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More letters

Missing clay saga continues in kilns at Vanier college

This letter is intended to correct factual inaccuracies and false impressions contained in an unsigned letter concerning the Ceramics Club published in the February 3rd Excalibur. The letter was written by Dixie Worcester.

I have been asked by Eric Willis, Residence Tutor of Vanier College, to say that he and I concur that he has never received any amount of clay from the Club. The explanation for Dixie's calumny against Eric Willis is that her use of the term "resident tutor" was meant to refer not to Eric Willis, but rather to the part time Faculty member who teaches a College Tutorial "Explorations in Perception and in the Aesthetic Experience".

I want to correct the impression created by Dixie's letter that the Club is a place where small fortunes can be forged out of baked mud. During my eight years association with the Club it has been run as one of those extra-curricular student activities that augment the formal academic programs of the University — an opportunity to engage in the creative craft of pottery as a hobby, at a nominal cost, and without the commitment involved in a formal course of study. Very active members making large numbers of pots to be sold for their own personal profit cannot be allowed in a hobby club such as ours because it is subsidized by the University in the form of free facilities and utilities.

Dixie refers to the Club's Christmas Sale as justification for her own commercial activities — these sales started in 1972 after the Club's need for a new kiln was recognized. The pots were sold at less than comparable retail prices, and all proceeds went to the kiln fund and as a result we were able to purchase a new kiln in 1974. We have continued with the Christmas Sales to provide the Club with sufficient money to maintain and refurbish our capital equipment. The sales have been carried out in the spirit and tradition of similar fund raising activities by charity and other non-profit organizations and as such they are quite consistent with the role of the Club as one for student hobbyists.

The saga of the missing clay began in the spring of 1976 when we noticed a large amount of clay had been purchased and a correspon-

ding amount of money was not forthcoming from our members as the clay was fired. We took into account stock on hand, the loss in weight that occurs on drying and firing, and did bookkeeping in terms of clay rather than money to eliminate errors caused by expenses on things other than clay. We concluded that there was a substantial deficit of about 800 lbs., this being about 35 per cent of the total amount of clay used during the year. Dixie and Margaret Glew were by far the two most active members (they used 38 per cent of the total amount of clay in 1975-76) and in addition to making most of the pots they were doing most of the firings. The most obvious explanation for the missing clay was that pots were being fired, but that the equivalent amount of money was not being debited from the members' accounts. However, I insisted that it would be improper to accuse anybody of this kind of negligence without specific evidence of non-recording of fired clay for particular firings. Thus the surveillance of the kiln firings in July 1976 was done to avoid unjust conclusions. The surveillance showed that the clay fired on July 29th by Dixie would never have been debited from members' accounts (herself and two others) had I not interceded in September.

In September the kiln room was secured with a new lock to avoid further loss of clay. At about the same time, following a discussion

with Eric Willis, we drew up a constitution for the Club which was ratified at an advertized General Meeting of members. The constitution included a clause limiting the amount of clay a member could use in any one year to 100 lb. (in 1975-76 a typical member of the Club only used 151 lb. of clay). In the same year the Club's records show that Dixie and Margaret used 218 lbs. and 458 lbs. respectively.

In November 1976 we repeated the bookkeeping of clay bought and used during 1975-76 using somewhat more accurate procedures than previously and taking into account minor losses that had been neglected in the previous calculations. The conclusion was that between 600 and 1000 lb of clay was unaccounted for (26 per cent or 46 per cent of the total amount). The details of this exercise were circulated to members on December 20th together with notice of the February General Meeting and we invited members to discuss the matter of the missing clay prior to the meeting but no member suggested an alternative explanation. If Dixie had read this letter she would have seen that the clay used by the Tutorial, taken home by members, and lost in the clay trap, was taken into account.

Goefrey Hunter,
Faculty Advisor to the
Ceramics Club.

CYSF buries head say GAA members

The Graduate Assistants' Association urges all York students (graduate and undergraduate) to vote for continued membership in the Ontario Federation of Students and National Union of Students in the referendum on March 9th and 10th. In taking this position the GAA deplors the efforts by CYSF to withdraw its membership from the two organizations. At a time when university spending restraints continue apace, and when other sectors of the provincial university community (including presidents and faculty) are well organized to express their concerns, it is folly of the highest order for the CYSF to pretend that student interests would be best served outside a provincial student organization.

Furthermore, CYSF spokespersons have provided no public justification for their position, while OFS, in its

publications and forums, has argued effectively on its own behalf. For example, while tuition fees are going up \$100 in the fall, it is significant that they are only going up by \$100 and that they haven't gone up at all since 1972. The relentless pressure of OFS in the interests of Ontario students has surely had some effect in this regard.

The present CYSF should cease burying its head in its political sandbox long enough to realize that there are issues more vital and interests more profound than those it has chosen to acknowledge. The GAA reminds all of its members who are graduate students that they are entitled to vote on March 9th and 10th.

Robin Endres
[executive member]
Ilene Crawford
[executive coordinator]
for the G.A.A.



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