Upon accepting the editorship of Focus this past fall I invited the campus community to “open the debate” on issues relevant to life at our university. I would like to thank you — the contributors and readers, for your support in my first editorial year. To those of you who were too focused on the many other things that demand one’s time, let me invite you again to consider giving us all the benefit of your views, thoughts, ideas, in the coming year. FOCUS is a paper for the community, to be sure. More than that though, it really needs to be a paper by the community — which is why I used the term “debate.” For lack of a better word, I wanted to encourage the belief that our campus culture depends on a lively exchange of ideas and points of view. FOCUS is a vehicle uniquely designed to foster such an exchange. I’m happy to be in a position of facilitator, but that is really all an editor of FOCUS can do, facilitate things.

So what’s with a free lunch, or you may ask, is there really such a thing as a free lunch? Well, in this case yes, there is. So, FOCUS itself can’t be a free lunch; it will take the active ideas and feedback of a lot of people to make it any kind of a feast. But, perhaps we can help the not-free lunch that FOCUS has to be, by inviting you to participate in, dare I say it, a focus group which includes a free lunch. If you would like the chance to tell us what you really think, this is it! We need your input and ideas. If you find yourself tempted by this offer, send me a note at lberard@andrew.cmu.edu. Lunch is just an email away.

We have endeavored to deliver in-depth feature stories covering campus initiatives such as the founding of a campus in Qatar, faculty titles changes, the revamping of the annual FCE process; we have also heard about our college’s activities from the Deans’ columns. We had fun bringing you reports from the Cultural Collective, offering political commentary, awarding creative office doors and shining the spotlight on members of our community.

You may have noticed some changes. Student writers, for example, are now given more guidance and direction in the choice of topics related to campus life. More photos; along with well-written text, the editors have elected to express campus life visually.

The big news of the summer is of course the abandonment, abatement, renovation and repopulation of Warner Hall. The project has scattered staff to the four winds — or from Oakland to downtown anyway.

The abatement crew bravely worked away in their respirators. On the sixth floor, trapped like Rapunzel at the top of an empty building, were President Cohon, Provost Kamlet and their staffs.

All alone no longer, the sixth floor once again has neighbors in Warner Hall.

See the back page for an update on who is back in the building.
Carnegie Mellon’s janitors weren’t invited to the spring student picnic — but they still had to clean up after it. The 109 custodians at CMU do the university’s dirty work, they are not granted the same rights as other Carnegie Mellon staff members, and they are subcontracted to an outside company.

Now, one group of CMU students, faculty and staff members support Workers’ Rights (PWR), pronounced “power,” is petitioning CMU for the janitors to receive benefits. But the Carnegie Mellon administration says that the janitors can do anything they want, as long as they are not a party to the negotiations, which are between Central Property Services and their employers and not the CMU. They do not receive tuition benefits, nor do they have access to university facilities or bus passes. They also receive cost-of-living increases. They also receive cost-of-living increases. According to Lou DiNardo, vice president of facilities operations for CMU's Facilities Management Services, wrote in an e-

In 1983, custodial positions were subcontracted to American Building Maintenance Industries Inc. In 1995, the contract went to Central Property Services (CPS), a division of Oxford Development Co. The university pays by subcontracting: Don Coffelt, director of CPS, says their terms are better than those of Central Property Services. "We create more jobs, and we get a cleaner campus," he wrote.

Although food-service positions have also been subcontracted since 2005 — to Parkhurst Dining Services, a division of EAT 'n Park Hospitality Group — the students are focusing on the janitors because their contract expires at the end of this month, and they want to secure benefits during this round of negotiations. There is some disagreement over just how bad the janitors have it, but a few facts are clear. According to Lou DiNardo, vice president and general manager of CPS, janitors are paid $9.60 per hour when they start, and their wage increases only $0.20 per hour each year until they reach the maximum of $12.60 an hour. They also receive cost-of-living increases.

Neither the janitors nor their children receive tuition benefits, nor do they have access to university facilities or bus passes. They do get "sponsored enrollment permits" from their employer as their sponsor, but this does not allow them to use the gym or the library like the IDs of staff and students. The janitors also do not receive tuition benefits from CMU to offer the custodians these benefits, which would have "minimal marginal cost."

Employees of Carnegie Mellon receive free tuition at CMU, and tuition benefits for janitors. Some took them. Others declined.

"It's interesting of what's going on," said Alisha Bhagat, a junior history major, who orchestrated the janitorial interviews that PWR conducted. She said that there were only one or two janitors giving PWR its information. PWR “made it seem like this was a big pressing issue,” she said. But with a few exceptions, she said, "people feel like they're treated really well by CMU students and staff.” Their self-reported salaries are “not bad,” she said.

The results of the survey did not mesh with current perceptions of what’s going on,” said Alisha Bhagat, a junior history major, who orchestrated the janitorial interviews that PWR conducted. She said that there were only one or two janitors giving PWR its information. PWR “made it seem like this was a big pressing issue,” she said. But with a few exceptions, she said, “people feel like they’re treated really well by CMU students and staff.”

To secure more benefits, like bus passes and childcare, Bhagat said, the janitors would need to organize themselves. “You can give them the means to succeed, but you can’t make them succeed, and in fact you really shouldn’t,” she said.

“Where would you be without those people that do the janitorial work?” asked Bailey. “You see someone who is educated, maybe has their bachelor’s, master’s, PhD, throw something on the floor and leave it. You’re not alone with Mommy — who do you turn to? The janitors work very, very hard. It’s almost like, ‘They’re beneath me, I don’t have to see them, I don’t have to talk to them.’”

When it comes to giving benefits to janitors, Bailey says, “We’re not in a Third World country. [The janitors] would like to improve their lot in life. Why can’t they have the same benefits as the rest of us?”

David Nagy, who worked for CPS before he came to CMU, said, “We have a big difference in between working for CPS and CMU.”

He said he thought a job at Carnegie Mellon would be better because he could get the tuition benefits and bus passes were offered in exchange for payroll deductions. “Anything is possible,” he said. “Bargaining is a give-and-take process.”

Alisha Bhagat, a junior history major, was a member of People for Workers’ Rights during her freshman and sophomore years. She orchestrated the janitorial interviews that PWR conducted, for which she received a Small Undergraduate Research Grant.

But what she saw happen after the survey made her stop participating in the organization. “I didn’t really feel that I was spending time well encouraging people to fight for things they don’t care about,” she said. “If the janitors are not involved, there’s just no point in doing it.”

Despite the results of the survey did not mesh with current perceptions of what’s going on, she said. She said that there were only one or two janitors giving PWR its information. PWR "made it seem like this was a big pressing issue," she said. But with a few exceptions, she said, "people feel like they’re treated really well by CMU students and staff.”

Their self-reported salaries are “not bad,” she said. “It’s definitely livable.”

FOCUS — in seven issues a year — is a publication of the faculty and staff and Carnegie Mellon University. Many of the members of the FOcus staff are individual members of the Carnegie Mellon Faculty, students, and staff, but it would not be construed as reflecting university policy. In the spirit of the fairness doctrine, FOcus is open to expression of opinions.

Editors: Lorenzo Rendón Managing Editor: Brian Connolly Reporting and Writing: Natasha Maglaya, Karen Wolken Copy Editor: Mary Martin Web Page: Susan Peehay Production: Jennifer Zehnder Producer: Donna Buderjke, Sue Layton Journals: David Nagy, Karen Wolken (FOCUS Management Committee: Joseph Pastore (Staff Council); Toby Davis (SDS); Joe Kosta (Academics); John Meier (Mathematics); Dan Nguyen (Human: Society); Teddy Seidelnief (Philosophy); Suzanne Shomler (Arts))
Dave Demarest, above left, a professor emeritus in the English department and founding editor of FOCUS, also spoke at the workers’ rights rally. He said that Carnegie Mellon was being hypocritical by denying benefits to janitors at the same time as it made itself a friend of the court in the University of Michigan affirmative action case. “It’s an outrage for the campus and I think all of us ought to band together,” he said. Of the denial of tuition benefits and bus passes, he said, “These are really insult added to injury.”
The interior and exterior of the Prekop’s home is an expression of artistic talent. It’s a combination art gallery and living space for the couple. The transformation of their split-level ranch began when they purchased it 10 years ago. Martin joked that real estate agents get hives when they visit the house. “People buy houses to sell them,” he said. “We buy houses to live in them.”

The interior serves as a gallery, showcasing their work as well as that of their three sons and Martin’s students from Carnegie Mellon. Photographs, paintings and other artwork displayed throughout the home changes periodically.

The exterior is primarily an outlet for Martin’s creativity. The transformation began with the facade, when Martin added a small mirror to each brick. He cut each one by hand and applied it with double stick tape. The mirrors “disguised the ugly house and blended it into the natural landscape,” he said.

Mirrors also adorn many of the trees in the backyard. Displays, which change as Martin has new ideas, fill other trees, including blue bottles hanging in a tree in the front yard. “They’re really not meant to be forever,” he said of the displays.

The breakfast room, adjacent to the restaurant-appliance-equipped kitchen, is one of the most eclectic areas in the house. Natural light shines in through two skylights and is reflected on small, rectangular mirrors that cover the walls and remaining ceiling. A rectangular wooden table and chairs are painted black and white to highlight the wood’s grain. The zebra-like pattern is used throughout the home. Black and white is a “natural choice for me,” Martin said, describing his attitude toward color as “minimalist.”

Most of the Prekops’ indoor pets are housed between two built-in fish tanks and one small pond that fills a corner of the rectangular room. In the living room, a fourth built-in fish tank houses the remaining indoor pets.

When they bought the house, it was the “cheapest, biggest, ugliest” one in the neighborhood, Martin said. “There wasn’t anything nice about the place.”

The spacious garage attracted Martin to the house and serves as his wood-working shop. He has built most of the furnishings in each room, including tables and chairs, floor lamps and ceiling light fixtures, and cabinets.

The master bathroom, where the interior transformation began, is decorated in the zebra-like style. The walls and even the toilet seat are made of black and white painted wood. Martin began with this space because it’s a “small, manageable room that could handle the intensive treatment.”

Martha works with fabric and has made window treatments and wall hangings for the home. Her latest project was a set of room-darkening drapes for their home theater, complete with a 100-inch retractable screen.

The Prekops moved from a home in the Oak Park section of Chicago that was architecturally significant, but “it didn’t become an art piece like this house,” Martin said. “This is much more like the house is a piece of art.” Oak Park is home to a large number of Frank Lloyd Wright-designed structures.

His use of the zebra-like style began in Chicago as an outgrowth of his experimentation with applying a thin coat of paint to small woodcuts. The style first appeared on cabinets.

The exterior of the home, to the chagrin of many of the Prekops’ neighbors, is part of the art. Martha described their neighborhood as conventional. Half the neighbors...
Facing page above and above: Front views of the Prekop house, with reflective walls and mirrors hung in trees.
Facing page below: Prekop in his home workshop.
Below: Lips in the front yard.
are horrified by their artistic home, she said. Martha enjoys giving tours of the home to folks who drop by. “People who hate it tend to keep it to themselves,” she said.

Martin photographs much of the art he creates. A series of black and white photos of the mirrored trees is displayed in the living room, in a black, wooden frame that he constructed. He processes his film in one of two dark rooms and takes photos in a separate shooting room with a large format camera, which he built.

Instead of a swimming pool in the backyard, the Prekops’ have two ponds, which are connected. An old-fashioned sink against the house marks the beginning of a waterfall that fills the home of the Prekops’ outdoor pets. They stock the ponds with fish, which attract birds, dragonflies and frogs.

Martin belongs to a small network of artists, known as the Gandhi-group, which he describes as a “casual group of artists with administrative jobs” that formed through “personal connections over 20 years.”

Founded in 2000, the group gathers annually, to showcase their work and discuss art education. “United by a commitment to internationalism and cultural exchange, Gandhi-group intends to contribute a uniquely international body of work and cultural perspective,” as stated on its website.

Martin does not devote all of his time and energy to his art. He leads a dual life, serving as the dean of Carnegie Mellon’s College of Fine Arts. “They’re both equally engaging and rewarding,” Dean Prekop said. He spends one or two days a week and weekends on his art. “I work all the time,” he said. “It’s tiring.”

His primary role as dean is guiding the College of Fine Arts’ programs, but Prekop also teaches and mentors students.

A year ago, Dean Prekop created a room at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts as part of its biennial exhibitions. He used a decorating theme identical to his master bathroom. The room’s floor and walls were constructed of black and white painted wood and similarly decorated chairs were included.
Dean Prekop recycled the materials from this installation to create the Zebra Lounge, a coffee shop gallery, in the College of Fine Arts building. The '60s-style coffee shop is a way to “express what we do and be around it,” he said. Student work is exhibited in the eatery and a piano invites individuals to show off their musical talent.

The Zebra Lounge is one step toward enhancing the relationship between the five schools (Architecture, Art, Design, Drama and Music) within the College of Fine Arts. In an effort to strengthen the relationship between the college and the university as a whole, Dean Prekop has partnered with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to create the Center for Arts in Society. The center is “dedicated to energizing research and teaching that links the College of Humanities and Social Sciences with the College of Fine Arts,” according to its webpage.

One way Dean Prekop is involved in the local art community is through his service to the Silver Eye Center for Photography. He serves on the center’s board of directors. “He has been extremely generous toward the support of our small, nonprofit arts organization,” Executive Director Linda Benedict-Jones said. His contributions include donating photos to the center’s auctions and hosting functions at his home.

Prekop is committed to another academic year as dean and then he will have more time to focus on his art. He has other plans for the house, mainly additions to the exterior, including lighting and a video or sound installation.

JASON BUGG
Early on a Saturday morning at a sports center on the west end of Neville Island, Reiko Goto is listening to a series of speakers making presentations to a group of local residents about the ecology of the Ohio River. From time to time, Goto picks up a stick and taps it against a thin three-inch metal bar suspended in a wooden frame like a gong. The bar sends up a distinct small tinkle. Goto laughs when asked what the gong is for. “To tell speakers when they have gone on too long,” she smiles. “Subtly.” Subtle but insistent is a good metaphor for Goto, a research fellow at the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, who for almost 10 years has been traveling to meetings like this with her husband, Tim Collins, also a research fellow at the STUDIO, telling people in communities along Pittsburgh’s rivers about the great possibilities for creating access, cleaning up the rivers, creating trails.

Goto and Collins had an impact pushing plans to clean up the Nine Mile Run watershed to connect Frick Park with the Monongahela. The Nine Mile Run project is showing hope of success, with agreement among local municipalities to improve the flow of sewage into the creek. As the development of a housing plan continues on top of the slagheap overlooking Nine Mile Run, the creek’s survival as a natural waterway is part of all planning for the future of the area.

Now, Goto and Collins are moving downstream. The Saturday meeting centered on the idea of creating a river trail along the Ohio River. Their river project goes by the name 3Rivers/2nd Nature, comprising members of Friends of the Riverfront and other environmental advocates, as well as member of the affected communities. Along with academics and conservancy program administrators, people from council members to retired teachers are always invited to 3Rivers/2nd Nature programs — billed as “River dialogues” — like the one on Neville Island.

The name 3Rivers/2 Nature represents a philosophy: as Collins told the Saturday morning gathering, “We own the rivers.” The rivers are part of the American cultural memory of Westward travel and Huckleberry Finn’s boyhood adventures. Domination of river access by private industry sundered communities’ connections — cultural, economic, environmental, emotional — with the rivers. Collins and Goto advocate a new relationship to the rivers, a relationship that takes in issues of art, ecology, access and equity.

But the philosophy, Collins and Goto are quick to point out, is not exclusive — industry and recreation must balance on the rivers. They see commerce as an integral part of the river life. And river commerce is environmentally efficient — 12 river barge loads roughly equals 720 polluting trucks.

The Ohio River Trail is part of an effort being slowly realized to link trails and green space along the rivers — the Montour Trail, Chartiers Creek Trail, the Three Rivers Heritage Trail.

Goto and Collins stress that improvements in the environment come slowly, given 150 years of industrial pollution — for some years before 1968, the water at the confluence of the Youghiogheny and Monongahela rivers supported no macroscopic life — but they do come.

Goto is enthusiastic about the presence of mayflies and Japanese knotweed on the river. Where there is vegetation, she says, “The little bugs and fish can be much more comfortable.” Blue herons and even bald eagles have been seen on the Ohio.

Nature comes back, Goto points out, but it needs help. And she sees researchers having a particular obligation to help. “Data is not just numbers. It should be used.”

3 Rivers/2nd Nature works to bring communities back to the rivers

STUDIO fellows build on years of river advocacy

BRIAN CONNELLY
Facing page: Reiko Goto points out Japanese knotweed along the Ohio River. Above: An Ohio River trail would link all of the region’s historic riverfronts. Inset: Tim Collins. Right: Riverfront living on Neville Island (note the chair holding a space on the dock). Below right: Ship repairs are carried out in this dry dock on Neville Island. Below: 3Rivers/2nd Nature supports barge traffic as an environmentally sound alternative to trucking.
Photos: Brian Connelly
Notecards, Post-its and Stickers

We live collaboration at Carnegie Mellon. The theme permeates the stories told in The Innovative University about the growth and evolution of the university. It is what we do best. We leverage the diverse expertise of our campus, including faculty, staff and students, to make ourselves more than the sum of our parts.

ILS: The Integrative Liberal Studies is another issue that came forward last spring. Peggy Knapp gave significant Senate time to the discussion and debate of the ILS and the idea of a university-wide general education. We must continually work to maintain this environment.

Qatar: When Peggy Knapp began her chair service, she stepped in to immediately be faced with discussions on development of the Qatar campus. Some of the major issues involved decisions on the academic calendars, the financial and the security associated with operating a whole new distant campus. She began by gathering the discussions to the executive committee and to the floor of the Senate with legal, financial, and academic presentations from the appropriate individuals in the administration. As the first class prepares to begin this fall in Qatar, we are already learning a great deal about the intellectual energy and readiness of the students to be engaged in the academic pursuits being offered. As several of our faculty and staff colleagues leave the US to embark on this new endeavor, our best wishes and hopes go with them.

Millennial Generation: I must say that I am very proud of the students I have known at Carnegie Mellon in all aspects of academic as well as metacurricular pursuits. Graduation always provides a sense of great pride that I have been a part of these young people’s lives even for a short period. What is also gratifying is not just to hear the pride in the parents for their child’s accomplish- ments but also the pride classmates have in bringing directly to me. My other shirt pocket is used for columns that individuals may wish to discuss. In addition, I am always open to informed of the activities of these groups and discussions of topics and issues that their meetings and deliberations, hallway discussions, small informal meetings and debates within and between departments and colleges will certainly continue over the next year. Personally, I love the side effects the ILS debate has opened. It challenges us to ask questions within our own departments and colleges about what it is that we want a Carnegie Mellon educated person to know and apply as professionals and engaged citizens in the 21st century. Such a dialogue has revealed some of our own misunderstandings of how our students have changed and how disciplines are evolving. We must guard the excitement and frustration of education, is that it is a moving target. Hopefully the outcome of these debates and discussions will go beyond a reshuffling of what we already have and capitalize on an opportunity to apply our innovative and collaborative practices to enhance the educational experience for all of our students.

Get connected with Staff Council

New Officers Elected
At its April meeting Staff Council elected its officers for 2004-2005, who took office Aug. 1: Chair, Joseph Pastorek Vice Chair, John “Jay” Marano Treasurer, Michelle Martin (re-elected) Secretary, Lori Bell

President’s Address to Staff
Mark your calendars for President Cohon’s Annual Address to Staff scheduled for noon, Tuesday, October 26, in McConomy Auditorium. Have a question for President Cohon? Email it to: sc-presaddress@andrew.cmu.edu

Questions received by Friday, October 1, will be forwarded (anonymously) to President Cohon.

Staff Council Online
Visit Staff Council’s Ad-Hoc Committee webpage at www.cmu.edu/staff-council/catering.html for details on sharing feedback regarding your experiences with Catering Services.

The Staff Council will also discuss:
- Our annual reports and mission statement
- Our officers’ and representatives’ contact information
- Discounted area businesses
- And much more! Please take a few minutes to visit www.cmu.edu/staff-council/ today!

Upcoming Meetings
Meetings are held at noon on the third Thursday of each month (food is available starting at 11:45). Meetings are open to the entire university community, however, only elected representatives may vote.

Staff Submissions
Would you like to write a column on a staff-related issue? Have an idea for one? We want to hear from you! The Staff Council Communications Committee welcomes columns from staff members that discuss or provide information on staff-related issues. Submission of a column does not guarantee publication. Ideas for columns are also welcomed. Please send your columns or column ideas to Jason Bugg at jbugg@cmu.edu.
Breaking news on the local restaurant front: Le Pommerier has been sold, we’ve heard. No word yet on what is to become of Christine and Jim Dauher, or how the new investor(s) of the disappearing downtown pizzeria. But we’ll try to send out some of our research assistants to see.

Regina Margherita Pizzeria at 38th and Bennett in Lawrenceville and liked it a lot. It’s called the Naples kind, usually available almost anywhere in the south of Italy. Very thin crust, modestly dressed, delicious. That’s what they do at Margherita, located at 38th and Bennett.

Also tried Cafe Asia in Squirrel Hill, on a night when the Psyche department seemed to have put this little Thai place on the analyst’s couch as well. When we followed him down the street, Jay McClelland admitted that he had thought the food ‘OK,’ but not better, worse. Like a Thai restaurant he said it. It certainly wasn’t better than ok. We noticed that time, too, but just dropped in, looked around and walked out. Either he couldn’t see a table he liked or he could read the writing on the wall.

Much better is the new India Oven on Murray in Squirrel Hill. Good prices, great buffet.

As part of our ongoing quest for a place around here where you can get a drink and a bite to eat, some of our researchers have sent back a report from the Myrtle Beach area and recommend a visit to Calabash, just north of Myrtle Beach, the little town which gave its name to all the crummy Calabash fish houses along the Grand Strand. Drop in to Ella’s and in the right season (an early Spring Break golf trip will do) and try the steamed special: $24.95 for two, with heaps of steamed oysters (in shell), shrimp and crabmeat. Also, in the other direction, try the Litchfield Beach Fish House, about 20 miles South of MB, near Litchfield Plantation golf course. The best, most succulent really very edible freshwater (or ‘fresh’) shrimp and sea scallops. Not only that, it’s very friendly. Bob, the host welcomes us and asks us for coming as we left, and calls many customers by name and introduces them to other customers at the bar. The LBBH describes itself as a small Pittsburgh restaurant it is a suspicion.

The special of the night was a lamb dish baked in puff pastry: a spinach-lined base of lamb loin, 2 to 3 inches long, stacked copiously in the crust. Very tasty, and very large servings. Michael the chef, originally from Calabash, comes out to greet customers and give the place a real feel of a real restaurant. The decor is possibly a little odd, with what appears to be a painting of the Amo in Florence, somewhat confusingly conflicting with the idea of the Gran Canal in Venice, but who cares. It’s a great place.

We began the evening by gathering at the home of one of our tribe for after-dinner drinks… as a before dinner treat. Amongst other things we had: Alvaro Pedro Ximenez Amada Sherry 2000 @ $13.95 half bottle; a De Bartoli Black Noble Australia dessert Wine, $19.99 half bottle; and an excellent sparkling wine for the cruise, G.H. Mumm Brut NV, $16.99 a bottle.

When we tried Bonaterra again, they made a reservation for us, saying at first that it would be difficult to fit us in. After listening to them strain to find us a spot we were gratified at the effort and then surprised on arrival to find that the place was virtually empty. Could be we had been there.

Our dining experience? Let’s do it in reverse, since the story has an upbeat theme this way. So dessert Terrestrial CremaBrulee, almost as universal as tiramisu, but people like it. When it’s well done. This one was more than well done; it was extremely over-cooked and got sent back. Then we tried the ‘parfait,’ or some redefinition of parfait. This one was some very cheap store bought ice cream with a few under-ripe hard and bitter raspberries thrown at it. And they wanted something like $7.50 for the dessert, which, like the rest of the menu, is way out of range. Entrees come in around $25 to $27 and can go up to $30. There is no way you can indubitably get the kind of charge, anywhere. You can done for less in Paris (Paris, France!). But in a small Pittsburgh restaurant it is a suspicion, as if somebody wanted to create the impression of quality by raising prices. The second dessert went back as well, with vociferous complaint to the management, and to give the management credit, they agreed with us, and offered us a replacement, which we rejected unless they could guarantee that in the intervening few minutes the quality had improved radically. They couldn’t.

While adhering to our ethical theory (nice things are not less than nasty ones) we have come to believe that negativity is often under-rated and under-used, maybe especially when you are writing about restaurant reviews. Usually, we believe, a restaurant event is seen as a costly and even rare event, and it is painful to have to adopt a restaurant might be the ‘socio- logically correct’ thing to do? Is that too Edwardian? Too Victorian? Never mind, but as a result of this theory we have decided to try the relatively new place in Sharpsburg, Bonaterra, but calling on a Thursday we were told that reservation for a party of six would be available for at least 3 weeks. So we quickly substituted one of our favorite nearby restaurants, The Gran Canal, the anchor of the Italian restaurants in Sharpsburg. In The Gran Canal look for Martin’s photo of an olive tree in the entrance way. Wild mushrooms ravished very nice, porcini, shitake, very light and delicate. The white wine tasty and light, the limoncello house dressing excellent, but get it on the side so you can add your own amount, since the house tendency is to put too much on.

We had the Nero d’avola wine from Sicily, at $28 per bottle, and it was excellent, more than drinkable with a nicely varied bunch of flavors. Get the same thing in Sicily for about 6 bucks.

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While adhering to our ethical theory (nice things are not less than nasty ones) we have come to believe that negativity is often under-rated and under-used, maybe especially when you are writing about restaurant reviews. Usually, we believe, a restaurant event is seen as a costly and even rare event, and it is painful to have to adopt a restaurant might be the ‘socio- logically correct’ thing to do? Is that too Edwardian? Too Victorian? Never mind, but as a result of this theory we have decided to try the relatively new place in Sharpsburg, Bonaterra, but calling on a Thursday we were told that reservation for a party of six would be available for at least 3 weeks. So we quickly substituted one of our favorite nearby restaurants, The Gran Canal, the anchor of the Italian restaurants in Sharpsburg. In The Gran Canal look for Martin’s photo of an olive tree in the entrance way. Wild mushrooms ravished very nice, porcini, shitake, very light and delicate. The white wine tasty and light, the limoncello house dressing excellent, but get it on the side so you can add your own amount, since the house tendency is to put too much on.

We had the Nero d’avola wine from Sicily, at $28 per bottle, and it was excellent, more than drinkable with a nicely varied bunch of flavors. Get the same thing in Sicily for about 6 bucks.

The special of the night was a lamb dish baked in puff pastry: a spinach-lined base of lamb loin, 2 to 3 inches long, stacked copiously in the crust. Very tasty, and very large servings. Michael the chef, originally from Calabash, comes out to greet customers and give the place a real feel of a real restaurant. The decor is possibly a little odd, with what appears to be a painting of the Amo in Florence, somewhat confusingly conflicting with the idea of the Gran Canal in Venice, but who cares. It’s a great place.

We began the evening by gathering at the home of one of our tribe for after-dinner drinks… as a before dinner treat. Amongst other things we had: Alvaro Pedro Ximenez Amada Sherry 2000 @ $13.95 half bottle; a De Bartoli Black Noble Australia dessert Wine, $19.99 half bottle; and an excellent sparkling wine for the cruise, G.H. Mumm Brut NV, $16.99 a bottle.

When we tried Bonaterra again, they made a reservation for us, saying at first that it would be difficult to fit us in. After listening to them strain to find us a spot we were gratified at the effort and then surprised on arrival to find that the place was virtually empty. Could be we had been there.

Our dining experience? Let’s do it in reverse, since the story has an upbeat theme this way. So dessert Terrestrial CremaBrulee, almost as universal as tiramisu, but people like it. When it’s well done. This one was more than well done; it was extremely over-cooked and got sent back. Then we tried the ‘parfait,’ or some redefinition of parfait. This one was some very cheap store bought ice cream with a few under-ripe hard and bitter raspberries thrown at it. And they wanted something like $7.50 for the dessert, which, like the rest of the menu, is way out of range. Entrees come in around $25 to $27 and can go up to $30. There is no way you can indubitably get the kind of charge, anywhere. You can done for less in Paris (Paris, France!). But in a small Pittsburgh restaurant it is a suspicion, as if somebody wanted to create the impression of quality by raising prices. The second dessert went back as well, with vociferous complaint to the management, and to give the management credit, they agreed with us, and offered us a replacement, which we rejected unless they could guarantee that in the intervening few minutes the quality had improved radically. They couldn’t.
As of early August, the HUB and Enrollment Services have returned to the basement of Warner Hall. After the basement, the building is being repopulated from the top down. The sixth floor is already occupied and offices on the fourth and fifth floors, which have also been renovated, are in the process of being reoccupied. The first, second and third floors will be reoccupied by the end of August. Admission, which occupies the first floor, is scheduled to move back last.