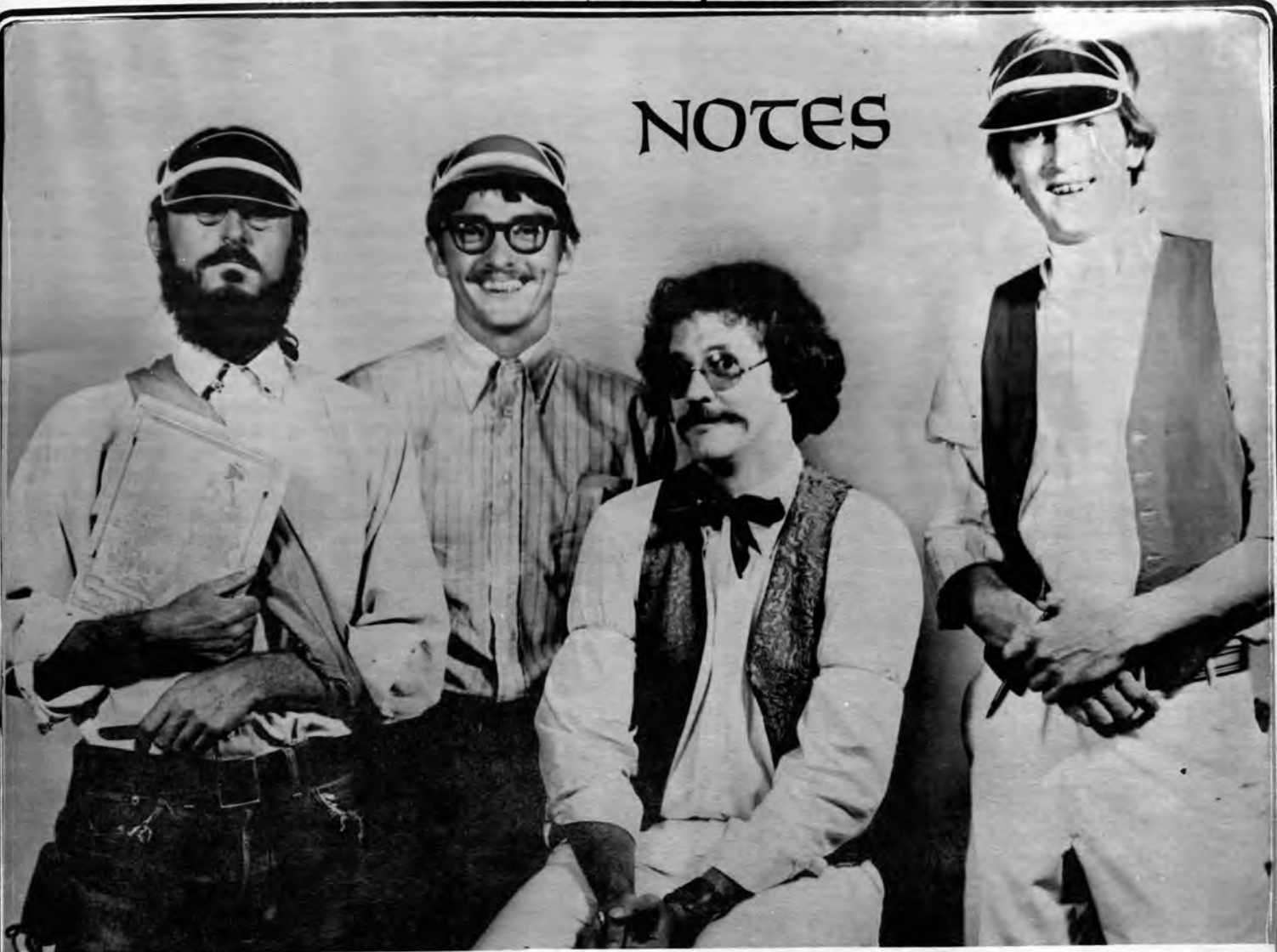


NOTES



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What We're About

The last time in my memory that we essayed a statement about what the Free You is up to was fourteen months ago. Since then there's been a large turnover in Free University membership, and our readership has more than doubled. We've grown from four pages to an average of forty, while extending our circulation through subscriptions and newsstand sales. We've gone through a substantial broadening and diversification of our content and services, and have gained stature in our own right as a successful and pioneering member of the underground--that's not our term, and we don't particularly prefer it--press. Since November we've been four co-equal editors instead of one; I decided then that this was necessary if our rate of growth up to that point was to be maintained.

I became the editor of this publication in April 1968 with no specific plans or hard, long-range goals other than the overriding assumption that running the Free You, like most anything else, is worth doing well if it's worth doing at all...and besides, coming at the tag end of a couple of years of writing, travel and general indirection prior to re-entering graduate school, it looked like a good diversion. The diversion has become consuming. Volume 2, Num-

ber 7, back in April '68 first carried the statement of purpose that still stands in our masthead on page two. The statement was pretty idly written--hell, I thought, I've got to say something, but I wasn't sure what--but it still sums up where we're at in as specific and brief a way as any I can think of now. Beginning with that issue, and with that statement, we've gone through a long, hard period of formulation and growth, rolling along with more of an inclination to do the thing, with the results speaking for themselves, rather than talk about it. There's a tendency in the Free University, and probably elsewhere, to sit around spinning visions 'till it's too late in the evening to do anything about them, and then to trot off and leave them to die, unrealized. We've had a rather contrary policy at the Free You, during the past year, of demanding that people who drift in here seeing one possibility or another in this publication, get to work and do something about it, if they think their vision is worth anything. We've been low on dreaming, and high on taking hard steps forward based on what we've already solidly put together; in the process we've lost a few visionaries, but have turned a number of visions into inescapable reality, and that's a rare thing. The Free You has so completely permeated by own life, at the expense of sleep, recreation, an otherwise estimable reputation at Stanford and life's usual

assortment of other diversions, that I'd lost all perspective on how much this all adds up to: pretty damn little, I thought--after all, 40-odd pages a month, put together at low salary within a community of self-styled castoffs by a volunteer staff of inveterate heads, can be pretty small potatoes--until a few hours ago, when I went through all the back issues from April '68 on and realized that, by god, we've really gone somewhere.

We're owned and subsidized by the Midpeninsula Free University, charged with providing both complete internal communication within the organization and the fullest possible external communication as to what the Free U is, and what it's about. The editors have chosen to interpret this assignment broadly: specifically, while the Free U governing bodies may tell us what to print for the good of the organization, we feel that neither the MFU nor, for the most part, the editors should try to say what shall not be printed. This means that whatever comes in from within the community, we print, subject only to the space-and-grammar restrictions noted on page two. The same holds for quality, original work from outside the community. This has several ramifications that aren't widely understood.

First, we spend a lot of time resisting pressure from all sides to not run one thing or another because it expresses an objectionable viewpoint, it isn't "Good enough", it doesn't seem immediately relevant to Free U programs, and so on. Now, each of the editors, in his own way, is highly qualified to wield a heavy blue pencil if he wants to, and each of us has other outlets for this sort of editorial tendency. But the point is that the MFU, through the Free You, is the only place free enough to not have to do this and, believe me, it's a lot harder for everyone involved to be that free than it is to cut, proscribe and reject the material submitted. Who is qualified to judge, in this environment, if even the four editors probably couldn't agree, if they had to, on the merit of more than a tenth of our monthly material? Individuals in this community have a lot inside them, and it's diverse; this means that with each issue, each reader is exposed to material he really can't stand...but that another reader, the writer and sometimes even an editor or two will dearly love. We assume enough sophisticated diversity among our members and readers to prefer to leave this sort of editorial judgment to them, and we refuse to allow either ourselves or anyone else to act as a censorial screen for them. For a specific example of this policy, I refer you to Ed McClanahan's postscript to Blair Fuller's story "Mouth", on page 32.

Second, by definition, the Free U is a community searching for new meanings, new forms of freedom and new ways of living, and since its earliest mimeographed days the Free You has shared and reflected this search. The editors feel that our share of this search shouldn't end; and that as soon as we start limiting our content, we will be placing a limit on freedom within the community indistinguishable from the limits imposed by society, which we all claim to abhor. There are far-reaching conflicts within this community, and we choose to reflect them, and keep them open. Further, there are opinions the community isn't directly exposed to at all, and we intend to print them. If we can dig up a statement by an SRI employee explaining why he thinks he

should work on CBW, or a would-be bomber's graphic reasons why he would blow us to glory, we intend to print them without prejudice. There are too many monoliths around, and we don't choose to become one. The only thing that could make us one would be the community's loss of confidence in its openness and in the self-evident moral strength of its own beliefs.


Third, as Gurney Norman has pointed out, this leaves us the only unpredictable publication around. The others, from the New York Times to the Peninsula Observer, all have their own limits, their own lines; you know in advance what they're going to say. Gurney Norman adds, "Most publications are committed to a constant position. They're seeking to be a certain thing, arrive (and encourage readers to arrive) at a certain moral or political place. Political underground papers seek to build movements. The Free You seeks only to encourage the growth of community, with all the variety, diversification and tolerance that implies." We're the only publication I know of where the readers are encouraged to climb in and become writers, whatever their opinion, and I like that.

And finally, this policy has us representing people. Not "The People", a euphemism used by politicians and movements to give legitimacy to whatever it is they're doing, but rather real people, individuals, as they come to us, join us and express themselves, rather than express what someone else asks--or allows--them to express. This makes irrelevant the several arguments that the Free You is too big or too small, too slick or too sloppy, too narrow or too loose. The editors' job is to push this publication just as far as they can with the resources available, and those resources are people, their expressions and their creative abilities. In this sense, the Free You exists to serve all the community of members and readers, and we have no interest in taking this publication away from that concept, or beyond the community. Enjoy it. The magazine you're holding now reflects the particular combination of distinction, style, thought and raunch in the life around you. As it changes, so will we.

-Fred Nelson

PL 29: PINNICLES PLUS OR PAUL PATTERSON
WON'T YOU PLEASE COME HOME?

If you're signed up for PL 29 and are interested in the Russian River canoe trip, phone Mary at 851-7321. I don't know who you are since my co-leader, Paul Patterson, has been sitting on the only copy of the list, somewhere out of earshot of his telephone, since the quarter began.



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