I was born in 1974, so I don't remember much of the 1970s.

But as my staff members began drudging through dusty closets and labeled boxes for pieces of the past, some odd memories began to surface.

Colorforms, Cooties and weeble people. Yes, I had played with them as a small child. My father had also taken me and my older sister to see “Star Wars” at the movie theater.

As if those fuzzy recollections weren't enough, I hauled out my oldest photo album to snatch a peek. There I sat, my feet dangling over the edge of an orange, brown and tan plaid couch. While my parents never dressed me in bell bottoms, I still wouldn’t succumb to my staff’s recommendation to run that photo side by side with my editor’s photo for all to view.

Fine. So what’s the big deal with this decade? Won’t it ever die?

The fact is most college students today were born in the 1970s – and for some reason there seems to be a strange fascination with this decade. But why? Are they trying to re-experience this cheesy pop-culture to provide a fresh break from their ‘90s lives? Or, do they just have some inner thirst for olive green polyester and Bee Gees’ 8-tracks?

Perhaps it is human nature to cling on to the past. The environment during our formative years may have had a profound influence on who we were then. But more important may be how it has shaped who we are now and what we will continue to do in the future.

Or heck, maybe we’re too young to be blamed. I was only 5 years old. Did I really have a choice whether I should wear maroon-patterned shirts with big pointy collars? Well, maybe I’m innocent for now. But when the ’80s resurgence comes around, I guess I’ll have to admit that I willingly took the Pepsi Challenge, wore jelly shoes and had feathered hair.

Fast forwarding to the 1990s, this issue of The Burr also touches on other important issues of today: Why is it that few Kent State University students are graduating in four years? And what effect does interracial adoption have on children as they enter adulthood?

On the lighter side, The Burr also explores the mystery behind handwriting analysis and why one student spontaneously dropped everything to run a triathlon.

Or if all else fails to spark your interest – you can stare at our Day-Glo green cover until you become inspired to study for your finals or go disco dancing, which ever comes first.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Four-Year Myth</td>
<td>Vera Fedchenko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Keep Your Mitts off My Money</td>
<td>Rebecca Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Writing on the Wall</td>
<td>Nicole Wisniewski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Across Racial Lines</td>
<td>Dendy Fowler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Artistic License</td>
<td>Yamuna Ramachandran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Flashback '70s</td>
<td>Ali Cybulski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Pushing Herself to the Limits</td>
<td>Keri Grubbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Motivated by Motion</td>
<td>Tina Grady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Striking The Right Chord</td>
<td>Katie O'Keefe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Tales From the Dog House</td>
<td>Andi Lucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Relationships @ internet. com</td>
<td>Sarah Tascone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Getting out From Under It</td>
<td>Erika Germer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even if you arrive on campus knowing what you want to be when you grow up, graduating ‘on time’ still means overloaded semesters and summer classes, with little time to spare.

College: The best five, six or seven years of your life.

Beth Pickens remembers reading that saying on a T-shirt while browsing in the Kent State University Bookstore. She had just begun her freshman year and planned to graduate in four years with an art education degree. She never thought the T-shirt might have an ounce of truth to it.

“I remember thinking, ‘They can’t really mean that,’” she says.

Then a serious illness struck, her grade point average plummeted, and she changed her major twice. And now, five years later, Pickens expects to graduate this spring with an individual and family studies degree.

Pickens’ experience is not unusual. While many students expect to graduate in four years and get a job, most are staying in school longer, usually because of unforeseen reasons. Like it or not, a four-year degree has now become the exception and not the rule.

In a 1994-95 University of Oklahoma study of 123 colleges and universities, 29.5 percent of students with average ACT scores of 21.5 to 23.7 graduated in four years. Fifty-one percent finished in five years and 56 percent graduated in six years.

Greg Rogers, director of academic assessment, says a five-year baccalaureate degree is now the norm both nationwide and at Kent State.

“Kent is very typical of what’s going on statewide and nationally,” Rogers says. “I think that’s something we need to relay to students, and parents especially, who are budgeting for college.”

Rogers says that since 1979, the Office of Academic Assessment and Evaluation Services has tracked graduation and retention rates of incoming freshman classes. The university first conducted this study to see how many students who enrolled as freshmen finished their degrees at Kent State. In recent years, federal legislation established the Student Right to Know Act, which requires all colleges and universities to report their graduation rates to incoming students.
In the initial Kent State study, only 19.5 percent of the freshman class of 1979 actually graduated in 1983. Thirty-five percent graduated in five years and 39.2 in six years.

Subsequent studies from the freshman classes of 1983, 1987 and 1989 show a steady decline in the number of college students graduating in four years.

Of freshman students entering in 1989, only 12 percent completed their degrees by spring 1993. Thirty-seven percent took five years, while 45.4 percent took six years to finish.

Despite these odds, Rogers says most people still expect to complete a degree in four years even though departments have added requirements, and a high percentage of students change majors.

Terry Kuhn, vice provost and dean for undergraduate studies, says some of the most common reasons students do not finish in four years are because of too many degree requirements, changing majors, staying undecided for too long, working full time, attending part time and repeating failed courses. He says students often come to college with unrealistic expectations of how hard they need to work to achieve their goals, leading to a high number of major changes.

"There's this gulf between the desire of what a person wants to be and a real understanding of the kind of inner drive, force, knowledge and skills that the person has who's in that position," Kuhn says. "A very common thing I hear is, 'I want a high-paying job.' And then I say 'OK, what is it?' And they say 'I don't know, as long as it's high paying.'"

Sonia Cenic changed her major from biology to nutrition and dietetics during her sophomore year. Cenic, who is currently in her fifth year, says she was initially uncertain about what kind of career she wanted. However, she expected to graduate in four years because of her academic background. She had taken advanced placement courses in high school and enrolled in the Honors College, where she was required to see an adviser before registration.

Despite her academic strengths, Cenic says she faced a " rude awakening" when she came to Kent State. She says the pressure to choose a major and living away from home for the first time made it hard for her to adjust. When she finally switched to nutrition and dietetics, she
found herself in school longer because of sequential courses that are offered only during certain semesters. Even when she began the nutrition sequence, she knew very little about her new major beyond the brief course descriptions written in her catalog.

“I really wasn’t sure of what I wanted to do,” Cencic says. “It’s hard to know when you graduate from high school what you want to do with your life. Even in nutrition, I really didn’t know a lot about it. People really aren’t exposed to careers while they’re in high school. You don’t know what (the major) is about until you get into the coursework.”

In Pickens’ case, she first changed her major from art education to elementary education because one of her friends had graduated with an art education degree and took three years to find a job. Pickens also became ill during her freshman...
year with Crohn's disease, an illness that causes chronic intestinal ulcers.

When her grade point average dropped below the education department's required minimum, Pickens found herself in an academic hole. Her adviser counseled her to change to individual and family studies during the spring of her junior year so she could finish her degree in five years.

A combination of work, taking a semester off during his sophomore year and changing his major has kept Rob Fair in school longer. Fair, a sixth-year geology student, spends about 30 hours every week working for a masonry company in Hartville. In the mornings, he commutes from his family’s home in Stow to attend class for an hour, then leaves to work from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. After work, he grabs a quick bite to eat and heads off to class again. On weekends, he wakes up at 6 a.m. to work an average of 15 to 17 hours.

Fair says splitting his time between work and school forces him to cut social activities from his schedule. He spends his free time on weekends catching up on his studies and writing research papers.

“I really don’t do much socially right now,” Fair says. “Every once in a while I’ll take a day off from work, not so much for a vacation, but because I’m stressed about a class or need more time to study.”

Although working and carrying a 14-hour course load has been difficult, Fair says he has no choice because he is paying his way through college. He says he took a seven-credit hour course load during fall 1994 so he could work full time. He now averages 12 to 14 credit hours per semester and expects to graduate in May 1996.

“I’ve always had to work somewhere, whether it’s a store or some odd job, or as a bartender,” Fair says. “It’s very hard and my grades have suffered. I do it to survive.”

Jim Lafleur knew few relatives and friends who graduated from college in four years, so he figured that the same rule would apply to him. Inspired by his high school art teacher, Lafleur decided to pursue a degree in art education.

During his sophomore year, Lafleur realized that it was not art that interested him, but interaction with people. He changed his major to psychology, which involved transferring from the College of Fine and Professional Arts to the College of Arts and Sciences. When he found that he needed to take 14 additional hours of Spanish and more biology and physics courses for his new degree, Lafleur says he felt angry that many of the courses he had taken no longer counted.

“I was upset because I thought there should have been more unity among the colleges,” he

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FRI 8 am - 5 pm

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says, "I took so many humanities courses that did not transfer. I took studio art classes that are just worthless now."

Lafleur says he also has a gripe against the LER structure, which can make it easy for freshmen to fall into a rut if they change or declare a major later. Child psychology, for example, is offered on the LER social sciences list, but is not a requirement for psychology majors because that same course material is covered in an upper-division course. He says some students enroll in such courses not realizing that those courses will not count toward graduation.

Kuhn admits that students may have to meet additional requirements when they change colleges and catalogs.

"If you are required to take certain courses at the freshman and sophomore levels that you didn't take for a given major, then you have to go back, and it adds time," he says.

Kuhn says one of the reasons a major can have more requirements than another is because academic departments must modify their curricula to meet the standards of accreditation agencies. The departments are more likely to add new courses recommended by the agencies without subtracting other courses already in the curriculum. He says a course that could be omitted is often kept because the additional course is seen as a "marginal increase."

"It's easier to add requirements. What's one more course?" Kuhn says. "The first time that happens, it's no big deal. So now, instead of 129, you need 132 hours. It's seen as being marginal. But I think we're in a different age now where people realize those marginal increases do cost students."

Although she is ready to graduate in May 1996, Pickens regrets not finishing in four years. She believes she could have graduated on time if Kent State had assigned her an adviser during her freshman year.

"I just wanted a four-year degree," she says. "I would already be out of here and have a job. Instead, my dad is still paying tuition to this school."

Cencic, however, believes staying in college an extra year was beneficial. Although she would definitely finish in four years if she could do her edu-
‘It’s easier to add requirements. What’s one more course? The first time that happens, it’s no big deal. So now, instead of 129, you need 132 hours. It’s seen as being marginal.’

cation over, Cencic says staying as a biology major would not have been the right road for her to take.

She says her college experience taught her a lot about relationships and living on her own.

“I was able to work and learn other things about life that I need to know,” she says. “But I’m ready to finish now.”

Based on her experience, Cencic says she would encourage freshmen to seek guidance and direction from their advisers, but not to depend on advisers to plan their coursework for them.

Lafleur is glad he is staying in college for five years because he is gaining more knowledge and maturity from the experience. He says he would advise all students to be open-minded about their course loads and take advantage of advising sessions.

“I’m a firm believer in the more you know, the better,” he says. “I’d rather take the extra time to get all my classes and get a couple more electives in than fly through it and get a haphazard education.”

— Vera Fedchenko is a junior newspaper journalism major. This is her second contribution to The Burr.
Citizens of the United States, welcome to the Third World.

Children of the economic elite move to the right and secure access to education and power structures. Children of the working poor and middle class move to the left for the uncertain future of higher education in America.

The U.S. Congress approved a deficit reconciliation bill and appropriations bill for fiscal year 1996 to make the largest cuts to student financial aid in history, eliminating $10.4 billion in loan interest subsidies from the budget over the next seven years. The student financial aid cuts are coupled with a $245 billion tax decrease for all socio-economic levels.

Voters signed a "Contract with America" in last fall's election to balance the national budget by 2002. Unfortunately, voters didn't read the fine print.

To cut both deficit spending and taxes, programs and services will be cut. However, in America many students cannot afford the costs of education without federal assistance. At Kent State, 17,000 undergraduate students receive loans and financial aid. Cutting student aid will discourage professional and graduate students from choosing professions, like teaching and social work, which are not well compensated but important to societal goals.

The same politicians who ran on American family values are now cutting support for the most essential value in democracy, education.

Budget processes are complicated and seem to be shrouded in mystery for the average American, which is an advantage for Republicans in Congress.

Middle-class Americans who exercise their right to vote are distracted from specific budget plans by campaign and party politics.

The children of the middle class rely on federal student aid programs for access to higher education. These loan programs have succeeded in creating what many countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia lack, an educated middle class with a high standard of living.

Certainly, House and Senate Republicans are not maliciously cutting programs that would destroy any attempt by a person of the poor or middle class to educate themselves.

Republicans in Congress believe the greatest gift they can give future generations of Americans is a balanced budget. To some in Congress, these student loan programs and subsidies are simply a handout to undeserving students who need to realize the...
financial consequences in their choices to pursue college educations.

In the shortsighted eyes of those forming budget priorities, education is a private, not a public responsibility. Congress' efforts to reduce government waste should be applauded. But, it is better to maintain access to education than to bring the brakes on out-of-control government spending.

An educated public will be the deciding factor in the increasingly technological and global economy. The decay of America will be caused by an uneducated, non-competitive populace, not the $10.4 billion dollars that could be cut from other areas of the student aid programs.

Congress could legislate changing the time a loan is considered in default from the current 180 days. The Guarantee Agency System could be revised by recalling excess reserves and eliminating Supplemental Preclaims Assistance payments. Reducing insurance rates for banks would be another cut without serving banking special interests and putting the budgetary burden on students.

Unfortunately, Congress' solution is to replace shortsighted spending with shortsighted cutting. This only removes one problem and creates another. Whether the budget is balanced in 2002 or not, the next two generations will still be paying back the trillion dollar U.S. debt. But in the future, the majority of Americans who have to compete in the global economy will not have the education necessary to pay back the colossal debt.

Another suggestion that circled the Capitol was students to repay loans immediately after graduation. The six-month grace period before repayment gone? Wouldn't this only increase the already high default rate?

The problem with all these proposed cuts in the "Contract with America" is not the nickels and dimes gained or lost, but the precedents set for the American community.

In a world created by Congress, private people would need a community only to buy and sell products. People who are not in the immediate family or same social class can be ignored. A world free of social responsibility, free of community.

The less willing we are to commit time and money to educating ourselves, the more likely we are to fall into the full of a Third World cradle, divided socially and clutching our possessions in fear.

- Rebecca Anderson is a senior newspaper journalism major. This is her first contribution to The Burr.
The Writing on the Wall

Write a letter to Anthony J. Iezzi, but don't expect the normal reply.

He'll look at it slowly with a magnifying glass and ignore everything you've written. Then he'll skip the whole second page and stare at the wall. With his eyes closed, he'll tell you things you never knew — things you never thought anyone else knew.

He'll turn the pages left, right and upside down and tell you your fears, fantasies and frustrations. Iezzi isn't your normal pen pal. He's a graphologist, or as most people understand it, a handwriting analyst.

As the study of written movement, graphology attempts to gain insight into the physical, emotional and mental traits of an artist or writer. It dates back to ancient times of Aristotle who wrote, "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience, and written words are the symbols of spoken words."

Like walking or talking, handwriting is a form of unconscious behavior. How big or how small, how fat or how skinny, how short or how tall the writing, it all comes from the brain. The hand is simply the instrument that carries it out.

Among the many species of life on Earth, only humans have the ability to form a document declaring American independence, paint a signature on "The Starry Sky" or scratch, "For a good time, call..." on bathroom stalls.
Handwriting samples can be requested at any time and are public knowledge, claims Iezzi, a psychologist and a licensed marriage and family counselor, as well as a handwriting analyst.

"Handwriting is as public as the color of your eyes," he says, "but it cannot detect height, weight, age, sex, nationality, religion, race and right or left handedness."

Lawyers use it as evidence in forgeries, individuals use it in search of a better understanding of themselves, police officers collect it to investigate the unknown and marriage counselors use it in compatibility studies.

Using a variety of forms, functions and a barrage of facts, handwriting analysts can detect more than just linear movement, circular swoops and ragged lines.

**Reading Between the Lines**

Reading and interpreting a specimen to identify the character traits of an individual is what some analysts call a personality assessment. From the findings, they can draw a detailed personality picture.

"Sometimes this is done when someone brings in his own handwriting specimen, but often a person will bring in a specimen of another person," Iezzi says. "Like a boyfriend bringing in a specimen of his girlfriend or a girlfriend of a boyfriend."

Iezzi took correspondence courses through the International Graphoanalysis Society in Chicago, which boasts it is the largest school of handwriting analysis in existence.

IGS trains its students to use graphology and relate it to their career field of interest — including real estate, medical technology and law enforcement.

If a letter was written or mailed to a person, Iezzi says, it is considered public information. Iezzi will not read a letter unless he believes it is in the legal possession of the client.

"If I suspect that you aren't in proper possession of it, I won't read it," Iezzi says. "About a year ago, I refused to do a specimen for a woman because I didn't like the way she was telling me things. Sometimes a parent will take something out of a child's room and bring it to me, and I won't read it."

Then in Iezzi's quiet office in Fairview Park, a Cleveland suburb, the analysis begins. First he makes two to three copies of the sample, cutting each line of the writing apart. Next Iezzi measures the first 100 upstrokes, such as the rising parts of the t, f and h. He measures all the slants that follow — the heavi ness, pressure, strokes and connectives between letters and words.

About two to three hours, at $75 each hour, is needed to get a full personality evaluation in Iezzi's office. The calculations result in an intensity, or an absence, of different personality traits.

A person's mental process, intelligence, fears, defenses, social traits, levels of imagination and forces to achieve can all be determined by variations in the writing, says Marcia Dehart, also a handwriting analyst.

Working out of her home in Bolivar, near Canton, Dehart uses extra materials to assist in her determination of an analysis. A light box illuminated underneath a page shows the weight of the writing, while a high-powered microscope intensifies certain letters and strokes.

Dehart is taking correspondence courses through the International Graphoanalysis Society. In addition, she is studying at the American Board of Forensic Examiners in hopes of eventually becoming a professional witness for document court cases.

Dehart says most of her requests are for compatibility studies, using personality assessment, and pre-employment screening for job placement. In the latter case, an employer will come to her with the job applications and a list of qualifications for the position and ask her to pick the best person available.

Although Iezzi admits to analyzing more forgeries and unsigned, threatening letters, he says he has had similar requests.

"One man built an engineering plant in Germany, and he had three people apply for the job as chief manager," Iezzi says. "In these cases, I always go blind with the names so that I give a fair evaluation. In this case, everything was written in German."

**Is My Pen Poisoned?**

There are about 10 different versions of the letters Iezzi calls "poisoned pen."

"It's something like when your neighbor sends you a letter and doesn't sign it," Iezzi says. "It's usually threatening like, 'You lousy so and so, we know that you're running around with Mrs. Smith's hus-
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"People don’t use longhand too much anymore," he said. "People are more apt to use typewriters and word processors now."

Handwriting analysis doesn’t end there. Phil Buford, one of the four certified by the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners in Houston, and one of the only two who are still practicing it, claims that typewriter cases are his specialty. Buford was training at Georgetown University when he began investigating typewritten letters that came from the constituents of Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal.

"I identified that all the letters were coming from the same typewriter," Buford says.

The letters, he found, were actually coming from the Committee to Re-elect Nixon, not from his supposed public supporters.

Buford, who has been a forensic document examiner for about 25 years, says that his clients are an array of local police departments, postal service workers, the Internal Revenue Service, Ohio Highway Patrol and the attorney general of Ohio.

“We compare the question, like a bank hold-up note or graffiti to the writing of a suspect,” he says. "And just like your hair color can be changed, your writing can be disguised."

Comparing general similarities is the first basic step in Buford’s analysis.

If the forgery suspect is 5 feet 2 inches tall, Buford says, you can eliminate handwriting samples that came from a 6-foot person. “In other circumstances,” he adds, “the writing can be correct, but it’s a matter of what came first.”

In some cases, a person will sign a piece of paper, and the document will be changed afterward. Buford experienced this when he was working on a multimillion dollar will case where the deceased woman’s signature was correct.

“It turned out to be a homicide,” he says. "She signed the piece of paper before anything was ever typed out."

Investigating the handwriting specimens of alleged criminals so that the information can be used in court testimony is something that only a professional examiner at a lab can perform. Kent City and Kent State University Police must send their document cases to the BCI or to the Akron office of the FBI for analysis. The lab is the largest in Ohio, and possibly the world, says FBI spokesperson Paul Bresson.

Each office of the FBI must then send all their specimens to the bureau’s only laboratory, located in Washington.

“DNA, shoe prints, tire tracks — any piece of evidence from the crime scene is sent to us,” Bresson says. “One section of the lab is completely devoted to document cases. We have about 30 handwriting experts. They analyze everything from handwriting to typewritten and computer images to burned or charred paper.

“We may not be able to analyze the writing from a burned piece of paper,” Bresson says. “But we can tell by the ridges on the burn marks whether there’s a piece of the puzzle that fits.”

After the examination, some of the original evidence is returned to the police department or FBI office from which it came, Bresson says, but most of it is destroyed at the lab.

What Makes Them Experts?

To work for the FBI, Bresson says all officials, including those training in document analysis, must go through the FBI academy located on a military base in Quantico, Va.

“No matter how much training they have had before, we all require our agents to go there,” he says.

Although Iezzi analyzes forgeries as well as personality assessments, not many FBI agents or graphologists stray from their specific concentration.

“I don’t do personality readings,” Buford says.

“There’s no scientific basis for it. A generally neat person may be a neat writer, but there’s no relationship there."

“IGS has no credibility in the forensic field,” he says. "I don’t believe in what they teach and I don’t care. They don’t train people to do what we do.”

Nonetheless, universities in France include handwriting analysis in their psychology courses, Dehart says, and they frequently use it in pre-employment screening. Iezzi and Dehart agree that the studying of writing is genuine, precise and factual.

“I get many calls to come to dinner and be an entertainer,” Iezzi says. “I just throw the phone back on the hook. I urge people not to make a game out of this. It’s very scientific and you could offend people. A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing.”

Iezzi has been approached by psychologists for his input on a client’s writing and acknowledges he is able to determine some personality traits better than others.

“In examining the writing of a psychologist’s client, I didn’t say she was suicidal,” Iezzi says. “In her writing, I found suicidal tendencies. And the psychologist knew it, but he didn’t tell me in the hopes of finding some new information.”

Handwriting is a “projective test” in psychology and all points are considered 50 percent accurate, Iezzi says. “A psychologist gave me a 98.9 percent value on one of his clients, meaning I got that close to the personality of his client just by looking at a blind sample.

“I think I am pretty good at this,” Iezzi says. “They say you can pick up a drug addict, but I don’t think you can. I can show erratic behavior, immature behavior and irresponsible behavior, but I don’t think I can call someone a drug addict. I wouldn’t risk that.”

To those interested in pursuing the field, Iezzi gives a final warning, “If you want to do handwriting analysis, go to a proper school, take the courses, get certified and then build up your experience,” he says. “I get people who read one thing and all of the sudden they’re a handwriting expert. Then I say don’t do it.”

– Nicole Wisniewski is a junior magazine journalism major. This is her second contribution to The Burr.
He introduced himself as Anthony J. Iezzi, master’s certified handwriting expert, and motioned for me to sit at a small round table with four chairs. Iezzi’s office did not have white walls or a counselor’s couch. It was more like a cozy home, and his office was hidden deep inside.

As he began to teach me the investigation of “brainwriting” and its detailed drawings of a person’s inner soul, he pulled images and references of pertinent stories from the air to add color to his explanations.

As he sat beside me, Iezzi began.

“From here I can tell that you are a very creative person,” Iezzi says. I looked down and only a corner of the specimen that I provided was visible, besides the fact that he was looking at it upside down.

Then he took my two unlined pages of handwriting, signed three times at the bottom of the second page, and with a magnifying glass, began to investigate me.

“Do you have a father?” Iezzi asks. “Are your parents divorced?”

Before I could slowly whisper “no” to my already open mouth, he took a simple capital “I” and told me that my “mother stroke” (the loop in the cursive I) was very strong, but that my “father stroke” (the finishing stroke in the cursive I) was nonexistent.

He took an overall look at my “specimen,” concluding that it was generally positive, so therefore my personality traits will be generally positive.

“I don’t see any negative traits,” he says. “I don’t see anger, immaturity, dominating or withdrawal.”

While he says my writing was legible and well organized, with a fine appearance, he pointed out letters and shapes that were trade marks of my handwriting.

He isolated my “ks” and the distinctive loop in the “N, C and W” of my signature, claiming they add a certain character style to my writing.

Then he proceeded to measure my slant — that is, the slant of my letters. He took out a scale and explained why he related to me to a simple set of
numbers.

"You are an extremely outgoing person," he says. "Interested in people—not necessarily impetuous, but still very outgoing. You are emotionally expressive, reaching out to other people involved with other people...."

He paused, almost nervous to point out the particular loops inside of my lower case 'a's'.

"You have a trait here that I'm unsure of how to express to you," Iezzi says.

I shifted in the now uncomfortable chair as he began to search for the words to describe the trait. "It's a characteristic that shows a sense of hiding a part of yourself," he says. "The long loops hanging from your 'g's' and 'y's' says that you are social and like to talk with people, but this loop inside of some of your 'a's' and 'd's' says that you also like to keep things to yourself—maybe hide certain things about yourself."

I just sat back slightly and was beginning to finally feel comfortable about my hidden characteristic as Iezzi went on with the adjectives to describe this loopy trait.

"You may even feel the need to lie sometimes because you have such a need to hide," he says.

The look on my face must have said it all, but I was trying to hide my reactions because I wanted to know if an analysis of the scribbles coming from my hand could be real. I didn't want to imply that he was right or that he was wrong.

He quickly referred back to my creativity and how many traits in my writing revealed this imagination that he was describing.

Wonder made me drift as Iezzi explained that a full analysis would take much longer and be much more accurate. The more he talked, the more I realized how intense this made me feel to be probed and investigated.

I left his office in a bubble of wonderment. Voices danced in my head of the things he had told me and of the things he hadn't known were true.

I guess knowing if handwriting analysis is real is left up to the brave with samples of scribbles and an open mind to decide.
Around the age of 5, I looked at my mother and asked her why my eyes looked different from hers and everyone else's in school. My mother found a globe and explained how I was born in a small country called South Korea, and when I was 4 my birth mother was no longer able to take care of me. Although I have no records of my birth mother, I was told she loved me very much, which is why she gave me up for adoption. She wanted me to have a better and healthier life than she could provide.

This isn't the typical story kids hear when they ask where they come from. I didn't understand then what my mother was trying to tell me about my heritage; I didn't understand what it really meant to be adopted. I merely looked to my mother to answer a question that was imposed on me by my classmates. Now that I am grown and a junior here at Kent State University, my peers still question me about why I don't have an accent or more knowledge about my culture.

Many people argue that children should only be adopted by parents of the same race. They
seem to think the child will forget his or her heritage and lose an integral part of his or her self. I sometimes wonder if my actions and beliefs are shaped by my Korean heritage, but I've never felt I lost any crucial part of my identity because I was adopted by white parents. In the debate over interracial adoptions, I think we sometimes forget the real essence of what adoption is all about: giving children a chance to live a life with love and family.

All adolescents deal with their identity at some point in their lives. Junior high school students join lots of clubs and organizations to find their niche. Young adults copy their peers in clothes, music and activities until they learn how to be individuals. Adopted children are no different.

Mahli Mechenbier, a junior pre-dentistry and English major, was adopted at 3 months. Her parents, Edward and Claudia Mechenbier of Dayton, shared a bedtime story with her in which she was the main character. In this story, Mahli learned how she was adopted by her parents and about her long-awaited arrival.

Although her parents always stressed how much they loved her, they continually acknowledged her Vietnamese background. But it wasn't until Mahli was 10 years old, when her mother gave birth to her brother, Bernhard, that she first understood her differences.

"All of my relatives are white, and when I was a little kid, I really looked at my surroundings and thought, 'Well, OK, these are people.' I didn't realize that I looked any different," she says. "When I looked at myself, my hair was a different color, but that really wasn't a big deal. When he was born, people started looking at us because he is very blond and different from me, so it made me aware."

Christina Graham, 16, a Kent Roosevelt High School junior, was 5 years old when she approached her father in a flurry.

"Daddy, it's not right," she said to the Rev. Chuck Graham of United Christian Ministries at Kent State University.

"What's not right, honey?" he asked, confused.

Christina continually stated to her father that it was "not right," and then she smacked her hand down on top of his hand.

"Honey, I don't see anything. Did you hurt your hand?"

"No, no. LOOK!"

It suddenly dawned on him what she was trying to tell him. The color wasn't right.

"That was a painful moment for me, because she was getting information from somewhere that was clearly telling her that because of the color of her skin, she wasn't right," he says. "We have emphasized to our kids that you judge a person by their character and what's inside of them, and yet, the messages are out there. The world is full of them."

The main concerns raised in interracial adoptions usually involve the child-parent differences in physical features and culture. It is these differences that trigger apprehension about the child's ability to form a solid identity and the parent's ability to meet their needs. Some argue that all human races have the same basic needs regardless of their differences. Parents of any race can provide for children of any race.

Although Chuck Graham agrees with this idea, he still feels that he is sometimes unable to answer many of his daughter's questions concerning racism and how to deal with prejudice, because he himself was never forced to deal with such obstacles.

"I have a daughter who is of my own genes and two bi-racial children, and at times I feel more understanding of my white daughter than the other two," he admits. "There are things that I am not prepared to help those kids with. We knew going into this that there were any number of obstacles to deal with, but we hoped that our commitment to these two human beings and our love for them would be sufficient."

My own mother was a missionary in Korea for quite a few years, teaching English to children and adults. So she made sure I was aware of my heritage. I have my traditional Korean dress and I can eat with chopsticks. But I was a child raised in a white society. During elementary school and junior high school, I forgot that I was Asian and generally thought of myself as just another white American. I believe this mindset made it easy for my classmates to accept me even though I looked different.
It wasn’t until I moved to an upper-middle class, predominantly white school in 10th grade that my identity came into question. I was one of only two minorities in the school of 1,200, and the students pointed out to me how different I was. I became more conscious of my Asian looks. Even though the students still accepted me because I thought like them and acted like them, they made sure I knew I wasn’t really one of them. They gave me nicknames like Yokohoma Momma and Dendis Khan.

But at Kent State, I am no longer one of a couple. Kent has such a wide range of people that I find a greater openness. I am exposed to other Koreans and by talking with them I have learned a great deal about my cultural background.

Mahlī grew up in the Catholic faith and was educated in a Catholic school. She and her two other Asian-adopted sisters remember only once having to deal with cruel children — when the public school kids shared their bus. The kids would taunt them, but Mahlī was able to ignore their bars, because she knew she could speak English just as well as anyone. Had Mahlī been raised by Vietnamese parents, she thinks their remarks would have upset her more.

“At the Catholic school, everyone pretty much knew that we were adopted because we had gone to church with these people forever,” she said. “They knew that my parents really wanted a child, and it was really unique that they had three different children,” she says. “Because they teach religion classes in a Catholic school and teach acceptance of all God’s children, it made it easier.”

Mahlī also feels that if she would have been raised by Vietnamese parents, she would have stood out among people more. Although at Kent State, she feels more people have an open mind, she still believes most people expect her to speak broken English or to not understand them.

“I think that I am more aware now that I look different, and although I am comfortable with it, it hits me for a second,” she remarks. But just for a second. For the most part, Mahlī feels her identity is complete; she accepts who she is.

“Whenever anyone asks me if I know where my real parents are, I say, ‘Yes, I live with my real parents,’ and in that sense I feel self identity is formed not only from your social or racial status, but from who your parents are,” she says. “I am who my parents are and who my relatives are. Asian? Yes, that is a part of who I am, but I live here in the United States, and I think that I have definitely adapted.”

Christina, on the other hand, is still dealing
with these acceptance issues, because she considers herself neither black nor white, but rather an individual.

It was during her first year in high school that Christina began to notice that the other girls were choosing friends that looked like they did. Christina didn’t know where to go because when she tried to hang out with African-Americans, she found that she had trouble relating to their way of thinking and socializing. They didn’t want to hang out with her because she wasn’t “black enough,” Christina says. The white students had trouble accepting her because she looked black.

“When I got to Roosevelt, I started getting called by the black kids an ‘Uncle Tom,’ or a ‘sell-out.’ I tried to tell them, ‘I’m not. I’ve tried to be friends with you, but you don’t want to be friends with me. That has nothing to do with being a ‘sell-out.’ I’ll be friends with anyone if they are nice to me. It doesn’t matter who you are.”

Christina has found that she needs to rely on her individualism and focuses herself as Christina, not Christina, the African-American girl, or Christina the white girl.

“Sometimes people make me pick a side, but I really don’t like having to do that,” she says. “I am going to accept people for who they are.”

Siblings also have a strong effect on the identity of a person. Both Mahli and Christina have a sibling who is the biological son or daughter of their adopted parents. Mahli finds it funny when she is walking with her brother and her boyfriend, because many times people assume that her brother is actually her boyfriend’s brother.

“I love my brother more than anything, and he has accepted me,” she says. “When we walk together, I know that people give us the look that we don’t belong together and something is wrong.”

Likewise, Christina says she knows that many people assume she is just a babysitter to her sister.

Both Mahli and Christina deal with the level of society’s acceptance in their lives. Christina is still trying to find that balance in her life that determines where she fits in, but for now she is content with being herself. Mahli, on the other hand, has learned how to deal with her identity and is happy.

Many times I think about how my situation would have been different if I had been raised by Korean parents. Most likely I would have spoken the language fluently and had a slight accent. I would probably think differently and look different. I might have emphasized my ethnic features and dressed in ethnic clothing. But I wonder if I would still possess such an open mind. I feel that because of my interracial circumstances, I have been forced to think more openly and to be more accepting. It is my open mind that I value above all else.

Ever since I was a little girl, my mother and aunt who helped raise me have told me that I can do and become anything I want with their full support. The one stipulation they have is that I give 100 percent of myself to whatever it is and then they will be proud of me. As a young adult heading toward my undergraduate degree and unknown future, I believe I have finally found myself and I’m ready to tackle my future. My adoption into an interracial family has only made me stronger. You bet my family’s proud.

— Dendy Fowler is a junior rhetoric and communications major. This is her first contribution to The Burr.
Artistic

Ann Carter, "Turf Eyeballs" 1994-95
Ann Carter, assistant professor of art at Kent State University, sculpts clusters of disembodied eyeballs gazing down at groups of tiny people to represent the objectification of women in society.

Dan Spencer, a senior art education major, recreates a piece of music onto a canvas the way a dancer would recreate music on the stage.

Former Kent State student Ross Kennedy wants people to be aware of what the world is about instead of trying to cover it up. So he sculpts outlandish images of food chains and dismembered bodies.

From floating eyeballs to painted dance choreography, some of Kent’s most successful artists take drastically different approaches to their work. Here, they describe how they have shaped their lives around their work and ideals and how they are rising to the top.

Creating Awareness

Ross Kennedy was fascinated with drawing spirals as a child. Then in 1987, he discovered the magic of clay. Now in 1995, Kennedy, 27, makes his living as a sculptor.

He spends his days at Studio 425 on Gougler Avenue, a building with five studio spaces. Kennedy and his friend Lee Kobus, a senior glass major, share one studio space, most of which is filled with his work. Clay sculptures with cartoon-like figures, titled “Evolution,” “Food Chain” and “Procreation” adorn his studio.

A microbe gives birth to “Evolution.” Sitting at the base, the microbe leads to a dragonfly, which leads to an octopus, a turtle, a platypus and a warthog. At the final stage of the evolutionary process stands the centerpiece, a chimpanzee, which holds the hand of an alien on one side and a baby on the other — a joke on the idea that together, these two creatures parented the human being.

A big fish swallowing a smaller fish make up the central figures of “Food Chain.” At the earth-like base lies a snake devouring a large egg, its belly bulging with one it swallowed earlier. A human skull sits nearby, worms crawling in and out of it.

“It’s to remind people that WE are part of the food chain,” Kennedy explains, adding that most people neglect the fact that humans end up as food for worms. “We think we’re at the top of the food chain, but they get us eventually.”

Images from dreams, real-life experiences and books worm their way into Kennedy’s sculptures, which he describes as “realism yet cartoonish.”

“It’s cartooney because it’s very serious,” Kennedy says. “It’s kind of awful things I’m dealing with. When they’re cartooney, it takes some of the bite away.”

Before he begins a piece, Kennedy researches material in the library and visits bookstores, memorizing a lot of what he studies.

“When I read, I see it like a movie,” Kennedy says. He once read a book called “Freaks,” which he asserts told about a German company of long ago. “They would buy babies from poor people, alter their bodies and make them into freaks... then sell them to rich people,” he says.

That compelled Kennedy to sculpt a trio of small figures titled “Man Made Freak Babies,” depicting mutated babies that Kennedy says are about “the different, sick cruelties people are capable of.”

The first, “Hot Dog Baby,” is an infant without limbs. The second, “Two Headed Baby,” shows two heads emerging from a baby’s neck. A closer look reveals the scars left after the second head was sewn on. The third, “Mermaid Baby,” portrays what Kennedy says the bourgeoisie once did to children for amusement. The inside of a baby’s legs is flayed, then sewn together to look like a mermaid.

Kennedy attended art school at Kent State on and off for a number of years. “School teaches you to think about art,” he says. However, “At this point, I want to be able to sell.”

In the past, Kennedy has sold his artwork, charging anywhere from $200 to $1,000. He has sold some work at KentFest and to private collectors. Downtown shops like Lasso the Moon also carry his signature. But one of his major projects involved designing costumes for the “Batman Forever” stunt show at Six Flags theme parks across the country.

Kennedy worked on the project with Kobus,
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an old friend Scott Gamble, who is a former Kent State art student, and a few others from mid-March through May.

Gamble, 33, who works with makeup, prosthetics and special creations, was contacted by a woman with whom he had worked on a movie in Dallas, and who owned a design firm. Warner Brothers sent photographs of the Batman, Robin and Two-Face characters to Gamble and asked him to make costumes resembling the photos.

"At first, I tried to do it all myself, but I couldn't," Gamble says. Then he remembered Kennedy.

"One of the reasons I thought of him was because I knew he was a big comic book fan as a kid. I would have been sunk without him." Gamble says.

While at times up to seven people were working on the project, Kennedy was the key sculptor and did most of the finishing under Gamble's direction. Gamble and Kennedy created all the molded pieces, such as belts, masks and Batman's armor, with Kobus' help. They painted the costumes, then sent them to the design firm, where the cloth pieces, like the capes, were attached.

The costumes were used at Six Flags parks in Chicago, New Jersey, Georgia, Texas and Magic Mountain theme park in California. Each location had two costumes for each character, Gamble says.

Kennedy also works as a contract sculptor for a chocolate company, but doesn't live by standard hours. His day begins at one o'clock in the afternoon and stretches into the late evening.

"I refuse to do the 9-to-5 thing," he says. "You're too physically and emotionally drained at the end of it to do artwork. I'm not capable of it, really."

It takes anywhere from three days to two months to complete a sculpture. "I sculpt really fast," Kennedy says. "It's just getting to it. I have to be in the right frame of mind.

"I do it to entertain myself and to get rid of the demons inside me. Then they're outside and I can deal with it," he says. "I think everybody has things that kind of haunt them inside." By sculpting, Kennedy says he can safely purge his fears and misplaced aggressions.

Kennedy plans to head to New York, where he'll try to get a job as an assistant to an established artist who he hopes will provide him with free studio space. Exposure is the key, Kennedy says. In New York, he plans to take his work to galleries and have artists visit his studio.

"I think it's worth trying," Kennedy says. "I wouldn't do it if I didn't think it could happen."

Painting to Music

Dan Spencer sold his first piece of art for $100, a good price for someone who then was only 17 years old. He's come a long way since then.

Breathing life into "Canvas in Motion" is one of his biggest achievements.

Spencer had no idea that a simple chat with a co-worker would turn into something spectacular.

Rebecca Drury and Greg Winters, both senior dance majors, were choreographing and organizing their own modern dance concert, which incorporated artwork, in spring of 1995 as a part of their graduation requirement.

"It just happened one day he was talking about the art department, and I mentioned we were looking for an artist. We were about to give up," Drury says. "Then Dan said, 'I'd be interested and I'd love to do it!'"

It was settled: Spencer was to take the music Drury was choreographing and create a painting.

"I had no idea what the dance was about," he says. "I interpreted the music onto the canvas in my own way." Spencer sewed four rectangular and square pieces of canvas together to form a larger 2 1/2' X 3' canvas. As he listened to the music, he painted.

"My brush moved with the rhythm, like a conductor," Spencer explains. "The different colors in the painting represented sounds. The color red represented higher pitches in the music, and the different shapes of lines, such as an upward line with sharp angles, represented changes in rhythm."

Winters, on the other hand, based his choreography on one of Spencer's previously completed paintings. He was searching for a painting that contained linear movements.

"My approach was to take the spatial pattern that was created in the painting and duplicate it on the stage," Winters says. "I actually paint the pattern on the floor with my feet."

Because Winters did not want to be influenced by moods of the painting's colors - a mix of blues and greens, Spencer shot a black and white photo of it. Winters used only that to choreograph his dance. Later, he brought it onstage during his performance.

The performance, titled "Canvas in Motion," was held at the end of the spring 1995 semester in the Kiva. Neither Spencer nor Drury knew what to expect, so it was a surprise to both that the colors of the costumes she chose for the six dancers...
of the costumes she chose for the six dancers were similar to those in the painting. “It was really amazing how two people can come up with the same idea,” Drury says. Bright yellow, blue and green were among the colors worn by the dancers. Their pants and T-shirts were baggy, each dancer’s a different color.

Spencer is inspired by an inner drive to produce art. “It’s like an addiction,” Spencer says. “I like art, and I have had that inner drive since junior high. I knew since then I wanted to go to art school.” His inner drive inspires him to paint, but also tells him when to stop.

“A painting is never finished, but to a point, you know when to stop messing with it,” he says. “You step back, look at it, and everything works in harmony. When you have that, you’ll see it.”

Spencer not only wants to create art, but also teaches it to children. He believes art helps them develop many social skills.

If art classes were banished, “the whole culture of art would be lost,” he says. “Many cultures still do art that is based on their culture, and (children) would lose that knowledge.”

**Watching the World**

Ann Carter’s disembodied eyeballs do more than let her see. They allow her to represent, symbolize and convey.

For the past four years, Carter has made a single floating eyeball the primary image in her work, based on the work of the French symbolist Odilon Redon.

“I have used the eyeball as a reference to surveillance and subjective vision,” Carter says. “This representation comes from how the eyeball sees and reinterprets and defines people into private, social and political entities.”

This body of work began with Carter’s concern with society’s reduction of women to mere bodies.

Fifteen of Carter’s drawings were displayed in an exhibit at the Braunstein Quay Gallery in San Francisco from Oct. 10 to Nov. 4.

One of her sculptures consists of a wall of 16 “maquettes,” book-shaped pieces perpendicular to the wall at different heights. Upon these maquettes stand groups of people, each of whom are as small as a grain of rice. High on the wall, hanging near the ceiling, are groups of eyeballs looking down at the maquettes.

The ceiling eyeballs are covered with a green, mossy-like surface similar to model railroad landscape foliage. They “monitor” what goes on below.

On the floor sits “Monitor,” a giant, 40-pound eyeball, 21-inches in diameter. Painted in matte black, its pupil is carved out, showing the wood underneath.

“It’s an example of an overbearing presence,” Carter says. “The giant eyeball is an objectifying force—the presence of a disembodied eyeball that is watching people that would circle around it.”

Its large size represents the weight of this force and conveys a universal concept dealing with social, political and socioeconomic monitoring. Carter says. “People are forced to conform to societal mores by expectations that are imposed upon them by their awareness of this objectifying force.”

Carter also has her work displayed at the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions in a show titled “The Wild Side.” But she does not limit herself to domestic exhibitions. “Maquettes” is in an Italian museum called the Musee Valle d’Aosta. That exhibit will soon travel to Germany and Japan.

Through the years, Carter has dealt with critics. Positive or negative, the reviews have made her more aware of other people’s interpretations of her work.

“It’s always interesting to find out what their read is because your work might be read in many different ways. People can interpret works in very personal ways,” Carter says.

Though Carter has worked with the eyeball image for four years, she continues running the theme through her work.

Currently she is working with medicine pills, drawing eyeballs on them in old-style lettering.

She puts the pills atop cubes of clear plexiglass which sit in a graph format on top of light tables.

“The pills are models for the social constructions of medicine, the practice of which is intended to remedy and regulate cycles of illness and health,” says Carter, who holds a personal interest in the medical industry.

“One reason I work with the pills,” Carter says, “is because I have a number of friends who have chronic illnesses, are HIV-positive or have AIDS and have to deal with the use of tremendous amounts of medicines regularly.”

Carter crafted her way to the top with an education, which she feels is essential for an artist’s development. She studied at the San Francisco Art Institute, where she received a bachelor’s and master’s of fine arts and later taught for five years.

“Most people I know have gone to school and received a master’s degree,” Carter says. “In the master’s program, students are able to expand their research and knowledge, and at the same time, focus their own work.”

She was a visiting artist at several institutions, including Princeton University, Mills College in Oakland, California and at the University of California at Berkeley for two years, where she ran the Visiting Artist Lecture Series.

“People can interpret works in very personal ways,” Carter says. “In the master’s program, students are able to expand their research and knowledge, and at the same time, focus their own work.”

—Yamuna Ramachandran is a senior magazine journalism major. This is her second contribution to The Burr.
Ross Kennedy's "Evolution"
A generation attempts to recapture the polyester past and give new meaning to cheesy clothes and toys.

Flash Back '70s
In the clutches of these peculiar pop-culture anarchists, the rules dissolved. Uninhibited individualists, they came packaged in varying shapes, sizes, colors and styles, an ever-changing kaleidoscope of sights. Some thrust themselves into the limelight by embracing politically visible and audible causes such as the feminist, gay liberation and environmental movements, among countless others. Some, still swept up in the peace, love and flower-power vibes of the late ’60s, followed the Grateful Dead. And the others, standing on the sidelines in the midst of this confusion, adopted the oddities of a disunified pop culture: disco, “Charlie’s Angels” and pet rocks.

These rugged individualists claimed membership to a decade overflowing with celebrated and unusual relics that have sneakily crept back into modern lifestyles. Attempting to recapture the activism, bold individualism and spirit (of cheesiness) that characterized the ’70s, members of the ’90s Generation X are capitalizing on this generation’s expression of freedom and nonconformity, while enjoying the fun of the vintage looks, funky sounds and the older, weirder pieces of the polyester past.

EVERYTHING ’70S

“The ’70s are absolutely back—Star Wars, metal lunch boxes, “Charlie’s Angels,” Scooby Doo, bead curtains and stickers... all the cornball, tacky stuff that people loved back then and still love now,” says Steve Presser, the self-proclaimed “Big Cheese” of Big Fun, a vintage shop in Cleveland’s Coventry. Big Fun, stuffed from wall to wall with shiny plastic disco balls, glittery T-shirt decals, “Charlie’s Angels” metal lunch boxes, mood rings and fortunetelling fish, opened five years ago. The store caters to a varied clientele.

“Right now our biggest crowd is the 18 to 24, college-age group. We also see a lot of teens, 25 to 35 and 35 to 45-year-olds. They all want to buy a part of the past,” Presser says. “The ’70s pop culture is especially trendy with college-age kids simply because it was so fun. Why not be a part of it?”

Presser attributes the success of such ’70s frivolities as pet rocks to people’s insatiable desire for anything strange or out of the ordinary. The pet rock, developed in 1975 by Gary Dahl, a California businessman, came in a cardboard carrying case and retailed for about $4. Because of the rock’s low-maintenance watering, sunshine and cage-cleanup needs, the masses instantly adored this lovable gray pet.

“People always attach themselves to simple marketing ideas. If it’s something they don’t need, they’ll want it,” Presser says.

Collecting antique televisions and ’70s toys, such as love bead kits, Colorforms, Viewmasters, board games and metal lunch boxes, David Blewette, owner of Grandma’s Video in Akron, challenges and entertains himself by searching for the “older, weirder” pieces of the past. He graduated with a degree in telecommunications from Kent State in 1976, which helps explain his fancy for collecting vintage televisions.

Ironically, Blewette says he never watches TV. Once he finds a certain type of antique TV or vintage toy, though, he will store it in his basement and begin a search for something entirely different. Blewette thrives on the search for original items for his extensive collection. Boredom is his enemy.

“Once I have one of something, I like to move on and find something else,” Blewette says. “I don’t collect all of one kind of thing — like metal lunch boxes. If I have one kind, I’ll move on and try to find a different kind.”

Michael Pierce, a manager at Record Revolution in Cleveland Heights, says Generation X’s backward tumble into collecting ’70s toys and sporting ’70s-inspired styles of clothing is merely a matter of society’s constant recycling and redesigning of old ideas into elements of modern-day pop culture.

“The resurgence of ’70s styles is just another trend that will fade out whenever anyone else starts doing something else different, and someone else starts following that person. Trends run in circles,” he says. “But where else can we go? What other era could we possibly pillage? What other era can we recycle?”

The ’90s generation seems to be empty of its own specific identity, Melissa Wells, a sophomore psychology major, says.

“We’ve recycled the ’60s, ’70s and ’80s,” Wells says. “We need to distinguish ourselves from the past, but we haven’t yet found our own culture. We are looking for meaning.”

Indeed, Kent State’s campus sings and paints a vivid picture of the ’70s. A story by ali cybulski
simple glance over the local twenty-something crowd screams its return. A young woman, decked out in a yellow double-knit polyester shirt and beige corduroy bell bottoms, strolls nonchalantly to the entrance of the library. Wearing a turquoise tie-dyed Grateful Dead T-shirt, a young man tosses his long, tangled hair over his shoulder and then gently strums his beat-up guitar. A student, whose neck and wrists are embellished with multiple strands of multi-colored plastic love beads, sits alone in the shadowed corner of the ledge outside the entrance to the Hub.

"Styles come and go, but I think this one's here for a while," Kathy Drescher, owner of Kent's vintage shop, Ecoporium, says. "I can't believe some of the things we wore back then and some of the things we're wearing now."

Drescher says vintage shopping for '70s styles is very big among students because it's so cheap.

"They find it, like it and wear it, and since it's so cheap, it doesn't matter if they only wear it once," she says.

The biggest collars, the widest wale corduroys and biggest flares at the cheapest prices appeals to creative and empty-pocketed Kent State students. They go to great lengths to find such apparel — even if it comes down to raiding the dusty back section of their parents' closets.

"I've gotten some of best '70s clothes from my mom," Wells says. "I swiped a great leather coat and a burgundy corduroy jacket with the biggest collar...I'm not embarrassed to wear it, especially when I didn't have to pay for it."

But Pierce says that Generation X's perception of '70s styles and the actual reality of the '70s style represent two distinctly separate entities.

"Younger people's '70s style is not accurate," he says. "True bell bottoms were high-waisted and skin-tight to the knee, and then they completely flared out — like the kind of pants you see the people who were on the cover of the "Saturday Night Fever" record wearing," he says, running into the basement of Record Revolution in a desperate, yet unsuccessful attempt to locate the album. "I really don't see anything stylish about these clothes. They make everyone look like a bunch of hooligans... like the juvenile delinquents from 'Dazed and Confused.'"

WHAT'S WITH THIS MUSIC?

Pierce says the sounds of the '70s certainly have come back in full force — from disco, to the Grateful Dead, to the punk rock of the Sex Pistols,
the Clash and David Bowie. "Alternative" rockers have leached onto the unique dimensions of '70s musical styles, and in the process, helped evolve the decade's funky sounds into '90s modern music.

"The '70s sounds and influences of '70s bands are definitely in the picture...Pearl Jam and Ure Overkill are very heavily '70s influenced," Pierce says.

However, Bill Weita, an employee of Heartbeat Records, believes there is no "resurgence" of '70s music. Seventies artists sell as well, or even better than they did 25 years ago, he says.

"People tend to ignore the real rock 'n roll of the '70s...the Eagles, Led Zeppelin, Bob Seger. The average person never stopped listening to this music," he says. "BillBoard's Sound Scan, which tracks the popularity and sales of music, showed that Bob Seger was outselling new artists like Green Day and Pearl Jam. But no one really wants to talk about it."

Phil Peachock, owner of Kent's Spin More Records, agrees that '70s music is not any more or less popular now than it was back then. The classic rock favorites have stuck around, while disco periodically regains popularity.

"The Allman Brothers, Bob Seger, Lynyrd Skynyrd...is the real '70s rock to me. Those bands are the ones that are influencing groups like Pearl Jam, who claimed to have listened to Neil Young when they were kids.

The popularity of the distinctly '70s-sounding bands of the '90s, as well as the Grateful Dead, stems from the emphasis these bands place on live music, rather than the video music MTV popularized in the '80s, Mark Watt, an employee of Tela Ropa, explains. Tela Ropa, which remains enveloped in a cloud of sandalwood incense, is Kent's haven for hippies. The store offers customers a variety of Grateful Dead tie-dyed T-shirts and stickers, hand-knit wool sweaters and mittens, and of course, incense.

"The Grateful Dead and '70s-influence bands like Phish and Blues Traveler are so popular because of their live shows and the fact that they understand more about making music than about making music videos," Watt says.

However, the popularity of the Grateful Dead's music did not result from their stunning live shows alone, Daniel Greenberg, a sophomore secondary education major, says.

"From the Dead, we have learned that people can get together and share a common bond without money or success. We can share music. We can share food and beer and meet new people," he says.

Food and beer may unite the Deadheads, but the groovy funk and smooth looks of the buff, polyester-suited John Travolta unites disco lovers. Drescher says disco's popularity is easy to understand, especially for Kent State's bored, underage and financially-challenged students.

"The younger (college age) crowd wasn't here for the disco era and is now reliving it through disco parties. More and more clubs are having 18 and over cheapie disco nights," Drescher says. "Disco is something any group can do...There are some great tunes out there and there are some bad ones, but they're all easy to dance to and a lot of fun."

Brandon Andexler, an employee of Spin More Records, agrees that disco music is universally silly and fun. Disco collections are big sellers, he says.

"Our biggest seller is the 'Saturday Night Fever' album," Andexler says. "It's fun to listen

Didn't you hear? '70s stuff is back
to and think about how stupid everyone looked.”

However, Peachock, who grew up in the midst of the ‘60s Beatlemania, looks upon the disco subculture and its accompanying sounds with obvious distaste.

“Not many people over the age of 40 like it,” he says, grinning widely. “Disco was a big show. It was more an event than music. Everyone dressed up... and you had to have a certain pair of double-knits to be really cool. The best thing about disco was the ball.”

ARE WE LOOKING FOR MEANING IN POLYESTER?

Below the surface of the resurgence of simple ‘70s trends like bell bottoms, disco tunes and the Grateful Dead lies a greater hidden significance. Is all the emphasis that Generation X places on the ‘70s an indication of their desire to grasp the intangible qualities of the decade—the individualism, the youth social and protest movements and the ‘60s’ themes of peace and love?

Maybe not.

“Is there really a ‘70s resurgence? I hope not,” says Scott Hart, a senior mathematics major, his face stricken with a look of panic. “I just remember my house had this golden metallic wallpaper with black and orange bamboo painted on it... It was just so tacky. But the music was pretty good.”

“The ‘70s had its good and bad points. Good: Barry White. Bad: tacky wallpaper,” Hart says.

But people have to find something to obsess over, whether it be the ‘70s or the Grateful Dead, Andexler says.

“It’s not just disco or the ‘60s... There are always going to be people that are stuck in some era... Not everyone progresses at the same time.

However, Ecoporium’s Drescher envisions the ‘70s as more than just a fixation with groovy tunes and bad wallpaper. She sees no difference between the motivation of the people of the ‘70s and the people of the ‘90s to instigate change and make a difference.

“I don’t see any movement for world peace, no love-ins and no sit-ins. Basically, when it comes down to it, people are all talk. They may have good intentions or ideas, but nothing ever comes of it because they don’t stick with anything long enough to see an accomplishment come through or to watch it fail,” Drescher says.

“Many groups tried to organize recycling efforts in 1970, and 25 years later, people are still trying to do the same exact thing. There’s still a lot more we can do. People back then had good ideas, but where are they now? What did they do?”

Blewette thinks the most successful movement that has carried over to the ‘90s is the food co-op idea.

“People are very conscious of their health,” Blewette says. “It is a strong movement. Environmental awareness is also strong, as well as just a general awareness of all the different social movements that exist.”

Food co-ops, which got their start in the early ‘70s, were originally buying clubs for people who sought out lower-priced organic foods, says Ygraine Silverling, a member and volunteer for Kent Natural Foods Co-Op.

“It starts when someone begins buying the
natural food in wholesale bulk quantities," Silverling says. "It actually becomes a 'co-op' when the group of collective buyers acquire and open up a store. Lifetime membership to the co-op is open to anyone...With the membership, you actually own a piece of the co-op and can get discounts off of monthly purchases."

Silverling believes the movement to stay healthy and fit, which gained momentum through the food co-op idea of the '70s, will persist and gain strength in the future.

"In essence, this is connected to the environmental movement," she says. "People are concerned with their surroundings and what they are eating. Clean air and water are needed to produce natural foods... Everyone from hippies to populist, self-sufficient types to your standard yuppie types come in looking for special foods or herbs. This movement is not just limited to one type of person."

Besides the popularity of the health movement, Wells believes the '70s and '90s generations also share a movement toward greater sexual exploration.

"We celebrate our sexual freedoms just like they did," she says. "We are all exploring, in a sense, 'try'-sexuality. Bisexuality and homosexuality are definitely more accepted. These are the strides we've made since then."

However, despite the success of these specific movements, both generations are linked the two in an "all talk but no action attitude." This keeps members of Generation X from accomplishing goals that their '70s predecessors set, Drescher says.

"That's one thing I think the '80s generation never gets enough credit for — their hard work and motivation to achieve and succeed, although it was all for the wrong reasons: the money and the greed," she says.

The people who grew up during the '70s were motivated in an altogether different way, Greenberg says.

"There was no concrete, common thing to bring them together, so instead they searched for and accomplished inner self peace," Greenberg says. "They were motivated enough not to be influenced by money or to quickly condemn and condone others."

Blewette says the '70s were not all fun and games. Indeed, the generation's social movements and activism in local communities challenged society's way of looking at things, he says.

"Human nature is an expedient thing," he says. "Although some people were genuinely moved to become more aware and more socially active, most people of the '70s popularized and trivialized the movements. It wasn't so much fun. There was a lot of hypocrisy. Things were either black or white — 'I'll stay on my side and you stay on your own.'"

People just want to be singled out for their activism. It was glamorous and empowering to be defiant, just like today."

The '70s generation was not selfish, but individualistic — just as members of Generation X aspire to be, says Greenberg.

"Our generation has taken from the '70s the expression of freedom, individualism and nonconformity," he says. "They look for the things that best represent themselves." •

— Ali Cybulski is a sophomore magazine journalism major. This is her second contribution to The Burr.
Brewsky's, a seemingly run-of-the-mill bar, complete with flashing neon sign, drab exterior, three pool tables and one foosball table, offers plenty of room for the average 150 to 300 people who frequent it on any given weekend.

But Larry Smith, manager and DJ of Brewsky's Nightclub in Akron and funkadelic DJ Gary Blain have transformed this once Top-40 bar into a haven for those serious about their bell bottoms, extra large colors and, most importantly, their disco music. Larry says he started doing "Disco Night" at Thursday's Lounge, also in Akron, five years ago because that's what he listened to while he was growing up. "I still listen to this music, not for novelty purposes, but because I dig it," he says.

Every fourth Sunday fluorescent-colored flyers, announcing yet another '70s bash, and featuring John Travolta in hot disco moves, are mailed out. Those who have received their flier faithfully file into the club and willingly step back in time for a few hours. In fact, everyone gets down. Most find themselves donning huge polyester bell bottoms, frosted pink lipstick, severe electric blue eye shadow and, yes, even 10-inch high platform shoes.

Kent State sophomore Amy Antenora, a double major in art history and cultural anthropology, admits that itchy polyester, smooth vibes from the DJ and breaking a sweat on the disco floor make her feel alive.

Paul Merz, a junior interior design student and frequenter of "Disco Night" exclaims, "It's like one big polyester glitter-o-thonic, dance-o-rama paradise."

One-time manager and DJ of Ozeez, Larry acts as host to the 150 people who show up for the event, while his partner Gary helps in videotaping each jam-out session. The tapes are then compiled into one and played at future parties.

"We're willing to do parties anywhere. If people want a good party, we'll provide one for them," Larry says.

Brewsky's "Larry and Gary Disco Party" also passes out various trinkets and door prizes throughout the evening, including Chinese yo-yos, fake scars, mini-mirror ball key chains, magic eight balls and etch-a-sketches. The prizes are purchased through the "70s Preservation Society," which reissues the items that get passed out.

One contest consisted of a pair of size 12 platforms, Larry says.

"The shoes looked like Huggy Bear's from Starsky and Hutch," he says.

Jerry Smith, an Akron native and Larry's brother, clad in a sky blue double-knit shirt with matching bell bottoms says, "I'm serious about this. I was a little kid when my babysitters would come over in '70s clothes. This one actually wore clear plastic platforms with colored water that she put in the bottoms. Burn, baby burn, Disco Inferno..."

Along with the standard Budweiser, Michelob and Busch beers, Brewsky's boasts a list of over 120 brews, also including, Old Peculiar, Woodchuck Apple Cider, Anchor Steam, and Dragon Street from Jamaica. "And, admittedly they do add to my euphoric disco-dancing mood!" says Smith.

The mood is definitely euphoric and just plain fun. Those that sit and watch are outnumbered by those who participate. "Do the hustle!" mingles with the smoke in the air and hustlers groove out. Right On! •

—Melissa Henterley is a sophomore English major. This is her first contribution to The Burr.
Out of the blue, student journalist Keri Grubbs began fitness training. One month later, she paddled, pedaled and ran, completing her first triathlon.

Pushing herself to the Limit
Saturday, Sept. 29: Around 1:30 p.m., My sister, Teri, and I arrived at Morgan’s Livery near Cincinnati, got our canoe and set off with the intent to canoe six miles and then run the six miles back to the livery – just like we would for the first part of the race. It didn’t take us long to master the paddling on opposite sides and the general maneuvering of the canoe. But we could not control the boat. It was ridiculous.

The Little Miami is no raging river, and it hadn’t rained for a while so we kept getting stuck on rocks and spinning backwards. Then parts actually got rough and the water started moving fast over the rocks. We were miserable. We tried all possible canoeing methods: paddling close to the boat, long strokes, short strokes, everything. But all we did was zigzag across the river. We could not go straight.

Two men, who obviously knew what they were doing, passed us. We copied them paddling close to our canoe. But I kept smashing my fingers between the car and the boat. After 40 minutes, we saw a camp site on the right side of the river. A teepee and several canoes were on shore.

“Look, we’re done,” Teri said.

I knew this was too easy. She yelled to a kid on the shore and asked if this was the end.

“No,” he said. “It’s the 2 1/2 mile check point. Three and a half miles to go.”

Shortly after that discovery, we tipped our canoe and fell into the freezing, brown water. The canoe filled with water and was too heavy to pick up. We were in rushing water to our knees, arguing about what to do. Finally, we dumped the canoe and climbed back in. Soon we began looking for a bridge that marked the end of the course.

Near what we thought was the end, we started laughing and relaxed a little. We passed under the bridge and pulled the canoe onto the beach in front of the livery. A man came out and told us we were at the wrong livery, we still had to go around one more bend in the river to get to the right one. Then he looked at our boat.

“Do you know you have the wrong size canoe?” he said.

We didn’t say anything at first, but we had noticed that other people on the river had larger canoes than we did. “Oh,” my sister said.

We got back on the river and paddled until we reached the six-mile stop. We pulled our canoe out of the water around 3 p.m. We were wet and hungry, our life jackets covered in mud and sand, and waited for the van to come and haul the canoes back to the livery.

My arms, shoulders and back were aching, and my fingers were bruised, but I realized the hardest part of canoeing had nothing to do with my body.

Sunday, Oct. 1: It’s exactly one week until race day, and things are already looking better than yesterday. Teri and I got up this morning and drove the hour ride back to the livery. Today the weather was excellent, and so were we, because we had the right size canoe. We kneel in our boat, leaned forward and finally got a handle on this canoe thing. We were going so well I could hear the water hitting against the front of the canoe, separating and moving past us.

Teri noticed two snapping turtles perched on top of a tree branch sticking out of the water. We passed the 2 1/2 mile marker and a little river house where we saw two men fishing. The trees leaning over the river were turning gorgeous fall colors. The canoeing went so well, we decided to try running the six miles.

The first three miles of the run wound around farms and land. After a mile, we stopped to stretch. Then we ran two more, and noticed that the path had turned onto a bike trail that took us back to the livery. No mile markers stood on this new course, and we had trouble gauging how far we had run. I had trained on a track, so not knowing how far I had gone really messed me up.

My sister is stronger than I am, mentally and physically. She’s the type of person who fights through pain. I’m the type who stops when it hurts. Teri stayed with me during the practice run, and we talked about whether she would do the same at the race. A team’s time is based on both members’ performance, so the faster she went, the lower our time would be. We decided that since this was our first adventure of this kind, she would stay with me. We would concentrate on time during another race.

She talked me through our practice run, and I knew she could have gone a lot faster. But as we came out of the woods where the bike trail ended, I realized I had just canoed and run 12 miles. I actually was going to do this.

Tonight I drove more than four hours back to school. I wasn’t as tired as I thought I’d be. In fact, I felt pretty good. Driving back, I thought about how all of this started.

About a month ago, my best friend told me about the triathlon: six miles canoeing, six miles running and 19 miles biking. As soon as she said it, I knew I had to do it. I’m not sure why; maybe I’d seen too many Nike commercials. At the age of...
20, I still think of myself as an athlete because I used to play sports in high school, and I guess I just wanted to remind myself why.

**Thursday, Oct. 5:** I wasn’t able to work out as much this week. I drive home tomorrow for the race and I’m getting very nervous. I even started praying.

**Saturday, Oct. 7:** I’m still praying. Praying for a miracle. My mom made dinner tonight: pasta. My parents are more excited about this than Teri and me. In his typical fatherly fashion, my dad is going to video tape the race. I’m used to it, I guess. He’s taped everything I’ve ever done.

Tonight it’s early to bed. I have a feeling I won’t be able to sleep.

**Sunday, Oct. 8:** 6:30 a.m. Woke up and left the house at 7:30. I’m riding with Teri, and my parents are bringing the bikes in my mom’s minivan. Our start time is at 10:26 a.m. We are supposed to be there an hour and a half before starting time. Of course, we’re running a little late.

I am confident about the first part of the race, because I had seen and done it, but now I am worried about the last part: The last half mile is not going to be a simple jog to the bike trail. Instead, it will be a straight-up climb on a crude little trail to where our bikes will be waiting. Then it is 19 miles on the road. I hadn’t conditioned for this.

There were two things I noticed when my family and I arrived at the park: First, rows of almost 1,000 bicycles. Second, very few female racers.

There were plenty of all-male and co-ed teams, but almost no all-female teams. My sister noticed too, and her competitive nature immediately kicked in.

“I want to try and win this,” she said.

“No way,” I told her.

She didn’t care. I told her there was no way I could do that well on the run. We dropped it, but I knew there would be problems later.

‘**My sister** is stronger than I am, mentally and physically. She’s the type of person who fights through pain. I’m the type who stops when it hurts.’
Teri and I set up our bikes and made our way down the trail that led to the livery. We would have to run up the same trail at the end of the second six miles. I had trouble just walking down the trail. The only steps were roots and rocks.

We met our parents, who had driven down to the livery, and I pinned my number, 219, on my sweat shirt. The race was started in shifts. Every few minutes from 9 a.m. to noon, five teams set off in their canoes. As our race time approached, I started feeling very sick. "I'm nuts for doing this," I thought to myself.

Before I knew what was happening, it was 10:05 a.m. Teri and I chose our canoe and set it in the grass not far from where we would put it in the water. Then my mom and I went to the starting point and watched other races begin. A man holding a clipboard stood at the edge of the water while another yelled for the next group to get their canoes into position. "Five, four, three, two, one." They were off.

Twenty feet from the starting point, one canoe flipped and filled with water. The team fought the rushing current. Rain had poured for two straight days before the race, and the river was strong and rough. Eventually, though, the racers managed to right their canoe, and the next group was called to the water. Seventeen seconds later, another canoe flipped.

I started praying again. A large rock was in the middle of the river, and I made a mental note to avoid it.

I went back to where our canoe was, and Teri and I carried it to the top of the ramp where the canoes were put in the water. We were the next group to go. I felt panic, fear and excitement all at once.

We put our boat into the water. "Thirty seconds.

"Oh shit," was all I could think.

"Fifteen seconds," the man with the clipboard shouted.

"Five. Four. Three. Two. One." We were off.

All I could think about was the rock and the canoes that had flipped. I yelled to Teri, who sat at the back of the canoe, to go left of the rock. We paddled hard, my heart pounded, and we made it around the rock and started down the river.

We knew this river. We knew what to do, and we did it.

A few miles down river, I looked up and saw the road we would be running on. A woman was running there. I smiled and waved.

"If you have that much energy, you should be paddling harder," my sister said. I laughed.

We canoed hard, argued a little and passed the places that had become somewhat familiar. We passed the 2 1/2 mile checkpoint, the place where we had flipped. As we approached the last bridge, we saw our parents. I waved to my dad and his video camera. My sister just grumbled.

We pulled our canoe on to the sandy beach and rushed to change our wet shoes and socks. We took off running.

Until this point, the race had gone well. But my sister's desire to win the race had not subsided. I knew I couldn't do it. I tried to explain this to her, but she could only think of winning. So she ran ahead of me, urging me to catch up. I wanted to kill her.

I knew the run. I knew where the road curved and how much longer I had to go. I did fairly well until we hit the last leg of the course: the hill. I knew I would have to walk it. It was just too steep and too dangerous. I tried not to...
think about how far I had left to go. Halfway to
the top, I saw a man kneeling on the side of the
trail, his knees bloody from a nasty fall. By the
time I got there, a medic was already talking to
him.

Finally I made it to the steps at the top and
made my way to the bikes. Teri was in a big hurry.
I was starving, but I put on my helmet and mount­
ed my bike for the 19-mile ride, or about the dis­
tance from Kent to Akron.

The bike ride was through very quiet farm
country, and the day was clear. We rode constant­
ly. When we came to the first hill, I tried to stand
up on my pedals for more power. That’s when I
realized my legs were shaking. They gave out. I
couldn’t stand and pedal, so I just tried to keep
up my pace. My ankle cramped. But the road took
a welcome turn and dipped, and the miles went
by.

I had seen bikers competing in televised
marathons grab for paper cups of water from
crowds of people on either side of the road. I
really wanted to do that. I held my hand out to
the crowd and clutched for a cup. One was thrust
into my hand. It was great – even if I wasn’t really
thirsty.

We passed the various check points and
crossed overpasses that went over Interstate 71.
People waved and drove past. I saw horses and
huge bales of hay. Teri admitted that she was a
“little” tired. Somehow, we kept going and
reached a point where we could see the end of
the race about a half of a mile ahead. An extra
surge of my last bit energy helped me pedal
extremely hard and glide under the red-and-white
Finish sign.

Thirty-one miles in three hours and 17 min­
utes.

We were finished.

Monday, Oct. 9: As I look back on this race, I
realize that it wasn’t really about canoeing, run­
ning or biking. It was about the river, the road
and a goal. Yes, Teri and I argued. And yes, she
urged me to push even harder. But it was only
because she knew I was strong enough to handle
it. That’s one of the reasons I entered the race in
the first place. I knew she wouldn’t let me quit.

For me, the race was about me, my sister and
our family. The day will stay with me forever, cap­
tured in my diaries and on my father’s camera.

Keri Grubbs is a junior magazine major.
This is her first contribution to The Burr.
The slightly noisy, yet comfortable atmosphere of people talking over dinner with music playing in the background fit perfectly.

As the group waited for dinner to arrive, she talked proudly and profusely with a smile. She shared her life experiences and spoke in an eloquent and friendly manner, never stuttering or awkwardly pausing. Her light-brown eyes sparkled, and a happy aura surrounded her. Although she was sitting, her muscular 5-foot-6-inch frame stayed in constant motion, whether she was nodding her shoulder-length brown hair or emphasizing her speech with her hands.

Movement is her life—literally.

Terri Kent, a Kent State assistant professor in the School of Theatre and Dance, not only lives, but also teaches movement. It defines who the full-time actor, director, mother, teacher and wife is and what she does.

"It's the physical expression...the physical manifestation of feeling," she says. "(It's) the flow of energy. We all have our physical body language."

She has even developed her own method of movement, for which she received a grant this past summer from the University Teaching Council.

"I call it the 'Kent Method,'" she says, using her last name to identify it. "I've taken principles of three schools of thought and developed my own series of exercises, focusing on time, weight, focus and flow."

Terri says she is documenting her method and segments of it are being videotaped. In the future, she hopes videotapes can be used to teach her method on the regional campuses.

However, movement wasn't always easy for Terri. But it comes more easily to her now because she had to learn it step by step.

"If you struggled with math but spelling came really easy to you, it would be difficult for you to teach spelling," she says. "But math you'd be able to teach because you had to break it down to learn it. You understand where the students' struggle is with it. So that's what happened to me. I had to really study that process of acting, and I had very strong mentors along the way. I drew from my movement teachers. I became interested in the method of physical movement."

While Terri was working as a full-time professional actor, she performed between nine and 12 shows a week. She says it was necessary to develop a method of movement to make each performance realistic and keep the audience interested.

"You better have some technique," she says. "Technique comes through movement."

Terri used her movement techniques and methods this fall when she directed Theatre Kent's production of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest."

In "Cuckoo's Nest," which deals with patients in a mental institution looking for a way to escape and merge into the outside world, movement is very important.

"When we are dealing with these patients in 'Cuckoo's Nest,' and some of the chronics who have no lines at all, (the actors) are so creative within this strict structure of a wheelchair," she says.

Terri says working on movement with these limitations in a script is challenging, but this gives the student actors a chance to learn a great deal.

"I cast several students in the show against type," she says, referring to how she cast actors with strong, dominant movement in a role calling for a small, quick-stepped person, and vice versa.

"(I did it) so they would have the opportunity to work in a different venue, because this is educational theater. I don't want to take what they already know and showcase it. I want to take what they do well and broaden their spectrum so they're not just good for one type of role, but for hundreds of roles."

As director, Terri says her job was to pick a group of people to tell successfully the story of "Cuckoo's Nest," which is about an underdog being the savior.

Terri has helped create stories through movement in other parts of the world.

She received a Fulbright Grant, an international grant and one of the highest academic teaching awards, to travel to India. Terri says one of her mentors, who is an expert on Indian drama, sparked her interest in the country.

"I went to teach American culture through the arts," she says. "While I was over there I directed 'Macbeth' and 'Steel Magnolias,' which toured through Thailand.

"It's the farthest place away from home without travelling to the moon," she says. "It was one of the most interesting and rewarding experiences."

Her list of awards is even longer. Terri has won numerous awards for "best actress" as well as receiving at least six other grants from various organizations. She has guest lectured at workshops and served as a dance consultant and instructor for the MGM major motion picture, "It Runs in the Family."

The awards may recognize her accomplishments publically, but Terri's husband, Rohn Thomas, realized this on his own.

Rohn says Terri is an amazing person. He says she is an incredible teacher because she brings out the best in each person.

"From a knowledge point of view, she has a deep knowledge of what it takes to be a teacher," he said. "She is a wise person. She is insightful. She has a real ability to empathize with people."

Rohn teaches acting classes during some semesters at Kent State. He says he can work with a student for a couple years and then the student may open up. But Terri can work with a student for a full day, and she'll come home and say, "Did you know this about this person?"

"She has a magic ability to make people open up," Rohn says. "When I first met her, I said 'This is an amazing person.' She has a deep soul. When Terri touches someone, they become a part of our life."
Motivated

Theater professor Terri Kent emphasizes movement in both her life and career.
Rohn, who is constantly auditioning for parts and flying around the United States to perform in roles in which he has been cast, says Terri is also always on the go.

Terri and Rohn handle their busy schedules by “constantly scrambling,” Rohn says although it is challenging to balance three kids with their jobs, they manage because their family is important to them.

“I think that both of us are dedicated to...encouraging people in our business to have a family,” he says. “We think our children deepen our souls.”

Jeff Thomakos, a former acting and movement student of Terri’s, who is currently free-lance acting in Minneapolis, says he still keeps in touch with her.

“I continue to write to her,” he says. “And I speak to her about once a month.”

Thomakos, who graduated from the School of Theatre and Dance in 1994, says Terri is wise in her teaching. He also says she is a special kind of teacher.

“She’s pretty much a pioneer in the movement method she teaches,” he says. “When you see it work, it’s pretty amazing. She can take an actor of moderate talent and turn them into an awe-inspiring one. She would find students falling behind and make it her personal goal to help them succeed.

“She teaches everyone. Some teachers will pick out a few people and almost ignore the rest of the class. In order to be a good teacher, you have to want to teach your students. She’s tough, but nurturing.”

Terri also means a lot to students outside the classroom.

“From the first day I met her she has been there for me,” Thomakos says. “At first, I was kind of wary of her because she seemed to like everyone...because my nature is not to trust anyone. But then I realized that she finds something positive in everyone.

“She’s always been there for me — especially after I graduated. It’s a tough transition from being in the life of a college actor who’s cast in everything, to fighting for your life (to get a job) in New York City. She’s one of my favorite people.”

Senior theater major Michael John Shank agrees with Thomakos because Terri has also affected his life in a positive way.

“Terri has meant a lot to me because she’s the first person I met when I came to Kent,” Shank says. “She sort of took me under her wing and guided me. She was a mentor to me. She gave me advice when I needed it and was kind of lost here.”

Shank, who played the character of Bromden,
the chief, in “Cuckoo’s Nest,” says working with Terri on the production has improved his acting and movement abilities.

The character of Bromden has minimal lines in the script, so movement is important in his portrayal, Shank says. Terri has helped him strengthen his weak areas in movement.

“My natural body movements are sustained – slow, continuous, very fluid movements – and very strong and firm,” Shank says, referring to his 6-foot-4-inch frame. “We, as human beings, instinctively move in a certain way. She pushes us to move in all different ways. She’s very knowledgeable about movement.

“She knows our weaknesses and our strengths and tries to provide a balance to make us a better actor or actress. My first inclination when I thought of the character was to move in a way that looked like I was scared or cowering, and I was indicating through my movement how I was feeling. Terri suggested to me to make it more of an inner conflict and make the outward more stoic.”

Shank says sometimes there is more strength and power in remaining still as a method of movement.

Terri was particularly a good director for “Cuckoo’s Nest,” Shank says, because it is a very strong, physical play. He says it was “definitely an advantage having a movement professor direct the production.”

Shank says he also admires Terri’s honesty as a teacher and director.

“I think a lot of directors don’t get to the point,” he says. “They don’t want to hurt the actors’ feelings. They throw a note around here or there, but they don’t strip away what the actors are doing wrong so the actors continue on with a bad habit.

“The good thing about Terri is that she is very honest and straightforward, and she lets you know what you’re doing wrong so you can do it better. But at the same time, she does it in a congenial way.”

Terri’s instruction in the classroom and during “Cuckoo’s Nest,” has “opened a lot of doors,” Shank says.

“I definitely enjoyed this “Cuckoo” experience,” he says. “It definitely strengthened my movement. It has helped me as an actor. I know I have to unlearn a lot of things and learn a lot more. (Terri is) very precise in her teaching. It’s opening a lot of windows in my acting.”

—Tina Grady is a junior newspaper journalism major. This is her second contribution to The Burr.
he outside world does not exist when C.M. Shearer holds rehearsal with the KSU Chorale. Totally engrossed in the music, he does not look at the choir. Instead he focuses on what he hears, listening for excellence.

"A little louder," he says snapping his fingers while the choir sings Francis Poulenc's "O Magnum Mysterium," an obscure sounding piece with deep tones and frequent dynamic changes.

"Who's counting?" Shearer asks, still snapping. "Anybody counting?"

"Careful, basses, careful," he warns.

"Shh...no, no," Shearer cuts the choir off, stops and thinks for a moment.

"Folks, I love you, but I don't like what you're doing. You keep making the same mistakes."

Eyes peek from behind black choir folders and some faces blush with embarrassment, knowing they are being reprimanded.

"Use the brain. Don't just open your
mouth and let anything come out,” Shearer says, in a calm voice.

Shearer means business when it comes to rehearsals. Through a combination of thorough preparation, a heartfelt love of music and unflagging enthusiasm, he encourages students to appreciate great music and perform it like professionals. Such patience and determination has also won him students’ and faculty’s love and respect.

“Please accept and embrace the fact that we are not all smart musicians yet,” Shearer says. “We are smart musicians when we sing the right note.”

Again Shearer cues the choir, and their voices sound louder and more determined, but now strained.

“You sound like frogs because you’re so determined to get the notes right!” Shearer says, laughing.

Nan Uhlik, a friend and colleague of Shearer’s, sings in the Kent Chorus, which Shearer also conducts. Uhlik says the 5-foot-10-inch Shearer is always animated and full of energy at rehearsals and has a “distinguished air about him.”

Silvery-white hair, parted to the left side, stands out against Shearer’s crisp cranberry-colored blazer. The lines over his brow and the silver-framed glasses on his face are evidence of wisdom and character. Shearer’s hands seem delicate and kind. The laugh lines around his brown eyes suggest a playful sense of humor.

Shearer starts conducting again when he notices that one of his students is singing without his music, another doesn’t have her pencil and another has forgotten his folder.

“Don’t come to class without folders, pencils, music or brains—you can leave your voice if you want,” Shearer says, teasing.

“C.M. loves a good joke or a funny story, even when the joke is on him,” Uhlik says. “He has a wry sense of humor.”

Shearer is known to friends and family as C.M., which stands for Clarence Maynard. He prefers C.M.

“The C.M.s have been in our family for several generations. My son is a C.M. He likes the idea of calling himself C.M. the Fourth,” Shearer says.

Conducting the KSU Chorale is just one of Shearer’s duties as director of Choral Activities. He also oversees the five vocal ensembles that make up the KSU Chorale Program. Shearer conducts three of the five ensembles, including the KSU Chorale, a group of 30 to 35 members; the Kent Chorus, a community choir made up of students, educators and residents; and the Ars Nova Singers, a group of seven distinguished singers.

Shearer is entering his 10th year as the director of Choral Activities. Before he came to Kent, he worked as the director of choral activities for the University of Nebraska at Omaha. But he wanted a change.

“I felt like it was time to look for other teaching options with opportunities to teach grad students, so I came to Kent,” Shearer says.

Throughout his professional career, Shearer has composed more than 90 published choral compositions, many of which include several pieces used for state-wide, sight-singing competitions. He has also prepared orchestras and choruses for noted composers such as Alberto Ginastera, David Ward-Steinman and Krystof Penderecki.

“One of the concerts that stand out most in my mind was that of Krystof Penderecki’s ‘Dies Irae: Oratorio of those who died in Auschwitz.’ It is extremely difficult, but it is an effective piece of music,” Shearer says.

The chorus doesn’t just sing in this piece, but whistles and shouts, he says. The chords clash with harmonies that range from thick and dissonant to simple and consonant. “Dies Irae” depicts a scene of a devil rising from the bowels of the earth, musically describing Hitler’s rise to power. The piece also illustrates the death scenes from concentration camps.

Other pieces that Shearer has helped conduct in recent years include Beethoven’s “Ninth Symphony,” performed with the Ashland Symphony in the spring of 1995 and Carl Orff’s “Carmina Burana,” performed in the spring of 1994 in the ballroom.

“Carmina is very popular because it’s rhythmical and fun to sing. The text is actually graffiti that was written in a monastery by monks in the province of Burana,” Shearer says.

He says the monks were writing fictitious stories about drinking scenes where men would talk graphically about the beauty of the female figure.

Shearer also loves Beethoven’s “Ninth Symphony.”

“People who are not prone to listen to classical music are attracted to Beethoven’s ‘Ninth Symphony,’” he says.

story by katie o’keefe
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Shearer says since there is no choral text until the work's last movement, "Ode to Joy," the singers are bubbling with anticipation when they finally get to sing.

"Both are dramatic pieces and it's always a thrill to perform with good music," he says.

Shearer's musical inspirations are Howard Swan, who is a well-known choral conductor in his 90s, and one of Swan's students, Robert Shaw.

Both have influenced Shearer's rehearsal techniques and writings, he says.

Shearer was born in Oklahoma in 1940, but grew up in the Texas panhandle in the town of Borger. Music has been a major part of his life ever since he was a child.

"My family listened to music constantly," Shearer says. We had a tremendous record collection. Mainly of what would be considered classical music. My parents still have it."

When he was in the third grade, Shearer won a first-place ribbon for singing a popular song in the talent show - even today he remembers the lyrics.

"I'm gonna buy a paper doll I can call my own, a doll that other fellows cannot steal, and those flirty, flirty guys with those flirty, flirty eyes," he pauses to remember the rest of the song. "Will have to flirt with dollies that are real."

Today, Shearer's repertoire is more sophisticated, and more politically correct.

"I would never do a song like that today because I'd get nailed to the wall...It's the dolly thing," Shearer says.

Shearer actually grew up playing the trumpet, but in college he became more interested in choral music.

"I decided that I would much rather spend my professional career conducting choral music than orchestral music," he says.

It was while attending North Texas State University for his bachelor's and master's degrees that Shearer met his wife Barbara.

"We were in a government class together and we probably made the instructor's eyes roll"
because we played silly little flirting games all through class," he says.

Shearer and his wife have been married for 32 years and have two children, Deborah and Christopher Mark (C.M.), and three grandchildren.

Although the 55-year-old Shearer says music takes up a lot of his time, he still enjoys many hobbies.

"I think you should work hard and then play hard," Shearer says.

He enjoys amateur radio operating and woodworking. Shearer says he and his wife are avid bicyclists.

"We put in, normally, 2,000 miles a year. We enjoy long-distance rides of about 50 to 100 miles a day," he says.

Jody Brown, a junior speech pathology major and an alto in the KSU Chorale, says she remembers Shearer for his analogies and philosophical lecturers. She likes his swan analogy the most.

"He told us how the swan struggles beneath the water, paddling and really working hard, but only the bird's elegance is seen," Brown says. "He says we need to show this when we perform, so that our audience only sees our gracefulness."

Shearer strives to expose his students to beautiful music so they might grow to appreciate and love it.

"When we sing something of greatness by a well-established composer, I show them why it's a great piece and then leave it up to them to appreciate the music," he says.

Edward Grimes, one of Shearer's graduate assistants this semester, has known Shearer for five years.

"Dr. Shearer stresses that anything of quality is worth working for. If it's art, then it is worth appreciating," Grimes says.

-Katie O'Keefe is a sophomore news journalism major. This is her first contribution to The Burr.
But what does the pet do when the student's away?

The four-legged half 'speaks out' about missing students when school is in session

story by andi lucas

Here I am. Sitting in my favorite spot – the far left corner of the brown couch, resting my head on the soft cushion. As I gaze out the window at the squirrels playing in the yard, I hear Mom pick up the phone. She dials an 11-digit number and then says, "Hi, honey!" I'm not even affected by the squirrels coming up to the window, teasing me, because I know she's on the phone with Sarah. Mom talks to her for a while and then she finally puts me on the phone. I can hear Sarah's voice and since I can't really speak her language, I lick the phone. Everyone laughs, but really, I miss Sarah.

Meet Cheyenne, a 2-year-old Husky/German Shepherd mix dog, pet and friend of Sarah Terchek. And now, put yourself in this situation: pet and girl bond, girl goes off to school, girl feels lonely.

But a question that is rarely, if ever, asked is, "How does the pet feel?" Well, after having conversations with five cats, three dogs, a steer and a guinea pig, I've got the answer: Pets have feelings, and they miss their students, too.

The Ice Cream Lover

I was a small, 7-week-old puppy when the Tercheks paid $10 for me at a house on Varoom Road. Now I'm 2 years old and I weigh almost 50 pounds – I'm a big, white, soft, furry dog. I'm super-duper friendly. I like to go shopping with the family, but only on one condition: I lick everyone who walks by me. And if someone doesn't pet me, I'll cry.

I cry even now, though, but that's because I miss Sarah. She's at school, so I only get to see her about twice a month. When she's at home, here in Eastlake, she takes me to the park and lets me off my leash. Then I get to run around and chase the deer. I get to sleep with Sarah, too, when she's home. I like to be close to her; she says I'm always under her feet.

So when she's gone, I just have to make do. Mom helps me get through the weeks by giving me my favorite treat each night before I go to sleep: a big bowl of "Puppy Paws Ice Cream" smothered in Hershey's chocolate syrup. I also like to eat apples, raw potatoes, onions, carrots and regular dog food, but please don't give me any green peppers. I hate 'em.

I love to run, but I think it gets me into trouble. Last time Sarah was home, she let me out at night. I was busy chasing deer and I forgot about
the time. After an hour and a half, she came looking for me; I think she was a little scared. But I didn't want to come in yet. So I let my white fur blend in with the snow, hoping I could run more. She caught me and made me come inside. But that's OK; I got to spend time with Sarah. I sure do miss her.

Sarah Terchek is a senior special education major. Sometimes she wants Cheyenne's company so much that she lets her pet visit on the weekends.

Free Willy: The Sequel

I'm Willy. Even though I'm only 15 months old, I weigh 700 pounds. But I guess that's an acceptable weight for me, because I'm a steer. And yes, I'll admit it, I can be a bit temperamental at times. But maybe that's just because I miss Cindy. She's one of my owners who goes to school now. She only comes home to visit once or twice a month, so the rest of the time I spend with Mom, Dad, Brother and Sister Messenger in Waterford, Pa. We all live on a little farm/ranch, but I stay in a little barn, where I've lived since I was born.

I love to be touched, but just not on my nose. Don't even try it, because I'll throw up my head and try to hit you. I also love to eat — did the weight give it away? Every day, twice a day, I eat a mixture of oats, corn, wheat and hay. But sometimes, when I was really good, Cindy would give me dried molasses, and I'd eat it right out of her hand.

But I don't think I'll be getting any treats anytime soon. A while ago, I broke out of my pen, ran across the street and into the woods. It was great. I got to run loose in the snow for more than two hours. Dad and Brother, who were chasing me, used a lasso at one point to catch me, but I escaped from it. They finally caught me about a half mile away from the house. I don't think they were too pleased. Hey, I was just trying to go find Cindy, I miss her.

Cindy Messenger is a freshman nursing major. In between school and a job, she misses Willy, too.

Peanut on a Leash

Cathy picked me out of a whole group of guinea pigs at the local pet store. When she first got me, I was really tiny — I think that's why she named me Peanut. But now I've gotten a lot bigger, and my brown and white fur is barely hiding my gut.

I'm 2 1/2 years old, and this is the first time Cathy and I have ever been separated. She used to have me in her dorm room, but I made too much noise. See, she has me trained to squeal when the refrigerator door opens so that she'll give me carrots, alfalfa, lettuce and celery. But my squeaking became too loud, and she had to take me back home to North Ridgeville, where I live with Mom and Dad. I only get to see her about twice a month and I really miss the things we used to do: She would take me out of my cage and put me on a leash so that I could roam around the room. My favorite spot to go was underneath the futon.

I know Cathy thinks I'm a real stinker. I'm pretty demanding when it comes to getting treats (I like the honey-dipped seeds she gives me). And I'm pretty picky about having a clean cage. Cathy needs to clean it about twice a week, so when it's dirty, I really let her know: I climb on top of my food bowl and nudge the top off of my cage.

I'm also pretty picky about where she puts my food and water bowls. If my food bowl isn't in the

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right corner and my water bowl isn’t in the middle of the cage, I’ll knock them both over. And yes, I do have a crystal water bowl because I refuse to drink from a water bottle.

But other than my little quirks, I think I’m a good pet. I only do the crazy little things I do to let Cathy know I care, and I do care. I really miss her.

Cathy Bakalar is a junior business management major. She cares about Peanut and really wishes she could always be with her.

Bathing Beauties

Cookie, Bosko, Cricket, Butler and I all agree that 2 1/2 months is way too long to go without a visit. I know people say that cats really don’t care if their owners live or die, but we do, and we care that we haven’t seen Holly in that long. Holly is our owner, who’s now studying at school, and we miss her. Since she’s gone, we still live at home with Mom, Dad and Brother in Maumee.

I’m Sally, a classic tabby cat with gray and black stripes, white feet and a white tummy. I’m pretty small for my age (8 years old); I only weigh 11 pounds. Dad picked me up at an animal shelter when I was 2 years old, and I’ve been with the Hartlerodes ever since.

I think between the five of us, I miss Holly the most. She’s a really good companion. Mom tells me that she has pictures of me all over her room at school. Actually, Holly tells me that when she calls — Mom puts me on the phone and I purr into it. When Holly is home, I hang out with her whenever I can, whether she’s studying, watching TV or in the bathtub. Now that she’s gone, I still sleep in her room on the bed, but it’s not the same. When I kick around her emery boards, playing with and eating them, I can feel her absence. I really miss her.

Holly Hartlerode is a sophomore history major and on cold winter nights, she longs to be with Sally, too.

The Shadow and Mo Tale

The Musick family has had both of us since we were puppies. I’m Mo, a 2 1/2 year-old, all-white German Shepherd. Shadow is only 1 year old and she’s an all-black German Shepherd.

We live in Dayton, with Mom and Dad, but we miss Dan — we only see him about once a month. We’re both pretty big dogs (I weigh 65 pounds and Shadow weighs 90 pounds), and even though we wrestle with each other, we really miss wrestling with Dan; he lets us gnaw on his arm. Whenever he’s home, he takes us out in the backyard and throws the ball around with us. He also plays with us with our favorite toy — the tug rope.

Shadow and I both have huge tails. We know it gets annoying when we get excited, because we tend to knock things over. And Shadow does have an irritating little habit of waking up early in the morning, not letting anyone sleep. And since she sleeps in Dan’s room, I’ll bet he gets frustrated.

He probably does with me, too, because I tend to lick everything in sight, including Dan’s pant leg. But, we know these things can’t be too bad. Shadow and I agree that we both really miss him and we know Dan misses us.

Dan Musick is a junior elementary education student. And, yes, he really does miss Shadow and Mo, too.

—Andi Lucas is a senior magazine journalism major. This is her second contribution to The Burr.

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RELATIONSHIPS
STUDENTS USE MODERN TECHNOLOGY

story by sarah tascone

photography by jeff camarati
The summer thriller “The Net” opens with Sandra Bullock’s doomed hacker-heroine exchanging intimacies with strange men after midnight in her dark, pizza-box littered room. A “Saturday Night Live” sketch has a nerdy Chris Elliot in pajamas naively responding to obscene questions from various deranged hackers.

Popular images seem to place the Internet within the realm of public restroom graffiti and sleazy singles bars. It is the last refuge for lonely, desperate people who fear true intimacy—on worse, a shadow screen for the deceitful and even criminal.

A few regulars on the Net say it’s more like a friendly chat with guests in your own living room, with some intriguing advantages.

“It’s real close to them really being there,” says Sheri Wild, a general studies major who has been talking daily on Internet Relay Chat for two years. Wild, a divorced mother of two, uses IRC mostly to meet men, but also tries to start friendships with other women.

“Most of the people I meet are really nice,” she says.

Tapendra Sinha, a lab consultant at Kent State Computer Services, says the Net is “just like being there with these people.”

“It’s like a big room with a lot of people talking,” he says.

To Sinha, the Net is a place to exchange ideas and keep contact with his native Bengal through a Bengali-topics news group.

He regularly logs on to various news groups focusing on subjects such as philosophy, religion, politics and art.

“I think it is good because it makes people more aware of other things,” Sinha says. “There are individuals who are so well-versed in topics. I learn a lot from these people. After a while, no one knows who started the discussion and it goes on and on.”

Brian Siewiorek, a senior radio broadcast major, enjoys the inter-cultural exchange the Net makes possible.

“You get acquainted with people you wouldn’t ordinarily meet,” he says.

Siewiorek just started corresponding with someone from Quebec on “The Good Son” mailing list, which features rock musician Nick Cave and related subjects.

“I just started talking to this guy and we start-
ed trading things through the mail. Now it’s on a day-to-day basis.”

One person Sinha enjoys conversing with is a Bengali author who writes from Boston University. Sinha says his non-dogmatic views are refreshing in the news groups, which are sometimes unwittingly turned into a soapbox for loud-mouths.

“He writes really well—poetry, prose, both in English and Bengali,” Sinha says. “His writings are non-issue based. People try to argue with him. Just by his logical questions he leads them to a blind end and the argument stops.”

Sinha has never met any of the “regulars” he converses with, but he says he feels like he knows them.

“You get a real sense of someone’s character after reading their viewpoints several times.”

But Siewiarek says there are barriers to getting to know people on the Net.

“Personality is hard to pick up sometimes,” he says. “I write really informal, and people probably get a different impression of me than I really am. I can get a little idea of what someone is like, but not get really in-depth.”

Strong personalities, according to Sinha, are what become distinctive on the Net.

“There are many different personalities. Some are aggressive, while others are more non-sexual oriented lines.

“There’s always idiots, but there are in real life. It is kind of hard because you can’t make them leave.”

She is against censorship, but warns to keep children away from the computer. Her kids aren’t allowed to use the Internet at all.

Harder-to-detect bugs are married men who try to pick up single women, she says.

“They always ‘fess up right before you meet them,” Wild says.

There are some ways to detect “scammers,” like printing out copies of everything they send you to check back for discrepancies. Local nets are the best bet, she says, because people are less likely to lie, knowing they might actually meet you.

Now Wild sticks to the locals because she has been disappointed about being unable to meet someone she has become interested in.

Wild believes the dating game is more safely played on the Net. Women have the advantage of “screening” and men the advantage of safely revealing personal things.

“They (men) really seem to open up on there,” Wild says. “They tell you things they wouldn’t ordinarily tell you. They always want to meet you right away, but you can hold them off. You get to know them a little before you meet
them."

On the other hand, Wild is disappointed that other women have not wanted to form friendships with her because they are only interested in meeting men.

A more traditional matchmaking takes place on the Bengali and Indian Nets. Sinha points to a matrimonial announcement on the screen – a man seeking a mate for his sister, whom he describes as “an attractive, intelligent woman seeking her PhD.”

American men will sometimes seek Indian brides. A female friend in Oregon asked Sinha to make an announcement for her to find an Indian husband.

“I don’t know what happened with that,” he says, laughing.

Occasional Net surfer Terry Maynard says people should have realistic expectations about relationships formed through a computer.

“Typing on a keyboard is a lot different from talking to someone in person,” says Maynard, who is a graduate student in psychology. “It encourages a sense of fantasy about who this person is.”

Wild says she often gets together with people in person, and is rarely surprised by what she finds.

“I’ve never met anyone who tried to pretend something they weren’t,” she says. “Most people I met were pretty much what they said they were.”

One such meeting was disappointing, though. The man lived in southern Ohio, and she knew she wanted more than a friendship, but couldn’t.

When Wild’s children saw a commercial for the movie “The Net,” they teased her, “That’s you Mommy!”

Wild says the disguised names the criminals used in the movie and the villain’s easy access to the heroine’s personal records were plausible, but the only real danger is in overdoing it.

Wild started out surfing for three or four hours a day, but now she limits herself to 15 minutes just to check in with the friends she’s made. The potential dangers make other surfers cautious.

– Sarah Tascone is a senior magazine journalism major. This her second contribution to The Burr.
Lydia Gamble, a staff manager at the periodicals center in the Kent State University Library, is involved with the few newsgroups time allows her but does not use any personal identification. She says she's not an expert, but the experience she has had makes her tread carefully.

"Having personally talked with hackers, I'd say 'Yes, there is a danger.' If I'm surfing and I get something that asks for my name, I say 'no.'" Gamble says on the Net, and finds out anything about you with only a little information. People she has talked with say they knew ways to create drop boxes in someone else's name.

Accessing confidential files, she says, might be easier than it would seem. Some students she was of the earlier part of the century have broken down and people are spinning somewhat in their own orbits," Maynard says.

"This is kind of sticky, but I think it has been fostered by the progress of our culture," he says. "Everyone wants closeness. It's difficult with the fast pace of our society to develop relationships. When you send something into the mist and something comes back to you, it's tremendously validating."
Even before I walked through the door of the King-Kennedy Community Center, I could hear the excited chatter and carefree giggles of the children inside. It only took a few seconds for the 3 and 4-year-olds to adjust to a new face. Within my first five minutes in the room, I had quickly become the center of attention. A little girl named Morgan grabbed my hand and attempted to pull me toward the bookshelves, which were overflowing with such classics as Dr. Seuss and The Berenstein Bears. I picked one randomly off the stack, but I had only read three words when four other stories were pushed eagerly into my hands.

"Read this one now."
"No, this one's next!"

Laughing, I glanced around. Besides the four who struggled to sit as close to me as possible, five other children roamed around the two main rooms of the center. Some quietly played house, using the Little Tikes kitchen as a springboard for their vivid imaginations. The others displayed more energy, not to mention vocal capabilities, as they raced after a bright yellow ball. Sandra McKinney and Tina Dukes, the director and assistant director of the center respectively, looked on with amusement. They have grown accustomed to the almost overwhelming enthusiasm of their pupils.

Every Friday, the center opens its doors to area children. The Tiny Tots program offers structured activities, such as arts and crafts, to prepare participants for the rigors of kindergarten. But the program's main purpose is to give the children plenty of time to play. When asked what he likes best about coming to the center, 5-year-old...
Neiman instantly pointed to the wooden swing set outside. The center’s playground is a favorite place of many of the neighborhood’s youngest residents, who spend their after-school hours taking turns on the swings, sliding down the sliding board and climbing the monkey bars.

Sitting in the midst of the excitement, I had trouble reminding myself that these children come from some of the poorest homes in Portage County. I had driven to the center to study the conditions of this community, but after a glance, I could tell the neighborhood’s “poor” reputation was hiding a wealth that other communities could never even afford to buy.

The brightly painted sign on the corner of Garfield and Winfield streets declares, “McElrath Community: We’re on the rise too.” These seven words capture the spirit of a neighborhood many Portage County residents would prefer to ignore. Lacking traditional street signs, the narrow roads wind and curve through the densely wooded lots, almost turning the area into a maze. I drove slowly past old, abandoned shacks that seem on the verge of crumbling to the ground. But while the majority of the residences are undeniably modest, I immediately sensed that the owners have tried to make the most of what little they have to work with. The peeling paint and cluttered lawns testify that hard times continue to challenge the community, yet hand-painted mailboxes and decorated porches reveal the determination of some residents to rise above these obstacles.

In the early 1970s, the McElrath Community was widely considered to be one of the worst rural ghettos in the United States. In order to combat the dismal conditions, community members formed the McElrath Improvement Corp. By working with the Ohio Health Department, environmental groups and county prosecutors, the group initiated the transformation of what used to be a hazardous waste site. Although some areas still lack water and sewage facilities, the MIC’s efforts have not only improved the neighborhood’s living conditions, but also have promoted community pride.

Converted from a plantation in the early 1900s, the McElrath neighborhood has experienced a history filled with difficulties, including an ongoing
battling with people who illegally use the area as a trash dump. The land was once occupied by about 500 people, but is now dominated by empty lots. As hardship forced most residents to leave the area, their small houses remained to testify to their misfortune. Years passed and the decaying houses were cleared from the lots, making room for the grass and trees that thrive in their place. The neighborhood is currently home to around 40 families.

"(McElrath) is almost like a family – we help each other out," says Dukes, assistant director of the center and neighborhood resident.

This bond among the residents also has an element of necessity. McKinney estimates that about 75 percent of the residents are unemployed, a number that has prompted the center to post job openings available in the area. With poverty levels increasing and governmental aid such as welfare diminishing, the McElrath Community needs all the help it can get. The center has become a keystone of support.

Lenora Bruster and Linda Powell are two sisters who have grown up there. Remembering their positive experiences with the organization, the sisters continue the family tradition of involvement by bringing their children to the center’s activities. As a single mother of six children, all under the age of 8, Bruster is quick to express her reliance on the center.

"My sister and I bring our kids here for all of the events," she says. "It is great for them, and me."

Powell also acknowledges the benefits provided by the center. Three of her five children attend the Tiny Tots program each week. Powell knows her children are in great hands, especially since one of the regular volunteers is her mother. Mrs. Bruster has lived in McElrath for almost 30 years.

"I’ve been coming down here since the day it opened," Mrs. Bruster says. "We all know each other. Our children grew up together and now the grandchildren will grow up together."

This intimacy is the most striking aspect of the McElrath Community, which the King-Kennedy Center fosters and strengthens. While residents may not be in the best financial situations, they can count on their neighbors and the center to help at any time. The center has become a home away from home for people who are related by blood as well as friendship. Unfortunately, many people do not get the chance to witness the close interaction which takes place inside McElrath.

Instead they focus their attention on the neighborhood’s run-down exterior.

The remarkable camaraderie is only a side effect of the center’s original mission. Funded primarily by the United Way, Kent State University and with the help of a local church that mortgaged its building, the center was created by the McElrath Improvement Corp. to provide aid to the impoverished Ravenna neighborhood. The center is one of the largest social service projects started by university students in the United States. Not only do residents depend on the center for preschool sessions, but also for numerous services that the non-profit center provides, including free hot lunches, medical check ups by a visiting nurse, tutoring sessions and an exercise group. The center has become the site of a new 4-H group, SWAP (Senior Worker Action Program) and a Girl Scout Daisy troop. Yet the center’s value extends far beyond these basic programs and now encompasses the entire lives of those who use it.

Residents of the community are careful not to take the center for granted. After an arsonist set fire to the building in November 1993, the center was faced with more than $90,000 in damages. Most services were either discontinued or cut back during the 15-month reconstruction process.  "We were devastated," McKinney says. "Not only devastated, but shocked. Who could do such a thing?"

Despite financial setbacks, the center picked up the pieces and proudly opened the doors to its brand new building on Feb. 5, 1995.

McKinney’s hopes for further expansion are well justified, because right now the center has its hands full. The room resounds with the shouts of nine energetic preschoolers, a ringing phone and the futile attempts of the teachers to restore some order. People walk in to check on their children, to catch up with friends or to just pass some time in the friendly atmosphere. The center is, without a doubt, the heart and soul of a very special neighborhood.

When the time came for me to return to the familiar comforts of Kent State, I was bombarded with invitations to stay for a lunch of noodle soup, grilled cheese sandwiches and apple juice. The group of 4-year-olds had trouble understanding why I would attend a boring lecture rather than stay and color with them. I even had trouble convincing myself. As I headed toward the doors, a small voice called me back.

"You’re coming back next time, right?"

With a smile, I told the little boy the honest truth.

"I certainly hope so.” •

– Erika Germer is a sophomore magazine journalism major. This is her first contribution to The Burr.
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