

FEATURES

RANDOM NOTES



Chris Piehler

I'm feeling spleen today. For those of you who haven't studied the 19th-century Moody French Guy school of poetry, Charles Baudelaire, who vies with Edgar Allen Poe as history's Most Morose Man, once described spleen as the feeling that a bunch of silent spiders had wrapped their webs around the very core of his brain. I like that. It suits my mood perfectly.

In a more modern context, spleen is the feeling you might get if you wake up hung over, wearing wet socks and spray-paint somewhere in the basement of one of the New Dorms.

Spleen is the same feeling you get at three in the morning when you kick the surge protector and lose your entire term paper that you blew off all your friends to write. Get the picture yet?

I think all this suffocating rage stuff might have something to do with the fact that it's the second week of April and it's still, to use a precise meteorological term, butt cold outside.

Add to that the fact that the constantly-falling snow makes me feel like someone has strapped my bruised and semi-comatose body onto a greasy couch in front of so many blank video tapes that my entire world seems to be enveloped in TV fuzz, and all I really want to do is find something made of glass and break it.

Yes, yes, I hear the chorus of optimists singing, "But look outside. Even now the sky is turning blue. Let's go frolic and look at the flowers and bunnies and birds." I say go ahead, but you won't get much frolicking done in the two feet of brown slush that marks the beginning of Vermont's mud season.

By the time you read this you will probably have lost at least one shoe to one of Middlebury's famed Sippy Holes which lurk everywhere waiting for some innocent wearing the new Nuclear-powered Air Jordans to walk by and sacrifice his \$300 footwear to the pissed-off gods of New England spring.

You will also have experienced Vermont Polka Dots, those deceit-

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Does diversity include the white male? Middlebury students look beyond gender and ethnicity

By Jake Kritzer

Is the white male the newest target of persecution, oppression and prejudice? Many white males answer yes. Last week's issue of *Newsweek* featured a cover story entitled "White Male Paranoia."

The article addressed the feeling of many white males that they are made out to be "bad guys" by minorities, feminists, gays and other victims of oppression in American society. The net result, some say, has been to heap blame upon white guys, making them the victims of many prejudices.

The *Newsweek* article by David Gates presents certain stereotypes that seem to be gaining popularity in our culture as evidence of a definite shift in attitudes towards white males. On television, for example, the white male is often seen, in Gates' words, as "a boob or a villain."

He cites a 1987 study of various commercials which found that mini-conflicts in the ad were won by women 100 percent of the time, but one need look no further than Homer Simpson or Al Bundy to understand the point. Often, writes Gates, the white male in popular media is the one who, "...can't jump, can't dance, can't feel." He who once enjoyed an untarnished image in our society is now being viewed as anything from a buffoon to an ogre.

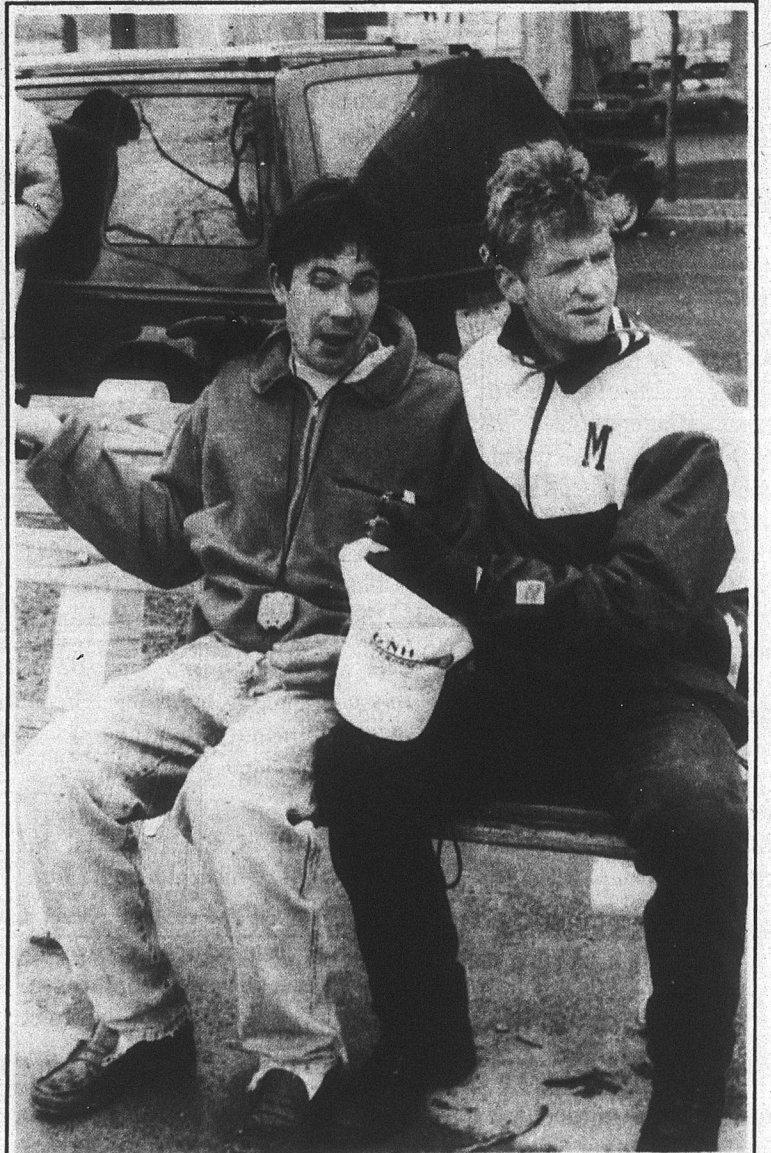
The issue extends beyond TV and movies. Effects are felt pre-

dominantly in the job market. The white male often suspects that affirmative action translates as reverse discrimination, and that attempts to achieve sexual and racial equality mean conferring a competitive edge to women and minorities.

What is the impact of this issue at Middlebury? The formation of a men's discussion group by Gary Margolis indicates that some males are starting to feel the pressure. Also, the publication and public response to a poem like Sharon Van Wright's "Pissed at Men" indicate that emotions run high. Some apparently see men, maybe not specifically white, as deserving of categorical criticism while others strive to defend men from what they perceive to be unjust attacks.

Overall, however, there does not seem to be strong support for either view. The white males that I spoke with did not feel threatened or victimized. One felt that, "Artemis and those in the Women's Center in some ways cast men in a negative light, but most of the paranoia is unfounded." Similarly, women and minorities did not hold any strong feelings of resentment or animosity toward white males as a whole.

"I see a person as a person," said James Mack, an African American sophomore. Mack said that he did not blame a group as a whole for ills done to blacks or others, but rather lays blame on guilty individuals. "People in higher places, positions



Rich Balakier '94 and Bryan Wockley '94 wonder about their place in a PC society.
Photo by Amanda Dickson

of authority, are the ones who will generally be guilty of prejudice, not a whole group."

The focus on individual accountability also holds true in other dimensions of this issue. For instance, Tina Buchholz '95 feels that in the job market, "Employers are looking more at a person's capabilities rather than at their race or sex." However, Buchholz concluded her

remark by saying, "At least that's what I want to believe."

Perhaps this seemingly idealistic view is true, as other students share the idea that those people running today's job market are primarily focused on ability and competence and not ethnicity or gender.

"People are not concerned with

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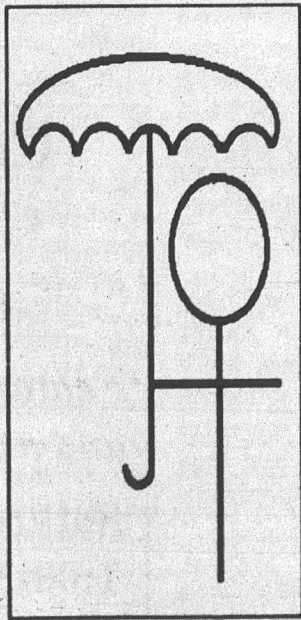
Gender groups seek to unite energies

By Elizabeth Robbins

A variety of student organizations ranging from the Women's Center to Lifechance address women's/gender issues on campus. These groups represent a wide spectrum of viewpoints and espouse different objectives.

The Women's Union is loosely considered the "umbrella organization" of the groups that deal specifically with women's issues. According to the charter statement, "The Women's Union is dedicated to the strengthening of the diverse voices of all women on campus and to creating an environment in which women can feel safe to express their opinions and concerns about women's issues. Finally, we strive to heighten campus awareness to improve the understanding of women's experiences on campus and in society at large."

The Union organizes events to educate students about gender issues. It is non-partisan and open to all women and men. Weekly meetings are held Wednesdays at 7 p.m., in the temporary Women's Center, adjacent to the Mitchell Green Lounge. For more information call coordinator Susan Meagher, extension 6266, or Lisa Fisher, extension 6586.



The May Belle Chellis House has been designated as the future permanent Women's Center. According to Christine Gresser '93, who met recently with

Deans Hanson and Emerson as well as President McCardell, the process is slow because it is a "multi-faceted project" that "involves many layers of the administration." Associate professor Ron Liebowitz was chosen as a liaison between students and administrators work-

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Folk festival serves as a cure for cabin fever

By Kate Crowley

As I walked through the Sixteenth Annual Cabin Fever Folk Festival this Saturday, I was struck by the faces of these backwood folk. They were intense and focused, but ready to wrinkle up in a smile. They were straightforward, with no extensions of explanation about who they were or what they were all about. Just simple and there.

This festival taught me about the folks who reside in this state. I always figured that going to school in Vermont would familiarize me with its culture but I have found that it actually isolates. So I looked at the faces and made up stories about who the guy with the red beard was married to and which kids were his and what he or his wife did for a living.

So in this way, I wandered downstairs in the Middlebury Municipal Building where I had heard there would be some jamming allowed. I was tempted to bring my guitar, but knew that my nerves and my fin-

gers would show that I had only been playing for two months. I was here to learn.

When I ran into the jam session, the musicians themselves seemed engrossed in the music but would glance up with a smile every once in a while to welcome the newcomers. The music was down to earth. There were no pretentious, overbearing, bordering-on-obnoxious musicians. Everybody who gathered there seemed to listen and learn as much as they played. It was great. As I looked around I saw people getting into the music. They were infectious stomping their feet or going all out with some clog-type dancing. Each jam session that I witnessed was completely original. There was one jam in which most of the players, whether they were playing spoons, guitar, mandolin or fiddle, took turns with the melody and took off with their own tune. There were other jams in which it was obvious who had

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Gender groups

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ing on the Center and to help coordinate the efforts open the Center. Gresser looks forward to working with him: "He's got a lot of energy, and he's a real doer."

The Women's Center is the most active organization focusing on women's issues on campus. Meagher is encouraged to find that in recent years "there is more coverage of issues; dialogue is increasing, for instance in the Campus," but states "the greatest frustration centers around the house, because until we have it, it will continue to be difficult to get everyone together and coordinated and aware of what everyone is doing." She feels that "right now scattered energies are just missing each other- the house will be a channel" for the energy of various groups and publications.

One publication that serves as a forum for discussing gender issues is *Artemis*, a magazine published twice a semester. At present it has health, arts, dialogue and features sections, and is growing more theme-oriented. The focus of the March issue was on women of color, and the forthcoming issue will be dedicated to exploring women's sexuality. All students are welcome to make submissions to

Drawer 50 in the mailroom. If you have questions, contact the editor, Lisa Baker, at 388-1654 or Box 4016.

The Middlebury College Women's Studies Newsletter is a monthly calendar of events, educational and job opportunities, conferences and book reviews. To subscribe, leave your box number with the editor, Aimee Young, at extension 6242. If you're interested in editing the newsletter next year, contact Tamar Mayer, extension 5568, or Diana Henderson, extension 5790.

The women's Brown Bag Lunch series meets Mondays at 12:15 in the Mitchell Green Lounge in McCullough. According to its coordinator, Christine Gresser '93, "it's more an opportunity than an organization."

The meetings provide a chance for women, whether they are students, faculty or staff, to discuss topics chosen in advance, usually specified in "This Week at Middlebury." The past few lunches have covered topics such as men and feminism, body image, sexual harassment and assault, women in politics during the 1992 elections, and sexuality and sexual orientation.

Recently, and less formally, the women's and men's Brown Bag

Lunches have been meeting to discuss gender issues in the Mitchell Green Lounge on Wednesdays at 12:15. If you have questions, Christine Gresser's extension is 6071.

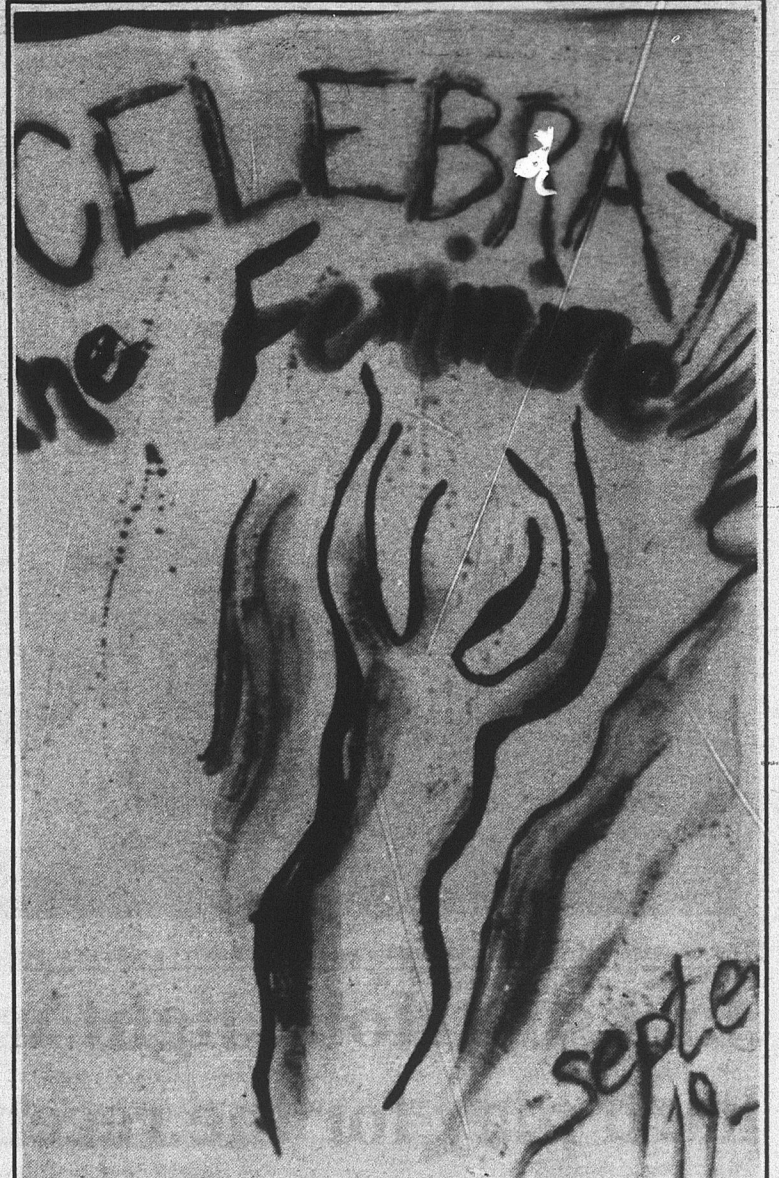
Lifechance is a forum for pro-life views which meets Thursdays at 5:30 p.m. in Freeman Seminar Room number two.

Besides bringing a campus-wide speaker every year, the group invites members of the community to speak at meetings about pro-life activism. Lifechance is also a springboard that enables students to work at the Crisis Pregnancy Center in town, which is sponsored by the Christian Action Network. Here students can help counsel women facing crisis pregnancy as well as women who have had abortions. P.E.T.A.L. is one of the many other groups with which Lifechance works. Call Rose Recchia, extension 6167, or Angela Warnke, extension 6550, for more information.

The Middlebury Gay Lesbian Bisexual Alliance provides support for homosexuals and bisexuals in the college community and works to improve the atmosphere and attitude on campus through education and awareness.

Events like Gay Jeans Day and Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Alumni Weekend are held yearly. MGLBA meets every Sunday evening. For more information, call coordinators Trent Bonsall, extension 4401, or Maggie Esquivel, extension 6584.

Oasis Outreach offers help and support for students struggling with eating disorders, sexual harassment and assault. In the past Oasis has



The Women's Union is striving to bring the community together through more events like "Celebrating the Feminine." Photo by Ritu Verma

had a help line to refer students to the resources on campus with the help and information they need. It has brought in speakers and even put on a skit dealing with miscommunication in sexual relationships for February orientation last year.

Oasis Forum is a display case in Upper Proctor that gives people the opportunity to comment on different issues by means of Scotch Post-Its. Call Molly Boyle, extension 6398, and Brooke Feder, extension 6041.

Folk fest

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played together before. Mostly though, the point was for Vermonters of all ages, sexes and sizes to get together and experience folk music first-hand. There was a family of fiddlers which included an eighty year old woman and a learning twelve year old girl.

A spoon player, a washboard player and plenty of mandolins and guitars made up one crazy group. Each had their own personality in playing and each contributed to the success of individual solos. I am not going to lie and say that all of the jams were a success. But where else will you get so much education in one day?


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