

-THE END OF AN ERA-

The BennZine Vortex



*A Periodic Newsletter of the Bennington College M.A./M.F.A. Writing Program
Student Life Committee * Vol. III No. 3 * June 26, 1995*

Student Life Committee Is Reborn; 6 New Student "Ministers" Named

BENNINGTON -- The Student Life Committee, the informal council of student governance at the Bennington College MA/MFA writing program, officially passed the torch this week to six students who vowed to fight for the intellectual rights and recreational opportunities of the program's 76 students.

The original committee members, who gave birth to the Committee last June -- Tim Wooten, Wendy Button, Colette Guren and Mark S. Guralnick -- are scheduled to be graduated in January 1996. One other original member, Robert Hombuckle, a third-semester student not expected to be

graduated until June 1996, will remain on the Committee.

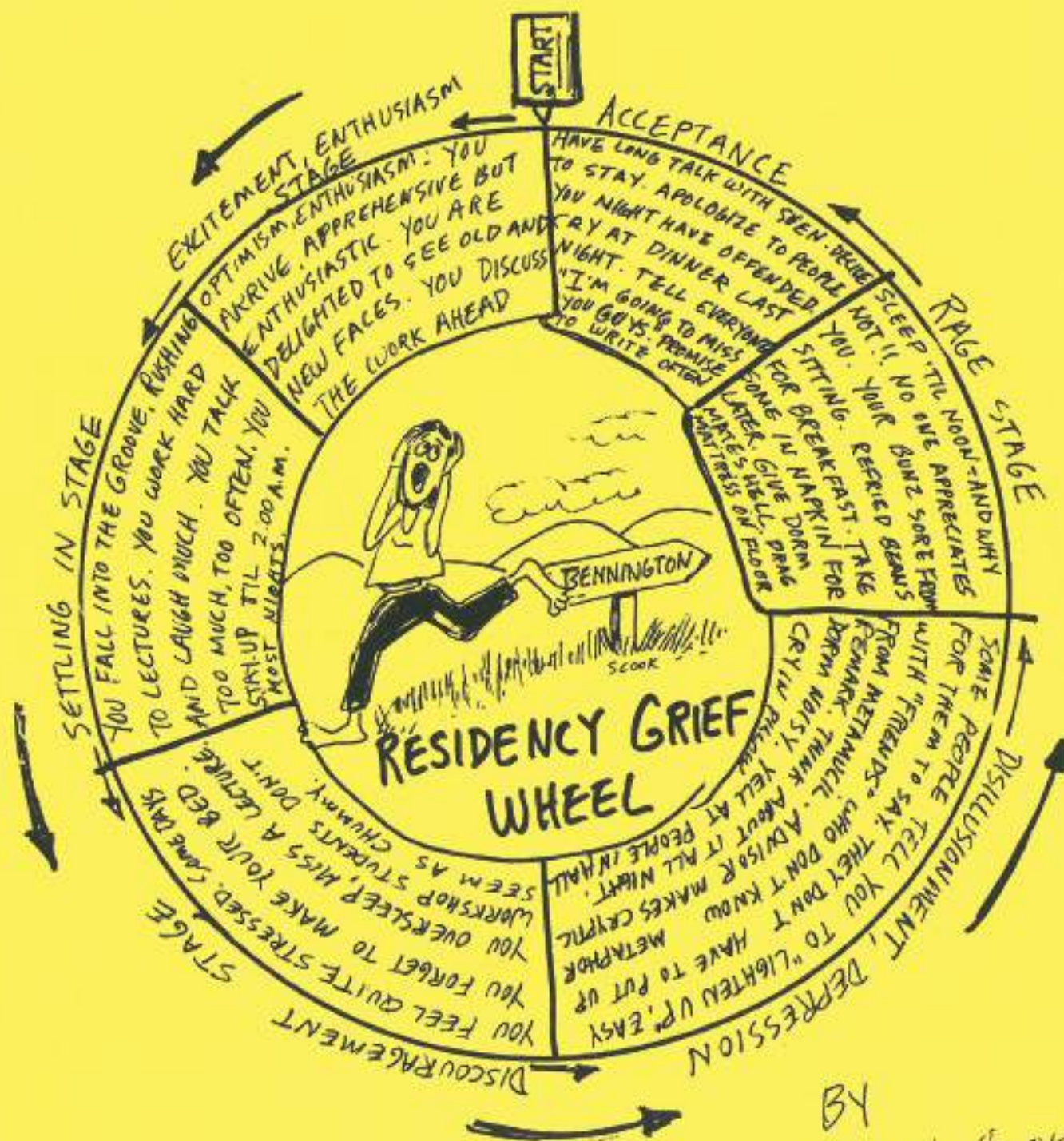
The new Committee members, dubbing themselves "ministers," represent several classes and writing backgrounds. They are Jaime Clarke, minister of entertainment; Nikki Macdonald, liaison and alumni minister,

--Continued on page 5--



At last

The Residency Grief Wheel



BY
SHARON COOK
(JUNIOR)

New Era Begins as Guralnick Yields Control of BennZine Vortex

BENNINGTON - Its mission was never known, and its adherence to journalistic standards was inconsistent. But that's not everything that made the BennZine Vortex a hit in the first year of its publication.

That first year came to an end at midnight Sunday when Mark S. Guralnick, founding editor and one-man publishing empire, finished page 8 of Vol. III, No. 3 of the Vortex -- thus ending his reign as the newsletter editor.

"I love writing a story about myself," said Guralnick, who couldn't find anybody else to write it for him. "I truly hope my successors will organize and begin publishing Volume IV during the January residency."

Originally conceived as a newsletter under the auspices of the Student Life Committee, the Vortex grew wildly from a one-page, two-column straight news page, using clip art and standard Helvetica headlines to an 8-page designed newsletter using clashing type fonts, custom logos, outlined line art and graphical boxes and screens.

It reached new journalistic depths when cartoonist Sharon Cook, columnist Gail Hathaway (a/k/a Ernestine Hem-n-Haw), and late-night gossip-gatherer Margo Aragon came on-board as regular contributors.

Altogether, 11 editions of the BennZine Vortex were published during and between three residencies.

The newsletter functioned variously as an information bulletin board, announcing recreational events and student travel plans, and a forum for student issues to be reported. A column titled "Radiant Notes and

Clusters" began as a list of anecdotal sketches but eventually became a listing of the growing number of publishing accomplishments by Bennington's graduate writing students.

Perhaps more than anything, the BennZine Vortex became the depository for sick humor, off-color stories, gaffes and bloopers, excerpts from unusual workshop stories, sexual innuendoes, and legendary statements by visiting lecturers.

It specialized in spoofs. During one freezing wintry day, the

fears that the College's restructuring might doom the program. In the Jan. 12, 1995 issue, the Vortex took on the issue again, reporting on an address by College President Elizabeth Coleman and quoting reactions by students.

Indeed, President Coleman has remained steadily interested in coverage by the Vortex. After reading a news brief in Vol. III, No. 2 which dealt with Bennington's accreditation status, she prepared a statement clarifying the issue, which is published in this edition (See page 4).

Behind the scenes, too, the Vortex witnessed a quick evolution. At first, it was produced on Guralnick's desktop computer and laser printer, with Bob Hornbuckle making late-night deliveries of clip-art to paste into holes on the page. Yet, when the final edition of the Vortex was "put to bed" late Sunday night, the Vortex operation had spilled into the Leigh card room -- the "newsroom" -- where dozens gathered over the course of the night, toting news briefs, funny sketches, classic quotes...and snacks for editor Guralnick.

Twelve months after its birth, the Vortex was being powered by a laptop, fed by two CD-roms, spitting out scores of type styles, fancy borders and graphical filler. Despite these technological advances, every edition of the paper was designed by hand, manually laid out and pasted up. "We never had any desktop publishing software," Guralnick said. "We used WordPerfect and elbow grease. Amazingly, they've overlooked us for the Pulitzer Prize."



BennZine

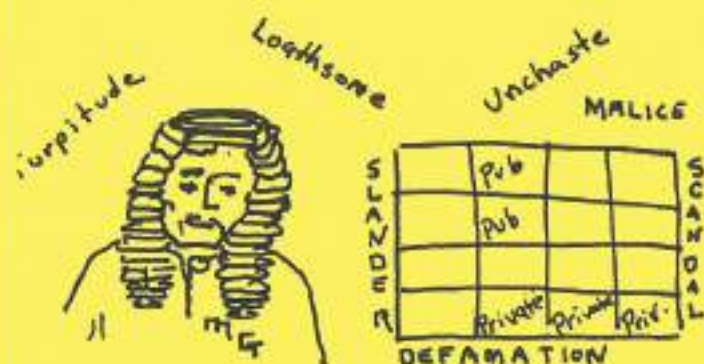


newsletter published as the BennZine "Gortex." In Vol. III, No. 2, published directly before this edition, the newsletter deceptively reported a 500-page thesis graduation requirement in a fake front page, only then to be followed by a true story reporting the new graduation requirements.

"We spread rumors, tainted the truth, adjusted quotes, magnified gossip, and broke confidences, all in the name of politically incorrect journalism," said Guralnick. "It's an important Bennington tradition that should not be lost."

Despite its irreverent theme, the BennZine Vortex occasionally tackled the most serious news stories of the Bennington community. In the August 11, 1994 edition, for example, the paper reported on the status of the MFA program amid student





Barrister Guralnick
Refers To His Privates
In discussion of Libel Laws

The Anonymous Trickster
aka: Miss Kirsch
195

Quotes of the Week

"Am I being too harsh on you? If I am, just cry."

--Susan Cheever to a student in workshop

"Has anyone dreamed about Sven lately?"

--Robin Neidorf in workshop Saturday

"As you can see, I'm a well-known copyright infringer."

--Mark S. Guralnick in his lecture on publishing law given Thursday at the Barn

"Have you ever noticed that Bill Hunt and Superman are never seen in the same place at the same time?"

--Rick Gagliano, making a noteworthy observation.

"The preference thing breaks down".... "There will be numerical casualties".... "It's the charade of being preferential."

--Excerpts from the Town Meeting on Wednesday in which Sven Birkerts debunked the idea of selecting your instructor or thesis reader.

"I hope all the spoiled rich kids are having fun protesting Bennington College into extinction. That's quite a cause. Dangerous too."

---Excerpt from James Therrien's "Observations" column, printed Saturday in the Bennington Banner.

IMPORTANT NOTE FROM BENNINGTON COLLEGE PRESIDENT ELIZABETH COLEMAN:

In light of the concern over the College's accreditation status that I have been hearing from some members of the MFA writing community, I thought it might be helpful to address the issue before you all disperse. As anticipated, in light of the changes that have occurred at Bennington, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges is visiting the College during Spring 1996. They have been fully apprised of the redesign of the College, and their visit is to see how well the implementation of that redesign is proceeding. Their regular 10-year accreditation visit took place during the spring of 1994, just a month before the details of the restructuring were determined. While the final report from the Association took cognizance of the planned changes, it was impossible for them to report on their actual implementation. The upcoming visit is essentially an updating of the spring 1994 visit. The 1994 report of the Association is available in the library and will reassure any of you who are concerned as to the status of Bennington's accreditation.

I wish you all an enjoyable and productive summer, and look forward to seeing you again in January.

Graduation Day Will Be Sunday, Jan. 14

The first graduation day for the low-residency MA/MFA Writing Program will be held on Sunday, January 14, 1996, program officials have announced.

After considerable debate, officials moved the January residency forward by one day in order to make the last day -- graduation day -- a Sunday.

Students will be expected to arrive on campus for the January 1996 residency on Thursday, January 4, 1996. The program coursework will begin the following day and continue until Sunday, January 14, 1996, ending with the graduation ceremony. Departure from the campus will then take place the following day, January 15, 1996, administrators said.

Student Life Gets a new life

Continued from page 1

Rebecca Boyd, athletic director, Michael Lythgoe, minister of culture, and Renee Bowles, minister of family planning, Bob Hornbuckle will remain on as treasurer.

"We'll be focusing on better communication," said Nikki Macdonald, whose liaison position will make her the Committee's student-faculty intermediary. "We have to develop a stronger sense of community among the student body."

She said the new Committee would fight to strengthen the orientation program for new students, many of whom, she said, remained quite confused about how the program works.

In its short life, the Student Life Committee organized several parties and happy hours and served as a forum for student gripes and questions. It also informally oversaw the BennZine Vortex, the premier issue of which was published last June following the organizational meeting of the Committee.

Add this to Shinder's List

As of Monday, June 26, 1995, all MFA dances must conform to the following regulation:

All students interested in dancing with Jason Shinder must sign his dance card before 9 p.m. Those who do not will be given a photograph of Jason and sent back to their dormitory.

—E.H.H., Sr.



HORRORSCOPE

June 26: If you were born on this day, you won't be old enough to read.

CANCER (June 21 - July 22): Money picture brightens. You may find yourself suddenly employable in spite of your advanced degree. Your creative powers are at their lowest points since you completed your last paint-by-number sofa painting.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Domestic issues require your immediate attention. A trusted friend may be untrustworthy during your long absence. Exercise caution when dealing with a Scorpio who recently painted your house.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Who do you think you're kidding? If you've got it, flaunt it. Taurus, Libra, Capricorn, Cancer and several high school-age boys will be contacting you by the end of the day.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 -Oct. 22): Your patience and affection will be

rewarded. Stop by the pound early in the day. Exercise care when operating machinery as you will be clumsier than usual.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21): Don't listen when friends tell you that you're paranoid, because you really are being followed. The near future brings travel, new experiences, and possibly long-term confinement.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Don't back down in an argument that you can't possibly win. Wear your opponent out by exercising your gift for whining. Take care where money is concerned. You're not going to win the lottery again this week.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Someone you hoped to marry will elope with a person young enough to be your child. Good news will come in the mail. You have already passed the first two stages in the \$10 million

-Continued on page 6-

Benn Listening...

By Ernestine Hem-in-Haw, Jr.

Dear Ms. Hem-in-Haw,

So, what is the proper communal bathroom etiquette, anyway? If a person spends 25 minutes in the bathroom blowdrying their hair in the final minutes before the cafeteria closes, do you tell them they could use a few minutes more or do you let them walk off ignorant?

And if they knock on the bathroom door while you're in there and then wait just inches from the stall til you've finished, do you blast them with the air freshener or let them deal with the real thing?

Do the people who spend the most time in the bathrooms get to keep them permanently? Is there a contest going on or some kind of bathroom scholarship I don't know about?

Yours truly,
The toilet interloper.

Dear T.I.,

Let me begin by saying a polite Hello and giving the proper tip of the hat to my mum who's taught me everything she knows regarding public and private conduct. The old dear is currently enjoying her retirement at a two-week spiritual retreat, the theme of which is "Treating yourself and your wrinkles with Care." Live it up, Mum.

Regarding your question of what to do about the stall door stalker, I say, let it rip, honey. If that person doesn't have the good sense to step away, knowing full well that refried beans, over-cooked vegetables and salad greens are a major part of the Bennington diet, then they deserve every breath of foul potty perfume they get. Show no mercy. Just remember to wipe and flush afterward. We don't, after all, want to be unsanitary.

And in answer to your blow dryer question, let me simply remind you to remind your bathroom partners that Electricity and Water Do Not Mix. I think you get my point.

Until next time, dears.

--Ernestine Hem-in-Haw, Junior.



"COPY EDITORS TEND TO BE
OVERLY-ANAL" SAYS TREE
DURING A TALK ON
PUBLISHING

HORRORSCOPE

-Continued from page 5-

sweepstakes.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19): Pay special attention to matters of money today. Your checking account is seriously overdrawn, and your boss has stopped payment on your last paycheck. Check Sagittarius message.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Secret will be revealed. You may have to move to another state. Disregard financial advice given by one who wants you to invest in a Fried Tofu franchise scheme.

ARIES (Mar.21-April 19): Music and dancing are featured tonight. Libra in the picture. You hear from someone you haven't spoken to for a long time, who will remind you that you forgot her on Mother's Day again this year.

TAURUS (April 20 - May 20): You are the focus of conversation this morning. You will not remember anything about last night's party, but a bill for damages will be arriving at your home shortly after your return.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Your literary efforts will be widely discussed in the near future. Keep in mind that at least one member of a jury will be familiar with all of the work of Fitzgerald and Steinbeck.

Radiant Notes and Clusters

**Announcements,
accolades and
accomplishments**

Jaime Clarke's short story, "A Complete Gentleman," will appear in the winter issue of Chelsea.

Maudy Benz had book reviews in Spectator magazine and The Independent. She also performed "From North to Jackie Kennedy," a dramatization from her novel, at the Duke University Museum of Art.

Ruth Farmer's poems, "A Day Like Any Other," "There are a Thousand Shades of Green," and "Anna Battle," were published in Stud Duck #6.

John Lane has had three poems accepted for publication in Virginia Quarterly Review and has an article forthcoming in Poets & Writers titled "Digital Poets." John has also been assigned to write an article on Suriname (South America) for Summit Magazine.

Cristina Del Sesto was editor-in-chief of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's annual report. Cristina profiled four people whose lives have been dramatically improved by public broadcasting. The annual report, entitled "American Stories," can be accessed on the Internet's World Wide Web.
<http://www.cpb.org>



Jill McCorkle Wins Faculty Poker Game

Jill McCorkle went away the winner in the faculty poker game last Thursday night and five-card stud will never be played the same again. Swearing she had "not played in years," she won the game by a landslide. She was seen Friday morning heading her car toward Manchester. Notice her new accessories. The boys bought them: earrings, scarves, Armani shoes...

Askold, who came in second, said he "wasn't even close" to her winnings. Sven insisted he "came out all right" in the wager. Others remained tight lipped about their gamble. And no stud could describe her style except to say it was (in the end) deft and pecuniary. Her moves surprised them.

When asked if she had participated, Maria Flook said, "I only play to strip."

Next residency gambling will be available in the Cafe. Every other night Gamblers Anonymous will meet in Room 220 of the Commons. Contributions for Bennington's Chapel Fund drive will come out of the casino earnings.

-Maudy Benz

Invitation

by Gail Hathaway

If you come to my house
I will make you coffee
I will cook a beefsteak
If you come to my house

If you like my Schnauzer
I will let you pet him
I will even rent him
To you I rent my Schnauzer

When you come to my house,
I will kiss your elbow
I will lick your ankle
When you come to my house

If you want my money
I will call my banker
I will call my broker
If you want my money

Conga conga love me
Koochie-conga, fuck me
If you come to my house
This house will be your house
My house will be your house

(Sing while in a conga line at your nephew's wedding).

Graduating Class Photo at 5:30 today

A class photograph for the graduating class will be taken at 5:30 p.m. today at the end of the world. The photo will be used in the graduating class chapbook to be circulated on graduation day.

Best and Worst Writing Advice

DOUG BAUER-

Worst- "Write about what you know"

Best- Write what you don't know about what you know."

JILL McCORKLE-

Worst - "First you write a poem, then you make it longer and it becomes a short story, then longer--a novel."

Best- Do it because you want to, not for what might happen later.

MARIA FLOOK -

Best- "Just remember, the most important part of the pencil is the eraser."

SVEN BIRKERTS-

"The best practical advice I ever received came from Herb Leibowitz of Parnassus, who returned an essay I had submitted with all of the "there is " and "it is" constructions underlined. I saw in a flash that my relation to my material was passive, indecisive, and that it was time to release that opinionated beast inside.

ANN WINTERS-

Best: "Lowell said, revise endlessly."

ASKOLD MELNYCZUK-

Worst: If somebody (giving advice) tells you they know all about writing, then you know they don't know.

Best: (1). William Carlos Williams said, "There are a lot of bastards out there." (2). Derek Walcott said, "Write the story of your people." (3). A writer doesn't really need advice, they need a people to write for and a handful of peers to listen and give thoughtful response. (4). Quit now.

SUSAN CHEEVER-

"I've been privileged to meet and know some great writers. They all gave me advice. I also forgot everything they said."

SUSAN DODD-

Best: "When my first book came out, a friend said, "Start on your next one right away. Then it won't matter what anyone says or writes about you because you'll be into another project."

BOB SHACOCCHIS-

"No one dared give me advice."

JASON SHINDER-

Best: "Go to a lot of movies."

-Continued on page 9-



Dear Auntie Pearl,

I have been going out with a man I met at a Writers Conference. "Chad" and I get along wonderfully and our literary tastes complement each other: I write romance for the middle-age people and he writes novels about Vietnam. There is one thing that bothers me, however. When Chad comes to dinner, I notice that he will go to the bathroom and remove my pantyhose that I have drying on a rack. He has done this on several occasions.

Otherwise, he is very masculine, a former rugby player and a bourbon drinker. I can't tell any of my friends about this, and I can't bring myself to ask him (He is a very private person).

What do you think is going on, Auntie Pearl?

-Puzzled in Pownal

Dear Puzzled:

I'll be willing to bet your Chad is a gardener and he's using the pantyhose on his tomato plants. Many gardeners know that you can cut the legs off of a pair of pantyhose and they are marvelous for tying up drooping tomato stalks -- so strong yet pliant.

And if Chad is the macho guy you say he is, I'll bet he's just too embarrassed to buy his own pantyhose. And who can blame him!

Just wait til August when he presents you with his first crop!

-A.P.

-Continued on page 10-

Late Night with John Lane

Students gather to hear student poet read work

From Technocrat to Toe Sucker

A small, but loyal, group of students attended John Lane's poetry reading "Against Information." The 10 p.m. gathering in Barn Room 1 also attracted Rector the Director, faculty and Kenyon the Zen dog. Victor Cruz, a poet and public relations executive, introduced Lane and compared him to Walt Whitman and God.

Best and Worst Writing Advice

--Continued from page 8--

LIAM RECTOR--

Best: "Find those with whom you have a rapport and proceed. Never, ever, proceed with those with whom you do not have a rapport."

Worst: "You have some right to expect fairness from the world."

Bring your bills, bonds, bucks and bank notes - b.'s budget needs your backing....

b. magazine is looking for contributions. Editors said they're seeking gifts of \$25 or more. Benefactors will be credited in the next issue and will receive a free subscription for one year. Deposit your gifts in Kristin Lee's mailbox today.

John Lane is the first MFA student to publish a book of poetry during his two-year residency. "I owe Bennington this book in many ways," he said.

The first poem in the collection, "Against Information," was mistaken for a satellite dish advertisement when it was published in a South Carolina magazine. An 800 number in the poem actually belonged to a bait and tackle shop. Over 200 calls were made by people who wanted the satellite dishes Lane describes in "Against Information." A local journalist picked up the story and Canadian Public Radio interviewed John for thirty minutes. Frustrated with the amount of technology surrounding him in and around his office, Lane felt "this voice rising up out of me."

A 20-minute video followed Lane's reading. Voices of local South Carolina folks, including Lane's, recited his poems while images of war, pollution, nature, business and cartoon images flashed on the screen.

Copies of "Against Information" are available at the Bennington Bookstore or by contacting John Lane.

--Margo Aragon

Best and Worst of the Vortex

Here are some of the famous quotes published in the first 11 issues of the BennZine Vortex:

ROBERT PINSKY: "You don't know shit about William Carlos Williams -- August 1994 residency.

MARIA FLOOK: "Gashhound! Hey, that's pretty good when it's amplified." -- January 1995 residency.

JILL McCORKLE: "Forgive me for snorting -- January 1994 residency.

TESS JAMES: "He gently coaxed himself back into safety and zipped." -- August 1994 residency.

COLETTE GUREN: "You poets are a clannish group!" -- January 1994 residency.

SUSAN DODD: "Let us not in our high-mindedness lose our love for trash." -- August 1994 residency.

DO YOU REMEMBER the first residency when giddy students attached gold ball-shaped table ornaments to their heads and other body parts?



Ask Auntie Pearl....

-Continued from page 8-

Dear Auntie Pearl,

I am writing a book about the problems some of us face when caring for an elderly parent. I have encountered a situation that my 78-year-old mother and I have been arguing about.

The problem is Mother's habit of putting her dentures in a glass of water by her bed. On several occasions, I have caught the family cat drinking this water! I'm very much afraid this is harmful and unsanitary. What is your opinion, Auntie Pearl?

--Worried in Williamsburg.

Dear Worried,

I have consulted one of the my advisers, Dr. Steward Fetlock, a renowned veterinarian and he assures me that your cat is in no danger from drinking this solution.

"Cats have an innate ability to know what is harmful to them," he says.

And good luck on your book!

-A.P.



FROGS OBSERVING THE WRITING STUDENTS MAKE THEIR NIGHTLY PILGRIMAGE TO THE CARRIAGE BARN

The Retiring Student Life Committee

TIMOTHY WOOTEN

Ideas and Issues

COLETTE GUREN

Gossip

WENDY BUTTON

Alcohol and Spirits

ROBERT HORNBUCKLE

Treasurer

MARK S. GURALNICK

Newsletter, Music, and Parties

The BennZine Vortex

Vol. III, No. 3, June 26, 1995

EDITOR: Mark S. Guralnick

CARTOONIST: Sharon Cook

CONTRIBUTORS: Margo Aragon, Renee Bowles, Cristina Del Sesto, Gail Hathaway, Sharon Preiss

Newsletter Office - Leigh (Card Room)

brave, bold, brash, yes, but what is b. magazine up to now?

b., the literary magazine published by and for Bennington's MFA writing students, hit the streets again this past weekend, featuring stories and poems by Ruth Farmer, Deborah Gillespie, Charlotte Coe Lemann, Michale Lythgoe, Pete Hausler, Stephen Sandy, Kristin W. Lee, Gail Hathaway, Jill McCorkle, Victor Cruz, Carol Malone, David Lehman and Tom Reichtin.

Now, b. editors say they're sponsoring a contest. Tell them what you think "b." stands for in a short essay. They'll publish the best responses, and you may win a prize too!

The literary magazine welcomes contributions by poets, fiction and nonfiction writers. Submit up to 10 pages by July 31, 1995 to Kristin W. Lee, 202 Mamasasco Road, #10, Ridgefield, CT 06877, or give an editor your contribution before your leave Bennington.

The BennZine Vortex



END OF AN ERA

