

COOKING UP SAGAS—AND NOT:
REPRESENTATIONS OF KALAMAZOO COLLEGE IN A CENTURY OF
BOILING POTS

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Every college annual tries to record a clear and comprehensive record of the past school year—college friendships, pleasant memories—but we have tried more than that. We believe Kalamazoo College is unique and distinctive because of our endeavor to live up to our ideal, “A Fellowship in Learning.” We are proud of our slogan, in it lies the essence of Kalamazoo College and this is the spirit which we have tried to capture and portray in our Boiling Pot. After all, college friendships fade, things vitally important to us now lose some of their importance as time goes on, the whirl of life even crowds our pleasant memories into a corner and there they, too, become dim. But a spirit, an ideal never dies and this is the idea on which we have built our book. Leaf its pages, smile whimsically, read tolerantly, but above all, catch a vision of the spirit of our Alma Mater—“A Fellowship in Learning.” (“Foreword” to the 1931 Boiling Pot, the annual yearbook of Kalamazoo College)

*This book is the yearbook of the Class of 1965. It is only fitting therefore, that it be dedicated to that single element of Kalamazoo College which has most effected [sic] it, the Quarter System. It is that System which has made it almost impossible to bring out a coherent **Boiling Pot**. The yearbook is not the only thing that has suffered at the hands of the System. Student groups seem to lose their cohesiveness. Classes that are really only separated by a year are now separated by thousands of miles. But these are the unfortunate aspects of the System, and they do not outweigh the fortunate ones. Within our four years, we have been to Europe, worked in a field related to our major or participated in some sort of service project, and written, hopefully, a senior thesis. But these are just the tangible things the Quarter System brought us. The intangibles might include the experience of being an academic guinea pig, branching out on our own when the System was found to be lacking, and instilling in all of us the idea that things need not be done the old way just because they were before. It was in recognition of these elements that the 1965 **Boiling Pot** is dedicated to the Quarter System. (Dedication page of the 1965 Boiling Pot.)*

INTRODUCTION

When one seeks, as I do, to ascertain the saga of the college—the “organizational motif” or “unifying theme” that generates “deep emotional investment” and thus “binds participants as comrades in a cause” (Clark, pp. 234-36)—and particularly when one is interested in the nature and depth of the saga over time, certainly one important resource to examine is the yearbook. Of course the strategy has limitations. The yearbook mainly represents the *student* perspective or, more exactly, the student perspective as mediated by the yearbook staff and particularly the editor. Changes from one year to the next, moreover, may partially reflect differing degrees of commitment by or creativity of the staff, and longer term changes obviously are affected by, among other things, innovations in print, and especially photo-reproduction, technology. Still, the yearbook normally is intended to say, in words or pictures, something *particular* about the experiences of *these* students (and especially the seniors) at *this* college; it is, in short, a recurring “collective representation” of a defined place and social experience and, as such, when treated judiciously, is a useful document through which to rummage for traces of a saga.

I have examined, therefore, every issue of the Kalamazoo College yearbook. The first was published in 1905 but it was not until 1918, with the publication of *The Ka-Col*, that the yearbook became an annual, subsequently called, for most years, *The Boiling Pot*. The yearbook was not published during the 1934-36 period, presumably due to depression belt-tightening, nor was it published in 1987 and 1992. Moreover, the 1972 “book,” called *The Cauldron*, was a rather anemic, loose-leaf version, perhaps indicative of the times. In this examination, I have been especially attuned to any written statements that convey students’ conception of the meaning or purpose of the college and/or their experiences here. But I’ve also looked for clues in what was or wasn’t included; the theme (when there was one) and the organization of materials; and who, if anyone, was honored and why.

In his book, *The Kalamazoo College Story: The First Quarter of the Second Century of Progress 1933-1958*, Arnold Mulder would appear to challenge the utility of this project when he writes that

The general character of a college annual is dictated by the student interests that remain the same from generation to generation: pictures of members of classes, with captions in the current student jargon; faculty departmental groups in which the teachers try their best, usually unsuccessfully, to look non-academic; society groups; athletic layouts; college humor; sometimes “poetry”; a dedication to a staff member. Some slight opportunity there is for variations, but in the main the college annual has of course always been the same in Kalamazoo that it has been anywhere else. (Mulder, p. 96)

This is by no means wholly wrong, and if one were writing a conventional college history, as was Mulder, the yearbook often would be of only incidental value. But the claim is overstated, even for the years Mulder studied, and as I will attempt to show, had Mulder's dates been extended another decade, he would have observed far more "variation" than this generalization suggests. (And had that extension continued into the 21st century, I don't think Mulder would have even recognized the genre!)

An additional, and more serious, limitation of this project does need to be addressed, however, before I turn to the substance of this paper—a limitation related not to the stability that Mulder implies but in fact to its opposite. One source of change in a yearbook over time may be the larger cultural shifts among those segments of American society from which the college draws its students. Thus, when substantial long term change in the yearbook does appear, how do we know whether this is telling us anything significant about this college, as opposed to simply reflecting more national trends among, say, middle-class, college-going youth? The only way to deal with this matter would be to compare several colleges of roughly similar stature and see whether the change found in the *Boiling Pot* also appears in the yearbooks of these other schools. I will write later in this paper about a rather fundamental change in the *Boiling Pot* which I suspect was reflective of larger cultural shifts, in this case stemming especially from the late 1960s and their aftermath, although I do not yet have the comparative data to know for sure. But I will also offer an admittedly speculative argument that this change was both reinforced by the then current Kalamazoo saga and yet paradoxically weakened that saga.

SAGAS

In the following pages, I will argue, based on evidence from the *Boiling Pot*, that the past century at Kalamazoo College has been witness to two sagas: the first rooted in the concept of a "fellowship in learning" and the second in the "K Plan," including importantly the year-round calendar. These were separated, during the late 1940s and the 1950s by a couple alternative but less coherent "collective representations," while the final decades of this century, i.e. from the 1980s to 2005, are increasingly absent of *any* clear institutional saga.

"A Fellowship in Learning"

Almost immediately upon assuming the presidency of Kalamazoo College in 1922, Allan Hoben introduced the phrase, "A Fellowship in Learning," as an encapsulation of his vision for the college. At the core of this 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 was 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 their attendant learning—transcended the classroom, with faculty engaged in campus life and

students welcome in faculty homes. This vision was informed, certainly for Hoben but no doubt at the time for most faculty and students who affirmed it, by Christianity. Yet it is clear from Hoben's various statements that his was a particularly inclusive, activist, and "liberal" understanding of Christianity, reflecting the prevalent Social Gospel tradition at the University of Chicago, where he had received his doctorate in sociology and New Testament and subsequently taught for a number of years.

Hoben moved quickly to institutionalize this phrase and vision. Much of this was simply through his speeches and writings for various college constituencies. But it took more concrete forms as well. In his second year at the college, he used his own money to have the President's house built on campus and soon began to entertain students there. Further, he developed plans for four faculty homes on campus, which were built and occupied by 1927 and where the resident faculty began to meet in seminars with advanced students. Also in 1927, he introduced a Ritual of Recognition for the new student convocation, one that articulates the "Fellowship in Learning" themes in eloquent and elaborate language. And he personally sought out new faculty, including Frances Diebold, whom he believed would be dedicated to his vision.

Much, much more could be said here about Hoben's goals, actions, and accomplishments related to the "fellowship in learning" vision. But all that is readily available in published sources, and my concern is with the impact of this on the culture of the college, especially among students. Using the *Boiling Pot* as our evidence, did the "fellowship in learning" take root? Did this become a resonant theme or understanding as students sought to articulate the meaning and significance of their Kalamazoo experience?

The answer is a resounding yes. If one focuses on language, perhaps the most dramatic example is the "Foreword" to the 1931 *Boiling Pot* quoted at the beginning of this paper. One could not ask for a purer verbal illustration of what Burton Clark later was to characterize as a "college saga" than this. But as early as 1925, the logo at the beginning of the yearbook, on a page directly opposite a "colorized" photo of the campus, was

Kalamazoo College

Fellowship in Learning

In 1928, President Hoben was asked to contribute a statement to the yearbook, and while this of course is not the students speaking, the fact that this statement was solicited and then featured prominently near the beginning of the yearbook suggests the esteem in which Hoben and his vision were held. The "fellowship in learning" phrase was not specifically used, but key elements of this ideal are palpable. This statement included the following words to the Class of '28:

To have been an integral member of this group, accepting in some measure its avowed aims of scholarship dedicated to human welfare and following with some success the studies and mental allurements of a four years' course will necessarily have influenced your outlook on

life. To know and choose what is better in taste and manners, in literature and politics, in aims and methods, in speech and possessions, in art and religion; to think straight no matter what the clamor of prejudice within, or the mob without; to serve your day in normal, vigorous living; to find work to do that will command your enthusiasm and your best effort and to trust humbly in God—all of this our College craves for you. (1928 *Boiling Pot*, p. 26)

In 1929, this was the introduction to the section on Organizations:

Since that vague, elusive thing call “success” is not measured in college only by one’s scholastic attainments, we find it quite fitting to devote a portion of this volume to the recording and recounting of extra-curricular activities in which all of us have taken part.

It is largely through these organized activities that we have experienced that element of fellowship which is so important to the realization of our collegiate desires. (p. 63)

If this last quote suggests a rift between “fellowship” and learning—a bit of late jazz-age influence perhaps?—it also should be noted that the introduction to the faculty section seems to make up for this with its “Message to Faculty”: “To our friends, councilors [I assume *counselors* was intended], and teachers, who have given of their lives in order that our lives may receive the light of learning, we, the students of Kalamazoo College, wish to express our heart-felt gratitude” (p. 25). More than a touch over-the-top, but certainly consistent with the Hoben spirit!

And of course it was only two years later, in 1931, that we discover the powerful and more thoroughly Hobenesque “Foreword.” That year’s volume, in fact, was dedicated to Hoben, with these words (this was still in the era when the yearbook was something the junior class did for the college and especially for the seniors): “The Junior class of 1932 is proud to dedicate this volume to our president—a man held in high regard for his freedom from bigotry, his earnest pursuit of knowledge, his readiness to impart that knowledge; who not only coined the phrase, ‘A Fellowship in Learning,’ but daily gives us an example of what it means to live it” (p. 4).

The 1932 *Boiling Pot*, as did many earlier ones, contained an essay, in this case a rather charming piece entitled “Metamorphosis of a Senior.” Near the end, the author notes that “...we’ve changed. We’ve absorbed something. Something that has helped to organize us into a harmonious totality. We don’t know what it is. It’s a spirit. A Fellowship in Learning. Kalamazoo College” (pp. 2 and 125).

1933 was the centennial year, and the yearbook broke with its usual organizational format, using instead a rather complicated but effective intertwining structure of decades and months. The “Foreword” explains the change in this way: “Keeping in mind the Fellowship in Learning, we have as our goal a clear and concise presentation of the

coalescing life in Kalamazoo College—past and present—in an atmosphere at all times informal and modern.” In addition, the 1933 yearbook also recognized Stetson Chapel, another of Hoben’s projects and dedicated the previous year, noting that it was “the culmination of one hundred years of a true ‘Fellowship in Learning’” (p. 70). These two quotations are intriguing in that they represent the not uncommon collective process of projecting contemporary social constructions into the past and thus giving these constructions an even firmer sense of reality. To note this, however, is not to discount automatically the empirical validity of the endeavor, and an inquiry into the degree to which and ways in which the college indeed was historically “prepared” for a “fellowship in learning” would be a valuable exercise.

Allan Hoben’s health began to fail in 1933, although with the assistance of Charles Goodsell, Professor of History, Hoben formally remained president through most of the 1934-35 academic year, dying in April of ’35. (Goodsell served as acting president the following year, and Stewart Grant Cole started his short-lived presidency in 1936, followed by Paul Lamont Thompson, who led the college from 1938 to 1948.) It would have been particularly interesting to see how the *Boiling Pot* would have dealt with Hoben’s illness and death in 1934 and 1935, but as earlier noted, those, along with 1936, were years in which no yearbook was published. Still, some sense of the veneration of Hoben, as well as his legacy, can be gleaned from the 1937 volume.

During the 1936-37 academic year, an organ was installed in the new Stetson Chapel, and dedicated as the Hoben Memorial Organ. The ’37 yearbook devotes a page to this dedication and notes that, while most current students had little or no acquaintance with Hoben, the music at the dedication “made us at least momentarily akin to his spirit” (p. 8). Later in the volume this music, or at least some of it, is identified as Professor Henry Overly’s “clever suite” entitled “A Fellowship in Learning” (p. 59). Another page of the yearbook that year was given over to the inauguration of the new President Cole, and it is noted that he has “won high esteem in this Fellowship in Learning” (p. 16). Placed symbolically at the end of the yearbook, moreover, is a fine drawing of Stetson Chapel, below which we find the following letter from a member of the Class of 1919:

As I look back across the years since my college days...I am more and more grateful that the circumstances prompted me to choose Kalamazoo College for my undergraduate work. A few contacts with the other and larger institutions of learning, both in the United States and abroad, have but strengthened my faith in the “Fellowship in Learning” at Kalamazoo. The old school, as I now see her more clearly, did things with and for me that a great university and its thousands of students would never have done. (p. 83)

In this quote, we again see the projection of the Fellowship in Learning language back into the pre-Hoben period but, more interestingly, by an alumnus who had never experienced directly the Hoben college! This suggests the degree to which this phrase and this understanding of the nature of the college had been broadly disseminated and accepted as capturing something essential about the school.

Finally, on this same page, and under the letter, we find the college crest, on one side of which is “A Fellowship” and, on the other side, “In Learning.”

While I discovered no sign of the Fellowship in Learning language in the 1938 yearbook, it is used briefly in 1939 with reference to the new president, Paul Lamont Thompson (“Above all, his religious principles make him a man whom we are proud to have lead and represent our fellowship in learning.”) and at least three times in 1940. The dedication of the yearbook to Professor L. J. Hemmes is “...to a scholar ...to a good sport who enthusiastically enters into our ‘Fellowship in Learning’ ...to a man we admire and respect” (p. 5). The just formed Men’s Union claimed its aim was “to realize the ideal, expressed by President Hoben, of a ‘Fellowship in Learning’” (p. 54). And the description of the new Hoben Hall notes that “by its fusion of many varied elements, [it] is one of Kalamazoo College’s best proofs that here is a ‘Fellowship in Learning’” (p. 67). Again, in 1941, the term is not used, although it is interesting that in both 1939 and 1941, the yearbook was dedicated to Frances Diebold, who had enthusiastically embraced and seemed to embody Hoben’s language and vision (See Csete in *Emancipated Spirits*).

By 1942, the impact of World War II is evident in the *Boiling Pot*. The frontispiece is a dramatic photo, shot from a low angle, of a lighted Stetson Chapel tower at night. Superimposed in the bottom third are a picture of a soldier, on one side, and a group of three African American children, seemingly in a rural and poor context, on the other. The picture is entitled “Oh Sacred Refuge,” a phrase from the college’s “Alma Mater.” The next page is entitled “A Fellowship in Learning” and contains only text, the first half of which is as follows:

The staff of the Boiling Pot for 1942 has endeavored to picture by word and by photograph the past year, a typical year at Kalamazoo. We have tried to include all the physical things and, as far as possible, the mental and spiritual intangibles which make Kalamazoo College what it is. Thus, this book is made up of pictures and text about the faculty, the activities, and the students, all integral parts of the college.

The aim is represented by the frontispiece. In this picture of the Chapel tower keeping its nightly vigil from the loftiest point on the campus, the staff has attempted to capture something of the spirit of the College. Some of the College Family are able to see reflected in the tower light much of the serene steadfastness, seriousness, integrity, and graciousness that are Kalamazoo’s. This reflection becomes even clearer when life at Kalamazoo is contrasted with life in the world outside—the world weighted with war’s pain and sorrow. Of course, to complete this picture, we need also to remember the lighter side of each of these—the happy playfulness of college life and the beauty and joy always existent in the world, even during wartime. To preserve some of the spirit of college, both serious and light, within this book, has been our task. (p. 5)

What to make of this? First, why are the African American children pictured, when there is no reference to them in the text? One must presume that this also is intended to reflect a world weighted with “pain and sorrow,” and the text simply isn’t clear about this. But more importantly, does all this imply that the “Fellowship” has become an escape from the world’s tribulations? Perhaps. A more generous reading would be that the college is represented as a counter-balance, a *temporary* “refuge” from and perhaps even the source of an alternative vision for a chaotic and unjust world. (It is noteworthy that during the same year this *Boiling Pot* covers, students had worked with the visiting artist, Philip Evergood, on preparations for the Welles Hall mural, in which students and workers idealistically meet on the “Bridge of Life,” and two pages of this yearbook in fact are devoted to this project.) But whatever the intention, it is clear that the editors continue to affirm the Hoben phrase and grapple to relate it to a world increasingly in turmoil.

The war’s impact on the campus is much more central to the *Boiling Pots* between 1943 and 1945. Rapidly decreasing numbers of civilian male students remained on campus, and the 1943 yearbook is in fact organized around a fictive “letter” from a soldier, reflecting on his initial years at the college prior to his departure for military service. The language used in the “faculty” section of this letter is familiar: “It was soon obvious [as the “writer” recalls first arriving at the college] that each faculty member here went out of his way to prove his friendship for me. None was ever too busy to sit down and just talk—and I began to discover what was meant by the phrases: ‘the College family’ and ‘a fellowship in learning’” (p.14). Playing on the latter phrase, moreover, the yearbook section on Trowbridge Hall laments the absence of “young, eligible males” and concludes that “it’s a different Trowbridge—it’s a ‘fellowship in yearning’ now” (p. 33). (The dearth of young men temporarily was rectified when a unit of the Army Specialized Training Program not only was housed in Hoben Hall from July, 1943 until the following spring but took some of the regular courses on campus and, as demonstrated in the text and pictures of a special section of the 1944 yearbook, often became actively engaged in the college’s social life.) This yearbook also begins with a welcoming back of President Thompson, who had recovered from a serious illness: “We do not know whether it was the strong urge to return to our ‘fellowship in learning’ or just what, but nevertheless, he is with us again. And we are glad” (p.11).

Returning for a moment to the ’43 *Boiling Pot*, one further observation should be made. On the page featuring the Student Senate, the editors write that “The history of a college such as ours, resplendent with tradition, steeped in the glory of its long existence as a disseminator of knowledge and instruction in the art of gracious living, could no more exclude the existence of a democratic governing body than could the great nation to which we owe our first allegiance” (p. 48). Aside from the wartime patriotism evidenced here, what I find interesting is the use of the term “gracious living.” The reader may recall that the quotation from the commentary on the frontispiece in the 1942 volume referred to the college’s “graciousness.” And—now skipping ahead—while the “fellowship in learning” phrase was not to be found in the remaining yearbooks of the decade, the caption for the picture of President Thompson in 1947 is “—truly gracious living.” Of course this phrase came into currency when “The End of Learning is

Gracious Living” was carved above the entrance to the new wing of Trowbridge Hall in 1939, and in the 1948 yearbook, the page picturing Trowbridge includes these words: “‘The end of learning is gracious living.’ Around these words are centered the lives and activities of 170 girls, for it is the motto of the women of Mary Trowbridge House” (p. 63).

All this is a bit unclear. Who originated this new phrase? Possibly President Thompson? Was it intended as a new summation of the college mission or was it intended to apply particularly to women at the college? If the former, was it beginning to replace Hoben’s language?

From the yearbook evidence, I can shed some light on the last of these questions. There is no further serious (as opposed to satirical) use of the “gracious living” concept after this period, so it was not a successful replacement. Still, the “fellowship in learning” phrase, while persisting through the 1950s, *did* gradually seem to lose force. It was employed in the 1950 yearbook, in the comments on the inauguration of President John Everton. The last years of the Thompson administration were somewhat tumultuous, including a student strike in 1948 (presumably in part with regard to Thompson’s dismissal of a popular coach), and the 1949-50 academic year had been one of healing. The editors thus write, “Through teas, dinners, and Faculty-Student Council meetings, a concerted and determined effort has been made to bring the administration, students, and faculty to a greater appreciation of each other’s views and to the fuller realization of the keynote of our administrative policy—‘a fellowship in learning’” (p. 7). In 1951, the frontispiece is the musical score of “Fidelity” (an alternative Alma Mater), under which we find the fellowship phrase. And again, in 1952, at the very beginning of the *Boiling Pot*, we find, “Its [the college’s] beautiful, sloping quad is crowned by Stetson Chapel, a fitting symbol of the Christianity upon which the College motto, ‘A Fellowship in Learning,’ is based” (p. 3). In 1954, the first section of the yearbook is divided into Academic, Religious, Environmental, and Social sections, and the Religious section includes this text: “Here in our ‘fellowship in learning’ each student may form and evaluate his personal philosophy through discussion with faculty and other students” (p. 9). We must then jump to 1958, when there is a brief reference to the phrase in the historical section (this was the 125th anniversary of the college). Finally, in 1959, when the organizational theme of the yearbook was “Doors Open” (to faith, knowledge, truth, etc.), the last of the “doors” sections is “fellowship,” where the phrase is used in the text, and it is repeated at the end of that volume, accompanying a two-page spread of pictures on “Life at Kalamazoo College.” However, virtually all the text in that 1959 volume, including these references to a “fellowship in learning,” consists of quotations from Arnold Mulder’s just-published book, *The Kalamazoo College Story*. It may be telling that most of these 1950s references either imply that the phrase pertained mainly to religious matters, or are contained in language borrowed from a college “old-timer.” And in any event, with one exception noted below, the phrase was never to appear again in the *Boiling Pot*.

Why did the phrase disappear from the yearbook, and, if my methodology is sound, probably from the students’ cultural repertoire? When beginning this project, I anticipated that the primary shift in the college’s collective self-understanding would

have occurred with the introduction of the K-Plan, and I still think that is largely true. Yet the diminishing use by students, especially in the later years of 1950s, of the “fellowship in learning” notion suggests that the ground for a new conception of the college already was being prepared. Witness these quotations:

The College is a small-scale example of a working democracy. The students who greet each other as they pass on the quad are from homes in twelve different countries. Hailed as third in the nation for its succession of successful Ph.D.s, Kalamazoo College is also proud of its number of students who have been recognized in Who’s Who. (Beginning of the student section of the 1952 volume, p. 20)

Kalamazoo College: to grow in stature, creating the liberal arts tradition and through successful participation a contemporary culture, its ultimate aim. (Spread over first four pages of the 1955 volume)

One would like to think that [the year’s good] rapport reflects the growing stature of the College. It may well connote the steadily improving quality of the student who enrolls with the intellectual tools to be challenged by and interested in ideas. It may reflect, too, the increased national prestige resulting from the Chicago Tribune rating and the recognition of the College as a training ground for embryonic Ph.D.’s. Certainly one day of the year, December 9, 1958, will take its place among the landmarks of our history, for on this day Kalamazoo installed its chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. (p. 22 of the 1959 volume)

The tone in these statements struck me as new—more focused on achievements, on ambition, on change. The 1953 *Boiling Pot* included a full page of reproduced articles from the *Kalamazoo Gazette* pertaining to the college’s success in graduating future doctoral recipients, and the 1955 volume included an upbeat statement from Weimar Hicks, who had assumed the presidency in 1953, extolling the large freshman class and the new building program (Upton Science Hall, further expansion of Trowbridge). (Interestingly, Hicks refers in this statement to students as “products,” a term one has difficulty imagining Hoben using.)

I don’t want to make too much of this. As noted, the “fellowship in learning” language did not entirely disappear in the 1950s. And the overall format of the *Boiling Pot* changed little, with scenes of the campus, followed by sections on the administration and faculty, students by class, the “societies” and other organizations, sports, theater and music, and special events, from outside speakers to college dances. Most of the pictures are both posed and formal, although typically there would be a set of “candid.” But the text seems on the whole briefer and, in the literal sense of the term, less “traditional.”

The “Quarter System” or “The Kalamazoo Plan”

Although selected groups of students had studied in Europe during the summer starting in 1958, the “K Plan” (as it was later to be called), including the year-round calendar, was introduced in 1961. But students obviously were privy to the institutional discussion leading up to this change, and the following quotation from the beginning of the 1961 *Boiling Pot* links the sense of change I observed emerging in the 1950s to the anticipation of a more radical transformation about to occur:

Although steeped in tradition, Kalamazoo College is considered a progressive institution, both within itself and as a part of the larger society. Many aspects of the College indicate that we are concerned with the world situation. The lecture series dealing with American goals, the Summer Study Abroad Program, and foreign students and professors on our campus, and the expanding physical facilities, are all indications of growing to meet the demands of a world which will not tolerate indifference.

The quarter system is an attempt on the part of higher educational institutions to provide a realistic answer to the problem of a growing college population and the need to educate students for the responsibilities which will face them. It will, in many respects, be more difficult for a small private institution to transform the entire life and academic structure of the college than for a larger university to do so. Dr. Hicks, Dean Barrett, and other members of the administration and faculty, are to be commended on the manner in which they are adopting this system to meet the specific needs of the College.

It is difficult to express the spirit of an institution in concrete form. However, this is our attempt to relate Kalamazoo College to a changing, progressive world. (p. 2)

This text is followed by two pages of pictures of students traveling abroad, and another two pages related to “national affairs,” including a photo of President Kennedy and another of students talking on campus with a representative of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Later in that yearbook, under the English Department section, one finds a photo of James Baldwin, again in discussion with students at the college.

Two things are of special interest here. First, the change at the college is articulated as “the quarter system” (or at least as the college’s version of this seemingly dramatic new strategy). And the special purposes of the quarter system are described as two-fold: to be more organizationally efficient and to promote greater engagement with the world. It is not clear why a shift from semesters to quarters *per se* would accomplish either of these goals. However, it is probable that the above passage conflated a quarter system with the *year-round* quarter system commencing at Kalamazoo, and *that* quarter system had been

justified both in terms of efficiency (by Board Chair Richard Light and President Hicks) and world engagement (by then Dean, Larry Barrett).

The 1962 yearbook, referring of course to 1961-62, begins with these words: “This is the trial year, the year of the great experiment, the quarter system” (p. 5). And on page 46, the formal resolution on the shift to a year-round quarter system, which the faculty had approved, is reproduced. Otherwise—aside from captions for candida—there is relatively little text in this volume. It is noteworthy, however, that one of the captions in the two-page set of “foreign study” photos (these probably were still from the trial summer program) is “The world is our campus.” While the college much later was to employ this phrase, I don’t recall it being repeated in any subsequent *Boiling Pots*. In the 1963 volume, while the first section is called “Academics” and consists of many candida of students and faculty arranged by department, the next section is entitled “Off-Campus Study” and contains this text: “Last year was the first year of the great educational innovation—the quarter system. This year, three more innovations were added: pilot programs in the areas of foreign study, senior theses, and the service quarter” (p. 24). Titles of some senior theses are provided, and the number of pages given over to foreign study photos is increased. The “boosterism” emerging in the ‘50s also comes through when we get to the senior class section: “The year 1959-60 boasted a record enrollment of 670, including 270 members of what was then ‘the smartest crop of freshmen in history’” (p. 152).

In the 1964 yearbook, one finds an odd combination of excitement about and influence of the new plan, on the one hand, and a couple text sections that are reminiscent of the “fellowship in learning,” albeit without the language, on the other. The volume opens with this dedication: “Bubbling, all in a turmoil, unquestionably alive, the Kalamazoo College program in the academic year 1963-64 has resembled nothing so much as a great cauldron of simmering water coming to a rolling boil. Much of the credit for this new energy and activity belongs to President Weimar Hicks, to whom, in this tenth year of his association with the College, this edition of the Boiling Pot is dedicated” (p. 3). The new program’s impact is also manifest in the at least partial organization *by quarter, beginning with summer*, of the first section, called “The Living Campus,” as well as in the senior section, with the inclusion, under each senior’s picture and name, not only of his or campus memberships and activities but, even before the latter, that person’s foreign study site and senior thesis title. However, and returning to the “Living Campus” section, we discover these more traditional words: “The entering student at K finds two campuses waiting for him—the buildings: silent, inanimate, and unchanging; and the faculty: living, active, varying, but always dependable, an integral part of each student’s life. Faculty members are known for their willingness to discuss with students, to listen with respect to their opinions, and to aid and advise without arrogance. They are the real pace setters in the student’s quest for knowledge and for meaning in life” (p.19). Finally, in the brief essay introducing the senior section, the writer, using the metaphor of “mental snapshots” that seniors will retain, first acknowledges the pull between past and present: “Some of the pictures will be those of the College—an institution going somewhere, but in its own sweet time. The stuffy Georgian architecture that seemed to shelter and embody outworn traditions. The quarter-system grid chart tacked to a wall, symbol of a vision that laughs

at tradition” (p. 162). And he then, certainly with no evident intention of impugning the new directions of the institution, once again paints an image evocative of an older “K”:

Maybe the clearest of the mental images that flash back will be those of people. The instructors who, living to teach, made one want to learn. The little group around the snack bar table, suddenly serious, the discussion changed from girls to God. The larger group around the switchboard on a gray November day, listening to the grim radio voice: ‘Ladies and gentlemen, the President is dead.’ (p. 162)

No such serious back-and-forthing may be found in the 1965 yearbook, the graduating year of the first group of students to have experienced four full years of the Kalamazoo plan. I have quoted from the dedication page (to “the quarter system”!) at the beginning of this paper, and while the statement acknowledges the “costs” of the new system, it clearly affirms that the benefits win out. The “quarter system” (calendar plus programs) has grown definitive in how students “represent” their college experience, not only in the yearbook *text* but also in its organization. For the first time but establishing a pattern that would characterize most volumes for the remainder of the century, the whole ’65 yearbook is organized by quarters, starting with summer. In this and certainly in most subsequent volumes, summer is represented both as virtually pastoral (lots of candid photos of students on the quad) or festive *and* as a lead-in to foreign study (with more pictures of foreign study orientation). A larger section of the yearbook, moreover, is given over to students’ photos from foreign study, appearing—as they would continue to be—in the winter section. One of these pictures, actually of students and the captain on the trans-Atlantic ship, has as its caption, “This is Kalamazoo College.”

But something else is different about this, and many subsequent, yearbooks. While in previous volumes, the placement of pictures of seniors had varied (sometimes near the beginning, sometimes in the middle or near the end), pictures of faculty and administrators had been at or near the beginning. In 1965, many candid photos of seniors appear throughout the yearbook, and faculty pictures along with the *formal* senior pictures come at the end. The preface to this section is telling: “So it is only a small shock for you to find that the portion of the book dealing with seniors has been blended into the overgenerous mass of space allotted in previous years to Faculty and things academic” (p.198).

I think two things are going on here. One is a tendency for the new Kalamazoo Plan rhetoric, by emphasizing innovativeness virtually as an end in itself along with the *off-campus* experiences, to provide little purposive language for on-campus academic matters and the role of the faculty. The other—and this is very speculative—is that we are seeing the impact of the larger cultural movement towards “expressive individualism,” a tendency that gained force in the 1960s. To the extent that people increasingly defined their “selves” not in terms of institutional roles and commitments but, to the contrary, as unique “inner” qualities that were only truly authentic when not inhibited by institutional roles, then attachments to institutional manifestations of the college (administration, faculty, buildings, traditions) will be commensurately de-emphasized when

“representing” the college experience. This second point should not be overstated, at least with regard to the later ‘60s yearbooks, since the *social* life of the college is still often pictured in terms of organized groups (including the “societies”) and events (even a Freshman Square Dance in the fall of 1966!); and until 1968, the formal pictures of seniors continue to be accompanied by not only study abroad sites and SIP projects but by organizational affiliations and activities. Still, the use of candid shots unrelated to specific organizations increases, and the inclusion of text about the college clearly declines. Moreover, in 1968 and usually thereafter, the “formal” pictures of seniors (and sometimes members of other classes) depict the students in staged (through context, clothing, activity, etc.) portrayals of “personalities,” often identified only by name and not academic or other affiliations.

The 1973 yearbook is an exception, however, at least with regard to text, and the text actually seems to acknowledge—and challenge—the tendencies I’ve just described. For that reason, I will reproduce here a number of paragraphs from this text, which introduces the volume.

We have endeavored to produce a yearbook which, like the college it represents, is something different, exciting, and perhaps challenging. We have sought to express what it is like being a student at a small, private liberal arts college. Instead of the usual scrapbook of how many games were won or lost, who were the homecoming king and queen, and 1600 mug shots of students and faculty, we have tried to capture in pictures, poetry, and prose the very essence of college as we have lived it for the past four years.

In the expression of our feelings we have tried to be fair, honest, and representative. Our comments were intended to be constructive and not derogatory. While we realize that our comments are not completely universal, we are certain that they are shared by a large portion of the people here.

These pages deal with our concerns and frustrations and express our ideals and hopes for the future of the college and its student life.

By the time he has been here for a quarter, nearly everyone has heard this institution described as the “College Community.” On a basic level, a community is a group of individuals living in the same area; but on a more significant plane the members of the group share a sense of unity—a fellowship based on interdependence and cooperation.

This diversity brings a richness to our experience here; but until we learn to utilize it effectively, it can form barriers to the growth of a cohesive community. Each person is immersed in his own interests and struggles for or against the rest of the people that make up the college. Often this immersion is so complete that the rest of the world is

blocked out, This isolation is not limited to the individual. Groups that do develop are generally small, independent units, cut off from other groups. Large social units do not seem to be compatible with the Kalamazoo life-style. The last members of the old societies will graduate this spring, and few present organizations have large memberships.

There are many factors leading to student seclusion. The “K-Plan” with its here-today-gone-tomorrow scheduling makes it hard for long lasting relationships to develop. Members of different classes are separated by the off-campus programs, and friendships are often broken up when people drop out or transfer...

The general life-style of the K College student has been described by Dr. Bogart as “intense.” The academic load and the 10-week quarter impart a sense of urgency evident in every facet of student life. A kind of quiet desperation pervades our work, our relationships, even our recreation. In an effort to relax during some designated time slot we often find ourselves working as hard at having a good time as at studying.

In the midst of disparity and isolation there exists an underlying sense of camaraderie. The experiences we share form a kindred bond between us—a foundation with other students and with the school. In this “bases for mutuality” lie the roots of that ephemeral entity referred to as “community.” (pp. 9-18)

The statement continues by acknowledging that “student-faculty relationships” are often positive sources of community, although it calls for more “mutual exploration,” noting that “the classic professor-lecture-to-passive-student tradition prevails.” And a more general call is made for increased student influence in the control of the school *and* for a curriculum that departs from “the *rein intellektuell*” to a more socially oriented context.

Several points need to be made about this statement. First, it comes near the end of the student power movement on many American college campuses, and both its tone and message probably could be found in many yearbooks of the time. But second, it marks a shift in the perception of the “K Plan” (and this is the first time I found that abbreviated term used). Certainly it doesn’t condemn the “Plan,” but unlike the 1965 dedication, where the costs are noted but minimized compared to the gains, neither does it celebrate it. Instead, what becomes “unique” about the Kalamazoo experience is, at least in part, the *shared trials* of coping with the downsides of the plan (the disrupted relationships, the intensity of the quarters, etc.)—almost a perverse pride in suffering through and surviving all this. Third, while there is some recognition of positive student-faculty relationships and while the word “fellowship” actually is used in the statement, the call for more shared faculty-student learning shows no awareness of the earlier “fellowship in

learning,” which emphasized precisely this. Finally, although the limits of diversity are acknowledged and the fractured group life is lamented in this statement, most of the remainder of this yearbook is given over to a virtually undifferentiated or identified set of candid photos, thereby implicitly conveying the very absence of community which the text had lamented. Probably this was the point: to illustrate this absence. But if so, we confront an irony, since this informal pictorial depiction of the college increasingly became the format for subsequent yearbooks.

Indeed, the yearbooks between 1974 and 1978 *are* essentially picture books, usually continuing the overall organization by quarter and either interspersing student and faculty pictures (1974-76) or including a senior section at the end, where senior pictures are arranged by major, with some but not all faculty included (1977-78). The 1979 *Boiling Pot* is a bit different, in that it begins with a series of dramatic black and white shots of campus buildings, against a black background, and then moves directly to a section called “Academic.” This section includes many pictures of professors and students, organized by division, with each subsection prefaced by a photo of the “appropriate building.” But this tilt toward on-campus academic experiences is not continued in subsequent yearbooks. The volumes for 1980-82 return to the organization by quarter, with lots of candid, mainly of students and often linked to the year’s round of activities (Bahama Boogie, Quadstock, LandSea, Homecoming, Monte Carlo, K’tucky Derby, Day of Gracious Living, Soiree, theater productions, etc.), along with the sections of photos from foreign study. Faculty members are pictured by department at the end.

One would expect the 1983 *Boiling Pot* to be different, since that was the sesquicentennial year, and to some extent it is. Nine pages near the beginning are historical, consisting of both text and photos, and this is followed by an “Academics” section, in which faculty are prominently pictured, often in the classroom or laboratory. Two additional pages are devoted to senior administrators, including a photograph of President Rainsford and President-elect Breneman at commencement. Thereafter, however, the yearbook resumes the familiar format of the preceding decade.

What can we learn from the text in the historical section? Something significant, I believe. The theme of the sesquicentennial was “A Tradition of Excellence,” and the text essentially takes this as the “mission” of the college. J.A.B. and Lucinda Stone are described as the “point of origin” of this “tradition,” and a short paragraph suggests that Presidents Stetson and Hoben were way stations as the tradition revived. With regard to the end of the Hoben years, the historical sketch notes that “by that time the College had received national recognition for students continuing in graduate study in the sciences, and its ‘fellowship in learning’ clearly placed Kalamazoo College among the distinguished liberal arts colleges of America” (p. 13). (This is the one remaining use of this phrase that I earlier noted.) But this is followed with the claim that it was with “the coming of Weimer K. Hicks in 1953...[that] Kalamazoo College entered a new era of change and growth” and that “it was the development of the K Plan that heralded the new Kalamazoo” (p. 13). In short, while an enduring motif is suggested, that of “excellence,” this is a particularly vague and bland ideal, and the primary message of this historical sketch is one of change rather than continuity. It is not surprising, then, to find these

words at the very beginning of the yearbook: “1983. The College Sesquicentennial. Much has come to pass during these last 150 years; *most of which has only historical value to us*. One hundred and fifty years from now, the 1982-83 academic year will be thought of in the same way” (p. 5, emphasis added). When “excellence” or “innovative” become the primary descriptors of institutional meaning, and institutional history is largely irrelevant, “deep emotional investment” in a “unifying theme” is an unlikely result. Thus we discover, at the beginning of a long section of candid photos later in this yearbook, this predictable claim: “This is what really happens at Kalamazoo College. These are the unique people living, playing, sleeping, partying, studying here. *There is no typical K student, everyone just does his or her own thing*” (p. 89, emphasis added).

From 1984 until 1990 (excepting 1987, when there was no yearbook), the format is back to the expected pattern of quarterly organization, many candid photos, foreign study photos, and very little text (although a bit about the celebration of the chapel bells, as well as excerpts from President Breneman’s inaugural address, are included in the ’84 volume, and 1989 is an exception in that student events and activities are explained). Throughout these years, faculty and administrators typically are pictured at the back of the book or, in 1985, not included at all. The “reader” continues to get the sense of a campus full of happy, goofy, individualistic students, hanging out or engaged in a seemingly endless stream of “fun” activities—and especially enjoying themselves in the summer.

This repetitiveness is pleasantly disrupted in 1990, when an obviously talented and inspired editor created “The Kalamazoo College Visionary.” This yearbook is organized as a dictionary of words commonly used at the college, with each word defined and then accompanied by a set of relevant photos (and occasional text). But the volume is introduced by the word “vision,” and the first section is a small essay on the transformation of the student’s vision over four years at the college. The essay’s conclusion includes these words:

Yet, to be graced with the true vision of Kalamazoo is to be graced with the ability to live with uncertainty while, at the same time, maintaining the ability to dream. Who could have guessed that in the process of attaining that diploma—the key to the **outside** world—we would unlock so many hidden chambers within ourselves...that we would tap strengths and talents we never knew existed?

The uncertainty we feel upon graduation is not a result of hesitation but a vibrant symbol of the transformation that took place in Kalamazoo. We are not limited by the dreams of an eighteen-year-old high school graduate. So many new doors have been opened, so many opportunities made possible. We have learned a whole new way of looking at things: we have acquired a whole new vision...

Despite the uniqueness of our individual experiences, we, too, speak a common language. This book does not claim to have recorded the personal journey of each K-student. Our lives are too complex for that.

But what has been attempted is to identify those events which we hold in common, those things to which we can all relate: our vocabulary. (pp. 8-15)

The yearbook then runs from “advent service” to, what else, “zoo,” the latter defined as “(1) a place where wild animals are kept 2) a place, situation, or group marked by crowding, confusion, or unrestrained behavior 3) K--, a small liberal arts college in southwestern Michigan. See 1) and 2)”! Each discipline is included in alphabetical order and faculty are pictured and senior majors listed along with definitions of their respective disciplines. Interestingly, this is one of the few recent yearbooks that not only refers to Career Development (CD) and SIPS but, in each case, provides several examples of each. As an informative and entertaining portrait of the college in late 20th century, this yearbook is superb. Moreover, the writer’s instinct is right that a shared vocabulary *does* contribute significantly to a sense of belonging, and the paragraphs quoted above do seem to capture what many imagine to be ideal ends of a K education. Yet what I find telling about this indisputably imaginative yearbook is the absence, in its dictionary, of any larger purposive phrases. “F” includes fanshen (one of the plays that year), field hockey, foreign student, foreign study, freshperson, and Frisbee Golf, but not “Fellowship in Learning.” And under “G,” we have golf but not even “gracious living.”

The following year’s *Boiling Pot* retains some of the originality of the 1990 volume, at least in the sense of having a coherent, albeit *ironically* coherent, theme. The title of the 1991 yearbook is “Kalamazoo College: Where Chaos is a Work of Art,” and while most of the book is fairly conventional by the late 20th century standards, this theme is advanced in two ways. In the middle of the yearbook, we find a two-page spread of *Index* headlines, beginning with “Campus Talks War; 47 Make Trek to D.C.” but most having to do with events and changes at the college, including the inauguration of President Bryan. At the center of the first page, we find this statement:

For what promised to be a “gentler, kinder” decade, the 1990s have yet to establish such a reputation. From increasing violence in our own city streets to world wide conflict in the Persian Gulf, the first year of what was to mark a “new world order” has witnessed more turmoil and chaos than many of its predecessors. Yet, at the same time, people have begun to mobilize their resources and energies to work toward solutions.

K-College had been a microcosm for the global situation at large this past year. The issues which stirred the world have also stirred our campus. More importantly, they have sparked the college community to voice their thoughts and work for awareness and change. The headlines of the 1990-91 school year, featured on this page, acknowledge a year of controversy and frustration, but they also celebrate the commitment of “K” students and faculty to use their talents and energy in the creation of this “new world.” (p. 82)

This theme of chaos generating creative response is echoed at the end of the volume, where a particularly thoughtful and sometimes eloquent student chapel talk is reproduced. The title of the talk is “Fiasco,” and the message is best conveyed in these selected paragraphs:

[Through creatively and patiently confronting fiascos] we may achieve a certain stability in our person. We become people who can survive cold blasts, dark storms and even fiascos. Perhaps now I understand what it means to be better off in the long run...

Finally, besides that stability of character, we receive truly the three most impressionable E’s of our lives. I am speaking of the Experience and Enrichment we receive from K-College and the Energy to keep it all together.

To use all that you have learned or will learn here as an energy source which renews your hope and joy or enriches your soul; that is what I would term a destination which you can continually seek. (pp. 194 and 196)

In this passage, and even to some extent in the preceding quotation, we can see shades of the notion found in the 1973 yearbook—that the fundamental nature of a K education is one of confronting and dealing with trials—although here the focus is less on shared suffering and more on the learning that complex decisions and challenging experiences engender. (Interestingly, this more positive spin begins to sound much like the educational benefits of the K Plan articulated much earlier by Larry Barrett.) I suspect both of these “takes,” “the mutuality of collective suffering” and “the realization of self through a series of demanding experiences,” were in the air; and these various quotations demonstrate admirable and impressive efforts by students to articulate something real and important about their college experience. But I must remind the reader that such efforts to “represent” this experience were few and far between. Beyond this, moreover, one wonders whether an education construed largely in terms of conquering hurdles is, *by itself*, sufficient to generate a deep sense of commitment to the institution. In various ways, I believe the 1992-2004 period particularly raises this question.

As mentioned earlier, no yearbook at all was published in 1992; according to Barbara Vogelsang, the editor simply didn’t finish it. And the 1993 yearbook was unusually brief, mainly consisting of candid photos but with portrait-like pictures of seniors, organized by majors. Faculty are listed but not pictured. The following year’s *Boiling Pot* was titled, I think tellingly, “Signatures of our Uniqueness,” with the introductory essay rejecting the identification of people by groups since what is important is the “uniqueness of each individual.” Some, but by no means all, faculty are pictured along with senior majors, and the organizational format is again based on quarters, starting with summer.

1994-95 was the year in which the calendar change was debated and subsequently passed, thus eliminating the summer quarter. The 1995 yearbook staff construed this as “redefining tradition,” the title of that year’s *Boiling Pot*, and while the “look” of this yearbook is similar to those preceding it, including a very incomplete listing and picturing of faculty and administrators, there is some effort to explain the theme. At the front of the book, we find these words:

The 1994-95 academic year, including the summer, was colored with various developments on the Calendar Change. To the dissatisfaction of many on campus, the Calendar Task Force committee attempted to create a new calendar that would maintain all the aspects of the K-plan while encouraging an atmosphere of greater continuity and cohesion on campus.

While some worried that “K” was abandoning its tradition and others embraced the idea of a more traditional calendar without summer classes, the ten-week quarters flew by and dragged at the same time, just like any other year at “K”. (p. 2)

And at the back of the yearbook, these words:

As the sun sets on our days at “K,” some experiences stand out in our minds, silhouetted against the blur of four years of study. Career developments, foreign study experiences, and senior projects have all opened our eyes to new and different perspectives. One thing that remains constant in our lives is change. As seniors leave, the school itself is on the dawn of its own change and it will grow as we have. (p. 152)

The theme is also conveyed in the choice of pictures inside the front and back covers and made explicit: “The progression of older to newer follows that of the endsheets; the front depicts the traditional Stetson Chapel, and the back shows a view of Dow Science Center...The restructuring of the Academic Calendar while maintaining aspects of the K-plan mirrors this progression.”

What I find most interesting here is the spelling out of the specific elements of the “K Plan,” or at least three of them, something that has been rare in most of the post-‘60s yearbooks. I noted earlier that when the “plan” was introduced, it was largely construed in terms of the year-round calendar, and while “foreign study” always was highlighted in a special section of the yearbook, seldom was the “K Plan” mentioned in the text or Career Service (later Career Development) or the SIP given much attention. But as the calendar discussion forced the issue of separating the “K Plan” elements from the year-round calendar, it was almost as if a sense of the former as definitive of the college momentarily was pressed into the students’ consciousness. But perhaps of equal importance, and echoing my comment above about the relative absence of a sense of

institutional commitment, on-campus study is omitted from the “K Plan” elements, and, as has by now become typical, there are few if any pictures of students interacting with faculty.

Starting with 1996 and continuing, with only one very weak exception, through the remaining yearbooks, we find virtually no effort to articulate the meaning or special nature of a Kalamazoo education, nor any signs of institutional affinity. The statements at the beginning and end of the 1996 volume could apply to almost all the remaining *Boiling Pots*:

This is not a viewbook or an advertisement for Kalamazoo College. These are the people you live with, the people you go to double blocks with, the people you eat lunch with and maybe the people you love. (p. 3)

The 1995-96 Boiling Pot is quite different from other yearbooks. It is my belief that people do not buy yearbooks to hear what the editors have to say. Students and faculty members purchase yearbooks to have collections of pictures of the people and events which meant the most to them... (p.136)

Here we have an unabashed defense of the yearbook as pure picture book, with the clear implication that the meaning of the “K” experience is simply hanging out or doing fun things with one’s fellow students. And I use the term “students” advisedly; *there is no faculty, or faculty and administrators, section in this or in any remaining yearbook, nor is there more than an occasional candid shot of a faculty or staff member.* A very brief spread on the inauguration of President Jones does appear in the 1997 volume, but this is not accompanied by any text. Indeed, the only written reference to this appears in this short passage at the end of that yearbook:

This has been a year of change: a new President, a new Provost, tons of new professors, a new K plan, an entering [sic] class that will be here in the new century: the Class of 2000, new organizations, new rules, a newly redone dining hall, plans for a new schedule, a newly redone CD Center, a new portfolio requirement, a new e-mail service, and just a new K. (p. 136)

Just what that “new K” is, aside from the sum of this motley collection of changes, is not addressed.

When I opened the 2002 *Boiling Pot*, I briefly thought this “devolution” of the yearbook into pure (student) picture book might have reversed itself, for this volume is historically rooted, both in providing a brief historical sketch of the college and then including relevant candid photos from the past in the various sections (sports, social events, etc.). But the historical overview is extremely brief and superficial, oddly leaping from the

Stetson to the Hicks period and thus entirely ignoring the Hoben years, and the larger generalizations are strangely banal. In “Unearthing Our Past,” we find this:

For more than 150 years, people have been gathering at Kalamazoo College for an amazing learning experience. Many generations have been gathering on the quadrangle in the rain, sun, or snow to hear the words of the President, talk with friends about the latest homework assignments, or simply relax and enjoy time away from school books. College is about learning, discovering, making connections. It has been this way for generations. College is a place to find our niche in life. Remembering the foundations of our families and communities can help us when the time comes to anchor our own roots. (pp. 6-7)

Or this, in “Learning for Life”:

The learning experience is what Kalamazoo College is all about. Its history of being the first college in Michigan gives its students a long tradition of academics to live up to. Lifelong learning occurs in many ways. From study abroad to each SIP, lessons are learned and lasting friendships made. By graduation, students are ready to conquer the world, and have many friends to support them. The best lessons, however, we learn from our friends, family, and elders. Through hearing their stories, we can learn from their mistakes and follow their wisdom. At “K” we learn more than just textbook material, but important life lessons. (pp. 30-31)

Aside from “the first college in Michigan” and, to an extent, from the references to study abroad and SIPS, this could be about any college—although few colleges would want to be associated with the prose style! (The stylistic difference between this and the writing in the early *Boiling Pots* is both striking and depressing.) The passages imply a clear paucity of institutionally-specific “representational” language and seem almost to be the logical outcome not simply of the disappearance of the “fellowship in learning” phrase but of the various “takes” on the “K Plan,” from an “innovative quarter system” to “learning through trials” or “bonding through collective coping.”

The 2003 yearbook is entirely without text and a pure return to the student picture book. The *Boiling Pot* for 2004 is similar, although it should be noted that this volume begins with a full-page pictorial dedication to President Jones, following by a lovely spread of black and white photos of the campus, linked by “A Campus of Beauty ... Learning ... Community...,” and ends with several memorial pages, a letter to the class from President Jones, and the text of student graduation talk. The last is especially interesting for my purposes in that the talk is organized around the “five dimensions” of a Kalamazoo education, possibly suggesting that this relatively new purposive language might be taking hold a bit among students. (It also needs to be noted, however, that the inclusion of this talk was the decision of Barbara Vogelsang, who oversaw the completion of this yearbook.) Finally, the 2005 volume is much like its immediate

predecessor: essentially a student picture book but beginning with commencement speeches from Acting President Palchick and the senior class representative and ending with a page on the four faculty retiring that year (to whom the yearbook is dedicated) and a memorial page. The student talk is organized around a set of “learnings,” and while quite nicely done, does not continue with the “dimensional” or any other “official” or traditional Kalamazoo language. One other feature of this final yearbook deserves comment: the front and back covers contain a map of the world, blank other than with embossed red dots at the location of Kalamazoo and every study abroad site.

CONCLUSION

What does all of this tell us? Before pronouncing any grand and no doubt audacious conclusions, let me again stress the obvious qualifications. The yearbook is only one indicator of how students think about their college and their college experiences; it most represents the perspectives of the editors and their staffs; and it normally tends to paint a positive portrait—to be a repository of good memories. Thus, any conclusions based solely on the yearbook must be extremely tentative. And second, changes over time in how students represent their institution and experience, even if genuinely reflective of the larger student body and their real attitudes, undoubtedly are partly due to broader cultural shifts among college students as a whole and thus often may tell us less than we think about a particular college. This said, however, I think there may be some merit in the following concluding thoughts.

First, the college has had only one truly resonant saga-like phrase: “a fellowship in learning.” This neatly summarized an ideal of a student-faculty learning community and perhaps was picked up so quickly and thoroughly because it captured what, to some extent, already existed.

Second, while for reasons I’ve suggested, this phrase weakened prior to the innovations of the early 1960s, these latter almost fully supplanted the phrase. Yet the competitor wasn’t “the K Plan” but “the quarter system,” reminding us that it was the year-round calendar in addition to the particular off-campus experiences that captured students’ imaginations and shaped their representations of the college from the early ‘60s until the later decades of the century.

Third, as the initial notions of being innovative and experimental waned, a kind of ambivalent celebration of surviving (and perhaps growing as a result of) the complexities of the college’s program became a central motif. Another, however, was the appeal of the summer quarter, or at least this is the message from its depiction over the decades. And among the particular “K Plan” elements, foreign study (or study abroad) remained the most literally memorable.

Fourth, whatever was most striking, appealing, or celebrated as a result of the introduction of the “K Plan” (innovativeness, the quirky calendar, study abroad), there was little in any of this that lent any special meaning to the college’s past or to on-campus study and to interactions between students and faculty. Nothing stood out as

dramatically in this little investigation as the declining emphasis on faculty (and administrators) in the *Boiling Pot* over the years--and their literal disappearance during the final decade.

Fifth, from the 1970s on, individual self-expression seemed increasingly to be the dominant point of being at “K.” This in particular was undoubtedly something students were bringing with them and that was regularly reinforced by the larger culture, but the absence of a powerful collective language, such as “a fellowship in learning” had represented, coupled with the emphasis by the college on new and challenging *individual* experiences, perhaps reinforced this self-expressive tendency and certainly meant there was no counter to it.

Sixth, with the calendar change in the mid-1990s, little was left in the symbolic repertoire of the college to lend larger meaning to the student experience. By then, of course, the particular elements of the “K Plan” were fairly common among liberal arts colleges, and while study abroad remained salient as an experience (as probably did the SIP for many students), little seemed truly distinctive or literally noteworthy.

Kalamazoo College is better than our prevailing language about the college, although improved language also would make the college better than it currently is. Put differently, we need to reclaim *and* create a saga, an evocative story of who we are and what we are ideally about. It is time, I believe, to stop pretending that the “K Plan” is that saga, recognizing that the plan is, by now at least, simply a structure (and perhaps not a fully adequate one) to accomplish some larger purpose or realize a broad and compelling educational ideal. I want to propose two, related ideas toward this end.

An important weakness of the “K Plan” (even in its earlier year-round version) was its dearth of language with regard to what happens on campus. While the fourth prong of the plan was some version of “excellent on-campus study in the liberal arts,” this always was a sort of residual category, and while much such study has occurred and continues to do so, we need to affirm the centrality of the campus as a genuine and vital intellectual community. In this regard, we could do no better than to return to the vision of “a fellowship in learning,” with all of its evocation of faculty and students collectively engaged in serious and joyful scholarly endeavor. To retrieve this language and remind ourselves of this ideal not only would give greater meaning and direction to what we hope already does occur, but it also would strengthen our sense of continuity with a truly remarkable period of our institution’s history. (It is heartening, in this regard, to observe that, thanks to Dr. Zaide Pixley, this return already has begun; for the past three years, elements of President Hoben’s Ritual of Recognition, including the “fellowship in learning” phrase, have been incorporated into our current Ritual of Recognition as part of the convocation for first-year students.) Obviously, the explicitly Christian elements of Hoben’s phrasing, however capacious, are no longer appropriate, but the fundamental ideal represented by this concept is broadly humanistic and inclusive and thus easily congruent with and indeed perhaps especially helpful for a community constituted by a wide range of religious or philosophical convictions.

But second, we need a new way to talk and think about the often remarkable ways in which the college is engaged with the broader world. Obviously, we have a superb track record in study abroad, and many career development experiences and Senior Individualized Projects instantiate similar world engagement. More recently, service learning projects and programs have furthered this learning beyond the campus. What are we after, what educational end are we seeking, in all of this? Greater *direct* comprehension of larger realities, I believe, and a kind of caring cosmopolitanism, much of which will complement the understanding gained on campus, as well as be informed by this understanding. I urge, therefore, a campus conversation not only about a possible re-appropriation of our historically powerful “fellowship in learning” language but also about how we might—through a few additional, fresh, and resonant words—expand on this notion as we represent, to ourselves and to others, the nature and significance of our more direct engagement with the world.

A saga, of course, is more than a few phrases; it is a widely shared sense that a particular college is distinctive or special and why that is so. But without compelling words, that sense is less easily articulated and indeed may either lose force or even fail to germinate in the first place. The words must correspond with an experienced reality. But they also can affirm and, most importantly, strengthen that reality, and that above all is why we need to talk about how we talk about Kalamazoo College today.

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