

## Tense Truce Follows Vandalism

by Eric Brand

"Eventually, they do understand it's a sick thing to destroy your own home."—Benedict College resident

One of the major confrontations in Stony Brook's history may produce a new era of cooperation. Vandalism at Stony Brook is almost commonplace, yet this year its costs have wildly exceeded all projections. Reports of "shocking conditions" and "appalling evidence" have been sent among administrators as the bill for campus vandalism has increased four-fold in the last two years.

### A Troubled History

The explanations for vandalism are as varied as the sources. Some say vandalism is effective protest against an oppressive administration. Others believe it is no more than irresponsible outbursts of destructive impulses.

According to Junior Representative David Grossman, who is chairman of the Residence Life Advisory Committee, Acting President Richard Schmidt blames vandalism on first year students. Tracy Schneider, one of the two Residence Hall Directors of Benedict College, by far the most ravaged building, strongly disagrees. Analysis indicates that freshmen are not solely responsible, nor are they exempt.

One Benedict resident (whom we will call "Owen") explained that freshmen "don't understand the full import of what happened. They think it's

common behavior...they don't know what to compare it to."

Owen spoke anxiously, worried about hallmate reaction to his interview. "For one student," he explained, "to go to a source of authority and complain about someone else would just maintain the apathy and weaken the unity the halls need."

It is this torpor as much as the physical destruction which is responsible for the damage. "Apathy is a very big problem," said Owen. "People become calloused to it, conditioned." He contended that when they allow vandalism to become part of their daily existence residents soon cease to care. But there are further theories as to vandalism's roots.

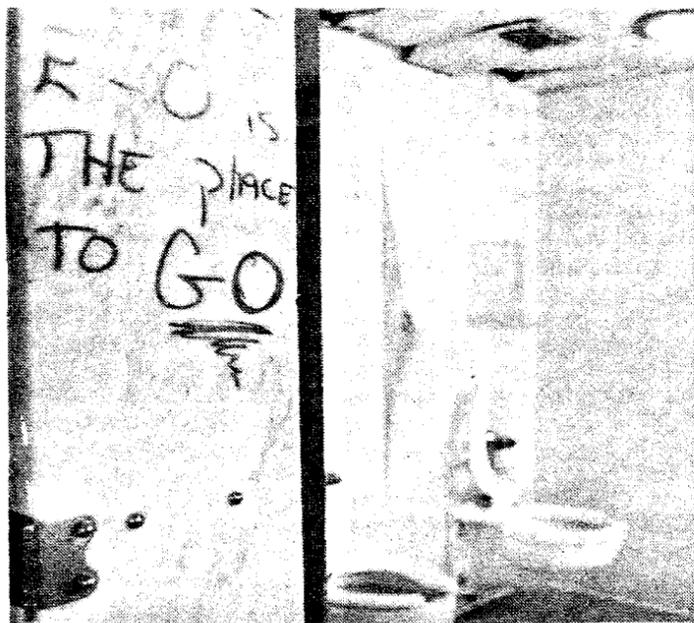
There is currently great controversy over the effect of alcohol on vandalism. "There's a clear linkage between alcohol abuse and vandalism," said Ronald Bristow, SUNY Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Student government officials at several SUNY schools report that their respective administrations also believe there is a link. But Polity Secretary Alan Price pointed out that the damage figures for dormitories housing bars, excluding Benedict, are far lower than those for Benedict alone. (Public Safety reports that from January 1 to December 11, 1979, there was \$575 worth of reported damage in Irving, \$1,170 in James, \$140 in Whitman, \$230 in Sanger and \$5,862 in Benedict. Each of these buildings contains

a liquor establishment.) "Benedict has its own problems," concluded Price. But Grossman said the administration has been blaming "blaming (vandalism) directly on people coming out of the Saloon."

The Benedict Saloon, centerpiece of social life for Benedict residents and other students, is in jeopardy due to the current controversy. "We don't think the Saloon is the source of vandalism," said Owen. "The problem really lies in someone's mind."

According to Price, the problem also lies in administration. He said he discovered in conversations with students and SUNY Central officials that "the largest cause of vandalism is that the administrators in Student Life are incompetent." The problems in Benedict, he contended, are due not to the Saloon but to "great problems with the RHDs," frustration with the way the administration has dealt with the damage, and the general campus environment.

This frustration has pervaded Stony Brook's history. Recent moves on the part of the administration (the RHD program, stepped-up patrolling of the dorms last fall by Security, increased supervision of student businesses), and several established complaints (inadequate facilities, a surfeit of bureaucracy, lack of respect for students and administrators) have led to increased tensions,



The ironic aftermath of vandalism in Benedict College.

fight, dismissals, and student rights rallies. They have also led, many maintain, to vandalism—the most cogent show of hostility and frustration the students can produce. By destroying University property the students hope to illustrate contempt for the University. But the reaction has been far more severe than any could have hoped or foreseen.

### Pressure From Above

In August, 1979, George Feiden of the Dormitory Authority visited Stony Brook and

subsequently fired off a memo to another official in his department. It was not a glowing review. The report eventually made its way through several officials and finally to SUNY Central—specifically, to two Vice Chancellors, who read of vandalism of "unconscionable proportions" and of an official "appalled at the extent and viciousness of the destruction." The buck, having reached the top echelon, stopped there.

On November 27 the Vice Chancellors dashed off what University Vice President for

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### On the Inside

55,000 rounds of ammunition stolen on campus

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"The Electric Horseman" is reviewed

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"Kramer vs. Kramer" is panned.

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Mike Crooms leads Pats to Victory.

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## Dorm Bar Curtailment Proposed to SB Senate

by Melissa Spielman

Anticipating a crackdown on bars by the University, a campus group is proposing to the SUSB Senate that the sale of hard liquor be moved out of the dormitories.

David Grossman, Chairman of the Residence Life Advisory Committee, said he is asking the SUSB Senate Student Life Committee to recommend that hard liquor be sold only in the Stony Brook Union. In a memo to the committee, Grossman proposed that the Union remain open 24 hours to accommodate bars and other facilities.

"By taking the bars out of the dorm areas," the memo states, "it will reduce vandalism. A centralized facility in the Union can be controlled better than can the facilities in the halls." The memo also states that any bars moved to the Union should remain student run.

Grossman said his committee is making these recommendations because it fears the University will close dormitory bars in response to severe vandalism. He added that the administration has been working with Albany to possibly close the bars. "They (the administration) have been sending memos upstate. The Dormitory Authority has been against bars in the dorms since they opened. Now, they're going to come down on us," he explained.

He added that vandalism in Benedict, where dormitory damage is most severe, is being blamed "directly on people coming out of the (Benedict)

Saloon." Saloon Manager Donny Thaler said, "People do not go to the Saloon to get drunk. They go there to socialize."

One Albany official does not share the student's views, however. Ronald Bristow, SUNY Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, said, "There's a very clear linkage between alcohol abuse and vandalism." He added, "We're examining the hours pubs can be open."

Though the committee only serves in an advisory capacity to the SUSB Senate, if the proposals are accepted, they will go for approval to Dr. Richard Schmidt, the Acting University President. Schmidt, who has ultimate authority over alcohol policy on campus, said the bars are not in jeopardy. "There are no plans at present for bars to be closed as long as they continue to be legal operations."

He added, "There have been many suggestions coming from students that the bars be distributed throughout campus or centralized. There have been discussions about a large central place where students can socialize, but we do not have any plans at present for it."

A spokesman for the state dormitory authority said that the University is fairly free to establish its own policies. "We don't tell (the Universities) how to run their dorms, as long as any use of the dorms is in a safe manner," said George Feiden. He added, "It's pretty hard to pin it down and say a bar in the dorm is definitely bad," explaining that

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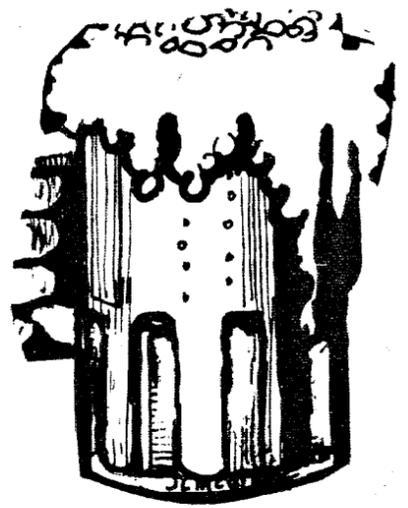
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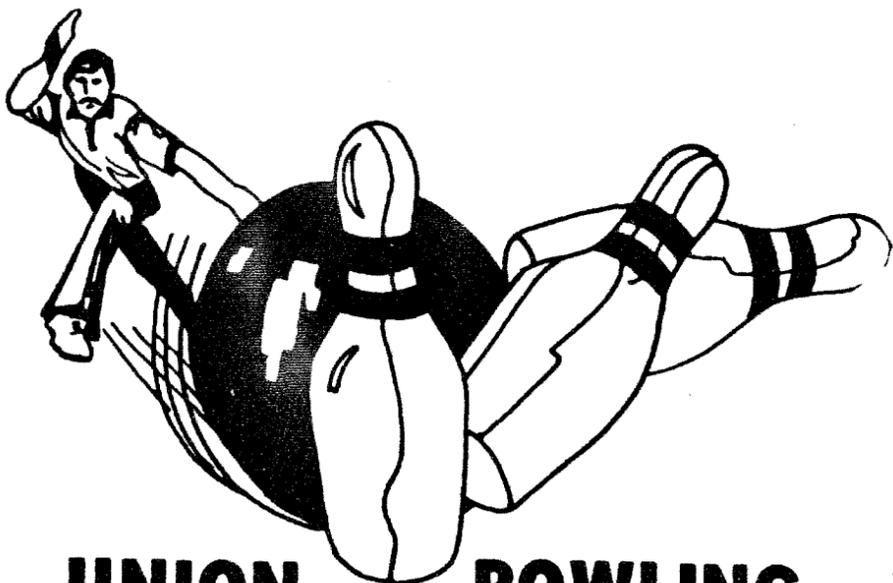
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# Guns, Ammunition Stolen From Campus Building

by Melissa Spielman

Police are still looking for burglars who broke into a campus building about two weeks ago, taking firearms and over 55,000 rounds of ammunition.

Four handguns, 15 rifles and shotguns, 55,000 rounds of .22 calibre ammunition, 500 rounds of .38 calibre, and about \$600 worth of tools were taken from the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) between Friday, January 18 and the following Monday morning, according to Suffolk County police. The rifles and shotguns had been confiscated from hunters, and the ammunition was being stored for a hunter safety training program.

According to Lt. Gary Meade, Acting Captain of the DEC Law Enforcement branch, burglars entered the building by snapping a chain which held down the grate over a basement door. Meade said the door was not kept locked for fear of trapping someone beneath the grate, and as a result, the burglars were able to just walk in.

Once inside, the burglars broke into an equipment room, and apparently by using a crowbar which was found on the scene, pried open lockers which contained the guns. Meade added that only about half the ammunition was stolen.

"I don't think (the burglars) had any knowledge of it being there," said Suffolk County Detective Victor Plitt.

"If they specifically knew that stuff was there, they would've gone directly for it," he explained.

Although the burglars were able to walk in, they found the exit door locked from the inside. "They had to break out," Meade said.

Though there are no suspects, Campus, County and Federal law officials are all working on the case. Meade said that the remaining firearms have been moved to Albany, that the grate chain and gun lockers are being replaced with stronger models, and the basement door will be made to lock from either side.

According to Kenth Sjolín, Assistant Director of the Department of Public Safety, his department was unaware that firearms were stored on campus. He added, "My first question is, I wonder where the ammunition, guns and rifles went to. Are they on or off campus?" He added that campus officers have been alerted to the situation, although they are unarmed and refer gun calls to County police.

Dr. Richard Schmidt, the Acting University President, said he learned of the burglary from newspaper articles. He added that allowing the continued storage of weapons on campus has not been discussed, but "will be put into full consideration."

The DEC, which is not affiliated with the University, is primarily responsible for enforcing conservation law. The building here, situated in the woods by H Quad, is the DEC Long Island office. DEC Law Enforcement officers are allowed to carry and store weapons on campus without special permission from the University.



The Long Island office of the Department of Environmental Conservation, where ammunition was stored for a hunter training program.

# Tense Truce Follows Vandalism

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Finance and Business Carl Hanes termed a "scathing" letter to President Schmidt, demanding "high priority attention" to the problem.

Hanes, a ripple of anxiety disturbing his ordinarily calm manner, revealed it had almost "reached the point where the University is going to have to close those dorms down." Everyone was feeling the pressure from above. It resulted in measures by the University that were labelled effective by some, aggravating by others.

## Measure for Measure

In the last two days of last spring semester, all hell broke loose on Benedict E-O. Allegedly, several hall members, seeing their home for the last time, ran amok. The damages, which were assessed at well over \$5,000, included broken walls, windows and furniture.

All SUNY schools have policies for combatting vandalism. At the

College at Morrisville, the entire staff of Student Affairs and Residence Life was fired after dorms were wrecked. At SUC at Oswego and SUNY at Albany, positive incentive programs have been instituted, wherein each dorm is allotted money for vandalism repair, and any money unused at year's end may be spent by the residents for improvements. In a letter to a Stony Brook Council member, an Oswego official reports the incentive program there has resulted in ten out of the twelve dorms coming in under the limit.

But in response to the E-O vandalism, Stony Brook Student Affairs decided that reassignment was the best medicine, and relocated every member of that hall except for the RA (residents of two other halls, one each in Benedict and James, were also relocated because of vandalism). The December 28, 1979 draft of the Student Affairs' Procedure for Reassignment Policy states: "The purpose of such reassignment is to prevent further damage by removing from the

area all those who had been resident in it during the period of damage." The Policy admits that these "residents could have been responsible for the damage." (Emphasis ours.) This solution has come under attack from many quarters as dubious, and indeed, its results seem to affirm this accusation.

Evidently in response to what was felt to be an unfair and arbitrary action, incidents of vandalism jumped at the beginning of this year. In return, bar hours were cut back and some student staff members were fired. The routine irritation of tripling added to the tension.

In addition to worrying about Albany, meanwhile, the University was "facing enormous fiscal problems," said Hanes. Enrollment is vital to the University, as the greater the projected enrollment, the more money received. So as both the enrollment, and percentage of students seeking on-campus housing to avoid spiralling commuting costs, increases, the University must find more room. The Procedures for

Reassignment draft states, "When the University needs room for temporary tripling of freshmen, these rooms must be found in G and H Quad, since by size and layout they are the best suited for this purpose." (Read: Tripling in the suites violates health and fire codes.) Vice President for Student Affairs Elizabeth Wadsworth has already stated that the halls will have to be cleared to some extent to make way for incoming freshmen. The vandalism, it was rumored, would be the perfect excuse for massive relocation.

Meanwhile, the students were outraged by what they felt were continued arbitrary and capricious actions by the administration. They held rallies, sued the University, did more damage—and, within a week of the beginning of this semester, vandalism erupted on a scale heretofore unseen. On Friday night, January 18, the men's bathroom on E-O was ripped apart. The same was done to bathrooms on D-3 and E-2 the

following night. Benedict residents were finally snapped out of their apathy. This was their home being destroyed, and a growing consensus decided they would not let a few miscreants jeopardize their future in it.

As suggested by Owen, vandals and their victims eventually realize the madness of destruction. The question is: has the realization come too late?

## A Change in Attitude

A Polity Senate Committee was formed, including student officials and Benedict student staff and residents. Other Polity executives, though scorned by Benedict staff members, worked with administrators to find a solution. Said the senator who founded the Polity committee: "We want to set an example to Dr. Schmidt that the students will clean up their act and for (the administrators) to clean up

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# Bar Shift Proposed

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alcohol available elsewhere could be just as harmful.

Grossman said he feels that only SUNY Central would close the bars. "The University will not do it," he said. "They could do it, but there would be too much controversy. But if SUNY Central does it, they'll just be following orders and passing the buck."

"The actions that might be taken by campuses to reduce vandalism really have to be initiated by the campuses themselves," said Bristow. But according to Grossman, several administrators here are pressuring SUNY Central to crack down. Among them are Schmidt and Business Manager Paul Madonna, who both said they have no plans to close the bars—unless guidelines are being broken. Most campus bars have been open and closed all year due to various violations.

Administrators at other state schools have limited alcohol use because of its link with vandalism. A student spokesman at Albany said

alcohol consumption there has been restricted due to vandalism. Barry Calder, Director of Student Activities and Services for the Buffalo student government, said, "They will not allow any more than three half-kegs in the dormitories because an end-hall lounge was ripped apart." Neither of these schools have dormitory bars.

Grossman said his Committee's proposal may help keep the campus from going dry. "If the order from SUNY Central comes down," he said, "they'll close every establishment that sells liquor." He added that beer and wine establishments should be left alone. "I don't think the University is against them," he explained.

Students here have said that closing campus bars could be inconvenient and dangerous. Bars within walking distance from campus have minimum age limits of 21 and 23. "If they want to close these places down, we'll have to go off campus," said Thaler. And if students drive to bars, he added, "Someone's going to get hurt."

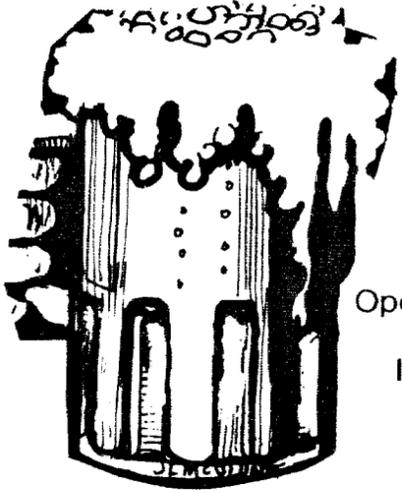
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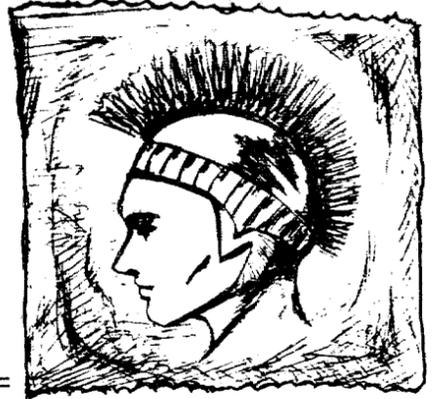
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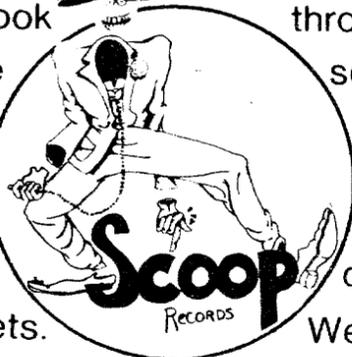
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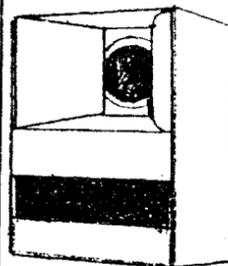
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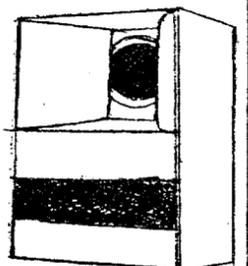
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# Vandalism: Sickness or Symptom?

It is difficult to determine the relationship between university policies and vandalism in G and H quads, and the rest of the University. There are two basic schools of thought: either students are wanton in their destruction of property, or they are reacting to conditions in their environment. It seems to us the latter is true.

One binding point which most groups cite concerning vandalism is that it is senseless, and those responsible for it have emotional problems. With this in mind, it is interesting to look at peasants in Russia and slavery in America. Many parallels can be drawn from a comparison of slavery and Soviet communism, and at least one comparison can be made with these and vandalism at Stony Brook.

Plantation owners were angered because their slaves abused animals. The Soviet government is furious because its peasant farmers abuse machinery. University officials are appalled by vandalism in the halls. And there is a fundamental problem with each institution: the governing body has degraded its constituents, and given them little, if any, means to control their lives. There is speculation that slaves and peasants were reacting to an oppressive environment, and there is documentation which seems to prove that university policies have contributed to a similar environment in the halls.

Statistics show that the halls have been hit hard with vandalism: Over the past calendar year, G Quad had almost \$4,800 in damage, and H Quad had over \$9,000. The total damage in other quads was less than \$3,700. This data is not questioned, but it causes are.

Before analyzing Stony Brook's problems, however, let us look at slavery and Soviet work conditions. Slave rebellions were few; none worked on a mass scale, and none had long lasting effects. Slaves who did not do what they were told were tortured. But they went about their daily lives, hating it. They struck back, however, by hurting their owners financially: killing animals by neglect, and later by sabotaging equipment. This was done skillfully, so that slaveowners believed merely that slaves were ignorant.

Similar circumstances existed in the Soviet Union. The communist party would not allow peasants to own land, but forced them to farm parcels. The government supplied them with equipment, which in turn was abused. For example, peasants ran machinery without oil until it was ruined. For many years, the communist party assumed that the peasants were just stupid. But the government proved itself wrong when it gave land to the peasants, who then took care of machinery.

The point here is not to show that the administration is attempting to undo the Emancipation Proclamation or adopt communist policies, but rather to give examples of oppressive environments, and what those who lived under them did in retaliation. It seems that slaves and peasants both

committed acts of vandalism...but now, back to Stony Brook.

Student protests here have rarely, if ever, had long lasting effects. Students are told that if they do not abide by all of several hundred rules, they may be exiled to community college. And, of course, the administration claims it is doing everything in its power for students.

The key idea is oppression, in various degrees. But it must be perceived through a broad perspective. And one must also consider another point: groups can oppress themselves.

Comparing the halls to the suites shows the following: There are three bars in the halls, and one in the suites. Tripling is unheard of in the suites, but omnipresent in the halls. Most



hall residents are freshmen, who have special problems with which to contend.

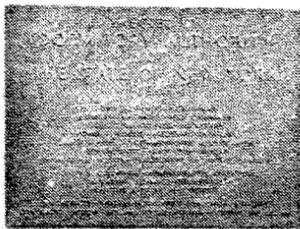
There are empirical data which indicate a strong correlation between alcohol consumption and vandalism, in addition to other crimes. Alcohol releases inhibitions, and some students say it makes them rowdy. Law enforcement officials claim vandalism would drop if there were no campus bars. But we do not believe that closing campus bars is a valid answer.

For several years, tripling has been limited to the halls. There were 1,200 triples last semester, and it is expected there will be even more this fall. It took a semester to detriple 1,000 students, which means massive tripling existed much of the fall. Several years ago, the psychology department did an experiment with overcrowding at Stony Brook. An experimenter would tell a campus resident to wait in a room before starting an experiment. A member of the psychology department would also be in this room when the student walked in. The conclusions indicated that hall residents, as compared to suite residents, seemed less likely to strike up conversation with the surrogate, and that they sat further away from the person.

A broad conclusion is that overcrowded people are less social. Other studies have indicated this, and some experiments involving overcrowded rodents show that they tend to fight among themselves and destroy their environment.

We believe that overcrowding, with other factors, has made the halls oppressive. Drug incidence and alcohol abuse are highest in heavily populated urban areas, and this suggests that the halls are oppressive because many sources contend that drug use is a form of escape, or emotional outlet, from problems.

And the administration will not end tripling because the more students it has, the more revenue it gets from the state. Aside from tripling and alcohol abuse, there are problems with administrative policies. According to a report done in 1973 by Charles Perrow, a Sociology professor, there are many problems relating to student services, which to some degree result from the policy of top



is almost understandable why the administration placed freshmen in the halls. Unfortunately, freshmen who must get used to new freedom at college can too easily abuse the bars. Freshmen are also nervous and anxious when they arrive here. So what is done? They are packed in like the cargo of slaveships with people they have never met before, and are told, This is Stony Brook.

Vandalism can be curbed on the halls and elsewhere. One suggestion has been to triple upperclassmen, requiring them to live on the halls. This would help freshmen in their transition and, probably, make it more difficult for them to obtain alcohol. But this would never work. In the past, when upperclassmen were forced to be tripled and live on the halls, they resolved these problems through protests.

It is expected that today the Stony Brook Council, the University's local governing board, will suggest that bars be removed from the halls to cut down on vandalism. If liquor and vandalism were the problems, this solution would work; but they are not. They are only indicators that there is oppression.

We feel the administration must rank campus life high on its priority list, and halt tripling throughout campus, particularly on the halls. There are two ways to stop tripling: either obtain more housing, or limit the number of residents. The former is expensive, but the latter, we believe, will cost more because it would result in a drop in enrollment.

Although vandalism is correlated with alcohol intake, we wonder if closing bars would cut down on vandalism. There are probably students who "drown their sorrows" in the bars, and thus have an outlet, though not a constructive one, for their problems. But without this outlet, we ask what they would turn to.

In the 1960's, the campus was being built at an astounding speed. Students complained that the University was ugly and impersonal, for the same reasons students cite today. But even more disheartening today is the buttons which were worn almost two decades ago: Now, not 1980.

Apologies to Alan E. Oirich, writer of "Amityville Herring" for misplacing his byline. Many thanks to Norvel Mungin.

administrators. Because the administration geared budget priorities towards itself, Perrow showed in several examples that little was done for students.

In a recent interview, a spokesman from Student Affairs said that his office has had severe cutbacks which affect operations in almost every area of student services. While the situation may be changing now, the priority of former University President John Toll was to build Stony Brook in terms of concrete and girders. From 1963 to 1978, he got millions of dollars for building, but spent little time or money on other areas.

With its priorities placed poorly, it

## The Stony Brook Press

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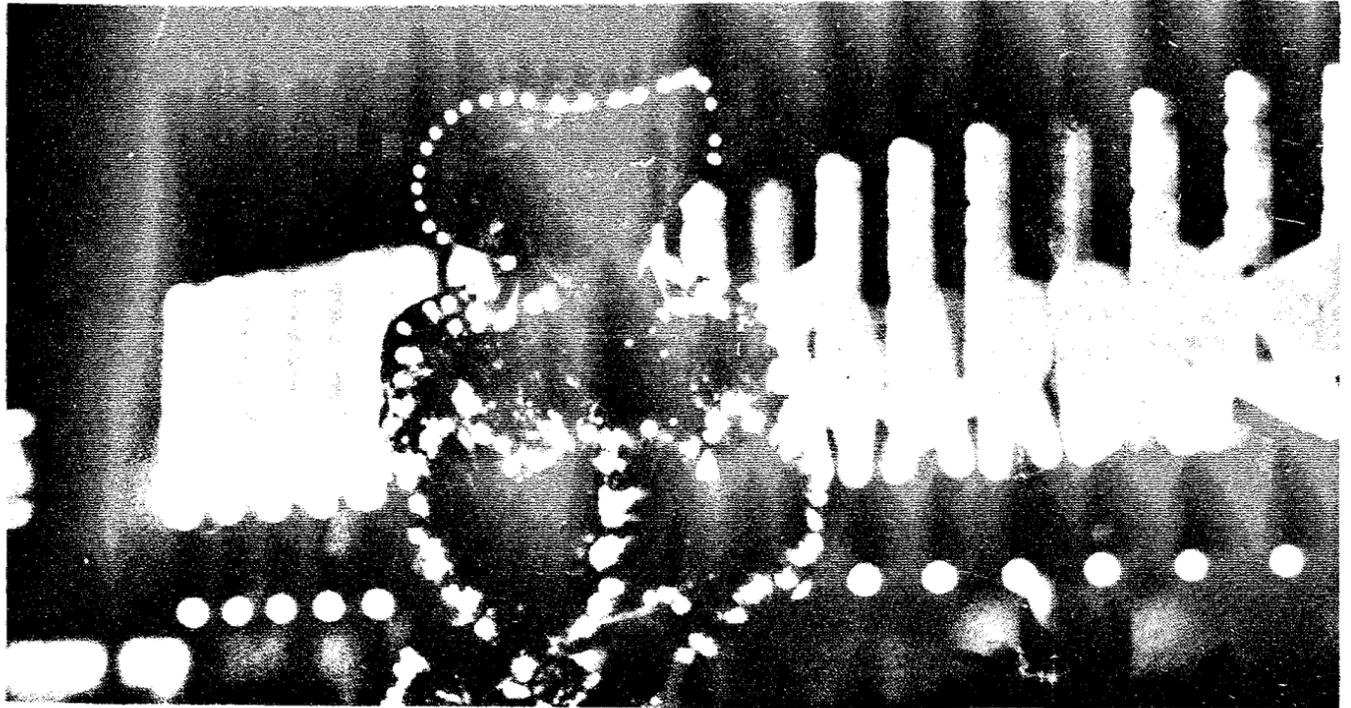
# 'Electric Horseman': Not Just Another Pretty Movie

by Stephen Tiano

I cannot imagine easily a tougher ordeal than being pretty. The pain of a continuously empty stomach must hurt in a fiercer, more immediate way. And surely one look in the mirror, if it reveals a total lack of anything which even suggests beauty, serves up directly a harsher disturbance than being pretty might. But hunger, in driving a person to grow, earn or steal food, and ugliness, in determining a person to prove that physical characteristics bear no relation to ability, can lead one to assume responsibility for one's own life. Being pretty does not. A woman who has ever been the subject of worshipful glances may know what it is to be watched, touched, and tasted—but, probably, no one ever listens to her words.

When it comes to pretty, Robert Redford stands very near the top of the heap. His good looks inspire a kind of lusty breathlessness in many women who cannot help desiring the golden god they see on the big screen, and also in men who can appreciate those good looks the way only a pauper can appreciate a prince's paice. As for being taken seriously, Redford has gone a-begging. Who will pay any mind to an actor who seemed to actually describe himself when, playing a writer in *The Way We Were*; he said of one of his own creations something like, "The trouble was everything always came too easily for him"?

In *The Electric Horseman*, Robert Redford finally emerges as the kind of real man that no amount of raising on a pedestal can obscure. Sadly, it comes as such a grand revelation that any fair-minded filmgoer must feel some shame at overlooking Redford's humanity for so long. "The Electric Horseman tells a story about cracking through larger-than-life images and finding the humanity beneath, a story which the actor himself holds a stake in. For this reason, one cannot wonder that Redford's persistence, more than his "bankability," deserves thanks for the fact of this fine movie's existence.



Redford and Fonda: Beauty and brains.

In the opening scenes, Redford excels as Sonny Steele, ex-champion. It happens that Steele's labor was rodeo; but Redford's portrayal treads a certain universal line, one which extends far beyond rodeo. Steele could easily have performed any work requiring the support of one's animal nature. Valerie Perrine, as the ex-champion's ex-wife, comments ably on the abuse he has always heaped upon his body. She tells him that he could never walk naked through an airport without the traces of all the surgery he has undergone triggering a metal detector. The humor in her remark strikes one, at best, as an unintentional by-product of the image. But for Steele, all the bodily abuse that rodeo demanded, and the remaining scars, is the

payment exacted for a champion's triumphs. In the same way, Sonny Steele appreciates that while he prostitutes himself in the name of a breakfast cereal, he forfeits the right to complain about it as long as he sits in the lap of luxury which his breakfast cereal contract pays for.

For Redford, the acceptance of imagery must have proven difficult to negotiate. He is known as one movie idol who does not relish much of what his successful transition from human being to image implies. But since he wielded an active hand in the politics which allowed *The Electric Horseman* to be produced, one can only believe that Redford has come to terms with how much he owes his success to illusion—and this movie may be seen as a statement of what those terms are. In Sonny Steele's initial acceptance of his use as an image, Redford begins such a statement and somehow achieves flesh-and-blood personhood on the big screen.

Steele's development as a character takes off almost immediately. Even though he acknowledges how well his breakfast cereal contract provides for him, his actions and appearance indicate displeasure with the way he allows himself to be part of a marketing package. Upon meeting another ex-champion, a racehorse which he must ride onstage in a Las Vegas promotion, Sonny Steele reaches the outer bounds of his willingness to participate in that same marketing package. His decision rests on the fact that the horse, *Rising Star*, has nothing to show for the role it plays. *Rising Star* is drugged to avoid any commotion under the bright stagelights. The horse's injured tendon is not bandaged properly, or supported, because it would tarnish the corporate image. *Rising Star* has been "muscled up" through the injection of steroids, drugs which induce sterility. Steele's actions seem rooted in the fine old American ethic that places natural limits on one's rights the moment they impinge on the rights of others. He steals the horse.

Redford's co-star, Jane Fonda, gives further evidence that she deserves some title of recognition as the pre-eminent American actress of the day. Her portrayal of Hallie Martin, the spirited New York-based television reporter who tracks down Steele and *Rising Star*, positively glows. She plays a professional woman the way no one else can: as a person who thrives on excellence at what she does and in her human relationships. All at once, she projects intelligence, strength, confidence, sensitivity, and vulnerability—the way real people tend to. Fonda's role, and her handling of it, merit special praise at a time when the vision of women which filmgoers are usually presented still reminds one of cut-out paper dolls. And on

a purely aesthetic note, Jane Fonda is the first actress since Natalie Wood in *Inside Daisy Clover* to play opposite Redford and not get lost beside his golden looks—in fact, her beauty and presence blend ideally with his.

The appearance of two such fine actors, whose talents at times take a back seat to their superstar status, might have leveled whatever chance the story of *The Electric Horseman* had to demonstrate its own firepower. But director Sydney Pollack operates with such a disciplined hand that no actor makes a bigger splash than his or her character, or the parts their characters play in the story.

To Pollack also belong kudos for the sure way in which all the characters impact on the screen. Valerie Perrine, as Steele's ex-wife, is honest. Her concern for Steele at the same time that she seeks his signature on their final divorce decree reeks of the very real tearing apart many of us feel inside when we do what is best, and not what we would prefer. John Saxon's corporate head may seem brittle, but he displays personality and motivation—especially in the scene in which he learns that *Rising Star* had been drugged. Finally Alan Arbus restores dignity to the role of the long-haul truckdriver, the dignity that disasters like *Convoy* stripped away.

If a single scene in *The Electric Horseman* can stand as the film's nutshell or theme, it will have to be decided in a heavily-contested vote. But two possibilities deserve immediate consideration, a scene in the middle, and the movie's finale. First comes the scene in which Hallie exults in Steele's revelations about the territory they pass through. He counters her wonder with the remark, "You know all about the subway." He implies some kind of responsibility for being aware of where and how one exists. The end of *The Electric Horseman* is troubling. How nice it would have been for Steele and Hallie to stroll off together, hand-in-hand. In a way they do, but not literally. For true romantics, there is no question but that the two must part and continue their separate lives. Others will have to think about it and grow respectful of two people who know when to separate. And most everyone will wish that it could have worked out differently. When awards are handed out, *The Electric Horseman* will be in the running for best picture, best actor and actress—in both starring and supporting roles—best script, best director, best camera and editorial work. It is fitting that the last movie I should see during the seventies was one of the very finest, as the decade itself was one of mediocrity, punctuated by periodic peaks, plateaus, and plummets.

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# 'Kramer vs. Kramer' vs. Reality

by Paul B. Wiener

Don't be fooled by all the hype. Kramer vs. Kramer is nothing more—nor less—than a new-fashioned tearjerker, gratifying those glands about as often as 10 addresses those of the groin. It is cinematically boring, consisting primarily of close-ups and dull, indoor, TV commercial-framed shots in visually rich Manhattan. It has almost no story, depending on its emotionalism and the viewer's biases and expectations for continuity (unlike writer-director Robert Benton's previous effort, *The Late Show*, which used droll parody and Art Carney's wonderfully dry characterization to carry it beyond its flaky plot). And worst of all, the film simplifies and trades on an issue—child custody—without illuminating it in any way, though it does its best to show modern, liberal, upper-middle-class, neurotic, urban moral confusion as a responsible picture of the issue's actual confused complexity.

Is there any need to repeat the primitive story outline? Wife leaves successful husband—and cute child—to find self. Husband is shocked, hurt, angered, loves wife, loves child more, has hard time of it. Father becomes mother, has wife's best friend's guarded, sexless support. Scenes of tenderness, ignorance, joy, terror, and pride with child. He copes, can't cope, loses job. Wife finds self, job, reappears to challenge father's custody. He tears hair out, finds worse job, fights wife in court, loses, wins. As with most modern films of this ilk, no explanation of a mate suddenly splitting the scene is offered—or expected. This, of course prejudices the viewer, deliberately, against such a cowardly, selfish person, and this most personal abdication becomes instead impersonal and symptomatic—of our selfish age? Of women's pent-up anger?

Meryl Streep as the wife is of course impossible to hate and needs no story, film editing or other actors to display her Liv Ullman-like talents. Dustin Hoffman as the husband, with his usual controlled frenzy and monomania, is capable of many things: he can be a graduate, a petty criminal, an ancient quasi-Indian, and a ratso. But a contemporary, ambitious, high-rise, urban advertising executive he cannot be. No matter, for the credible world of work and work skills is glossed over to

make room for daddy. And Hoffman is a good daddy, flailing about in a sea of makeshift, strangely babysitterless parenting, and relating well to an unusually versatile child actor, Justin (is there any name more Central Park West?) Henry, who is so delicious he practically drops chocolate sprinkles all over the first two rows.

How can a movie starring Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep, made by an experienced filmmaker, hosannahed by all of New York, and dealing with a perfectly understandable, apolitical dilemma be so cheap, unimaginative and pandering? Why are all its flaws being overlooked? If men's jobs take them away from their families, why do we never see this happen with Hoffman until it's too late? If he is different from other men, then why make this a feminist issue? And how come Streep

after many years out of work, with nothing evidently going for her but those famous eyes and cheekbones, lands a well-paying, trendy job? Have we seen any of her skills? Any of Hoffman's? Who's to say Hoffman's new job (secured in a poorly-written but affecting scene of desperate determination)—and his new loss of self-esteem, job autonomy and familiar routines—won't be even more time and morale consuming than the one he lost for—get this!—rushing off to a conference with Justin's first grade teacher? And why is child custody made the issue when the real issue is, how do separated parents care separately for their child? Isn't that problem, with its greater anguish, ingenious solutions, tremendous variety and painful limitations, far more interesting than the civilized, comfortable suffering of Mr. and Mrs. Midtown Manhattan?

The fact is, it has been a very poor year for American films (*Saint Jack* was about the best I saw)—and for America. The New York critics, of course, love most films set in Manhattan. Not only did they need something to rave about, after *The Seduction of Joe Tynan*, with Alan Alda's intellectual uptightness and self-righteous posturing, proved to have no staying power, but they needed something to feel good about, a movie that seemed affirmative, serious and adult without being too controversial or offensive to the Gene Shalits of America.

Apparently, as TV viewing increasingly shapes our ideas of visual narrative and dramatic technique, as feeling for New York diminishes to the full volume of a bumper sticker, and as critical thinking becomes indistinguishable from quoting opinion polls, the need for craft and depth in modern filmmaking is being slowly forgotten. If *Kramer vs. Kramer* is any indication of quality, we can expect films of the eighties, when not like *Star Trek: The Movie*, totally controlled by mindless, thumb-sucking, rip-off technicians, to be showcases for slick mythmaking, compulsive, desperate idealism, and aggressive personalities with the same kind of commitment to the individual as *Parent Effectiveness Training*.



Hoffman and Streep in "Kramer vs. Kramer":  
Pretentious and pandering.

## Tense Truce Follows Vandalism

Continued from page 3

theirs." He adds, "Schmidt promised that the administration will cooperate with this committee, and if any administrators don't to let him know."

The University's local governing board, the Stony Brook council, announced an open conference to be held tonight in Lecture Hall 100. A large turnout is expected to hear those involved air their views on the problems and the solutions.

Benedict was no less active. Three to four hundred people attended the Quad meeting on January 21st to discuss their predicament. Hanes said, "If we all work together, we can take care of this thing."

In addition, the University instituted a new policy for those apprehended. "We're going to prosecute," stated Hanes—"fully." Any vandal caught would be "removed from the dorm and from the University." And on January 23 Business Manager Paul Madonna announced that the students had started "naming names."

### A Future in Question

The naming of names and a subsequent arrest came out of the first of several planned reforms in student-administration relations: the comprehensive Crime Prevention Unit, consisting of seven officers, each with 80 hours of extra training in crime prevention. On the night of the Benedict meeting, student staffers met with the CPU, and there the name of Morris Tevah was reported to Security. According to students who know him, he had precipitated his

arrest by confessing to building staffers. Security detectives speak hopefully that this will lead to more arrests and less crime, but they, like some residents, retain their time-weathered scorn for what they suspect might be a bureaucratic placebo.

Another proposal, that walls be built cutting off the Saloon from the halls, would allow access through locked doors only for residents. Also proposed is a shift of hard liquor sales to the Union. (See related article.)

Despite these efforts, reticence exists. Owen argued, "It's up to the halls themselves to handle their own problems. Anything that's proposed just can't be done without commitment on the hall." But though residents cling to their doubt and mistrust, they know that "they don't have much to turn to." Cooperation with the administration is their only chance. Their greatest fear is relocation.

In an interview, Hanes was presented with the Benedict residents' consternation that regardless of reparations, mass relocation would still occur. "I disagree," he said, adding, "if the students and the University can work together to identify the problem and extract those that have created the problem." It is an important point, for though as Hanes stated, "The University would certainly not wish to move a mass number of students," he admitted, "It is an option." In other words, those responsible for the vandalism must be found.

So amidst the shaky dawning of a cooperative age at Stony Brook, doubts still linger. George Feiden reminded one reporter, "We are charged with maintaining the dorms in a safe, reasonable manner. Bond-holders for these

dorms have to be protected." The students know, too, that the rooms in G and H are needed for future freshmen triples.

As a Polity Councilman put it:

"The SUNY system runs on two things—money and scapegoats." The expense in dollars is known. It is the number of scapegoats which is in question. And so, with

mass relocation a possibility, Owen warns, "These people have made this their home. If moved, they'd be plenty pissed. They'll be back. There will be damage."

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# The Stony Brook **P**RESS/Sports

## Pats and Crooms Triumph

by Chris Fairhall

After 2½ years at Stony Brook, Mike Crooms finally had his night as he led the Patriots to victory over Staten Island, assuring that the team is once again on the playoff trail.

After 3½ minutes of play, Staten Island called time out. And the team had good reason for it. Crooms, starting at guard, hit three field goals in 90 seconds, as the Pats took the lead, 11-6. Though two more



Mel Walker goes for one of his 1,000 points.

time outs were called in the first half, Staten Island could not slow the Patriots' momentum.

By the end of the half, Crooms scored a career-high 20 points, and hit a field goal in the second half for 22. Forward and co-captain Heyward Mitchell also hit a career high, 23 points. Strong rebounding from Mitchell, center Eugene Treadwell, and co-captain and guard Mel Walker gave the Patriots a sharp edge in their 93-79 victory.

The Pats and Staten Island are in contention for regional playoffs, and both teams knew that a victory would be weighed heavily in determining who would win a berth. Head Coach Dick Kendall said there was a lot of pressure to win the game, and that he told Crooms, "This is your chance."

"The coach said it determined our playoff status," Crooms recalled. "I really wanted to go out there and bust tonight." Crooms played a superb offense in the first half, getting free for lay-ups and sinking tap-ins. His defense in the second half was just as impressive. With strong defensive rebounding, a blocked shot and an interception, Crooms helped squash any chance Staten Island had of catching up.

Big scorers in the second half were Mitchell with 16, and Walker with 14, for a total of 18 in the game. With 47 seconds left in the game, Crooms scored his last shot, a dunk from a fast break. At halftime, Crooms said the coach told him to "go out there and be poised." The guard explained, "So I tried to box out and get the rebounds."

Throughout last semester, Mitchell and Treadwell were weak at rebounding. But with the tap-ins both got, not to mention their rebounds on defense, the Pats added an important dimension to their playing. "I've been hitting the boards a lot more," said Treadwell.

Added Mitchell, "I was really psyched tonight, and I think we're going to be strong the rest of the season." Mitchell said that he feels good about scoring his career high and playing a superior game, but after it was over, he said, "It feels better to have beaten Staten Island."

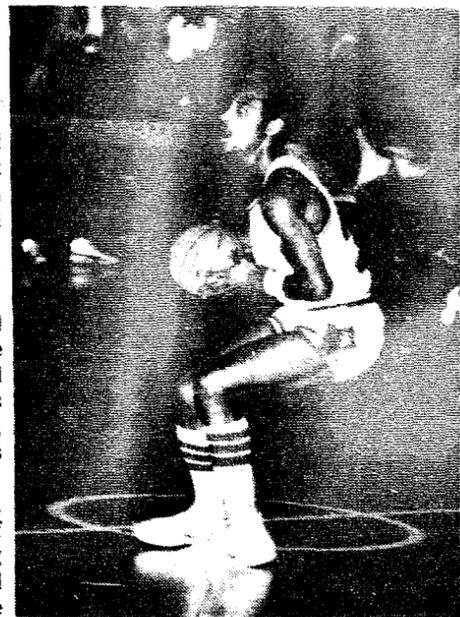
Treadwell, a 6-7 freshman from Mastic, LI, said the game was only an indication of things to come. He said that he is "coming around finally," and that the coach told him to "mostly stay on the defensive boards." And as a result, Treadwell said, "The scoring just came on." He scored 12 points.

While Tuesday's game belonged to Crooms and Mitchell, Mel Walker was in all his glory last Thursday, as he became the sixth Patriot to break a career total 1,000 points. "It feels good," he said Tuesday night. "Since I didn't play that much as a freshman, I'm coming on real good."

As a freshman, Walker scored 51 points, as a sophomore, 345, and as a junior, 319.

Walker scored 18 points Tuesday night, but most noticeable was his rebounding. "We had the two big guys," he said of Crooms and Mitchell. "I didn't have to score that much."

The Pats got into foul trouble early in the



Mike Crooms on the offensive.

first half, and within only a few minutes, so did Staten Island. In a sight not too often seen, the visiting coach was given a technical foul in the second half for shouting at the referee. Within the last 2½ minutes, Stony Brook clinched a victory as two of Staten Island's key players fouled out.

The starting line-up was Richie Malave and Heyward Mitchell at forwards, Walker and Crooms at guards and Treadwell at center. This was not the typical starting five which Stony Brook fans saw last semester. Said Kendall, "It's going to be tough now—that starting line-up."



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