



Gracies Dinnertime Theatre

Volume 17, Issue 1
www.hellskitchen.org/GDT



Member of
Hell's Kitchen
www.hellskitchen.org

Appearance and Money

by Sean T. Hammond

If appearance is everything then the Rochester Institute of Technology is working hard to have it all. Since the ouster of President Rose after the public outcry over his—and the institute's—close ties with the CIA in 1990, President Simone has worked hard to restore the image of RIT, and establish an infrastructure that will insure RIT's continued position as a superb academic establishment.

Such guidance certainly seems to be working. RIT is consistently mentioned in *US News & World Report*, and was most recently ranked fourth overall among the top regional universities in the north, and tied for first in academic reputation (with Villanova). RIT is among the 100 most “wired” campuses in the nation, according to *Yahoo! Internet Life*, and in 1999 the special interest floor Computer Science House was chosen as the single most wired dorm in the nation. Given the established importance of technology in today's market, it makes sense that the students entering technical colleges such as RIT will dream of the prodigious paychecks that computer science professionals are now famous for.

Appearance and money. Money and appearance. The two are inseparable in the minds of many, being two sides of the same coin.

Perhaps that was why a brand new building, the Center for Imaging Science, was constructed as the photo program—once ranked second in the nation—was severely cut back in 1995...despite spotty student protests. Any potential feelings of hypocrisy were later ignored as the institute basked in the glow of Dan Loh, a 1995 alumnus of RIT's photo program who won a

Pulitzer Prize for photography in 1999. Nor did they hesitate to make it clear that Mr. Loh is the sixth RIT alumnus to win a Pulitzer for photography. What they failed to mention is that he may be the last.

The very next year, near the start of spring finals, Simone's administration again moved to cut back on programs at RIT, but this time threatened the entire School for American Crafts and many programs in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences. Students concerned over the value of their degrees

upon graduation quickly organized large scale protests on the campus and throughout the city of Rochester, receiving the support of local artists. Despite these protests, the programs took the hit.

Since that time, most of the student housing has undergone a major makeover. Several beautiful new townhouses have been built (using illegal, underpaid immigrant labor), and the dormitory facilities are all in the process of being renovated. Now, rather than feeling as though they live in low income, concrete housing, students stroll down halls that look as though they should be in office buildings, and ride elevators with walls of burnished stainless steel. One can only assume that these renovations have been paid for in part with the money saved through cutting back on the above mentioned programs.

While all this has been going on, the opus of Simone's administration will undoubtedly be the field house. Touted as a place in which approved student organizations can meet, and big-name music groups can be booked by Student Government, the field house is being counted on as a large money maker. Accordingly, President Simone has requested that deans and instructors voluntarily make cutbacks to help pay for the construction of the field house.

Most recently, a RIT student run political satire magazine, *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre*, known for being vocal about several of the administration's policies, was effectively censored.

The ineffective protests surrounding program cuts have taught students that it is futile to resist the Simone administration. Take for example the student run Rochester Cannabis Coalition (RCC); formed to educate the student body on the legal issues surrounding the *cannabis* legalization movements across the nation, the group met all the requirements for being an officially funded student group. Simone stepped in and overrode the decisions of RIT's Student Government, denying funding on the unfounded grounds that groups such as the RCC would lead to the presence of drug pushers on campus. Of course the real reason for a denial of funding was the tarnish such a group might bring to Simone's school.

Recognizing their non-role on the present campus, Student Government has voluntarily neutered itself. Rather than directly approving groups applying for club status, Student Government now merely makes recommendations for approval. This, of course, will never make it necessary for Simone to step in and directly override their decisions.

Then there is the photograph taken by Chandra Meesig. Part of a senior photo exhibit, it showed a woman's hand down her own underwear, covering her crotch. Ever image conscious, the photo was removed from the honors exhibit by administrative officials against the desires, and despite the protests of Chandra Meesig.

Most recently, a RIT student run political satire magazine, *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre*, known for being vocal about several of the administration's poli-

cies, was effectively censored. Using techniques proven to work with Student Government, President Simone overrode the decision of RIT's Creative Arts Committee (CAC) to fund the group, though it had had several articles picked up by the Yahoo and USA Today web sites through its partner Uwire, was featured as the Independent Press Association's publication of the month in October 1998, and appeared on the first page of the *Democrat and Chronicle's* business section, also in October 1998. Of course, with a lack of funding, the group has been effectively silenced, unable to comment on institute policy or report on the relationships of RIT's trustees with local activities. To date, President Simone has failed to present an explanation to *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre* as to why he felt the need to veto the decisions of the CAC, which had funded them since 1995.

Whether President Simone is a benefit to RIT depends on your perspective. It is true that he knows how to bring in the money, and as long as he has the power to control which student groups and organizations exist on campus, he can insure the continual good image RIT transmits to parents and contributors—corporate or otherwise. This is, understandably, to the detriment of student life and politics on the campus.

Until RIT's Student Government has the ability to override the president's decisions as they relate to student life, and until organizations such as the Creative Arts Committee are not vetoed in their decisions, a more appropriate moniker might be El Presidente Simone.

After Dinner Mints

by Kelly Gunter

I was thinking about the Lassie television series a little while ago. It occurred to me that the whole "brilliant" dog thing was entirely contrived through what legal professionals would undoubtedly call leading questions.

For instance—

Lassie: Woof, Woof. Woof! (*With Lassie you could just feel the punctuation.*)

Human: What is it boy? What's wrong?

Lassie: (*Jumping on hind legs*) Woof, Woof Woof Woof.



Human: What's that you say? Timmy's fallen down the well again?

Voila! Communication the likes of which most families have never seen. But what kind of communication is that? Who are these sick people who keep thinking up these bone-rattling situations for poor Timmy to be in? More importantly, couldn't Lassie get sweet, little Timmy into more trouble than the entire LAPD just by doing a similar sort of song and dance routine?

Imagine—

Lassie: Woof, Woof. Woof!

Human: What is it boy? What's wrong?

Lassie: (*Rolling on the floor, tongue lolling out of his mouth, feigning mild incontinence.*) Whooph, Whooph Whooph Whooph Whooph Whooph.

Human: What's that you say boy? Timmy's been jonesing for another hit of crack and to help pay for his habit he's turned to pimping 12-year-old Asian schoolgirls to score?

Let's face the facts though, it's not really what he says, but to whom he says it. The person translating Lassie is the one who should really be getting the focus. The following are just some possible scenarios.

Lassie: Woof, Woof. Woof!

Bill Clinton: What is it boy? What's wrong?

Lassie: (*Chasing own tail emphatically*) Woof, Woof Woof Woof.

Bill Clinton: What's that you say? Ken Starr's been caught giving head to Tom Delay and they did

what with a novelty straw?

Or

Lassie: Woof, Woof. Woof!

Rick Lazio: What is it boy? What's wrong?

Lassie: (*Bounding up and down while snapping his muzzle.*) Woof, Woof Woof Woof.

Rick Lazio: What's that you say? Hillary Clinton stole candy from babies and then fed it to elderly diabetics instead of their prescriptions? You just can't trust her?

Do you see how devastating Lassie could be when leashed into the wrong hands? Oh, what a tangled web we weave when at first we try to perceive. I know Lassie would second that opinion.

Cult Corner

by The Most Pious & Revered Sean T. Hammond



It was bound to happen. Surrounded by books on religions, the occult, and various mythology, how could I not do a weekly column on mischievous little cults, heretics, and heresies. And where would any heretic be without the Inquisition? (nothing like starting off with a bang, or in this case, a scream)

Started by Pope Gregory IX in 1231 when he issued the famous decree *Excommunicamus*, it ordered that repentant heretics were to be imprisoned for life and those which refused to recant their heresy were to be turned over to secular authorities for execution. It also ordered that the graves of heretics were to be dug up, their bones burned, and their homes destroyed.

Not wanting to be as mamby-pamby as Gregory, Pope Innocent IV strengthened the Inquisition with his bull *Ad Extirpanda*, allowing the use of torture to gain confessions and touted burning at the stake as the best method of execution. It also provided for the confiscation of heretic's property, and the property of their heirs.

This, of course, led to abuse of power where rich landowners were often accused of heresy, tortured until they confessed, and then had their lands seized by the Church. This pattern remained intact right up through the Salem Witch Trials here in the 'States where the vast majority of those accused of practicing the Dark Arts owned most of the land.

The Inquisition lost a great deal of power in Europe and by the 1400s was mostly limited to southern France. It was revitalized in Spain by Tomas de Torquemada in the mid 1400's, much to the dismay of many Native Americans unfortunate enough to be living in Central and South America. The Spanish Inquisition was suppressed by Napoleon I's conquest of Spain in 1808, but unable to keep a good group down, it came back...only to be permanently shut down in 1834.

The Vatican's modern version of the Inquisition is called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Rather than dedicated to using humans as firewood and keeping grave diggers employed, its main duty is to condemn Catholic theologians and professors for heretical tendencies. The most recent example of their work that I know of was the "silencing" of the Dominican priest Matthew Fox of Holy Names College in Oakland, California in 1988.



A typical GDT meeting

Gracies Dinnertime Theatre (GDT) was begun as an outlet for creative-minded RIT students. For years, these students have used GDT as their forum for questioning and exploring the world around them.

It has become a source of enlightenment not only for those who contribute to its black and white photocopied pages, but also to those who read it.

GDT is RIT's only regular on-campus publication devoted to free, creative expression. We have published numerous angry editorials and dissenting essays which cast doubts on practices normally taken for granted. We distrust authority, rally around the oppressed, probe our own psyches, and utilize one of the greatest social tools ever known to writers: satire.

Satire has always had a sobering effect on those who read it and recognize its truths. From Jonathan Swift to Dave Barry, satirists have always been the ones who recognize the social ills of their time. A little distrust of those who control is healthy; without it, Swift, Barry, and the staff of GDT might be crippled with the blindness of self-denial.

If you read *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre* with an open mind, we will pry it open a little wider.

Go ahead, let more ideas flow through your brain. I know that you are all strong enough adults to determine which thoughts will become

values or beliefs. Surely none of you take to heart that old belief that an unclean thought contaminates the mind. Thoughts are not unclean, they are merely different.

In an institute which promotes diversity and pluralism, why would certain people want to shut down a publication which encourages diversity of thought? Is it that these people really don't want a diverse campus, or is it that they do not understand that this is GDT's effect on the community? Who knows, but let's hope that it's the latter, because the former would spell T-Y-R-A-N-N-Y.

So, let's spell it out in plain English. GDT creates a more widespread and diverse free-thinking environment. Is diversity only based on ethnicity, gender, or skin color? The most diverse part about human beings is our minds. No one has a mind which thinks and functions exactly like another. So, the most diverse environment is a free-thinking and free-speaking one.

So, without giving any official statement as to his reasons for doing so, President Simone has cut GDT's funding and effectively diminished campus diversity.

What effect will this action have on RIT's other student-run organizations if Simone's decision is allowed to go unchallenged?

—Randall Good



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