

3-19-1976

TJC Newsletter, Issue 18

Grand Valley State College. Thomas Jefferson College

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WHICH WAY...FOR TJC?

TJC

newsletter

Issue #17.

Compiled from the Dean's Office, Thomas Jefferson College, GVSC. 19 March 1976.

WELCOME TO TJC

We'd like to extend a very warm welcome to all our new and returning students at Thomas Jefferson College this spring term. Those of you who have chosen to attend TJC during the spring will find that you have entered during a period of intense questioning, of fluctuation, and of probable fundamental change within the college. Our curriculum, our committees, our meetings all reflect the growing concern that TJC students and faculty have for their present and future educational experience here.

We hope that you will find *your* best ways of taking advantage of all that TJC has to offer you. We hope, too, that you will want to get involved in determining the future of your college: that you will voice your ideas, your suggestions, your complaints. Both our Dean and our Associate Dean -- as well as our faculty -- are open and more than willing to listen to any ideas you may have for the continued success of TJC. Feel free to talk to any of them and to express your ideas openly.

TJC is a unique institution. It is capable of giving you everything you want from a college education, but only in direct proportion to what *you* are willing to give the college. We hope that you will *want* to give -- of yourself, your skills, your experience -- so that TJC in turn will be able to give you the full learning experience you seek.

SPRING TERM REGISTRATION

Registration for the Spring Term 1976 will take place in the GVSC Fieldhouse on Monday, 29 March, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM and again from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM. All students who did not register during the Winter Term must do so on this date if they do not wish to pay late registration fees. Tuition payment is due at the same time as registration; any student unable to pay tuition will be considered a late registrant and will be required to pay late fees.

Late Registration is possible from Tuesday, 30 March, to Monday, 5 April, in the GVSC Records Office (second floor, Lake Huron Hall) from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Any student who registers late will be required to pay a \$20.00 late fee.

Drops and Adds can be made any time between Tuesday, 30 March, and Monday, 5 April, in the GVSC Records Office, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. No Adds can be made after the 5th of April. Drops can continue to be made later in the term, but tuition refund percentages will continue to decrease throughout the term. Withdrawal from a course can be made at any time during the term.

ORIENTATION FOR NEW STUDENTS

Orientation for new students at TJC will take place on Monday, 29 March, in the Campus Center Multi-Purpose Room, beginning at 8:00 AM. At 12:30 PM, all students will be brought to TJC for faculty advising and registration information. After orientation and advising are completed, the students must register in the Fieldhouse before 3:00 PM. Tuition payment must be made at the time of registration. If you are receiving grants or financial aid, you will be expected to stop at the Financial Aids table before completing the registration process.

If you have any questions about orientation, please contact the GVSC Counselling Center.

WHAT I KNOW AND WHAT I DO [EDITORIAL]

My old world is dead and the new one
scares me. -- A.S. Neill

In the last Newsletter, I wrote on the new "voc-think" in higher education, and wondered how such civilized human values as truth, goodness, and beauty will survive when the institutions traditionally used by society to sustain these values (churches and colleges) are being eroded away by an unprecedented attempt to survive at any cost. I suggested that sometime in the not-too-distant future we will no longer have to worry about questions regarding truth, beauty, and goodness because we will no longer be capable of understanding such questions. Questions about truth will be decided by weighing the positive and negative consequences of a belief. Questions of beauty will be relegated to pollsters and critics; and goodness will be a specialized area of expertise for lawyers and politicians.

Things are changing very fast, and people like myself who are still concerned with values -- the *why* as opposed to the *what* of human existence -- are facing a real existential dilemma. We possess certain information and beliefs about which we feel totally confident, so confident in fact that we feel we really *know* certain things.

On the other hand, we find ourselves behaving in ways incongruent with what we know. The dilemma is one of coping with the widening gap between our tacit knowing -- based on intuition, wisdom, and reflection -- and what we do, controlled principally by social, political, and economic exigency.

When push comes to shove, when we can no longer psychologically and physically adjust to the stress of doing one thing while believing another, the easiest and most common way of resolving our dilemma will be to change our beliefs or knowledge. Certainly intuition, wisdom, and reflection are much more delicate and destructable than social, economic, and political realities.

I think that, to some extent, this kind of coping has happened in higher education during the last five to seven years. Faced with the prospect of dwindling admissions and an impending buyers' market, educators set aside their traditional function and began to design a product palatable to future customers. Thus, practically overnight colleges gave up their goal of being agents of social change -- dedicated to the continuous development of the human spirit, and collecting and supporting the highest of human accomplishments -- and became commercial enterprises. Operating traditionally on the model of the Metropolitan Opera Company, colleges rapidly adopted the model of the Metropolitan Insurance Company.

This new-think was given the status of a small educational revolution, a kind of coming-of-age, by the appointment of a blue-ribbon commission -- the Carnegie Commission -- charged with charting directions for higher education for the last quarter of the twentieth century. It seems suspicious that the final recommendations of this commission were exactly what higher education needed in order to survive. Apparently the commission served the function of adding prestige to the rationalization for survival but did little in examining reasons for survival.

So, my old world is dead and the new one scares me.

But while I'm still a little scared and before I adjust what I know to match better with what I do, I want to note some of the things I know, if for no other reason than providing a record for myself when I am unable to remember what it was I used to believe:

- a] I know that, other than colleges and churches, there are very few social, economic, and political institutions which function to question and sustain a value orientation in society;
- b] I know that perhaps the only sane human enterprise in 1976 is intimately connected with creativity and the arts;
- c] I know that, if we knew today the world would end tomorrow, listening to Beethoven today would be a valid and meaningful human experience, and programming a computer would not be;
- d] I know that grades, diplomas, and departmentalizing knowledge have deleterious effects on the meaningfulness and significance of the learning experience;
- e] I know that the single most important ingredient of the learning experience is the level of consciousness of the teacher. A high teacher promotes personally meaningful and significant learning regardless of teaching method, process or content;
- f] I know there are very few high teachers;

- g] I know students function better with limited choices than with unlimited ones;
- h] I know students like information, long-range planning, and complete projects. I also know today's students are intelligent enough not to be sucked into believing in *the* information, *the* plan, or *the* project. The teacher as information-passer is a good educational model, especially if teachers have any information to pass and don't take themselves too seriously;
- i] I know the old saying about "healthy body, healthy mind" is true;
- j] I know that most educational enterprises function to inhibit growth in ability to feel and express emotions, act creatively, and know intuitively;
- k] I know that most great human experiences and accomplishments occur when a person is able to transcend his or her own self-consciousness;
- l] I know that most techniques developed by education in general, and psychology in particular, tend to increase self-consciousness. Knowing thyself is essential and good but, at times, totally crippling;
- m] I know something about history -- that it's an integral part of each one of us, that it has a lot to do with what we do and even how we think. It sets limits on how much we can change at any given time. We ought to know more about our history.

If institutions of higher education are to survive, they must adopt as their primary function the development and preservation of the highest forms of human thought and action. The role of education is to connect with the "knowing" side of us -- the potentially wise, reflective, intuitive, and valuing side of us. To focus primarily on making us copers and adjustors to political, social, and economic realities is to put education on the same plane as the marketing of hula hoops.

-- T. Dan Gilmore

FOR WOMEN

A special showing of "Soviet Women" will be presented on Monday, 5 April 1976, at 2:00 PM in Louis Armstrong Theatre. Bill Mandel will talk and show slides on Soviet women jobs, childcare, education, pay, working conditions, birth control, abortion, marriage, sex roles, and positions of power in the USSR.

The first poetry anthology, *Word Weavings*, to be published by the Matria Press Collective of Grand Rapids is now available. Contact Chris Shepherd at 616/454-7164 if you are interested in obtaining a copy, or if you are interested in publishing your own works.

The Grand Rapids Feminist Center is back at its old home on Sheldon, and back in business again. Its new name is The Gertrude Stein Women's Society: A Lesbian Feminist Center. Further news on this group will be coming later...

The Grand Rapids YWCA Women's Center will be holding a Women's Festival on May 6th and 7th. For information and details, contact the YWCA directly.

Marge Piercy (former TJC artist-in-residence), feminist poet and novelist, has just published her new book, *Living in the Open*. It's available at the GVSC Bookstore.

A special political-action Women's Assembly is being planned for March 26th and 27th in Lansing, Michigan. This two-day workshop will feature seminars, discussions, readings, workshops, films, and much, much more. If you are interested in registering for the workshop, either pick up a registration form on the Women's Board at TJC or contact the Women's Assembly directly by writing to them at the Olds Plaza, 125 Michigan Avenue, Lansing, Michigan.

The GVSC Women's Center has moved! It is now located in the upstairs of the Crew-house. Drop in any time to get acquainted, obtain information, or lend some help.

The WWW Program has several new and exciting offerings for the Spring Term. It would be well worth your while to check their listings in the schedule before registering for classes.

TJC MAILBAG

Our first letter is from *Erica Helm*, a TJC student who has been doing a field study in Guatemala during the last few months:

We made it to Costa Rica. Finally. Guatemala was hard to get out of. We spent a month on the breathtaking Lake Atitlan in Guatemala, where I had been studying some folkloric dances of the Cachiquel Indians. We were there just long enough to get tossed out of bed one night by our floor which was tossing itself. The village we were in clattered and rolled all night, water lines broke, windows broke, but all the houses stood, as they were one-storey mud huts and very flexible.

The village above us had been totalled. Another covered by the mountain that used to stand above it. To get out of the village to the larger towns of Panajachel and Solola where we had hopes of news contacts with the rest of the area and the world, we had to clear away landslides from the road. That was a spooky affair since the earth was still rumbling intermittently.

For a few days we had no communications as to the extent of the damage, passability of roads, or whether or not the quake would continue. You in the states, even at this date, are probably better informed than I.

The quake hit on February 5th at about 3:30 AM. Finally, on the 10th, by a very round-about route, we were able to leave Guatemala and come south. Guatemala was in sad sad shape when we left. The water had all been contaminated, food was scarce, and besides the dead thousands were sleeping in the streets. We donated what food and clothing and first aid we had, and left. (By the 10th, the authorities were asking foreigners to leave because of food and water shortages.)

Costa Rica has been peaceful. Thanks, Jo Ellen, Dick, Ann, Marty, Cathy, and everyone else for your sweet concerns and meditations. Energy like that got us through the quake unharmed. Believe me, it was a holocaust where you could have been zapped no matter where you were or what you were doing.

No precautions were "sure;" we didn't know, nor could anyone say, which areas were "safe" and which were not. It was a matter of timing and placement left up to my guardian angel.

Jimmy (Kochia) Wahlberg is here and fine. He was a soul of encouragement for me through the whole disaster. Today he'll be riding a horse down the Pacific shoreline.

I miss everyone there. And look forward to returning.

The next letter is from *David Schuchman*, an early graduate of TJC who is now living in Arizona. The letter was addressed to T. Dan:

Lately I've had occasion to informally analyze my education at TJC. I've come up with some real strengths and weaknesses. I'm sure only part of the causes lie with TJC. I'm also not suggesting any change in TJC as there have to be both strengths and weaknesses in any system. I just thought you might be interested.

In case you don't know, I'm in an MSW program at Arizona State University. The program is generally pretty unchallenging, though I've been able to challenge myself and seek out challenging people, most other students unfortunately. This actually is one of the strengths that TJC *did* help me with -- responsibility for my own education, taking initiative to learn, and ability to learn. These qualities have been my saving grace here.

The second significant thing was in terms of my own participation and power in the policy-making aspect of TJC. I think *you* are largely responsible for making (allowing) TJC to become open to student input. Granted, not everyone can obtain the level of participation that I did, but its still, relatively, an incredibly open situation.

The weaknesses are more those of not planning ahead well or not taking *enough* initiative in my education. (So, a strength is also a weakness. Beautiful.) I'm realizing that my fellow students in graduate school generally have a better founding in facts, theories, and experts that are significant to my field. In other words I never studied Erickson, for example, while my classmates are very familiar with him. They have a knowledge base, in the field, that I lack to some degree.

In terms of adjusting to this, I've been able to utilize my ability to learn very effectively. I'm also at a decided advantage to my classmates when it comes to learning new things, since it is less effort for me -- a less anxiety-producing experience.

Another weakness is in my transcript. I think the concept is a sound one, but I think I could have expressed myself better in my evaluations. If I had known what I was going to do after graduating, I might have written them less informally. I also might have taken more courses related to my future interests. On the other hand, though, I did get into graduate school

so perhaps it wasn't a significant handicap. Well, basically, that's it. I'm really pretty satisfied with my education. I think the strengths easily outweigh the weaknesses for me.

Betty is enjoying her job as Information and Referral Specialist for the City of Scottsdale. She works in a small community center and is getting a good feeling for the community and for her job. Quite a change from working for the big state bureaucracy in Chicago.

We're finally getting over our cold spell here. Yesterday was a comfortable 78°, a far cry from our cold weather (40-50°). Sounds great, doesn't it? I've been playing tennis outside at least once a week all "winter."

I'd be interested in any reactions you have to my letter... Say hello to all my old friends (young ones, too). Betty says hello too.

This letter, too, is from an early graduate of TJC, *Mark Goniwiecha*, who has been living in Alaska for several years now:

I just received the December issue of the TJC Newsletter, which prompted me to write you a note. I have not been a good correspondent for the past few years; and whenever I have been in the Grand Valley area it has been when classes are not in session.

I have been in Alaska most of the time since my graduation from TJC. For those years (1971/1972, 1973/1974, and 1974/1975), I was a Spanish and French teacher and librarian at Monroe High School here in Fairbanks. I am also working part-time on a degree in "northern studies" at the University of Alaska. Last May I decided to forego teaching in favor of working on the trans-Alaska pipeline.

I joined the work force as a welder's helper out of the Pipeliners' Union 798, Tulsa, Oklahoma (self-declared American labor movement "heavies"). Not only am I learning a fine skill, but I am also having the time of my life, and earning plenty of money (a first, for me!). Most of the summer and fall I worked north of the Brooks Range on Alaska's north slope, living at several camps (including Happy Valley, Pump Station #1 at Prudhoe Bay, Galbraith, and Dietrich). I was laid off in mid-December -- the slow-down was expected due to the holiday and cold weather (-50° and colder). The temperatures are a little warmer now in Fairbanks (-30 and -40°) and the rehiring will be picking up soon, as Alaska wants to complete construction this season. I plan to work as long as I can up there.

Meanwhile, I have purchased a couple acres of spruce trees near Fairbanks -- a possible building site in a year or two. Also, I am dreaming of going to library school in the nebulous future (University of Hawaii, perhaps, Earl?). Hello to everyone...

MARY'S CORNER

Bob Ceo, former student at TJC, dropped in to visit recently. He told me that he is now working as a photographer at Talbot's Portrait Studio in Ann Arbor, and is also working as a bartender on Saturdays at a neighborhood bar. Bob once told me that he'd like to be a bartender since, I think, it offered such a good opportunity to mix drinks as well as people, to observe and to learn, and maybe even to philosophize.

Kate Leffler has been accepted in the Graduate School of Art at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana.

I was recently notified that John McNaughton, TJC graduate for whom great futures have been predicted by many of us, has become associated with the law firm of Law, Weathers, Richardson, and Dutcher in Grand Rapids. Much success, John, in your work!

Steve Montgomery has been accepted as a graduate student in art at Temple University in Philadelphia.

And Bob Vashinsky was accepted at Northern Michigan University in Marquette for graduate work in guidance and counselling (Masters Program). He has also been accepted at Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant for the same studies. Bob hasn't yet decided where he plans to attend.

I would like to share with you copies of two letters I recently received. The first was written to Mr. Rangaramanuja Ayyangar concerning Rebecca (Ranjani) Iftner, one of his students while he was teaching South Indian music at TJC.

Respected Pandit Acharya:

I was fortunate to attend South Indian Music Concert given by Ranjani E. Iftner at TJC Campus Center, GVSC campus on Friday, January 30, 1976. Her performance was superb and received enthusiastic applause. After the concert was over, I requested her to visit my family and give her recital again so that my children, Sandhya and Geetha, could share some of her music spirit.

Ranjani kindly accepted my invitation and we had a music recital on Thursday, February 12, 1976. I also invited a few American and Indian friends who are interested in South Indian Music...My wife, Sakku, and I and my children served all our honored guests with delicious South Indian food -- rice, curry, sambar, samosa, puri, and gulab jamun. After dinner, Ranjani recited four South Indian classics on veena: Varnam, Thyagraja Krithi, Konakol, "Saranu Saranu Sarada." It was again a superb performance. Every one of us was enthralled and enchanted by her sweet, melodious, and soothing music. She is an ideal student in the old Indian tradition of Guru and Shishya and a devotee of music. I am confident she will ever hold a torch you kindled and enlighten the hearts and kindle the minds of many, many people she will meet in the future.

So the seed of South Indian music which you seeded on American soil is now already a small plant and will soon grow to a tree blossoming and its fragrance reaching all corners of this country, all due to your blessings! We would encourage in all possible ways.

The letter was written by *Dinakar Voruganti*. Mr. Ayyangar sent a copy of it to me, realizing that I would be very happy to hear about how one of our students is doing in her studies.

The second letter is from a TJC student, *Michael Millard*, concerning a recent concert given by Mr. *Guillermo Fierens*, our Distinguished Artist-in-Residence during the Winter Term. Mr. Fierens is a classical guitarist who has been teaching at TJC.

Dear Mr. Fierens:

I, along with many other individuals, wish to express to you our deep thanks and admiration for your superb concert last Friday evening. The difference, I think, between your concert and other artists' concerts we've attended is your personal level of intensity and credibility.

Throughout the performance, you with your audience maintained a mutual, reciprocal respect and integrity -- you as master, we as listeners. Not only did you obviously choose intricate and complex pieces to stimulate and please us, it appeared that you had indeed chosen pieces that would stimulate your interest during the long hours of practice. Your artistic credibility was further displayed through your adherence to composer-artistic respectability. For me, you captured the authenticity of the music within the limits of the individual native composer's intentions.

Thank you for the many hours of dedication that you have so magnificently shared with us so often, we the fortunate few that have been graciously given a chance to hear you.

The SIN Committee is proud to announce that the SIN Bizarre Bazaar, held on Thursday, March 11th, was a great success. They made more than their intended goal, and it was obvious that everyone who attended had a thoroughly good time. The Bazaar was a success for everyone concerned. And the SIN Committee now has more funds with which to help other students in emergency situations.

Below is a copy of the Narrative Statement that *William Stage* included in his Academic Log for graduation. Those of us who read it felt it was such a good statement that we wanted to share it with you here:

NARRATIVE STATEMENT

The first substantial snowfall of the season is piling high outside my window as I write this. My Self turns introspective, more so with the onset of winter. Perhaps this is a prime time to scribe this narrative statement.

I was originally recommended to TJC by an Economics Professor, formerly of CAS. He confided in me that "those students ask the most intelligent questions." I was to discover later that, while they do ask a lot of questions, they are not necessarily intelligent ones.

I came to this college with two notions in mind. One that I wanted to learn how to write well creatively. The other that my prime motive for learning was for the

sake of learning. Procuring a degree was, at the most, only an afterthought. My first concern has diminished somewhat. Though I have never allowed my writing talent to idle (I am proud to have put in seven months as a paid journalist/photographer for City Hall in Grand Rapids), I have switched my academic emphasis to the Life Sciences, as is evidenced by the preponderance of credits in that area.

My idea regarding degrees still holds fast. It is merely a document stating that I have spent so many years studying what interests me. Why, I am just getting started! My interests have been kindled and there is plenty of fuel lying about. With graduation impending I view commencement as only the slightest of interruptions in the course of my academic journey. I am consistent in my philosophy of learning. I recall writing similar words concerning the degree in my TJC entrance essay.

Perhaps TJC has made me a doer. I can honestly say that I put a good effort into all my classes. I tried to make them dynamic, not static.

The best thing TJC has done for me is to allow me to choose my own curriculum. I took only those classes I was interested in and therefore I did well in them. My evaluations attest to that. Happy that I was not in a conventional classroom situation pretending to listen to some authority drone on about some topic which I might consider the epitome of boredom. No, my education has been exciting and I am grateful for the chance to explore freely. I am grateful for the chances I had to direct the class at times.

When I felt that I had depleted the resources at TJC, I was grateful for the chance to participate in the newly-incepted NAUTE Exchange. I attended Evergreen College in Olympia, Washington. There I entered a nine-month comprehensive pre-med program. There I acquired the fundamental learning tools of the science trade: math, chemistry, and experimental procedure.

The distribution of my credits reflect the academic freedom I was granted while at TJC. 118 credit hours, 65% of my total credit, are in the physical and natural sciences. I turned on to science during my first term largely through the enthusiasm and encouragement of Dr. John Warren.

My interest in learning is genuine. I have progressed through college full steam ahead. I feel privileged to have been part of an "experimenting school" where I could work at graduate and freshmen levels simultaneously. I have seen the other side of academia while attending the University of Maryland and the College of Arts and Sciences. They are fine for their methods, tried and true, of teaching factual, no-nonsense, straight-over-the-counter course offerings. I have been saddened by the lack of inquisitiveness of those students belonging to the traditional colleges. At least you will find no students at TJC who wish to know no more from their teacher other than that which will be covered on the test.

The other major lump of my credits fall under the heading, "Literature and Composition." The latter was improved immensely by the writing of evaluations after each seminar. To me these served a twofold purpose: to pour out my feelings on paper and to capsulize what I had learned in the course. I was quite serious about these evaluations, and they often ran the length of several typewritten pages. My only complaint about TJC is this: that faculty were irresponsible when it came to writing their half of the evaluation. I had to badger a few of them until they complied. A few had lost them, while others merely jotted down a few patent lines. So much for that. I know what I learned and that's what matters.

To me TJC is not so much of a place where knowledge is imparted as it is a school where I can learn how to learn for myself and that is exactly what I intend to do.

Where do I go from here?

- To engage in the world of laborers. A place I am wont to call the real world.
- To dish out my philosophy to anyone willing to listen.
- To re-enter school when I am ready for more formal learning.
- To lend a hand in my community wherever it may be.
- To merge vocation with avocation until the two are no longer distinguishable.
- To continue posing the two questions that have brought me to my present state of mind:
 - "How is it that I live?" which may be answered by science.
 - And "Why do I live?" which is answerable by philosophy and theology.
- Lastly, to become a man complete, with the courage and integrity required to live the sort of life he can speak proudly of with his dying breath.

-- William Stage, 11/25/75

AN IMPORTANT NOTE FROM OUR ASSOCIATE DEAN

Studies of institutional change have indicated that most new ideas "come from the bottom." While we rarely think of students in such a demeaning hierarchical sense, an idea has "come from the bottom" (a student -- no one remembers now just who it was) which has such exciting possibilities for TJC. The idea?

MAGIC WEDNESDAYS

In the Spring Term course schedule, you will note that most classes have been scheduled to meet on Monday and Thursday, or Tuesday and Friday, *plus* Wednesday from 12:00 to 2:00 PM, in 132 Lake Huron Hall. When the idea of all of us meeting in one place to do a one-credit large-group thing was suggested, my first reaction was, "No! We couldn't..." But the more the faculty and students discussed the idea, the more exciting the prospects became. Committees of faculty and students have been working on developing a meaningful Wednesday experience. There is, after all, strong connection between geology and ceramics, between dance and language, between organic gardening and community studies. Maybe interdisciplinary can really mean *interdisciplinary*.

So...you meet your regular class on Monday and Thursday, or Tuesday and Friday, for four hours per week, and then join the Wednesday all-classes meeting from 12:00 until 2:00 PM. Not enough has been firmed up to give you a clear idea of the substance of the meetings at this time, but it promises to be exciting...We'll see you there!

-- Dennis Winters

ROBERT SHECHTMAN

On Friday, February 27th, at 8:15 PM, the premier performance of Robert Shechtman's "The Eye of Ahura" was given by the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of conductor Theo Alcantara. Shechtman, who is a teacher of music at TJC, wrote "The Eye of Ahura" specifically for the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra. It is the product of the composer's long love affair with the infinite variety of orchestral sounds. The title, an ancient Persian colloquialism of good will, was chosen out of the composer's feeling for a work written especially for a Grand Rapids area audience. "I live here," Shechtman says, "and this is my first opportuni-

ity to share my work with these special people." Shechtman has entitled each of the five sections of the work with the initials of his "special people" in Grand Rapids. On Saturday, February 28th, the performance was repeated in the Louis Armstrong Theatre at GVSC, as a presentation of the GVSC Premier Series 1975/1976. There is no doubt that the performance was received enthusiastically. Bravo, Bobby!

THOMAS JEFFERSON COLLEGE
Grand Valley State Colleges
Allendale MI 49401

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