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**Editorial**

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Jackie Cox, a 5th year senior in news-editorial journalism, is the administrative vice-president of the inter fraternity council and director of Greek Columns. He is also a member of the Greek Steering Committee and Lambda Chi Alpha.

Dave Curley is a 5th year senior in graphic design who likes to spend his time creating sculpture and photography. In addition to long hours as the design editor of this magazine, he is also the classified ad manager at the Daily Reveille.

Paula Dale is a 5th year senior in broadcast with a minor in theater. She took time off from school last year to work at the Disney MGM Studio Theme Park in Orlando, Florida. She enjoys dancing and comedy clubs, and dreams of traveling around the world.

Kathryn Dennis is a historian/reporter for Zeta Tau Alpha. A junior in news-editorial, Kathryn is a staff writer at the Daily Reveille. She likes to draw and paint in her spare time.

Ronlyn Domingue, a junior in news-editorial, is very active in women’s rights issues.

Lori-Ann Gula is a journalism major and works as a copy editor for the Wonderland Times.

Stephanie Haydel is a junior in news-editorial from New Orleans. She is a member in Scotch Guard and loves watching football and listening to music.

Dusti Johnston is a junior in journalism. She currently spends her days as a staff writer for the Daily Reveille.

Troy King, a staff member at the Daily Reveille is a 5th year senior in creative writing. Troy is a member of a psychic phenomena research team. He plans to attend grad school in physics and education.

Wendy Lavender is a 3rd year senior in journalism with a minor in political science. She plans to attend grad school in creative writing.

Garilyn Ourso is a regular contributor to the Gumbo Magazine and will be graduating in May with a degree in Creative writing. Her goal is to work for National Lampoon or write home appliance manuals.

Jonathan Young has a B.S. in zoology and plans to apply to a medical illustration program. Jonathan is also active in the Campus Crusade for Christ.

got any questions, comments, or ideas concerning the Gumbo Magazine?
Drop us a line at:

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Gumbo Magazine
Volume 2 Issue 1 August 1990
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Americans produce 154 million tons of garbage every year—enough to fill the New Orleans Superdome from top to bottom, twice a day, every day.

by dusti johnston

America’s favorite pastime is adopting causes. Americans demanded sanitary food production at the turn of the century, a new economy in the ‘30’s and civil liberties in the ‘60’s. But this year, and even this decade the cause will undoubtedly be environmental protection.

According to an Environmental Protection Agency report, America’s fastest growing environmental concern today is solid waste. Americans on average throw out about 3.7 pounds of trash per day. That results in over three trillion pounds per year. That would be like each person throwing away a facial tissue every minute of every day for a year, or about 128 trillion tissues.

And an environmental trade journal, The Economist, says 90 percent of that waste is dumped and buried in landfills.

Out of sight, out of mind has been the typical American policy towards trash. But everywhere you turn, there it is.

RECYCLING

You couldn’t get away from recycling today if you tried. It’s the hottest issue going. It’s in our newspapers, TVs, schools, advertisements, legislation, conversation and conscience.

And today we have groups such as Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, World Wildlife Fund, the Wilderness Society and the National Audubon Society.

But the environment was a concern of many Americans before this year. 150 years ago Henry David Thoreau in his book Walden urged people to live more simply. President Teddy Roosevelt in the 1920’s established national parks for land and wildlife preservation.

But it goes back farther than that, because the world is a closed system with a fixed amount of air, energy and water that has been recycled for millions of years, millions of times.

So recycling is not a new idea, its just an idea whose time has come.
Whether they adopt the cause of saving the environment because of a general interest or for personal reasons, Americans are looking at a limited tomorrow if they do not change their lifestyles to curb the “trash problem” destroying the environment.

Last year the Department of Environmental Quality issued a measure that requires a 25 percent reduction by 1992 of the waste being landfilled in Louisiana.

“The state is aiming at a 50 percent reduction by 1994 or 1995,” said Linda Imes, Baton Rouge Mayor Pro-Tem.

However, the products that are going into the market are coming out as waste, so Americans are getting an even rate of exchange. We need a reduction in the amount of waste produced.

PRECYCLING

Today the emphasis has shifted from recycling to something called “precycling.”

Basically this means that before buying a product, consider if it can be disposed of in an environmentally safe way, such as recycling. Be aware of choices available in stores and choose those that are made of or packaged in recyclable materials.

Some European nations, such as France, have been doing it for years, said Barbara Coltharp with the Louisiana Litter Control and Recycling Commission.

Those Europeans are required to pay a certain price for each container of trash each time they dump it into a landfill and when you start talking about paying more money, you can bet it leads to a change in a people’s purchasing habits.

For example, you go shopping with $50 to buy a $50 shirt. But it is also going to cost you $5 to throw it away. That’s when you consider if you really need or can afford a new shirt. The bottom line comes down to “can I really afford to dispose of the material I’m buying,” said Coltharp.

To promote the precycling cause, the United States right now is relying strictly on an increased public consciousness, but the U.S. may one day have to charge the consumer per container, per dump, in order to get the message across, Coltharp said.

Today people can buy just about anything if they have the money. The decision stops right there. But one day the decision may end with “can I afford to dispose of the product in an environmentally safe manner,” not just “can I pay the sales tax?”

Esprit clothing is currently running an advertisement that asks con-
Household Oil Spills

American households are the only disposers of hazardous waste not under government regulation.

Most Americans don't know how to properly dispose of household hazardous wastes. The book 50 Simple Things You Can Do To Save The Earth stated that “Some of us, for example, innocently dump toxics down the drain or into the sewer system - which might be the worst thing, since wastewater treatment plants aren't designed to handle hazardous materials.” The “innocent” dumping of household hazardous wastes can result in serious water contamination.

Hazardous wastes dumped into a landfill can seep into the groundwater, run off into surface water, or pollute the air.

Examples of hazardous wastes in the home are paints, paint thinners, car batteries, oven and drain cleaners, mothballs, floor and furniture polish, brake or transmission fluid, antifreeze, rug and upholstery cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners and furniture strippers.

Often people do not realize they are dealing with hazardous waste. DOW Chemicals collects household hazardous wastes at the College Drive K-Mart on the third Saturday each month. Bring them in reusable containers.

“It has been estimated that in an average city of 100,000 residents, 3.75 tons of toilet bowl cleaner, 13.75 tons of liquid household cleaners, and 3.44 tons of motor oil are discharged into city drains each month,” said Environmental Hazards Management.

About one-third of all water pollution is from motor oil and almost 40 percent of oil spills are caused by household spills.

“Motor oil puts a film on moving machine parts, and during wear it collects metal shavings from the parts,” said Exxon spokesperson David Gardner. In addition to the heavy metals the oil picks up in the engine, the oil also breaks down into solids and different forms of sludge when subjected to extremely high temperatures in an automobile’s engine.

The easiest way to dispose of used motor oil may be to dump it in the woods or down the drain, but eventually that oil may find its way into your drinking water.

Exxon, in conjunction with the Sierra Club, collects used motor oil at the College Drive K-Mart every third Saturday of the month. Exxon asks that you bring used motor oil in a reusable container, but they will accept oil in everything from a glass bottle to an oil pan, said engineer Bill Faulk.

In case you miss the third Saturday of the month collection, some area Exxon locations already accept used motor oil. You can drop it off at the Sherwood/Coursey, College/Perkins, Tiger Bend/Jones Creek, or Perkins/Ellen Exxon stores.

Baton Rouge hopes to have curb-side pick up of used motor oil in January, said Mayor Pro-Tem Linda Imes.
Workers at the Energy for Resources demonstrate how to recycle old newspapers into a new, usable paper.

Manufacturers causing the overabundance of trash in the United States. But as long as there is a demand for paper-labeled cans and reusable microwaveable dishes, then manufacturers will undoubtedly continue to produce them.

Precycling is a means of behavior modification. It asks that consumers alter their wants in some ways. Can the public’s expressed concern about environmental values overcome their consumer habits that seem to be set in stone? In other words, do consumers really need paper labels and another reusable dish for microwave meals? What can we do?

For starters, do not buy products with unnecessary packaging.

When consumers don’t buy the merchandise and demand goes down, companies will be motivated to produce the socially-conscious packaging the public demands and the recyclers will accept.

But if you have to buy an over-packaged product, take it out of the box or plastic or cellophane wrapper and leave it at the grocery check-out counter. Store managers won’t be pleased because they don’t want the extra trash either. They will express their dissatisfaction to manufacturers, who will have no choice but to develop alternative packaging for the products.

If you are aware beforehand which products are made from recycled materials or which packages are recyclable, then those are the items you should purchase.

Keep in mind that Baton Rouge recycles newspapers, office, computer and bond paper, beverage cans and other products made of aluminum, cardboard, plastics (from milk cartons to grocery bags), scrap metals (brass, copper, stainless steel and lead), used motor oil, glass (clear and colored), household chemicals, yard waste and any old furniture, appliances or clothes.

Bring a net, string or canvas tote with you to the store to carry groceries home rather than use the bags the store gives you.

If that is impossible, try to reuse old paper grocery bags. Some local grocery stores offer a nickel or so for every one of their paper grocery bags brought back to the store and reused.

But never use plastic grocery bags. The Earth Works Group in the book 50 Simple Things You Can Do To Save The Earth stated that all plastic bags are non-biodegradable. Therefore a single Styrofoam cup used today may still be on the Earth 500 years from now.

But polystyrene foam is an important part of packaging in America, said Barbara Coltharp, spokesperson for the Louisiana Litter Control and Recycling Commission. “You have to have Styrofoam in the packaging of large items like televisions and stereos,” she said.

“The United States just can not ban Styrofoam because it causes problems. It is a product that has its place in the packaging needs of America,” she said.

But polystyrene foams are not a necessity in the fast food market. If you eat at fast food restaurants, ask for paper cups and plates. Polystyrene foam does not actually keep foods warmer, it only locks in the heat and makes the food moist.

But for some reason if you must use a Styrofoam cup or plate, keep it and reuse it. Get your money’s worth out of it, because after all, it will be around for 500 years.

Styrofoam Myths

Today there is a great “Styrofoam myth” in our society.

A McDonalds counterperson proudly announced to me that their Egg McMuffin cartons were not made of Styrofoam, but of polystyrene foam.

According to the Earth Works Group in the book “50 Simple Things You Can Do To Save The Earth,” what many think of as Styrofoam is actually polystyrene foam.

This material is made of benzene, a known cancer-causing agent. The benzene is converted to styrene, and then injected with gases that make it a “foam” product. Often the gases used are CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons), which “eat” ozone molecules and deplete the Earth’s ozone layer.

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But for some reason if you must use a Styrofoam cup or plate, keep it and reuse it. Get your money’s worth out of it, because after all, it will be around for 500 years.
Did you know...

What's in a landfill?

About 40 landfills are currently operating in Louisiana, but the landfill space could be filled to capacity in about 10 years, said Barbara Coltharp, spokesperson for Louisiana Litter Control and Recycling.

But if everything that is recyclable were recycled, Louisiana would need only 20 percent of that space.

Items like nail polish, nail polish remover, prescription medication, pain thinners, paint, used motor oil, gasoline, brake fluid, paint remover and cleaning agents should never be dumped into landfills.

These fluids can seep through the landfill liner and infiltrate ground water supplies, she said.

made from petroleum, a nonrenewable resource. Some plastic bags are incinerated, but that still produces air pollution. The ink on the bags contains cadmium, a toxic heavy metal. Burning the plastic releases the cadmium into the air, EWG stated. And even the “biodegradable” plastic bags take up space in landfills, oceans, parks, roadsides or wherever they may be dumped. The plastic breaks down from a big bag into smaller pieces of a big bag.

Or you could bring a cardboard box to the store to carry groceries home in. Even if you don’t use the boxes for groceries, bring them anyway. Most grocery stores in the area said they are always in need of boxes because they use them for shipping and storage.

Do not buy products that can’t be recycled or reused in some way.

Buy eggs in cardboard boxes rather than in Styrofoam cartons.

Do not buy toilet paper packaged in plastic. Some toilet paper comes in reusable plastic bags with draw strings, but opt for the individually paper-wrapped rolls or buy in bulk. And if you buy in bulk, make sure each item is not wrapped individually.

Avoid over-packaged products. Microwave meals are guilty of this. Sometimes bakery fresh bread is packaged in paper, but if it’s not, ask for it.

Buy fresh fruit and vegetables, but don’t use the plastic bags the store provides. Some stores offer small paper tote bags for fresh fruit and vegetables. If your grocery store doesn’t have them, bring your own or throw the fruits and veggies in the tote you brought.

Remember, however, that precycling does not mean that you can’t buy plastic and canned products. It just asks that you buy products with environmentally safe means of disposal.

For instance, plastic freezer can be reused about 25 times. And when you are finished with it, recycle it. Aluminum and tin cans can also be recycled without much hassle to the consumer.

But if you’re still unsure of just what to buy, then look on the label.

With the massive environmental consciousness of the public today, manufacturers are using every opportunity to tell how environmentally safe their product is. Most products today have something on the label that tells if they are recycled or recyclable.

A large portion of toilet and facial tissues, cereal, cookie and cracker boxes and other paper products are made from recycled paper. Recycled paper boxes are gray on the inside, so if it isn’t labeled as being recycled, just look at the inside of the box.

Even some books are now printed on recycled paper with recycled ink. The first or second page of the book will usually say whether it is or not.

But beware of the proudly-displayed “environmentally safe” symbol on a lot of products today.

“Advertisers will do what it takes to sell the product,” said John Miller, an advertiser at Lamar Advertising Company in Baton Rouge.

(continued on page 40)
In these trying times of today, it's nice to know that when no one else seems to care, we can always go to group therapy.

Picture this: You are standing in front of a room full of people, people who expect to be entertained. There's a catch, though... you have absolutely nothing planned to say! You have completely zero to talk about, zilch to sing or perform, and nothing to even read to these people! Who would want to be in such a predicament? Who could survive it? Well, there's a comedy team here in Baton Rouge who actually put themselves in this very situation. They call themselves Group Therapy.

Group Therapy is an improvisational comedy group. Nothing in the show is planned or rehearsed. Everything that happens on stage is improvised. It's up to each member of the group to think fast, rely on his instincts, be original, and at the same time get and keep the audience's interest. The group does, however, have a set format that the shows follow with some variation each night. The way Group Therapy works on stage is the audience gives the members a set of characters and the characters' relationships. From there it's up to the group members to go with it. All actions and dialogue are made up as they go along. There are all different types of so-called "games" the group plays, but for the most part, they play whatever the audience gives them. Group Therapy's performances offer something new every night. It's one of those things you just have to see for yourself.

Group Therapy can be seen performing every Saturday night at C J Deggar on Essen Lane near the movie cinema. A lot of people like to stop by CJ's (that's what the regulars call it) to
see the group’s show, have a cup of gourmet coffee or tea and a bite to eat before catching a movie. This isn’t the only place Group Therapy can be seen, though. The Art Bar, known for its original art and live music, also makes room for Group Therapy. It’s best to watch the newspapers and the Art Bar’s entertainment calendar for exact performance dates.

This type of comedy improvisational group is a bit new to the Baton Rouge area. It’s a type of entertainment the group’s leader, Mike Cappel, believes Baton Rouge and other cities are ready for. He’s the one responsible for putting the whole group together. Mike says that Group Therapy actually began in New Orleans. A man by the name of Albert Numberg from Montreal, Canada, came to the Crescent city in 1986 and introduced the idea of a group performing with totally improvised material. The group Numberg established was called Theatre Schmetheatre, in which Mike was a member. They performed at a place called Cafe Brazil.

Later a new concept was introduced - Improv Musical. Theatre Schmetheatre’s improv musical ran for six shows. It was then Numberg returned to Montreal. Mike Cappel broke away and decided to form a different group based on the improv idea. Hence, Group Therapy began performing in New Orleans in 1987. Almost two years later the group found itself here in Baton Rouge. Mike says he feels this is the next form of mass entertainment. In his words, “It’s the Rock & Roll of stand-up comedy!”

Some people who see Group Therapy wonder if these are real people with real jobs. Group Therapy is composed of eight members, all of whom have been reported to me as being “real normal” people.

I caught Group Therapy’s act at the Art Bar. But normal? They appeared to be far from normal. This is not meant as an insult, but more as an observation. These people were funny, if a bit off-the-wall, bizarre, quick-witted, energetic and just outright gutsy!

This particular group has been performing together for about six months. There are two women in the group who make a terrific combo with their contrasting looks and personae on stage. Lisha Brock comes to the group with some previous theatre experience and a stand-up comedy background. Dana Summers is a newcomer to this type of performing.

The men in the group are Robert King, Johnathon Bradford, Richard Alamar, Brian Huckeba, Bill Phillips and Mike Cappel. Robert King lives in Lafayette and drives back and forth for performances and rehearsals. Johnathon Bradford and Richard Alamar each bring acting and comedy experience to the group. Brian Huckeba has worked as a stand-up comedian as has Bill Phillips, who is a Psychology student at LSU. The leader, Mike Cappel not only performs with the group, but also teaches Improvisation classes at The Baton Rouge Little Theatre.

I spoke with group member and psych student Bill Phillips, who dramatically said, “I have this vision of a patient walking in my office and me lying on the couch going ‘Thank God you’re here. I’ve had such a bad day!’” Bill and I had a good laugh from the thought of him being someone’s therapist. (I hope I haven’t just ruined his chances of opening his own practice one day.) Nevertheless, I asked Bill, “Why do you all do it?” He pondered for a moment, grinned, and said, “We’re nuts! Seriously, the group is made up of
eight creative people, all with the desire to be out on stage performing."

The thing that makes Group Therapy work is their chemistry. It is trust that helped develop this chemistry. Trust among actors is essential in any type of theatrical performance and especially so in Group Therapy’s case. Bill says, "If you don’t trust the person you’re on stage with, the scene isn’t going to go anywhere, the show isn’t going to go anywhere. Trust is the most important element that we have and our most important tool."

Another vital part of the group’s performance is the actors’ concentration and focus on what they’re doing. It is knowing from the moment the audience gives the person his character what he’s going to do with it. Each person must be focused and ready for anything because everyone feeds off each other. If the focus and concentration are lost, then the group becomes a bunch of babbling people on stage. It’s a tough thing to do and a lot of work, but it also appears to be a great deal of fun.

Hecklers seem like an inevitable occurrence. Group Therapy has kind of an unwritten philosophy concerning hecklers. It’s essentially that if the people are into the show enough to actually make editorial comments, then at least they are watching and are interested. So the group will normally play off the heckler, and, as always, the show goes on! Some nights, hecklers create problems, but so can the lack of ideas on stage. Bill summed it up best by saying, “Sometimes it’s like ideas at the Legislature... it’s just not happening!” When this happens they just have to concentrate, keep working and hope for the best.

The group has recently returned from performing in Florida and is looking to New York City in the future. While they are always looking ahead, they’re also enjoying working on their craft here in town. Audience response to the group’s new approach and alternative style has been very positive. With comedy clubs, live comics and live theatre, Group Therapy is another ingredient Baton Rouge has needed. It’s a form of entertainment many may not be familiar with yet, but it’s something that anyone who likes a good laugh can relate to. Group Therapy is the type of group you can see over and over again without seeing the same thing twice because you...the audience...call the shots.

Group Therapy’s success comes from each person being in focus and ready for anything because everyone feeds off the other.
September 4
Trent Graphics Sale begins. 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Feliciana Room. Continues through September 7

September 5
Folklore in Louisiana Photography: Lecture by Nick Spitzer. 7:30 p.m. Reception Following

September 6
Emeritus Faculty artist recital: Thaddeus Brys, cello, with Susan Brys, piano. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music

Film: Rock n Roll High School. 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

September 7
Film: Aria. 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

International Welcome Dance. 9 p.m. - 12 midnight. Atchafalaya Room

September 10
One Step Beyond Print Sale. 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Feliciana. Continues through September 14

September 11
Blacks in Film: Prince: Sign O’ The Times. 7:30 p.m. Colonnade

September 12
Film: Zydeco. 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Union Art Gallery

Fashion Committee: Pre-tryout seminar for Fashion Committee Modeling. 6 p.m. Cotillion

September 13
LSU Philharmonia, Timothy Muffitt, conductor. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music

Film: The Shining. 7 and 9:25 p.m. Colonnade

Fashion Committee: Model Tryouts. 6 p.m. Cotillion

September 14
Film: Koyaanisqatsi. 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

September 16
Passport To Adventure. World Travel Film Series: Bewitching Brazil. 4 p.m. Colonnade

Film: Always for Pleasure. 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Union Art Gallery

September 20
LSU Wind Ensemble, Frank Wickes, conductor. 8 p.m. Union Theater

Film: Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown. 7 and 8:45 p.m. Colonnade

September 21
Faculty artist recital: Steven Cohen, clarinet. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music

Film: Blazing Saddles. 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade. Also on September 22

September 23
Chamber Music Concert: Turtle Island String Quartet. 4 p.m. Colonnade

September 25
LSU Symphony, Timothy Muffitt, conductor, with Student Concerto Competition winner Jennifer Garner, violin. 8 p.m. Union Theater

September 27
Film: Psycho. 7 and 9:15 p.m. Colonnade

The Great Ice Cream Giveaway. 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Union-Front Lawn

September 28
LSU School of Art Faculty Show. Union Art Gallery, co-hosted in Foster Hall Gallery. Continues through October 25

Film: Zelig. 7 and 8:45 p.m. Colonnade

October 4
Film: Birdy. 7 and 9:30 p.m. Colonnade

Fall Fashion Show. 8 p.m. Cotillion

October 5
Film: Fellini Satyricon. 7 and 9:30 p.m. Colonnade

October 7
Guest Artist Concert: Gilberto Manghia, cello. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music

October 9
Perspectives Speaker: James Burke. 8 p.m. Union Theater.

October 11
Opening concert of the LSU Festival of Electro-Acoustic Music Studios. Performing: In the Company of Dancer. 8 p.m. Union Theater

Film: Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands. 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

October 12
Film: Heathers. 7 and 9:05 p.m. Colonnade
October 14
Passport to Adventure. World Travel
Film Series: Scandinavian Melody. 4 p.m. Colonnade

October 15
Les Chanteurs, Kenneth Fulton, director, School of Music's chamber choir. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music

October 16
Pop Entertainment: United States Marine Band. 8 p.m. Union Theater

October 18
LSU Philharmonia, Timothy Muffitt, conductor. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music
Film: *Dark Star*. 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

October 19
LSU Jazz Ensemble, Bill Grimes, conductor. 8 p.m. Union Theater
Film: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. 7 and 9:30 p.m. Colonnade

October 21
LSU New Music Ensemble, Dinos Constantinides, conductor. 2 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music

October 23
LSU Percussion Ensemble, John Raush, conductor. 8 p.m. Union Theater

October 25
LSU Wind Ensemble, Frank Wickes, conductor, with the A Capella Choir, Kenneth Fulton, conductor. 8 p.m. Union Theater
Film: *Aguirre, The Wrath of God*. 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

October 26
Faculty artist recital: Griffin Campbell, saxophone, Jan Grimes, piano. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music
Film: *Harold and Maude*. 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

October 27
Film: *Harold and Maude*. 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

October 28
Great Performances: Africa Oye! 3 p.m. Union Theater

October 30
LSU Symphony, Timoth Muffitt, conductor, with Bob Norsworthy, III, marimba. 8 p.m. Union Theater
Blacks in Film: *Glory*. 7:30 p.m. Colonnade

November 1
LSU A Capella Choir, Kenneth Fulton, conductor. 8 p.m. Union Theater
Film: *Man Facing Southeast*. 7 and 9:15 p.m. Colonnade

November 2
Film: *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. 7 and 8:45 p.m. Colonnade

November 3
Drawings and Prints by Louisiana Artists: Fourth Annual Competition. Reception from 7 - 8:30 p.m. Union Art Gallery. Show continues through December

November 8
University Chorus. 8 p.m. Location TBA
Film: *Lolita*. 6:30 and 9:15 p.m. Colonnade

November 9
Film: *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*. 7 and 9:05 p.m. Colonnade

November 10
LSU Tigerama with the LSU Wind Ensemble, LSU Jazz Ensemble, LSU Tiger Marching Band and Golden Girls. 8 p.m. Union Theater
Film: *Devi* (*The Goddess*). 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

November 11
International Expo 1990. Free from 12 - 6 p.m. Maravich Assembly Center

November 12
LSU New Music Ensemble, Dinos Constantinides, conductor. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music

November 13
Guest Artist Recital: US Air Force Woodwind Quintet. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music

November 15
Baton Rouge Opera/LSU Opera Theater, Marioara Trifan, music director. 8 p.m. Union Theater
Film: *Devi* (*The Goddess*). 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

November 16
LSU Low Brass Ensemble, Larry Campbell, conductor. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, School of Music
Film: *Devi* (*The Goddess*). 7 and 9 p.m. Colonnade

November 17
Great Performances: Into the Woods. 8 p.m. Union Theater

November 18
Baton Rouge Opera/LSU Opera Theater, Marioara Trifan, music director. 2 p.m. Union Theater

November 20
LSU Symphony, Timothy Muffitt, conductor, with guest Michael Gurt, piano. 8 p.m. Union Theater

November 27
LSU Symphonic Band, Frank Wickes, director, Linda Moorhouse, assistant conductor. 8 p.m. Union Theater

November 28
LSU Tigerama with the LSU Wind Ensemble, LSU Jazz Ensemble, LSU Tiger Marching Band and Golden Girls. 8 p.m. Union Theater
Film: *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. 7 p.m. Colonnade

(Continued on page 40)
"We receive over 24,000 calls per year pertaining to various problems. We try to send someone out quickly, but because we are under-staffed, some problems must wait..."
CAMPUS MAINTENANCE problems are not new. The sight of squirrels scuffling in the broken fountain in the Quad, the grinding sound of a car axle dragging in a pothole, and the to-the-bone chill while you wait for steam-line repairs are all common. Campus buildings demand repairs that range from changing lightbulbs, painting walls, fixing roofs and repairing air-conditioning systems. But within the last few years, the money appropriated for maintenance has decreased with budget cuts.

Joe Kelley, Director of the Physical Plant, said the office receives about 24,000 calls per year pertaining to various problems. Kelly explained that they try to send someone out quickly, but because they are understaffed, some problems must wait.

Since the mid 1980s, they have lost 130 employees, and due to this shortage, bigger problems are fixed before those that do not need immediate attention. “You have to keep the boat floating,” Kelley commented.

Kent Nance, Assistant Dean of Basic Sciences, stated that the Physical Plant has “done their best to respond” to problems in the Life Sciences Building’s area, and that “even with their limited resources, I think that aids in the repair of potholes, but Kelley stated that they also need equipment to repair the sub-base of some of the roads.

Another maintenance problem involves temperature controls in the air-conditioning and steam line systems. Air-conditioning breakdowns are annoying for most, but for the scientists in the Choppin Hall area, a loss of temperature control affects them directly. Many experiments require controlled temperatures, and if the air-conditioning unit malfunctions, the experiment has to be repeated.

Heating is another problem for the campus. LSU’s heat generates from a central boiler system on the west side of campus and underground steam lines run it to the buildings.

According to Raymond Guynes, project engineer for Student Housing, a central location is more cost-effective than having individual systems for each building. He said that problems arise when the steam lines leak or fail to return the condensed water to the boilers. If a problem occurs within the system, Guynes said, workers must shut off valves which will leave groups of buildings without service until the line can be repaired.

He also explained that most repairs take about four hours, which includes the time to cool the pipes and for steam to start heating in the rooms. In a report compiled by Physical Plant, of all the buildings listed on the report, 43 percent of them need new steam regulators within the next few years.

One of the biggest problems on campus are the roads. Kelley explained that for the 132 cited locations which need repair, only 15 percent of them can be fixed each year. The approximate cost to fix the streets would be one million dollars in labor and materials. Kelley said currently there are four people on the road crew and they do not have the equipment they need.

Recently, however, LSU’s administration let the Physical Plant borrow some money to buy a machine Physical Plant hired CES Engineering, a firm from Houston, to build an $18 million system to take the place of the old one on the west side. The new air-conditioners, boilers, and air compressors will save LSU money in the long run. This system has been operating since late June.

Leakage problems in roofs and windows are also common on campus. Kelley said that the physical plant’s budget cannot handle all of the demands for new roofs, so they are continually patched until funds can be
One of the worst areas is in Choppin Hall. Water dripping into the seventh floor labs from Choppin Hall's roof has a pH level of 12, a highly basic substance like lye. In contrast, rainwater normally has a pH level of seven.

"It's more than an inconvenience," Nance said. The basic water could damage someone's eyes and it's corroding the floors in the labs."

He also said the Life Sciences building has leaks on the west side, and $500,000 was spent to re-caulk and re-roof but water comes through the walls and into the rooms. The repairs are still under warranty but repairs have not been made.

OW WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

According to the Physical Plant report, LSU needs almost $35 million over the next ten years to correct maintenance problems. (This report does not include Student Housing repairs).

First of all, Physical Plant does not have the equipment it needs for each worker. For the system to work at its best level, Physical Plant would need $2.5 million more a year for supplies and equipment.

The worst problem however, is the number and quality of workers. The Physical Plant employs 503 workers, which is a low figure when compared to a few years ago. A custodian works 30,000 square feet of land on campus, and ideally each person should be assigned only 20,000 square feet.

Another problem Kelley cited was the availability of qualified workers. Because many machines have become more technical and require a specially-trained person, Kelly said they have few applicants for those jobs. Those people who do apply need training, and Kelly said Physical Plant doesn't have the money to train them.

In a report submitted by Chancellor Bud Davis, most civil service workers are paid less for the same job they would have if they were working for East Baton Rouge parish or the EBR School Board. Chancellor Davis could not be reached for comment.

Kelley said workers cannot afford medical insurance after all the deductions are taken from their checks. "I saw a man's check who had worked 80 hours. The check was for $118," Kelley said. "How is he supposed to afford insurance with that?"

Kelley stated the root of all the problems is a lack of money. He said Physical Plant's budget, about $13 million for maintenance, operations and utilities, has remained about the same for years, but "inflation just chips away at how much the money can buy."

He explained 60 percent of Physical Plant's money comes from the state. The other 40 percent is paid by student fees and by other departments, such as Student Housing or the Union.

The state legislature was asked for $900,000, but Kelley said, "We might get cut to $300,000. That will hardly scratch the surface."

"Three years ago, people really didn't realize what it took and how much money it took," he said.

The sight of squirrels scuffling in the broken fountain in the Quad, the grinding sound of a car axle dragging in a pothole, and the to-the-bone chill you experience while waiting for steam-line repairs. Broken light bulbs, leaky roofs and bad temperature control. We will continue to have these problems until the state decides to make a firm commitment to take care of LSU's needs. Until then, we'll have to live with the drips, peeling paint, and bumpy roads.
There are certain places you might go to lunch or dinner if you want to impress someone - your parents, for example, or a first date. You can recognize these places by their parking lots - big. Or by their prices - expensive.

What if you don’t really want to impress someone? What if you just want good food or reasonable prices? Or atmosphere so thick you can cut it with a knife? Or maybe you want to avoid the crowds?

You might try a smaller, out-of-the-way restaurant. Call it what you want: a hole in the wall, a greasy spoon, a quiet little out-of-the-way-place-known-to-but-a-few - There are many just a short drive from campus. Our staff tried some of these restaurants and filed this report:

King’s Restaurant. 3038 North Street. 383-4776.

It was the sign that lured us in. “King’s Restaurant. Open 6:30. Breakfast $2.25. Tire Repair $2.”

It soon became apparent that although King’s Restaurant is a converted gas station, the “tire repair” part of the sign referred to the King Tire Shop next door. It didn’t matter, though. By that time we were hooked.

The interior of King’s Restaurant is certainly not fancy, but has an interesting decor. Dark plywood panelled walls, velvet paintings, a jukebox, a Ms. Pacman machine, eight or so tables and places to sit at the counter create that certain aura.

The restaurant features daily lunch specials for $3. From the list of available dishes, you can choose one meat and a couple of vegetables. On Tuesdays they serve crawfish étouffée for $4.

We chose the pork chop ($3.00 plus 50 cents for a canned soft drink). It turned out to be a monstrous thing,
almost the size of the plastic plate on which it was served. Our only complaint was that the plastic silverware wasn’t really sturdy enough to do it justice.

The red beans with rice and the sliced white bread on the side proved to be almost too much to eat comfortably at one sitting. Nevertheless, we persevered.

We also ventured one morning to sample the breakfast special. Normally it includes 2 scrambled eggs, bacon, grits, toast, and free orange juice. We decided to switch out our bacon for a fried pork chop for 75¢ more. Again, it was very large and very delicious.

Avo’s Greek-Lebanese Market & Deli. 3154 College Drive. 927-6731.

and

Roman’s Greek-Lebanese Cafe. 5350 Government Street. 928-2702.

As far as we can tell, these two restaurants are not connected in any way, but to describe one is to describe both: a small cafe with peach-colored walls covered with pictures from Mediterranean countries. Deli items are on a shelf near the entrance. A cooking area, featuring a lamb turning slowly on a spit, is separated from the dining room by a screen. There’s tinkly music playing somewhere in the background.

The difference is like the difference between big and wide College Drive and the more suburban part of Government Street: Avo’s, between a mailing center and an aquarium shop on College Drive across from Shoney’s has formica-topped tables and a more spread-out floor plan. It would have been nicer if there was more of a partition between the cooking area and the rest of the dining room. Roman’s has more tables crowded onto a narrower space and more of a neighborhood cafe atmosphere.

Both places serve similar dishes - shawarma (marinated chicken or beef, served in bite-sized pieces), hummus (ground chick peas with garlic and lemon), gyros sandwiches, shish kabob, tabouly, falafel, and wonderful Lebanese tea, which is garden-variety iced tea made with rose water instead of tap water.

You can get sandwiches and combination plates at both restaurants. Typically, the plates feature a main dish plus hummus, grape leaves and feta salad with pita bread on the side. The chicken shawarma plate at Avo’s, $3.95, contains the elements above, but we found the salad didn’t have much feta and the portions of hummus were small. The chicken shawarma luncheon special plate at Roman’s (available Monday-Friday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.) is also $3.95. It doesn’t have the grape leaves, but the portions of the other elements are much larger. And for those of you who are vegetarians, Roman’s has a vegi plate that will knock your socks off. It has stuffed grape leaves, hummos, and tabouly. The amount of food was most filling and healthy to boot.

Streamline Grocery. 2256 Highland Road. 383-7427.

If you didn’t know where Streamline Grocery was, you’d have a hard time finding it: the sign has been taken down and a note on the front door of the brick building advises that the store is “under new management.” Look on Highland across Taylor Street from the Bengal. Take-out plate lunches, however, are still being served from the back of the grocery Monday through Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Go to the back of the store, walk past the meat counter and turn down the little hallway. There’s a counter there and a chalk board that features the day’s specials which are one meat and two vegetables for $3.35. You’ll be presented with your lunch plus a plastic fork and salt and pepper packets, all in a Styrofoam container. You pay in the front at the grocery check-out.

We tried the barbecued ribs and the red beans with rice. The food is excellent and the portions are enough to fill even the hungriest person.

So if you find yourself on the run and in need of a good cheap meal, we recommend this quickie as a must. It would also be an ideal lunch to pick up if you enjoy sitting out by the lakes and watching the ducks during your lunch break.

Pinetta’s European Restaurant. 3056 Perkins Road. 387-9134.

While most of the places we’ve discussed here have been relatively new or relatively informal, Pinetta’s is more of a traditional restaurant with checkered tablecloths and elegantly bow-tied waiters who seem to have been working there since the dawn of time.

It’s almost literally a hole in the wall - it’s squeezed narrowly between a bookstore and a fabric store. That, and the fact that one of the signs is falling apart may lead you to wonder if there’s truly a eatery there at all.
Actually, it's more like a cave than a restaurant. Once inside, your eyes need almost a full minute to adjust to the darkness. When you can see again, notice the beer mugs on the walls, the dark pictures (though pictures of what, we couldn't tell), the stuffed deer heads. The ancient dust on all these items somewhat adds to the restaurant's charm.

The menu is in Italian and English, though the important parts are easy enough to understand. Besides Italian food, German and Turkish/Armenian dishes are also featured.

Our favorite section was the Business Lunches ("Pranzi"). From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday, you can have your choice of corned beef and cabbage, trout, ham, brisket, veal cutlet or shish kabob for only $3.25. Daily specials are also $3.25: Monday, spaghetti; Tuesday, hamburger; Wednesday, chicken with noodles; Thursday, beef; Friday, shrimp creole.

The veal cutlet is pan-sauteed and served with potatoes and a salad. It was a large cutlet and most satisfying. We also tried the chicken special, which consisted of chicken served over a bed of pasta with a red sauce on top. On another adventure to Pinetta's, we tried the beef special. What we got was rice and gravy served with green beans and salad. The gravy had a hint of burgundy wine taste and definitely got a thumbs up.

This is the kind of place to take your date to make a good first impression. It has a certain romance about it's darn cheap.

Silver Moon Cafe. 5142 Oleson. 766-2553

If there is one place that we would try to convince you to go, this is the place. Most of you have seen this place, might have found it to be a bit scary-looking and decided on something else.

But looks can be deceiving. The food here is the best example of "soul food" we've tasted. The seafood gumbo, the jambalaya, the smothered chicken, the red beans and rice are all excellent.

The Silver Moon is near the corner of Nicholson and Brightside on Oleson Street, an unpaved, pot-hole-filled dead-end you probably wouldn't drive down if you didn't know the area. But from the front porch of the
restaurant, you can crane your neck above the railroad tracks and the weeds and look across Nicholson to the Beau Chene shopping center. It has an eclectic decor - beer signs and family photos, a juke box and a spinet piano, a painting of an Air Force fighter plane that takes up most of one wall. Place settings are eclectic, too - your fork may not match your knife, and neither may match the utensils your luncheon partner has. Plates and bowls are a curious mix of plastic, Styrofoam and ceramic, though once we got an order of green beans served in the overturned top of a Pyrex casserole dish.

You order at the bar, get your drink (soft drinks are poured directly from the 2-liter bottle and tea is in a dispenser on the counter) then find a place to sit. The campus crowd makes the Silver Moon fairly busy around lunchtime, but there’s usually a place at the counter. And while most of the tables have places for two or four, one table (or perhaps it’s a series of tables) seats 16 or 17.

For $4.50 you get a choice of one entree (meat loaf, for example, or smothered chicken or a pork chop) and two vegetables, including candied yams, red beans, black-eyed peas, corn, mashed potatoes, lima beans, or green salad.

We highly recommend the red beans - juicily served over rice with big chunks of onion, green pepper and celery. This “side dish” portion is usually enough for a lunch by itself.

Overall, we have decided that Silver Moon deserves two thumbs-up. With the best food, as well as the largest amount of food for the dollar value, Silver Moon receives our top-notch food rating.

Marino’s Neighborhood Deli.
2031 Perkins Road. 387-4546.

The worst thing about Marino’s is that there’s no place to sit while you’re waiting for your order to be prepared. It is, after all, just a convenience store, but the deli has a fairly extensive menu. If you have not called ahead, or if you’re not getting the daily special, you may be spending a couple of minutes reading the labels on the canned goods aisle.

You may have better luck finding a place to eat your meal, though. The signs invite you to take your Styrofoam container and picnic at the Greenwell Nursery next door. The table at the nursery looked inviting, but we didn’t try it.

The specials change daily. We noticed stuffed avocado, chicken casserole and smoked catfish recently when we checked the sign that was posted at the beginning of the week.

We tried the smoked catfish (Friday) and found it smothered in shrimp al fredo and served with corn and a black-eyed peas/okra combination. It was wonderful, but at $5.75 was a little steep for a take-out plate.

We hope you take advantage of our findings and experiences to discover some excellent places to eat, drink, be merry and maybe save a buck or two.
The four-year undergraduate career may no longer be a viable expectation. In addition to facing the rising costs of a college education, most students can expect to spend more than four years completing their college degree. LSU has not been excluded from this national trend. Students earn their degree in an average of six years.

According to data from the Office of Academic Services and the Office of Budget and Planning, only 15.6 percent of the entering freshman class of 1976 graduated after four years. This figure has decreased steadily, as only 10.7 percent of the 1985 freshman class received a degree after four years. Only about 40 percent of each entering freshmen class earn a degree at all. In recent years, this percentage of graduates has not been reached until the ten-year mark.

"There are an awful lot of students who go through in four years and do well, but there are also large numbers of students who don't," said Daniel Marin, Associate Dean of the College of Business and Administration.

Jack Robbins, a mechanical engineering major said, "Everybody jokes about it, but no one is happy." He will graduate in May 1992 after ten regular semesters and three summers. Robbins, who entered LSU in Fall 1987, said his 18 hours of Air Force ROTC and strict degree requirements are the main reasons.

Mary Gereighty, a psychology and sociology major said, "It's more acceptable to take longer now." The course load necessary to graduate on time is unrealistic if a student wants to "embrace every aspect of the LSU campus," she said. She will graduate in December after entering in Fall 1986. If students can afford the extra time, then it is worth the better grades and the

by kathryn dennis
opportunity to “take advantage of being in college.”

Finishing college in four years today has become more of an accomplishment than a “normal” assurance of college life. Searching for the cause has brought no concrete conclusions. Each student has unique reasons for taking longer than the once normal eight-semester college career, but there are some possible trends worthy of discussion.

As tuition and other costs rise, more students are working to pay for their college expenses. LSU’s tuition has nearly doubled in the last five years. “Everybody seems to be working, and that takes a lot of your time,” said Zane Nelson, a counselor for the College of Arts and Sciences.

Jack Robbins added, “It’s hard to pay for all that, so many people take less hours and work a lot.”

“If you work 20 hours a week, it’s awfully tough to complete 18 hours,” said Daniel Marin. Some students enroll in fewer courses or drop out for a semester to work, but taking longer to put yourself through college can be a “plus in the view of prospective employers,” he said.

However, students need to put school work first. “Something is wrong” if students are working to support car payments and rent on a fancy apartment and have to drop or take fewer courses, Marin said.

Dean of Academic Services, Carruth McGehee said students should “calculate very carefully how much they can work without interfering with their academic schedule.” It may be better to stay out of school for a semester and work full-time at a better paying job and devote full time to the college experience while in school. On the other hand, students must consider the extra expense of extending their college career.

In addition to more students working, Marin cites LSU’s liberal drop policy as one of things that may slow students in pursuit of a degree. A small percentage of students abuse this opportunity and drop courses just because they are getting a poor grade in it. “I’ve seen transcripts with as many as 17 W’s on them,” he said. Most curricula require an average of 16 to 17 hours a semester to graduate in four years without going in the summer. “If a student signs up for 18 hours and drops three, they’re out of the ball game, and that’s not uncommon,” he said.

“We’ve cultivated a bad habit here that dropping a course is a solution,” he added. It is a solution for students who did not plan their semester well, and it is a solution to the department chairman who does not want to deal with the fact that a teacher may be inadequate. Dropping courses adds semesters and years to students’ college careers and is “destructive of commitment and wasteful of resources.”

Zane Nelson said without the option to drop, students might apply themselves better from the beginning.

Changing majors might be a common reason for degree programs taking an extra semester. Almost everyone changes majors at least once.

Students should decide their major by the end of the sophomore year, Marin said. “If there’s a firm commitment subsequent to that time, I don’t think there’s going to be a problem.” While meeting general education requirements, students can explore several possibilities. “We make the mistake, I think, in urging students to declare a major when they walk in the door,” he said. The freshman and sophomore years can be planned to serve a number of options. Most course credits transfer in changes made during the first two years.

Junior year is often the real test of whether someone can handle a subject. Unfortunately, several credit hours can be lost if a student changes majors at the junior level. A junior in most majors has already invested a lot of time in courses that will contribute to no other degree.

Because engineering, for example, is so structured, students who change to engineering often have to “start from scratch,” said Kim Roberts, a counselor for the College of Engineering. Nelson added that “If you’re focused, and you know what you want as your major, then you’ll finish a whole lot quicker than if you don’t.”
Stricter and more numerous degree requirements "may be a big road block for a lot of people," Nelson said. Some curricula require a 2.5 grade-point average for admission to the school or college. Students pursuing an engineering degree do not get credit for math courses until calculus, and students must have credit in calculus and physics to take many of the engineering courses. "This sometimes puts students behind," Kim Roberts said.

The general education requirements which began in the fall of 1987 should not slow a student down, though, because the number of hours for each degree has not increased. Recently the performance level required for admission to the College of Business Administration was increased. This change should have a positive impact, as students who get into the college are often better prepared.

Due to work or the pressure to make good grades, some students take less than the 16 to 17 hour courseload necessary in most curricula to graduate on time. Marin said 17 hours is not an excessive courseload for a full-time student that does not work any more than 10 hours a week. That kind of courseload becomes unrealistic if a student has to work 20 hours a week, unless that person is a strong student and well-organized.

Ideally students should take 15 to 16 hours, Nelson said. Taking only 12 is not problem if the student is not in a hurry and the grade-point average needs to raised. "I'd rather see students take 14 and do well than 18 and not do well," he said.

Remedial work can also increase the time spent earning a degree. "There are a lot of factors, but academic preparation is the key to all of this," said McGehee. The amount of remedial work a student must complete can add as much as 28 hours of work in math, English, and reading. As long as LSU had an open door policy, the University had a "big job on its hands to finish the task that the high schools were leaving unfinished." A student conceivably take half a year of what is really high school work that does not count towards graduation.

The amount of time students spend getting their degrees may soon decrease. Due to tougher entrance requirements, the 1988 entering freshman class came to LSU better prepared, as will those which follow. "Farther along and in better shape academically, the class now entering its third year has more momentum towards graduation," McGehee said. The number of students required to take remedial courses is decreasing. That factor creates a diminishment in the average time it takes students to complete their degrees.

A larger portion of students are returning for the second year, completing more hours, getting better grades and fulfilling more of their degree requirements than those of 1987 and before. Of the 3,708 students who entered in Fall 1988 (continued on page 40)
They told me when I was young that little girls should look, act, and sound like proper little ladies. More or less, we should actually be little ladies. For all some of us knew, sandboxes and mud pies were a hell of a lot more fun than boring old Tupperware parties at Aunt Myrtle’s every other Sunday. Sit up straight. Comb your hair. Wipe that off your nose. Grown-ups never ran out of advice when it came to shaping our futures, but we didn’t listen closely because we already had our role models. On our own, we discovered that womanhood had a greatness that our elders just didn’t seem to grasp. They wanted us to be one of the prim and proper children Julie Andrews took cascading with her down the mountain in The Sound of Music. But we had bigger plans. We were going to grow up and be Barbie. Later, when I was about thirteen, I found out that if you blew up Barbie to lifesize proportions, she would be absolutely anatomically incorrect, with a fifty-plus inch bust and a waist the size of my ankle. Now all of this is quite upsetting to a young woman nearing adulthood, and even worse when she’s not a natural blonde and doesn’t own her own sports car, beauty shop, or brand of cereal. Alas, Barbiedom would be harder to reach than planned. Content with the fact that I looked more like Barbie’s training-bra clad, younger sister Skipper, I readily advanced through my early teens, awaiting the day I would go through my own rite of passage and suddenly blossom into at least a Charlie’s Angel. Blooming into a rather cheaper model of Jaqueline Smith at sixteen, I began to test my feminine charms and womanly appeal on members of the opposite sex. They fell for it. Soon I was going steady. Not long after that, I wasn’t. He had dumped me for some bouncy, cheerleader type. A month later he dumped her for some exotic exchange student. We two dumpees found ourselves sitting around one day asking What is it that men want? Where is the absolute role model? Just who does society perceive as the ideal woman? That was the day I decided to blame Barbie for damn well ruining it for the rest of us mere mortal females.

Since making her debut in the late fifties, she has always adapted to the trendy role model of the day. How many generations of other gawky, brace-faced preteens have held her in goddess perfectionism? How many other dirty-nailed adolescent boys fantasized about her being the girl next door with thin curtains? Why’d she get all the neat-o gadgets while we had to hold out for jumpropes and ready-bake ovens that couldn’t heat a Dorito? Barbie’s hair salon, Barbie’s
pool party. Barbie’s combination taxidermist emporium and pizzaria. That super babe was the overachiever of doll land, kinda like what Diane Keaton was in Baby Boom. She made having it all a blatant reality that the rest of us scrap heap of vermin should get off our lazy duffs and strive to accomplish, pronto.

No matter how many degrees I get, what color I dye my hair, or how much aerobic-induced body sculpting I partake in, I am plagued by the miserable thought that I am a mere dust speck in the shadow of this ultimate representative of womanhood. Take a look at what this mini-dynamo has done over the years:

1950’s—PRISTINE SUPERMODEL

1960’s—HIPPIE RADICAL
ENVIRONMENTALIST
FLOWERCHILD
ASTRONAUT

1970’s—ROLLER DISCO QUEEN
SUNTAN FANATIC
CAREER GIRL
SURGEON

1980’s—SURERSTAR ROCKER
AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR BABE

And numerous other career, social, and character adaptations.

Barbie has basically taught society that you can look good, live well, and have the career of your choice without ever having to prove your brain potential or any personal talents. Where did Barbie get her vocal training? How long did she attend med school? When she became a veterinarian, didn’t that interfere with her astronaut and beauty pageant duties?

If Barbie were interviewed by Barbara Walters and given the chance to “relate” to the world, would we, the American public like the Barbie we saw? Could we accept the mind behind the painted rubber face? Would she dazzle us with her charisma, or slobber all over herself fighting back a lisp? Who IS this caldron of explosive energy too intense for this race of humans?

When I was a little girl, I used to think Barbie had the same ideas and personality as I. We were close back then, and she seemed eager to go along with anything I wanted to do. She was simply “Suntan Barbie” and we’d hang out by her pool, invite a few other dolls over for a
Throughout the years, some have thought that they had reached Barbiedom. But as well as they lived in glamour and looked the parts, not Raquel, not Farrah, no, not even Vanna with her wonderful acting ability could adapt each decade without aging or falling from grace into tabloid turmoil. Why, even today there exists a super sub-human who has come the farthest in making the Barbieisque image a reality. Always in the public eye, this rock star, fitness fanatic, model, dancing queen, limelight hog and blonde super image would easily change her name to Barbie if given the opportunity. Meet Madonna.

After reaching a reasonable age of adulthood, I have come to realize that Barbiedom was merely a social extreme - the non-existent epitome of what everyone sees as the female success: Rich, self supportive, with a killer bod, youthful features and the latest wardrobe to boot. (I'm sure having a sugardaddy down at Mattel didn't hurt much either.) She has been a tiny representation of what none of us could ever compete with in a zillion years. It is my conclusion that she constantly walks on her toes because she is not one of us, was never made in our image and was obviously created by a man who never knew what it was like to wear heels.
We hear the phrase “New Age” a lot lately. It’s a catchy-sounding blanket term covering things like channeling, healing, Tarot cards and even off-shoots like abstract art and electronic music. Everywhere you turn someone is wearing a crystal around their neck or donning weird mystical symbols as jewelry. The media and the general public are getting caught up in some of these spiritual and philosophical exploits that seem to have come from nowhere. But we know all those people live in California and New York, right?

You might be surprised. There are plenty New Agers right here at home. Louisiana has long been famous for the holdovers in older mystic arts like voodoo, but it has its fair share of practitioners of the more recent mystic arts as well. I started nosing around our campus to see what was up with New Agers.

**ASTRAL TRAVELERS**

“The astral body,” explained John, is called many things. “It’s been called the soul, the etheric body, the dream double, the aura. It’s been romanticized in paintings and a few songs, too. But most people still don’t believe it exists.”

“What does it look like?”

“It looks like the person. Everybody has one, and it’s in the shape of their physical body. Actually, it’s a bit more malleable than that, and with practice you can make it take the shape of anything you want. Once it leaves your body, that is.”

When I asked for an explanation, John walked to the other side of the room and put a match to the cigarette that had been dangling unlit from his mouth until then, “Have you ever heard of out-of-body experiences? You know, like when people in the hospital were near death and they say they could see themselves, all of a sudden, like they were a ghost floating above the bed?”

I told him I had. John continued. “That is their astral body escaping from their physical. They tell of a feeling of indescribable lightness and freedom. They say they can fly and that they really don’t feel as if they want to return to their bodies.”

I had heard this before, but always in the sensationalistic tabloids like *The Globe* and the *Weekly World News* that you see at the supermarket checkout stands.
"But first I want to go back to the old days, people. You see, imagination. Let me explain it with an analogy a girlfriend conjecture. The best way to tell you more about it. In were more in touch with the every living thing has an aura, can be separated from the travel about in different planes be seen from our own physical sure how to take that. I wasn't with a question. I hoped he getting dream and then still feels like you just get when your astral physical. But some conjecture. The best way to know about the astral "Well," he ever had dreams of "Yes," Ian- "You know and then still feels like you just get when your astral physical. But some conjecture. The best way to know about the astral "Like the dying "Exactly. But I would say that's just a lot of to know it is to experience it." "Are you saying you can do this at will?" "Yes." There it was. The statement I was looking for. "How?" "Practice. I know that sounds a little vague. I mean, if someone doesn't know what they're trying to do, how can they practice? The first step is to educate yourself on the subject. There are plenty of books on it, and I've read most of them. They each approach it in a slightly different manner, but they'll all get you to the same result. Most will give you a set of exercises to do, like imagining that you are floating and seeing things from a different perspective. It's imagination at first, but once your astral body realizes what you're trying to do, it will cooperate." Remembering lessons in skepticism, I asked him, "Could it all be imagination?" "Until it actually happens," he said, "It is indeed imagination. Let me explain it with an analogy a girlfriend used to describe it. She said it was like an orgasm. You could wonder and wonder if it actually happened, and even fool yourself into thinking it was. But once the real thing came along, there was no doubt that it was the truth."

How can you argue with that? But I still wanted to know more. "Okay. Let me see if I have this straight. You can leave your body and wander around like a ghost? What happens to your physical body while your consciousness is off gallivanting around the planet?"

Nothing. It maintains itself like it's sleeping. In fact, a lot of people return to find their body asleep. And one method of astral projection involves leaving your body after it's fallen asleep." "Okay. So now you've left your body. What do you do?"

"More than we could fit in your article. There are several levels to the astral plane, some of which are quite like our own. One of the ways that we know astral travel is true is that you can verify facts you learn during projection. Say for example you went to a friend's house. Now he can't see you unless he's really sensitive, so you've pretty much got the run of the place. You can go into his room and check out what's on his nightstand or written on a bulletin board or something. You can return to your body and then call your friend. Tell him what you saw. Oh, by the way, it helps if your friend was forewarned. Some people would be pretty upset to think you can spy on them anytime you want. Anyway, tell him what you saw and ask him if it's there."

"Is it?"

"When the projection is real, you'd better believe it!"

"Anything else?"

"I saw a car wreck at the corner of Dalrymple once. I saw the way it happened and everything. I was living on campus at the time, so when I saw it I went back to my body and immediately rode my bike to the corner where I saw the wreck. It was there. Same people, same cars, everything."

"That's pretty convincing evidence," I told him. "Prove it to me."

"No problem," he said. I was surprised. I'd talked to people that claimed such things before, but never had I met anyone willing to try and prove it. They usually made some excuse like the moon was wrong or something.

John laid down on his sofa and closed his eyes. I might say that's just a lot of people in hospitals?" wouldn't suggest stepping it out. There are much that take a little more time and patience to perfect."

"How can you argue with that? But I still wanted to take a little more time and patience to perfect."

It was there. Same people, same cars, everything." "That's pretty convincing evidence," I told him. "Prove it to me."

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John laid down on his sofa and closed his eyes. I could see his body relaxing as he mentally went through the steps. When his body went completely limp, I got a little paranoid, but decided not to interfere. I sat there waiting for him to do something. He remained motionless for about five minutes and then sat up with a start.

"Well?" I quizzed him. "I didn't see anything."

"I did," he said calmly. "You have a six-room apartment with gray carpet, and your bed is by a window. You have three flutes on a table against the South wall and a music stand next to them. On the same table is a small tree and across the room is another small tree, about three feet tall. On
the East wall is a small desk with a white typewriter and a copy of *OMNI* magazine. That enough?

“How did you know where I live? How did you find my apartment?” I realize now that I didn’t even question the validity of his astral projection at that point. He had just described my room perfectly. No flaws.

“I’m not sure. When I’m looking for a place I’ve never been to, I just will myself to go there.” Then he told me my address.

I thanked him for his time and told him he could get a transcript of our discussion later. He told me it wasn’t necessary and said that he hoped he hadn’t scared me. He had, but I told him not to worry about it, that I was just a little shocked. Even if he made up everything about what he had seen, the coincidence was a little too much to take. He offered me a cigarette and showed me the door.

**CRYSTALS, CRYSTALS EVERYWHERE**

Still shaken up by the ordeal, I barely remembered I had another appointment. In an hour I had to go to Julie’s house. Julie, you see, is a proponent of crystal power and from what I’d heard, quite an expert on the subject. And to prepare for this interview, I had read several articles on crystals.

Crystals do have power, it seems, and many produce effects that we all enjoy without practice. They may not be as flashy as astral projection, but it’s hard to be skeptical about all aspects of crystals. For example, quartz has many scientific uses. It is used in TV and radio tuners as well as digital watches. Piezoelectric crystals, which produce an electromagnetic field when mechanically deformed, are used in sonar devices, strain gauges and pressure gauges. Pyroelectric crystals, which are a sub-group of piezoelectric ones, produce an electrical field when their temperature changes. Hence, they are used in temperature sensors.

But I had a feeling Julie wasn’t going to tell me about electrical engineering. I must admit, I was expecting one of the freaky West-coast types like Shelley Long’s sister in *Hello Again*, so I was surprised when a woman dressed in a blue business dress answered the door. After introductions were made, she took my hand and led me inside. Still not over my vague preconceptions, I was waiting for her to say “The force is strong within you, Luke Skywalker.”

She never did. Instead, she told me that this was the first time she had given an interview and hoped that she would do it right. I assured her there was no way to mess it up, so relax. I started by asking her what a crystal is.

“There are two types, actually,” she began. “Crystalline and amorphous. Crystalline solids are things like diamonds and quartz that are made of repeating three-dimensional molecules. Amorphous solids, which aren’t really crystals, are things like glass that are very close to being solid, but are actually liquid.”

“And here I thought you’d tell me they were gifts of an alien race,” I joked with her.

“No, they’re quite naturally formed. And they have magical powers.”

Well, no more delusions. She was what I came for. “Can you explain?”

“Different ones do different things. If you are sensitive, you can actually see the energy field that extends around them.”

“What if you’re not sensitive?”

“You can still benefit from them. Lots of people wear different crystals for different things. Some produce vibrations that calm you, some give you more energy, some produce sexual vitality.”

“Do you have one of those?” I asked.

“Yes,” she smiled back. She knew I was joking.

But I remembered the part about vibrations. We use the vibrations from crystals to keep our watches in synch, so maybe it wasn’t these same vibrations that produced the effects she described. “How do you figure the vibrations can make a difference?” I asked.

“Thoughts and wishes can be stored within the crystals. If I have a sick friend and I place a wish for her to get better within the crystal, she’ll get better once I give her the crystal. Indian shamans used them for healing rituals.”

“Are you a shaman?”

“No, but I’ve helped friends feel better by giving them crystals with well-wishes in them.”

Then I remembered something else I’d wanted to ask her. “A lot of people wear crystals these days as jewelry. Do you think they know the properties they have or do you think it’s just decoration?”

“I’m pretty sure the crystals help them even if the person just uses it as jewelry.”

Just then the phone rang and I waited as Julie ran to catch it. The smile on her face quickly turned into a frown. Her mother had been hurt lifting a box and Julie had to go see her. I told her I was sorry and asked her if there was anything I could do to help. She said not really, and just before herding me and herself out the door, she grabbed a small crystal from her table. “For mother,” she said.

That was the last I saw of her.

**CHANNELING THE SPIRITS**

Remem—ber Shirley MacLaine’s *Out On A Limb*? In it there is a disembodied entity, John, who speaks through a (continued on page 40)
The popularity of LSU football has grown tremendously over the past years, and to some avid fans has become religion. Though last year’s losing season enlightened many followers to question their faith, football will probably remain LSU’s top sport in popularity. But with early season predictions placing the Fighting Tigers in the last position, real sports fans may want to turn to the father of their beloved sport, rugby, whose LSU teams boast an 85 percent win average in their twenty year history.

It is believed that the sport originated with the Romans who played a rough-and-tumble game with a pig’s bladder. According to history, it was expected of players to draw blood from their opponents. But the modern game had its birth when a student, Webb Ellis at Rugby School in England, picked up a soccer ball and ran with it until he was ripped down by his schoolmates. This game of kill-the-guy-with-the-ball, though not taken in its literal sense as with the Romans, spread in popularity among the universities in England. By 1871 an official union was formed. About the same time in the United States, a perverted version of the game was played between Rutgers and Princeton. The game grew quickly in Europe and her colonies, and though it became an established game in the United States, it took another one hundred years for the game to make it the LSU campus.

According to the club’s own written history, the LSU Rugby Football Club had “a brief flourish of existence in 1968” but failed to “catch on” at the time. They played a few games but fell apart after lack of participation. Two years later a geology professor from South Africa, Rob Haswell, took an initiative to rekindle the interest in rugby at LSU.

Haswell lured a group of interested students to the Tiger Lair by offering free beer and showed a test match film. According to the team’s scribes he “expounded upon the noble, physical, aesthetic, and philosophical propensities of this demanding and austere sport” keeping in mind that the “sixties” came late to LSU.

He received a number of eager aspirants with a “high degree of athletic caliber” and even larger beer muscles. After a few weeks of practice, they defeated an experienced Tulane club 16-10 in their first match. Haswell coached a running and handling game and praised the virtues of attack. According to the team, this very successful outlook is still obvious in LSU’s game today.

Boyd Morrison, a LSU Rugby alumni, told LSU Magazine about the earlier teams’ style of play that brought LSU national collegiate titles in 1974 and 1976: “The LSU
good rugby
give blood

program was definitely unique compared to other clubs in the area. It was professionally designed to win using an open passing style. We coached ourselves, pushed one another, and took it seriously. We had pride and represented the university well. We created ourselves out of a desire to be good rugby players.

The LSU club grew quickly during those formative years, and by 1976 was fielding up to four teams. The LSU team was at the zenith of its career at that time.

"I think that was the most fun I ever had as a rugby player. There was a tribal quality to it," he said.

In 1976, a group of older players graduated from the LSU club and founded the Baton Rouge Rugby Football Club.

Though both teams did well in play over the last fourteen years, the sport didn’t grow enough to support two teams in Baton Rouge. After lengthy debate, they decided to merge the two last semester. Now, like the universities in Europe, LSU will field a club side along with the collegiate team.

"The LSU club didn’t have the older and experienced players," said Les Bratton who was one of Haswell’s original players. "A lot of their [collegiate members] players have never played rugby before and need the guidance of the ones who have been there."

"Once you’ve played rugby you’ll swear by it. It’s a way of life and they [old ruggers] want to put back in what they got out of it," Bratton said. A large number of the Baton Rouge players are LSU alumni and feel the merger will be positive.

"The merger will produce some good coaching and, hopefully, a national contender. In the seventies LSU was known as a power. We want that recognition again," Bob "Big Red" Causey said.

Causey, an alumni of both the LSU and Baton Rouge clubs, has 10 caps which means he has played for the United States in international play 10 times. This seasoned player wants to put the emphasis on the collegiate team. "The University side is our first priority. By allowing these guys to play 'big boy' rugby at the club level, they will run all over those college teams. A college national championship will come first. The success of the merger hinges on the success of the college team. Everything else will fall into place," he said.

Another plus for the merger comes on the economic side, according to Bratton. The cost of trips to tournaments is paid mostly by the individual members and adds up. The older guys who are "established economically" can help the younger guys out, he said. Bratton owns his own landscape business here in Baton Rouge and said he and other
local ruggers put some of the younger players to work.

All the glitches haven’t been worked out but it looks like the merger will create a power-house team that will hopefully return LSU’s game to the splendor of its earlier years.

After one of the tournaments held at LSU last year, the participants gathered outside of T.A.’s Tavern on Chimes street for a block party. This traditional celebration rivaled those of Emperor Caligula. The beer was going in every direction. One happy rugger was seen sporting nothing but the bruises he received earlier that day.

“Everywhere you go [to compete], after the game is over, it’s tradition to meet your competition over a beer in a truly sporting way,” Bratton said.

Though most of the LSU players agree that they actively participate in this old tradition of sharing a keg, there is a lot more to rugby than drinking. “The wild partying image associated with rugby players has somewhat calmed down over the past few years,” said David Dawson, a senior on the LSU team. “With some teams though it still gets out of hand. That guy without his clothes was from Tulane,” he added.

“Some teams exist just to party. They don’t have any real desire to win,” Dawson said. “We [LSU] like to party but we’re serious about winning, too.” Bratton agrees and said that for the serious players, rugby brings with it an emphasis on success both on and off the field.

“For one thing, you really have to be successful to play rugby because of the cost of traveling,” he added. “In fact, a large number of players are executives or own their own businesses.”

“In European countries rugby is an upper-crust sport played by people who are going places,” Bratton said. He said that over 50 percent of the people who play for LSU have post graduate degrees.

The LSU rugby club and affiliated teams have celebrated numerous victories and very impressive records over the past twenty years. In fact, they have placed almost 100 times in some 130 tournaments in which they participated.

One off-shoot called the Louisiana Exiles was formed by a group of LSU players who were vacationing in the east. They have an impressive record of 57-8 and have won the Canadian-American Tournament in Saranac Lake, New York, the last two years in a row. The Exiles also fielded an “Over-35” team this past year who took home a first place victory. The Can-Am tournament boasts that it is the largest invitational tournament in North America.

The collegiate team has won all the games in its region in the last two years and won the SEC tournament last year. But, according to Bratton, they have bigger things in mind for this year’s season. After winning their first game of the region four of the Eastern Division play-offs last year, the LSU team lost to Clemson in the second game. The LSU team doesn’t anticipate going down that soon this year. “They were knocking on the back door last year but plan on going for it this year if they don’t get too drunk or cocky,” Bratton said.

But he said he knows that they are going to bring “serious havoc” to the Eastern Division this year. “They [Columbia team] have a few new guys and some very good athletes out there and I believe they are a lot more motivated this year,” he said. “If they stay healthy and focused they have a very good shot at it.”

Bratton said that recruitment will have a lot to do with the team’s future. The team sets up a table at registration but gets most of its players from friends of friends. “One thing that would really help is to recruit the football walk-ons that don’t make it,” Bratton said. “Rugby is a running contact sport that requires a lot of athletic ability and if these guys played for a year they might make it on the football team the next year.”

Another obstacle to the team’s future will be funding. The club receives about $2,000 from the university and the Student Government Association. This is about the same amount they received twenty years ago when the team was formed.

The team raises money with T-shirt and LSU rugby jersey sales. They also raised money working at the Hot Air Balloon Championship.

A good deal of the money pays for the trips to tournaments, but the members often have to pay the difference. According to Dawson, even if the club had beaten Clemson, some of the players wouldn’t have been able to afford future trips.

The club also spends a good deal of money maintaining their field. Bratton, who is also the club’s treasurer, said they spend about $800 a semester fertilizing and seeding. “We’re lucky the university provides a field for us,” he said. “But, they let cars park on it seven times a year - right in the middle of our fall season.”

Despite all the problems they’ve faced, the LSU Rugby Club has passed the test of time. They plan to keep up their winning tradition even if they can’t afford to keep up their field.

One rugby player, an avid football fan, joked that while the Fighting Tigers are sweating it out in their new indoor practice field, the LSU Rugby Club will be fighting their way to a national title.
I started thinking about the strange old clock on a bleak winter night while trying to read in the study. Even though it wasn't snowing, the evening was bitterly cold. A wind that howled like Cerberus itself kept a noisy vagrancy beyond the normally picturesque panes. I was glad to have some
knotty oak burning in the fireplace and a steaming mug on the armrest, very contented to tackle a couple of chapters of the book before I retired for the evening. At my old age, it was one of the simple pleasures which granted that state of repose which seemed so fleeting lately. The mansion was as quiet as a chapel, except, of course, for the ticking from the old clock on the mantle.

I had spent many a winter’s night reading or just plain sitting amidst thought in front of the study fireplace, deep in far away thoughts of deeds and moments long past. This chair was one of my favorite places. I found it especially reminiscent in these last few years when the body needed more rest and the winters seemed so much colder. Oh the terrible winters! They felt as chilling as the coffin itself would be. Yet the armchair braced me and the fire gave me the warmth that I needed. They understood the needs of an old man. The armrest, the bookcover, the sunbeaten wrinkles of my right hand - in the firelight they all seemed to drift into the same flickering leathery pattern. Only the black stark words stood out on the yellow background. Their static reality almost seemed more poignant than my own.

The ticking of the clock had never bothered me before. I had literally grown up hearing it. The aged timepiece had been sitting on the mantle, watching holidays, Christmases, Easters pass for as long as I could remember. Whole acres of cord wood had been burned beneath its vigilant perch on the fireplace mantle. I remember the clock standing in the very same place it did now as a young child. My father lifted me up by the underarms to let me wind it with the treasured bronze key. In the decades since, the constant ticking had never bothered me. The sound seemed as much a part of this house as the creaking of the front door or the groaning of the attic rafters late at night. The ticking meant home, family, warmth, the study, hardcover books and pipe smoke. I'm sure it had reminded my father of home and his own father before him.

As he grew older, the duties of the clock's upkeep gradually fell to me. I took them up diligently. Winding the clock before I retired for the evening became akin to brushing and shaving in the morning, smoking a fine cigar after supper, or sipping a supple glass of brandy before bedtime. Giving the clock a taste of oil every year became as cyclic as the change of the seasons. By my father's death in 1965, the tradition of looking after the clock was firmly established in my daily habit. Even when I happened to travel abroad, whether on business or pleasure, I made sure that the housemaid I trusted most be instructed to wind it nightly.

When I was old enough to be allowed in the study, to stoke the fire, smoke pipes, gesture and talk of gentlemanly things, my father took it upon himself to show me how to wind the clock by means of a small hand key on the back for the purpose, he said, of keeping it ticking throughout the next day. He also showed me how to give it a single glistening drop of oil in a small hole at the top every New Year's Day. The gears must never start to rust, father said.

As had been told around the dining table, Grandfather Nelson had mysteriously acquired the clock on a trip to Switzerland in 1898. Before he had been elected Governor, he had held a host of diplomatic positions. Travels had taken him everywhere in a long-gone time when the globe was still huge and fathomless. An eccentric white-bearded crony, the man had taken an interest in antiques. He had apparently stumbled across the clock on a journey though the Swiss Alps in a high village second-hand store with a gable that had looked like a Gothic steeple, he had said. I guess he had been struck by the workmanship. The clock had been a very good buy indeed. I've seen neither lagging nor a swift spring. I had never heard a skip in its hidden internal pendulum buried somewhere in the heart of the thing.

After his death in 1939, my father had taken my grandfather's place in the study. As a young boy, I was not always allowed in there. I often slipped in to look though books or play with the fireplace or study my father's huge spinning globe. Throughout my escapades the clock always kept a noisy vigil of my intrusion.

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I sat in my armchair and stared, the text in my hand forgotten. It suddenly occurred to me that I had spent the last twenty minutes reflecting on the history of the timepiece. I had never been so distracted by the sound of the thing before. I shrugged off a feeling of preoccupation and dived back into the book. My concentration didn't last long. Before I had even turned a page, I felt the increasing urge
to look up at the clock. I placed the queer feeling as that of being watched unknowingly, or maybe being judged.

I stared at the face of the clock and it stared back with the same expression it had for sixty years. Both hands were nearing the 12, much too late for an old man to be awake. I forced myself to begin anew at my reading but then found myself almost hypnotized by the sound of the ticking as I looked at the page. It seemed louder than usual. Finally, I put the book aside and got up to inspect, giving in to the inanimate distraction.

The clock was indeed a curious design. It was not nearly as large as a grandfather clock, but still dominated the mantle. All in all, it was about the size of a small suitcase, rectangular in shape, about eighteen inches to a side. It was made of some mysterious hardwood, a European species I had never been able to properly identify, and reinforced with ornate metal strapping bands on the edges and corners for strength and ornamentation. It was heavy for its size, weighing at least sixty pounds.

Although the wood and metal surfaces were periodically dusted and polished, they were scarred deeply from nearly a century’s worth of use. The network of cuts and scratches all but obliterated the natural grain of the wood. The surface now more resembled a latticework, an accidental design of interwoven slashes, pocks, whirlwind spirals. If I didn’t know better, I would’ve guessed the old clock had been deliberately smashed at one time in the past, or jostled around for years in the back of a stuffy closet. But the ticking was strong and vibrant. The old clock filled the study with the deep methodical sound.

A thick glass case surrounded the large circle of numbers and the cast-iron hands. They moved around the numbers with a precision that could only be matched with the regularity of the ticking. However, the face of the clock was not the only feature on the frontal panel. Surrounding and enclosing it were many dials, meters, and other numerical measuring devices. There was a meter which marked the day and the month, one that measured the moon phases, a small thermometer and barometer, a day or night indicator and a host of other gadgets. The thing was more like a scientist’s lab panel than simply a device to keep the time. If it had been made some time prior to the turn of the century, it boggled the imagination thinking of the mastery that had gone into the construction of its innards. The clocksmith must have been a veritable genius. No wonder my grandfather had been so enamored to buy it. Guests who were new to visit the study always inquired of its origin. Unfortunately, there was little our family could tell them.

Besides the absence of the name of the clocksmith, the only other curious thing about the clock was a small rotating dial in the upper right hand corner of the face. It was the only indicator whose function was not known to me. The dial had no numbers, words, or other calibrations around it. It simply displayed the number 2. I had often wondered what that number meant. It had been on “2” for years and years. Maybe it was broken. Perhaps it was the one flaw in this ancient machine that had seemingly been ticking forever. I had always wanted to ask a clocksmith what he thought it might be.

Strange feelings welled inside of me. I wrestled with them and the present flooded back. What was I doing standing in the middle of the study staring this old clock down? I had never been so strongly drawn to the clock as I had been this evening, except maybe when I was first sneaking in here decades ago. I stopped and suddenly placed the feeling. It was anxiety.

I looked at the face and a paranoia lump hardened in my belly. I sat down again and tried to put the sight of the clock and its incessant ticking out of my mind. The clock ticked on, oblivious to all this. I put the Irish coffee down. I had certainly had enough tonight.
chill up my brittle bones. The clock this evening sounded like a stranger. The ticking reminded me of the sound of a loose shutter in the wind of a creaky floorboard, an unwelcome sound not pleasing to the ears, something that raised the hair on the nape of my neck the wrong way.

I got up and retired, marking the book and resting it on the mantle. I yawned and took up the brass key and then put it down. What would happen if I didn't wind that sentinel tonight? After the unsettling feelings its ticking had instilled in me, I thought it might be a relief to let its springs run down. Perhaps a sense of order would return after the clock had used the last of its spring-stored energy. I could always decide to wind it tomorrow. I went to sleep that night with a touch of melancholy. The ghosts of my father and grandfather were surely frowning on this frightened old man. The clock had not been allowed to run itself down in my lifetime. It was as much a part of the house as the cornerstone of the fireplace which still glowed a pale flickering yellow.

But the ancient timepiece didn't stop ticking in a day or two. Becoming more and more annoyed at the constant sound that now seemed to fill several rooms in the house, and not knowing why it wouldn't stop, I finally called a nearby clocksmith to inquire.

"This is George Nelson. I have an old mantle clock here, Swiss by design. It dates back to, oh, the turn of the century or so, and I wanted to wind it down to bring it in for cleaning.."

Ruby cut me off. He knew the piece. He had seen it once, he said, some years ago when he was in the chimney sweeping business. Apparently he had observed it quite well that day because he described it from memory. Very fine workmanship, he said.

"Did you identify the workshop?"

"Not by sight. You're right, though, it was Swiss as I remember. There were once so many small family clocksmiths both in Zurich and Geneva, that it would be hard to tell. No inscription?"

"No. But tell me, how can I wind it down?" I explained that I had already waited a couple days.

"Let it go," Ruby replied, "I've seen that mantle variety go for five or six days. It's funny. You wouldn't think a simple spring would outlast you."

So I let the clock have nearly another week as the winter grew grayer and colder. It kept up a healthy tick, deep and rich, as loudly and consistently as it ever had. On the fifth day I got out of the study. I really couldn't work or relax because my concentration would be immediately ruined by the incessant sound. Sunday morning I decided I would disengage the ticking mechanism myself, even if the old clock was a family heirloom. I got up abruptly from the breakfast table, startling the servants, grabbed a screwdriver set from the greenhouse and stormed into the study. The heels of my church shoes resounded on the tile floor. I turned the thing around suddenly and violently and searched the clock's paneling for screws which would grant me access to its insides.

With a haste and a ferocity that was uncharacteristic of my age, I assaulted the screws on the back panel. My haste turned to anger when I found that even my most precise efforts only seemed to strip the heads of even the most inviting of screws. All I managed to do was turn the threaded bolts into bald, mangled rivets, now totally inaccessible to my simple tools. I stood there, temples pounding and breathing hard, and considered what plan of action I would take next. Even in the midst of the sudden obsession, however, I could see the absurdity of my actions. A part of my normal intellect laughed at itself, but the sound was quiet and nervous to my own ears. I was still holding the screwdriver in my right fist, hard enough for the crackled knuckles to turn white with anger.

I eventually had the maids bring in a pile of blankets and pillows from the linen closet. I carefully piled them on the mantle surrounding and ultimately covering the clock. That seemed to bring some relief to my stricken senses. The ticking was now again very faint, almost pleasant. A paranormal weight descended from my brow. Chloe and Bernadette, the two housemaids, stood bewildered. It occurred to me to explain this unorthodox gesture, but the master's pride held my tongue. I simply gave instructions that those muffling devises not be removed no matter how unsightly they were.

I had the best in servants. My decision was always final in this house. I did not have to defend my motives for anyone's sake. It was my own affair. They did not have to know how much I was growing to fear that old clock.

During the next week, I began to think about (cont on page 46)
One of my fondest memories of my high school years at Dominican in New Orleans was a trip I made with the Key Club service organization to Methodist Home, a home for battered and abused children. I still remember distinctly the smiles on those children's faces as we held our own version of Mardi Gras.

As clear as those children's faces are, one in particular sticks out more than the rest. I latched onto a little boy who refused to do anything but sit on my lap - expressionless, not saying a word. But, when I was preparing to leave, thinking I had completely failed, he threw his arms around my neck, smiled, and whispered, "Don't go yet." Needless to say, that little boy made an impression on me that I will always carry in my heart.

That was one of my first experiences with service organizations. It seems as though many like myself carry similar experiences into college which lead them to join one of the many service groups that campuses such as LSU offer.

"I feel like a kid again," said Jeanne Louviere, Colonizing Com-
Visiting the School for the Deaf is one of the many services that these organizations provide for the community.

mander for LSU's Army Scotch Guard. She was referring to the way she felt when she hid Easter eggs for the children at the Louisiana School for the Deaf. In the past two semesters, Scotch Guard members planned and participated in a Halloween party and an Easter egg hunt there.

The all-female Scotch Guard put a lot of time and effort into planning the Deaf School parties. Prior to the Halloween party, Guard members learned sign language in hopes of communicating with the students. It was a learning experience for both groups involved.

In addition to working with the Deaf School, Scotch Guard also visits Jefferson Manor Nursing Home twice a month to play bingo. Participation in the Big Buddy program is also a weekly event on the Guard’s agenda, explained Becky Soesbe, 1989-90 Executive Officer of Scotch Guard. They help the children with homework and arts and crafts, and read with them at the Centroplex library.

These are examples of one type of service that Scotch Guard offers - community service. But the Guard was originally established in 1962 as an auxiliary group to the LSU Army ROTC. Scotch Guard also serves our campus.

Scotch Guard along with the Army ROTC took part in the Corps Blood Drive and an alcohol-free TGIT (Thank God It's Thursday) in honor of Substance Abuse Week last semester. Scotch Guard members can also be seen around campus table-sitting whenever needed and decorating locker rooms to fire up all our Tiger athletes on their road to victory.

Angel Flight is another military-affiliated group that serves the campus. Angel Flight, unlike Scotch Guard, is a national organization with about 75 chapters around the country. The LSU chapter is about 75 members strong.

Angel Flight has two national projects which they work on year round: aide to the elderly and assistance to needy children. Members read to children at Parker House about once a week and are presently in the process of planning a project to work with the elderly.

In addition to these projects, Angel Flight works closely with the Air Force ROTC for the Corps Blood Drive and the nation-wide program POW/MIA.

Angel Flight is very proud to be hosting their area conclave this year in Baton Rouge.

But service on the LSU campus is not confined to the Military Science Building. Circle K International is another group that knows the true meaning of the word service.

Circle K, a co-ed service organization on the college level, is a member of the Kiwanis or K-family, explained Kim Eppling, president of the LSU chapter of Circle K. As far as projects go, “We try to plan as much as possible,” said Eppling.

This past year their big project was the planting of 28 trees at the Roosevelt Street Park in honor of Earth Day. For this project the chapter won first place for single service projects in their division at the dis-
Circle K also works with the Boy’s Club or Quest Club. There they tutor the children and help them with their homework. Last semester they also took the Boy’s Club roller skating.

The Circle K chapter at LSU is presently 30 members strong with hopes of increasing membership in the fall. They returned from the spring district convention with five awards, including Distinguished President, Jennifer Bailey, and Distinguished Secretary, Kim Eppling. What began as “a single service fraternity,” according to Eppling, is growing rapidly.

My final stop on my search for service groups led me to the only national major Greek letter organization - Alpha Phi Omega. APO began nationally in 1925, making its way to LSU in 1932, according to Morris Welch, APO Advisor.

APO began as a college level group of Boy Scouts. And even though they are not today an official arm of scouting, their code of conduct is based on that of scouting.

“We follow the three cardinal rules of leadership, friendship, and service,” says Welch. APO believes in serving the campus, community, nation, and the fraternity itself.

APO serves the campus through sitting SGA tables, proctoring spring testing, and helping with the 4-H mini-farm. Their service projects extend into the community through tutoring at the Butler Community Center, working with national charities, and serving America House.

Last semester APO, 100 members strong, totaled 3400 manhours. They, like Circle K, worked with Earth Day by setting up a dumpster in front of the Union to recycle paper. This project got them city-wide publicity.

Anyone can pledge APO, a group that holds fellowship as a high virtue, according to Welsh.

Every service organization at LSU seems to come equipped with its own personality and style, but with one thing in common - a spirit of giving. Anyone can belong, it simply takes a big heart and a smile.

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students who entered in Fall 1988, 73 percent returned the next year, a 6 percent increase from the previous year and a 9 percent increase from two years earlier. Also, 58 percent completed 24 hours or more in their first year, according to data from the Office of Academic Services. "We'll see a better graduation rate and the average period of time for graduation cut down," McGehee said.

Within a few years, The amount of time most LSU students take to earn their degree will most likely decrease at least slightly. However, an eight-semester college career may never again be a "normal expectation."

December 3
University Chorus. 8 p.m. Union Theater

December 9
40th Annual LSU A Capella Choir Christmas Concert, Kenneth Fulton, conductor with guest conductor, Dallas Draper. 3 p.m. Union Theater

December 10
40th Annual LSU A Capella Choir Christmas Concert, Kenneth Fulton, conductor with guest conductor, Dallas Draper. 8 p.m. Union Theater

"channeler," Kevin Ryan. Channeling is the sort of New Age thing most of us have heard about. A medium, or channel as they're called these days, goes into a trance and a spirit takes possession of them and speaks to others.

There are different types of channeling. In Automatic Speaking, the person who channels the spirit does the talking for them. Often, the channeler's voice will change as well as their accent, presumably to fit the voice and accent of the channeled spirit as much as possible.

In Automatic Writing, which is second only to Automatic Speaking, the channeler writes out messages from the spirit. There are many different forms this writing (continued on page 47)

So whether that means labeling something "environmentally safe" that really isn't, or just using big words so that it sounds environmentally safe, let the buyer beware.

Here are a couple of words often found on labels that imply environmental safety:

Photodegradable - This means that the plastic may break down in sunlight after 30 days, EWG stated. But if the photodegradable product is going to a landfill, the last time it sees light may be when it is is dumped into the landfill and covered with dirt.

Biodegradable - This infamous claim is often found on disposable diaper boxes. This simply means that the plastic may break down into smaller pieces, but it still takes up space wherever it is dumped.

So the next time you toss something in the garbage can, remember that it will probably end up buried in a landfill, drifting in an ocean or floating in the air after incineration, and what you are tossing in the garbage, more than likely, can be recycled.

The city, the nation and the world today have the means to recycle or safely dispose of almost every product they produce.

But many Americans are stuck in the rut of putting out the trash on Sunday and Wednesday nights. Some parts of Baton Rouge now offer curb-side recycling of aluminum, clear glass and plastic beverage jugs, and in January the city will expand its curb-side recycling program to include brown and green glass and yard waste, which will be ground up and turned into mulch.

Organizations like the Sierra Club, Exxon and DOW Chemical collect everything from aluminum to household chemicals at the College Drive K-Mart every third Saturday of the month. The Salvation Army and Paralyzed Veterans of America make free home pick-ups of any furniture, appliance or clothing that you are ready to get rid of.

And while cities and organizations are making efforts to curb the "trash problem," the turning point comes when the consumer makes the conscious effort to not toss something into a garbage can but rather to recycle.

So what are you going to do with this magazine when you are finished with it?
stretching your MONEY

College means more than getting up every day to attend classes and take exams. Opening a bank account, acquiring credit cards, and buying a car and insurance are financial situations students face during their college career. These financial decisions can be costly if they are made without the proper information.

For Charles J. Givens, millionaire and author of *Wealth Without Risk*, money mistakes enabled him to learn how to make money and keep it. Three times in eight years, Givens created a million dollar fortune in less than 18 months starting with nothing. And each time, his financial mistakes lead to his downfall.

As a result of Givens’s mistakes, he was able to develop financial strategies on practical wealth-building techniques that enabled him to become a millionaire many times over. Representatives of his Charles J. Givens Organization travel year-round teaching these financial techniques to people to help them save thousands of dollars using personal, financial, tax-reducing, and investment strategies.

This summer, Pete Ulmer, a self-made millionaire and representative from the Givens Organization, visited Baton Rouge. Although his seminar focused primarily on money strategies for homeowners, some tips are useful to college students.

Under personal finance strategies, he suggested college students obtain credit cards for the lowest interest rate and annual fee. The average Visa or MasterCard charges between $15 to $35 in yearly fees with interest rates ranging from 18% to 21%. NCNB Texas in Dallas offers Visa and MasterCard at no yearly fee for a low 13.90% interest rate, and Oak Brook Bank in Illinois has a MasterCard with no yearly fee with a 15.60% interest rate. Closer to LSU, the Campus Federal Credit Union offers Visa cards for a low yearly fee of $10 at 16.5%.

In Givens’ book, he offers personal finance strategy #44: “Pay the credit card purchases you make this month with a check next month when you receive the bill. Never wait until you think you have the money - that time may never come. If you charge $100 for gasoline and meals, pay $100.”

Asset Management Accounts (AMAs), according to Ulmer, are an investment strategy students can use as opposed to checking accounts. AMAs are interest-bearing national checking accounts avail-
able through brokerage firms, mutual funds, or other large institutions. They have no minimum check requirement or limit to the number of checks you can write.

AMAs usually require $10,000 to $25,000 just to open an account, but some are available for as little as a $1000 minimum deposit. AMAs provide two benefits, according to Givens. "The first is the variable interest paid on your account balance. The second is the additional .5% to 1% created by the daily compounding."

However, many college students have a hard time keeping the minimum balance in the local regular non-interest bearing accounts. An AMA is not beneficial if money balances periodically drop since fees are incurred below the minimum balance required.

Local banks offer non-interest bearing checking accounts which require as little as a $50 minimum deposit. The Campus Federal Credit Union offers free checking accounts, called draft accounts, to its members. Other local banks including AmBank, CNB, Premier, Sunburst, and Hibernia offer basic checking accounts for fees ranging from $2.50 per month with Premier to $3.75 per month with AmBank.

In addition, banks except the Campus Federal Credit Union charge fees for each check processed. The AmBank budget account, which incurs service charges below the minimum balance of $800, allows ten free checks before charging for processed checks. Processing fees range from a nickel per check with Premier to $.35 per check with Hibernia.

At some point students are faced with purchasing a car and must finance the car using a loan. Ulmer stresses financing the car for 36 months or less. "If you have to take out a loan for longer than 36 months, you can't afford the car. Don't buy it."

In addition, you should never buy a new car. "A new car is only new for one day, the day you buy it. The next day it is worth $5000 to $7000 less than the day you bought it." He suggests buying a used car two to three years old with 15,000 to 20,000 miles. "Spend the extra $50 and take the car to an independent mechanic to get it checked out before you buy it."

Most states, including Louisiana, require registered car owners to have auto insurance. Automobile insurance, according to Givens, is one of the biggest expenses students pay, excluding school costs. However, he suggests several strategies which can cut your premiums 30% to 50%.

Bodily injury liability, property damage liability, comprehensive and collision are the only coverages students need to carry on an auto insurance policy. Duplicate coverages like medical payments, no-fault (PIP) insurance, and uninsured motorist coverage (UMC) should not be carried since they are usually covered under hospitalization insurance, the collision portion of the policy, and other medical policies.

Givens suggests carrying enough bodily injury liability protection to cover net assets plus all potential legal fees. "If you rent and are living paycheck-to-paycheck with few assets," he says, "the minimum protection is probably enough."

Carry a minimum of $50,000 property damage liability coverage because of the current high cost of automobiles and the possibility of multiple car damage. In addition, when the value of your car drops below $1500, drop the collision and comprehensive coverage. "Remember," Givens says, "if your car is damaged, you can't collect more than the car is worth no matter how premiums you've been paying."

Finally, Givens suggests increasing collision and comprehensive deductibles to $500 or more. "Increasing your auto insurance deductible to $500 will reduce your comprehensive and collision premiums as much as 30%," he says. Then substitute a free credit card for expensive low insurance deductibles. "Your best no-cost insurance is a no-annual-fee MasterCard or VISA which is never used for purposes other than emergencies. With a $1000 or $2000 limit, you have the cash available, but unlike premiums, the credit card costs you nothing unless you use it."
Academic Distribution Fund offers new hope of better jobs in Louisiana

For us in Louisiana, graduation often brings the sad realization that we must turn to other states to find employment. The job market is competitive because industry has been reluctant to locate here. One reason for this has been the poor image of our public school system.

Businesses must scrutinize the potential workforce available in an area for the expertise necessary to run their operations. Changing technology requires a workforce able to learn and apply new skills. According to The Business Roundtable, “Today’s economy demands workers who are literate, creative problem-solvers, who can adapt to ever-changing situations, workers who have learned how to learn.” An undereducated workforce can hamper the success of a company which requires a core of highly-trained personnel.

Corporate executives must also consider the needs of employees before relocating them to an area. They know that employees with families will think long and hard about the kind of education their children will receive in a new city before they’ll agree to move there. States with innovative approaches to public education have attracted business and industry. There is agreement in the business community that improving public education is among the most vital issues on which to focus in bolstering the economic health of our state.

From this standpoint, then, it is interesting to see a local grass roots initiative making strides to change public schools right here in East Baton Rouge Parish. The Campaign for Academic Distinction has been created by a coalition of community and business leaders. It seeks to raise $3 million for K-12 education and initiate a program which will provide grants for teachers and schools with innovative ideas to use in the classroom.

One of the problems with state-funded schools is that bureaucratic red tape has a way of taking the creative stimulus out of education. This private sector initiative to fund public education is designed to bypass much of this bureaucratic process and offer educators the needed incentive.

Teachers often have ideas they’d like to put to work in their schools, but without necessary funds to implement a program, the idea never takes root. A more direct channeling of resources to the grass roots level could make all the difference in a child’s education.

"If we as teachers, can go beyond what the system requires of us, we can motivate our students to be better readers, better writers and better informed citizens. Perhaps we can even work toward helping them understand who they are, what they’re all about and how they feel about learning. Support from the community is a tremendous pat on the back. Nothing could motivate me more than for someone to
say, 'I think you've got a great idea, here, I'll give you X-amount of dollars or I'll do whatever I can to support you.' That's the best shot in the arm that a dedicated teacher could possibly get."

Mary Holm, Teacher
La Salle Elementary

Each classroom and each set of kids has a unique set of needs. No one knows better than teachers how to gear the classroom to best meet those needs. A grant encourages teacher initiative and it supports efforts to create a classroom environment which will be intellectually stimulating and prompt a child to look at learning in a whole new way.

With 100 such local education funds across the country, the Academic Distinction Fund has a significant difference from the others. The fund is an endowed fund. An endowed fund is one where the original amount is allowed to remain and generate interest, which is then used on a continuing basis as operating capital. This enables administrators to focus on the program itself without need for further major fundraising efforts. Jenola G. Duke, Executive Director of Volunteers in Public Schools, which will administer the fund’s programs, says that, "...investors in the fund know that their contribution will benefit not only students today, but generations of students to come. The beauty of an endowment is that you operate off of the interest so that the original corpus is never touched."

Since the campaign began, Lafayette and Shreveport have begun similar endowed fund campaigns with ADF as a model and the idea is being closely studied around the country. While the first phase of the campaign sought support from individuals and family businesses, the current phase is focusing on large corporations. The final phase will bring the program before the public-at-large with a community phone-a-thon in September. A corps of parents, teachers, principals and community volunteers will be calling a cross section of parents and concerned citizens to ask for support for the fund.

Programs like the Academic Distinction Fund have the potential of changing the image of public education in Louisiana. A focus on public education could help our state rise in academic standing and attract business and industry to improve the economic picture in Louisiana. A focus on public education could mean more jobs available at home which would enable Louisiana graduates to remain and work in the state.
I’ve been conducting a very unofficial survey to determine once and for all what the absolute truth is: “the unexamined life is not worth living” or “ignorance is bliss”.

Since no one seems to have the answer, I decided to write the final and definitive essay on the subject (in less than a page).

I asked one friend and she shouted, “ignorance” as she dashed out the door with her tennis racket.

“You didn’t even think about it,” I screamed to the slamming door. Suddenly everything became clear.

My less neurotic subjects claim that they are happy being ignorant. I want to know how someone can know that they are happy if they don’t contemplate it.

I’m not speaking of the day-to-day little things that make one happy, but rather of the overwhelming search for the ultimate means of achieving the ideal happiness. Everything from advertising campaigns to self help books to exercise fanatics have offered suggestions, but no one has been able to pinpoint the method. If there are so many happily “ignorant” people out there, why can’t any of them offer a solution to all the miserable souls?

I propose that none of them are really happy. I know many blissfully “ignorant” people. My theory is that they merely assume they are happy because no one has told them anything to the contrary. I have faith that on their death bed they will get a revelation and realize that they were unhappy all their lives. They just didn’t recognize it as unhappiness until it was too late.

All those years that could have been spent in miserable, yet healthy introspection, were wasted on school and socializing and tennis.

Sure, examining life makes you miserable (it’s supposed to), but only by knowing misery can you know when you’ve achieved the opposite.

It seems to me that if everyone is doomed to be miserable, they should know it, so they can work to find a cure. If you had cancer wouldn’t you want to know it?

Too many people for too long have fooled themselves into thinking they were happy. They seem to have forgotten that they are only fooling themselves. I am here to remind them.

One friend told me that “the overexamined life leaves no time for living.” It’s a beautiful thought that tells me nothing except to reflect in moderation. That’s okay, but how do you know when you’ve examined too much?

I can see it now: I’ll be on the verge of a philosophical breakthrough and the alarm will ring and remind me that I’ve surpassed my introspection quota for the day and now it’s time for tennis.

I suppose the moderation theory would work if life wasn’t so extreme, but careful examination has led me to the conclusion that moderation just isn’t feasible.

Then, of course, there are people who don’t know how to live other than by examining. Many of them will say that they have no choice in the matter, but that they’re sure that ignorance must be more blissful.

But I say, what is life without reflection, insecurity, worry and depression? How much more blissful can you get?

Wendy Yvonne Lavender
the genesis of insanity and paranoid delusion. I started reading what medical books the study library had to offer, but didn't get very far. The now muffled ticking was reasserting itself, I swore, even louder and more powerful than before. I couldn't understand why only I seemed to suffer from the volume and the intensity of the ticking. Chloe began to stare uneasily at me and my frequent complaints about the noise. Bernadette, always superstitious, started avoiding the study altogether. I knew they didn't hear anything. To them the clock sounded perfectly normal. It was their aging boss who was becoming an incessant crankcase.

I put more pillows over the clock and added weights. I sealed the study doors and put towels down to block the cracks. I listened for hours to my collection of jazz albums at a more than significant volume, records I hadn't touched in years, trying to drown out the hellacious, omnipresent ticking. It now seemed to fill the house itself. If it hadn't been so bitterly cold outside, I would've spent the days outdoors. I could have stayed with the Jacksons down the lane, old friends of the family, but my pride stopped me. I was not about to let a mere clock drive me from my own house and home. I sat in that mansion like a stubborn, deluded old man, but I knew that what was left of my patience had eroded.

That evening I phoned my gardener, a strong young man who lived in town and wasn't due to visit the estate until spring. He said he would come take the clock away tomorrow and store it until an auction could be arranged at the first thaw.

As it happened, I didn't need him. My bed that night was lonely, a turbulent sea of shifting blankets and uneven half-dreams as I tried to reach sleep. I had had extreme trouble putting up with the incessant sound again all day and this time it had followed me to the bed chamber, the last solace of relative silence in the entire mansion. I lay on my back, eyes open, the vision of the internal pendulum rocking slowly back and forth inside that rectangular monster. Sleep was near. Tomorrow the gardener would come and remove it. My eyes closed, descending, and in my mind's eye the pendulum blurred, began to disappear. An invisible cover of silence slowly blanketed my remaining consciousness. At that moment the clock struck twelve. I sprang upright in bed at the first monstrous bolt of the bell as it resounded and echoed through the house, my bedroom, my mind. I listened to eleven more chimes in tortuous inaction, diligently, seemingly unending, and some inner part of my self slipped.

I threw on a robe and slippers and hounded the sound to the study. I burst both doors open wide and swept the pillows and blankets from the mantle in one flowing, violent swing. With the muffling material gone, the ticking sounded immense, a leviathan of energy. My eardrums actually hurt. I couldn't believe it wasn't shaking my brandy glasses and books off of the study shelves.

Exposed again, the face stared at me. Regardless of the count of twelve, one hand was near ten and the other sat near two forming an evil linear grin. The macabre expression seemed to leap out at me.

Scenes of violence raced though my mind. I shuffled out of the study, down the long east wing, through the kitchen and out to the wood pile, breath streaming in the freezing night air. I grabbed the double-bladed axe from the firewood chopping block as the snow fell around me. I tested the edge in the moonlight. Yes... this would do nicely.

The adrenaline was pumping and I felt vaguely young, fit. The weight of the lumberjack axe in hand felt no heavier than my own walking. I reemerged in the study and took a stance in front of the clock. I brought the axe above my head, and with a force that surprised even me, brought it hurtling down.

The first blow shattered the glass case and knocked the whole clock from its pedestal on the mantle. It came crashing down and missed my feet by inches. The brandy glasses shook. Now that I had it down, I attacked it with a fury. I brought the axe again and again upon the fallen timepiece. I showered it with a rain of solid blows as saliva splashed from my open mouth. Hatred of the thing filled me. It rivaled anything I had experienced as a younger man. A single purpose guided my fury - to leave that devil's instrument a pile of gears and splinters upon the floor.

I brought the axe up again and cringed in mid-stroke. An invisible bolt of fire speared through my chest. The pain was immense, piercing. One thought told me it was my heart. The pain spread through my whole chest, bringing a paralyzing
sensation with it, and began washing over the rest of me in waves. The axe fell, I tottered for a second, and collapsed on the floor. I couldn't fight it. The pain raced through me, tingling, spreading from the solid knot at the center of my heart, agony as the muscle contracted and faltered.

I looked at the fallen nemesis on the floor beside me as the tendrils of death spread from my chest to my limbs, to my brain and consciousness. The glass was shattered and the timepiece was nicked and cut severely, but it was still intact. A few dials and gauges were awry. Although my senses were fading, I could hear it... tick tock...tick tock...tick tock...My mouth opened to scream, but my brain forbade it. I was going numb.

In my last moments of consciousness my eyes were suddenly drawn to the small mysterious dial in the upper right-hand corner. The axe fell on me - a coup de grace of the mind. I saw the “2” revolve and change to a “3.”

entire books through channelers! One has only to walk into the New Age section of any bookstore to see things like “Written by Jane Smith as dictated (or channeled) by Washiki (or whatever the spirit’s name is).”

As you can probably guess, I was anxious to meet a channeler and ask the spirits all sorts of things. I found Nancy, a faculty member here, to do the honors.

I won’t give a physical description, because she was very adamant about not being identified. Anyway, I met her in her office. It was by all means the standard office of a faculty member, too small and stuffed with books and primitive artwork. I asked her if any of the artwork held anything of a symbolic nature for channeling. She told me not really, that all it took was the person, and that most extra mediums used were just for show.

I asked her if there was a best time to channel, and if there was any spirit in particular that she channeled more than others.

“Not really. Setting is very important, and if there’s bad vibes, it can make things difficult. As far as a particular spirit, I’d say no. I’ve gotten one in particular named Michael several times, but mostly I channel spirits of loved ones of my clients.”

“You’re a professional medium?”

“Channeler,” she corrected me. “And I don’t charge a lot of money. And if the channel doesn’t work or isn’t clear, I don’t charge anything.”

“How much do you charge?”

“It varies. Anywhere from 10 to 100 dollars.”

“That’s pretty cheap, isn’t it?”

“By comparison, but I have this job.” (She wouldn’t let me say what she teaches.)

Even better. Not only had I found a channeler, but a discount channeler. Being the excuse for a reporter that I am, I hoped I would qualify for the blue light special. “Can you demonstrate for me?”

Nancy got a look of gee-do-I-have-to in her eyes. But she agreed to do it. I told her it was only reasonable, this going into an article and all. She agreed, and with the ritual I expected (but didn’t get) from John the astral traveller, she turned the lights out and closed her eyes. The whole thing was kind of spooky because the day was slightly overcast and gray light was filtering into the office. Combined with the shadows the trees were making, I felt like there should have been a gargoyle peeping from the bookcase.

“Name a person close to you that has died recently,” Nancy said in a very deep voice.

I wracked my brain but couldn’t think of anyone. At this point I decided to make something up. I hadn’t put any of my other informants under pressure. “My cousin Bart,” I said.

She made mumbling noises for a few moments and then tensed up. “Ronald,” she said in a scary tone of voice. “Are you there, Ronald?” she repeated. I was a little shocked. I hadn’t told her my first name was Ronald. I had introduced myself only as Troy.

“My name is Troy,” I said.

“Your first name is Ronald,” she moaned. “You are named for your father.”

Well, she got two points for that one. I don’t tell many people that. “This is Bart,” Nancy continued. I privately chalked up two points for myself.

“But I’m not your cousin.”

“Who are you?” I asked.

“A friend of your grandmother’s.”

I thought for a moment. I got a cold chill as I remembered my grandparents telling me about their friends who had died in a car wreck a month or so earlier. The man’s first name was indeed Bart.

Shocking coincidence. “What’s up?” I asked. I had been to a seance once before and seen this sort of thing, so I tried, although it was hard, not to let it get to me.

“I’m dead,” Bart/Nancy replied.

I should’ve been expecting that one.

“How did you die, Bart?”

Nancy tensed up a little more. I thought she was going to pull out of it. But she answered me. “In a car wreck.” Then she came out of the trance. I was disappointed.

“What happened?”

“I don’t know. I can almost never remember what I say when the spirit channels in. Did we get your cousin?”

“Sort of,” I replied. “Only I didn’t know who he really was. I didn’t have a friend named Bart. But it turns out my grandmother did.”

“Learn anything?”

“Not to be so skeptical all the time.”
The Parting Shot

by dave curley
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