Faculty Senate Meeting--Jan. 24, 2006

Statement by Hugh Young, emeritus professor of physics

(Editor’s Note: Abbreviated remarks delivered at the Jan. 24th Faculty Senate meeting. Full text of his prepared remarks below.)

My name is Hugh Young; I’m a Professor Emeritus in Physics. I’ve been on the campus most of the past 50 years, and I sort of feel as though I own it.

We need a policy for public art on the campus, so a program of the sort Dr. Horgan has described is certainly welcome. I suspect that the development of this policy was catalyzed at least in part by the recent proposal to erect a gigantic 100-foot high sculpture by Jonathan Borofsky on the Mall. If you aren’t familiar with this proposal, I urge you to read the article in the October 31 TARTAN. There are copies of both of these on the table, and the FOCUS article has a Web page with several pictures of the proposed sculpture.

But what are the larger issues for public art on our campus? First, what are the rights of the members of the campus community who will experience the art? Will the experience be voluntary, or will it be coerced? That’s not a trivial question. For art exhibited in a gallery, the viewer has a choice: If you don’t like the work, don’t go into the gallery. Even with a six-foot-high snowman painted in unusual tops, continuously emitting high-volume music over the campus, with speakers at the tops, continuously emitting high-volume music; then the situation is different. It’s a little like second-hand smoke; it’s hard to avoid.

A musical performance is the same sort of thing. If it’s in a concert hall, or even beside the Senior fence, then you have a choice of whether to listen or not. But suppose we put up poles all over the campus, with speakers at the tops, continuously emitting high-volume music; then the situation is different. It’s a little like second-hand smoke; it’s hard to avoid.

So experiencing public art should be voluntary, not coerced. And let’s not hide behind the idea that coerced experiencing

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Major Medical Benefits for University Retirees

The university has given retirees one monetary benefit called Major Medical. For most retirees, this has really meant a prescription drug benefit since medical costs are covered by Medicare and a university drug benefit.

Unfortunately no clear public announcement was made by the university of the decision to eliminate this benefit. The university has eliminated the prescription drug benefit. The situation at Carnegie Mellon appears to demonstrate the reality of that fear.

When the Medicare Part D plan was being considered, the fear was expressed that many retirees would lose as a result because the employment benefit would result in losing benefits. The situation at Carnegie Mellon appears to demonstrate the reality of that fear.

Lincoln Wolfenstein
university professor of physics emeritus

Response to: Major Medical Benefits for University Retirees

Like all organizations, Carnegie Mellon is faced with increasing health care expenses for active and retired populations and with the need to manage those costs. Effective Jan. 1, we took a number of steps to address this challenge.

One of those steps was to coordinate our major medical prescription drug benefit with newly available Medicare Part D in order to reduce university medical costs while providing the same level of benefit.

It is important to note that the major medical benefit was not eliminated, but it is true that now there is a charge for this, whereas before there was no charge for retirees with 15 or more years of service.

We realize that the rollout of Medicare Part D has resulted in significant confusion and dissatisfaction throughout the country. The facts as they apply to Carnegie Mellon retirees are as follows:

* Retirees with 15 or more years of service who received major medical benefits at no cost were required to elect Medicare Part D Prescription coverage again in effect.

* The premium associated with this plan is an additional cost to retirees. The premium is based upon the plan selected and could cost from $31.17 per month for individuals to $62.34 per month for retirees and spouses.

* The university’s major medical benefit remains in effect, but Medicare Part D is primary, meaning it pays for prescriptions, after a deductible, similar to major medical coverage.

* To achieve the 80 percent reimbursement level formerly provided by major medical, Medicare Part D pays 75 percent of prescription costs up to $2,250 per year and Carnegie Mellon pays the remaining five percent of the first $2,250 per year. This leaves the retiree paying 20 percent of the first $2,250 per year (as they did under the former plan). At that level, Medicare’s Part D stops and Carnegie Mellon’s plan continues reimbursing expenses at 80 percent (the so-called donut hole) up to the catastrophic limit. Above the catastrophic limit, Medicare Part D coverage again goes in effect.

Questions regarding major medical benefits for retirees may be directed to Bea Mitchell at 8-5076 or by e-mail to bm2a@andrew.cmu.edu.

Barbara B. Smith
associate vice president
chief human resources officer

How “Beads for Tulane” Was Born

By Lindie Droulia
program assistant/communications coordinator, cyert center for early education

If anyone were to ask me my favorite city, I would respond without hesitation: New Orleans. All the diverse ingredients that created New Orleans—the culture, the food, the music; the people—it was a melting pot, and I loved it.

I lived there for 10 years, through many important events in my life. I met my husband there, my son was christened there, and we were a foster family home for Elizabeth when she was 17 until she was 20. Although I moved in 1993, we still have family and friends there who we visit on a regular basis. We had just been to New Orleans and Biloxi a month before Katrina.

We watched and tracked the storm as it approached the city. Saturday, we realized that it had the potential to be “the big one,” as you would so often hear in New Orleans. It was just second nature—when a storm would approach, the possibility of the levees breaking and the city filling up with water like a bathtub was always in the back of the minds of the locals. We knew anything bigger than a Category 3 could bring catastrophic results.

As it all began to unfold on Sunday, we called our family and friends to make sure they were all heading for higher ground. My husband’s father, who lives in the French Quarter, was still hanging around, and all we could do was hope for the best. Once the storm approached and seemed to take a slight turn to the right, we felt we had dodged another bullet, but we knew the high winds and flooding could be a problem.

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FOCUS — in seven issues a year — is a publication of the faculty and staff of Carnegie Mellon University. Many of the articles in FOCUS express the opinions of individual members of the Carnegie Mellon community; unless so indicated, they should not be construed as reflecting university policy. The spirit of the fairness doctrine, FOCUS seeks a variety of opinions.

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Karen Schnakenberg
Baudolino, but he is charmed by him, and he recognizes that Baudolino's story may prove politically useful. Indeed it does; his enemies, upon hearing of the supernatural prediction, immediately surrender. Bar- barossa adopts Baudolino as his son, and thenceforth Baudolino's fate is tightly con- nected to that of the Emperor. Ultimately Baudolino accompanies the emperor on his crusade against the infidels, and he is present when the emperor suddenly and mysteriously dies. It is not until the end of the novel that one finds out exactly how and why the emperor died. In the mean- time, Baudolino journeys far to the east in search of the Holy Grail—which may not exist, but as readers learn in the course of the story, makes holy relics sacred is not facticity but belief—and the mystery, as Land of Presto John—himself also perhaps nonexistent—encountering fascinating heretics, strange beasts, and bizarre geography along the way. Most of the story is narrated in Constantinople in the first half of the thirteenth century while the city is being sacked by Roman Catholic warriors. While I was not particularly impressed by the secret of Emperor Barbarossa’s death or of Baudolino’s ultimate fate, I cannot begin to do justice to the wealth of stories and figures that make up this book, but I can say that I enjoyed reading it thoroughly. It, too, is about the pleasure—and necessity—of storytelling.
Thoughts on Faculty Governance
Jim Hoburg

I hope the insightful and stimulating comments of Pat Larkey and Clark Glymour in the November/December issue of FOCUS will lead to more faculty interest in and discussion of issues of governance at CMU. I’m convinced that this really will happen (more about this below), but I’d love to be proved wrong.

I often reflect upon a drama that I was privy to during the past three decades during my tenure at MIT and another while more than another house in the New Orleans area affected, I knew this would be our challenge. Jarrin had many other initiatives she was also working on, so when she sent out an e-mail to our group asking someone to take the lead, I knew in my heart I had to do it. At the same time, Genie Beckom also responded. So, we decided together to co-chair the effort.

We began to brainstorm—how to go forward, and who would be the recipient of our campaign? That night, after speaking to Elizabeth again about her situation with the Faculty Constitution and Bylaws, I realized that very few people in the administration understood what administrators are actually doing.” Particularly when administrators have very strong visions as to how their colleges or departments should evolve, there’s a danger that those of us in the trenches will suffer the long term consequences if they turn out to be wrong.

Along with other CMU faculty members of my generation, I was most fortunate to join the university not long after Dick Cyert became president. He was a strong “leader,” in the best sense of the word, and his visions were mostly sound.

In my opinion, he was responsible for, or at least very much involved with, much of the ascendancy that Pat Larkey describes—sometimes by changing directions and sometimes by staying out of the way. Part of what I admired in Cyert was that his administration was not confrontational or despotic. At the level of individual collegues, I worry that some of us are now going in directions that are less transparent than those of the Cyer era, and that it’s faculty members rather than administrators that mostly try to stay out of the way. I very much hope that my concerns are unfounded; but my recent experience as a member of the University Senate has helped all at the level of trust in “leadership.”

On Faculty Governance
Jay Kadane

In the 1980s, the Faculty Organization had a constitution and bylaws that didn’t work. Each year, obscure amendments would be proposed for faculty vote that fixed one problem, only to create another. The Faculty Constitution and Bylaws, because they contradicted one another. The resulting sense of illegitimacy made it difficult for the Faculty Organization to deal with the university administration, to forge the necessary partnership with the most important interest of the university as a whole.

When I became active in the affairs of the Faculty Organization, I was asked to be a committee with Toby Davis and Librarian Henry Piscotta to revise the Faculty Constitution and Bylaws. Rather than tinker with the existing documents, we decided to rewrite both. The idea was to put into the constitution those things that we thought should be changed only by vote of the faculty and put into the bylaws those provisions that the Faculty Organization, in two consecutive meetings, felt should be able to change. Since that time, the Bylaws have been changed, not only by the change in structure of the library departments, but also by the addition of research and lecturer track faculty. The constitution has not required amendments, to my knowledge, since.

There are important limitations on the powers of the chair. The first is that the term of office is one academic year, and the second is that the chair is not privy to discussions and negotiations between administrators and faculty members after that remarkable meeting. But in the end, the program was abandoned, I thought as a result of concern and opposition from faculty members throughout the university. I saw it as faculty governance at its finest—faculty members who could not be ignored told the administration that they would not be proscribed, no matter what the offer.

I don’t know if such a thing would happen in 2006, either at MIT or at CMU. . . but I doubt it. It seems to me that the average faculty member considers himself or herself to be too busy to be significantly involved in issues beyond research and teaching. But, if someone is not too busy, often entrepreneurial people doing interesting things. Young faculty members are advised of the danger of getting too involved with “nonproductive” things like university governance and with the innumerable issues at some administrative levels, the Faculty Organization is viewed as inconsequential to decisions that really matter. My guess is that with hardly any evidence to back it up, this problem, when people’s character and insti-tutorial structure of the university from department head up have even read the articles on university governance in last month’s FOCUS.

Is this really a problem? After all, as Pat Larkey says, our best and brightest are relatively unconstrained in pursuing whatever they find interesting. We all benefit from the resulting rich intellectual environment and from the ascendant institutional reputation. My own concern falls within the category that is described by Clark Glymour as “keeping track on what administrators are actually doing.” Particularly when administrators have very strong visions as to how their colleges or departments should evolve, there’s a danger that those of us in the trenches will suffer the long term consequences if they turn out to be wrong.

Several days passed before we were able to locate our family and friends. It took another several days to get my father-in-law to locate our family and friends. It took an eternity for the people in the city that I loved to reflect that of a third world country. I was devastated.

We then turned our concerns to our friends in Biloxi. The first word of the storm surge in Biloxi was frightening, but the first images from New Orleans indicated it wasn’t as bad as it could have been. Then the levees broke. Those few days brought a great deal of anxiety; we couldn’t locate my wife or our friends in Biloxi. It was heartbreaking to watch 80 percent of New Orleans under water. When the looting broke out, my heart became so heavy—the city that I loved reflected that of a third world country. I was devastated.

Jim Hoburg, professor of electrical and computer engineering and the chair of the faculty senate and Jay Kadane, Leonard J. Savage University professor, statistics

Beads from Tulane
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We still had no guarantee as to when they could return to work if they still had a job.

I started to think about that as an employee at a university. It had to be difficult—not only had so many lost their homes and their positions, but now faced the possibility of not having a parking space or a job to return to. It really hit home, and I needed to help some way.

Back in September, Staff Council Chair Jay Marano sent out e-mail requesting ideas and support for Katrina Relief with Jarrin Nevel, vice-chair of the Faculty Senate. Jarrin and I have spoken as I also knew she had family members in New Orleans, so without hesitation, I responded to count me in. I knew person-ally I wanted to do something; I HAD to do something—and if I could maximize the end result by a group effort, I was ready to go.

Jarrin announced that our Staff Council ef-fort would be gift card collection, but we still had a few details to work out. Who would re-ceive them, and how? With so many people in the New Orleans area affected, I knew this length—it was meant to happen that way, and it just all came together at that point.

I love New Orleans; I want it to come back stronger than ever but still have the same di-verse city that I fell in love with. My goal is to broaden our relationship with the members of the Tulane community and the city of New Orleans.

Genie Beckom, project coordinator for the Board of Trustees and Advisory Boards, President’s Office, also has family members who live in New Orleans. She adds, “My brother and sister-in-law took in 15 members of his wife’s family who were victims of Katrina. They live in Arkansas, and thankfully, were able to handle an influx of family members. They are still living with them today. They are fortunate; others are not. This is why I got involved—for those others who have limited options to feel that we are here at Carneg-ie Mellon University in Pittsburgh care. It is Carnegie Mellon’s Staff Council pro-viding support and hope to Tulane Univer-sity’s Staff Council.”
2.2.3 Benefits accruing under a straight cash or cost-based gift in kind

In my hypothetical example, I have assumed a gift of appreciated property, one may wonder how the above discussion is impacted by a straight cash donation or a donation of an appreciated property. First, between September 28, 2005 and December 31, 2005, straight cash gifts are not limited to 50% of AGI. Amendments to the Internal Revenue Code, designed to encourage charitable giving in conjunction with Hurricane Katrina, suspended the 50% rule. Since Vice Provost Hor- gan stated that Trustee Kraus donated or commissioned the sculpture in the fall, a question arises as to how this was accomplished without the property arriving.

If it is under construction, what may have happened is a prepayment of the construction. On the other hand, in this structure of the transaction a question arises as to whether the taxpayer might benefit from the payment as contrasted with when the University might benefit from receipt of the actual sculpture. Arguably since delivery of the sculpture is to occur in 2006, to enable it to be displayed at graduation, the Internal Revenue Service may take the position that the Katrina suspension is not relevant since the gift is effectively made upon delivery, and not upon commission. This would then put the deduction on Trustee Kraus’ 2005 tax return rather than 2006 tax return. A parallel issue concerns whether or not transportation and construction services used in conjunction with the planned installation will be competitively bid, and whether anybody on the Board will be themselves from the acceptance decision. For example, the Gumberg interests are ample represented on the Board, and were unlikely to have participated, at least went through the notification process with the Chairman of the Board that is required under the 1999 Board Policy on Conflict of Interest.

2.4 What are the Terms or Limitations of the Charitable Transaction?

Another issue is whether or not Trustee Kraus participated in the University’s decision to accept the sculpture, and if so, whether the decision was made only after the University’s presentation, or after the Board’s approval. For example, the Gumberg interests are ample represented on the Board, and were unlikely to have participated, at least went through the notification process with the Chairman of the Board that is required under the 1999 Board Policy on Conflict of Interest.

Gates “Dominoes” and Associated Relocations

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* Some move dates have not been finalized and are still subject to change

Information courtesy of Russ O’Lare, director of university planning

“Walking to the Sky” continued from Page 1

Imagine further that the University is cooperative, and agrees to value the donation at a fair market value of $1 million. Thus, the charitable deduction shelters $3.85 million of cash income since there was a donation of $1 million ($3.85 x $1 million). The net tax saving in cash to the donor is $2.85 million since $1 million was paid for the painting. The donor is absolutely better off with the gift. The University might benefit from receipt of the painting as contrasted with when the property was sold. The Internal Revenue Service may take the position that the Katrina suspension is not applicable, so the sculpture is to occur in 2006, to enable it to be displayed at graduation, and not upon commission. This would then put the deduction on Trustee Kraus’ 2006 tax return rather than 2005 tax return and without the suspension of the 50% limitation.

Another issue is whether or not Trustee Kraus participated in the University’s decision to accept the sculpture, and if she so participated, at least went through the notification process with the Chairman of the Board that is required under the 1999 Board Policy on Conflict of Interest.

2.3 Other campus beneficiaries from placing Walking to the Sky on a campus green space?

The installment of Walking to the Sky will likely involve legal work to affect the donation as well as transportation services and actual contracting, since a large scale crane will be needed. Questions thus arise about whether any of the law firms on the Carnegie Mellon University Board, who figure prominently on the University’s Federal Form 990, advised and provided legal services for the transaction, whether or not they notified the Board Chair of such activities, and whether or not they rescued themselves from the acceptance decision. Similarly, a question arises whether or not transportation and construction services used in conjunction with the planned installation will be competitively bid, and whether anybody on the Board will be involved with this aspect of the project. For example, the Gumberg interests are ample represented on the Board, and were engaged in construction of the Collaborative Innovation Center that houses various Carnegie Mellon academic units, CERT, and Apple Computer, and could readily install the sculpture. Will they be involved in this project as well, and do so within the confines of the 1999 Board Policy on Conflict of Interest?

2.4 What are the Terms or Limitations of the Gift of Walking to the Sky?

During the discussion of Vice Provost Hor- gan’s presentation, one faculty member, evidently from the Tepper School, inquired if there were any restrictive covenants or limitations on the gift. He went on to obliquely describe issues that arose with an earlier Kraus donation, the so-called CAMPO. This gift apparently stipulated that nothing be attached or surround the art with the result that the Tepper School has not been able to add classrooms that it desperately needs.

Some faculty at the meeting suggested putting it in California in front of our new building at Carnegie Mellon-Qatar. Others wondered out loud if the University could sell it within a year or two, or put it in the Fine Arts basement, either immediately or after a year or two.

It would be helpful to learn if terms of the Walking to the Sky gift contain any restrictions on University use or sale of the gift.

3.0 What are the Risks of the Charitable Transaction?

Frequently those who worry about aggressive charitable donations activity focus entirely on the risks that the donor faces as a result of overstating a deduction. It should be remembered that unrealistic Fair Market Values can also be the donee’s responsibility, and if they are entirely unreasonable may cause legal difficulties. Issues thus arise about who actually signed the document effecting acceptance by the University, whether or not the person was an officer of the University, and whether personal or University liability attaches to the act of signature. So far attempts to
What is public opinion worth in a representative democracy? Tough to say considering we’re not always sure who is representing whom.

Supposedly a foundation of democratic decision-making, public opinion has often been subject to deception and mockery. Does the public really have the time and expertise to consider political issues with the depth and understanding needed to constitute an informed citizenry?

Perhaps not, but the Western Pennsylvania Program for Deliberative Democracy is seeking to change that through deliberative polling. The program is a collaboration between Carnegie Mellon’s Center for the Advancement of Applied Ethics and the Carnegie Library. The program’s mission is to raise civic discourse on social and political issues so that an informed and engaged citizenry will have effective consulting power in the decisions of policy makers.

Dr. Robert Cavalier of the philosophy department is co-director of the program. He summarized a deliberative poll as a forum in which a random sample of the population would be brought together to spend a day learning about and discussing regional and national issues with the guidance of moderators and expert panels. After a day of deliberation in small focus groups, the participants would take part in an opinion poll. According to Dr. Cavalier, the results of the poll would show what members of the public really think about an issue if they were given the time to become as intimate with the issue as the experts and politicians. In turn, policy makers would then have a more accurate picture of their constituents’ positions on the issues.

On Oct. 29, Carnegie Mellon was the site of the first of two planned Deliberative Democracy events in Pittsburgh. The event brought together a hundred or so members of the Pittsburgh Community, selected by random sampling and invited to join their fellow citizens in a day of civic discourse on the issue of healthcare.

Pittsburgh was not alone in this experiment. Concurrent deliberative forums were run in six other cities around the country including Seattle, Wash.; Kansas City, Mo.; and Baton Rouge, La. While other cities tackled problems like HIV, medical research, and citizens’ responsibilities, Pittsburgh focused on the changing status of Medicaid, healthcare for the uninsured and elderly, and the cost of improvements in healthcare.

The day began with registration and briefing in the Admerson wing of Baker Hall. After being divided into smaller groups, the participants were then sent to separate rooms and spent the day tackling the issue of healthcare from various angles.

The participant groups were organized according to regional and national focus, with the regional groups incorporating changes and initiatives currently on the table in Pittsburgh and the national groups taking in the structure of healthcare in the United States as a whole.

After two discussion sessions, the participants gathered once again in the Admerson wing to address their questions to an expert panel. The panel included Dr. Robert Madue of the Pittsburgh Veterans Healthcare System, Dr. Beaufort Longest of the University of Pittsburgh, Peter Perrella of the Pittsburgh Regional Healthcare Initiative, and Andrew Dick of the RAND Corporation.

Throughout the discussion groups spurred deliberation amongst the participants, the expert panel session had one message: in addition to being a public concern, healthcare is a business. Suggestions and questions from the audience about socialized medicine, healthcare systems like those in Canada and much of Europe — were met with curt rebuttals that the U.S. healthcare system will simply not work that way — there is too much money to be made.

After the expert panel session, the focus groups reconvened for a final discussion session before each participant completed a survey. The results of the polls in Pittsburgh and throughout the country are now available through the Western Pennsylvania Program for Deliberative Democracy’s Web site. Any difference between the results of the deliberative polls and the more common national opinion polls is yet to be seen.

Perhaps the efficacy of the citizen’s forum will be more fully demonstrated next semester when Dr. Cavalier plans to hold a second deliberative event. For more on the program, the poll and affiliated institutions and media, visit the SPPDD Web site at: http://caae.phil.cmu.edu/caae/dp/index.html

Innovative Citizen Forum held on Carnegie Mellon Campus

By Ryan Coon, FOCUS staff writer

Walking to the Sky

continued from Page 5

ascertain the facts have proven unsuccessful. Since the University is likely self-insured on such matters, or would not have the benefit of third party insurance were due diligence not followed in, say, the establishment of the Fair Market Value, any costs or settlement amounts would be the establishment of the Fair Market Value, any costs or settlement amounts would be the University’s beleaguered operating budget.

3.2 Incremental insurance costs

At the end of the time allotted to Vice Provost Horgan’s presentation, I raised two final issues that were not responded to. First, I asked him to report back on incremental insurance costs that accepting this large piece of art could entail. It is conceivable that somebody (not necessarily members of the campus community) could damage it, or injure themselves by climbing up on it. At the Faculty Senate reception, after the meeting, a senior member of the Carnegie Mellon police force told me that the Carnegie Mellon Police had advised the University about the risks that such a structure would entail, and the eventuality that it would wind up costing the University further amounts of money. Unfortunately the University did not hear their concerns, perhaps to keep a determined trustee/donor happy. If there are such incremental insurance costs, a further question arises about whether their payment is covered by the donor, or will come out of the University’s operating budget.

3.3 Is accepting and displaying Walking to the Sky on prestigious green space going to hurt alumni giving?

The other matter that could easily arise as a consequence of unilaterally installing Walking to the Sky involves further erosion of alumni support for the University. As noted earlier, actual cash giving is substantially and materially below expectations. It is imaginable that the celebration of such a disproportionate art work, that in the eyes of many defiles what was a jealously guarded green space, will complete the destruction of alumni good will. Indeed, it is imaginable that some alumni trustees may find themselves at odds with those who agreed to and accepted Walking to the Sky. At least one trustee resigned from the Board over the establishment of the Qatar campus, and I would not be surprised if others might quit in protest over this matter.

Some may argue that erection of Walking to the Sky is a positive statement that Carnegie Mellon is open for business, and will do whatever it takes to get giving going again. On the other hand, it is equally if not more likely that such a pronouncement will chase away serious donors who would prefer to support things like scholarships for needy students, or endowed chairs that will support serious academic work.

4.0 Time for Legal Action?

By now the readers of FOCUS have concluded that I take a decidedly dim view of this sculpture, and see consumer and mass-media interest with curt rebuttals that the U.S. healthcare system will simply not work that way — there is too much money to be made.

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of art has educational value that justifies such coercion. It shouldn’t be forced under any circumstances.

A second issue is that art shouldn’t compensate for the university’s failure to manage its budget. In one interview a trustee stated: “Today the financial mood is not conducive to philanthropic giving.” We agree. The university should cut its budget by 10%. It is not a matter of squeezing oneself to death, but a matter of making sound economic decisions. In this way we can avoid the fate of the Donors, the financial support of the university. The financial support of the university is 10 years.

This point is discussed eloquently in the article in the October 2005 issue of Focus that I mentioned a couple of minutes ago. I urge you to read it.

Now think about the mall again, and the way corporations have occupied the middle of it, with the same life-size human figures I mentioned before, towering over the roof-tops of Baker, Doherty, and Hammerschlag Halls, taller by half than the flagstone on the Cut. At best it would be intrusive; calling attention to itself rather than to the elegant symmetry of the Mall. At worst it would destroy the ambience of this part of the campus.

Now about the proposed Public Art Committee. This committee has to be representative of the entire campus community, including students, faculty, and supporting staff. The committee make-up, as presently proposed, has a total membership of 13. Maybe that’s a bad omen in itself. Of these 13, seven are to be people with close professional ties to the arts. Such an unbalanced committee can’t possibly be representative of the campus as a whole, and in my view it would be unacceptable.

Finally, for any project that would result in substantial visual impact on a significant part of the campus, there should be opportunity for extensive public discussion of the proposal. I think that’s essential. The recent CMU tradition is for no public discussion of such issues, and that’s wrong.

So we’re back where we started, with the promise of a well-thought-out process that has already been laid and then carefully concealed. This whole project ought to be put on “hold” while we consider some serious questions. Is the scale of the object appropriate? Is there a possible alternative location? Does the work violate the integrity of the Hombostal Mall?

The new Dean of the College of Fine Arts was quoted recently as saying that the College of Fine Arts doesn’t have a vision, but “people irritating each other.” Personally, I don’t feel that I need this sort of irritation. And I don’t particularly want my campus used as an instrument for such irritation.

HUNT INSTITUTE PRESENTS YUGA: CONTEMPORARY BOTANICAL WATERCOLORS FROM JAPAN

Pittsburgh, PA—The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation presents the exhibition Yuga: Contemporary Botanical Watercolors from Japan. 23 March to 30 June 2006

The exhibition has been organized by the Hunt Institute in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Japan Association of Botanical Illustration. The exhibition includes 43 works—the majority of them donated—by 33 artists. The artists represented in the exhibition include Junzo Fujishima, Rei Fukuzawa, Tadak0 Hayashi, Mieko Ishikawa, Michiko Ishiyama, Yoko Kakuta, Yumi Kamatani, Yoshiko Kamei, Seiko Kijima, Sanae Kikuchi, Yuriko Kikuchi, Hidenori Kobayashi, Mariko Kojima, Mirko Konishi, Mikiura Naohisa, Noboru Morino, Sadao Naito, Yoko Nomura, Yosha Ohta, Takeda Sogetsu, Masao Saito, Masakazu Sato, Akiko Sato, Fumiko Sugizaki, Kiyohiko Sugizaki, Kazuko Tazuma, Kazuto Takahashi, Miyako Takahashi, Kiyoko Tanaka, Yoko Uchijio, Keita Yonezu and Keiko Yoshida.

Flowers have always played an important role in Japanese culture. Indeed, botanical art classes now are offered in cultural centers throughout Japan. In recent years The Japan Association of Botanical Illustration has encouraged artists, produced exhibitions, and stimulated additional publications. JABI has stimulated additional exhibitions and books, even bringing exhibitions to Japan from abroad. As a result, the JABI catalogues and the Library. The current collections in the Botanical Library, an international center for those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was founded in 1961 as the Robert M. Berkebile Institute for Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library’s activities had diversified so that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography, and the Library. The current collections include 24,000 book portraits; 30,000 watercolors, drawings and prints; and 2,200 autograph letters and manuscripts. Including artworks dat-
We’ve noticed some odd things turning up side by side. For example, just the other day, CNN online had this kind of headline: “Bush lays out optimistic vision of ‘hopeful society’.” And just below that in one of their comment boxes a reader had written the question to the guest about how they viewed the future, 76% as opposed to 24% said they are worried about the future rather than hopeful. Now, maybe they did not know what the Prez had to say. Perhaps they were still waiting for either the great society, or the just society to come along. Maybe they didn’t know exactly what the Prez’s hopeful society entails. Someone once said you’ll never be happy until you give up on hope. Hope is what gets you killed. Or at least that’s the assumption that you don’t have it yet, whatever ‘it’ is, but you need for some reason to continue to wait in expectation, fear, anxiety, that ‘it’ will someday come. Or yes, we have no bananas.

To which we say, look on the bright side of life! Enjoy! But watch out for odd things turning up side by side. As in...

Gore Vidal/Vidal Sassoon

One of the important things to be able to do in modern cultural life is to maintain a clear distinction between Gore Vidal on the one hand and Vidal Sassoon on the other. This, for example is something that clearly is well beyond the analytic capacities of Ali G, otherwise known as the, a sort of an odd, kind of an inventor of Du Ali G Show (remus sometimes still available on HBO). Interviewing Gore Vidal, Ali G confines him with Vidal Sassoon, an easy mistake to make when you think about it, and asks him, amongst other things how he manages to keep up on hair styling when he also has all those other things to do... It may remind you of Mitchell’s on two from Hot Metal Street (nice name for a street). Gore’s that is, is well known perhaps—better than his hair styling. And it is certainly more arresting than the writing of Sassoon (Vidal, not Siefried).

So, amidst the ample food service of a short Caribbean cruise this winter we decided to delay yet again going for a haircut/colifire and instead to read Gore’s recent collection of essays, Imperial America: Re- crescent and the Unifying Spirit of Empire (2004) It turns out that Mr. Vidal has some very distressing views. Hard to imagine he would become a —as he has expressed himself if he made that kind of conversation with customers in the chair, so it’s probably just dumb luck that he’s a writer instead. But lightens up, for heaven’s sake. It was dis- tracting, to say the least, to have one’s concentration on the copious buffet tables on board disturbed by a sudden recollection of Vidal’s insistence from the early 70’s on that the U.S. has barred away all its basic good qualities and drifted into a late stage of imperial decay. Who needs that kind of thing? We ask. Better a good haircut, or another plate of sushi from the fresh fish brought on board at Grand Cayman Island.

So we throw Vidal overboard and make a major effort to read other things, like the famous (we didn’t know this until we got to it) novel of our time, A Man Called Peter. We’ve read only a few recipes, and they are much as an opportunity to try “Eggplant with Anchovies”, and the ‘Fresh Fava Bean Puree’. We did try the Veal Scaloppis in a cream sauce, and the Dark Chocolate, earned, pursuing a short-sighted path that can only accelerate our decline.”

More complex, more demanding, more rewarding perhaps and certain more fun to try cooking. ‘Our’ reason was the collection at the end of the book, a sort of complete dinner menus from 23 famous chefs. Included in the list is Pittsburgh’s own (for that little bit of her in New York) Lidia Bastianich who offers ‘Shrimp, Scampi Style’, ‘Zite with Sausage, Onions and Fennel’, ‘Erminia’s Chicken and Pota- toes’, ‘Fettuccine with Cilantro, Chocolate, Hazel- nuts and Orange’. And now we ask you, would rather swallow that or some odd inappropriately coined recipe for political disaster as con- coted by that Vidal guy? In a recent article on Trainsoll, Vidal describes a book he has been reading, Dark Ages America: The Fi- nal Phase of Empire by Morris Berman, a professor of sociology at the Catholic Uni- versity of America. Vidal turns us in the wrong direction when he says that Berman’s thesis begins by invoking the story of Jonah, for a somewhat far-fetched comparison: “Once the crew had determined that Jonah, a passenger, was the jinx, they threw him overboard and—Lo!—the storm abated. Three days later he had spent in the belly of a nauseous whale must have seemed like a serious jinx to the diges- tion-challenged whale who extruded him manfully. A decent opinion of mankind has done to Bush.”

Is Vidal secretly longing to be a food and wine collective columnist? Surely he’s stretching a point, isn’t he? Does Vidal, Gore think he’s really Ali G? One could admit, perhaps, that there is some simi- larity between Bush and Jonah, and even al- low that a fair percentage of world opinion has turned negative about all this bad luck we’ve been having, just dumb bad luck that’s all. But to talk of vomiting, even when it’s about whales, and then to suggest that 100% of decent opinion has done the same thing nowadays—well, just let’s say we find that a bit hard to swallow.

We have found some other things more to our taste, much more appetizing. We tried out the fish restaurant chain in the new South Side development off Carson Street called JoJo’s. We had trouble getting the name right, and thought it is something like McCormick and Schmuck, just off Carson Street a block or two from the Silver Spoon (nice name for a street). It may remind you of Mitchell’s on the Waterfront. It seems roomier perhaps, although some of the decor struck us a bit odd. So too much orange. It’s wise not to taints on the booths? They appear to be fit- tcd with ties. We struggled to imagine what they could be for and could only come up with some restaurant version of the mile-high club. Surely not? We tried the fish and chips, thinking that to be the signature dish of any fish place, and it was. Better was the blackened fish, a trite enough dish to be sure, but it was well enough done. The best thing at dinner turned out to be the des- sert, the ‘Fresh Fava Bean Puree’. We did try the Veal Scaloppis in a cream sauce, and the Dark Chocolate, earned, pursuing a short-sighted path that can only accelerate our decline.”

Recipe of the Month:

“We were already in our twilight phase when Ronald Reagan, with all the insight of an ostrich, declared it to be ‘morning in America’. twenty-odd years later, under the ‘boy emperor’ George W. Bush (as Chalmers Johnson refers to him) to Vidal’s Johnson might well have drawn up. Coors, is that it? We’d drunk Guinness and wished they had somebody working for them with an idea about good beer. The oysters, however, were excellent—sufficiently good enough, a couple of gigantic raw oysters in a shot glass with lots of horseradish. The que- sadillas were a bust, as were the fish tacos. Something needs to buy a Mexican recipe book and find out that salmon does not fit a fish taco make. The hamburger was a good hamburgher for $1.99. The bar itself had an excellently diverse mix of patrons, many of them young we noticed. But then, bars af- ter all are noisy places designed for young people on the make, and not apparently for mature adults in search of really good beer and excellent bar snacks for a pittance.

Much better and much more fun, is the place right next door, Sur La Table, a cook’s shop with all kinds of cooking items, uten- sills, and ‘a’ut. It too is a chain, and chains have a lot to answer for. Where, for example is the Kitchen Wizard? Driven out of busi- ness by high rents on Forbes, and by chains we guess. Still, what are you gonna do? Not buy nice cooking stuff when it’s right there in front of you? Suppuse you do refit your kitchen, buy a $10K Wolf range, where else can you get sufficient stainless steel stuff to go with that? And Sur La Table has it, and it is much preferable to that lame place in the Strip, Whisky’s Balcony. It’s not even a balcony anyway, and there are probably no ruder or more unpleasant people working in a shop anywhere in Pittsburgh.

Meanwhile, we wish Vidal, Gore would try to cook up a happier meal for the mind. He enuores the aforementioned Ber- man’s book in part because its title echoes Vidals’ ‘heretical view’ that America is an Empire. Vidal quotes with approval the fol- lowing from Berman:

“We were already in our twilight phase when Ronald Reagan, with all the insight of an ostrich, declared it to be ‘morning in America’; twenty-odd years later, under the ‘boy emperor’ George W. Bush (as Chalmers Johnson refers to him), we have entered the Dark Ages in earnest, pursuing a short- sighted path that can only accelerate our decline.”

That much by way of background, and then as if to prove his point he has a budget deficit to out, to Vidal’s approval to be sure, exactly how this empire- cial Phase of Empire

“For what we are now seeing are the obvi- ous red in color and character. Also dirt cheap, $9.99 if we remember correctly, The Jonest should be around for a while, but the Malibu will disappear quickly we understand (not long after we pick up our case). Now there’s a couple of things that go well side by side. See, thinking about things, you can understand them. Perhaps.”

And finally to wash it all down, a couple of good things to drink. With dinner, Al- toedged Malibu 2001 (#28857). It was $12.00 but is now $8.99. A terrific wine at a good price.

After dinner, if you like port, try the Jonney, an Australian tart that is really rich red in color and character. Also dirt cheap, $9.99 if we remember correctly, The Jonney should be around for a while, but the Malibu will disappear quickly we understand (not long after we pick up our case). Now there’s a couple of things that go well side by side. See, thinking about things, you can understand them. Perhaps.”

(food and Wine Cultural Column Corner)

The Food and Wine Column says: It’s not all that bad, really, cheer up, c’mon!”

Food and Wine Cultural Column Corner

A word of warning about Johno’s hours: Although its motto is “Breakfast Served All Day, Every Day,” what that means here in Pittsburgh’s market place is that it is open from 11 p.m. until noon. The sched- ule is made to jibe with that of truck drivers who haul produce up from the South, ar- riving shortly after midnight. They unload their trucks, then come for the Johno Special, an impossibly overstuffed three-egg omelet containing peppers, onions, mushrooms, provolone and American cheese, and/ or sausage and/or ham, plus a spatula- loaded of hot fried potatoes. Unless you have the appetite of Garrett Jones, consider this pla- te load a meal for two.”

Find it online at: http://www.epicurious.com/restaurants/(click click)

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