

## The Convivial Generation: Sagas and Solidarity Among the Kalamazoo College Faculty in the 1950s and '60s

by Robert Stauffer, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Sociology



Some time ago I read Burton Clark's *The Distinctive College*, a wonderful book about why some colleges stand out in the American educational landscape. The key, Clark sought to demonstrate, was the presence of a strong, compelling, and shared identity, rooted in a story through which the college understands its special purpose and meaning. Clark called this an "institutional saga," by which he meant a "historically based, somewhat

embellished understanding of a unique historical development. It offers in the present a particular definition of the organization as a whole and suggests common characteristics of members." This saga, he continues, involves "the capturing of allegiance, the committing of staff to the institution. Emotion is invested to the point where many participants significantly define themselves by the central theme of the organization," and "this deep emotional investment binds participants as comrades in a cause. Indications of an organizational saga are pride and exaggeration; the most telling symptom is an intense sense of the unique." (Clark, 234-35).

In the years hence, I've spent a lot of time thinking about the relevance of this notion to Kalamazoo College. Do we have or have we had our own saga and if so, what is, or has been, the "unifying theme"? In search of answers, I've studied all the published histories of the college, including Marlene Crandell Francis' fine recent book; I've carefully examined a century's worth of *Boiling Pots*, scores of *Index* articles, and numerous documents and catalogues in the college archives; and I've reflected endlessly on my own 35 years at the college. But most relevant for this paper, I have conducted, with the assistance of Media Producer and Instructor Dhera Strauss, videotaped interviews with 24 (mainly) emeriti faculty members who first came to the college before 1970.

What have I learned? First, we at least *had* a saga rooted in the idea and ideals of "A Fellowship in Learning." This phrase and the social and physical expression of it were the work of Allan Hoben, president of the college between 1922 and 1935. At the core of Hoben's vision was a closely bound community of students and faculty, one in which teaching and learning were shaped by and occurred within a context of personalized relationships and mutual regard. A shared commitment to scholarship was central, such that students would absorb "the scholar's spirit," as well as the sense that the end of such learning was "purposeful living" exemplified through service to "human welfare." But also central was a devotion to the college community itself, on the part of both students and faculty, such that relationships—and the attendant learning—transcended the classroom, with faculty deeply engaged in campus life and students welcomed into

faculty homes. This vision was informed, certainly for Hoben but no doubt at the time for most faculty and students as well, by Christianity. Yet it is clear from Hoben's various statements that his was a particularly inclusive, activist, and "liberal" Christianity, rooted generally in the non-prescriptive theology of the northern branch of the Baptist church and specifically in the then prevalent "social gospel" movement in which Hoben had been immersed through his doctoral studies and teaching at the University of Chicago.

Based on language regularly used in the *Boiling Pots* from the mid-20s until the early 1950s, the Fellowship in Learning was a unifying idea, at least for the student writers, and in an earlier paper, I've provided many examples of this. (See Stauffer, "Cooking Up Sagas—and Not") But we also know from the remarkable retrospective interview with Frances Diebold, hired by Hoben in 1923 and remaining an active faculty member until 1967, how deeply significant this idea was for at least one of the college's most dedicated and respected faculty members. (See Csete in Griffin, ed., *Emancipated Spirits*). It is not unreasonable to assume that her attachment to this ideal was shared by other long-serving faculty hired during or not long after Hoben's presidency. For decades, many of them not only lived—but also held seminars and hosted teas—in the Grove Houses created by Hoben precisely to facilitate his Fellowship in Learning.

But did *this* saga last? Marlene Francis, by titling her new history of the college *A Fellowship in Learning: Kalamazoo College, 1833-2008*, suggests not only that it did last, at least in spirit, but that the spirit the ideal embodied actually preexisted the phrase. While in some respects I'm inclined to agree, I think the matter is somewhat more complicated, at least with regard to the college after the 1950s, and it is to this that the remainder of this paper is devoted.

Weimer Hicks assumed the presidency of the college in January of 1954, following several flawed presidencies, declining enrollment, and a weakening financial position. Under his leadership, however, and with the substantial involvement of the then recently appointed board of trustees chair, Richard U. Light, and a remarkably creative new English professor and then faculty dean, Larry Barrett, the college did an amazing about face. Enrollment increased quickly over the next several years (this due only in part to improved demography); a sustained period of faculty hiring (whether as replacements or new additions) commenced; the endowment grew; and, based largely on the college's success in "producing" future doctoral recipients in the sciences (itself a legacy of the Hoben years), the institution was declared by the *Chicago Tribune* in 1957 as the 9<sup>th</sup> best coeducational liberal arts college in the nation.

But of course something even more significant was on the horizon: the *K Plan*. One of the key features of the plan was the four-quarter (as opposed to a two-semester) calendar,



which allowed the college to expand enrollment without extensive expansion of facilities and faculty. Indeed, the components we usually associate with the plan—career service, foreign study, and the Senior Individualized Project—were at least in part developed to make this calendar work by providing meaningful off-campus experiences during the new fall, winter, or spring quarters, depending on one’s class, with sophomores and juniors on campus during the summer quarter. While the impetus for the new plan came primarily from board chair Light, who sought both efficiency of operation and the educational benefits of foreign study, and from President Hicks’ desire for a fresh, distinctive way to promote the college, the overall nature and rationale of the plan were developed by Barrett and the educational policies committee working (and lobbying fellow faculty) through the summer of 1960. By the fall of that year, the plan’s basic structure was overwhelmingly approved by the faculty (the vote was 44 to 4!), and phased implementation began the following year. The *K Plan* was born, as was the potential for a new saga. Was this potential realized? And to the extent that it was, what happened to “A Fellowship in Learning”?

I think it is useful to distinguish between students and faculty in exploring these questions, and, as mentioned above, I devoted an earlier paper—based primarily on my review of the *Boiling Pot* language, format, and pictures—to changes in student representations of the college. In that paper, I concluded that the plan *did* seem to contribute to a new saga for students, particularly in its first decade or two. But for a long while, the plan was described as the Quarter System, suggesting that what students found most distinctive was the year-round calendar; and with regard to the component parts of the plans, Foreign Study (as it was called throughout the first decades) clearly was considered the most significant. Moreover, the “Fellowship in Learning” language, which already was disappearing in the 1950s, was virtually absent in the *Boiling Pots* throughout the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



In this paper, I want to direct my lens to the faculty, who are plausibly the most important implementers, celebrants, and custodians of a college saga, and it was particularly for this reason that I interviewed those who were here at the creation and/or during the early years of the *K Plan* (through the 1960s). I decided to limit the interviewees to those who remained at the college throughout their careers so that I could learn more about their perceptions of the *K Plan* over the long run, and I also, with one exception, limited the pool to those who were still residing in the Kalamazoo area. All but one of the interviewees (John Wickstrom, arriving in 1966) are currently retired, and two (Walter Waring and Allen Buskirk, arriving in 1949 and 1953, respectively) are now deceased. Others interviewed, along with the date of their first year at the college, were Ada (Tish)

Loveless ('53), Harold Harris ('54), Richard Stavig ('55), Jean Calloway ('60), Richard Means ('61), Joe Fugate ('61), David Scarrow ('61), T.J. Smith ('61), Mark Thompson

('61), Don Flesche ('62), Conrad Hilberry ('62), Margo Light ('62), David Collins ('63), George Nielsen ('63), Larry Smith ('63), Eleanor Pinkham ('64), Herb Bogart ('65), Stan Rajnak ('65), Paul Olexia ('68), Sally Olexia ('73 but effectively part of the '60s cohort), and Romeo Phillips ('68).

Some years ago, when I first began to reflect on these matters, I presented a talk at the college in which I speculated that the *K Plan* only indirectly affected the faculty and thus would have constituted, at best, a relatively weak saga for them. They didn't do career service, study abroad, or write SIPs, and the pre-existing on-campus curriculum intentionally was not directly challenged by the new plan. (See Stauffer, "Of History, Sagas, and the "K Plan": In Quest of a Usable Past"). My interviews, however, seem to tell a different story. When reflecting back on their early years at the college—and for most of the faculty members I interviewed, these years coincided with the early years of the *K Plan*—these individuals time and again recalled the excitement they observed and felt. The following quotations are illustrative:

*That K Plan... was all-new, it was all experimental, and people were excited about it. They had worked very hard...to set it up, so a lot of that excitement was contagious, and I became a part of it.* (Mark Thompson)

*There really was an enthusiasm about the new plan and how it would affect the college in general. And I caught that very quickly...It seemed to me that there was a real sense of enthusiasm about where the college was going. And it was shared by just about everybody on campus.* (Don Flesche)

*With one exception, everybody was enthusiastic about, you know, really getting in there and seeing what they could do, and it was a really exciting time.* (Jean Calloway)

*When I got into the team [joined the faculty], it was really an exciting place to be because things were happening...and we were exploring things that hadn't been done anywhere, as far as we knew. [Question: So there was, as far as you could tell, pretty substantial buy-in to the plan?] Oh my, yes. There was very little argument about the basic plan. I really admired it. I thought the structure of the plan was a matter of basic genius for a college student.* (Larry Smith)

*This sense of a giant educational experiment that was taking place, I think, was something that was shared by all of us; there's no question about that. Something new was happening and we were part of it. We were going to take these really good students that we had and give them opportunities that they could have never dreamed about. It seemed very romantic and now looking back on it,...it still is kind of moving to think about.* (Jeff Smith)



*I think that single thing—the planning for the very idea of the K Plan—was the most exciting thing for me. I mean it transformed the whole college, the whole idea of the college. (Hal Harris)*

*The institution was recognized nationally as being very innovative because of the K Plan...It was exciting...It indicated that the place was progressive...and it seemed like a stimulating environment. (Paul Olexia)*

*Of all the experiments that I knew about, this was the clearest and boldest. The one where everything fit together maybe, and where the students would come out different from when they came in—and that certainly has proved to be true. (Con Hilberry)*

*I loved the K Plan. (Sally Olexia)*

Others spoke in more specific terms. Some lauded the way in which one or another of the off-campus experiences, especially foreign study, matured students; one noted the improvements in foreign language fluency; and a couple others pointed to the special qualities of the summer quarter. Dick Stavig focused on his experiences leading the first experimental study abroad groups in the late 1950s and the ways in which the success of these experiments was critical to the subsequent incorporation of foreign study into the overall *K Plan*. Although a few observed particular problems related to the plan, the consensus was that the *K Plan* represented a truly significant and successful development in the history of the college—one that really did capture allegiance and “promote an intense sense of the unique.”

For this group of faculty, then, most of whom arrived at the college at the beginning or in the early years of the *K Plan* and who were its primary implementers, there is substantial evidence that the plan was indeed an emergent Kalamazoo College saga. And, at least for a few decades, a potent one. Writing in 1982, Con Hilberry observed that “the *Kalamazoo Plan* has become so deeply a part of our experience that one could almost say...that we *are* the *K Plan*.”

Despite all this, however, I continued to wonder how adequately the *K Plan* could serve, especially over the longer run, as a source of personal identification and motivation among the faculty. Again, the particular components of the plan, aside from on-campus study, mainly involved and affected students—and did so as these students were away from the campus. A few faculty members did visit foreign study sites, and of course the faculty generally served as advisors for Senior Individualized Projects. But life on campus, intellectually and socially, remained the faculty’s focal point, and it was through their teaching and their relationships with students and one another that faculty members would derive their primary identities and connections with the college. In this sense, wouldn’t the “Fellowship in Learning” saga be far more conducive to such sustained faculty engagement than the *K Plan*?

I therefore sought, through my interviews, to determine what happened to the saga of “A Fellowship in Learning.” To what extent, I asked, did the interviewees believe this phrase and ethos had been significant during their years at the college? Did it simply disappear or did it linger as a supplementary or even complementary saga, at least for the faculty?

Not surprisingly, those who arrived at the college prior to the *K Plan* vividly recalled *this* saga. For Tish Loveless, my mentioning the phrase conjured up Tuesday afternoon teas in Hoben, required chapel, and especially “a closeness of faculty and students. Students were invited into faculty homes a lot then [1950s]. I lived over on Stuart Street in an apartment, and there were lots of students we had to dinner or over in the afternoon—those kinds of get-togethers.” Al Buskirk recalled working with a group of students building an accelerator in the Humphrey House annex.



*For a while there we had a close knit group, and if there was anything to the “Fellowship in Learning” and so forth, [that was it]; we really got together and had a great time. We had them over to the house for informal gatherings and discussions on things, and then we all worked together in the garage over there, as we called it.*

He also remembered getting calls from the Dean of Students informing him that 25 students would be coming over for coffee or tea, since at the time the Buskirks lived in one of the “seminar” houses and “were expected to have students over on a regular basis.”

Those coming in the 1960s, however, had a much vaguer sense of this saga. Some, for example Dick Means, noted that President Hicks sometimes used the phrase, but others had little recollection of this. Don Flesche acknowledged that while President Hicks “may have personified the idea” and possibly used it, he, Don, didn’t “remember the term being used or having any particular idea of a fellowship in learning.” Con Hilberry concurred, and Paul Olexia, while familiar with the idea, felt “that there were expectations of small liberal arts colleges in general of having somewhat of that approach,” suggesting that while Kalamazoo took the idea seriously, it wasn’t particularly unique. It also is significant that when asked about Allan Hoben, most had only a vague sense of his role in the history of the college. John Wickstrom, in fact, was quite explicit about this:



*I've always thought that the college is a very forward-looking place. It almost has no historical memory....When I came, there was nothing for me behind the K Plan...There was that [the K Plan] and then some strange something that was before that that nobody talked about. Always **now**, what are we going to do **now**, what are we going to do **next**?*

In short, while, for some, traces of the Fellowship in Learning language seem to have persisted into the 1960s, this clearly was no longer the dominant form of expressing the college's ethos among faculty. And in this sense, the faculty's outlook was not unlike that of the students of the time, with conceptions of the *K Plan* rapidly supplanting the old language and thus ways of conceptualizing what the college was about.

Yet this is itself somewhat surprising. If the Fellowship in Learning had been a powerful and enduring saga, why was it so easily and quickly replaced? Wouldn't the "old guard" have been more possessive of *their* college and its saga? And more generally, wouldn't the underlying cultural patterns generated by decades of a Fellowship in Learning have continued to assert themselves in the life of the college, particularly if I am right in thinking that the *K Plan* wouldn't have provided sufficient, sustained meaning and purpose among the faculty?

The first question is rather easily answered. Even as early as 1960, when the faculty voted to approve the new *K Plan*, the "old guard" comprised only a small percentage of the faculty. Of the 48 faculty members who voted, only four had come to the college prior to 1947 and only 19 prior to 1954, the year that Weimer Hicks assumed the presidency. Of the faculty at the college at the time of the *K Plan* vote, more than 90 per cent had been at the institution less than fifteen years and almost 60 per cent less than seven years. Moreover, either President Hicks or Larry Barrett was sufficiently astute to include two of the longest serving and most distinguished faculty members, Francis Diebold and Raymond Hightower—both hired during Hoben's years—in the planning process. Evidently, this wasn't enough to placate Diebold, perhaps *the* exemplar of the Fellowship in Learning. Jean Calloway observed that "everybody was enthusiastic about [the *K Plan*] except Ms. Diebold, who was dragged kicking and screaming all the way. And she really never accepted it." On the other hand, the strategy clearly worked with regard to Hightower, who, as chair of the planning committee, was instrumental in generating support for the new plan prior to the vote.

There, of course, were other reasons that even veteran faculty would have supported the new plan, not least of which were the promise of a less demanding teaching load and the decision not to change the on-campus curriculum (although the latter *did* often need to be reorganized to fit the new year-round, quarter system). But the relative absence of a strong cohort rooted in and identifying with the earlier saga surely smoothed the way.

Turning to the second question, was this transition really a fundamental sea-change, or did aspects of the "old" college persist even without the "Fellowship in Learning" language? The more I listened to the interviewees (and recalled *my* early years at the college in the 1970s), the more I came to see two significant continuities. One of these

has to do with the importance of relationships with students, and the other with a palpable and often vibrant sense of community, albeit this time especially among the faculty members themselves.

Earlier I noted that Con Hilberry seconded Don Flesche's sense that the "Fellowship in Learning" language was largely absent by the 1960s, yet Con then added "but of course we still were really close to the students." And in various ways, many of the interviewees explicitly agreed. Consider these comments:

*I came from big university settings...and so the thing that amazed me when I came here was that you saw students individually; they didn't have to sign up for office hours and they actually could see the professors and the professors knew them by name...I was really impressed with the closeness between students and the faculty.* (Sally Olexia)

*And to be sitting in my office, have a student drop by and just chat with no problem—just wanted to chat. I found that to be fascinating. I just drank it in.* (Romeo Phillips)

*All during this period [in this case, the 1970s]...there were really some wonderful students, and it was during that period that I think I had more students that became friends, that I kept in touch with over the years.* (Dick Means)



*I found [the college] to be a very warm place with great students. Probably the happiest days of my teaching life were those first fifteen to sixteen years at K. We did a lot of socializing with students in those days.* (Herb Bogart)

*I think some of the small classes got really close...where they got to be a group...When I came back to teaching [after directing foreign study] I did freshman seminars. 'Coming of Age' was one...When the students come back now, those are the classes they talk about. They remember who was in the classes...they were always talking, they did the reading, and they would come around after class....In some ways those were the...most enjoyable classes [I taught].* (Dick Stavig)

*I got to share [with students] my sort of obsession with opera when the Met used to come to Detroit. I would take like 200 students that week [to Detroit]. We would go on charter buses and have picnic lunches prepared. And I still have...alumni come up to me and say that was their first introduction to opera and how much they appreciated that." [These trips] were one of my high points.* (Jean Calloway)

Or note this interchange:

Question: When were your best times here and why?

*I think mine was '68 to about '70. And I think the reason for that was that we had a huge number of majors in French graduating, among whom were just some excellent students...That was a highlight in the French department at least. (Dave Collins)*



Question : What about how others feel?

*I'd hate to pick out just one...There have been good students throughout the years. [Question: And good students defined good times for you?] Yes. (George Nielsen)*

In sum, while the explicit language of “A Fellowship in Learning” essentially was gone after 1960, along with the formal teas and many other organized faculty/student occasions, deep and lasting relationships with students not only persisted but often were key to the ways in which faculty defined their roles and derived meaning from their vocation. Yet equally important to these faculty members were their relationships with one another.

If we think of this faculty community in the familiar hub and spokes metaphor, certainly one person very much in the hub was Herb Bogart. And for those who know him, the following quotation is hardly surprising:

*It was a very close community. Lots of talk. Lots of faculty going down to the Whistle Stop and drinking. Lots of Friday evening meetings of the American Association of University Professors...It was probably the most communal experience that I had in my lifetime in those first 10 to 20 years.*

With regard to the Whistle Stop—a popular downtown bar at which many faculty gathered on Friday afternoons—Bogart was not the only interviewee to mention this camaraderie. Sally Olexia said that:

*My favorite times here were when Kurt Kaufman [a chemistry professor and esteemed faculty leader, as well as a very close friend of Bogart] and Warren Board [at the time—early 1970s—a highly popular and gregarious associate provost with strong ties to the faculty] were here. And the social life and professional life got pretty well intertwined at that point...On Fridays, there were never any meetings past four o'clock because four o'clock was Whistle Stop time...It was just a very happy, exciting time for me.*



Others mentioned the coffee room in the basement of Old Welles. As Stan Rajnak recalled,

*At that time...everybody went to this God-awful coffee place to have coffee. There weren't coffee pots in the departments...And I thought a lot of the work of the college got done in there.*

Independently, Dave Collins made the same point when reflecting why faculty community later declined:

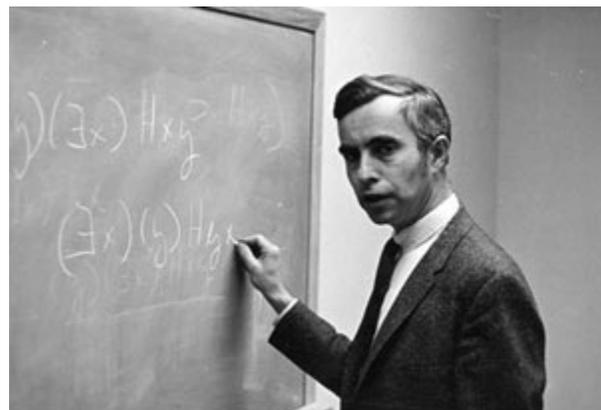
*A coffee pot in every department, instead of having to go to Welles, Old Welles, where we would have our daily sip. I think that's probably symptomatic rather than a cause. But it has happened. It seems to me there is less communication [now], even in the same building among colleagues. Even a cup of coffee can achieve that.*

And John Wickstrom spoke of both Old Welles coffee *and* the Whistle Stop:

*That room [in Old Welles]: it had a big round table, and I think just about every morning there would have been 15, 20 people there...And it was just...chat, chat, chat. I found this a very social place...[and] not only was there that in the morning, but then we kind of segued to lunch at noon. And pretty soon, every Friday, we were down at the Whistle Stop.*

But the sense of community wasn't entirely the result of the consumption of liquids, coffee or otherwise. Several referred to the Faculty Readers Theater, annually directed by Nelda Balch. Some spoke of dinner parties, with colleagues from various disciplines, or—as did Wickstrom—of the many faculty who would gather for lunch and talk in the Welles Hall “snack bar.” Others mentioned hearing their colleagues speak at the “voluntary chapels” created by Bob Dewey, after the formal and mandatory chapel program ended. And several recalled that many faculty members, from diverse disciplines, would show up for job candidates' talks; indeed, a couple mentioned that this disciplinary diversity in the audience impressed them when they gave their own talks.

As noted earlier, there was a kind of core group—the hub—that was particularly central to the faculty social and political scene. Around the mid-to-late 60s, according to one person's recollection, this would have included Kurt Kaufman, Herb Bogart, David Scarrow, Phil



Thomas, Stan and Kathy Rajnak, Dave Collins, Jean Calloway, Jeff Smith, Ralph Deal, Dick Means, Don Flesche, Paul and Sally Olexia, and Dick Stavig, no doubt among others. But there also were various smaller groupings or “spokes,” representing one or another set of common interests, whether music, theater, gourmet dining, sports, or else simply established relationships among families who bonded by living near one another and/or through the friendships of their children. However, not too much should be made of this distinction, for the larger point is that the hub and spokes comprised a wheel—a broadly shared sense of a faculty community. As Jeff Smith said, in reference to this community,

*It was a wonderful bunch of people. In all truth it is was the family that you chose to be a part of as opposed to the one you haven't got any control over. And I found it very attractive.*

Or, to return to my original point, but using Don Flesche's words,

*I don't know if [this] was what was meant [earlier] by a Fellowship in Learning or not, but to me, [the 1960s and '70s] were the best years of the college, when there was a very definite tie between the faculty and the students **and** a tie that united all the faculty.*

It is probably the case that the earlier meaning of “A Fellowship in Learning” had to do primarily with the special relationship between faculty and students, although the notion of a general sense of being deeply engaged as a whole community in a common enterprise is implied. And given the much smaller faculty size prior to the 1960s, no doubt there were close ties among faculty members at that time, although with the very heavy teaching loads then, there would have been much less time for faculty-to-faculty relationships. In any event, what was interesting and what stood out so prominently in the interviews, was *both* the sustained importance of faculty ties with students *and* the remarkable satisfaction of faculty relationships themselves among those coming in the late '50s and the 1960s, even though the “fellowship in learning” language or at least the explicit saga it invoked no longer existed. As David Scarrow noted, with regard to his early years at the college,



*I wouldn't call it a community of scholars. I think it was a community of learners...who were willing and anxious to communicate their learning to one another—and to their students. And that was what attracted me about this place.*

George Nielson echoed this sentiment when I specifically asked about the resonance in the 1960s of the concept of “a fellowship in learning.”

*What I remember being so wonderful was the forum program, which brought speakers to the campus that were appropriate for the whole campus. And they could*

*be religious speakers, but they could be political speakers or could be from government or history. But the talks could be appreciated by everyone. I thought it was a wonderful forum program, and I think there certainly was a fellowship in learning among the faculty.*

And both the continuity and the change that I've been describing are nicely conveyed in a quotation from Eleanor Pinkham, who was not only part of the 1960s cohort but who was an earlier graduate of the college (class of 1948):

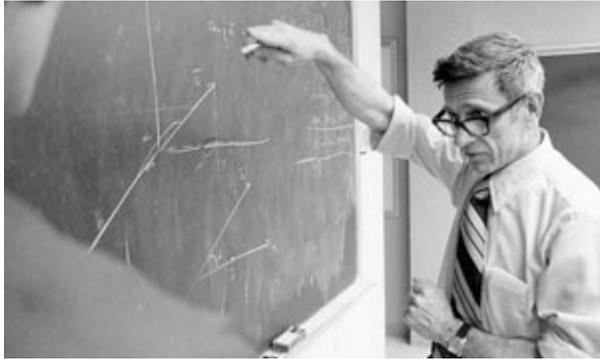
*Well, I think the friendliness of the campus was there when I was a student. It was a very close-knit society. Especially between faculty and students...Of course the faculty lived in Faculty Row [the Grove houses]...and it was very common to be in faculty homes...for gatherings or seminars in their homes...I think the thing I noticed when I came back several years later...was...the seriousness of the scholarship was different—it was changed. The students seemed more serious, better prepared, and I wouldn't say a better faculty [but] a different faculty. Still, that same feeling that [we] were talking about [existed]...being in the snack bar, everybody sitting around, sharing. That was...great...That was important.*

That an emphasis on teaching and close connections with students persisted even as the *K Plan* became the new college saga isn't really surprising, for while these faculty-student ties may have had an unusually salient meaning in the Kalamazoo College's history, Paul Olexia was right to say that, in a general sense, this is the ethos of any good liberal arts college. And of course "on-campus" study remained one of the components of the *K Plan*—and the one most directly involving faculty. What requires more explanation, however, is the strong sense of collective identity and community among the faculty during the 1960s and '70s. There was nothing in the vision of the *K Plan* that spoke directly to that. Moreover, since the new calendar meant that the whole faculty was never "on" together, since non-teaching quarters were staggered in each department, one might have expected a *diminution* of faculty solidarity. And the faculty grew substantially during the later 1950s and the 1960s; in fact, as Marlene Frances notes, 21 new faculty members were added in 1961 alone, constituting one-third of the entire faculty that year (p.262), and continued hiring during that decade outpaced retirements or other faculty departures. Wouldn't a place with so many newcomers face greater difficulty sustaining community than one with already established community ties?

Yet I think each of these observations actually contains part of the explanation. While the *K Plan* didn't celebrate campus community, its innovativeness and the excitement this generated, as we saw earlier, was itself a course of shared identity and pride. Further, the year-round plan probably did limit some faculty contact, but it also created the more leisurely summer quarter, which facilitated the cultivation of friendships and afforded more time for conversation not only with students but with fellow faculty members. And the many new faculty members meant a certain degree of homogeneity in age (and thus stage of life) and life-style, both of which would have smoothed the way toward establishing mutual ties based on shared experience. In a real sense, a kind of generational identity was possible for a very sizeable portion of the faculty. There of

course were some age differences between those arriving in the '50s and those coming in the '60s, but the impact of those seem to have been minimal. As Jeff Smith, part of the large 1961 cohort, recalled,

*I thought they [those who had come in the 1950s] just meshed in with us...I don't think people thought about the older generation and the newer generation...That old crowd, it seemed to me, integrated almost perfectly with us.*



Moreover, as noted earlier, the relative absence of many more genuine “old timers” would have empowered this new '50s-'60s generation, allowing the latter a greater sense of collective ownership of the institution. In fact, some of the group I've earlier referred to as the “hub” thought of themselves in the '60s as “Young Turks,” clearly implying this sense of new ownership. Quoting Jeff Smith again:

*In the 1960s, I think it was very much this...strong feeling [that] this was our college; we were building the damn thing with our bare hands...We had a lot of fun getting that thing off and running, and a sense of ownership and empowerment that would be difficult to have with an inherited institution...*

This feeling of empowerment suggests an additional explanation for the faculty solidarity of the 1960s and '70s: the relationship between the faculty and the president. Virtually all of the individuals I've been discussing spent their first years—sometimes more than a decade—under the Hicks administration, and almost all of them also remained at the college through the presidency of George Rainsford. In both cases, the policies and/or styles of the president generated resistance among the faculty and thus a sense of shared interests and common cause. The nature and tone of this resistance, however, differed significantly, and it is therefore important to discuss separately the reaction to each president.



Many of the interviewees considered Hicks to have important positive qualities. Tish Loveless, for example, while critical of Hicks' seeming devaluation of the women's athletic program, nonetheless stated,

*I think he was excellent in terms of what the college needed at the time. He was the kind of person who could meet and greet in the community. He could raise money which the college desperately needed...He took leadership roles in the community. He knew what he wanted to do and he did it.*

Walter Waring, a natural story teller and someone

already at the college when Hicks arrived, said this,

*When Weimer came, everything changed. Weimer was very vigorous and his language used to scare me right out of my chair. But...he was very kind and he was interested. One day, he came around and visited classes. ...He came to my class and I had a big classroom [with] a big closet in the back. Well, he wanted to get out of there without much noise or much distraction, so he backed himself up right into the closet and shut the door. And I thought that was pretty funny. He came out and zipped out of the place. He never came to my classes again. But Weimer could raise money and he didn't mind doing it. I don't know if he knew much about education; I think not very much. But he knew about people, and I think he managed to keep all the faculty he wanted. Then he added [even more faculty] strength.*

And there were other positive recollections:

*One of the things I remember about Weimer is that you could disagree with Weimer—you could even disagree strongly with Weimer—but once it was over, it was over...Weimer also was a person...that, when he said something, you could absolutely rely upon his word. He did not forget. (Joe Fugate)*



*Now my concern [about coming to the college] was, did they want me because of my academic credentials, or did they want me because of my uniqueness [i.e. being African American]...Then when I met President Hicks, the first thing that came out of his mouth was “You have what we want academically.” And he said, ‘You just happen to be a member of America’s most*



*publicized minority. (Romeo Phillips, who went on to say that the faculty embraced me. I felt very, very comfortable. They brought me in and made me one of them. And I said “I think this is a good choice for me” and I stayed for 31 years.)*

*I was impressed by the fact that everybody in the [larger Kalamazoo] community seemed to know and like President Hicks. There was tremendous community support for the college because of their knowledge of him and so I...felt that he was really strong in that effort. (Sally Olexia)*

*After just a couple years [after arriving at the college], I found myself exceedingly ambitious for the college. But that was due in part to Hicks, because Hicks made it*

*immediately clear that this great ambition was to make the college something considerably more than it had been until that time...He struck me as being a really dynamic guy and basically a decent human being. (Hal Harris)*

But many interviewees also were critical of President Hicks, remembering him as rather moralistic, autocratic, and sexist. Several mentioned his attempt to censor the language in some of Nelda Balch's plays, for example; others recalled his aversion to faculty drinking, his arbitrary decisions about the awarding of tenure, and his explicit statements that women faculty who became pregnant shouldn't be tenured and probably shouldn't continue to work, or that women shouldn't be eligible for TIAA participation or tuition remission, since such benefits should be provided by husbands. Recall also the above noted disregard for organized women's sports. Two interviewees put all this into a larger context, suggesting that while Hicks had, on the whole, served the college well, an ironic consequence of this was to build a faculty with more sophisticated or cosmopolitan expectations than he was capable of understanding. Moreover, John Wickstrom suggested—and others agreed—that Hicks was not very able to deal with the protests and changing lifestyles of students near the end of the 1960s:

*I think...when it all started hitting the fan in the late '60s in terms of cultural change, he found that not only was he intellectually having a problem, he also was having a social/moral problem with the direction the culture was taking. And I think his last years were very difficult...I felt increasing tension between the kind of place it was becoming and the kind of person he was.*

But perhaps the most significant confrontation between the *faculty* and Hicks had to do, not surprisingly, with salaries. A telling and consequential example of this was described by Dick Means.

*I went in to see Weimer. Maybe it's [my] second or third year, and he says, "Dick, you've done a wonderful job. We're going to give you an \$800 raise. Isn't that wonderful?" Okay. I began to think about it and the other guys I talked to, but they wouldn't tell me. Nobody would tell each other how much they earned at K College. So we met at my house. There were about eight of us...And we all wrote on a piece of paper how much our salaries were and how much our raises were, and we threw them on the floor in my living room. Then we all picked them up and looked at them, and it turned out that every single one of us would receive this notice from him that we "had a wonderful year and I'm going to give you \$800." All seven of us! And it surprised us; it surprised me.*



Given such experiences, Means and others decided to organize an AAUP chapter at the college on behalf of more openness regarding salary matters, and a Morale and Salary

Committee of the AAUP was subsequently formed. The committee successfully challenged Hicks to release at least general statistics about salaries by rank at the college, allowing the AAUP to then make comparisons with other institutions.

But to return to my main point, maybe more important than obtaining useful information and possibly some degree of bargaining power, the formation of the AAUP created a kind of institutional context for the furtherance of faculty sociability and solidarity. As Means went on to say,

*We kept having meetings for a long time. Of course those meetings ended up going downtown and drinking beer...*

Jeff Smith's recollections amplify those of Means:

*AAUP was very much a blue collar kind of thing. It was a bunch of working stiffs, you know, hanging out with one another. I'm surprised we didn't have a bowling league to tell you the truth! It was that kind of thing. AAUP was a treasured organization for all of us, I think, and [while] I had never heard the phrase "waiting on the president," ...the executive committee would go to the president's office and wait upon his pleasure to see them with their grievances or their concerns. It was a noble organization in those days...*



And Paul Olexia stated,

*I think that [the creation and meetings of the AAUP] did a lot to unify the faculty, but it was Weimer's control over things that made [them realize] that they had to be unified."*

Perhaps the best way to summarize the impact of Weimer Hicks for sustaining community among faculty is to say that this president inadvertently managed to strike just the right balance of respect and resistance: *respect* for his successful strengthening of the college and its reputation through his fundraising, faculty hiring policies, and promotion of the *K Plan*, all of which enhanced a shared faculty pride in and identification with the institution; and *resistance* to his internal administrative style, which contributed more directly to faculty members' sense of identification with one another.

The situation was quite different with regard to Hicks' successor, George Rainsford. Assuming the presidency in 1972, Rainsford initially was perceived rather positively. His credentials seemed impressive, as did—at least for a while—his “presidential bearing.” Jeff Smith noted, for example, that:

*I always thought that President Rainsford was at his best in a public situation. If anybody was going to sell the college and be a great face for the institution on the East Coast, [he would be that person]. He looked like an Easterner, after all, [and] that's the group that we've got to break into...to overcome the stigma of corn-fed Midwesterners. ...I was perfectly willing to criticize him at the time...But as a front man for the college, it seemed to me that he would have been an almost ideal choice; [a] beautifully spoken, magnificent figure of a man, and that's about all people know about a college president...*

Moreover, two interviewees recalled other important ways in which they felt Rainsford contributed to the well-being of the college. One of these was the introduction of the LandSea program. The other was his effort to rectify the college's gender discrimination. As Eleanor Pinkham said, with reference to such discrimination,



*That changed under George Rainsford. And if he didn't do anything else for the college, he did that. And he did it in important ways...not only for the faculty but...for the clerical staff, who were poorly paid...and not under TIAA.... When he first came on campus, he came and talked to me in the library, and [when] he asked me about various issues at the college, I mentioned that one. And he really...took it seriously...That was a big change.*

It was indeed, as Marlene Francis corroborates in her recent history (Francis, 295) and one that should not be forgotten. Yet as Francis also notes, even Rainsford in his first year was resistant, on quite dubious grounds, to tenuring a young female faculty member, and faculty intervention was required simply to convert her position from instructor to assistant professor. And virtually all other comments about Rainsford I heard from the interviewees ranged from the mildly critical to the downright hostile.

Examples of the former were references to a demeanor many perceived to be pompous and pretentious; his inability to remember names of faculty or students (whereas Hicks had excelled at this); his refusal to live in the on-campus "president's house," insisting instead on the college purchasing an elegant home in the toniest neighborhood in the city; and the stilted style of the occasional cocktail parties Rainsford would host for the faculty at this home. As an interviewee said, regarding both house and parties, "One had the sense that one was coming up to the lord of the manor." More serious concerns were Rainsford's reluctance to accept numerous tenure recommendations made by the faculty personnel committee and his efforts to eliminate positions; his poor record in raising money; and the unreliability of his word.

Summary comments were often quite strong and blunt. "He didn't have any ideas of his own. He [was] this fake...cardboard figure." "He was self-serving. I don't think he had the interest of the college really at heart." "George was the kind of guy who judged a

person by the size of his desk. The bigger the desk, the more important [the person]. So George had a real big desk. And the rest of us had a small desk.”

This widespread antipathy towards Rainsford had the same effect—albeit far more strongly—as had the more nuanced faculty reaction to Hicks: it promoted further cohesion among faculty. Speaking of the early Rainsford years, Paul Olexia was quite explicit about this.

*The faculty was probably more unified at that point than it had ever been. I mean it was just one big family, and there was lots of cooperation and we had great times. And I think part of it was that we were driven to this unity by [the shared negative reaction to] George Rainsford.”*

This was *not* a result of a stronger AAUP, however. To the contrary. Early in his tenure, Rainsford created a formal Faculty Council, presumably as a means of communication between himself and the faculty, with the result—and many interviewees believed the intention—of undermining the role of the AAUP. But it was at this time that the Friday afternoon sessions at the Whistle Stop began, essentially replacing the camaraderie of the monthly AAUP socializing. And whether at the Whistle Stop, lunch in the snack bar, faculty parties, the newly established end-of-quarter all faculty gatherings at another local establishment, or simply daily campus interactions, the talk invariably was punctuated with Rainsford stories. This did not reflect, it must be said, a deep division between the faculty and “the administration” per se, which might have led more to a simple bitterness than to an often convivial solidarity. Warren Board, for example, who was promoted to provost during the Rainsford years, identified with the faculty, promoted faculty interests, and, through his high-spirited, informal manner, actually contributed to the *joie de vivre* of faculty gatherings, as suggested earlier in the quotation from Sally Olexia.

For numerous reasons, then—a substantially new faculty of relatively similar age, a core group within this faculty who were particularly engaged socially and politically and who “made things happen,” a summer quarter when things slowed down and faculty relationships could be especially nurtured, presidential styles which mobilized faculty resistance, organization, and solidarity—a kind of fellowship persisted or even grew among the faculty during the 1960s and ‘70s, complementing the implicit continuation of a fellowship in learning between faculty and students. Neither kind of fellowship was called that; indeed, not only had the “fellowship in learning” phrase largely been forgotten, but at that time such language might well have conjured up too many connotations of the older Christian character of the college, which President Hicks continued to extol, but which had little appeal to more than just a few of an increasingly secular and/or religiously diverse faculty. (At least one interviewee, however, *did* lament strongly the gradual severing of the college’s ties to the American Baptist tradition, especially in the 1970s and subsequent decades.) But the sense of a *convivial faculty community* was both strong and pervasive. The dominant *college* saga, of course, had become the *K Plan*, and as I’ve tried to demonstrate, the innovativeness of this plan and the acclaim it received did engender a sense of excitement and pride among the faculty, thus reinforcing their collective identity. But that identity, I am suggesting, derived as

much, if not more, from the many conversations, shared projects, and often deep collegial friendships among the faculty as it did from the new and more “official” *K Plan* saga.

In fact, if this interpretation has merit, it helps to explain an otherwise perplexing comment written by Jean Calloway in a study of the college sponsored by the Danforth Foundation in 1966-67. After concluding that the *K Plan* seemed to be succeeding in terms of students’ intellectual and personal growth, Calloway then observes that “in a more personal judgment, I would venture to say that our greatest weakness lies in our



failure to perceive any clear and compelling sense of purpose and direction in our undertaking as a college which would unify the faculty, the students, and the administration and the many excellent programs which make up the *Kalamazoo Plan*.”

I’ve recently asked Calloway what led him to this claim, but understandably, after so many years, he said he simply didn’t recall. My hunch—and of course I can only speculate—is that it points precisely to the disjuncture between the *K Plan* elements and their impact on students, on the one hand, and the rather different albeit satisfying daily experiences of the faculty, on the other. These faculty experiences, however real and however important both to the faculty members themselves and to the social and intellectual vitality of campus life, just

couldn’t be interpreted in the language of the prevailing saga.

I need to address one final theme that recurred during the interviews: the sense that the strong community ties among faculty did not last. Recall, for example, Dave Collins’ observation that at some point, faculty started drinking their coffee in their departments. Or as Stan Rajnak similarly remarked,

*I can’t remember exactly when it was but surely sometime in the ’70s when it really struck me that somehow people had just withdrawn into their cubbyholes. I mean you didn’t have regular coffees, you didn’t go drinking beer in the afternoon, there were really no faculty community events [to speak of]. But even more than that ...almost everything became departmental or personal even. Down to, “well, I’ve got my six courses and the rest of you can do whatever you want” ... I very clearly remember [coming] back after my quarter off, and it just seemed...like the place had fractured...not bitterly or viciously. People just seemed to say, “I’ll take care of myself.”*

And Don Flesche noted, after recalling the times when close ties “united all the faculty,” that “I think we really have



moved away from that...I know we did by the '90s.”

Perceptions of *when* the erosion of faculty community occurred obviously varied, and this undoubtedly is due in part to occasional reappearances of this community in the latter decades of the century. Certainly one such moment was the day of festivity and collective effervescence in June of 1984, when the English change ringing bells, newly installed in the tower of Stetson Chapel, were dedicated. Several interviewees, including Jeff Smith, the driving force behind this project, recalled this day as one of their fondest memories of their time at the college. Indeed, in her recent history, Marlene Francis quotes Smith, and his language on that occasion both extols the older spirit of a fellowship in learning and hints at its fragility:

*In a community with its tradition seriously diminished in importance by recent fashion, Stetson remains a respected reminder of something beyond. It is fitting that the bells, standing as a metaphor for the eternal change in which we must seek some order, stretching back beyond our memory and forward beyond our lifetime, should meld their rich symbolism with that of our chapel.*

This memorable day of dedication occurred, moreover, in the early years of the presidency of David Breneman (1983-89), George Rainsford's successor, and it is likely that the special mood of the day partially reflected a new and unusual sense of connection between the faculty and the president. Breneman, unlike both Hicks and particularly Rainsford, seemed to identify with the faculty and to engage with them on their own ground. Eleanor Pinkham recalled that he “was well liked and respected by the faculty;” Dick Stavig felt that Breneman was “good at bringing people together;” and David Scarrow remarked more specifically that Breneman “was interested in carrying on intellectual conversations with [them].” For a few years, then—years prior to or in the initial phases of the illness that gradually distanced Breneman from the college—the earlier noted pattern of faculty solidarity emerging out of collective opposition to the president was reversed; the congenial and collegial style of *this* president helped to sustain faculty solidarity, perhaps repeating a pattern from the Hoben years.

In a very different vein, the multiyear discussion group in the 1990s devoted to Darwin and the Darwin legacy drew together a sizeable number of faculty members from a wide range of disciplines. Organized by Paul Sotherland, this series of discussions, sometimes including the authors of books read by the group, evoked the excitement of intellectual community among faculty and continues to serve as a “respected reminder” of what is possible.

Despite such interludes, however, the sense that community among faculty waned sometime after the 1970s was not in doubt among these interviewees. And the source of this sense is not nostalgia. Newcomers to the faculty now, men and women with no memory of this earlier period, often remark on the paucity of sociability and intellectual community among the faculty as a whole. It would require a whole other paper to adequately explore the reasons for this diminishment of collective faculty ties. But

certainly that paper would need to include a number of likely explanations, including some suggested by my interviewees.

One of these has to do with the intergenerational transmission of this collegial style. I have written about a faculty generation arriving at the college in the 1950s and '60s, but I was fortunate in being part of a group that came shortly thereafter, in the early to mid-1970s. (This cohort included Kathy Smith, Kim Cummings, Henry Cohen, Barry Ross, Wally Schmeichel, Lonnie Supnick, Bernard and Lisa Palchick, Marigene Arnold, Richard Cook, David Strauss, David Barclay, John Fink, Bob Grossman, Franklin Presler—and, a bit later, Gail Griffin, Billie Fischer, Carolyn Newton, and Tom Smith.) And though we thought of ourselves as a separate generation, many of us were deeply influenced by, indeed socialized into, the convivial style and solidarity of our immediate predecessors. Recalling one particularly merry example of this partial fusing of generations, Herb Bogart said,



*We used to have amazing dance parties...I remember one time the party was going very, very good, and all of a sudden, John Wickstrom asked Bernie Palchick to dance. And we all fell on the floor laughing and the party went on till about five o'clock in the morning.*

What is interesting, however, is that from 1980 through 1984, only one faculty member who was to remain at the college was hired, and for the rest of the '80s, this was true of no more than two or three per year. In short, this created a much more *significant* distance between those about whom I've been writing and most of those who were to come after the 1970s, a gap which meant that the earlier model of faculty life was much less immediately available. The impact of this can be overstated—one can think of a number of faculty who arrived later and yet exemplify the community orientation of the earlier generation, as the example of Sotherland organizing the Darwin group illustrates—but those exceptions may have more to do with individual personalities than with socialization into a lively, existing ethos.

A second factor was the gradual elimination of the Grove Houses as faculty residences. While the original purpose of using these houses not simply as faculty homes on campus but as locations for both seminars and student social events largely had disappeared by the early 1960s, the houses continued through the 1970s to be the “initial” homes for many new faculty, thus providing opportunities for the development of close social ties among these faculty members and their families. By the time these faculty members purchased their own homes, deep and lasting relationships often had been created. At least for the last couple decades, however, other uses have been made of these houses, and this surprisingly powerful form of community creation has disappeared.

Two additional explanations concern gender. Most of the faculty generation I've been discussing were men. It would be an overstatement to think of that community as an "old boys club," since the women who *were* part of this generation often spoke with enthusiasm about the faculty cohesion. But that cohesion may have been accomplished more easily by the predominance of one sex. As the number of women on the faculty grew in the 1970s and especially thereafter, ties among faculty did *tend*—this too must not be overstated—to develop within rather than across gender groupings, perhaps in part because of the rise of second-wave feminism and the development on campus of women's studies, both of which tended to emphasize gender solidarity among women. Second, and probably more consequential, faculty, whether men *or* women, were increasingly part of two-career couples; and particularly when children were involved, there was simply less time available for collegial socializing.

But perhaps the most significant explanation would have to do with the increasing focus on professional scholarship among younger generations of faculty. Whether due to expectations imposed on them by the college, which escalated especially in the 1990s, or to their own occupational identities and commitments—or to both—there seems little doubt that professionally oriented activities play an increasing role in the lives of today's faculty at the college. And this means not only a greater preoccupation with the management of one's time but also a partial shift in reference group from one's colleagues at the college to disciplinary peers. Margo Light made this point well:

*...in the '60s and the '70s, our loyalty was to the college. No matter what...Now, I don't think the loyalty is to the college no matter what. [Rather, the attitude is] my loyalty is to my discipline, and I look for colleagues in other places....In the late '90s, we were sensing that the new faculty coming in—because there were more pressures on them to publish than there ever were on us—were more interested in their careers as academic careers, rather than as faculty members in a small college that's like a college family. I don't have a sense that there is a small family anymore. It's a college. It's still wonderful. But it's totally different, I think.*



Again, I must avoid overstatement. Some of the faculty about whom I've been writing were accomplished and recognized scholars in their disciplines or productive creators in the arts. And the younger faculty members vary in their degree of professional engagement. But the overall drift towards such professionalism seems clear, and it shifts the sense of what one *ought* to be doing and *what is particularly valued* by one's colleagues.

To repeat, however, my primary intent has been to capture an ethos, not to account in any thorough-going way for its demise. Nor is this essay a story of decline, in the sense of the college having seen its better days. In some respects, current efforts to revivify the *K*

*Plan* through more focused internationalism of the on-campus curriculum and through connections of career service with both course-based service learning and the “guilds” program may more directly link the *K Plan* to faculty life than was ever the case before. And should that happen, the *K Plan* as a saga for faculty as well as students may take on a more compelling meaning. And perhaps the most recent initiative—to promote social justice leadership as an explicit and significant focus of the college—may give rise to substantially new dimensions of this saga.

But I do think something *was* lost and whatever the “causes” of this loss, those need not be destiny. What was lost can be at least partially retrieved if we recognize its value. The college has reclaimed the language of “A Fellowship in Learning” (now followed with the words, “At Home in the World”), and this may well be the occasion to remember that the ideal of deep community, social and intellectual, intended by this phrase can and should capture not only the ties binding faculty to students but faculty members to one another. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this essay, there was a time not so long ago when the *K Plan* and such ties existed in a particularly complementary and harmonious manner. We owe a great deal to the faculty generation of the late ’50s and the 1960s for providing this model, and we would do well both to celebrate and to learn from the inheritance they have provided us.

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