

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 18 Issue 02
January 15, 2010

Giant Hand

Impetuous talent

AU Profiles

Tyler Nagel

Social Scene

U an im sb on 2!



*Plus: From Where I Sit, The Mindful Bard,
Dear Barb, and much more...*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



Re: "In Conversation with Rita Shelby" by Wanda Waterman St. Louis, v17 i44 (2009-11-20)

Greetings,

I just got through reading the article on Ms. Rita Shelby. I thought that the article did the wonderful artist great justice. A few weeks ago, I had the honor of interviewing this artist on my online radio show, and it was such a huge success. I think the world of this lady, as she stays steady on her artform, and wish her all the best in the world. Thank you for giving more shine to this great artist.

Nabraska Poet

Re: "Around eCampus: Thomas Oates" by Bethany Tynes, v17 i48 (2009-12-18)

Read your article with Thomas Oates, very impressed with this man! Thomas appears to have education as his priority. Newfoundland and his family are very proud of him.

Joyce Crowley

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Christine Purfield



In the closing stages of 2009 I moved, kicking and screaming, into the 21st century: I joined the social networking world. That is, I created a Facebook page.

I caved on my long-standing aversion to groups of any kind (an invitation to a tea party is likely to send me running for the first ferry off the island or remember some long-standing, non-existent prior engagement).

This came at the behest of a cousin in England who informed me “were all on!!get with it U!! U an im sb on 2!!!!!!” (as in:

we’re all on. Get with it, you. You and him should be on too).

Freedom from spelling and grammar rules, not to mention an allowable overuse of the apostrophe, is obviously a draw for some people.

Nevertheless, I thought I’d give it a whirl and so spent a relatively painless few minutes pasting a photo of my dog doing an imitation of me on my “wall.” I carefully avoided all questions about what I like for breakfast, what I want to be when I grow up (still working on that one anyway), and where I like to go on vacation (get your own holiday ideas!).

Now, I have more “friends” than I know what to do with; half of them I don’t actually know and half of the other half I’m not sure I’d socialize with in the “real” world. Each day, Facebook gives me hints as to who might make a good friend. Generally, if you’re a friend of another friend then you’re deemed good enough to be my friend. I thought this was very generous of the nice people who administer Facebook, until my husband’s ex-wife was suggested. Repeatedly.

I was an awkward teenager (there are some who would say that I’m still awkward, but that’s another topic altogether) and found it difficult to make friends. If I was a teenager today, it would be so easy: just click that “Add as friend” button, wait for them to confirm, and you’re all set. Then, when people see that you’re a friend of Joe Smith over in New York, they can’t wait to make you their friend. You must be cool if you have friends in New York, I guess.

My brother’s name is Rob Purfield—he’s into self-promotion so he won’t mind me sharing that with you. One of our cousins, who splatters her whole life on Facebook but who probably would mind if I told you her name, decided that she’d like to add my brother as a friend. So she searched for his name on Facebook and got about 15 results, one of whom is my brother. She then requested friendship with all of them. She now has every Rob Purfield in the world as a friend. Except my brother. He has a Facebook page, but apparently he’s very fussy about who his friends are. He hasn’t accepted my plea to be his friend either. He obviously still has outstanding issues about me sitting on him and pulling his hair when he was seven.

When I was a kid, if you were nosy about someone’s life you surreptitiously rifled through their desk at school, or you took a little peek at their well-hidden diary before rushing out into the schoolyard to tell all.

Now, you openly browse their Facebook pages and they kindly lay it all out for you so as to save you the bother of looking or—heaven forbid—phoning and asking how their life is. Who has time for that these days?

I've actually found it quite fascinating how we're all eager to share every minute detail about our lives with virtual friends, not to mention virtual strangers. It's no wonder that humorists have picked up on social networking as working fodder:

The phone rings. "Hi, Twitter was down this morning. Could you just tell me what you had for breakfast? Thanks!"

Or someone arriving at the pearly gates: "What have you done with your life?" "What? Haven't you been following me on Facebook?"

And my personal favourite: "Got nothing to say? Say it on Twitter!"

The really amusing thing about social networking sites in general, and Facebook in particular, is how people manage to trip themselves up without thinking. There are stories in the media about how insurance companies check Facebook pages to see what claimants are up to. Why would you claim a debilitating injury after a fender bender and then post a picture of yourself two days later doing the samba with a glass of wine in one hand and waving a piece of underwear in the other?

How about the woman who phoned in sick and then immediately went on Facebook to exclaim how dense she thought her boss was, because he didn't figure out that she was faking . . . again? She'd forgotten that she'd added him as one of her three thousand friends. Oops.

One of the benefits of having a friend on Facebook is that they can be "unfriended" in a nanosecond. And the word "unfriend" was the word of 2009 for the New Oxford American Dictionary. Doesn't that tell us something?

DID YOU KNOW?



CanLearn

Pursuing your education can be a complicated (if exciting) venture: choosing a university, filling out enrolment forms, picking classes. And it's even more daunting if you're trying to navigate the complex world of student loans.

If you're new to the process (or still wondering if student loans are right for you), [CanLearn](#) is a government portal that may help make the process easier. From loans to grants to scholarships, CanLearn offers a variety of tools to answer your questions. A short video on the homepage outlines the basics of the student loan system, and there are tools to help you estimate just how much your education will cost before you even begin applying for loans.

Other sections walk you through the details of repaying student loans after graduation. The Continuing Education section includes a Q&A database geared toward adults thinking of returning to school. There's a wealth of information here, and even if the site doesn't answer your specific questions you'll find links to other resources that might, including a variety of partner organizations and the National Student Loans Service Centre.

AU TECH

Bethany Tynes



Second Life

Gunnar Schwede is a Systems Analyst with AU's School of Business, and has played a major role in the development of a virtual AU Island in Second Life. Schwede recently took the time to discuss his efforts, and explain just how this work could benefit students.

"Second Life (SL) is a virtual world developed by Linden Lab that launched on June 23, 2003 and is accessible via the Internet," Schwede explains. "A free client program called the Second Life Viewer

enables its users, called Residents, to interact with each other through avatars. Residents can explore, meet other residents, socialize, participate in individual and group activities, and create and trade virtual property and services with one another, or travel throughout the world."

And this interactive technology could be of key importance to AU students in the future. "As a distance education provider, AU is challenged with making course materials relevant and engaging for individual learners distributed across Canada and, increasingly, the world," says Schwede. "Second Life (or more broadly, virtual worlds) allows AU to bring learners to a common space where they can interact with other learners and participate in immersive learning activities."

One way that students can experience this type of immersive learning environment for themselves is by visiting the AU Island in Second Life, which "was developed with a bit of our university in mind," Schwede says.

"There are office buildings where we hold our 'In World' meetings, an amphitheatre for learning sessions, lectures, demonstrations and live music events. There is also the main AU building. It can be used as a marketing and information area for students." The island also features "a freebie kiosk where one can pick up free items like T-shirts and other things for your avatar."

Great care has been used to faithfully duplicate aspects of the main AU campus in the virtual world. "A quarter of the island has been turned into the boreal forest and part of our Muskeg Creek trail," Schwede notes, adding that this trail leads "all the way to the AU Observatory, which is a 3D Model of the original here at the university."

Second Life also allows for the creation of multiple "layers" of development, and as such, "about 200 metres above the island surface is a classroom area, individualized by subject or course." This area also contains the home of the Freudbot, a project developed by Bob Heller and Mike Procter of the Centre for Psychology. Through this tool, "students can learn about Freudian concepts and theories by 'wandering through the iceberg' and chatting with Freud in his office."

"Bob Heller and Mike Procter are also involved with a related project called Virtual Patients in collaboration with medical educators at Ohio State University and Florida State University. In this project, medical

students practice their interview skills and differential diagnosis skills by visiting with a virtual patient. Health builds are one of the fastest growing areas within the education sector of Second Life," says Schwede.

Also above the surface of the AU Island is a labyrinth "stretching over 150 metres each way" that "can only be conquered by choosing the right answer out of three possible choices," as well as "a Mayan pyramid, surrounded by a jungle with hidden tombs, an urban shopping mall, and a forest, which is still in development."

"At 500 meters, the highest developed height, you will find the AU Library platform containing pyramids showing the history of Athabasca and area in the form of 3D objects, images, and sound recordings," says Schwede. "Other attractions are a pirate ship, floating above the sunken ruins of Atlantis, a beach where waves gently roll on shore, a 300-metre zip line from the highest lookout point down to the edge of the beach, a working hang-glider, guided tour vehicles, our Lil' AU Shoppe and much more."

Schwede encourages AU students to visit and experience the island for themselves, and believes that the possibility of using virtual worlds like Second Life as educational tools should be thoroughly investigated by distance education providers such as AU.

"Virtual worlds are not going away," he says. "Exploring their role in distance education will be critical for AU and all distance educators."

CLICK OF THE WRIST – Jack Hall, the Matchstick Man

Sometimes, interesting discoveries are a bit like sun showers: they appear without notice out of a clear blue sky. These links on the amazing story of Jack Hall arrived the same way. In response to our recent "Matchless" column, Jack's son Tony shared the tale of his dad's days as a deckhand in the 1930s—and the astonishing musical legacy he created. It has to be seen (and heard) to be believed.

Matchstick Instruments

To fully appreciate the clips below, you'll need a little background on Jack's remarkable creations. As a young seaman in the merchant navy, Jack Hall "couldn't pick, strum, or draw a bow." He didn't know anything about carpentry either. But that didn't stop him from whittling down more than 20,000 matchsticks to build a real working fiddle. And that was just the beginning.

Musical Matchstick Man

Glen Campbell is the first musician in this collection of clips, and he performs using Jack's Guinness World Record 1937 Matchstick Guitar. That's right, Jack's entire collection of instruments was painstakingly handmade by him from used matchsticks. There are four segments in this clip, each one featuring instruments made by Jack—and there's even a short performance by the patient builder himself.

Merchant Navy

Along with information on his instruments, there are photos and documents from Jack's early naval career, including a description of the conditions he worked in. Besides gluing thousands of matchsticks together while the ship pitched and rolled beneath him, tight quarters meant he would often have to "move his material into the ship's galley where he continued among the pots and pans."

AU Profiles:

AU Profiles: Tyler Nagel

Christina M. Frey



If you thought the computer age had made printing and printing presses obsolete, you'd be wrong. "It's anything but old-fashioned," says Tyler Nagel, a National Expert in offset printing, and, since 2002, a student in AU's Bachelor of Commerce program.

Here, the e-Commerce major explains why "traditional" printing is key to so many industries, and describes his work with WorldSkills, an Olympics-style international competition of technical skills.

Tyler, who teaches full-time, also shares his strategies for keeping it all in balance—and for getting everything done!

Tyler works full-time for the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), teaching in their Journalism and Digital Graphic Communications programs. "I teach . . . all the stuff that happens after the reporters file their stories and photos," he says. But it isn't just publication layout that's important: more happens during the printing phase than you might suspect.

And it's very, very important. Tyler explains:

"Printing is the fourth-largest manufacturing sector in North America—and the majority of that printing happens with liquid ink on paper." For example, he adds, "Most things in your daily life are printed with 'traditional' offset technology: books, money, newspapers, flyers, catalogues, notepads, business cards, packaging."

Computers might design the type or template, but offset printing technology reproduces it. It's cheaper, better quality, and quicker than what we might think of as "modern" copying technology: laser printing and carbon-based copying. "What most people would think of as old-fashioned is actually a world of multi-

million dollar machines, completely run and controlled by computers, to within fractions of a millimetre of tolerance," Tyler explains.

He should know. He's a National Expert in offset printing for WorldSkills International, an international competition that's second only to the Olympics in size. WorldSkills—essentially, the athletics competition for technical skills—matches up teams from qualifying countries to show technical prowess in 45 different areas. The competitions in each skill area are designed and judged by groups of experts like Tyler, who represents Canada on the expert panel for offset printing.

"It's a game-changer when you move from knowing something is due on a certain date to knowing that you have an hour to complete a task, and that the hour you have is from 4:30-5:30 on Wednesday."

How does one judge a technical competition? It's more than the quality of the final results: speed, operating skills, press cleanup, and resource management all play a part. During the last competition—in Calgary this past fall—14 countries competed on two presses. "Each competitor got to print [only] one job," Tyler says. "Talk about pressure!"

The pressure can be high in the judging area, too. Tyler is grateful for some of the skills he's learned through AU. "The management-oriented courses have taught me a lot about leadership and communication," he says. "[They're] essential skills when you're working through interpreters in four different languages with experts from 14 countries!"

One of the most important skills distance learning has taught him, though, is time management. "It's a constant challenge to balance all the demands in my life," Tyler says. "AU has forced me to learn . . . time management." In fact, this skill is crucial to success in distance learning in general, he feels. "[It] is absolutely essential to avoiding procrastination," he says. "I'm certain more people fail at AU because of procrastination than any other cause."

His main strategy: "A good Day-timer!" Tyler says, and he means it. Instead of setting deadlines, he recommends setting time limits for a task. "It's a game-changer when you move from knowing something is due on a certain date to knowing that you have an hour to complete a task, and that the hour you have is from 4:30-5:30 on Wednesday," he explains.

Time management involves more than scheduling; it's also important to choose carefully what to focus on when studying. "Pay special attention to the learning objectives at the start of each lesson," Tyler advises. "If an assigned reading doesn't directly relate to these, I've found that it's likely background material and can be read in less depth than other readings." It will free up time to focus on more important areas of the coursework, he explains.

Of course, it's also essential to factor in time to pursue personal hobbies and interests. In addition to his work with WorldSkills, Tyler also manages to fit in travelling, backpacking in the mountains in the summertime, and skiing during the winter.

Does the system work? Most of the time! "It helps, but a system is only as good as the will of the user," Tyler admits. "And my will isn't always perfect!"

Christina M. Frey's got her schedule all worked out: everything comes before housework. When she's trying to avoid doing the dishes, she blogs about life at The Twisting Kaleidoscope.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Giant Hand

*Giant Hand is Kirk Ramsay, an impetuous young dude with no musical background who one day decided to start making music anyway. He enjoyed a surprisingly immediate—and positive—response from listening audiences. Recently Kirk made both the cover of Ottawa Magazine and the “Hottest Bands in Canada” list. See [Voice review](#) of his debut album, *Coming Home*.*

Journey into Music

I decided to make music after watching a documentary about Daniel Johnston. I just got this huge urge to make music. I'd always wanted to be in a band, but after watching the documentary I decided to do it on my own. About two or three months after getting my first guitar I was opening for Immaculate Machine, then, about a month after that, Born Ruffians. A few months later I was somehow playing at Ottawa's Bluesfest.

I never really had a chance to sit down and figure out what happened, but I just keep writing music and playing shows and taking it slow. I recorded a full-length album in my apartment. After I'd recorded a few songs I realized a concept album was taking shape. Now it's almost been two years, and I'm still having a good time.

The Creative Life

I don't really sit around trying to think of things. They sort of just pop into my head. Usually right before I fall asleep an entire song will pop into my head. I just try not to think about it. I find if I try too hard to write a song I just don't like it. All the songs on my album were written in one go. They sort of just wrote themselves.

Before, I didn't have an outlet for any of my thoughts. I kind of just thought about them all the time but that's it. Those thoughts never went anywhere. Now they do.

Inspiration

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Daniel Johnston's album, *Hi, How Are You*.



AU OPTIONS

Bethany Tynes



SOAN 384 - The Family in World Perspective

SOAN 384: The Family in World Perspective is a three-credit social science course that provides students with a “wealth of information” about “various family systems in international and multicultural contexts.”

AU student Debbie Hamilton decided to register in this course not only to “fulfill an elective requirement,” but also because she “thought that it would be interesting to learn about different families in different cultures.” Hamilton hoped to gain “a better understanding about why people behave the way they do.”

“I am not finished the course yet,” Hamilton says, “but I have to say that the most favourite part of the course is the research project, because I am able to relate the topic I am researching to my community, which gives me a better understanding of where I live.” Hamilton also finds that the work she has done on her research project has helped her in her job, as she now has a better understanding of her clients.

Hamilton deeply appreciates the support she has received from her tutor throughout the course. “I love my tutor, Lois Johnston,” she says. “She is so very helpful when I have questions. She is always available during tutor hours, always calls back right away if there is a problem with the phone, she emails back promptly and sends marks and assignments back on time.”

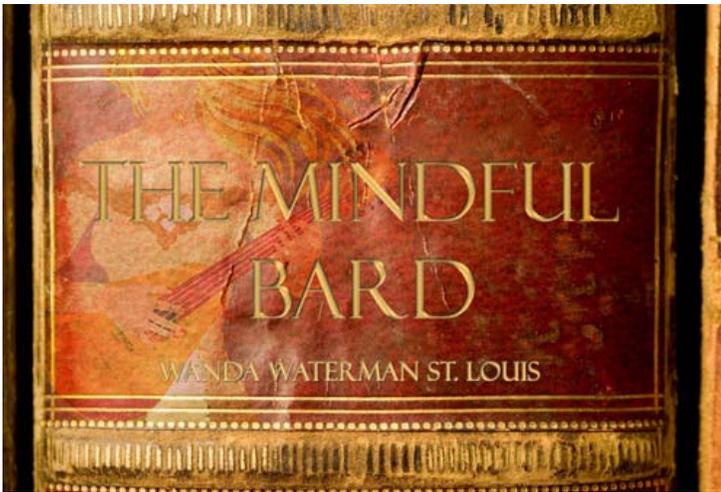
Dr. Johnston has been tutoring SOAN 384 for almost 10 years, and says that “SOAN 384: The Family in World Perspective focuses on the family from an international and cross-cultural perspective and allows students the opportunity to examine cross-cultural responses and solutions to family issues, and to compare such solutions and responses to those in our own culture.

“It is hoped that the student will recognize and come to appreciate the variation in bonding relationships, in forms of family, in ways of raising children, etc. and will acknowledge diversity as a starting point for any discussion or study of family,” she explains.

Though the course was previously in need of updating, Dr. Johnston recently “enjoyed the challenge of revising it,” and says that the revision now “appears to be ready for use . . . The revised course includes numerous readings on recent topics related to the family. For example, one reading (2008) deals with sex selection and international human rights law. Another, (2009) with transnational families.”

One aspect of the course that Dr. Johnston believes may surprise many students is “the international flavour of this course.” In SOAN 384, North American culture is not viewed as the universal norm. This international perspective provides a unique learning experience for students. After adjusting to this surprise, however, Dr. Johnston finds that The Family in World Perspective often allows students to develop “a genuine interest in further studies in Anthropology.”

“Some students may find some definitions and viewpoints controversial,” Dr. Johnston warns. She hopes, though, that “students will postpone judgment until they have completed the readings and their own research.”



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

Book: John Geiger, *The Third Man Factor: The Secret to Survival in Extreme Environments*

Publisher: Penguin Canada

Publication date: 2009

Someone is Out There

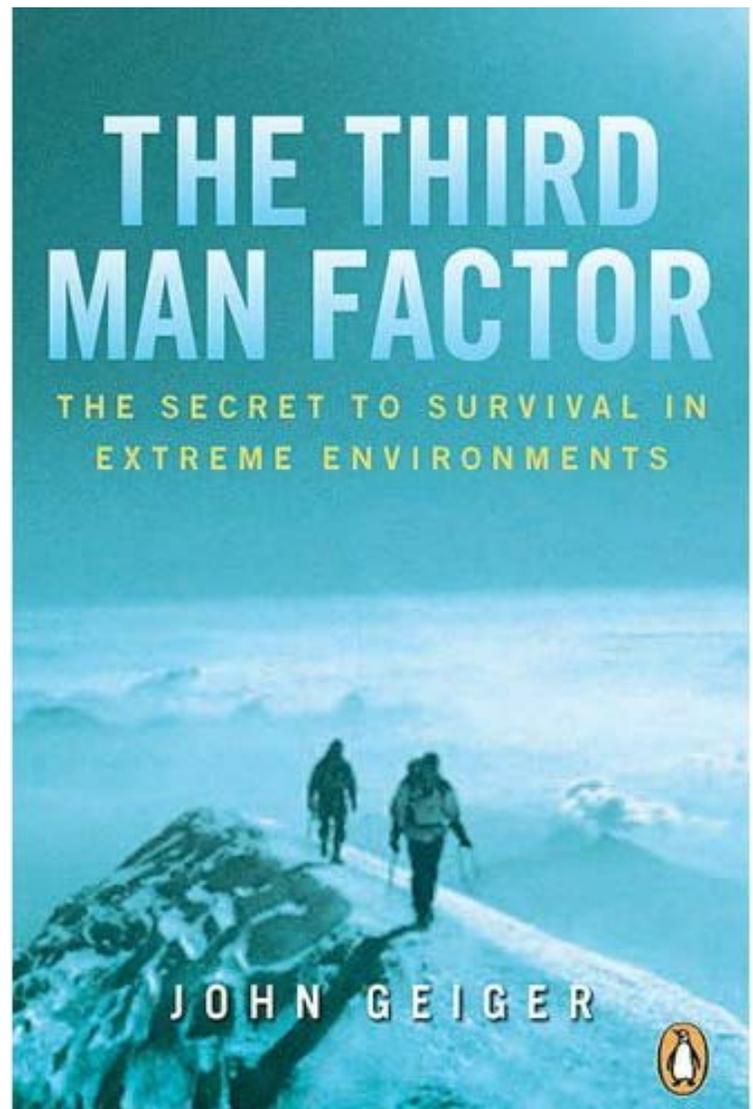
*"Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road*

*There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
—But who is that on the other side of you?"*

T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"

The passage above was inspired by Ernest Shackleton's account of his 1914-16 expedition to the island of South Georgia in the South Atlantic Ocean. His ship having been slowly wrecked by ice, Shackleton had set off with a small group of men to a whaling station at the opposite end of the frozen, mountainous island. During one particularly harrowing stretch Shackleton, starving, exhausted, chilled to the bone, and despairing for his life, saw an extra man in front of him, one more than his companions.

It would be years before Shackleton would be willing to speak openly about this extra man, but as soon as the confession was out of his mouth it was heavily publicized and immediately followed by other accounts from explorers who'd had the same experience. In fact, the other explorers in his team revealed that they too had seen the extra man but had not told anyone because they'd been afraid of being thought mentally unstable. (This may explain why most reports of the third man phenomenon, not counting ancient religious texts, emerged in the 20th century.)



The Third Man Factor presents us with a body of detailed anecdotal evidence that while enduring a complex of privations—often including pain, illness, hunger, thirst, extreme cold, monotony, and isolation—many people either see or sense the presence of a person who turns out to be not there at all.

There is an amazing range of common factors in these experiences. For one thing the visitants nearly always disappear once the perceiver sees that help is coming. The visitants are often the same sex as the perceiver and sometimes appear in the form of a dead loved one. And in many instances the visitant appears on the perceiver's right and even apes the perceiver's posture and movements.

The book has amazing insights into human nature, and you can't read it without developing a truly humbling grasp of the profoundly social nature of Homo sapiens.

Significantly, the degree of warmth and comfort the presence brings increases with the level of danger confronting the perceiver.

The religious often call these apparitions angels, or more specifically, guardian angels, an assumption that raises a host of theological questions. Why, for example, do the presences appear to some and not all, as often to atheists as to believers?

Scientific minds have generally attributed the illusions to delirium brought on by extreme conditions. Trouble is, third man appearances do not share the chaotic, senseless, sometimes malevolent nature common to hallucinations. The presences consistently bring calm and peace, even words of guidance, which in the case of Charles Lindbergh actually guided him safely through a long and heavy bank of fog on his famous flight across the Atlantic.

So what causes these apparitions?

I'm not above spoiling an ending, but the research presented at the end of this book is so varied and soul-stirring that I can't do it justice here. I will say that the proposed reason that fascinates me the most has something to do with a primitive brain function coined "bicameral mind" by psychologist Julian Jaynes, in which the decision-making process is experienced as something happening outside one's own mind, mouthed by external beings. Hence the soldiers of *The Iliad* heard their personal moment-by-moment decisions coming not from within their own craniums but from the Olympians. It is argued that in times of extreme stress, when multiple stressors are at work, this primitive way of thinking re-emerges.

The book has amazing insights into human nature, and you can't read it without developing a truly humbling grasp of the profoundly social nature of *Homo sapiens*. It would seem that the thing that distinguishes life from death is in fact the company of a loving other. The absence of such an other is a living death, and those able to summon such a presence can survive much.

The Third Man Factor manifests seven of The Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it gives me tools enabling me to respond with compassion and efficacy to the suffering around me; 3) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 5) it is about attainment of the true self; 6) it stimulates my mind; and 7) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on my view of existence.

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.



*From
Where
I Sit*
Hazel Anaka

A Bold Prediction

I don't know what astrologers and clairvoyants have said about 2010 but based on what I've seen less than two weeks in I predict the craziness will continue. From matters sublime to sordid, from issues vital to vacuous, from people astute to asinine, there is no compelling indication that this year will be any better than last or the one before or the one before or the . . .

I suspect one or more potboilers are in the works chronicling the rise and stupendous fall of Tiger Woods. Analysts will continue to speculate how one (albeit iconic) man's snake-like behaviour has impacted both the worlds of golf and the sponsorship business. "How low can you go?" used to refer to the limbo, not a star's skid into notoriety.

Just hitting the front pages here is the possibility of Northern Ireland's own Mrs. Robinson's affair with a "boy" bringing down her husband's government. We are assured she is under "acute psychiatric care." And the beat goes on.

Notwithstanding hundreds of medical studies there is finally a compelling reason to try to lose weight this year: full body (!) scans at airports around the world. Thanks to the twit with exploding underwear and some deranged people's willingness to die "for the cause" we are all going to be further inconvenienced and have our privacy eroded. What's next: routine cavity searches?

The world is watching (or is it not watching?) the battle of the late-night talk show hosts. I for one couldn't get into Jay Leno at prime time and found myself drifting to Letterman, which I would have found unthinkable only months ago. There are reputations, broken contracts, megabucks, ratings, and advertisers at stake here. Can we all say Craig Ferguson?

With two Tory floor-crossers, growing public dissent, and government's sagging numbers provincial politics has become interesting. Pundits, political scientists, and venters alike are weighing in on this issue and it will dominate for all of this year and indeed until the next election, likely in 2012. Being a political observer is a little like driving by a motor vehicle collision: too gruesome for words but impossible to turn away from.

The pain of unemployment and fortunes lost (or at least badly battered) will continue for the foreseeable future. Experts and Joe Public alike are watching for the teeny tiny baby steps of an economy on the mend and wonder when each of us will feel it in our own lives and pocketbooks.

So why have I chosen to focus on negativity and superficiality? Two reasons. If you've been around more than a few years you know that while the faces and names might be new the underlying stories are not and this too shall pass. Secondly, with most of these things if we don't laugh we're likely to cry. Each of us will continue to do the best we can every day in our own lives. Whether life brings us comic relief or hair-pulling frustration is largely our own choice, from where I sit.

Sister Aurora

There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .

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So then I call Mike.

He asks me why we even need him to go with us. So I tell him it's because women have been getting assaulted in the park at night and we'd just feel safer having a guy with us.

You know what he said?

He said the women were just making it all up, that they wanted it and were ashamed to admit it...

...and so they went around saying they were raped, getting guys in trouble for nothing.

I know he was talking about me.



He thinks I made the whole thing up 'cause I didn't want people to think I was a slut. I should have just kept it a secret!





Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Constant Need for Reassurance Takes a Toll

Dear Barb:

I've been involved with a woman for the past six months. We are both in our mid-thirties and are divorced. We really connected and got along fantastic at the beginning. In fact, I thought everything was going well until a few months ago when she seemed to become very insecure and had doubts about whether our relationship could work.

It seems no matter how much I try to reassure her that everything is fine, she continues to have doubts. We have already broken up once but were able to reconcile. I love this woman very much but I don't know how to handle her constant doubts. I don't want to end this relationship, but I'm not sure how to make things better. Hope you can help.

Ken

Hi, Ken. Thanks for writing. You definitely have a challenging situation, but because you are hanging in there I'm sure this can be worked out.

First of all, do you know anything about your girlfriend's past? Has she had some difficult relationships, maybe some betrayals that could be triggering these insecurities and doubts? You said you are both divorced. Do you know the details of her previous marriage?

Perhaps her parents or other family members are divorced, thus causing her to lose faith in the longevity of relationships. You indicated that these insecurities have only arisen in the last few months. Perhaps as the relationship is becoming more serious she is growing fearful that something may happen to cause it to end.

Many events can prompt insecurities in relationships. As well, something in your behaviour could be triggering her doubts without you even realizing it. You mentioned that you are reassuring her but her misgivings continue. Have you sat down together to discuss the nature of her doubts? Does she have fears about your ability to be loyal and faithful to her? It is very important that you discover the basis of the doubts in order to discuss and resolve them.

This task may be more than the two of you can handle alone. Since you really love this woman and want this relationship to succeed I would suggest you both see a professional counsellor.

Many couples seek counselling before entering marriage, as it is better to find out early if you can resolve problems prior to entering into a more permanent living arrangement or a marriage.

Good luck, Ken. I hope I was helpful.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.



AU's People and Places

Cindy Kilborn

Cindy Kilborn spent 22 years as the Administrative Manager of a large Edmonton law firm before retiring in 1991. After moving to Baptiste Lake and "spending a couple of years being 'retired,'" however, Kilborn decided that she "much preferred working" and joined AU as the Manager of Learning Services Tutorial in 1996. In January of 2008, she became Manager, Special Projects, in the Office of the Vice President, Academic.

Kilborn's "first exposure to AU" came prior to her "retirement," when "law students who were articling with the firm" took required accounting courses through AU. "I spent many an hour assisting these students with their courses," Kilborn explains, "and was very impressed with the breadth of the courses being offered by distance through AU."

"When the opportunity to join AU became available I jumped in with both feet and here I am 12-plus years later," Kilborn says. "Best decision I ever made!" From her office on the main AU campus in Athabasca, Kilborn works "to oversee and undertake specific project work, either developmental or research," in support of the role of the Vice President, Academic.

"This involves an ongoing commitment to acquiring understandings about the operations of the university, as well as developing knowledge bases in a wide variety of substantive areas related to the effective management and delivery of open and distance learning experiences for graduate and undergraduate students," Kilborn explains. "It also entails an ongoing understanding of the operations of the university, developing and maintaining lines of communication, and consultation across the University."

In her current role as Manager of Special Projects, Kilborn doesn't feel that there is such a thing as an "average" day. "Every day is different depending on what I am working on at any given time," she says. "Some days I spend all day doing research, other days I spend all day in meetings and/or consulting with others. Highlights are when a project 'comes together' and we have a cohesive plan to move forward."

Kilborn enjoys "the challenges and complexity" of her position, as well as "researching and learning about different aspects of distance education; what is happening within other distance education institutions; [and] how can we improve/advance AU in online delivery."

"Effective management and delivery strategies for open and distance learning experiences for graduate and undergraduate students are core to the success of our academy," says Kilborn. "I believe that the projects I work on foster these goals and support the smooth running of the university."

Kilborn spends her spare time enjoying nature with her husband and their two Newfoundland Retriever dogs, Duskie and Teddie. "I enjoy long walks through the woods with our dogs (even in -40 degree weather), canoeing, travelling, and spending time with my family," Kilborn says, which now includes a great-grandchild.

With her husband, Kilborn has also "spent considerable time travelling in South America and Mexico," and as such, she believes that "it is now time for [her] to learn to communicate in their native tongue." She plans to join "the student population by going back to school to learn to speak Spanish."

AUSU UPDATE



New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners

The new AUSU Handbook/Planners are in the final stages of creation, and should be available within the next couple of months. We had great response on it being full colour, so we'll be doing that once more. Also, numerous suggestions for improvements have been heard and we're fitting in what we can while still keeping the book at a convenient, compact size.

Watch the AUSU front page for the pre-order form, which should be up in early December!

SmartDraw Program Renewal

Some of you who took advantage of our program to provide SmartDraw software to members have been getting notifications that your software license will soon be expiring. Fortunately, AUSU will be continuing this program, so if you haven't already, go to the AUSU home page to download the newest version.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

Think AUSU for Christmas

If you haven't already, take a look at our [merchandise catalogue](#) on the front page. Show your AUSU colors on your tree with one of our glass ornaments, and the hoodies and baby jumpers are great gifts for those important people who are supporting your pursuit of your degree.

We also have a selection of other items, such as *Voice* mugs and USB hubs, when you want to show where you get your student-focused news from.

Lock Loan Program Cancellation

Not everything is good news. And unfortunately, due to continued loss of loaner locks that was well beyond our expectations, AUSU has determined that it simply cannot continue to loan locks out to students at the Edmonton and Calgary Exam Centres. However, the locks are still available for purchase, and their popularity attests to their use and convenience. Used locks are being sold for \$2, new ones for \$4. Contact ausu@ausu.org for details.

The locks themselves are small and allow you to set your own three-digit combination, good not only for lockers at exam centres but also for the gym or anywhere that lets you use your own lock to guard your stuff.

AUSU Council Down to Eight

AUSU will be starting the New Year with only eight council members. Heather Fraser was removed from Council as a result of repeated absence from Council meetings. It is always a hard decision for Council when we have to remove someone the members have elected, but without full participation it gets more difficult for Council to move forward. Council does hope, however, that this gives her more time for her many other endeavours, and wishes her the best.

Election Policy Changes

AUSU has made some adjustments to the timeline of the elections. Last year we had a number of complaints that the election period was just too long. People lost interest between when it started and when the voting period rolled around. The new policy shortens the timelines for nomination and campaigning considerably, although we have left intact the four-day voting period to be sure that all members have an opportunity to make their voices heard. Full details on the changes will be released on the AUSU website shortly, and Council has set the date of this upcoming election to March 7, 2010. Voting will be until March 11, 2010, with more details as to how you can participate to be available shortly on the AUSU website.

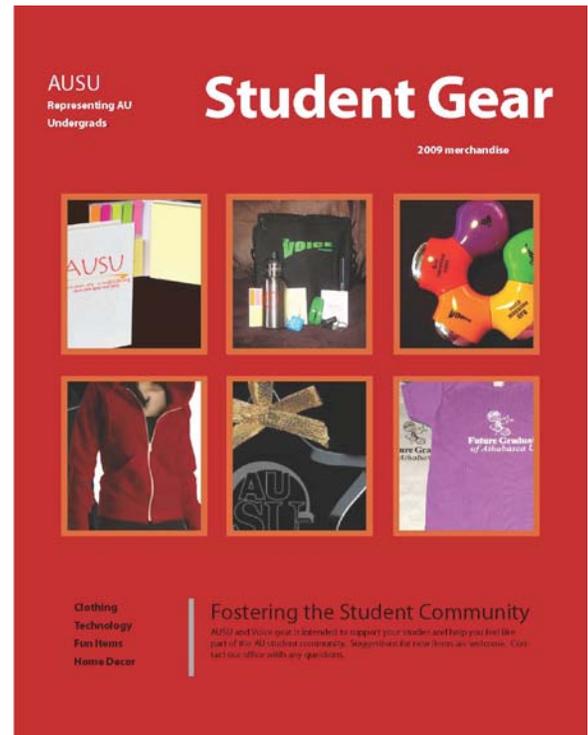
AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union

By far the most common complaint we hear from members is that some tutors take far too long to respond and that there is too little communication between certain tutors and students. With more studies emerging that show the likelihood of students completing a distance-based course can be directly related to the amount of contact they have with their instructor, AUSU views these complaints as particularly grievous. To attempt to address this, AUSU is seeking a meeting with the tutors' union to try to discuss some ways that the Students' Union and Tutors' Union can work together to ensure that both tutors and students get the support they need to make sure students get the contact they need to get them through their courses.

AUSU Thanks Minister Horner—With Odd Results

AUSU took the opportunity earlier last month to write a letter to Alberta Advanced Education Minister Doug Horner to thank him for holding firm to the regulated limits on undergraduate tuition, even though the government is under increasing budgetary pressure. Unfortunately, shortly after the letter was sent, Minister Horner announced that they were considering changing the regulation to allow significant increases to tuition beyond the regulated amounts.

Editor's note: In response to public concern on this issue, Minister Horner has clarified in interviews that only tuition for certain programs would be open to review and possible increase.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Strike now possible for Ontario college instructors

A recent vote brought the possibility of strike action one step closer for some 9,000 Ontario college instructors. According to the [CBC](#), roughly 57 per cent of those voting gave their union “the green light” to strike.

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) represents the faculty members. An OPSEU spokesperson said that, even if a strike were to happen, it wouldn’t take place until at least mid-February.

The union had been in talks with the colleges for five months before negotiations broke down on December 15 last year. The main issues concerning the union are academic freedom and workload. Another key issue is last November’s decision by management that would have imposed “its offer on the teachers without a vote.”

According to a press release, the offer would raise the maximum yearly salary to just under \$104,000, and would also see salaries increase “by eight per cent over four years.”

The provincial government is urging both sides to think of the 200,000 full-time students who would be caught in the middle of a strike. John Milloy, the Minister for Training, Colleges and Universities, expressed his concern in a release. “I am very concerned that the ongoing contract dispute between faculty and Colleges has the potential to interrupt classes for thousands of Ontario students,” he said.

In Foreign News: Union workers to have dedicated online college

America’s labour unions are approximately 11.5 million members strong, and a new online college is being created especially for those members and their families. The initiative is a joint project of the Princeton Review and the National Labor College, along with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (A.F.L.-C.I.O.).

As [The New York Times](#) reports, the new college is “tentatively named the College for Working Families.” Courses are planned to begin this fall, and the college will be “the first and only accredited degree-granting online institution devoted exclusively to educating union members.” Bachelor’s degrees would comprise the initial offerings, with master’s and associate’s degrees to follow.

Besides focusing on “affordable and accessible” training, a key goal for the college will be student retention. As Michael Perik, president of the Princeton Review, told reporters, “We enter this venture with the strong belief that not enough attention has been paid to student remediation and retention.”

The college will survey union members to determine demand for various programs. So far, courses planned for the fall include business, allied health sciences, criminal justice, and education.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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