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Bard Free Press - All Issues (2000-2018)

Bard Free Press, 2000-2018

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## Bard Free Press, Zine (April 6, 2019)

Bard College

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## Ishmael Thomas: Coworker, Friend, and Family to Bard

BRONWYN SIMMONS

Ishmael Thomas passed away in Northern Dutchess Hospital on Tuesday, April 2nd, 2019. He was 68 years old. Known as Ish or "Rain Man" to friends and colleagues at Bard, he worked at Kline in the dish room for almost 23 years. According to coworkers, Ish was a dear colleague, a hard worker, and loved by all. He had a genuine spirit, and lit up a room with his idiosyncratic personality. Despite having the tough job as a dishwasher, he was never heard to complain or say a negative word.

Ish loved numbers, and was able to do math additions at an astonishing speed. "It was phenomenal," his coworker Betty Nicolato said. Ish was "sharp as a whip," and memorized everyone's birthdays, as well as 65 people's work schedules. If someone called out sick, he knew immediately who it was and when they were supposed to be at work. Ish loved to color, and he brought pages of brightly colored animals he had done to give to his

colleagues. John Moore, the administration for Chartwells, who originally hired Ish, received a page every single day. "He knew I loved orange," said John, who was also Ish's human resources and payroll officer. Each of Ish's colored pages was dated with his name and the words "LOVE HAPPY DAY."

Ish was known for singing and dancing along to modern pop songs, a trait his co-workers related with much fondness and laughter. He also had a penchant for sugar, and would eat lots of the pastries and sweets in Kline. Ish would get angry when someone mentioned snow, since the snow meant he wouldn't be able to come into work or would have to leave early. He loved his job wholeheartedly.

"I liked his laugh," Francis Shultis, a longtime coworker and friend of Ish's, remembered. Indeed, Ish's laugh seems to be notorious among his co-workers, most of whom mention how funny it was. Melissa Gruntler, who



Photo Courtesy of Chas Cerulli

worked closely with Ish for sixteen years, called it "a little mischievous laugh." He was quite a little prankster, according to Melissa, who remembers him frequently joking, "We don't need anymore pots and pans—I'm taking a leisure hour." Melissa told the Free Press, "I liked everything about him. [ . . . ] I think people when you work with them are just as much a family as your extended family."

"I helped him, he helped me out," said Frances of his relationship with Ish. "He was a good man. [ . . . ] He always got a good heart." Frances says he will miss Ish, and that his favorite memory of him is his singing and dancing as he worked. "He's just all in my heart," Frances said.

"It was an honor to work with him," Betty said. She illustrated Ish's jokester side, too, describing how he would call her "Betty Boop" and then let out his signature laugh. She also told the story of how she once tried to give Ish some pans to wash, and he responded, "No more, no more." So she took her grease pan and washed it herself and then showed him, saying, "Haha, Ish, I washed it myself." In response, he stuck his tongue out at her. "He was

## To All the Pets I Had Before

EVIN GUINAN

When I was younger, I had a chronic experience that I'm sure many people can relate to when remembering their youth. I was curious, innocent, and loved animals. My mother, being as she was, facilitated this interest to the best of her ability, and I pursued it as an individual. Hikes, science centers, taking care of class pets, and the like, they were all the norm. Along with these, I also had my fair share of personal pets. Toads, bearded dragons, tree frogs, anoles, fish, iguanas, and, yes, hermit crabs. As a youth, I had no conception of real responsibility, and it is in this moment that I'd like to look back at those animals, now in whatever world or non-world they may reside in post-death, and apologize for being a child who did not understand what research was, or that animals often require more than what we conventionally think.

Case in point, the hermit crab.

You may know the hermit crab as an odd creature that

creature that huddles around its comrades in one of those large bird cages outside of the Generic Beach Store on a boardwalk, and you are correct. Generic Beach Store will sell you a hermit crab for \$3.99, then they sell you what they usually call "a crabitat", consisting of a sponge, some food pellets, a small dish of some kind, and then a small plastic terrarium or cage.

This is considered proper housing, but much in the same way the denizens of New York City are experiencing a housing crisis, so are hermit crabs, and at large. The hermit crab, most commonly acquired as a "Purple Pincher", or PP for short, actually needs way more than that in order to survive.

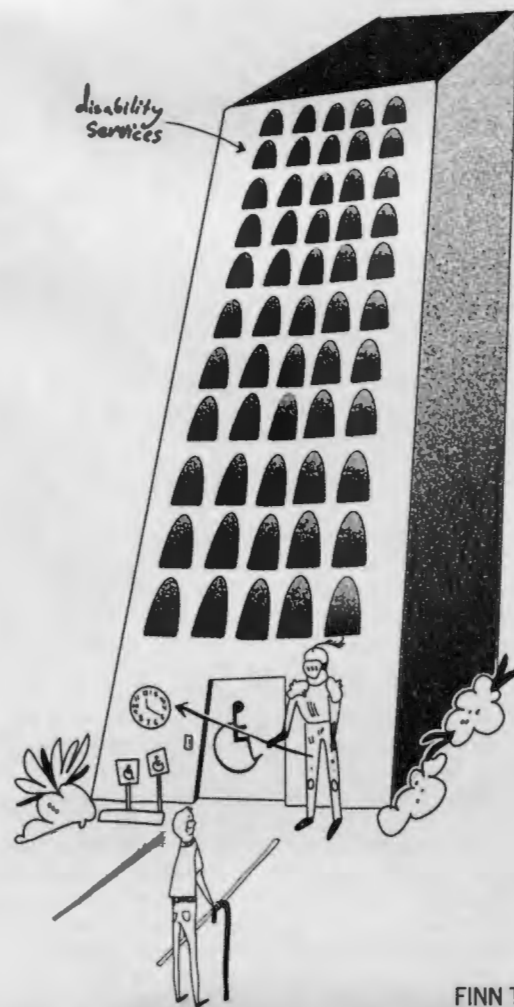
Firstly, as with any living creature, they must breathe, and in order to do that they need proper humidity, which is unattainable in an open cage. In order to properly function and feel less stressed they need a tropical temperature, anywhere between 70 and 88 degrees,

# Bard College FREE PRESS

APRIL 6, 2019



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FINN TAIT

ideally, and water, fresh and salt, readily available. The real kicker, is that they need anywhere from four to six inches of sand in which to bury themselves, which is another impossibility with a normal 'craibat', and essentially requires at minimum a 10-gallon tank.

One of the many sad truths of the common PP is that, despite the name "hermit crab", they really travel in groups of near hundreds of crabs. They need a friend, and are inherently social creatures— I have certainly spotted mine having a shindig or two. Yet people usually house them alone in improper doom cells. As they are hardy creatures that want so desperately to survive, they slowly die over the course of months while being fed chemical infested pellet food, with a bacteria-housing sponge as their only water, in likely a freezing domicile, clinging to the hope that tomorrow will bring a warmer day, and maybe just one piece of mango.

People tend to believe that hermit crabs live maybe a year at most, but the reality is they can live decades. A proper and varied diet, a

group of buddy-crabs, some water pools and a spritzing every day, and they are golden.

As you can tell, I'm a bit passionate about this. I see it as a form of penance to give my four hermit crabs the best possible life they can get. This includes battling with B&G in order to make my room not sub 60 degrees in the winter so my Crab Lads don't get stressed out, and hunting for new and fun terrain for them to scuttle about in.

Every day I grab a fruit from Kline, careful to avoid too many clementines, as the acid isn't good in excess, and alert for any pearls, as they are my smallest one's favorite. As my main secondary goal in life, they are both a simple hobby and a beacon to the pets I had during my naive days as an elementary schooler.

So, to all the pets I had before, I'm sorry but I have learned. I will never forget the lesson you taught me. Respect any animal you may take under your roof with proper research and proper care, and, of course, respect the crab.

## Hampshire College Closure Not Indicated At Bard

BRONWYN SIMMONS

Hampshire College in Massachusetts has made headlines for the past few months as it appears to head toward imminent institution collapse. The small liberal arts school, known for its progressive politics and outstanding history of activism, has seen its enrollment decline sharply, which has drastically affected its financial capability. Hampshire first announced it was looking for a "strategic partner" institution in January.

Then in February, it made clear its decision not to accept an incoming 2019 freshman class, instead only planning to admit those students who had deferred attending Hampshire in 2018 for a gap year, as well as those who already accepted admission offers for early action; this means a total of 77 new students. The New Yorker reports that the college also informed its students that it was unsure which professors would be teaching next semester, and that food and other services would be

limited. Lastly, Hampshire has begun laying off faculty and staff, starting with admissions and development positions, with as much as up to 50% of faculty feared to be let go in the coming months. Since Hampshire relies largely on tuition to support itself financially, the fact that it is not accepting a full freshman class, as well as letting its admissions officers go, makes it clear that it plans to close.

Hampshire's president, Miriam E. Nelson, has come under harsh criticism for her apparent disregard for protecting the college from closure, her lack of communication and transparency vis-a-vis the college's dire financial situation, and for not accepting the outpouring of alumnus and student support. Hampshire alumni have rallied in an effort called Save Hampshire, and declared they could donate enough money to allow the college to accept a full freshman class and avoid the faculty and staff layoffs. Students have formed the Hamp Rise Up movement, staging a 50 day sit-in at



Above: Hampshire Students Stage a Sit-In  
Photo Courtesy of The New Yorker

Below: Students Protest  
Photo Courtesy of @hamp-up via Twitter

President Nelson's office in protest of the handling of the college's financial crisis and asked that two student-elected students be put on the board of trustees during the negotiation process to ensure "transparency, shared governance, and equity." The college has denied the students' request.

Bard College is similar to Hampshire in many ways, and Hampshire is not the only liberal arts school to close in the past years. The Free Press asked President Leon Botstein for a statement about the recent events at Hampshire and how they relate to Bard. President Botstein assured The Free Press that Bard is not in danger of shutting down, although he remarked that this trend of college closure will continue. "The reasons are a slowing demographic demand, and the economic inequality in our country that puts higher education out of the reach of most of our fellow citizens. Add to that the misguided and damaging anti-immigrant politics and harsh foreign policy rhetoric coming out of Washington. It has deterred enrollment from abroad," he said.

When asked what could have been done differently to prevent such a collapse in the example of Hampshire,

Botstein seemed to agree with Nelson's instinct to seek out a partner institution for support: "I think greater fundamental integration with the four colleges in the 5 college network—Smith, Holyoke, Amherst and UMass—would have helped. They all have the resources and standing to have supported a college they helped create over the long term." Although Nelson has named University of Massachusetts Amherst as a sought-after partner, its president Marty Meehan has negated the possibility of acquiring Hampshire. It may be too late for Hampshire to save itself by partnership, and if Nason continues to ignore the help of the alumnus network, Hampshire's end looms near.

"The closing of Hampshire is a tragedy and a blow to the liberal arts and progressive ideals in education. It is a moment of sadness and reflects poorly on our priorities in politics and culture, and therefore in philanthropy," said President Botstein.

**Update:** At the time of print, Hampshire President Miriam E. Nelson has stepped down, citing financial troubles as the cause for her decision. She is replaced by Interim President Kenneth Rosenthal.

# RecycleMania Encourages Sustainability

AVEN WILLIAMS

If it isn't constantly on your mind, at the very least you have seen it all over the news. Global climate change is going to have a severe impact on our generation. While it is easy to feel overwhelmed to the point of inaction, Bard's Sustainability Club is committed to making differences on campus and in the community. "The push is really to create a student demographic interested in making little choices to save the environment," says club head Karianne Canfield, '21.

The Sustainability Club's current project is RecycleMania, an eight week competition between colleges across the country to help schools reduce waste. During these eight weeks, all of the recycling at Bard is taken from dorms, the campus center, and Kline, and then is weighed before it is recycled. The Sustainability Club is taking this opportunity to educate students on how waste is handled at Bard and how to effectively use our recycling system.

Over years of participation in RecycleMania, Bard is able to keep track of how well we are recycling and if our waste levels are improving. "It also compares nationally with schools our size and our rank, so specifically in the Liberty League," says Canfield. "It's mostly a publicity push to make students and faculty more aware on campuses about how their campus does things environmentally and what we can do to do more." Waste management is an important issue at Bard. Most buildings on campus have separate bins for paper recycling, plastics and glass, landfill, compost, and donations. The free-use store also provides a way for students to pass on unused items to others.

An important focus for the RecycleMania project is accessing what we can do to improve our recycling habits on campus. "Essentially we used to be a single stream recycling [system]" Bard E intern Ashley Eugley '22 explains, "but that meant people had to sort the trash

for us once we threw it out... That wasn't an effective way so we separated into two different bins, one of them is for mixed paper and one of them is for glass bottles, plastic containers... however a lot of people don't recognize that it's a different stream for each." Contamination is not just a problem between recycling containers but for waste in general. Eugley believes learning to recycle properly is a good first step in making a larger sustainable difference: "Make sure your dorm mates and yourself are recycling properly. You should have designated bins in your dorm for different types of trash, so making sure your bins are not contaminated is great. If, say our recycling bin of paper is contaminated with tomato soup, or something that is dumped on top of it that should go in the trash or down the drain, then we can't put that in the recycling stream." Any recycling that is contaminated with non recyclables goes to the landfill.

Each week since the beginning of RecycleMania in February, the Sustainability Club has hosted events to

engage students in the process. Their past events include Upcycle Valentines for Valentines Day and the Zero Waste Cooking Workshop. Their most recent event was a recycling-themed carnival in the campus center. At their blind Water Testing event a few weeks ago, they asked students to rate their preference between bottled water, bard tap water, and boiled water. At their table they displayed a plastic water bottle. A quarter of it was filled with a dark liquid, representing the amount of oil that goes into making one plastic bottle.

After counting the results of the taste test, Bard tap water was the surprising winner. This information is an important step in promoting student consumer awareness. "I think that it's hard to find agency to do a lot of political action," says Canfield. "It's easier to feel good about the decisions you make everyday."

So I want to make a place for students to feel like they are doing something to help the environment and actually be doing that as opposed to relying on a congressman (or person) and having to leave

campus and go and protest."

For Eugley, a commitment to the environment has been a natural and lifelong interest: "I was born in Maine and my dad's a lobsterman so the environment is essential to my family's livelihood. It was always my source of entertainment and my source of energy... I think my chief motivator is I think that there is a lot you can learn about yourself from spending time in nature and so when are destroying the habit and the resources we need we are really hurting ourselves as well as other organisms."

Finding the motivation to participate in environmental conservation and changing our unsustainable habits is no easy task, but for the Sustainability Club, making small changes in your everyday life to be more environmentally aware is the first step towards limiting the impacts of Climate Change. "You can still feel active and engaged in the process of saving the planet by doing little things," says Canfield. "And we shouldn't be afraid of doing these little things, they're really easy!"

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Come to our meetings, Tuesdays at 7PM in the Red Room

Follow us on Instagram for updates and insider information.

@bardfreepress

# Why I Co-founded the Disabled Student Union

BRONWYN SIMMONS

Last year I interviewed Ben Sernau, the first student to attend (and graduate from) Bard College in a wheelchair. Ben, who majored in writing and computer science, is diagnosed with Beckers Muscle Dystrophy and used a motorized wheelchair with 10 MPH capacity. Bard attempted to change its lack of disability accessibility to accommodate Ben when he joined the college, adding automatic buttons on many of its doors and turning one of the Toasters into a disability-equipped dorm.

Despite Bard's attempts at modernizing and becoming equally accessible, Ben still faced literal roadblocks at every turn. The snow rendered his wheelchair incapable of making it to class on time. The shuttles were not equipped with ramps, so when he needed to get off campus, he had to arrange a trip with security ahead of time. He mostly stayed on campus and didn't engage in many extracurricular activities. In what he described as the "worst time of his Bard

experience," Ben got stuck on the 2nd floor of an academic building because the elevator stopped working. He had to crawl down the stairs as security carried his wheelchair for him. When asked about why many of Bard's buildings are not Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) approved, Ben explained that since Bard is a private institution, it is not required to comply with ADA regulations. "But that's not an excuse, because you just need to include everyone. We're all human beings, so if you say you're an institution that wants to include everybody, then you should," Ben said upon reflection.

Amy Shein, the Disability Support Coordinator, is the point person for disabled students at Bard. Of the roughly 300 students registered with disability services, Amy told me that only about 5% were physically disabled. This is not surprising, as this hilly campus is nearly impossible to navigate with mobility issues. Bard's lack of accessibility

deters disabled people from enrolling at Bard, while the lack of disabled students at Bard in turn discourages any fundamental changes in accessibility.

Amy Shein has been very supportive and accommodating of me vis-a-vis my physical disability. When I first met with her (after submitting my documented proof of disability), she straight away contacted security and B&G to ensure I was officially approved to bring my scooter with me into all campus buildings as my mobility vehicle. She told me I could alert her to any inaccessible classrooms that I had class in so she could switch the classroom location to another more accessible one, that I could call B&G to ask them to shovel snow in front of my dorm if I couldn't get through it, and that I could be added to the security escort service in case I ever needed help moving from one part of campus to another.

Amy also responds to my emails promptly, and has gone out of her way to assist me with mobility issues.

Thus, the problem is not that Bard is unaccommodating; on the contrary, I

find it to be exceedingly so. The problem is that Bard is not accessible. Many of the disability buttons are broken on the doors. Most of the professors' offices and administrative offices are located in old buildings with no elevators. There is an enormous hill that must be climbed to get to the library, classrooms, dining hall, mail room, etc.

The shuttles are not equipped with ramps. So, by choosing to come to Bard, is it my fault that I have such a hard time navigating the campus? Or is it Bard's fault for prioritizing its historic buildings and scenic landscapes over equal access for all people?

I think it's a combination of both, but I wish Bard would do more to comply with ADA regulations. It would allow me to feel less like I were fighting to be a student here, so rather than having to spend so much energy worrying about how to physically get myself to my class, I could focus more on my homework itself. If instead of agreeing to work with an individual student after the student expresses discomfort and asks for help, the college could already have those basic

## Chained Bollards in Village Walk Raise Accessibility Concerns

NICHOLAS FIORELLINI

After Central Campus Area Coordinator Hannah Jaegers sent out a school-wide email about cars being prohibited from Village Walk in October, chains and locks were added to the pre-existing bollards on both ends of Resnick Commons, preventing cars from passing through, earlier this semester. Enforcing the Village Walk to be a pedestrian-only area has received mixed reactions, with students mostly citing safety and accessibility reasons.

For some students, the chained bollards have made their experience walking home, especially late at night on the weekends, feel safe and less concerned about being hit by a student driver.

"I've almost been hit three times," says first-year Maya Aga. "People will be dropping off their friends after a party and will speed through the Village without looking. I absolutely think the chains are a good idea."

But for others, like sophomore Bronwyn Simmons, who has chronic

pain and uses an electric scooter to get around campus and lives in Village H, believes the chained bollards provide an additional burden to disabled students like herself, especially during wintry weather.

"There is barely room for my scooter to get through without any snow on the ground, but I can manage," Simmons tells Free Press. "Throughout the winter, however, the snow piles up on the sides, and it makes it impossible for me to ride my scooter through. I have to dismount, bend down, and push my scooter under the chain, hunching in a way that really aggravates my pain level. It's extremely difficult."

Even without the chained bollards, navigating campus in snowy and icy conditions already presents problems for disabled individuals who rely on mobility aids.

"Riding my scooter in the snow is mostly impossible," continues Simmons. "When the paths are not cleared, including the ramps, I am unable to move through the

points of accessibility in place, making the campus a more welcoming and inclusive place. Then, I could find it a "place to think" instead of a place to dread getting around.

For the "average" Bard student's information, my disabled Bard student day looks like this: I wake up an extra three hours early to ensure enough time to do all of my physical therapy exercises and ice my hips before class. I make a decision regarding the snow outside: Will I attempt to ride my scooter through the slippery sludge, risking a fall on un-shoveled paths? Will I call security to drive me, risking being late to class as I depend on the availability of the next free security guard to come get me during their busy work day? Will I give up and just walk, accepting the physical pain that comes with it?

Once I'm in class, I plug my scooter into an outlet, as the cold makes the battery die quickly. I force a smile as someone compliments me on my "nice ride," telling me they're "so jealous" that I get to use my scooter to get around while they "have to walk." I think about telling them they're lucky they can

walk, but bite my tongue and calm myself down. I remind myself that since I don't look disabled, there's no way anyone would know that their comments are insensitive. I think of that time a classmate called me "lazy" for taking the elevator, and how I froze in shock as the elevator door closed, unable to venture any kind of reply that might better his knowledge of ableism and assumptions. I make sure to get a seat at a table, and when I sit down I lean back in my chair, slumping with horrible posture to make sitting through an entire class bearable on my hips. I dream of being able to sit up straight with perfect posture as the professor takes roll. At lunch, I bring my scooter into the dining hall, parking it next to me as I eat. I ignore the stares at the oddity of my bringing a bike indoors, but I wish I could put up a sign that says, "I need this scooter because I'm disabled!"

I wish these same thoughts did not go through my head every day, but they do relentlessly. I dream of a day when I can navigate my way across campus easily and feel like I have just as equal access as a more physically abled

person. That is my reason for recently co-founding the Bard Disabled Student Union. I was tired of feeling alone and misunderstood in my difficulties with access. With a Union, students with disabilities on campus—whether they be mentally or

physically disabled—can support each other, raise awareness of ableism, and fight for equal access.

Please email me if you'd like to join the Disabled Student Union.

bs9405@bard.edu

## The Admissions Scandal and Bard College

ALYSSA MAY WHITE

One big item in the news lately has been the college admissions scandal that Vanity Fair calls, "Operation Varsity Blues." The operation is the largest college admissions scam that the justice department has ever prosecuted. Stanford, U.C.L.A., Georgetown, Yale, Wake Forest, the University of Texas, the University of Southern California, and the University of San Diego have been implicated so far. The scandal includes big names, like Lori Loughlin (Aunt Becky from Full House), but another well-off family has gotten more attention lately. Gregory and Marcia Abbott have moved into the spotlight due to the actions of their son, Malcolm Abbott, also known by his rap name, Billa.

Malcolm Abbott is not the sibling involved in the college admissions scandal. His parents are accused of having his younger sister's SAT and ACT scores boosted by paying off the same scammer other rich and famous parents are accused of working with. Vanity Fair reporters came to

the family residence hoping to talk to one of the parents about the scandal, but instead Malcolm came out, blunt in hand, to greet them. Malcolm briefly defended his parents, but largely used the interaction with the press as free publicity for his rap career.

The overarching claim is that Malcolm never enrolled in college, but that is not accurate. Malcolm Abbott used to be enrolled at Bard College, though he dropped out without completing a degree. His email still exists, and will come up if you type the name Malcolm Abbott into the address line of your Bard email. Malcolm harassed Assistant Dean of Students, Bethany Nohlgren about his views on the college over Instagram. He accused Bard of failing to address racial issues, and said, "So grateful to not be at that institution," followed by a more vulgar expression of his displeasure. There is no evidence to suggest that his application to Bard was bolstered in the same way his sister's college applications were.



Former Bard Student Malcolm Abbott  
Photo Courtesy of New York Post

snow. Even when they are cleared, it is slippery and dangerous to ride. I have to depend on getting rides from security, but the guards are often busy with other tasks, so it is not a reliable way to be on time to class. Walking through the snow, which I do have to resort to at times, is incredibly painful."

When the weather is clear, many roads and pathways on campus have sizeable cracks and potholes or are not paved, providing other challenges for individuals with mobility aids to face.

As a solution, Simmons

suggests, "The college should install a pathway for pedestrians only on the sides of the chains."

On the March 31, 2019 Student Assembly Town Hall on accessibility and disability on campus, administrators responded to these concerns and said the weight of cars interferes with the current geothermal heating system already in place that would melt the snow on the Village pavement. In the future, Building and Grounds will pay closer attention to the snow surrounding the walk's entryways.