

5-15-1978

The Bullfrog Pond: Special Edition

Grand Valley State College. Thomas Jefferson College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/bullfrogpond>

ScholarWorks Citation

Grand Valley State College. Thomas Jefferson College, "The Bullfrog Pond: Special Edition" (1978). *Bull Frog Pond*. 55.

<https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/bullfrogpond/55>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Thomas Jefferson College Publications at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bull Frog Pond by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

•• TJC Fight Song ••
(Keep It Alive)

My mother says it takes a cake to rise
Keep it alive
My brother's head has too much light for jive,
Keep it alive

You know this place is a mystery school,
We give and receive, and change is the rule
Don't be afraid, just ride the wave
And keep it alive!

'Cause you know leadership sways
Adds suspense to our days
But every crisis will pass
Don't worry, truth will last
Yes! Yes! Yes!

People
The planet
Is coming together;
Now is the time!
School is a place that's based in our hearts
It's easy
Keep it alive!
Keep it alive!
Keep it alive!

Whatever we've lost before
we can let it go
There's unlimited strength within us
If we let it flow...

Contact
Electric
One to another,
Love
And faith
Oh, sisters and brothers

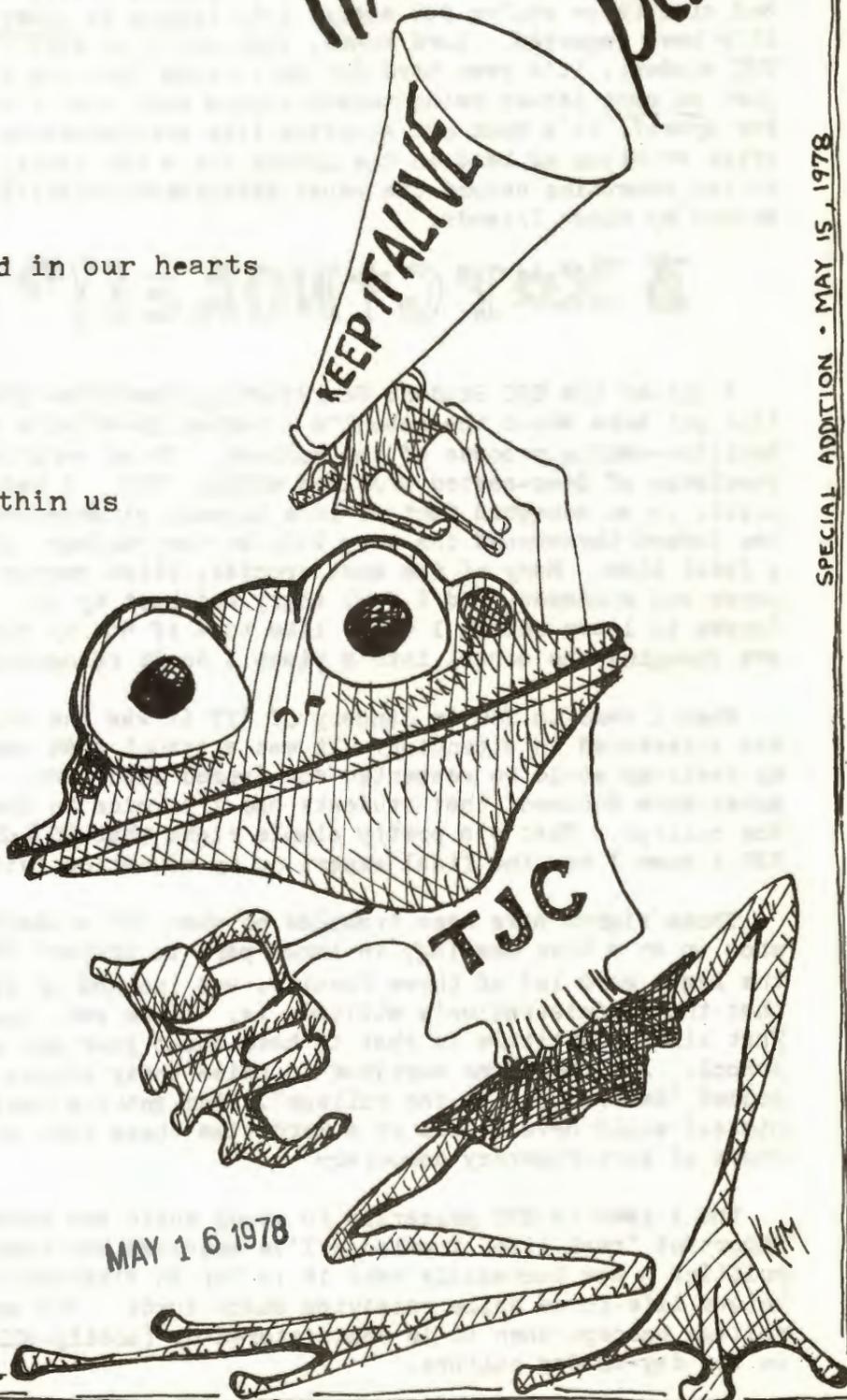
My heart smiles first,
Then my eyes and face
And you will
Keep it alive
Keep it alive
Keep it alive...

Give the dark side no sway
Pessimism brings sorrow
As we think today
We will surely be tomorrow
So open your eyes
And let light be your guide
And we

will
keep it alive!

• Barb Bootz

the bullfrog pond



MAY 16 1978

LETTER NUMBER ONE

"a song, when it's over
is no song at all...."

Bruce Cockburn

Folks -

First of all, I'd like to thank the Lanthorn as well as WJC's Paper for the effort you've put into reporting the ongoing crisis at Thomas Jefferson College. And also those who've put energy into trying to understand the situation once it's been reported. Lord knows, that ain't no easy feat. Even as an "informed" TJC student, it's been hard for me to wade thru the clouds of smoke. There are just so many issues being tossed around that when I've tried to synthesize it all for myself, it's come out sounding like gobbledeegook more often than not. So, after sticking my head in the ground for a few weeks, somehow it feels important to say something beyond the usual BX*FG+NORc!!*ZXQ!'s I've been exclaiming lately around my close friends.

B X*F G†NORc!!* Z X Q! ???

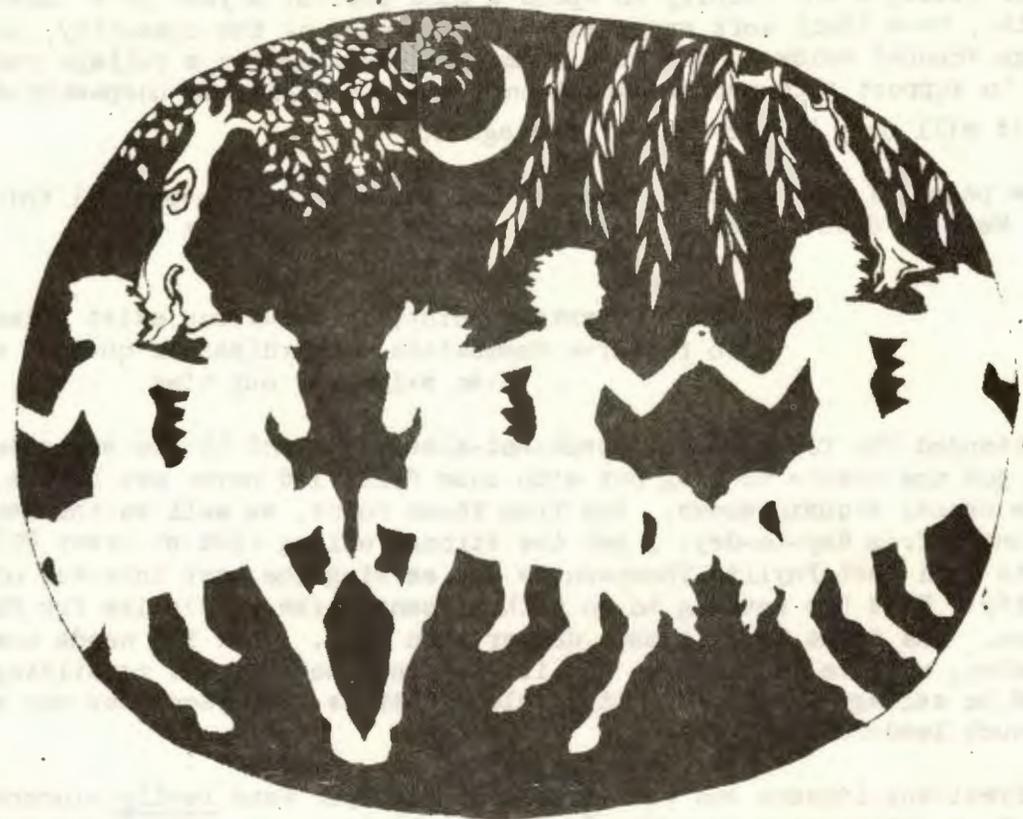
I joined the TJC Student Coordinating Committee last September in an effort to find out more about the school's internal governance and to put my energy into the decision-making process of the college. To my surprise, I came to the gradual knowledge of deep-seated problems within TJC. I had known there were problems: crisis is an accepted fact of life in most alternative schools. Yet this crisis has indeed threatened the very life of the college, if it hasn't already dealt TJC a fatal blow. Many of the most special, vital people are being driven away by force and misdeeds, and I feel angry and hurt by it. And I feel that I too may be forced to leave before I would like to - if not by force, then by the powers that are changing the school into a place I don't recognize and cannot love.

When I came to TJC in January of '77 it was the only school in this state that I was interested in attending. It was a school that was special. Because I knew that my feelings would be respected and deemed important. It was even written into the governance document that students had 1/3 voice in the decision-making process of the college. That's a pretty simple right that 90% of schools trample on. But at TJC I knew I was the final expert on my education (with the guiding help of many).

Those rights have been trampled on when 200 students (out of approx. 350) can show up at a town meeting, in large part to protest the firing (i don't care what the legal word is) of three faculty, and instead of dialogue, one gets the feeling that the administration's attitude is: "if we wait long enough, they'll go away". What kind of attitude is that to have about your own students? In a "democratic" school. And those who continue to raise their voices (students and faculty) are deemed "destructive to the college". One gets the feeling that old Thomas Jefferson himself would have a hell of a hard time these days at TJC, standing up for his views of participatory democracy.

Tho I came to TJC primarily to study music and education, I feel like the most important "real-life" knowledge I've acquired has been in the area of institutional politics - how incredibly hard it is for an alternative school to maintain its unique life-force while receiving state funds - and especially under a cluster college concept when it is administered by (mostly all) men who have no investment in its day-to-day culture.

But first, there are things I will always cherish about my experience here.



"I've seen groups of strangers learn to dance and sing as one." Michael Lauchlan

My first term here, a year and a half ago, I sat in Janice Jarrett's voice class and felt magic at work. A group of 20 or so folks, many of us strangers, ranging from off-key bathtub singers to excellent experienced musicians, gathered together in one room; and somehow we managed to find enough love and support within ourselves to really share and learn from each other.

That experience typifies to me the best of what alternative education can be: starting where you are and challenging yourself to reach new levels, with the support and critical feedback of fellow students and instructor. But most important is the provision of that atmosphere that encourages the student to realize the magic within.

Some rightly ask, "But are there objective criteria to judge this learning by?" I personally don't wish to spend the rest of my life at TJC, so that's an important question I also ask myself.

That's where a good evaluation process and advising system that provide clear feedback and ask important questions of a student are invaluable to a healthy alternative learning situation. (Leaving the final decisions to the student herself.)

TJC is sorely deficient in this process, a fact which Pres. Lubbers himself mentioned in an address to the TJC faculty this winter. Yet a person with excellent skills in this area, one who spent last year running the advising system and a good part of this year developing (with asst. dean Edie Harrison) a clear new model for evaluations - Ava Arsaga - is not being rehired.

It's debilitating to the lifeblood of a community to dismiss, drive away, and discourage the most energetic, brightest members who are working on the very problems that are most crucial to its survival. It's a death wish.

It's also debilitating to the lifeblood of a community to ask a highly respected group of students and faculty to spend a good part of a year on a "dean search committee", have their work approved overwhelmingly by the community, yet have its findings shunted aside in bankrupt summer maneuverings by a college president who claims to support alternative education. When we allow the unspeakable to happen once, it will only happen again. And again.

Some people I respect have told me that the time to protest all this was last year. Well, I didn't know then. I do now, so I must say it now.

"After a certain point, institutions exist primarily to preserve themselves, regardless of quality or purpose."
- an axiom for our time

I attended the TJC advance a week-and-a-half ago and it was an eye-opener for me. I got the chance to hang out with some folks I'd never met before, and others who are casual acquaintances. And from these folks, as well as the many students I encounter from day-to-day, I get the strong feeling that at least 80% of TJC students feel that Phyllis Thompson is not serving the best interest of the school community. This has nothing to do with personal like or dislike for Phyllis Thompson. The issue here is much deeper than that. What TJC needs now is strong, responsive, unitive leadership for its internal healing and rebuilding process. We need to salvage the magic. It is clear that Ms. Thompson does not and cannot offer such leadership.

If President Lubbers and Vice-President Niemeyer were really sincere in their "support of alternative education", they would have taken the tremendous faculty and student support for Jean Frein and used that positive energy to create. Instead, they appointed an unacceptable person and even made provisions for the fact that huge numbers of the community would leave in protest. The immense amount of gall it takes to do that still makes my blood boil, a year later.

I've said many of these same things in personal meetings with Mr. Lubbers and Mr. Niemeyer. I don't think they're BAD MEN. Again, the issue goes beyond personalities. But I resent with my whole being the arbitrary power they have over our lives. They are totally unaccountable to you and me. Their function is to do business. That's my main lesson in institutional politics: institutions are run by businessmen, not by educators. Don't let anyone tell you differently.

Business and magic don't hang out together too often, but they need not be exclusive of each other. President Lubbers had a golden opportunity last year to say, "TJC community, choose your leader - and we'll give you one year to get your business together". With that above-board approach we could have become that rare animal, a magical community that had its shit together, or we would have had only ourselves to blame. In any case, things certainly couldn't have turned out any worse than they have.

Perhaps it is not too late for us - administration, students, and faculty - to cooperate in putting TJC back together. Alternative education is admittedly not a fad anymore. Enrollment will never be what it once was - yet a group of students and faculty who enthusiastically support their school are the best free publicity you could ever hope for. That's how a great number of us ended up here - word of mouth. But that can't happen as long as we're torn apart.

The students and dissenting faculty of Thomas Jefferson College cannot be blamed for this disunity. The central GVSC administration has ruined any semblance of cooperation by its unilateral and irresponsible appointment and unbending support of Dean Thompson. If they wish to see the unity reestablished that is essential to the welfare and success of TJC, they must remove Dean Thompson and cooperate with us in a renewed search for a dean who will be acceptable to all parties involved.

PRESIDENT LUBBERS: WE WANT A RESPONSE TO THIS.

Respectfully yours,

Jesse Paledofsky - TJC student
(with the amazing assistance
of Seth Garwood)

"...Yes, I must be home again soon
to face the unspoken unguarded thoughts of habitual hearts
a vanguard of electricians, a village full of tarts
who say you must protest, you must protest
it is your diamond duty
ah, but in such an ugly time, the true protest is beauty
and the bleeding seer crawled from the ruins of the empire
and stood bleeding, bleeding on the border
he said, passion has led to chaos
and now chaos will lead to order
oh, I have been away for awhile
and I hope to be back again soon"
Phil Schs



Ritual of New Beginnings

Spend the day at Rosy Mound.

Stand in the same place
for sunrise and sunset.

Bring orange juice.

If your lovers come along,
let them do anything or
bring a lunch,
but do not eat
unless it's magic mushrooms
for the first time.

Run, breathe, pray.

You need only spend the morning
alone.

A Prayer

May life become miserable
For thieves and whitnots.
I myself live on borrowed time.
This morning my axis mundi was painted blue
And invaded by a host of woodpeckers.
Then came the Audobon.
I made a fortune on concessions.
With the Windy Spring
And the Birds learning of a Woodier West,
I rest alone now in a rainy field warm.
May the goddess see pleasure
On her small creatures crawling
In the Dark.

Stuart Brown



A Prayer

May life become miserable
For thieves and whitnots.
I myself live on borrowed time.
This morning my axis mundi was painted blue
And invaded by a host of woodpeckers.
Then came the Audobon.
I made a fortune on concessions.
With the Windy Spring
And the Birds learning of a Woodier West,
I rest alone now in a rainy field warm.
May the goddess see pleasure
On her small creatures crawling
In the Dark.

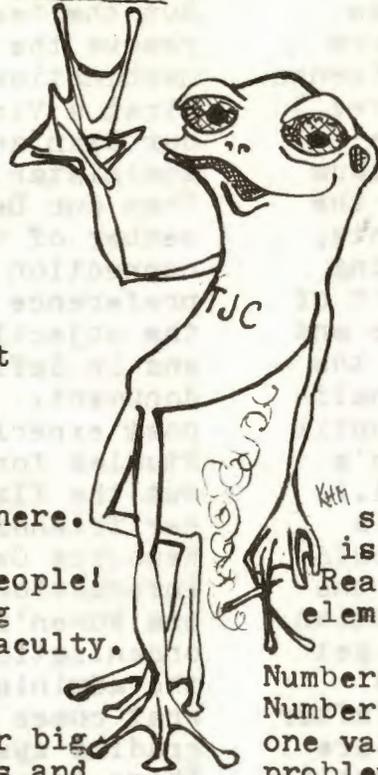
Stuart Brown



Letter Number Two (in defence of Flakiness)

In Toledo, Ricky told me about the poster on his friend's wall at Kalamazoo College, where he went when we both split Mount Union in disgust. I went to Florida and cleaned bedpans, then sang in bars with him after he left Kazoo, and here I was, after two years, ready for more higher learning. So I wrote to Thomas Jefferson along with the other 30 and TJ sent me a flaky handwritten postcard, "Sure, you can do it here, come on up." The others sent what proper institutions send: catalogs, form letters and applications. I came here.

1972! TJC's crisis was too many people! There were as many new as returning students, and as many new as old faculty. So all of us greenhorns landed in Seidman to start Unit II. Unit II was a big flop. I remember big meetings where most of the students and practically all the faculty got together with Dan Gilmore (our Dean) and tried to figure out what to do about Unit II and the stress all the new people put on the old systems. Years passed. TJC grew. We who sought to maintain the systems whereby students and faculty could have direct and real input into our educational process were continually concerned with the problems attendant with that rampant growth. When we passed 600, we seriously talked about ways to halt the growth or at least drastically reduce its rate. We longed for the days when there were 300 of us and we could get together. (1st law of group participation: the % of any group which can get together at one time and place is inversely proportional to the size of the group.



1978! the crisis at TJC is too few people! Why? This seems like a perfect opportunity to form a tight, integrated group of learners, to really get together. I see two reasons:

- 1) the faculty we built up for 600+ is too big for 300-.
- 2) an institution which is not growing and expanding is thought of as a failed institution.

Reason #1 is precisely why we tried to abolish tenure, so that non-renewal of contracts, when needed, could be accomplished with respect to merit and acceptance within the learning community rather than by seniority and administrative fiat, as is now the case.

Reason #2 is one of the patently foolish elements of our cultural consciousness.

Numbers is not our problem.

Numbers--whether high or low--are merely one variable affecting our basic internal problem: continuously re-designing and maintaining our academic process and the meta-systems for that design and maintenance function itself in a community whose members are divergent in interest and atomized in activity. This problem is always serious and often fraught with danger, but freedom in any endeavor demands harder work and higher risk.

Freedom--the freedom of learners and teachers to participate directly and meaningfully in all phases of the educational process--is exactly what alternative education is about. And our immediate and more-or-less external problem concerns that very academic freedom. We exist within (get our money through) an institution administered by businessmen and conservative Christians, to whom propriety and appearances are paramount. Our freedom has produced an appearance which offends their sense of propriety and embarrasses them.

TJC originally branched off from CAS as the School of General Studies, an honors college designed on the Oxford model (hence the arcane Bachelor of Philosophy degree.) SGS students were expected to be above average students who would pursue serious academic endeavor beyond the scope of the traditional departments and requirements, free of the old grading system and using new modes of learning. From this point of view, SGS was academically respectable and it was a very marketable commodity in the late 60's. It remained so, however, half-way through the 70's (or, curiously, until about the time that the Administration's embarrassment reached a critical level.) They were embarrassed, it seems, that a bunch of freaks (read "Bolsheviks") could subvert their dream of the "Oxford of the Midwest" into a flaky humanist institution where anyone could study anything and get good State-of-Michigan credit for it-- which is what the newspapers screamed after each visit of the state auditors (who are accountants, not academicians.) But public appearances are what count to businessmen, and their reaction was not support but embarrassment.

The validity of serious study in seemingly non-academic areas was never examined; the excellent academic accomplishments of TJC students were ignored, along with the figures showing that TJC students had a higher rate of library use, graduate school and employment placement and personality integration.

Above all, they never examined their own embarrassment, but acted upon it as good reason for an ever-increasing list of academic limitations and other destruction. They were embarrassed by our windmill; plans were found for a road to curve through it. **They** were embarrassed by the paintings on **our** walls; we were forced to paint over them.

p. 8

But the best example of their attempts to remove the thorn from their side is their machinations concerning the Dean of TJC. First a Vice President was inserted between our Dean and the President to seek tighter administrative control. Then our Dean was removed and replaced by a member of the administration who had no real connection with us or our kind of school, in preference to a more likely candidate, over the objections of the faculty and students and in defiance of the legal governance document. Her first acts were to abolish post experience credit and to close Field Studies for repairs. Then she began weeding out the flaky faculty. Now we see her and her friends trying to shut down the Poetry Resource Center, locking up the Women's Information Bureau and effectively killing the Women's program, all because these organizations have embarrassed or criticized the administration.

What comes next? The rumored campus-wide grading system? Will they drive us all away? There is a hidden agenda at work; we, the present and future members of this community deserve some answers. Are the old agreements to be honored any more? Is there to be a TJC? If so, what will it be? Will we have any input into the decisions? Can we plan our own academic futures here?

Perhaps we cannot demand that Phyllis, Glenn or Arend do what we want: they sign the checks. We can demand, legally and morally, that they be honest with us. And no answer is an answer. Phyllis, Glenn, Arend: we want the truth; we deserve the truth.

For me personally it may not matter; I'll soon be gone. But somewhere someone is quitting his Mount Union College today. In two years he'll be ready to go further in his own direction, as I've been able to do at TJC. Will there be a poster on anyone's wall?

S. Garwood

Thomas Jefferson College

of General Studies



GRAND VALLEY
STATE COLLEGE

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Murdock
114 Main Street, Apt. 3
Norway, Maine 04268

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Murdock:

We have received your applications to TJC. It would be very helpful if we could meet with you for a rather leisurely conversation. Since you are so far away, this may be unfeasible. Our main purpose is to make sure that you understand the character of our program before we accept you as a student. And, furthermore, we would like to be sure that there is a strong probability that you will succeed in the program which we offer.

Note well that we have eliminated the competitive grade system. A student in TJC must be motivated to learn by the intrinsic subject matter, which he is concerned with. Ask yourself frankly whether or not it is to learn as contrasted to earn credits and degrees that you plan to come to Jefferson College.

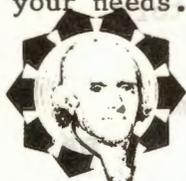
The TJC tutors do not teach in a usual sense of the word. We consider ourselves fellow students; we think of ourselves as studying with students, rather than teaching. Do you find it frustrating to have a staff member supporting you in exercising your own interests and enthusiasms as contrasted to telling you what to learn? Do you believe that one can learn as much from other students as from staff members?

Ask yourselves whether you are converging or diverging in your interests. The student who is very specialized in his interests sometimes is unhappy in TJC. If you have a well-defined vocational or professional goal in mind, I would like to know about it.

What other colleges have you considered and applied to? Do you have a deadline by which you must make a decision with respect to Thomas Jefferson College of General Studies? If we should decline your applications, what will you do in the fall?

Finally, will you please individually write to me your reactions to the things which I have said? And, in addition, identify what it is which makes Thomas Jefferson College of General Studies appealing to you.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope that we will be able to meet your needs.



Sincerely,

Daniel Clock

Daniel Clock, Chairman

I could never have gone to any other college. I could never have learned what I learned at where I am now doing what I am doing. If I hadn't gone to Thomas Jefferson, I was put in as Dean when Phyllis was put in as Dean and I said so. That's all I can do.

Karl Hoff
1978

p. 9

5/12/78

Memo: Graduation Statement
Attention: Board of Control, Arend, Glenn,
Phyllis, and assorted lap-dogs
RE: Expunging the freedom of education
and expression at TJC/GVSC

The question is: when can I get work-study for/
when can I Specialize in/ what's the latest
student-faculty ratio/ got any cross-college
figures on heartbreak? I'll just whip up a
Special Study Description - I've been fulfilling
the requirements all term. Just last week
my heart began to swell towards spring, but each
day brings another uncovering, betrayal, and more
anger. My heart set me down at this typewriter,
said the ache aint goin nowhere.

The poison is real at this college. The women
are leaving. Cam is leaving. One last "Special
Issue" will tell the tale. Watch the clock for it.
People I could have known, given some time,
hold my hand once in farewell. Lovely Barbara.
Janice. Ava. Jere. Linda. Michelle. Subtract
all those possibilities. And more. But you've
made provisions for this:
you don't need my list.

I want to maim you the way you've maimed me,
my friends, my teachers, and my school.
Place where I flowered.

Fuck your positions, your salaries, your business
connections. If it would mend mine,
I'd cut your hearts out.

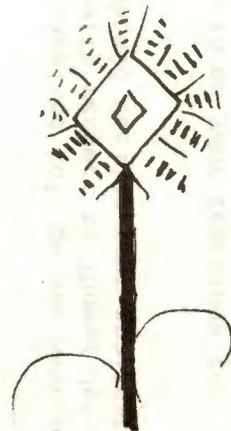
Hanson, Rebecca, J.
481-70-2322



TOWARD TWO THOUSAND

vague rumblings
listening dread
vast stentorian chant
contemporary borgias
whispering needle
conscience hemlock
people pawn
mindless mobvoiced
hatching history
darkened room

sg



B. Boatz

Handwritten signature or scribble in the right margin.

FROG FUNNIES

-heard any good ones lately?-

→ a Survival Skill Questionnaire

1. Do you find squirrels bothering you more often than they used to?
 - a) maybe
 - b) not sure
2. If you had it to do all over again, would you:
 - a) graduate from kindergarten?
 - b) become a Rocky and Bullwinkle aficionado?
 - c) shoot the moon as you walked across the stage at your highschool graduation ceremony?
3. Has money become the most monetary thing in your life lately?
 - a) yes
 - b) yeah
4. Is your belly button an in-sy or an out-sy?
 - a) out-sy
 - b) in-sy
 - c) wait a second, let me check
5. Would you rather:
 - a) hit that dude over the head with a bag of sugar or
 - b) beat it out on the skins?
6. What is your sexual preference?
 - a) occasionally
 - b) normal
 - c) ambidexteral
 - d) mixolydian (goes all seven ways)



p. 11

7. Which statement would best characterize your attitude towards life?
 - a) everybody's a spazz except me & my friends
 - b) um, yeah... i mean, you know... like, you know... i mean, yeah
 - c) aint no reason t'hang my head, i could wake up in the mornin' dead
 - d) no spreek english
 - e)

And now, here's something we hope you'll really like!

♪ "da-de dada de da-de-da
da-de dada de da-de-da
da de dada dada da de dada
da de dada dada da de dada



Statement of Purpose

There are three weeks 'til many of us go our separate ways. Our school is changing drastically around us. We each feel the urgent necessity of making our statement of what TJC means to us, and how these changes are affecting our opportunities to learn. The thread that holds us together is the belief that we as Thomas Jefferson students have an irrevocable right to control our own lives and a written right to our lawful voice in the decision-making process of our school. These rights that we value most highly have been stepped on time and again.

We in no way accept the authority of the GVSC administration to act in this irresponsible, inflammatory manner, and so herein we raise our voices and tell our individual stories.

Without a doubt, there are as many stories as people in this school. If you want to share yours, contact a contributor.

Contributors:

- Barb Bootz, lyrics, graphics
- Stuart Brown, graphics
- Seth Garwood, letter, poem, graphics
- Becky Hanson, memo, poem
- Karle Howlett Murdock, acceptance letter, graphics
- Jesse Paledofsky, letter, graphics

donations wildly appreciated!

(printing costs have been paid by those who produced this.)

Special Thanks:

- Stephen Keerl
- Larry Schneider

Wild thought for the day:

"Let us dare, despite all, to trust."

- Martin Buber

