COVER STORY:

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The Grade Game

by Christopher Kirby Jones

photo by Dave Fenwick

"What's that? The Grade Game? What's that mean? What does it mean to you? What does it mean to the grade-givers? You are already living this out, and those grades should mean, therefore this feature will not be another lecture. Furthermore, please do not attempt to answer the questions for me, you, in reality, feel about the grades that you receive. You know that also. What this discussion will reveal is how a real live professor sees grades, graders, and the grading.

The professor is Doctor Arthur Walter Bethel. Doctor Bethel received his Ph.D. in 1968, his M.A. in 1966, and his B.A. in 1964, all in English, and his B.A. in 1962, all at the University of California at Santa Barbara. He teaches at Cal Poly since 1968. Doctor Bethel's instructions include Introduction to Philosophy, Phil 101, Teaching and Ethics, Phil 331, and English.

He has been teaching University students both success and fail. His reflection on our system of student evaluation is time informative and thought-provoking.

OUTPOST: Many students and educators view the present system of grading as the most destructive, demeaning, and wasteful of time and effort. They believe that it allows administrative convenience, and that, to decide what students will go on probation and which will take an honors course—out it does not help in learning.

BETHEL: I want to begin by commenting on the prevalent assumption that there is something wrong with labeling, or otherwise performance of students by assigning letter grades. It is supposed to be the matter with the system?

OUTPOST: It fosters competition.

BETHEL: Well, what's so bad about competition among students? Why shouldn't they learn to scramble for good grades? Isn't that useful way to get them to study material, and to pass the test? They believe that it allows administrative convenience, and that, to decide what students will go on probation and which will take an honors course—out it does not help in learning.

OUTPOST: Competition focuses the student's attention on the professor, which is inteded of the intrinsic rewards of learning, that is, once the grade is attained, the material, no longer useful to the student is forgotten.

BETHEL: If it is true, it is a serious problem, but I don't see either way, are by grades is the solution to that problem. To rely knowledge for its own sake, one must become a certain sort of person, that is a person who appreciates the satisfaction that comes from mastering a subject. One isn't born with that kind of appreciation, and as I said before, in order to acquire the skills by which one can come to appreciate learning, one must first acquire discipline, and that requires some discipline, reward, whether it is a grade or peer pressure or whatever. I see no reason to suppose that students will discipline themselves even if I can't get the grades removed.

OUTPOST: Grades tell some people the ones that aren't good at the grade-getting game that they have few personal worth. Many students, everyone has equal worth as a person.

BETHEL: This objection is a part of a puzzle of a system in which everyone wins. Wanting to go, don't just buy it. If a person isn't good at the grade-getting game, he can prove it's a learnable skill or if he can't learn to play the game, he's a victim. He has to take the blame for it as he may possess. Whether he has a personal problem, not the professor's, a University problem, rather than the very nature, elitist institutions, and

ought to reward excellence. It may be egalitarian to tell a student that he's doing just as well as everyone else, but it's wrong to do so in a university.

OUTPOST: Is grade-getting just a game, unconnected with education-getting?

BETHEL: Well, they should be unconnected. Let's be darn sure that we really are measuring growth in knowledge and not just making students jump through hoops. The fact that professors don't always do this is appropriate criticism of those professors and their courses, but it isn't good criticism of the giving of grades. The same abuses could exist under other systems.

OUTPOST: What of the many proposed alternatives? For instance, Written Evaluations instead of grades. A system where each professor will periodically sum-up a student's strengths and weaknesses, on a subjective basis.

BETHEL: This system has the following defects: It supposes that the professor is in a position to know each student's strengths and weaknesses. Generally, I'm not in that position, given the large number of students I must teach. Moreover, my time and energy are limited, just like everyone else's and I would frankly refuse to be audited by the administration that I have to compose little essays each quarter on each student instead of assigning letter grades. In any case, the student who really wants to know his strengths and weaknesses has ways of finding out from comments on his papers, etc. But with each student, I do feel confident that I am in a position to judge the merit of his or her work, and that I can properly give this student an A and that one a C. The proposal under consideration seems to suggest that it is wrong to rank students relative to one another, and that comparisons ought to be difficult to make. Now suppose that you're good at something and that you apply for a job on the basis of your skill. Don't you want your prospective employer to be able to look at your record and see that you're better than most other people that he might hire? If you really think that employers shouldn't be allowed to hire on the basis of the excellence of the applicants, then our differences go very deep indeed.

OUTPOST: Perhaps Contrast Grading, where the student, with the professor, decides what material to cover in the course and what criteria are to be used in grading. This method insures the student a clear view of what is expected.

BETHEL: There is the drawback of not specifying whether the student gets the grade if he does the work at all, or only if he does it well. I've tried the second version, and found that a lot of students rated it: some did a lot of extra grining to no good effect, and others felt cheated out of good exam grades because they hadn't undertaken the specified extra work. But of course, this isn't an alternative to grading; rather it is a way of grading which, in the traditional manner, makes the reference to excellence. On the other hand, if the student is told that if he writes a report, say, then he'll get a B, instead the report is good, bad, or indifferent, then this requirement is a dubious measure of merit, but seems fixed to require that the student jump through hoops, and as such is anti-educational.

OUTPOST: How about Performance Grading, where at the beginning of a course, the professor will precisely outline how much material the student must cover for an A or B, and then let the student work at his own pace?

BETHEL: As far as I can tell, this is just another regular grading, except that I notice that there is no reference to the grade of C. I'm only going to be the median grade unless there is good reason to the contrary in the particular case. What you call performance grading also seems to require a reference to course modules. You mentioned that it lets "the student work at their own pace." This is a teaching technique, not a grading technique, of course, and has been tried with mixed success.

OUTPOST: Could a Pass-Fail system be successfully implemented in this competitive grade system for grades?

BETHEL: The question is raised, how many grading categories can we profitably employ? I've known students fail, pass, pass with honors, pass with high honors.

OUTPOST: Blanket Grading then, where the professor would award the same grade to every member of the class.

BETHEL: This is an attempt to deny the individuality of each student's performance. It might make sense in, say, a dance class. Do you really see yourself as just part of a collective whole in, say, a philosophy class?

OUTPOST: What of Secret Grades, where the professor would not tell the student his grades during the course, thereby reducing competition among students.

BETHEL: The question is, what is the virtue of secrecy? I've known a student, a good one, who never picked up his grades, on the ground that he knew himself to be a bright, hard-working and interested student, and he wanted to get through on that basis. This attitude requires a lot of self-confidence, more than I've got. Would it make sense in a system where you have no way of knowing whether or not you're doing well? I'm told that this system would reduce competition, but I think it is unlikely, since the problem of the student who is unable to become reasonably academically requires some discrimination. Twenty years ago, three or more integrationally related University readings. This is the norm, not one of them necessitates the others.

So it stands: we students get no direct grades, for how hard we have tried. We get no grade, directly, for how much we have learned or for what we have learned. What we do get grades on is how well we can apply our knowledge. Ideally, this is a practical and sufficient indicator as to how much the student has tried and how much he has learned; not always so, it is.

Doctor Bethel points out that the ultimate responsibility for an effective grading system is on the professor, the grade-giver. His tests must reflect his instruction on material of true "worth." The grades he gives must reflect how well each student has applied this "worth." It is useful to the student to know the grade of C, that University degree and all the others.

If the standards of evaluation are lowered, then the grade of C is no longer an indication of merit; there is the grade of A that indicates your achieve-
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GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT
by the Nightflyer
An R'N'R Guide To The Classics

It is, perhaps, unfortunate that the average rock’n’roll listener does not listen to anything else. Most r'n'r listeners have vaguely heard of jazz and country because they may have heard a part of a Waylon Jennings or Charlie Rich single on the top 40. The average r'n'r listener dismisses classical music as something for senior citizens and Stanley Kubrick movie soundtracks.

Well, my friends, classical music has been around a lot longer than rock’n’roll will ever be. Highbrow intellectuals, neither even classical music nor are they its only fans. Some of the world's best-known rock stars acknowledge their classical influences freely. Frank Zappa, for example, makes references to Edgar Varése when asked about his influences. Wasselmann, Emerson, and company have all had classical training. Thus, they liberally sprinkle their performances with bits and pieces of Mozart, Bach, Copland, and Mussorgsky.

The biggest step on the road to enjoyment of classical music is admitting to yourself that you really like it. That seems to be the hardest thing for most novices to do. At least it was for me. The next step is to actually listen. This need not be the serious-mixed-with-intense-analytic-concentration type of listening. In fact, it's better if you are doing something else-see the Pacific Concert while you're studying or fixing dinner, for instance.

You will gradually discover that some composers' music will grab you immediately and others will repel you with an equal force. You will find you have favorite pieces and favorite composers and you will begin to explore the music with a greater amount of seriousness. Finally, you will begin asking yourself why you remained so adamantly against this totally enjoyable genre and listen to anything at all. You will find yourself that you really like it. That seems to be the hardest thing for most novices to do.

My favorite composer by far is Beethoven. He was the world's first exponent of the avant-garde-the world's first rock’n’roller. If you will. The body of his music is diffused with such complex statements about life, death, love, hate, fantasy, and reality that depending on the piece you see a twisted genius consumed with a struggle to stay sane or a contented soul excelling the glory and goodness of man. Often these two themes appear side-by-side in the same piece—the Ninth Symphony is like that. Beethoven's nine symphonies are his best known body of work and everybody has heard bits and pieces of them (from Vanquish commercials to the Huntley-Brinkley Report). My favorite is the Ninth (masquer), followed closely by the Fifth (brahmsy), Sixth, and Third.

My next favorite is J.S. Bach's organ music. Although some of Bach's music sounds mechanical and repetitious to me, his organ music ranges from light, airy, almost-danceable melodies to solemn dirges that evoke sinister images in my mind. While I'm on Bach, I can't forget his two sons, Johann Christian and Carl Philippe Emmanuel. While they were less prolific than their father, their contributions were significant. I especially enjoy C.P.E. 's music for the flute. It is rumored that of J.S. that an illegitimate son called P.D.Q. Beth. White P.D.Q. 's music is significantly different than the rest of the Bachs. It is, perhaps, the highest level of effete snobbery and respond with something like, "What'sa matter? Ain't you got no cultcha?"

Some other favorites are the Russian Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Prokofiev. By far, Bravinsky leads the pack with his brand of Buute. His violent and complex rhythms and soft reflective passages make even the venerable Ninth Symphony sound amateurish by comparison. Rachmaninoff is the melancholy one of the three. His piano concertos sound almost like the musings of a man on a ledge (my favorite is the Piano Concerto No.2 in C Minor a great piece to ask into the deepest parts of the soul, as an example)

Amercian has no less than prodigious in producing her own composers. The trio here is George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, and Charles Ives. Gershwin's two known works (and my favorites) are Rhapsody in Blue and An American In Paris. They are light, jazz-influenced pieces concerned with audio impressions rather than visual feelings. Copland's music is the same way-concerned with audio generated images. Copland's fascination with the romanticism of the American experience is perhaps more accessible than Gershwin's. If you have only heard Rumpole of the Old Bailey's hack job on Rhapsody in Blue or ELP's synthesized Moondog from Copland's Billy the Kid, you are missing something! Both Gershwin and Copland are held in high esteem by European composers because of his craftsmanship and non-classical Bravinsky-style style. Charles Ives is not yet, yet he probably the most American of the three because his music is not European neoclassically influenced, tyes style is highly individualistic and uniquely

Continued on page three
Progress or Procrastination?

by Steven Boybold

Progress or Procrastination? How students realize the effort it requires to provide campus entertainment or change Cal Poly policy—especially when that change is instituted by the students.

Those students who must deal daily with the administrative bureaucracy know only too well the morass of forms, signatures, and approvals it requires to accomplish something as simple as off-campus or even on-campus advertising. When it comes to putting on a rock concert or an x-rated movie, those students who have to follow the rules and procedures that seem to serve the administrators and hinder the students... 

It would seem that the administration is determined to make it as hard as possible for students to direct their own affairs or change campus policy to the students' welfare and not that of the administration.

Recently ASI Films Committee Chairman Jim Fauest underwent a tedious, difficult, and frustrating task of allowing students the right to choose their own entertainment (as in x-rated films) without the need for approval from the administration. Faueet's dogged efforts to work within the system was met with what seems an equally determined resistance by the paternal administration. Threatened as they were by this attempt to usurp their authority in directing student affairs, the administration sat on it. Two months later, by the continued efforts of Fauest, a decision was made to show the x-rated film: "Emmanuelle". The battle was won, but not the war. Student entertainment must still bow before Father Kennedy; are they allowed on campus.

The foregone is an example of the results a student may look towards when meeting the administration on their own ground. As one more candid administrator put it, "What really bothers me is to see Jim (Fauest) work within the procedure CAM requires and still meet the resistance and procrastination he has.

What the administration seems to have forgotten is that their purpose is to serve, not hinder the students. Or perhaps their rationale is that they are simply providing students with another educational experience. But I think in our culture, and it is here that we may learn what to expect out in the "real world". If that is the case, then students are learning the determination it requires to make any headway.

As ASI President Mike Hurtado once said; "If we're going to make any progress, we just have to keep hitting and hitting our heads against the administrative wall." With as few as 2 to 3 percent of the students taking an active role in student affairs, their heads may well become bloody stumps before significant progress is made.

Editor:

I am compelled to respond to the disgusting attack perpetrated upon my cultural credentials in Judas Priest's "Play On For Old B.C." in issue of February 9, 1978. Contrary to JP's estimation, there were altogether two lowdowns in the audience that night in Pismo. I take credit for showering encouragement to Miss Nashville (Rorise Bisakley) to get back to the movies, but never, under any circumstance, would I be so boorish as to shout to Arlo to play "Alice's Restaurant" because I believe it to be a rambling bore and apparently Arlo felt the same way, as evidenced by his admonishment.

The only point on which JP agrees is comparison of Miss Nashville to Laura Nyro who I believe many will agree was downright awful, her company with the movies, Bob Dylan and probably Jesus Christ himself not withstanding. The only point on which JP agrees is comparison of Miss Nashville to Laura Nyro who I believe many will agree was downright awful, her company with the movies, Bob Dylan and probably Jesus Christ himself not withstanding. I take pride in saying she was downstairs awful, her company with the movies, Bob Dylan and probably Jesus Christ himself not withstanding. I take pride in saying she was downstairs awful, her company with the movies, Bob Dylan and probably Jesus Christ himself not withstanding.

The body of what is considered classical music is bigger and much more varied than the body of rock 'n' roll. Also, that fine line is getting even finer. Classical music offers a refreshing change from the overexposure of Deep Purple or Black Sabbath. Integrating classical music into your taste makes you a more complete listener and a better person.

Recently AFS Entertainment Chairperson Peter Lash has been busy trying to pinpoint the correct image for the SLO Mozart Festival this summer. You won't be disappointed!
"There's an awful lot of people who are going to find out who I am...and they're going to identify me with student issues," he admits.

By doing so, Plotkin is following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Joe Hayes, who is now assistant vice president for student affairs at Cal Poly. Hayes' decision to resign was made in August and Plotkin was selected at the end of the summer. Since August, he has been legislative advocate for the California State University and Colleges Student President's Association (CSUCSPA). He is now a full-time paid secretary and his two part-time interns from Sacramento State.

Funds come from the fees students pay each quarter. The student government at each campus votes on whether to include the money in its budget and then contributes it to CSUCSPA. Plotkin finds himself, at age 21, in a unique position. Since August he has been the legislative advocate for the California State University and Colleges Student President's Association (CSUCSPA). He is now a full-time paid secretary and his two part-time interns from Sacramento State.

One of the most important victories for the CSUCSPA this year, as Plotkin sees it.
was the passing of legislation allowing a student to sit on the state university and college Board of Trustees. Gov. Brown signed the bill in September and when it was sent to Sacramento in January interviewing Plotkin, candidates were being interviewed by the Governor's office.

The purpose of the student trustee is to "make students a part of the system," he says. "Of course, the trustees were totally opposed to this; they couldn't stand the idea." Selection of a student trustee should be announced soon. "The student trustee will be a representative of the CSUCSPA," says Plotkin, "but a trustee who happened to be a student, not a puppet of anyone but independents."

The outlook for any kind of collective bargaining bill being acted on in this session is not quite so good. Claims bananana's and they're going to influence the Trustees and the Trustees will oppose the bill.

"So, what's our strategy? We have a conservative, Republican legislator introducing the bill. We're working on that right now.

What is important, says Plotkin, is finding out who the author is and what will be the reaction of other legislators. That's why sometimes we choose a weak legislator, one who gets no notoriety at all, to carry a bill for us. Many times it goes through without any notice at all because people say "Well, he's a careful man, the bill must be all right."

"But, if we want after, say, Willie Brown, and had him introduce something for us, a very flamboyant, glamorous member of the legislature and everybody watches him closely because he's too.

"People who have respect for law and hot dogs shouldn't see either being made..."

"He does everything he can to fight the image of the backroom wheeler-dealer..."
In French, the word EVASE means flowing upward and outward. At Cal Poly, EVASE means expansion and beautification in Poly Canyon.

Poly Canyon is fifteen acres of architectural paradise, or so it hopes to be. A campus group called EVASE (pronounced, Ayvah Say) has come together to form a "work force." Their job is to incorporate their skills in refurbishing Poly Canyon into a "showcase."

EVASE is led by a talented group of architectural students who see great possibilities in redirecting goals and ideas to build the canyon into something Cal Poly can be proud of. With support from the School of Architecture, EVASE is planning to reconstruct Poly Canyon's natural beauty and repair several of the deteriorating "archie projects" planted intermittently along the hillside.

According to Bruce Elster, one of the group leaders, 'The feelings were, that there didn't seem to be any real planning involved in how the canyon was being used. EVASE is an outgrowth of those feelings.'

Elster along with others felt there was a real need to get all the students involved in Poly Canyon and use it for the benefit of everyone instead of just a few architecture students.

EVASE began as a brainstorm of several people involved in the Architecture Department. Evolving slowly through the summer and fall quarters, EVASE began to show signs of real potential and actuality.

This quarter there are five classes being offered which direct themselves to actual work up in Poly Canyon. EVASE performs a duty of organizing different courses involved in work participation with the design and building of structures in the canyon. Curriculum for this quarter varies from a 240 level course in Poly Canyon Graphics to a 471 level class concerning Environmental Impact Reports.

Advisors for the group are Nelson Greene and Al Cooper, both architecture professors who feel that the students should be aware of what Poly Canyon is and what it can be in the future.
Continuing on through the hierarchy of EVASE are various departments such as "Manual Task Forces". (MTF). Each MTF is led by an individual concentrating on his particular interests to lead a small group of people, and accomplish specific goals in the expansion of Poly Canyon.

An example of a task force is the Design Review MTF. This review board was organized to alleviate the problem of hastily constructed projects. The board evaluates all future structures in the canyon concerning specifications and details so that the construction is professional and permanent, exemplifying the kind of quality that Poly Canyon deserves.

This is the only school in the world that has a Poly Canyon and this is the first attempt by students to manage this choice piece of land and guide it to its hopeful "showcase" status. The biggest goal for each individual is to gain insight into why we are all involved in "higher education". Why are we all going to school? To tie the real world in with the classroom theories that we all know are so important, RIGHT? RIGHT!

But part of the problem is that only the School of Architecture uses this laboratory. Poly Canyon should be a more interdisciplinary lab. Varying majors will be represented and involved in the use of Poly Canyon, concentrating on diversified interests from diversified students. Elater expresses this point, "To say that Poly Canyon is strictly ours, (Arch. Dept.) is ludicrous. We are not an elitist group; Poly Canyon belongs to the university and to each and every student."

Receiving first-hand experience is of the utmost importance. Using classroom knowledge and getting your hands dirty with building techniques, soils study, and design systems are just a few examples. More help is needed in many fields in order to obtain the quality efforts of physical direction, study and construction.

EVASE is not really a group led strictly by an individual or individuals but rather a "flow" of people interchanging and manipulating ideas upward and outward, hence the name, EVASE.

The structural hierarchy of EVASE contains a steering committee which operates as their title implies. They steer the group in a positive direction, aiming for continuity and development. This committee is comprised of four individuals who have not been elected but have taken on the responsibilities of leadership and control.

"We should be aware of what Poly Canyon is and what it can be in the future."

Ah! Here is something everyone will be interested in. An MTF called Activities. This task force is concerned with possible activities held in the canyon. Specifically some kind of CONCERT, brewing slowly (of course) but surely as a possible springtime event. All systems are GO and the green light is definitely on and bright for this project. There are some problems to be worked out first, but nevertheless the Architecture Department has said think BIG and GO FOR IT! So be looking forward to some possible concert happenings in the spring.

"If one aspect of the group fails, then we are affected."

Constructing EVASE as a loosely knit group of people is unique. Everyone is united for a common goal maintaining and proliferating the growth of Poly Canyon. Students are taking responsibility for the canyon to make it special. The canyon can be a guideline for other schools to hopefully develop their own areas similar to Poly Canyon.
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