

Grapevine Journal Collection

Office Files

"Successes on A Rough Road" Grapevine Journal History

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COMMUNICATIONS

Project Grapevine/The Grapevine Journal

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Student Services Building - Room 25
East Lansing, Michigan 48823
(517) 353-9066 or 353-9067

BLACK PRESS
/ BLACK POWER

May 29, 1973

Dear Sir:

Enclosed you will find an excerpt from the
Grapevine Journal's presentation at the May 25
M.S.U. Board of Trustee's meeting.

JAMES E. BALLARD
Executive Director *Chairman*
Advisory Board *Board of Directors*
Project Grapevine *The Grapevine Journal*

GEORGE WHITE
Director *Senior Editor*
Project Grapevine *The Grapevine Journal*

RONALD JOHNSON
Editor in Chief
The Grapevine Journal

SUCSESSES ON A ROUGH ROAD

Background:

June 1971. The Grapevine is published, the first newspaper produced by Project Grapevine, and the first newspaper produced by Black students at MSU.

The Grapevine, an eight page tabloid produced by two students, is composed on a manual typewriter and pasted together on a makeshift light table.

Two thousand Grapevines printed...humble beginnings.

Sept. 1971. The Grapevine becomes the Grapevine Journal ...adopts small change in format. Circulation climbs to 10,000. Staff increases to four.

Printing on donations, the following seven issues were published with no changes in facilities. Circulation holds at 10,000.

May 1972: Eight staff members produce 24 pages, the largest in the paper's history. Contents include a special section on national presidential primaries and an analysis on the protest of Black athletes at MSU.

Grapevine Journal honored with First Class Award from Associated Collegiate Press, University of Minnesota

Summer 1972. Advertising and revenue base become tools for expansion. Founder James Ballard turns major administrative duties over to George White in order to build an advertising staff. W. Kim Heron becomes editor.

July 1972. This innovative summer staff reaches its academic arm into the Lansing community by helping to produce and publish for Citizens Congress Inc.

Plans for the coming year include:

- * Improvement in quality
- * Composition and printing from a professional printer--Printco, Inc., Greenville.
- * Efforts to gain equal access to University facilities.

The Michigan State News which through the cooperation of the university annually receives over 100,000 dollars in student taxes sets up an Alternative Voices Fund for 20,000 dollars.

Welcome Week

Summer labors produce a 32-page paper. The full color tabloid drew 1,700 dollars in advertising, combining for the first time editorial quality with revenue making potential. Circulation is raised to 40,000 on

order to give the total student body an alternative voice and a community awareness. Increased circulation increases Grapevine identity and the newspaper becomes an institution on campus.

Subsequent issues continue to combine this editorial and advertising quality with a consistency in meeting deadlines, something never before achieved. The Grapevine Journal is scheduled four times a term and all dates are met. Campus interest increases.

September 1972. The staff of the Grapevine Journal doubles. THE GRAPEVINE JOURNAL HAS BECOME THE LARGEST BLACK STUDENT NEWSPAPER IN THE NATION.

With its new consistency the Grapevine Journal begins to serve the community, bridging a gap between Black and White by providing important information and news not otherwise covered at Michigan State.

Community Recognition

The Grapevine Journal opens to the academic community --luncheon seminars for students to talk to journalism experts and community scholars. Guests included such notables as Chester Higgins, Robert E. Johnson, Professor George Hough III, and President Wharton. This led to a former ASMSU president to call Project Grapevine "one of the most important projects we have ever funded."

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March 6, 1973. The Grapevine Journal begins to compose its own paper again--the quality layout formerly produced by professionals is maintained by the student staff. Layout becomes a part of the learning process. The general student populace is invited to take part in this learning process. Many participate.

Within this recent period, the Grapevine Journal receives marginal federal and national advertising and receives recognition from national figures such as Chester Higgins (of the Federal Communications Commission), Robert Johnson (executive editor of Jet magazine) and Jesse Jackson (director of Operation PUSH), and local figures and organizations such as Charles Mitchner (Lansing area Urban League), Dick Letts (Lansing Human Relations Department) and New Detroit Inc.

During this same period the Associated Collegiate press award is renewed.

	Growth		Editorial
	Staff Size	Advertising Revenue	Quality
June 1971	2	0	No Recognition
May 1973	35	1350	1st Class Associated Collegiate Press Award

With few resources but a will to work, achieve, learn and teach, the Grapevine Journal, to this point--has survived and thrived.

A. J. Leibling succinctly explained the working of the press in American society when he said, "Freedom of the press is reserved for those who own one." The limited number of journalistic organs is a threat to the practical freedom of speech which deteriorates continually as the number of newspapers printed decreases annually and while those continuing in business become increasingly the proprietors of communication and multi-industry complexes. For minorities who are largely excluded from the working press as restricted as it is, the burden is doubled. The whole situation may be regrettable in the society at large but on a college campus there is no excuse for it when we have documents such as the academic freedom report which states "the university is to promote the advancement of discussion in a democratic society."

Since 1969, the Grapevine Journal and its parent organization Project Grapevine have been trying to drive a wedge in the press monopoly of one paper on the MSU campus. Beginning as a one page mimeographed publication and struggling to become the largest minority campus publication in the country, the Journal found the doors of opportunity consistently closed against an alternative publication. At MSU one paper was assured over \$100,000 annually one paper had been recognized by the university for 63 years, one paper could claim the entire MSU student body undergraduate as paid subscribers because of the university registration process. One paper- a private corporation at that- could claim the largest captive audience in the area, the entire MSU student body.

In our five years of struggle we have threatened court action called meetings, written letters, written articles, pleaded on television, gone before the MSU Board of Trustees and in the fall of 1973 we turned to student government with the proposal on which the present Student Media Appropriations Board is based. We are proud that this body is now making the new level of student press freedom possible on the MSU campus.

We are presently approaching the Board with a two part proposal. We would like nothing better than the immediate restoration of the Grapevine Journal which we began with, but not even SMAB money could bring back the Journal immediately. What we are proposing is a new weekly magazine called Good Times and support for a program to rebuild the now decimated ranks of the Grapevine Journal in order that the paper can begin publishing monthly in the spring of 1975.

When the Journal closed in the fall of 1973, due to lack of funds, all staff continuity was lost. Like other student groups, the Journal has depended on a smooth succession of personnel with those who acquire skills passing them on to newer students who will in turn pass their skills on before they graduate. But because of the loss of the 1973-74 academic year such did not happen and there will be only one person returning for the entirety of the coming year who has an understanding of the full production process of the paper. It will take fall term to recruit and begin training a new staff for the Journal and winter term for them to receive further training and some practical experience with Good Times with the guidance of an advisor and consultant before beginning on the Grapevine Journal. It looks like an overly long route, yet we see it as the only way to preserve the quality that we have always strived and reached for the Grapevine Journal.

In the meantime we are pursuing Good Times for several basic reasons:

1. The magazine is a small 6 page weekly publication which requires less monies output, a smaller staff and increasingly self-sufficient over the next few years, thus requires no SMAB input after several years.
2. The magazine ~~offers~~ offers students a specialized publication covering primarily sports and entertainment, two areas of continuing student concern and interest.

3. The magazine will have minimal staff and operational problems because of its size, but even more important, it offers a training ground for the minority journalists and interested whites, especially those who will be producing the Grapevine Journal during spring term.

4. The magazine can produce revenues equal to 25% of cost other than printing, composition and delivery. Thus the monies we are requesting only represent the production cost.

Project Grapevine is asking for full support for its publications for this year 74-75. We are additionally asking for support for the training and workshop sessions and seminars to be run by the Project for the next three terms; and for the cost of printing the three issues of the Grapevine Journal to be published during spring term.

Though we are attempting to rebuild the Grapevine Journal, the SMAB Board can certainly look to our past record of success, when there was a minimum of resources at our hands, as an indication of our proposal feasibility. We offer a product and a process with the training for minority journalists and communications specialists through practical experience. We introduced a new set of voices into the lopsided field of communications, thus we have given minority students a greater awareness with the Grapevine Journal in which they have gone on to work with newspapers such as The New York Times, The Detroit Free Press, The St. Petersburg Herald and The Lansing State Journal. We also have conducted special seminars and training sessions that reach beyond our own workers. During the winter and spring of 1973 we hosted regular cold-cut luncheons bringing together students with faculty, administrators and professionals to discuss the communications industry. Our guests included Dr. George Hough III of the Journalism Department, MSU President Clifton R. Wharton; Jet Magazine Editor Robert Johnson and

Federal Communication Commission counsel Chester Higgins Jr.

Our product, the Grapevine Journal is a needed communications vehicle for the minority student severed from his community and news of relevance of his life. The information is sorely needed too by the white student groping ^{use another word} for an understanding of a society faced with the options of understanding its own pluralism or disintegrating.

In closing, Project Grapevine is proud of the role it has played in creating this Student Media Appropriations Board, the likes of which we are sure exists nowhere else in the country. We are proud too, of those who have struggled with us and particularly of student government leaders who have made this board a reality. We hope that the present Board will set a precedent for those Boards of the future by dealing promptly and justly with this proposal and those that follow.