 13, 2004.

For more information about the Contemporary Artists Center in North Adams, log on to www.thecac.org.

Devin Powers
Bennington College
Bennington VT 05201
#7754
devinpowers1@yahoo.com

* Artists with film, video, or other technology need to supply their own devices. Artists with specialized installation requirements including plinths must provide these as well.

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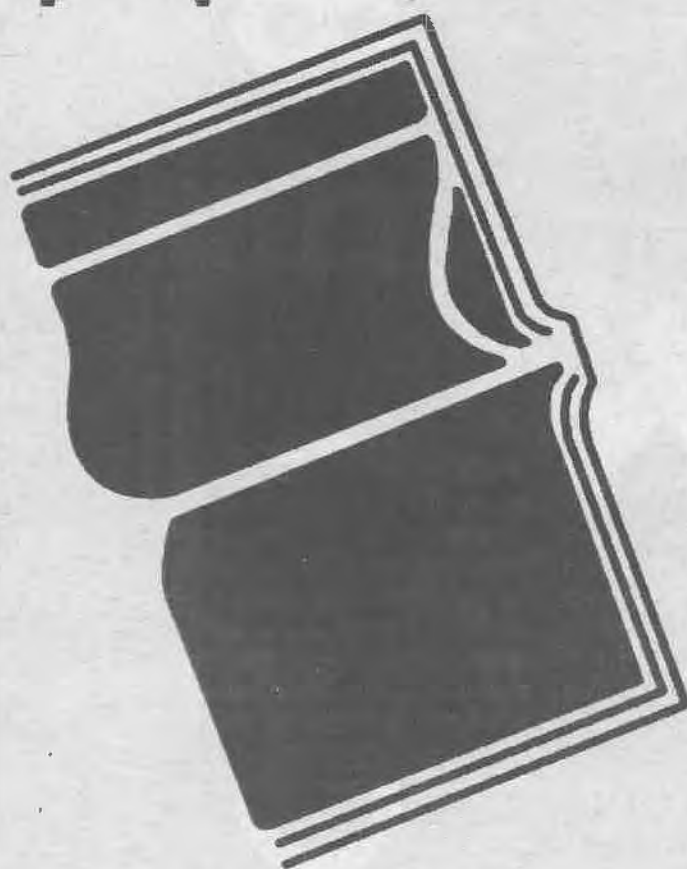
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