

Grapevine Journal Collection

Narrative on the Grapevine Journal

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Section IV  
The Welcome Week Paper:

Thro ugh Kate July, Madelyn Bridget handled most of the material for the paper (assignments) while I worked on the mechanics of the pa er, facilities and financial matters with the Board and the committee. H owever, with the progression of the summer, I became more involved in the editorial depart-ment in an acitive capacity, following up on reporters' assignments, taking over responsibility for the Monitor section, and writing stories myself, two full page features, a shorter Lansing story, two reviews and a column. One of the features was a highly abridged version of what was to be a multi-part s tory on the history of the Black student at MS U, With the exception of ~~an~~ unpublished research by Dr. Ruth Hamilton which the article drew somewhat upon, the article was the only one of its kind to appear in the area. The toehr feature story was the continuing saga of the Grapevine Journal. The Lansing piece was on Joel Ferguson's Lansing campaign, the column was a Black assesment of the Watergate mess, the reviews which an in the second ~~issue~~ covered a new book by Victor Hernandez Cruz and a record by Wayne Davis.

Other than myself and George White, the entire Monitor section of the paper was solicited from outside of the Journal staff from both the campus and larger community. At the time of closing we had made contacts with a number of writers f~~or~~ continuing work to appear in the Monitor section. These included C. Patrick LaRowe, MS U professor of economics; Rosa Morales of WKAR and El Renacimiento; Roland Williams, p~~re~~sident of the Black Pre-Med club; Nkem Nwankwo on the international scene with his background as a journalist on the continent; the cabinet of ASMSU; people from the CU D like Richard Thomas and Leroy Johnson; and we were working on COGS and almost had a piece from them in the second issue

There are some flaws in the technical appearance of the Monitor section but the section as a whole carries what it was intended to showcase, an area where a defunct activity like thinking can be exhibited on the campus.

Editorial confusion increased from late July on as we were moving to complete the paper and trying to move the final deadline for the paper from Sept. 3 to August 25. At that point we threw off the sub-headlines we had been working under originally which we had worked out at the beginning of the summer. It killed some of the methodical approach that we had been trying to get into the paper. With Gail Russel and Art Levin giving some assistance, Madelyn Bridget took most of the weight in the sections other than Monitor. George White was able to help somewhat on the Sports-Entertainment section although he could only work when he came up from Detroit. Madelyn was also taking classes that term.

From mid-August on, almost the total consciousness of Madelyn and myself, centered around finishing the Welcome Week paper. Writers--staff and free lance alike--had to be cornered about finishing their work. Some of the articles simply never were done to satisfaction and never saw print. There was a shakeup when Angie Lee quit her job at the beginning of August which left an unstable situation with regard to artists. Will Roberts was hired to take her place, but he never really functioned well within the organization in a formal capacity. There was some lack of coordination between the editorial and the advertising departments which he became quite adept at exploiting. Roberts stayed on until Labor Day and left a number of things undone. (we wound up with an excellent piece by an ~~high school~~ elementary school teacher



as a side effect though).

This last mad rush though, was simply a matter of filling the material in. The conceptualization of the paper and its new format had all been worked out in late June and early July when Angie Lee and Madelyn Bridget made the mock pages for the "Grapevines" New Look" a tight functionally sectioned paper patterned extensively after Newsday but also borrowing a trick or two from magazines like "Phonograph Record" magazine.

Nowhere was the rush as bad as in photography where our search for summer facilities had been futile. I had two high school students recommended to me by the Lansing Boys Club and tried both of them out on test assignments before settling on George Blackmon. He produced most of the original work that appeared in the Welcome Week issue and did most of his dark room work at the Boys Clubs' darkroom until they closed. The ~~final~~ final photo work was taken care of at Info Services and Linn Prints. Blackmon was a problematic worker, not really mature enough for the job and ended by leaving before the end of the summer.

Madelyn Bridget and myself made a number of driving trips between East Lansing and St. Johns and Ithica in order to speed up the flow of copy for the paper. The pasteups were begun on Aug. 31 and the were done almost entirely by Madelyn and myself for the editorial material--the people who "helped" were usually more trouble than help. The process was slow and difficult because we were also continuing to run copy, write copy and finish the material for the paper as we were putting it together--being mentally in two places at one time really. It came to a saving of \$440 for the work involved though.

We finally drove the completed paper as far as it was to Ithica where we finished the copy elements of the paper. I rented a motel room in Ithica that night and drove the

paper from Ithica to Greenville the next morning. The paper was finished in Ithica that night, Sept. 11 and it came back to the campus the Friday of Sept. 15. Madelyn encountered home problems as a result of spending so much of her time with the paper that summer and took the week off in Detroit, leaving the distribution of the paper to James Ballard and myself. They were delivered on campus by the two of us with Duane Wilson, Tony White, Art Horowitz and George White. The off campus was taken care of by White, Wilson, Horowitz and myself the next day.

The papers were available at every dormitory and major building on campus as well as 25 off-campus locations. The initial contacts for the off-campus sights had been made by Madelyn Bridget and agreements had been closed by Ballard. A total of 887 papers were also distributed by mail, about 400 of these going to the Lansing community from a list of names taken from the local Cotillion programs of past years supplied by a Lansing resident for us. (An earlier program had attempted to a subscription drive thorough /What Conyers of the local Boys' Clubs. The boys were to carry sign-up sheets in the community for the paper and receive for their effort advance prizes as well as 2¢/name gathered and an additional 2¢ for each paper they later delivered. The plan fell through when Conyers lost control of the sheets with the kids and could not gather them back in time.)

#### Assesing Welcome Week

The Welcome Week paper has some flaws in it in terms of design where we compromised form for content at points. This was noticeable in the campus section. The monitor section was spoken of earlier, the Sports looked good, family looked bland, the off-campus section was highly informative for student but less so for a campus resident. Most important, the paper existed with an inner consistency which had been sought from the beginning.

### advanced Plans

Unfortunately, the Welcome Week issue was only one of the things which we had planned to have had completed when we rounded the bend into the beginning of the fall term. By that time, the first two issues were supposed to be entirely canned to run--there was just barely enough to get by the second issue when combined with new material. But the staff was in shambles, as noted in an earlier section.

Section V  
The Grapevine Journal Ad Hoc Committee on the Grapevine Journal:

At the Journal's first meeting with the Board we gave the following budget to the Board of Trustees for our operation in 1973-74:

Revenues	\$40,000
Ex penditures	
Personnel	\$39,069
Circulation	5,400
Editorial Expenses	3,300
Production	37,151
Advertising	600
Office and general	4,100
<u>Contingency</u>	<u>\$ 3,500</u>
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	<u>\$93,120</u>

Projected Defecit from Operations \$53,020

Equipment	\$22,410
Previous Year's Debt	<u>\$13,345</u>
Total Funding Required	\$88,775

This budget reflected the direction which we decided on for the paper, and even though we appointed a our own ad hoc committee to look into the question fo funding the paper for the coming year, this budget was our basic weight around our necks.

The committee of Anita Shelton, Madelyn Bridget and myself was set up as an internal strategy finding body to find some feasible alte native for the coninuation of the paper. The committee worked on various combinations of street sales, expense cuts, machinery vs. no machinery etc. But the basic conclusion of the committee was an anti-clumactic fidning that if there was no money there was no paper. On theat subject there were no alternatives.

There was discussion of the possibility of selling the paper by subscriptions, this would mean however, that the paper would become less rather than more visible at a crucial time when building an advertisi ng base was important. The same arguement was applied to printing frequency. Either would have hurt advertising and possibly voided the advertising contracts

which had already been sold. These kindof alternative directions might have been real options during May or June when there wa flexibility. After putting trust more or less in the university structure, by mid-July we had laeadey made too many commitments in one direction.

And any plan would have to have startigg capital. Money would have to come from some source to cover the costs of operating the paper until the paper until as steady flow of advertising money began to support the paper at whatever level it was to continue as. Even forgetting about the compu-graphic equiptm nt, there weere the costs of printing hte paper and of key personnel. The fantasy we ente tained in early July that we could cut staff costs by having the writers and photographers go without pay until the paper began to turn a profit, was one thing. But janitors, secreta-ies, artists, account executives, and composition people show such dedication even more rarely.

The committee investigated every option except going back to the level that we had existed on the previous year. Evn that was not a real option. The previous y ar we had had a guarantee of our printing bill from the State News Alternative Voices committee. We could not even start the year out with credit from our printers, they wanted a check or university purchase order before printing each issue.

At the end of the summer we sent letters to COGS and the Alternative Voices Committee asking that they loan us \$6,600 to cover the printing costs until the advertising moeny began to flow back to us. Both failed.



Section VI  
Last Ditches and Other Sources:

The Concert Packet

Several days before the end of July were spent trying to set up a concert for July in the I.M. as fund raiser for the Journal. Several acts including Todd Rundgren and Jim Croche were investigated during that time. There were two things going against any concert from the start, most groups either take summer easy or make a big killing playing festivals and large concerts, and at the same time, the summer student population in East Lansing at its nadir and the past experience with summer concerts by Asmsu though years ago was one of failure. An I.M. date was secured for Jim Croche and the concert was moving ahead until our contract negotiations broke down over the question of a 60-40 split of the profits going in favor of Croche. There was no sense in putting in the work for what would have been our best possible profit. There was continuing talk with Bill Sparks through the summer for a concert in the fall which never materialized for us.

George Ayers Comes to Town

Shortly after the conclusion of the summer workshop on July 21, we met with Dr. George Ayers of the St. Paul extension of the University of Minnesota who had been involved for some time in getting grant money out of Washington. Between meeting him and the end of July we sent out proposals at his suggestion to the National Task Force on Career Development of the National Education Association and the Sloane Foundation. Contrary to Ayers' enthusiasm, neither foundation was interested in our proposal or any proposals along the same lines because of their primary interest in other areas. However, we did get a proto-type of a good grant proposal out of the whole affair.

## Section VII

### Journalism Workshop or Anything for the Kids:

James Ballard, Madelyn Bridget and I were present at the opening of the Urban Journalism Workshop on July 7 and spoke to the kids later that evening. Between the afternoon meeting with the kids and seeing them again that night, we nixed an earlier decision to cancel the paper because of the intransigence of the Board of Trustees and the ad hoc committee on our problem. It was not until July 13 that we received any money at all and we were at an emotional low of sorts at that time. During the week we spent time with the kids when we were free as often as possible and gave our advice frequently to the coordinators of the program.

I gave a lecture on July 9 on the role of the editor and the use of editing symbols. I impressed on them the importance of holding the entire operation in their own head from start to finish. But we did not become really tied up in the project until the second week when it fell apart.

On the second Sunday of the workshop, we found out that the group was nowhere as near to the completion of the paper as they should have been. There had been a mix-up of the teaching schedule and the kids had never really learned how to do tabloid lay-out for a newspaper. We spent from sometime Sunday evening until 5:40 the next morning and most of that next day also trying to straighten out the paper with the kids.

One of the things which we found out in the course of having the chance to work with the students was that they didn't know how to write headlines for the most time. I drilled that into them before the next week was out. There was also a general criticism of the program we saw in the loftiness of

much of the talk. High school students don't need a lecture on libel, they need a lecture on the rights to a free press which they have as high school journalists. Censorship is common in high school papers, libel rarely has a chance to occur. Madelyn tried to give them some things to relate to their high school paper by putting them through a role playing exercise in setting up a high school paper from scratch, which some of them would have to do if they were to have a high school paper the following year.

Journal members also chaperoned the workshop dance on their final Friday evening and spoke briefly at their graduation exercise. Grapevine photographer Scott Van Orner and former photographer for the paper Greg Jolly took the only extensive photo records of the proceedings. I personally typed an evaluation for Roland Williams who was seeing the project through after the firing of Art Levin by the State News Board of Directors.