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2003

Faculty Shows

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*Bryn Mawr College*

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I think they started in the '30's, but that was before my time and I know only what has crept into the Archives more or less by the backdoor through Roger Wells' notes. Things like

in 1933 there was Restraint Necessary with Miss Park in black velvet singing a Greek song learned from a muleteer, and Helen Taft Manning doing "A Professor's Life is Not a Happy One";

in 1935 there was Much Ado But for Nothing with crazy characters and impersonations of students;

and, in 1937, K.Laurence Stapleton is said to have written a script, but I could find nothing in the College News.

The first Faculty Show which I remember was in '43. I was warden in Rock and had just finished writing my dissertation, so when Elinor Nahm started a move for a show I volunteered to do stage work and so became involved forever after, keeping records, pictures, etc. which I sent to Archives in Canaday when I retired. That hoard, supplemented by reports and reviews in the College News, is my source for this scanty survey. But I do want to list as many of our old colleagues as possible so that we will remember what good sports they (and we) were and how much fun we all had together. Apology for both scantiness and quality of illustrations; they are what happened to be in my records or turned up otherwise in Archives. You may want to add to that collection!

For 1943's show, Standing Room Only, I could find no illustration, but at least some of you can picture Joe Herben intoning his Baccalaureate Address in which he waved a telephone book as he brought "ringing messages from the Book of Numbers." It was there, too, that he defined Bryn Mawr College as a kind of metamorphosis from cuckoo to butterfly. Then there was a takeoff on Tchekov's Three Sisters, satirizing Bryn Mawr College about which the News wrote: "Everyone in the audience could understand the frustration of Miss Linn and her colleagues always aspiring to Washington (remember:these were the war years) and always staying in Bryn Mawr while Mr. Weiss tries ineffectively to get drunk all alone ineffectively on milk and Coca Cola and Andrushka Allen Grant is again exposed to measles." Does anyone here remember Dean Grant? The News also said that Mrs. Manning's singing (of "Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage") was indescribable and that Miss Stapleton displayed truly professional auctioneering powers selling original manuscripts including a chapter from Mr. Chew's forthcoming book. There was no ticket price so the profit of $1,408 all came from the auction, once the expenditure of $406.62 was deducted.

Top Secret was next, in 1947, and imagine what it must have been like to produce a show on May 10! Of course in those days we started college October 1 and graduated in June. This was the first show that strung together a series of acts or skits worked up by different groups and roughly sewn together by an ongoing sideshow off in one corner of the stage. This time that was Erich Frank, grading bluebooks by tossing them into various containers and turning down petitioners. The opening song by much of the cast began:

"Up Goes the Curtain, soon you will hear
All the secrets of the Faculty Show,"

and ended
First of the acts was a cancan chorus of faculty ladies and wives, followed by Patterson from Physics singing "Everything's Up-to-date in Bryn Mawr College" and then a quartet made up of Herben, Lattimore, Nahm and Soper draped in bathtowels, singing among other things "Don't Sock Your Mother, Boys, Its Mean" and saying about Bryn Mawr students, "They're damn hard to teach and still harder to please." Then there were skits: one called "Out of Bounds" located on a hot desert island and authored by Laurence Stapleton. I am not sure, but I think this picture (Fig. 1) of Sam Chew, Mary Gardiner and Ed Watson belongs here. Another skit was the Great Flexible Lecture on Art by Joe Sloan, and another on the plight of the graduate students at Bryn Mawr with a sympathetic song that became very popular: the chorus was "Radnor Hall is just like Oxford, Radnor Hall is like the Sorbonne, The Hell you say it is!"

Here, too, in 1947 was Mrs. Manning not only doing a duet with Jim Crenshaw, but also as the Bee for the very first time (Fig 2.), it having only recently appeared in the New Yorker. And also for the first time but to be repeated time and time again, with varying casts and titles, was Spring in a Roman Garden (Fig. 3): with Dorothy Nepper (Marshall) as prima ballerina and a bevy of lightly tripping nymphs (Irene Clayton, Alice Lattimore, Elinor Nahm and Jean Oxtoby, paired with galumphing satyrs (Alwyne, Berliner, Berry and MacKinnon) with, finally, Joe Sloane turning up as the deus ex machina. And finally (Fig. 4), the finale, which was to become almost traditional, a parody of May Day, this time with white oxen and bagpipes. That this slide illustrates that particular finale we must guess by the combination of Dick Lattimore's ballet costume and Walter Michels (his only such appearance).

Next in 1951 was Kind Hearts and Martinets. This time there was a Cause to be benefited by the proceeds (I do not remember that there had ever been a price of admission for any show before). The cause was the rounding out of the campus-block by purchase of the Scull property (where the Phoebe Anna Thorne School and the Education Department now are) for $55,000, due September 1, 1951. But when a third of the seats in the front section of Goodhart were priced at $5, the rest at $3, the front half of the second section at $2 and the rest at $1, there was a violent uproar and we had to back down, ending up with receipts of $1,815 diminished by expenses of $406 and a profit of only $1,408.

This was the first printed program, in the form of the college catalogue, quaintly called the Calendar in those days, with the subtitle: Future Perfect Curriculum to Corner the Campus. First in Semester I was a Curriculum Committee meeting in the form of a male octet singing at the Deanery lunch table (Adams, Dryden, Goodale, Lattimore, LeBlanc, Nahm, Parker, Soper) (Fig. 5). Their song (to the tune of "Brush up your Shakespeare") started out:

Oh, the gals that wait in the Deanery move in higher society,
And to win their hearts you must shout with ease.
Hurry up with my coffee, please.

They were backed up and answered by a crew of wives and female colleagues in the form of waitresses (Berry, Broughton, deLaguna, Esteves, Horrax, Lehr, Northrop, Woodworth, Watson) and entertained by a kick-chorus of pseudo-students (the Mrs. Fletcher, Groff Janschka, Lattimore, LeBlanc, Martin, Morris, Parker and Witte).

Then the three acts or semesters featured a variety of courses, starting off with

- English Literature in Transmission, entitled "Lady Be Good," a parody of give-away shows (Fig. 6), by Gertrude Leighton and Laurence Stapleton, starring Joe Sloane as...
shows (Fig. 6), by Gertrude Leighton and Laurence Stapleton, starring Joe Sloane as Major Claghorne, Joe Berry as Hopalong, Mary Gardiner as Lady Satgood in one scene, and with Gertrude Leighton as Emily Wench in another (Fig. 7), all assisted by Benjy Linn, Bob Broughton, Ferrater Mora and Lincoln Dryden.

- Next came Anthropology 101: Tribal Rites, performed by squaws Freddie deLaguna, Edie Lanman, braves Heinz Politzer, Alec Soper, shamans J. Adams, L. Kilby; and Spirits M. David, and Isabel Stearns.

- Then there was Theory and Practice of Art, a Tragedy in Five Continuous Acts starring Fritz Janschka, Angeline Lograsso and Ted Morris (Fig. 8).

- Semester II started off with Sociology 201: Home Life of the Normal American Family featuring the scary Charles Addams cartoon creatures from the New Yorker (Fig. 9): Hugh LeBlanc and Frances Berliner as Pop and Mom, with Milton Nahm and Kitty Fales as the kids who danced hand in hand singing:

  "Teacher's gone and we are glad;
   We have drove her simply mad.
   Teacher's in the loony bin;
   Now our holidays begin."

- Then Mildred Northrop as granny dropped by to borrow a cup of cyanide.

- Next was Comparative Literature 1: Prairie Division, featuring Ed Watson, the Peses, Heinz Politzer, Germaine Bree, M. Esteves, Frances deGraaff and Geddes MacGregor, all singing "Home on the Range" in their respective native tongues and costumes.

- Semester III started with Music Appreciation 301: Semi-Octangle, performed by Bob Goodale, Hugh LeBlanc, Ted Morris and Alec Soper.

- Next, of course, was good old Latin 101: Spring in a Roman Garden, with pretty much the same old cast suporting Dorothy. But about the Interdepartmental Finale, so-called Vestigial Remains of Early English Rhythm, I regret that no one of the so-called Semi-Octangle survives to remind us what is was: Alcala, Barron, Bernheimer, Broughton, Lattimore, Sloane, Thon and Watson, but it is likely in view of earlier and later finales to have been "To the Maypole, let us on..." And tying this all together were Footnotes on Faculty Fashion, hilariously performed by Arthur Dudden as that doleful professor who could never do anything right, aided thereto by Frank Parker. The whole thing lasted almost three hours, and betwixt and between were Felix Gilbert selling balloons and Germaine Bree hawking popcorn.

In 1955 there was The Profs in the Pudding, again with a terrible fight over ticket prices, despite the worthy cause - the "new" science building (which would have been the Physics, Math and Geology wing?) Prices ended up: $10 for front half of first section; $7.50 for second half; $5 for 2/3 of second half and $3 for the rest. The program was in the form of a diploma, all rolled up and tied with a yellow ribbon, with the contents listed as Academic Regression and Agenda of Faculty Meeting. In that mock meeting Warner Berthoff first called the roll:

  Twas broughton and the carpenter
  Did lehr and lower Far and wide;
  all mellink was the oxtoby
  and katharinemcbride

and so on. (We have it all - and like some of the songs I have texts here and can make copies if anyone wants.) Then came the Faculty Song:

  Oh, the Faculty's always intelligent
  In spite of what most students say
  The fact is we really are brilliant
  In a quite incomprehensible way.
In a quite incomprehensible way.

The agenda followed: 10 different acts designated as committees of various sorts, ranging from Institutional Hazards to Aesthetic Regeneration, and eventually it was wound up by a Faculty Meeting Finale. Interspersed among all these were four reports from the Committee on Human Resources led by that "pioneer in the frontiers of knowledge,"Arthur Dudden, as "the discombobulated professor with an intellectual curiosity for flies." A paragraph from the College News will give the flavor:


Other comments from the review include:

"The Confidential Bluebook" by Laurence Stapleton and Hugh LeBlanc appeared to portray the paradox of combining a search for knowledge with logical positivism. LeBlanc did the searching, with Haverford students Ferrater Mora and Wallace MacCaffrey and Bryn Mawr student Isabel Gamble. Their discoveries included Annie Leigh Broughton as Miss Alabama and Mary Woodworth as Miss Pennsylvania. Finally, Eleanor Bliss, as the Baltimore Oriole, both was and was not Miss Positivism while Berthoff as Possum symbolically burned a stack of bluebooks in a huge red lantern.

Then the Committee on Human Behavior presented a somewhat Freudian interpretation of the traditional bull-fight about which the News reported:

"Fritz Janschka's staging and sets were excellent and performances by Donald Brown, Hope Goodale and Richard Bernheimer brought to life the roles of Freud, the Matador and El Toro . . ."

The most appropriate casting of the evening saw Carol Biba as a fetching and convincing Pogo(Fig.10). This last was in the Committee on Preservation of Wild Life featuring (from left to right) Lincoln Dryden as Churchy la Femme," consulting his "audible birdbook," Mildred Northrop as Mrs. Caterpillar, caterwauling the tad-napping of her Conshohocken, Isabel Gamble as Owl, Mary Gardiner as Sleuthing Hound Dog and Bob Goodale as Albert the Alligator.

Quoting the News again:

"Easily the greatest surprise was Mr. Ferrater Mora's Charleston, which began at approximately normal speed and rapidly increased in tempo to a phenomenal pace." (Fig. 11)

This was in a skit called "Speak Easy! You May Never be Called on Again," all under the auspices of the Committee on Parents' Night. Next was The Committee on Orals: B and O Division, which added international flavor as personalities from around the world gave renditions of "I've been working on the Railroad" in their native tongues. Particularly outstanding were Frances de Graaf in Russian boots and Geddes MacGregor, whose kilts and Highland Fling were long to be remembered.

And revived once more was the Dorothy Marshall ballet, this time as a report from the Committee on Aesthetic Regeneration, and with Joe Sloane in Little Lord Fauntleroy costume leaping out of a fountain. Then as a Finale, the answer was found to all the problems besetting a small liberal arts college: that is, a football team made up of various shapes and sizes which
a small liberal arts college: that is, a football team made up of various shapes and sizes which gradually resolved itself into a very improper Maypole dance. An auction of almost everything except the cast (that is, props, costumes, whole or in pieces) helped swell the proceeds for the new science wing; the total was $2,730. The whole thing ended at 11:45, to be followed by a beer party at the Bachrachs - $1 per person!

The fact that the next faculty show did not come along till 1962, leaving a gap of seven years instead of the four established by those in '43, '47, '51 and '55, might suggest some lack of enthusiasm on the part of the faculty but this is belied by the richness of the program, not only in old favorites revived under different auspices and with different casts but also by the number and variety of new acts and new blood. The title, presumably with reference to Tennessee Williams' The Night of the Iguana, was The Night of the Lacuna or Dross, generally descriptive of the contents which were a mishmash of take-offs on the usual regular college events combined with original skits and as always winding up with the To The You Know What.

The program, in the form of a blue examination book, lists a Parade Program Night opener with a Firemen's Band composed of local talent and paraders singing a song by George Kline, beginning:

We've said arrivederci to our labs,
   to Linear B and Neolithic slabs -
We've put aside false academic pride,
   to cut cool capers in Goodhart tonight.

Then came a Step Sing authorized by Max Diez and featuring music by Horace Alwyne: involving Roger Wells as a "very fine cowboy" (quotes are from the College News review); Hughes LeBlanc and Pauline Jones producing "an erotic portrayal of the spirit of La France" and the Russian department doing a twistochka. Next a Symposium on the Tri-College Weekend involved Phil Lichtenberg and B. Ross with Titration: Watch those Drips! and Varying Versions. A Workshop of the Enemies of Music was sung by a male octet and involved both a Romeo and Juliet duet by H. Leblanc and Bob Goodale and a Greek version of "Onward Christian Soldiers." This was succeeded by something called a Gift of Time presented by Carol Biba and Joe Varimbi, with Rosalie Hoyt on bells. Both before and after these were the Strange Interludes of Arthur Dudden and his various casts with Warner Berthoff as the sinister narrator: the first was Welded; the second, Beyond the Horizon.

Ending the First Act was a Dance Club Recital involving three very different scenes: first a Partisan Pavane with Frances de Graaf, Michel Guggenheim and Charles Mitchell. This was answered by The Cid performed by Mort Baratz, Ferrater Mora, Hope Goodale and Phyllis Turnbull. The last number was disguised by the title Waldesschmalzwalzer and initials of the dancers but looks suspiciously like Dorothy Marshall and her indefatigable crew.

The second act began with A Study of Optical Mutations of Social Disorganization, which might be almost anything, for all I can remember, but the cast might remind you what it was all about: Horace Alwyne, A. Andrews, Charles Mitchell. Next, a dance number, entitled Computer Panel: Branch No Indicator, involved a dozen faculty wives in some very avant garde choreography. Donald Brown then produced a Report on the U.N. Investigation of Bryn Mawr, which was followed by a skit entitled The Bald Senior, or The Last Adventure in Ideas. This was answered by The Cid performed by Mort Baratz, Ferrater Mora, Hope Goodale and Phyllis Turnbull. The last number was disguised by the title Waldesschmalzwalzer and initials of the dancers but looks suspiciously like Dorothy Marshall and her indefatigable crew.
music by Bart Hamilton and his bagpipes. Then finally, the Finale, a song by G. Kline, sung by the entire cast:

We could have chanced our right Inspiring headlong flight
Of freshmen and of sophs
But we have shown restraint To prove that hubris ain't
Innate in mainline profs.
What causes seniors to be so excited? Whence comes the juniors rapturous glow?
Not from deductive proofs Not from seductive spoofs
Just from the Bryn Mawr Faculty Show!

If the four-year interval between shows was to be reinstituted the next one should have been in 1966, but apparently there was some difficulty in keeping up the pace, so it was only in 1967 that a show was again attempted, but rather modestly, without even a title, except Faculty Show. Suggestions for a title that were turned down include: Wind in the Peccadilloes, Games People Play, One Thousand Nights Ennui. The modest little program was named Footbook and dated March 12, 1967. Searching through the College News, I found a little piece in the March 10 number stating that the show would take place on March 16 - but thereafter nothing! no review, no excuse! mention at all. But we do have the opening song (to the tune of "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ye"):

Baldly we launch a show Both brash and rococo
We're on a Commission To spur Admission
The gals we won't take Show qual- and quantity
Bigger and bouncier Blonder and floouncier
Distinctly brainier Reverse Bryn-drainier

And we have the program according to which the acts ranged from the first on Admissions Policy or How to Get to Bryn Mawr to the Finale, noted in the program as "Lantern Night - one of the most beautiful and impressive sights of the year," but pretty obviously from the cast still another version of May Day. Various skits were based on college traditions like Parade Night and our very own Faculty Ballet as well as on institutions like College Chorus, Self-Gov, and the Language Houses. Interspersed among these were four Strange Interludes authored by Arthur and mostly acted by the "Washington Squares," of which Dudden and Berthoff were most in evidence and ending up with "The Iceman Cometh." With no review, very little certain in the way pictorial evidence, I have to do some guessing here. I think this scene (Fig. 14) in front of the curtain of various men in what will be their costumes in later acts is the Committee on Admissions listed first on the program: Cunningham, Kennedy, Kline, Leblanc, Oxtoby, Schmidt, Scott, Soper. I think they are about to interview what is called raw material and are interrupted by a long parade of "personalities," like Charles Boyer Mitchell and Julie Andrews Painter, apparently applying to the College.

Then comes Parade Night, characterized as "These tumultuous Proceedings," and listing a cast of characters who certainly appear in this picture, although I have no memory of how it all came about (Fig. 15). The program goes on to list a College Chorus of Cunningham, Kennedy, Kline, Leblanc, Oxtoby, Schmidt, Scott and Soper and an Arts Council which "provides an outlet for student activity," all this punctuated by two more Strange Interludes starring Arthur Dudden and his "Washington Squares." Then an act entitled "Traditions, one of the thousands that have been passed down practically since the College was founded," lists what everyone knows as the cast of the old original Spring in a Roman Garden but what they did was this (Fig. 16)! With no review, very little in the way of pictorial evidence, and complete absence of memory on my part, we will have to rely on evidence from some here who first took part in this kind of performance in '67 and so have memories uncluttered by earlier triumphs. But at least the
performance in '67 and so have memories uncluttered by earlier triumphs. But at least the record says that there was a profit of $699.

Not really a faculty show and so not part of this record is what took place in 1970, when a good number of faculty worked with a band of students to put on Britomartis, a take-off on Spenser's Faerie Queen. Also in the interval before the last full-scale show was a Faculty Auction in 1976, of which I have no record. But then finally there was the Faculty's full-scale last gasp, Curriculi Curricula, in 1979, profits to go to the new Campus Center. A price of admission of $3.50 was first proposed but when many thought it was too much or too little; it was decided that contributions would be accepted - to be designated for whatever part or aspect of the new center anyone wanted. The mimeographed program listed skits as courses with an opening convocation and a finale called Class Dis-Missed in DisMay or May-be the End. And we have two contradictory reviews that tell all. The first, enthusiastic, was in the College News; the second, in the Bryn Mawr-Haverford Bi-College News, comments both more extensively and sometimes more harshly on individual acts. Thus it was a Haverford male who wrote:

"It is rather astounding that the supposedly witty, erudite and gifted faculty of such an intellectually respected college would write and perform skits of such dullness, predictability and bankrupt imagination."

However that may be, we can be grateful to them, for by combining the two reviews we may get the Big Picture. The title song, Curriculi Curricula, rousingly led by Ty Cunningham, was followed by Tragedy 001b: Midsummer Night's Dean with a Trustee Can't can kick-chorus performed by the wardens, all about an undergraduate who wants to major in Greek, deanly opposition, a magic potion and happy resolution. (Haverford comment: "All in all, one could take it or leave it.") Next (Fig. 17) was the first of Dudden's Strange Interludes, involving both Pat McPherson and (according to Haverford) "a foot-in-waste-basket denouement." Then came Anthropology 007: Rites of Passage of Bryn Mawr students, which was seen by the Haverford reviewer as

"a filmed enactment of the primitive habits of some of the natives of Transpennsylvania who were all female ... (and) reproduced by recruitment."

Music 203F or Close Harmony followed, and you can recognize in Fig. 18 at least a third of which may be present and can do an encore (F. Cunningham, R. Gaskins, M. Kennedy, M. Ross, D. Scott, J. Wright). Next was an art lecture by Dale Kinney on Bellini's Feast (or Beast) of the Gods (Fig. 19), which apparently, according to the Bi-College News, turned into a filmed re-enactment of the Gods at Faculty Table at Wyndham with the Beast of the Gods lusting after a nymph, seeking to join her under a blanket, and getting 3 pies in his face. According to the College News,

"Act I ended with a good but often confusing skit incorporating the disciplines of French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish. It was called Mythical Structuralist Archetypes in European Folktales, or Close Encounters of the Foreign Kind. Mr. Patruno as Dante meeting his Beatrice [Nancy Dersofi] and Enrique Sacerio-Gari were stand-outs. The French Department parodied Carmen, the Germans sang opera, and the Russian contingent was rather obscure."

The Haverford critic's version sounds like a different play:

"a lengthy demonstration of a professor's ability to speak several foreign languages apparently to gain entrance to a palace. Eventually, having attempted almost every language offered at Bryn Mawr, the professor gave up and the play continued. Inside the palace a king was lying on his bask while two female slaves dropped grapes in his mouth. After several minutes of grape-feeding, two crusaders appeared with a large sword. Immediately one knew that the sword
crusaders appeared with a large sword. Immediately one knew that the sword was going to be stuck in the king's stomach. Did the scriptwriter think up a new twist? No! Did he at least get the stabbing over with? No! Instead he has the crusaders run back and forth across the stage gesticulating for a while. Then and only then does the king get stabbed."

The differences between the two versions leave it up to us to choose which we prefer. The second act, Semester Two, opened with the now familiar Ballet, this time led by Sandra Berwind - according to the College News, one of the highlights of the evening and according to the Bi-College News (with a Bryn Mawr reviewer taking over for the second act):

"Sandra Berwind was particularly rustique...and fawned with great elan upon Richard Gonzalez and the admirably inept corpse de ballet."

The BM-Haverford reviewer continues about the third Strange Interlude:

"The moment when Dudden pulled the imaginary fly's wings off has changed, it is rumored, the entire lives of some who thought teaching history was a dull, normal occupation. Dudden, choosing a type of humor usually unexplored in college productions, consistently showed originality and creativity beyond the call of duty, as well as scaring all his students."

Back to the College News:

"Mrs. Ridgway, clad only in a bee costume, (Fig. 20) flitted enthusiastically about the stage, claiming that, "I wish to state That I'll always mate with whatever drone I encounter."

The segment was entitled Biology 302b: Advanced Genetics. At this point, the College News goes on:

"An unannounced entry to the line-up was a fiery Presidential Tango (Fig. 21). Our own Miss McPherson, clenching a rose between her teeth, danced across the stage first with Robert Stevens of Haverford and then with former president of BMC Harris Wofford."

Next on the program was Ritual Deviance in the Temple Cult, subtitled The Good Ship Lollipop, with Phil Kilbride and Neil Forsythe embarrassing the Bi-College News because they shared a lollipop when one got lost. Then Jane Hedley's Oblique House, introducing newcomer Can Smirlock to the old inhabitants of English House, played with the special idiosyncrasies of Joe Kramer and Annette Nientzow, "who parodied themselves with uncanny accuracy." About the last Strange Interlude involving a block of ice deposited in the lap of Judge Spaeth, the Bi-College News said that "Dudden speaks softly and has a forked tongue." Finally, the finale: Class DisMissed in DisMay with Charles Mitchell as Queen of the May and then an auction of posters, costumes, props, etc. administered by Mary Dunn with the able assistance of Helen Hunter and Noel Farley (Fig. 22).

And that was that. But I have a couple of mystery pictures which you may be able to identify:

- Fig. 23: What show had Taylor Tower as the backdrop? And what chorus is this before it? It might be a chorus of wardens called Full Employment in the 1951 show? But it might not?
- Fig. 24: And what about this chorus of musicians? Who are they besides Darby Scott and what are they doing?
- Fig. 25: And what about this? Surely a Strange Interlude, but which?

After 1979 various kinds of cooperation between faculty and students to amuse each other
After 1979 various kinds of cooperation between faculty and students to amuse each other became the order of the day both at Christmas and at other times of the year. About these events you may read in a very learned paper on the history of Bryn Mawr Faculty Shows written by a Bryn Mawr student for a Haverford course on the Introduction to Folklore. It adds to the shows included here subsequent joint student-faculty entertainments in the '80's and is stored in the Archives along with all the other miscellaneous notes and pix. If anyone else has material which his or her heirs reject and abjure, he or she may also want to give them safe haven in Archives.