

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

*Volume 15 Issue 45
November 30, 2007*



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The collective soul, alive and well

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PSYC 450

Maturing Nicely

Using it, not losing it

*Plus:
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From Where I Sit
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THE VOICE MAGAZINE

November 30, 2007 - Volume 15, Issue 45

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We love to hear from you!
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comments to voice@ausu.org,
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publish your letter.

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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It Takes Two

A British Court of Appeal made a ruling last week that presents an alarming paradox. While the court's decision appears to have gone wholly in the respective woman's favour, it also dealt a serious blow to all women's rights, particularly when it comes to the responsibility of fathers to their children.

The events are straightforward. A 19-year-old woman and a male had a one-night stand. She became pregnant. She decided to give the child up for adoption, but a "legal guardian and a local authority" applied to the county court to ensure that the father was at least aware of his unborn child's existence. The county court ruled that both the father and the woman's own parents had a right to know about the pregnancy (the woman lived on her own, so her parents would not necessarily have been aware of their grandchild).

The woman objected, insisting she wanted her infant adopted at birth and that she was under no obligation to tell her one-time partner he had fathered a child. The Court of Appeal overturned the original decision, and "ordered the local authority not to take any action to inform the father." Their stance was that the mother-to-be held "the ultimate veto" over whether the father could be told.

Lady Justice Arden's rationale for the ruling was particularly ominous: "the father's rights had not been violated because he did not have any to violate." Not that he might be a bad father. Just that, as a father, he had no rights.

A chilling statement in so many ways. First, it's generally accepted that, until science invents a workaround for the meeting of sperm and egg, children are conceived by a joint effort. In other words, it still takes two, even when the blessed event involves a test tube.

Second, society now generally supports—and enforces—the idea that *both* parents are responsible to provide for the children they create. Especially for modern fathers, the message has been that dads need to step up and get involved, both financially and emotionally; to take a more hands-on role in raising their kids.

So here's the question that the court's decision raises: if fathers have no rights, why should they have responsibilities?

To state unequivocally that one of a child's two biological parents has no rights regarding that child—not even the right to know that the child *exists*—is a slap in the face not only to every father, but also to the countless women who have fought long and hard to ensure that men *do* face up to their paternal responsibilities.

It assumes that men are, by default, irresponsible, inept creatures who bring so little benefit to their children's lives that they should not be allowed to contribute even if they want to. In short, it places the complete burden of raising children squarely back on the mother—precisely the societal assumption that so many women have struggled to change.

Fathers, whether present in the home or not, are either responsible parent figures with a duty to participate in their children's lives or they are merely sperm donors with no legal ties (i.e., rights) to their kids. So the next time this particular justice system hands down an order for a man to honour the financial responsibility for his children, it needs to decide which version of fatherhood it subscribes to. Because they can't have it both ways.



PSYC 450 - Drugs and Behaviour

How do drugs affect the human body? What makes addictive compounds “addictive”? What about hallucinogens? Why do neurodegenerative diseases elicit their particular symptoms? AU’s Centre for Psychology recently released a new course, PSYC 450 (Drugs and Behaviour), which, as its name implies, explores the relationships between pharmacological agents, human physiology, and human behaviour.

Course professor Dr. Trevor Gilbert, who is also now the Chair for AU’s Centre for Psychology, indicated that PSYC 450 “deals with the effects of psychoactive drugs on the brain and behaviour.”

He explained that at first, PSYC 450 students explore the “fundamental principles of pharmacology; that is, how drugs move through and affect the body.” This provides students with the foundational knowledge for the other course objectives, which are subsequently taught in the course’s 18 units.

For instance, neurotransmitters and their actions are explored, with emphasis on how drugs affect these “brain neurochemicals.” Addictive drugs are included in this, since their primary mode of action is often related to actions on key neurotransmitters.

“Then,” Dr. Gilbert explained, the course “examines the physiological and behavioural effects of recreational drugs like alcohol, nicotine, cannabinoids, and hallucinogens. Additionally, PSYC 450 explores the biological basis and treatment of various psychiatric disorders (e.g., depression, bipolar disorder) and neurodegenerative diseases (e.g., Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease).”

Dr. Gilbert, who is keenly interested in distance education and online learning, has ensured an excellent learning experience in PSYC 450 for AU students. The [course website](#) is an easy-to-access area that provides students with course readings, a timeline, student manual, student course evaluations, and course downloads. Additionally, the website provides links for related resources and tutorials (including an exam demo!).

PSYC 450 uses a completely online interface for its marking scheme. This innovative technology not only quickens the marking process, but is student-friendly since it eliminates the hassle associated with locating testing centres to write exams and paying writing fees.

Student evaluation in PSYC 450 consists of five quizzes, worth 5% each, comprising a mix of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Additionally, students write a term paper, worth 35% of the final mark. Dr. Gilbert indicated that the topics are “wide-ranging . . . some ideas include the biological and neurochemical bases of affective disorders, the biological basis of addiction, and an examination of current illicit drugs.” The remaining 40% of PSYC 450’s evaluation scheme is the final exam, which, like the quizzes, is online.

Course professor Trevor Gilbert is currently the Chair for AU’s Centre for Psychology. He has excellent experience in the behavioural neuroscience field, and has published several papers.

In addition to PSYC 450, Dr. Gilbert is responsible for a number of other courses from AU’s Centre for Psychology: PSYC 333 (Sensation and Perception); PSYC 356 (Introduction to Personality Theories and

Issues); PSYC 402 (Biological Psychology); PSYC 418 (Special Topics in Psychology); and PSYC 435 (Abnormal Psychology). He is also developing two more new AU behavioural psychology courses.

Dr. Gilbert, who achieved his BA (Honours) and MA from the University of Victoria, and his PhD from the University of Calgary, has a special interest in several key areas of neuroscience, including neural plasticity and epilepsy; neurodegenerative diseases; and neuropsychopharmacology and addiction.

For more information on PSYC 450, visit the [course syllabus](#).

CLICK ON THIS - The Place to Be

Lonita Fraser

Sometimes the places that amaze us are right out in the open; known, famous even. Sometimes, though, the most incredible things are those that sneak out of the land of surprise.

The Urban Landscape Project

As the site says, "there is startling beauty to be found in the most unlikely places." Why not explore?

Lost Cities

Our histories are filled with the places we've been, lived, loved, and then left behind.

World Monuments Watch

What surprises me is not so much what is here, but that which isn't. Still, a wonderful little exploration tool.

Peculiar Streets Around the World

Like a street so short it only has one address.

The World's Creepiest Places

Certainly a tad unsettling.

Waymarking

Using GPS technology, why not help your fellow adventurers find the unique and wonderful? Or find a new place to visit yourself.

The Temples of Damanhur

Nestled secretly for many years under an Italian hillside are some of the most incredibly beautiful artistic and architectural triumphs. I want to go to Italy just to visit these places myself. They're gorgeous.



When my mother died, my father was 71. She'd suffered a brain injury and he'd been her primary caregiver 24/7 for the previous 15 years. When she died, he was lost. Then he found computers. This was back in 1996, when the Internet was really starting to take off and the 386 personal computer was new!

Dad had been a mechanical engineer in his younger days and his way of becoming familiar with computers was to buy an old 286 model, take it to bits, figure out how it worked, and then put it back together. He went on to add more memory, a CD drive, and he figured out how to work it so that he could play his favourite musical LP records (remember those?), upload them to the computer, and copy them to a CD.

If he emailed my brother and me and we didn't respond within 24 hours, he was annoyed. He downloaded games and software at three in the morning ("I'm old, I sleep during the day.")

He was devastated when he failed a year-end exam on computer-aided graphics at the local adult education centre. (Wouldn't you think they'd have passed him just for turning up at age 74?) When he died in 2002, he knew more about computers than his two "kids" and most of his grandkids did.

That's the great thing about learning; it has no age limit. There's no governmental rule (at least, not yet) that says you can't learn after a certain age.

I first went to university in 1975 when I was 21. (Okay, so you can do the math; don't look so smug.) I felt old. I was in a class where the average age was 19, but I'd worked in the finance industry for five years before getting there. These folks came straight from high school. However, there was a woman in my German class who was easily in her 60s and she was taking an undergraduate degree, majoring in German with a minor in Chinese. It wouldn't surprise me to learn that she was studying Urdu in her 90s.

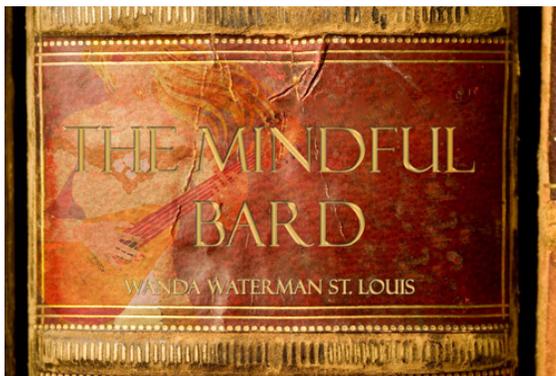
The challenge for many mature students is to keep an interest in a course that has obviously been designed for a younger age group. My French courses are a prime example; there are questions for the assignments such as: "How would you dress if you wanted to impress someone?"; "What characteristics do you look for in a new boy/girl friend?"; and, my favourite, "Do you clean your room regularly?"

Trying to explain to the tutor in French that I can't remember the last time I had to, let alone *tried* to, impress someone, that my last "new" boyfriend was about 25 years ago, and that if I didn't clean my room no one else would, is a challenge.

There are advantages to being an older student however. When I'm expected to write a contemplative essay for English 353, I've got a much longer time horizon to contemplate on. If I need to do an expository essay, I reflect back on the 18-year-old woman I hired as a summer worker one year and how I had to teach her the step-by-step wonder of office filing. A very bright and articulate teenager, the importance of following the alphabet was sometimes lost on her. She has since told me that although she struggles from time to time with her studies to be a doctor, she can at least put all the medical terms in alphabetical order in a nanosecond.

And it never ceases to amaze me how much-younger students are so patient with the daft questions I have to post on the computer science forums. (Where's my Dad when I need him?) It's like there's a notation next to my name that says "Old fogie alert; be kind." And I'm very glad they are.

Being a mature student is almost as difficult as being a maturing student. The former has lots of time to reflect and draw on; the latter has lots of time to get it right.



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

The Earthwork Interview

I wasn't old enough to be a true hippy when hippiedom first started taking root in Bear River, Nova Scotia, back in the early 1970s; I was far too young, still in my early teens and going to school with fishermen's kids who wanted nothing more in life than to become conspicuous consumers. After school I was minding the babies of people who lived in apartments above their own health food outlets, or geodesic domes or log cabins or teepees or very old houses decorated in craft show wabi sabi. (I was once shocked and disappointed to find a blow-dryer in one of their bathrooms.)

But everyone knows what happened to the hippies, or thinks they know: the hippies eventually became so morally flaccid that it was easy for the corporate leviathans to suck them up, masticate their faded denims and leather vests and spit them out wearing power suits and expensive haircuts. Ask one of these Woodstock sellouts about the political ideals of yesteryear and she or he will probably heave a gentle sigh and say, "Times have changed," just as if the desire for a just world had been no more than a passing fad, since replaced by other fads, better because newer.

Or so legend has it. In Bear River as elsewhere many of the alternative shelters have been abandoned or gentrified and no more do crowds of young folks in long hair and long sweaters, both giving off the musky fragrance of rare laundering, sit in circles in meadows by the highway handing joints around and waving peace signs at passing vehicles. Many of these young people eventually showed their true colours as snooty opportunists who disdained anyone outside their own little cliques, no different, under the Indian cotton, than their suburban populuxe parents. Yet the primitive, unplugged aesthetic of the 60s remains and has influence, as do the ideals. Social activism is no longer just a game (although apparently it's still a tremendous amount of fun).

And social concern did not die just because the media stopped covering it or covered it all wrong.

We all should by now know that our survival is irrevocably contingent on responsible attitudes and actions. But



there's no need for the human race to throw up its hands in despair and decide to go out in a blaze of self-destructive glory; amazing things are now being done by small groups of friends working together, having fun together, creating together, and together slowly righting the economic, social, and environmental imbalances created by globalization.

I've mentioned these groups in other articles (notably my review of McKibben's *Deep Economics*), but this week I'd like you to pay heed to Earthwork, a musicians' collective in Michigan. Aside from producing numerous excellent recordings and charitable events, in 2005 the collective put out the trail-blazing CD *Something Fresh*, a compilation striking in its synthesis of brilliantly clever musical creations and a complex of urgent social messages about the sustainable production and consumption of food.

The following interview is with two Earthwork members, Susan Fawcett and a gal by the name of Darlene.



Photo courtesy Gary Howe

Describe the origin and structure of the organization.

SUSAN: Just as a little background—Earthwork Music is a collective of musicians, and we do a lot of benefit concerts and organize a few annual events, namely The Family Weekend (we offer classes for kids and their parents in the arts and sustainability), and the Water Festival a travelling music festival geared toward education. We are a very community-oriented group, and work largely in the independent festival circuit.

We are first and foremost a group of friends, and have been playing music together for years. We had an identity long before any sort of infrastructure. The name Earthwork came from the Earthwork farm where founding member Seth Bernard grew up. The name is a good representation of the kind of community we all want to be a part of. We're now operating as a DBA, and looking to become a limited liability corporation.

John Lindenmayer said: "I might instead highlight the 'structure' in a way that talks about how we all bring different skills, ideas, and contacts to the table, how well we collaborate together as musicians and visual

artists, as well as our collaborations with the non-profit world. Maybe how we work together as true peers and how we don't have a traditional hierarchal structure of leadership."

DARLENE: As a group, we all have important life/earth issues burning in our hearts. Where there is a window of opportunity to create productive solutions or to bring awareness to the general public, we as a group try to use our talents and networks to make it happen.



How often do your members meet?

SUSAN: In an official way? We shoot for twice a year or so. Many of us play together and see each other a lot, but not often all of us at once.

DARLENE: The beautiful thing about a collective is that any of us can gather together in any number and make something happen. As we are a community, we love to meet as often as possible. It may be for a formal event or benefit, a business discussion or simply to uplift one another, as we all need to be fuelled now and again.

Describe a typical meeting.

SUSAN: We all bring something to run through the juicer and then drink a lot of juice. We talk about our goals as an organization, performance opportunities, and organizing events and festivals. At the last meeting we all drew each other's names to give each other song assignments for a children's album we're hoping to record in January. Then we ordered pizza.

Do you also socialize together? If so, what do you do?

SUSAN: We play music, listen to music, cook food, and play basketball.

DARLENE: In addition we watch movies and try to make our own; we laugh and cry; we help each other out with life's difficult challenges; we encourage each other and try not to take ourselves too seriously.

What kind of musical background is typical of an Earthwork recording artist?

SUSAN: Most of us grew up going to community music festivals in Michigan, or have been for a number of years. This is where many of us met for the first time. I think only one member of the collective has a bachelor's degree in music, though many of us have some classical training.

DARLENE: A lot of our learning comes from that internal drive that causes you to seek out what you desire to know. We all have a lot of musical influences in our lives, and any artist is constantly expanding to include new and old forms. We have a good amount of styles amongst us from blues-gospel-country-gypsy-classical-folk to the unexplainable.

As a cooperative, do you share studio space, recording equipment, and technical expertise?

The unofficial official studio of Earthwork is the Heart Center Studio in May's hometown of Big Rapids. It was jointly invested in by her family, Fox on a Hill Productions, members of the collective, and some other friends. The space is open to members of the collective for a nominal fee. We've got a great space, and some nice gear, but no live-in engineer. Our musicians have worked with lots of people over the years, but it seems Ian Gorman is a recurring favourite. Whenever possible we work with Ian for mixing and mastering, and Glen Brown for post-production if we can afford it.

What, for you, are the right conditions for artistic creation?

Some of us are 'on' all the time. (Micah from Breathe Owl Breathe is constantly creating new things). Others of us do better with time off, time alone, sometimes working with each other.

What impact, if any, does your social activism have on your bursts of creativity, or even on the honing and refining process? And, vice versa, what impact does your art have on your social concern?

This article came out today and is a pretty good example.

May wrote the song in response to the ending of the public comment period after the hearings on the mine application. She wanted to have the song ready in time for the Bioneers event last month, and again to play it for an audience of several thousand (including the governor of Michigan) last Saturday night. Once we've placed ourselves in the position of environmental advocates, we have a certain responsibility that perhaps we didn't previously.

How does the label market and distribute recordings?

This aspect is still developing. Previously, it was handled entirely by the artists individually (though we did help one another out here and there). Now, Fox on a Hill Productions, LLC does a lot of radio and press promotion, as well as distributing to retailers, and selling directly from its own website as well as earthworkmusic.com.

What do most of you have in common?

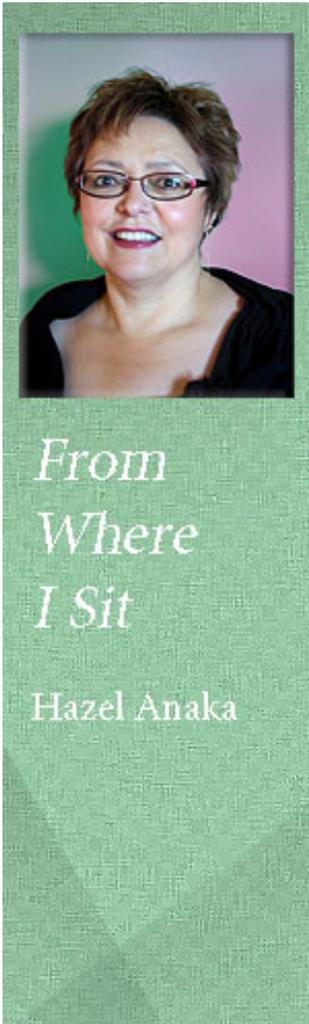
SUSAN: A love for music, and a desire to change the world for the better. Most of us are from Michigan, and have a deep appreciation for folk and roots music.

DARLENE: I would have to use the EW Mission statement here: *The Earthwork Music collective believes in the intrinsic and historical power of music (and the arts) to raise both community and self-awareness.*

We are also lovers of Life.



The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.



Back to Work

Up until the end of August, Roy was a long-haul truck driver. After six years as an owner/operator hauling mostly lumber or pipe into the States, the thrill is gone.

To blame are the worsening economy in the U.S. and the stronger Canadian dollar. Overall, both the number of loads and price per load have dropped. The downtime waiting for a reload has grown from a few hours to as many six days.

Those were days spent in American truck stops: all hard time if you don't have a girlfriend or go to casinos or bars. All he could think of were the jobs waiting for him at home. Maddening. Increasing friction with his dispatcher was the last straw.

The usual month or so he takes off for harvest is turning into four months. The grand plan is to juggle working for a new firm (doing hourly work pulling a winch trailer in Alberta) with pulling his own gravel trailer. All of the construction slated for Edmonton - Fort Saskatchewan - Redwater should mean some lucrative work for gravel haulers close to home—as long as the bottom doesn't fall out of the Alberta economy.

I think Roy finally acknowledges what I've known for some time. The sleep deprivation and poor eating habits were taking years off his life.

It's been good to have him home. He needed the downtime. He needed to sleep in, improve his eating habits, and tackle some jobs that have been put off for years. For a guy who never ate breakfast, starting each day with porridge has been a shock to the system. He's eaten more fish and salads in the last three months than in the last six years.

Taking one evening to install the organizer in my closet has earned him mucho brownie points. We've been stumbling around the component pieces for over a year now. (Men, if there's one way to a woman's heart, it's through a well-organized closet.) Unfortunately it's not any bigger, but it functions so much better. Thanks, hon.

After spending years sleeping in the bunk of a truck Roy continues to be amazed at the silence of a country night and the comfort of his own bed. He's sleeping more and rarely sets an alarm.

He also has more time for family and friends and for frittering away whole days.

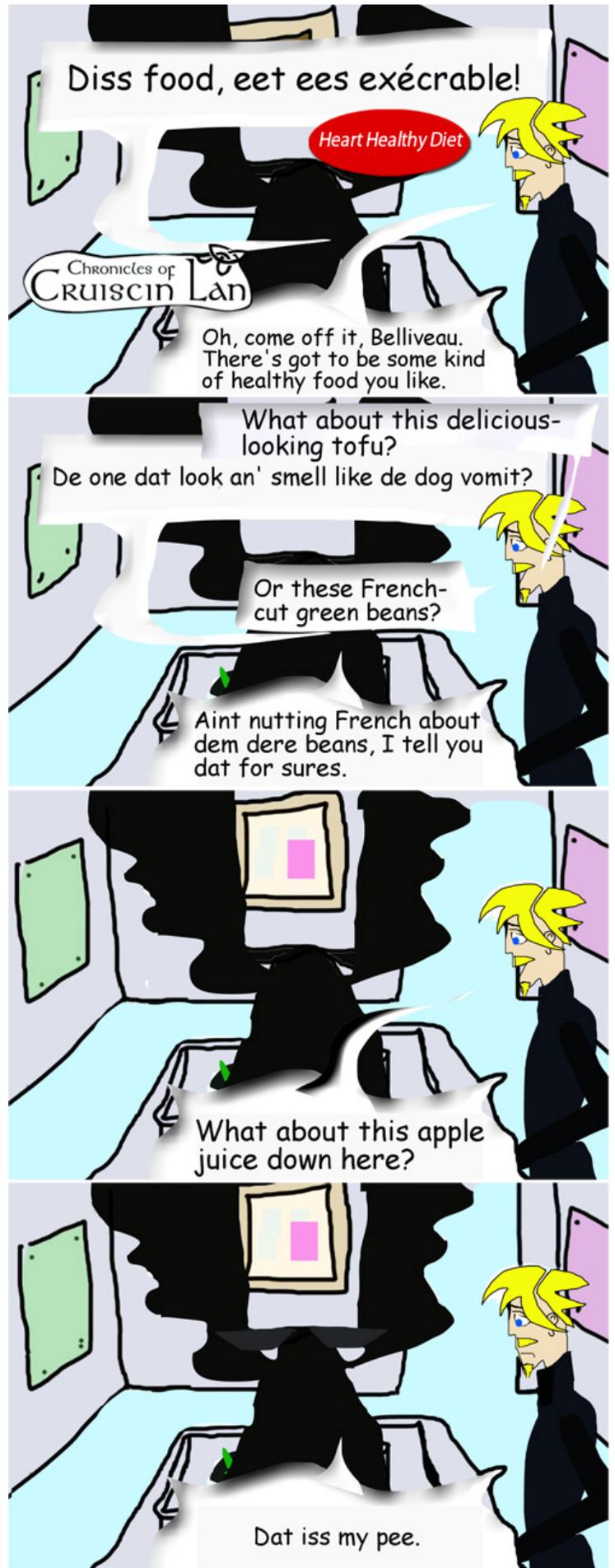
We've logged quite a few miles in the new Honda, running errands, Christmas shopping, buying the new gravel trailer and related accoutrements, seeing doctors, doing procedures.

This level of togetherness can break a couple. Thankfully we've got 34 years of practice to fall back on. An abiding love and quirky sense of humour have saved the day on more than one occasion. It's almost like a preview of retirement.

That said, it's time to get back to work, from where I sit.

The
Chronicles
of
Cruiscin
Lan

by
Wanda
Waterman
St. Louis



The Hives - The Black and White Album

Release date: October 2007

Label: Interscope

Tracks: 14

Rating: 8

The Black and White Album is the latest release from The Hives, a group that is notorious for high-energy, catchy songs that make full use of the modern rock mentality while still getting you to dance.

At least that's how I feel about it—The Hives have had a few hits you might remember from the last few years: "Die, Alright!," "Supply and Demand," and "Hate To Say I Told You So" weren't particularly

well received on the charts but the songs did work their way into semi-regular radio play for good reason.

It's just about impossible to put on a Hives record and not feel like dancing on the furniture and throwing a party. This album has a few slow moments where the band decided to experiment with their sound equipment, but for the most part *The Black and White Album* is just what fans should be expecting from The Hives after a three-year pause between recording sessions.

The single "Tick Tick Boom" was released to a fairly cool reception in terms of chart placement, but the song was quickly recruited as the theme to the WWE Survivor Series 2007; this has been, sadly, the primary form of publicity for the new record.

Aside from what is a great single, the star tracks are "You Got It All . . . Wrong," "Bigger Hole to Fill," and the disco-esque song "T.H.E.H.I.V.E.S."

Being Swedish, the band has taken a European approach to rock music and has incorporated a more pop-oriented sound into their music. The product is something quite closely related to Franz Ferdinand in terms of both musical exploration and the dance/party vibe that runs through the entire record. Don't be nervous about the European recording though—*The Black and White Album* was produced in English, not Swedish, so you won't have to hone your language skills before listening.

After the release of this record, The Hives remain an altogether underappreciated band in Canada and most other English-speaking countries, although it's difficult to say why. Maybe the anglophones of Western culture are looking for a more traditional rock sound than this band produces, or maybe they just haven't got the right publicity team on the job. Whatever the reason, this is a band and album that deserve some airtime, so check it out.

AUSU THIS MONTH



Response to AUSU's open letter from Joy Romero, Chair, AU Governing Council

Athabasca University

Office of the Governing Council

October 31, 2007

Dear AU Students:

I am very pleased to learn, through your elected AUSU representatives, that you share our excitement and satisfaction at the recent Government of Alberta allocation of \$30 million in capital funding for the new Academic and Research Centre on our Athabasca campus. This level of government support does indeed, as your student leaders say, clearly demonstrate the province's strong commitment to post-secondary education and to AU students in particular.

In response to your question about how AU will use these funds to enhance student services, it is first important to emphasize that, as dedicated capital funding, this \$30 million grant is specifically earmarked to cover construction costs of the new building in Athabasca. None of the money may be diverted to operational uses. That said, however, acquisition of our new building will allow us to enhance student services in many ways.

As you may know, AU academic and support staff members have for some time now been suffering from a critical shortage of work space. Our main campus was designed to house a staff serving the academic and support needs of a 10,000 member student body. Last year, in contrast, 37,000 students enrolled at AU. In the past five years alone, our staff complement has grown by more than seven per cent annually, and finding adequate office space, meeting space, research space, etc. has grown increasingly difficult. Many staff members have been forced to work in environments that are not suited to their professional needs, and such compromises have impacts on operating efficiencies and, inevitably, if not addressed on the quality of service provided to students.

The new Academic and Research Centre will greatly strengthen Athabasca University's leadership role in addressing distance education challenges and opportunities. In addition to providing badly needed space and services for the academic and research centres of the university, including work space for 210 additional staff members, it will enhance and support increased collaboration between researchers and academics giving impetus to research into teaching practices, innovations and implementation strategies associated with e-learning. It will also house the university's new Technology Enhanced Learning Research Institute—an Institute dedicated to using technology in learning. All of these improvements are destined to have a direct positive impact on the quality and quantity of the university's academic and research programs.

In addition, in 2010, when academic and research staff move into the new building, the space they now occupy in the existing main Athabasca campus building will be renovated to house student support staff. The altered building will be transformed into the Athabasca University Learning Centre and, in addition to expanded student service facilities, will house a significant teaching laboratory.

These are indeed exciting times for AU and for current and prospective AU students. These and other proposed capital projects as well as the planned introduction, over the next several years, of a number of new academic programs, the creation of several new research institutes, including the Technology Enhanced

Learning Research Institute mentioned above, the adoption or creation of innovative educational technology in support of distance learners and the planned expansion of our student financial supports are positioning AU to both broaden its outreach and expand its services to students. Over the coming few years, AU students will benefit from a broader range of academic choices and enhanced opportunities to participate in research, and they will be supported by a broader (and deeper) range of non-academic services.

Thank you for your letter and your interest in the changes affecting your university. At AU, the focus is on you, the student, and all developments, whether they involve bricks and mortar, technological innovation or academic research, are calculated to enhance the opportunities that we can provide to you.

Sincerely,

Joy Romero, P.Eng., MBA PM

Chair

Athabasca University Governing Council

cc: Frits Pannekoek

An open letter to Joy Romero, Chair of AU Governing Council

Dear Ms. Romero:

On behalf of the students of Athabasca University, we are excited and encouraged by what Dr. Frits Pannekoek has called the “second greatest milestone” in the history of Athabasca University. The approval of \$30 million toward AU’s new administrative and research center, as announced today by Minister of Advanced Education and Technology Doug Horner, is a tremendous step toward ensuring that AU will remain one of Canada’s finest educational institutions.

This funding demonstrates Alberta’s strong commitment to Alberta’s students, and the students of Athabasca University. Athabasca University also demonstrates this commitment through its focus on increasing affordability, accessibility, and quality of education for our members. Recent limits imposed on annual tuition increases are an important first step toward ensuring affordability. Today’s funding announcement will further address accessibility issues for AU students.

In early 2007, AUSU presented the government and AUGC with a document detailing our Vision for a Skilled Alberta. It is clear that our concerns have been heard and that steps are being taken to ensure that students’ views are incorporated into revisions to our education system and university services. We are encouraged that we have reached this milestone to improve the main campus of our university and ensure that AU has sufficient staff to address growing student needs.

We now look forward to learning how AUGC and Athabasca University will use these funds to enhance the quality of AU’s offerings and we request a communication from AUGC to our members explaining how this new funding will enhance student services.

We continue to look forward to reaching future milestones that will ensure that AU can address the urgent need for enhanced learning and virtual communication technologies, more courses and programs, and research opportunities for students.

AUSU

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK

What's new here and around the world

Mandy Gardner



At Home: Taser death prompts better translation services at border control

Mandy Gardner

Further investigation into the Taser death of Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski has revealed that not only should the risks of Taser use be looked into, but that airport protocol needs an overhaul.

Alain Jolicoeur, president of Canada's Border Services Agency (CBSA), has questioned why Dziekanski was left on his own for six hours in the secured immigration area of the Vancouver International Airport while his mother, who had come to collect him, was told there was no record of a Polish arrival on that day.

Jolicoeur says the tragedy might have been avoided by simply having someone on staff who could converse with Dziekanski, since the Polish man could not speak English. It seems that due to a lack of communication between the Taser victim and airport officials, the immigration case was not dealt with

promptly and this may have been what led to the ultimately violent behaviour of Dziekanski; airport security video shows the man holding up a small table before police officers subdued him with at least two shots from Tasers.

CBSA has just released the official timeline of events preceding the death. Apparently, after checking into the secondary customs desk at 10:30 p.m., the man was twice told by airport staff that he could wait in the international arrivals lounge. However, he stayed in the customs area.

Given the lack of Polish-speaking staff on hand, it is most likely that Dziekanski simply couldn't understand the message and didn't know where he was supposed to be. Staff made a public announcement directed to the man's family in the public lounge, but this was not acknowledged.

The CBSA ultimately feels that the death could have been avoided, and to prevent similar tragedies in the future they have called for more multilingual staff as well as more surveillance cameras for the arrivals area.

In Foreign News: Australia welcomes a new prime minister after more than a decade of John Howard

Australian Prime Minister John Howard was not only ousted from his position as PM this week but also from his Parliamentary seat, with both moves in favour of the opposition Labor Party.

Howard subsequently lost his place as leader of the coalition Liberal Party (strangely pieced together from various conservative parties) following defeat in the federal election to Paul Rudd, who has promised not only to pull the 550 Australian combat troops out of Iraq but also to sign on to the Kyoto Accord.

The *Huffington Post* described John Howard as "one of the Bush administration's staunchest allies" because of his commitment to the war in Iraq and to finding alternative ways of dealing with climate change.

Although Howard was an undeniably popular leader during his four terms as prime minister, Rudd says he was "out of touch" when it came to current issues like Kyoto and even technological advancements.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* remarks that Howard “never formed a firm intention to retire,” something that not only led to his own demise in politics but to the crippling of the Liberal Party itself, which is now left scrambling to appoint an Opposition leader.

The Liberal campaign was founded on a period of economic success under Howard’s leadership, which the ousted PM credits to exports of coal to India and China. During his administration, Australia has seen its dollar rise in foreign markets where in earlier decades the economy was in poor condition; regardless of the economic rise, it seems that Australians are ready to tackle more pressing issues with Rudd as their leader.

The Labor Party, which theoretically sits centre-left in relation to the Liberal Party’s centre-right affiliation, has won at least 81 of 150 Parliamentary seats in a clear majority.

EDUCATION NEWS

Ramin Ostad



Colleges rise to meet academic demand in Alberta

EDMONTON (CUP) -- A shortage of university seats in Alberta has colleges offering more four-year degree programs to satisfy the increasing demand for education that universities are unable to meet.

“I think there's not enough seats at the universities; there hasn't been for a very long time,” said Carl Amrhein, provost and vice-president of academics at the University of Alberta.

“[Alberta has] one of the smallest, lowest ratios of university seats to high-school graduating classes, so there are simply not enough spaces in the universities.”

The University of Calgary turned away a little over 5,000 qualified applicants in the fall of 2006.

Many of these students have instead attended other institutions, such as Mount Royal College and Grant MacEwan College, to fulfill their post-secondary aspirations.

According to Janet Paterson-Weir, Grant MacEwan College’s provost, availability isn't the only reason students are choosing colleges over universities.

“The research we've been doing indicates that students come here for many different reasons. One would be that they can't get the degree anywhere but here, such as our Child and Youth Care degree. Another reason is they might come here because it's a small environment where the professors are assigned to teach directly in each class.”

Carlie Pochynok, a Journalism student at Grant MacEwan College, agreed. She chose the college not only because it's the only institution in Edmonton with a journalism program, but also because the environment suited her.

“I've gone to both U of A and Grant MacEwan, and at Grant MacEwan the class sizes are the main difference that people notice,” Pochynok said. “You can walk into a lecture hall here with 50 students, and 300 at U of A.”

“Most of the professors here also know you by name, and there's easier access to them and to other students.”

While the demand may be growing at colleges, they were only given the freedom to offer degrees in 2003 when the Alberta government introduced the Post-secondary Learning Act.

The Act allowed the college system to offer baccalaureate degrees, and created a peer-review committee to oversee the creation and quality of all degrees offered by post-secondary institutions in Alberta, ensuring that all degrees are considered equal by potential employers.

Internationally, however, Amrhein believes that the brand of a university may change how a degree is received.

"When you go to China, Japan, Germany, they know who the U of A is because they have experience with us. They probably don't know who Grant MacEwan College is," he said.

"So if you present two degrees to someone in Munich, they know U of A, [and] they probably don't know Grant MacEwan. All else equal, they'll probably pick U of A."

Jinting Zhao, a fourth-year political science student at the U of A, thinks it's a valid distinction. She believes that universities are able to teach at higher level than colleges.

"It's about access to a network of the best minds and the best resources available in any particular field of study. These resources are more likely to pool at the University level rather than the college level," Zhao said.

Amrhein is also concerned about the high-school graduates who never even apply, though.

"When engineering is known to be admitting people whose averages are in the 80s, a whole bunch of students with averages in the middle-70s who could succeed never bother to apply," he said.

"There's the students who are turned down, that's several thousand students a year I guess. [But] I'm as worried or perhaps more worried about the discouraged students who never even apply because they think it's hopeless."

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THE VOICE

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