Arts Get Younger All the Time

The next time you drive by the Viterbo College Fine Arts Center you may just find the parking lot ablaze with an entourage of bright yellow school buses. No, the school has not regressed to that youthful mode of transportation and the youngsters you might see do not comprise the newest freshman class of child prodigies. Rather, this gang of grade schoolers has come to share in one of Viterbo’s great passions—that of the fine arts.

"Arts for Young America," an outreach program designed to cultivate art appreciation at a very early age, has just been launched. The program targets tri-state teachers who can choose for their classes any number of performances offered at the college for younger audiences. To emphasize the educational aspect of the arts, study guides, activities and suggested topics for discussion will be available prior to each show.

Tickets range between $3 and $6 in an effort to keep the matinees comparable to the cost of a movie, which youngsters are more accustomed to attending.

"We worked very hard to keep the cost of these performances affordable, because the arts, by their nature, can be very expensive. We wanted to make them accessible to all children," said Michael Ranscht, Special Events Coordinator at Viterbo College. "We wanted to provide opportunities for young audiences to make a real connection between their textbooks and the real world," he added in explaining the rationale behind the creation of "Arts for Young America." "This series provides endless opportunities for instructors to stretch arts and arts education opportunities extending beyond the normal curriculum."

For Viterbo, which recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Fine Arts Center, "Arts for Young America," is an exciting new initiative to those in the arts community who are wondering what the next quarter century will be like.

"Viterbo has a very strong tradition based in the arts and this new series we believe is one that would make the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration proud," Dr. Robert A. Flum, dean of the School of Fine Arts said. "An appreciation of the arts isn't cultivated overnight or delayed until we reach adulthood. The youngsters who fill our main theatre for this series will be the future arts patrons for our entire community."

Connie (White) Delaney: To persist is to succeed

Finding joy in all she does is the key to Connie (White) Delaney's success and resilience. A recipient of the Viterbo Outstanding Alumni Award for Educational Achievement, Delaney, a
1975 graduate, majored in both nursing and math at Viterbo and spent 18 years in education at major colleges and universities in three states. She has since pursued post-doctoral study in Nursing Informatics, a relatively new field which utilizes her background in both nursing and math.

Delaney was instrumental in funding 15 medical research grants, has authored 49 books, articles and reviews and conducted over 35 different research presentations. She has also managed to serve various professional organizations. Her more recent involvement includes: the American Nurses’ Association, the National League for Nursing, the Iowa Academy of Science, the International Association for Human Caring and the American Medical Informatics Association.

How does she do it all and still find time to breathe? “I try to find a balance when opportunities are there—a fit between my personal and professional person. I just love life and if I would die today I could not possibly squeeze one more thing in the days I have had,” she said with a smile.

Life hasn’t always been so rosy for Connie. Personal tragedy struck just before her senior year of college and the non-traditional student was left without the financial resources necessary to complete her studies.

She called the late Sister Grace Clare to let her know she would not be returning to school that fall. Sister would not have it. “She just told me not to worry about and to continue on with my classes,” she explained. “To this day I don’t know how she did it, but Sister Grace Clare made it possible for me to stay in school and I’ll never forget that nor will I forget Viterbo.”

New Dorm Scheduled for Construction

(Editor's note: the following announcement marks the first of many initiatives Viterbo will soon undertake under the auspices of a strategic direction entitled: “Vision 2005: A Renaissance for Learning and Living in the 21st Century.” The spring issue of Strides will be dedicated to a number of these changes—yet to be announced—which will change the much of the educational landscape here at Viterbo College.)

Fueled by five consecutive years of record full-time enrollment which has created a shortage of on campus living accommodations, Viterbo recently announced plans to construct a $2.2 million apartment style residence complex on college-owned property adjoining Marian Hall. Groundbreaking for the new building, which will house 100 students, is expected in March with completion scheduled in time for students to move in when classes begin next fall.

Most of the two-bedroom units will be fashioned to include kitchen and expanded living/study quarters which is quite different from the dormitory style construction provided for students when Marian Hall was built.

Over 550 students currently live in Viterbo owned or rented properties. The new student housing complex comes as welcome relief as the college has scrambled each year to keep up with the climbing enrollment. The total number of students at Viterbo has skyrocketed nearly 50% in five years. Last year, Viterbo was cited by the “Chronicle of Higher Education” as one of the fastest growing independent colleges in the Midwest.
While enrollment at many colleges and universities has been flat throughout the 90s, Viterbo's growth has continued unabated, exhausting the supply of college owned housing. Three years ago, the shortage became acute and a number of students were placed in the Guest House Motel. Last year, the lack of sufficient on-campus housing required the college to rent rooms at the Holiday Inn for students who were shuttled back and forth to Viterbo each day.

This fall, over 90 students who were unable to be placed on campus, are living in 14 college owned or rented houses and duplexes. Viterbo's president, Dr. William J. Medland, says completion of the additional student residences also fits well with the overall goals the institution has set for its future. "We have more full-time students than ever before and much more demand for on-campus housing. This allows us to commit to our goal to become a more residential based college where students can benefit from a holistic residential/academic college experience."

Returning students and those living in Viterbo rental housing will be given the first opportunity to move into the new apartment style complex in August.

**Viterbo Announces Fast Track**

Earning a bachelor's degree from Viterbo College just became more feasible for adult learners thanks to new, concentrated courses which will carry the title Fast Track. Fast Track, designed to meet the needs of community adults who are juggling career, family and school, is a series of time-shortened general education courses, according to Dr. Jan Eriksen, Director of Extended Learning. Students can earn up to eight credit hours per semester, which satisfy core curriculum requirements for Viterbo College degrees, by attending class just one night a week.

It serves as a basis for any major program including Viterbo's returning RN and the newly created Advance, which is geared toward students age 25 or older who have had a minimum of 60 college credits but who have not yet completed a bachelor's degree. "Fast Track is ideal for the highly motivated student with excellent time management skills. Since classes are taught at an accelerated pace with fewer classroom contact hours, students will be expected to devote a greater number of study hours outside of class," said Eriksen. Fast Track benefits working professionals without a bachelor's degree who want to advance their careers or change jobs. It was created in response to a new trend in educational delivery systems and is just one of many programs found throughout the state, Eriksen added.

**Generosity goes well beyond money**

Senior Paula Flaskrud was recently asked to speak at the November 14 Scholarship Breakfast attended by students and donors who provide scholarship support. Flaskrud is an elementary education major with an English minor. She has a history of involvement of service oriented clubs and organizations, including Circle K for which she has served as president. We dedicate this Final Word essay to Paula by sharing her eloquent remarks with our readers, many who
support Viterbo via scholarship assistance.
"The generous people that are here with us today are well-deserving of a thank-you. They have not simply donated money to us. The have given us much more than that. They have given us the chance to live our dream of going to college and doing something important with our lives. They have given us compassion, a virtue that perhaps we might not see in our daily lives as much as we should. These individuals have given us hope, hope that there are still these warm and compassionate people in the world.
"They have donated their time to us. We all know how hard money is to come by. These individuals worked countless long hours before they wrote out those checks! They have shown us the love for mankind that they all have by pushing aside their own needs and fulfilling those of complete strangers. All in the hopes of making someone else's life easier. How many people in this world have done this for you before? Be sure to thank these people, they are one in a million, a rare species of humans who love people.
"I do not think we should only thank these wonderful people. We also need to learn from their example. We need to pass on this compassion for other people. We need to meet our responsibility to humanity through volunteerism. Over the past four years here at Viterbo College, I have been able to prove to individuals who have helped me out financially in the past that I, too, have this divine inspiration to help those in need, that I do, indeed, appreciate what they do for me. Listen as I read the following reflection written by a close friend of mine, Tim Eggleston. It sums up the feelings I get when volunteering or being honored with such gifts as scholarships."
"The earth begins to settle as another day passes. The sun has set in the west and countless stars illuminate the sky. The birds have huddled in their nests, and I too lay my head back ready to fall into a world of dreams. As my head gently rests on my pillow, I ponder the question, "What has marked this day?" I reflect back upon this day and this is what I saw.
"I saw... the smile of a man in a nursing home who completed a puzzle with encouragement from a thirteen-year-old... the promise of tomorrow after a field of 2,000 trees had been planted by a group of college students... a lawyer embrace a special olympian as she crossed the finish line... a group of college students walk along a harbor and distribute leftover pizza to the homeless... a needy child jump up and down on Santa Claus' lap as she opened her Christmas present.
"I saw... a group of teenagers engage in a meeting which discussed plans for an upcoming food drive... business professionals meet with college students to build a foundation for a new organization... a 17-year old high school senior address an international delegation of his peers... the sadness on the faces of college students working with battered women from a nearby shelter.
I saw... an insurance agent lend support while a 12-year-old boy walked his first steps with the aid of his new crutches... a pie being shoved in the face of a friend... a college student being presented with a scholarship for $2,000 given by a professional business person... a microbiologist test genes which may someday unleash a cure for countless diseases.
"I saw... a doctor set a volleyball to his 120 year-old teammate and newfound friend... a tear trickle down the face of a pre-med student as he addressed a group of his peers... a parent cry when a doctor informed her that her premature baby boy was going to live.
"I now realized that a special group of people had marked this day. These people are not hampered by the diversity of age, gender, race, or national heritage. This group of people who share the same belief of providing service: they realize that they can make a difference in other people's lives. I shut my eyes knowing the dreams I will have tonight will be
'tomorrow's miracles and tomorrow's reflections.'
"Students and faculty, I leave you with these reflections as we thank and appreciate these generous people who are here with us today. They have not simply donated money. Thanks to all of you. Your gift has been more than just a check. Your gift of compassion, generosity and love for humanity will lead us to fulfill our dreams and carry on this warmth in society. Thanks for your contributions, to each of us individually and to the world in general. You are indeed a rare and special species of people!"

**W-ONE selects alumni as "Nurse Leader of 1996"**

Mary Lu Gerke's leadership skills and her many contributions to the profession of nursing, her community and Gundersen-Lutheran Medical Center, culminated in her selection as the "Nurse Leader of 1996."

Gerke '74 has been the director of the Intensive Care Unit/Critical Care Procedures and IV Therapy at Gundersen Lutheran for 16 years.

Colleagues describe Gerke as a visionary. She is recognized as having an open, honest and creative approach and as a positive leader who keeps projects moving.

Having spoken both nationally and internationally on the use of clinical information systems and technology to improve the quality of nursing, Gerke has also published an article on the same topic and presented at national conferences regarding the La Crosse area Healing Web.

A member of the Viterbo College Alumni Board, Mary Lu was officially honored by Wisconsin Organization of Nurse Executives at an award banquet in Oshkosh last fall.

**Former Viterbo Student Publishes First Novel**

Joni Rodger's life has taken some riveting turns since the year she spent as a student at Viterbo in 1980.

Her newly released feminist novel, *Crazy for Trying*, chronicles a young woman's struggle to escape the shadow of her influential and politically charged mother and the confines of her rubenesque figure. The solace that the 19-year-old protagonist finds while unseen as a late night D.J. in Helena—a career unprecedented for women in Montana in 1979—seems curiously autobiographical. The author, herself, was the first female DJ in that very city and among the first in the entire state.

Rodgers, a cancer survivor, began writing after she was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma three years ago and realized that her time was too dear to spend in front of the television. She now serves as an advocate for those coping with cancer as well.
Library gets new look

The next time you visit campus, be sure to book a trip to the newly updated Todd Wehr memorial library. Some of its features include:

- Electronic research databases: Students are now able to locate information using online research sources.
- New reference section: This improved area provides more convenient access to and assistance with reference materials.
- New floorplan: Don't get lost during your next visit and tour of your newly arranged and easier to access library.

Woman Wildlife Artist "Makes" a Fame for Herself

When she first returned to her childhood passion of painting in 1991, self-taught wildlife artist Elizabeth Wucherer signed all of her works "E. Wucherer." That is, until she displayed her paintings at a local art gallery and overheard some appreciative viewers discuss her work, referring to his brush strokes and his choice of subject matter. Yes, this E. Wucherer, he is something special.
This experience was quite an awakening for the artist who had been innocently passed off as an Elmer or an Eli. After all, how many women venture into the woodsy and watery domain of fish and fowl, and how many women have the intimate knowledge of these creatures to recreate them convincingly on canvas? Of the women who do, how many are taken seriously? Wucherer, who now signs her work with her full name, was recently selected as winner of the 1997 Wisconsin Great Lakes Trout and Salmon Stamp Contest, which determines the stamp required for trout or salmon fishing on the great lakes bordering Wisconsin. She is only the second woman to have ever earned this prestigious distinction.
Wucherer's watercolor of a 24 inch Coho salmon was chosen in statewide competition. The painting "Silver Streak" holds great personal value to the artist, as she caught the coho with her family in the Bark Bay waters of Herbster. The fish did not die in vain for it was as wonderful to eat as it was to behold, she says.
The senior art major has placed in various hunting and fishing stamp contests in 1994, 1995 and 1996 and her work is widely exhibited in the La Crosse area. She is recognized for her attention to detail in painting waterfowl, fish and other wildlife.
Actually, her very first artistic explorations did not involve wildlife. She recalls "decorating" a kitchen wall at age two with a mural she drew of her family in permanent black magic marker. Wucherer took art classes throughout school simply because she enjoyed them-she never considered herself an artist. Growing up on the Brule River in Northwestern Wisconsin fostered the kinship with nature in Wucherer. The natural environment was the only playground she and her two brothers knew. It is no surprise then, that the outdoor world was mirrored in Wucherer's early paintings.
After college, the responsibilities of marriage and a full-time job at Century Telephone brought an abrupt halt to Wucherer's artwork. When her youngest son John was born, she felt
stretched too thin and decided to leave work and become a full-time mother. "Day after day of diapers and Bert and Ernie culminated the need for a vice, so I replaced my old, dried up paints. My brushes had gone bad from non-use and so had my skills, but I retaught myself," she explains.

Friends and former colleagues soon took notice of Liz’s "diversion" and began to commission paintings. It was her father-in-law who is also a photographer who finally convinced Wucherer to exhibit her work in a one-person show at a local gallery. The pieces were well received and eight of the 20 works were sold at the opening reception. This affirmation proved to Wucherer that she had what it takes. She was finally an "artist."

The art education major shares her talent with children through workshops in area elementary and middle schools and plans to teach in a classroom of her own someday, but for now is diligently working on a wildlife calendar she has been commissioned to do. The artist need not look far beyond the back window of her home in rural Holmen to find inspiration. Wucherer takes pleasure in watching her three young sons flourish, surrounded by the natural beauty that has molded her and remains a driving force in her own life.

MacBeth Returns to Stage in Honor of Fine Arts Center Silver Anniversary

*MacBeth*, Shakespeare's classic tale of greed and obsession, opened the Black Box Theatre season this past fall before four consecutive evenings of sell-out crowds.

The first play ever presented in the Viterbo Fine Arts Center, *MacBeth* returned to stage in an innovative new production directed by Janet McLean, in honor of the 25th anniversary of the facility.

In no other play does Shakespeare present a couple so consumed by the powers of darkness, and senior Damon Mitchell, and sophomore Nicole Wightman played their lead roles convincingly.

Guest artist Don Preston who is with *Engarde!* , a stage combat and stunt artist teaching company in the Twin Citie,s assisted with the production. He choreographed numerous fight scenes which brought the actors within inches of the front row audience.

*MacBeth* provided an excellent opportunity for stage combat, an aspect of the performance art that the students have not been previously exposed to, according to McLean.

To accentuate the lurid plot, the production also featured original music by junior Matt Boehler.

Nursing program Receives Shadow Grant

Asian American youth now have the chance to job shadow local health care professionals thanks to a state grant Viterbo just received from Initiative Community Activity Grants for Girls.

The gift will fund a summer Health Careers Program to be offered in June 1997 to Asian American girls. The program will consist of exposing the participants to different options for health careers through job shadowing. Experts in areas of career counseling, financial aid,
admission requirements/procedures for higher education, woman’s health issues and various health careers will be sought to talk with the participants. Whenever possible speakers will be of color, particularly Asian ethnicity.

The program will be made available to middle and high school students, primarily females, although up to 30% may be male.

“Many of the Asian adolescents in the La Crosse area are from families who have immigrated to the U.S. in the last 10-15 years. There is a shortage of Asian women in this community to serve as role models for girls interested in health careers. For adolescents from recently migrated families, experience and knowledge of career options may be very limited. The goal of this program is to provide exposure to health careers to these individuals” said Rose Kreutz, Viterbo nursing instructor and author of the grant.

Out and About with Viterbo Alumni

"Strides” recently caught up with two alumni who come from very different walks of life. Years, gender, occupation and geography divide them. Their desire to better the lives of those less fortunate, however, binds these two humanitarians together. This commonality is the thrust of this article, which is comprised of their stories.

Alumna helps to pick up the pieces of a tiny country still torn apart by the aftermath of war

What follows is the reflection of Edie (Davis) Shannon ’62, who graduated from a Viterbo that was all female. Almost everyone here at the time was on scholarship, student loans, and/or worked while attending classes. There was an emphasis on ideas and ideals, rather than on possessions. Now, 35 years later, ideas and people remain more important than things to this student of life. Edie has never stopped learning. She and her husband BJ have explored 134 countries and there is not one she has not loved.

"Armenia used to be just ‘one of those countries behind the Iron Curtain’ to me. Not any more. During April and May of 1996, my husband B.J. and I volunteered as consultants for the International Executive Service Corps under the auspices of the United States Agency for International Development. Our assignment was to assist the former Soviet state optical industry in Armenia in making the transition to a free market economy.

"We were headquartered in Yerevan, the capital city the size of Phoenix, and literally in the shadow of Mt. Ararat. Incredibly beautiful Ararat, the resting place for Noah’s Ark, is the symbol for Armenia, although it is now in Turkey, a source of great pain and discontent to the Armenians. Before the collapse of the Soviet system, Yerevan was a bustling city and the center of much of the economic stability of the Caucasus. Now with the Turks on the western border forcing the Kurds out of their territory and into Armenia, and the war with Azerbijan adding refugees from the east, the city resources would be stretched in the best of circumstances.

"There is no reliable source of energy within the country, and because of the war with Azerbijan, the external supply has been cut off. We were very fortunate to be living in the one district that had running water. Furnaces exist, but t without energy (fuel), there is no heat.

"Our apartment was OK by western standards, and wonderful by the country norm. We had
the top floor of a house, and we had a flush toilet. The owners of the house, a family of four who lived in two rooms under us, used the outhouse in the garden.

It is difficult to live with no phones, no mail system, and no electricity. Add these inconveniences to a nation trying to understand western business practice, and the transition to a market economy seems almost an impossibility.

"Thousands of well-educated people are jobless, and those who have work, get paid very little. University professors make $8 US a month. A box of Cheerios, when it's available, is $15.

The optical project we worked on was a huge success, in great part due to the willingness of the Armenians to look at change. Everything we did with them, they did for the very first time. As in all Soviet states, property and products belonged to the state. No business had a business plan, a budget, an inventory. Everything was done by quotas sent from Moscow.

"With this framework gone, a violent change in business practice must occur in order to compete in the world economy.

"Over the two month period, the Armenians dealt with the strange new concept, "customer service," instituted staff meetings, and set up ordering and payment systems.

"In addition to my involvement with the optical project, I worked as a consultant for the International City/County Management Association. As property is becoming privatized in the former Soviet states, a real estate industry is developing.

"With the help of a very able translator, I worked with the local real estate brokers and professors of Law and Economics from Yerevan State University to develop the materials and curriculum for the course.

This was done, despite the almost insurmountable problem that exists with me. I am female. The gender gap in Armenia is approximately where the US was in the 1930s. Women don't drive, hold office or make decisions of authority.

With each group I worked, I had to earn my credentials, a slow and tedious process. But eventually the men came to realize I knew what I was talking about. By the time we left, I was granted the status of an "official man." I made the mistake of assuming that Armenians would transfer this acceptance onto other females. I was wrong. Small steps.

B.J. and I have done a great deal of volunteer work in our lives, but this rare opportunity to make a permanent difference in the lives of a nation is the best thing we have ever done.

"Will we go back?

"As the Arabs say, 'Inshallah.' If God wills."

Chuck Priebe '96 building for the ride of a lifetime

When Chuck Priebe graduated with a sociology degree last spring, he was uncertain of where he was headed. When he learned of Habitat for Humanity's "Bike and Build" Botswana program, he immediately signed on for the month-long adventure. He found such satisfaction in providing homes for the needy that he has accepted a permanent position in Habitat's International office in Georgia, where he will be by the time this issue of Strides goes to press.

Perhaps biking 600 miles across the Kalahari desert is not the average person's idea of a dream vacation. Leisure was not on the mind of Chuck Priebe either, as he spent three weeks sleeping in the bush and eating off the ground while en route to Francistown where back breaking labor awaited him. Basically, 26-year-old Priebe got just what he ordered when he decided to volunteer for Bike and Build Botswana.

The trek was organized in commemoration of Habitat for Humanity's 20th anniversary. The organization first began its house-building work in Botswana in 1992 and to date, 250 houses
have been constructed. Botswana, roughly the size of France, is home to nearly 1.4 million people, many of whom are devoid of even the most basic human needs, shelter included. More than 80% of the population depend on agriculture for a livelihood, but only about 50 percent of food needs are met and merely five percent of the country's revenue comes from farming. Even rice is an extravagance for the poorest of the poor.

Priebe first learned of Habitat for Humanity from a representative who spoke to his Homelessness class at Viterbo. (The class is taught each second semester by Tom Thibodeau (Religious Studies) and John Seem (Sociology). Intensely moved by what he had heard, the non-traditional student took a year off from college and went to work for Habitat in Georgia. The weeks before Priebe's month long stint in southern Africa were chaotic ones as he scrambled to raise the $2,300 needed for the trip. For the most part it was friends, relatives and local businesses who came to his aid and made this trek of a lifetime a reality.

While making their way toward Francistown for a week-long building project, the 40 Habitat volunteers, all from the US and Canada, averaged 60 miles on bike each day. A support truck and scouting vehicle kept them stocked with supplies and safe from the potential danger of African wildlife.

The 20 homes they built upon arriving, were based on the "western" rectangular concept and were made of soil or cement blocks with roofs of concrete tile or corrugated iron. They cost $1,500 US dollars to build as opposed to a US Habitat house which averages about $34,000. "Many African countries try to emulate South Africa because it is the most westernized. Despite the geographical barrier and the economic disparity, we influence their culture in profound ways. I don't know if it's good or bad. Some say they have to advance, but they're probably richer spiritually from their closeness with the earth-something we have removed ourselves from," said Priebe.

Similar to the urbanization which took place in the US in the late 1800s, Botswanan villagers are beginning to occupy shanty towns, as they are unable to sustain themselves by farming and must seek alternative employment in the growing diamond, precious metal and coal mining industry.

Their social structure breaks down as they form crowded communities and the strong family bond begins to disintegrate, Priebe surmised.

While in Francistown the bikers boarded at a "college" which is the equivalent of our ninth, tenth and eleventh grades. There they lived much like the villagers who were accustomed to collard greens, African grits, hand washed clothing outhouses. Priebe even had the opportunity to sample "mopani," a local delicacy. When he was told to try one of the bite-sized morsels that "come from trees," he assumed mopani was a type of nut. It was not until after he munched on a handful that he learned the true nature of the cuisine-he had just gobbled down several large grubs that were collected during the rainy season, boiled and dried. Good-natured Priebe chalks his snack up to yet another cultural experience, one that did not taste half bad.

"Bike and Build was a trip of a lifetime. I would definitely do something like it again, perhaps elsewhere, because there is a whole world to see," said Priebe.

As you read this, Chuck is adjusting to his new position at the Habitat headquarters in Georgia. We at Strides anxiously await news of when the young adventurer will embark on yet another mission, fulfilling both his passion to explore the world and his desire to help those in desperate need.
Students Fast for World Hunger

Over 35,000 children die each day from hunger-related causes. Only ten percent of these deaths are the result of famine; the other 90 percent are caused by chronic malnutrition. In response to these astounding statistics, this past fall Viterbo students joined the Oxfam America campaign for world hunger and poverty. On the day of the fast, for both lunch and supper, over 160 participants elected to eat a simple meal of white rice in Marian Hall cafeteria. The money that would have been spent on food they are more accustomed to was donated to Oxfam. The fast was sponsored by Campus Ministry and the Peace and Justice Committee. Among the participants were: (left to right) Junior nursing students Stephanie Matzek, from Elsworth and Ann Geraghty, Evanston, Ill.; and Julie Ekern, a junior English education major from Spring Grove, Minn.

Pet Blessing

The third annual blessing of animals and pets took place on October 4 in celebration of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, in the Viterbo College Assisi Court. _____ and ______ were among those gathered around the sculpture of "The Dancing Francis" for the celebration.

Phonathon Sets New Record

It has been yet another productive year for the Phonathon. In just 11 days, 75 volunteers made over 6,700 phone calls, obtaining an all-time high of 1,694 pledges. Faculty, staff, alumni and student volunteers who spent 433 hours on the horn, raised $86,000-surpassing the 1996 goal of $84,000. Aside from providing an opportunity to touch base with alumni, this annual event helps further the education of Viterbo students. Funds go toward scholarships, new equipment and extras not covered by tuition money. In years past, both alumni and parents were called upon to pledge at this time. This year the Phonathon is being split, with parents to be contacted in spring. Previously, $83,142 was the most raised from the two groups together: a number which has been surpassed by almost $3,000 from just alumni.

Fine Arts Center Celebrates Silver Anniversary

Viterbo College had double cause to celebrate this fall as the campus community held both its founder's day observation and the kick-off of the Fine Arts Center 25th anniversary jubilee. A noon program in the Fine Arts Center Lobby was the highlight of the October 4th celebration.
The program featured the unveiling of an original water color dedicated in honor of the event by Diane Crane, Viterbo art department faculty member. Music by Al Townsend's "Wonderful World Jazz Band," accompanied an appearance by Fine Arts Center architect Joseph John Sherer, and a narration of the cornerstone laying by Sister Marie Leon La Croix, founder of the Viterbo theatre department.
The day's events culminated with the theatre department's opening performance of the classic Hart and Kaufman comedy, "You Can't Take It With You."

Photos
Father Tom O'Neill, college chaplain and Kathy Gorman, dance instructor, lead the procession from Mass at Maria Angelorum chapel to the Fine Arts Center, carrying a banner bearing the slogan "Arts For All," the theme of the year-long anniversary celebration.

President William J. Medland greets Fine Arts Center architect, Jack Sherer, who upon arriving from Milwaukee where he is now retired, "recognized the beautiful faces of the same Sisters who 25 years ago made the project the neatest and most fun I have ever worked on."

Sister Marie Leon La Croix recounts a time when tuition at Viterbo cost $12.90 for the year and the building plans for the Fine Arts Center were considered by many to be a "five million dollar folly for a white elephant-a high price to pay for an elephant of any color." She stood firm in her belief that "if you build it, they will come," and 25 years later, renowned artists from around the world are still making La Crosse their destination.

Members of the Viterbo dance team conclude the program by leading Sisters Jean Moore, dean of Letters and Sciences and _______ in the Macarena. Al Townsend's band did not know the song, but Viterbo's Father Tom O'Neill saved the day with his trusty tape player.

Nola Starling-Ratliff '74 surprised Sister Annarose with a return to campus to take part in the 25th Anniversary activities and particularly the "Annarose Glum Roast." Nola, who graduated with a music degree, is principal at Racine Horlick High School.

Round Table
As Viterbo celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Fine Arts Center this year, the School of Fine Arts looks with pride upon past accomplishments. From the very beginning, with their prayers and perseverance, our founding Franciscan Sisters have molded the School into what it is today—a premiere institution that embellishes the entire community with exposure to the fine arts. Without a single full-time Sister remaining, their successors have fallen heir to a tremendous, yet endearing encumbrance.
Now that torch has been passed to lay faculty, who with strength and certitude are adamant that it remain burning bright, the time has come to look toward the next quarter century and
During a round table discussion which we share with you, *Strides* recently had the opportunity to address this very subject in a candid interview with key leaders from the School of Fine Arts

Meet the participants:

**Peter Fletcher, postgraduate certificate**  
Art Department Chair, professor  
Last college attended: Royal Academy Schools, London  
At Viterbo since: 1987

**Edward Rushton, MFA**  
Art Department, assistant professor  
Last college attended: University of Iowa  
At Viterbo since: Autumn, 1996

**Diane Foust, Ed.D.**  
Music Department, associate professor  
Last college attended: University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign  
At Viterbo since: 1985

**Daniel Johnson-Wilmot, D.M.A. Candidate**  
Music Department Chair, associate professor  
Last college attended: University of Wisconsin  
At Viterbo since: 1973

**Dean Yohnk, Ph. D.**  
Theatre Department Chair, assistant professor  
Last college attended: Bowling Green State University  
At Viterbo since: 1992

**Shari Taylor, MFA**  
Theatre Department, assistant professor  
Last college attended: Ohio University  
At Viterbo since: 1982

**Robert Flum, D.A.**  
Dean, School of Fine Arts  
Schooling: University of Northern Colorado  
At Viterbo since: 1993

*How do you see yourselves, as lay people, with outside obligations and lives here and elsewhere, carrying on this tradition of excellence and the rich heritage of dedication to the arts espoused by the FSPAs?*

Dean Yohnk (Theatre): When Sr. Marie Leon retired, I realized, what an ominous undertaking the rest of us had because I had so appreciated the tradition that she and the other sisters here had established. And I think that although they don't directly say it, the sisters have a strong confidence and hope that we will continue on with the program and the mission that they have had from the beginning. Like Sr. Marie Leon, having been here 40 years, when she was retiring, her implication to me, was that “Well, 40 years from now when you do this same thing…” and, I think it is a overwhelming in a sense that we have women who have dedicated
their lives to a mission, to a calling, to a vocation, and there is also an expectation that we
give this same kind of dedication and commitment to the college. So I think we do tend to
expect longer hours, more commitment, more dedication, using those sisters as a role model
that we're trying to follow.

Peter Fletcher (Art): I agree that dedication is expected. Ed (Rushton) here, and uh Lisa
(Schoenfielder) are both new people in my department and I'm shocked and impressed by how
much time they put into things. They both came from state universities where you don't have
to do this.

Diane Foust (Music): I think there has been the same reaction in our department. We have a
new faculty member also, and he has said to me, "I've never been in a place where faculty
members are around so much." He came from a conservatory background where music is the
primary focus. He said, "faculty members stay all day. I've never seen that before!'

Shari Taylor (Theatre): Students see all of us with outside lives and people who are important
to us in our outside lives and they see us with other interests and I think in a lot of ways, that
makes for a much healthier environment for them that they get a real sense of what it's like
to be an artist in the world today, if that makes any sense.

Q: Is that just the institutional culture or is that brought on by the heritage of the FSPAs?
What's your guess on that?

Foust: I think it's some of all of those things, because music is a very demanding time and
energy kind of profession. Then add the sisters' dedication- what they've done for years, you
know, devoted their lives to the institution. It all adds up, and I think one of the growing pain
issues that Viterbo is dealing with right now, is how to make this transition from the sisters to
the lay faculty, and how we keep things going with all of the factors that everybody's talked
about. Besides the fact that we have been at record enrollment for the last five years which
has increased the number of students we work with.

Q: That puts more pressure on doesn't it, with the increased enrollment?

Robert Flum (Dean): And that pressure is pretty much self inflicted too, we are all adamant
recruiters. We are a private college and you know the Fine Arts don't expect people to just
come to us. We have to work very hard.

Q: How many fine arts majors there are?

Flum: Right around 200, approaching that. The growth has been very significant.

Q: How about Ed, you don't have a "history." You don't have to justify anything that took
place in the past! How did you feel walking in here for the first time?

Ed Rushton (Art): Yeah, as a newcomer, I am very impressed with the commitment to the fine
arts, for a college the size of Viterbo, and ....for some of the things we have been talking
about in this interview. That kind of dedication is contagious and kind of justifies those extra
hours we put in.

Foust: I took this job because of this building. I said, "If a school this size has a building like
this, Fine Arts must be important here! I'd like to be here."
Yohnk: In fact, it's the way we sell students at the last moment to come here as theater majors. We walk them on the dark, bare stage and then I go over in the corner and I turn on the lights. I learned this trick from Sr. Marie Leon! If you go in the middle of the stage and turn on the lights, they are overwhelmed by the sight of the main theater and that usually is the final ticket. And many students have told us that that's true, so I keep doing that.

Fletcher: I think that we in our department expect more. I've been here eight years and students used to come, and to a larger extent still come expecting to be taken care of- that's why they choose Viterbo. They don't want to get lost in an impersonal system within the state.

Yohnk: Our department has gone up about 300% in the last few years, in terms of enrollment, with 85 majors from 10 states, now. During the past few years, we have had to work on setting down some new guidelines and expectations that will allow us to more effectively handle the students. I think it's just a different place now, and especially for some of those students who are seniors now, who came here when the department had about 25 majors. So, there have been lots of struggles that I think have been positive and made us a stronger more professional department.

Q: So, you're saying the growth in your department is also a large factor?

Yohnk: Yes. We draw a lot more students from different geographic areas. Almost a third of our students are from Minneapolis, St. Paul area, and bring different expectations with them. Students from metropolitan areas tend to bring a greater sense of knowledge of the arts. They have been in large cities where they have been exposed to the arts, so they come here with different goals than perhaps the students from the rural communities that we once primarily served. So there's been a need for us to respond and create more degree offerings and professional kinds of programs that meet these student needs.

Taylor: ...Yes, I think, in our department, we try and provide students with the opportunities that they had when we were a small department. Without changing the sort of atmosphere and style of our department, we've had to really look at how do we do this kind of work that used to be pretty easy to do with 25 students. How do we do it now with 85?

Daniel Johnson-Wilmot (Music): I guess I would agree that students coming from a more sophisticated background have different expectations. I think sometimes, their idea of what they know is a little self-inflated, and not really substantial, and I think that fitting into Viterbo, which is a community, where we all help one another is a great experience for them. What's another change that's happened school-wide? I know that in talking to Dean, he said that someone came in from the outside and said, "Wow, you mean you do productions with the music department? What, you talk to one another? You get along? Is that really true?" In many schools, that's not the case. I know there are always things we need to continue to work on, but I think at least we are at the point where we discuss them and we arrive at solutions I think the fact that we're talking and willing to work together at all it is great.

Yohnk: I do think that becoming a school of Fine Arts was one of the best things that happened. At least, now, there is a much more open forum We're a group of people that are artists, and I think that although there are differences between mind frames, and work habits of different kinds of artists in different fields. There are there are some real strong common values, beliefs and attitudes that we hold as artists.
Name one thing that you would like to see happen in your department in the future? Peter, you probably touched upon that already, with you it’s the new art gallery?

Fletcher: Yeah, that’s the top one.

Rushton: I’ve been very impressed with the students’ interest and enthusiasm for graphic design and I would like to see that to continue and grow.

Wilmot: I have a real modest request! I wish for 20 string students, and 20 piano students, so that we have a more balanced department.

Diane: With faculty members to go along with that! Because if I have to teach strings, I’m really out of my element!

Yohnk: I have two wishes. One that we can build the technical component of our department so that we can support the performance end of the program. We always end up with more performers and fewer technicians, and you can’t have everyone on stage without anyone in the wings to build and to dress, and to do all those things. Secondly, I think we have to continue working for a balance, in terms of number and quality of students that we attract...that we would be able to maintain a number that is most efficient for us to do our work and give the students what they need.

Taylor: My wish is to see the Fine Arts Center move into the 21st Century with the same kind of dignity and provision for the future that it had in 1971 in terms of keeping pace with technology and with just regular building and maintenance kinds of needs.

Wilmot: Now that I have given you my selfish kind of wish, on the college-wide basis, I’m hoping that the FSPA educational vision continues to drive the whole direction of the college. If that ever gets diminished too much, Viterbo will become a very different place and a place where I think, lay faculty, who still have that educational vision in mind will find difficult to work in, and I think that we need to heighten that awareness about the educational vision and mission.

Q: To those who are more purist in their artistic approach, how do you add the practical vocational element that seems to be needed today?

Fletcher: Students who come to us have the opposite problem. They seem to be thinking about jobs only. And our mission seems to be about upgrading their thinking about those pure elements of art and to be concerned with quality. If you are only thinking about the job, you may not become the artist you want to be.

Rushton: I see that too in graphic design where the subtleties and nuances of typography are just kind of being left by the wayside and things like speed and deadlines seem to be more important. I’m making students take a step back and understand these principles too, in an effort to enrich them and help them understand quality over production.

Wilmot: We have music education programs, and most of the advisors are advising students so that they do have a job or at least they can get a job in another field. Particularly in voice, the development can come so much later than what a 22-year-old expects when they leave here with a degree in performance. They have to wait until their voice matures, so that, for
voice people there is a problem. What does one do then if that's the only area they are prepared in?

Foust: The challenge for our students is to see that what they do in music is connected to what they do period, whether it's related to a job or it's related to their happiness. They're so young at 22, and they're in a little pond here and they may have been. you know stars here. You try to tell them what the bigger pond is like, but until they jump in it's hard to explain that.... So, it's kind of a balance between practicality and idealism

Taylor: Or when you do theater in it's purist form, it's the most impure art. That's the Catch 22. You always are relying upon someone wanting to see it, wanting to participate in some portion of it, and there is in a lot of ways, a commercialism involved in producing theater that doesn't have to be there. Whether it's paying or not, I mean it's just not very satisfying to perform in front of no one. However, lot of students, for example, who might come into our program and only want to act, find that when they leave here, they can get a job acting, but half the time, it's based upon their technical expertise. That because they can do set construction, or lighting design, or whatever, that they are infinitely more employable because they have a broad base of skills in all the various theater areas.

Pat: What one thing would you like to tell Dr. Medland that affirms your department's importance in the college community?

Yohnk: I think that in every job you have, sometimes you think that the grass is greener on the other side or that somebody has it better, but I'm very active in the state theatre chairs organization and we meet about 3 times a year, and there are usually 26-28 theatre chairs from around the whole state, public and private. Every time I go, I guess I'm just struck by the fact that I don't think there's anywhere else, in this state at least, and maybe in the whole midwest, where the arts become a major central part of the mission and the goals of the college. It's more than having a large Fine Arts building on campus, because there could be a large building anywhere... but if it wasn't kind of the heart of the outreach and the community mission, it wouldn't mean anything.

Wilmot: I've been sitting here wondering why I came to Viterbo? I remember the building being impressive, but I think I came here because of the people. I don't think I came here because of the building to be quite honest. I liked the music faculty, and the administrators had a lot of enthusiasm about this building and were really supportive of it. And I thought the nuns had a great vision and I liked the way they worked with one another, so I guess that's why I came here.

Flum: Well, it's like I said at the banquet, we're celebrating the 25th Anniversary in the building, and it's wonderful, but it's still only a tool. It's still a means and the real essence is the people. It's the people that make the institution.

Alumni News

Alumni march in Oktoberfest parade
The Alumni Association sponsored a Viterbo entry in the La Crosse Oktoberfest parade this past fall. Alumni Board members and Sigma Pi Delta (the student alumni association), donning costumes from the
past 25 years' performances, marched together in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Fine Arts Center.

**Student Alumni Host State Conference**

Sigma Pi Delta, the student alumni association at Viterbo, was created in 1988 to enhance alumni involvement and support. This year, Sigma was the host to the State SAA/SF (Student Alumni Association/Student Foundation) Conference on November 8-9. Students and advisors from ten institutions of higher education attended, making this the largest state conference ever.

This year's theme, "Be a Part of the Dream Team" provided an Olympic flavor, capitalizing on the Olympic torch's trip through La Crosse this past summer. Larry White, area torch bearer, talked with the students about volunteerism and offered them all a closer look at the torch. Deb Murray '90 provided the keynote address on "What Makes a Winner." The day was rounded out with seminars presented by the various attending organizations.

"Planning this event was quite a challenge, but a terrific learning experience for our membership," said Tammy Brunkhorst, conference co-chair. Fellow co-chair Brooke Holliday, stated, "The state conference is always a great opportunity to network and learn new ideas. This year's event was no exception."

"An Evening With the Professionals"

On the evening of November 13, five alumni returned to campus to meet with current pre professional students. Dr. Joseph Kotnour '75, Dr. Judy Harpenau '83, Dr. Margaret Grenisen '80, Lois Roberts Collins '79-81, and Dr. Linda Lorenz Hamilton '85-87 shared their backgrounds and experiences in the fields of dentistry, family practice, pharmacy and chiropractic medicine with the attentive students and also answered career related questions.

"An Evening With the Professionals" is one result of a year long effort by the pre-professional advisors and the Alumni Office to establish a Pre-Professional Mentoring Program. This program is designed to involve more alumni with current students, taking advantage of the experiences of alumni while helping to give direction and guidance to students.

**Reunion '97**

June 27-29; let us know if you would like something special planned for your group; contact the Alumni Office at (608)796-3072 or e-mail: dev_sally@viterbo.edu

**Sunset Boulevard**

Tickets are available to attend "Sunset Boulevard," starring alumna Linda Balgord, on April 12, 2 p.m. in Chicago. If you would like more information contact the Alumni Office.

**Viterbo Theatre Guest Actor a Familiar Face**

If you've been known to frequent the Guthrie Theatre or have been an ardent aficionado of the daytime soaps, you may find the face before you vaguely familiar. If so, may we confirm your suspicions?

This past semester, for several weeks, the Viterbo College Theatre Department had its own professional actor in residence. Michael Tezla arrived in La Crosse to work with students on their production of *You Can't Take It With You*, which was performed in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the Fine Arts Center.

Tezla, who began his performing arts career as a director, is most recently employed as a voice talent and live spokesperson for television and radio. He has appeared on the daytime dramas, *Another World*, *All My Children* and *The Guiding Light* as well as in several films. His acting career also includes 15 unprecedented years on stage at the Guthrie, Court and Peninsula Players theatres, all midwestern houses of renowned venue. He's even taught stage combat and fencing at the Minneapolis Children's Theatre.
"I came to Viterbo because I found working with the college students to be an exciting prospect. It is quite energizing to be in the process with those learning the craft and to see the perpetual acting questions for which hopefully, my experience has provided a trustworthy and reliable answer," said Tezla.

The 52-year-old Duluth native came to Viterbo through theatre department chair Dean Yohnk, who heard about Tezla from acquaintances at the Guthrie and Peninsula Players theatres. "Having had Michael on campus provided an invaluable experience to our students. His diverse acting experience and expertise has brought a wealth of knowledge to this production," said director Yohnk.

Tezla, an actor since fifth grade, is known for playing older men, and found the character of 75 year-old Grandpa and the Viterbo College theatre department a good fit. "I was really impressed with the maturity and professionalism of these young students of theatre and in working with them I relearned many things I have forgotten, so this was really a new and invigorating process," he said.

**Sister Marie Leon La Croix: A 41-Year Dream-Come-True**

First year theatre students gather in the dusky La Croix Black Box Theatre for a different kind of freshmen orientation. Their eyes remain focused upon the woman, petite in stature though grandiose in gumption, that stands before them.

Meet Sister Marie Leon La Croix, founder of the Viterbo theatre department, for whom the Black Box—one of her favorite places—is named. Though officially retired since 1995, the matriarch remains a constant presence, both in body and spirit, throughout the Fine Arts Center.

She tells her young audience of how she was challenged by the motherhouse to come to Viterbo in 1955 to start a theatre department. Once she received orders from Mother Superior, she promptly left her teaching position in Spokane, Washington and arrived in La Crosse where many difficulties awaited her.

"Over 40 years ago, my Irish and my French got together, and I decided that I could do this job with the help of God who called me back here to do it," she explains.

Her first obstacle was creating the space for a theatre. There were no supplies to be had, not even a hammer, but with the help of the maintenance department, Sister Marie Leon transformed part of the old Murphy Center gymnasium and some storage space that nobody wanted into a humble platform stage. The costume shop consisted of a single sewing machine.

Sister was elated. Though Viterbo could not offer a theatre major without an actual theatre, the program began as a strong minor. The make-shift theatre-in-the-round, complete with battered old tin chairs, became known as Reader's Theatre and drew a faithful assemblage of avant garde patrons. Contemporary and very intellectual shows for that time were performed, and afterwards the audience and players would often sit around red and white checkered clothed tables until 1 a.m. drinking coffee and discussing the evening's performance.

"I guess you can say that Reader's Theatre served as La Crosse's first coffee house. I'll never
forget when one reviewer said to me 'Every time I come to a show at Viterbo, these old tin
seats get a little softer.' His was one of the nicest compliments I have ever received," said
Sister.
The matriarch of the theatre department still keeps in touch with most of her early students,
who remember fondly 15 years of performing in the gymnasium and the Reader's Theatre
days, according to Sister. "They still tell me that those were the creative days-the good old
days."
While those humble early years provided a solid foundation for the department, the need for
a more sophisticated theatre and more space was always at the back of Sister Marie Leon's
mind.
The already well established music and art departments, which were housed in the convent
and the basement of Murphy Center, had been saving money for years for a new facility when
Sister Marie Leon decided to join them in their quest. In planning the building, she literally
visited every college and university in the state to investigate the technical aspect of the
theatre.
The Sisters took an enormous leap of faith in building a $5.5 million dollar Fine Arts Center
when they had only 69 students enrolled in the three departments. They felt a strong
commitment, however, to that handful of students who devoted their studies to the arts, and
an equal calling to bring the arts to this area.
As costs for the center continued to rise, it was decided that plans for a second theatre would
have to eliminated. Sister Marie Leon would not have it. She tearfully pleaded for the
experimental Black Box, which was then reinstated in the plans.
Now, years later, what sage advice does this tenacious, get-it-done FSPA have for those who
are trying out their skills for the first time? "Dreams can come true," she says, "if you set high
goals, love what you're doing with a passion, work hard, don't be discouraged by failures and
use the God-given creative talents that you have-which are sometimes a blessing and
sometimes a curse," Sister Marie Leon tells the students.