



# THE GRAIL

VOLUME II

OCTOBER 30, 2014

ISSUE IV

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## PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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## FROM THE EDITORS

Hello Again,

The Fall is upon us. Centered around the story of an alcoholic paralytic's friendship with a 5-year-old Romanian immigrant, *The Fall* (2006) is a visual tour-de-force, a stunning film whose scenes seem like filmic adaptations of surrealist painting. While the Reed life may not have the grandeur of a multi-continental adventure-fantasy, it certainly has its fair share of colors and drama. At Reed, autumn brings about intense euphoria, with simultaneous melancholy. Grace Fetterman understands

this all too well. From making new friends to sad Commons meals, read about one woman's journey through the fall (5). Looking for some more upbeat news? Look no further than what *The New Yorker* calls "of the most remarkable acts bubbling up from the extreme-metal underground." *The Body, Beast, and Hail* come rock Reed (4). Enjoy sipping hot beverages and discussing philosophy? The Grail's interview with Reed's Philosophical Society might just be your cup of tea (1).

Love,

Brendan, Brian, Grace, Jordan,  
Lauren, Maddy, and Vikram

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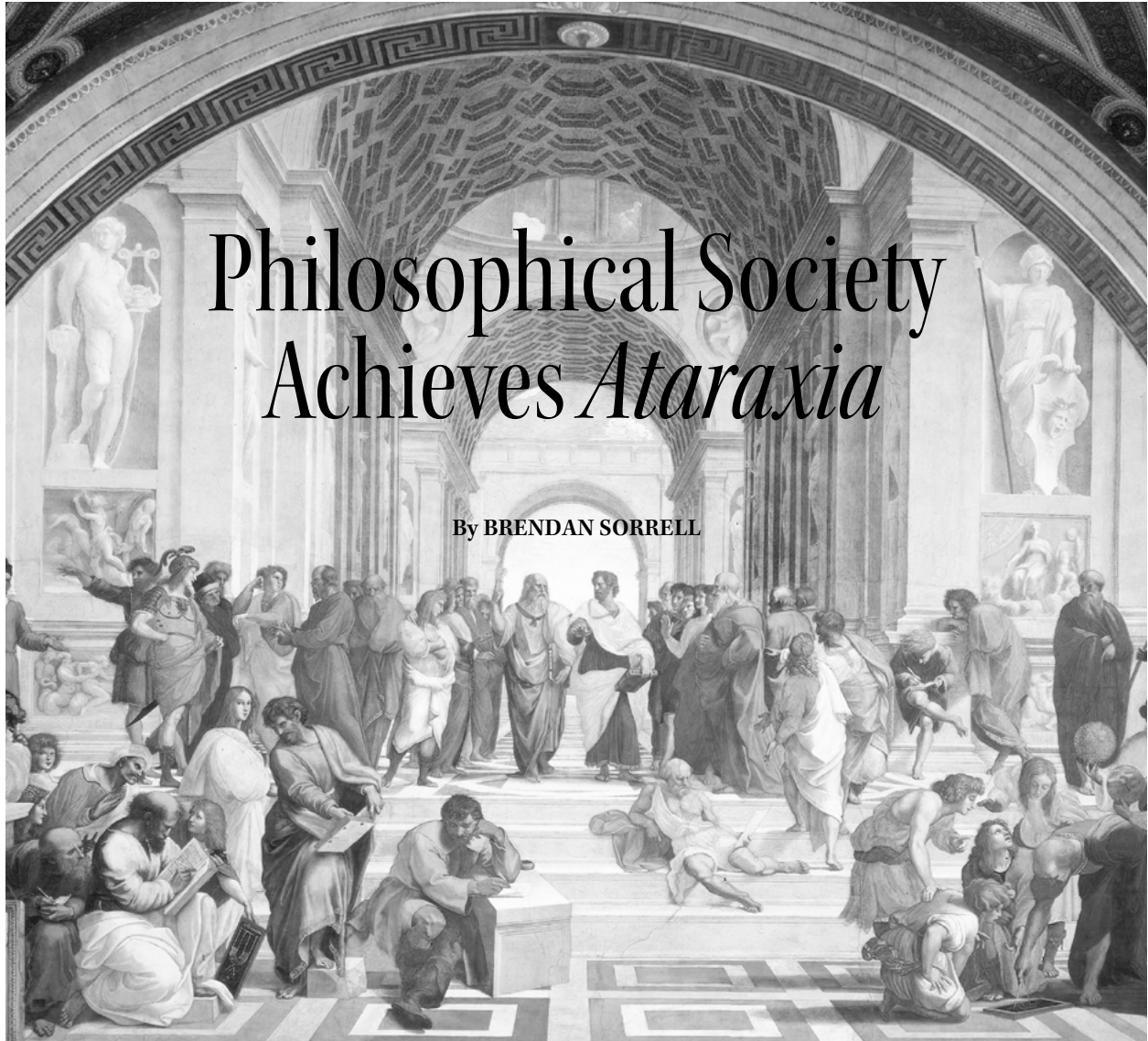
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*Front cover by Jordan Yu.*



# Philosophical Society Achieves *Ataraxia*

By BRENDAN SORRELL

It's a Wednesday night and 20 students gather in Vollum not for a movie, or to discuss finances, but as the email sent out to all of them announced: "to situate the role of virtues in Epicurean hedonism once and for all." Sent by the organization's founder and the speaker for the night, Elise Woodard '15, the phrase, following a description of what hedonism and virtue mean in the context of Epicureanism, and followed by a note stating "Epicurean delicacies will be served" relates the two main objectives of the club: providing a space for presentations of philosophically relevant arguments and creating an inclusive atmosphere for students of all disciplines who are interested in

philosophical topics to evaluate and discuss the argument as presented. Woodard notes that "I don't know of any other group [on campus] like us; we're not doing political organizing, we're not deciding on things to do outside of campus. I think the Philosophical Society is unique in being an academic club where you evaluate and discuss arguments. I think philosophy lends itself pretty well to this, it does things piecemeal, and each presentation is of stand-alone arguments that don't require a lot of background knowledge." Still, a lot of thought has gone into how the meetings should be structured.

Each meeting begins with a presentation lasting from 20–30 min-

utes. Woodard began her discussion by outlining a disagreement between hedonism and virtue that she was going to set out to resolve: as stated on her handout "hedonistic ethical theories, which define pleasure as the only good, seem incompatible with and parasitic on virtue ethics, which treat virtues as goods in themselves." She went on describe that Epicureans, the theorists who inspired Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*, define pleasure as the only intrinsic good in their system of ethics but go on to claim that certain virtues are necessary in order to live a pleasurable existence. She resolved this conflict first by separating two kinds of pleasure, the kinetic and *katastemic*, the *katastemic* pleasures

of freedom from disturbance for both the mind and body being those of importance to the theory. By arguing that there are representative passages in the extant Epicurean literature to suggest that they saw the virtues as the things that were meant to organize their lives in order to live a life in accordance to *katastematic* pleasure being the only inherent good. The virtues in this case justify the means to pleasure, and as necessary means to pleasure the only way for one experience the two *katastematic* pleasures; *aponia*, or freedom from bodily pain; and *ataraxia*, freedom from mental disturbance.

The meeting then shifted to a discussion of the argument as presented, with about half of the audience chiming in with one comment or another over the course of the next half hour, regular attendees like Jesse Gold '16, Mirell Cohen '15, and Drew Garcia '15 among the leading voices as Woodard ably situated comments within the Epicurean framework she had established. The format of the meetings was one of the most important factors taken into account when Woodard was deciding what the organization was going to be. "I met with Troy [Cross (philosophy 2010-)] and discussed possible formats and went through different models and looked at forms from organizing meetings around readings to having them be open-ended discussions surrounding a particular topic. We decided it would be best if we want to do philosophy to do talks half presentation and half discussion."

The structure has remained the same as it was when the first talk was given by Sanjeev Verma '15 in April of 2013, with the group confirming that that would remain the format following the first two meetings in Spring of 2013. "Most other philosophical societies have a broader approach where they talk about a chosen topic," says Woodard. "Our approach is different because we require a speaker and have a set amount of time for discussion. That was a problem at

[SUNY] Stonybrook [where Woodard attended before transferring to Reed her sophomore year]. It could be difficult to stay on topic, unless somebody had prepared a short talk on it. When somebody did that the conversation went well because it gave grounding to the topic. After a while people stopped showing up, with little variation it was male dominated. You'd have exchanges between two people that would last for about 20 minutes and most people would not get into it. Our approach keeps people on topic."

One element of the Stonybrook

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*"Most other philosophical societies have a broader approach where they talk about a chosen topic," says Woodard. "Our approach is different because we require a speaker and have a set amount of time for discussion."*

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discussions that is evidenced in Reed's own Philosophical Society is the broad range of topics that can be presented on, which have ranged from Ancient to Modern, Aristotle to Marx, with one presentation deriving mostly from linguistics, with a lot of talk about possible worlds. Presenters from outside the student body have identified themselves as critical theorists and political scientists as well as philosophers and students from outside the philosophy department have contributed to the

organization over the last two years. The number of topics that can be covered far exceeds that which would be covered by the course offerings of the Philosophy department. To a large degree this maintains the tenet central to the department of the importance of doing philosophy outside the classroom in order to be a philosopher and not a human version of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

One aspect of philosophical societies in general, according to Woodard, is that students are often encouraged to talk about whatever they've been thinking about in philosophy. While this is not necessarily negative, it can cause the discussion to get side-tracked and for people to be unfamiliar with what is being discussed. With the model put forth by the group at Reed, participants can come to a meeting with no previous knowledge of what the topic being discussed is but because it will be presented on they will be able to participate. To those who find this limiting, Woodard replies that if there is a philosophical topic that interests you then you should take time to research it and present it, rather than just coming in and talking about it. "I'd rather be more inclusive and than more exclusive," says Woodard. "I'm trying to encourage more people to give talks on something they've written because then it's not as intimidating."

Woodard's discussion of Epicurean Hedonism and Virtue was adapted from a paper she wrote for Hellenistic Philosophy last semester and many people have given discussions derived from their thesis work. "If the paper is well-selected then it doesn't change much when it becomes a presentation," says Woodard. "A historical paper gives more grounding for the debate. When you take a historical, most people are more familiar with it. With any philosophy paper you should just be presenting an argument and responding to it, but if you're introducing someone to a subject then you should talk about two different subjects and create a debate,

but both equally fit the format of discussion.”

One offshoot of the still young Philosophical Society was a Hegel Reading Group that met once a week for most of last semester, reading aloud passages from Hegel line-by-line. Most of the people involved had taken Peter Steinberger’s Marx and Engels class the previous semester and were well-versed in the topic beforehand, but Woodard would like to possibly see more of these types of reading groups surrounding a particular figure in philosophy in the future.

The Hegel Reading Group also sponsored an event through the Philosophical Society on Specters of Hegel, a debate between Steinberger and Professor of German Jan Mieszkowski which took place at the end of last semester. Well over a hundred people attended the event and this helped to give the Philosophical Society even more recognition within the Reed community. The group now gets a steady stream of 15-20 attendees for

each meeting, with presentations by faculty roughly doubling that figure. Elise would like to see more involvement from the philosophy department, both in form of giving more talks and being sponsors of events.

One event that has been coordinated that the group got outside funding for—philosophy in general requiring very little funding to be done—was for a trip to the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy conference that was held in Oregon last year. Woodard is quick to state that there is a need for people to take an outside interest in such events and let her or others involved with the society know. She states that because the group has now become reasonably established, “people are perhaps starting to take it for granted. It’s still more in its infancy and needs nurturing. At the beginning it took hours of planning. Now we just need a speaker and a room.” This shift from the excitement of starting up an organization to the more mundane sus-

taining of it, at least on the logistical side, can often lead to stagnation, but Woodard is quick to stress that they are open to input on what students would like to see done.

Something that was brought up in the past was establishing an undergraduate journal of Philosophy, but the plan sputtered out early on in its development from a lack of interest in anyone taking the reins on the project and making it a reality. This is just one example of what the Philosophical Society could do if somebody were willing to do the work to make it happen. “It would be hard to do something like a film showing for philosophy, but maybe if we got some footage of Saul Kripke giving a lecture.” ❖

*The Philosophical Society is co-sponsoring an upcoming event with the German department: @NeinQuarterly, Twitter-famous intellectual, will lecture on November 13 at 7 PM in PAB 320.*



*Peter Steinberger (poli sci 1977-), Scott Jenkins '15, Jan Mieszkowski (german 1997-).*

*Courtesy of Philosophical Society*

# Scary Music For The Spookiest Time of the Year

## *Big Toe Brings The Body for Halloween Show*

By CHARLIE C. WILCOX

NPR recently published a small piece that asked the question, “Where’s All the Good Halloween Music?” In it, someone sent in an email to the All Songs Considered offices and pondered why Christmas has so many (by which I mean far, far too many) songs associated whereas Halloween has, well, “Monster Mash.” The writer, Stephen Thompson, responded by listing a couple of “spooky” bands, like Timber Timbre and Dead Man’s Bones (yes, that Ryan Gosling band).

Regardless of how good these bands are, they are Halloween-scary in the same way that my mother’s choice in October lawn decorations are Halloween-scary. As I have been writing about this, NPR (god bless ‘em) have posted another Halloween-centric music piece, this time a “Question of the Week” asking “What Are The Most Terrifying Songs Of All Time?” And the top result? Sufjan Stevens, with “John Wayne Gacy, Jr.” Okay, well there are a couple ways to define ‘terrifying,’ I suppose.

Big Toe Booking had something else in mind when they put together their Halloween show. They didn’t necessarily go for a “spooky” show in the way that skeleton gifs on tumblr are #spooky; instead, they went for spooky in the way that finding a Satanic axe-murderer in your house at night is pretty goshdarn terrifying. Big Toe Booking has put together a Halloween concert, set for the night of October 30th, that showcases legitimately challenging and scary music; music that is harsh but rewarding.

To achieve this, they’ve enlisted The Body as their headlining act, with

Beast and Hail on the bill as well. The Body is a noise/sludge metal duo that has been internationally recognized as one of the most intense and innovative bands of the past decade. Lee Buford supplies the thudding, booming drums, while Chip King operates electronics and a guitar. King also sings, but ‘sings’ is probably not the most descriptive way to put it. His high-pitched screams and yelps are some of the most depraved sounds on their records, sailing high above the dark and deep drones of the in-



struments. When I saw them perform at Laughing Horse (RIP) last spring, Chip performed without a microphone, and it is seriously messed up that he was still audible, considering the stacks of deafening amps behind them. 2013’s album “Christ, Redeemer” was critically praised as being not only one of the best metal albums of the year but one of the best albums of any genre, period. This year, The Body put out “I Shall Die Here,” a collaboration with the dark ambient artist The Haxan Cloak, and this album might even top their previous output. Needless to say, these guys are at the top of their game, and it is to Reed’s luck that they are Portland-based and ready to play a show on campus.

All three acts on the bill are Portland-based bands, some for longer than others. The Body are somewhat recent transplants from Rhode Island, but have become ingrained in the Portland metal scene while maintaining a global presence. Daniel Menche, the mastermind behind Beast, has been a member of the PDX scene for longer than many Reed students have been alive. He attests that the first time that he played in the Reed College Chapel was in 1994, making this show a twentieth anniversary.

Speaking of that, one will take notice that the members of The Body, Beast, and Hail are distinctively more mature than the spry youngsters that make their way through Reed with their guitars and sing-song vocals and 4/4 time signatures. These dudes have been around for a while, and their awesomeness attests to the fact that one doesn’t have to be barely an adult to be hardcore.

So, if you want to spend the night before Halloween experiencing some of the most cutting-edge experimental noise music out of Portland, and are prepared to get legitimately spooked, come to the Chapel on October 30th, at 8 PM, for The Body, Beast, and Hail. The Chapel, with its acoustically-minded construction, will be a perfect place to see these bands. But don’t take it from me, take it from The New Yorker (because how many experimental noise metal bands get discussed in The New Yorker?), which writes that the Body is one “of the most remarkable acts bubbling up from the extreme-metal underground.” If The New Yorker can handle it, so can you. ▼



## GRACEFUL GROUSINGS

# A bitch in the boardroom, a bore in the bedroom, a bounty hunter on the bouncy bridge.

By GRACE FETTERMAN

“If you keep an open mind, your brain will fall out. Open your heart, and risk coronary thrombosis and disillusionment.”

That’s a bit from my new book, *The Power of Negative Thinking*. I’m going on tour next week, and will be giving a little talk about it at UCLA. Here’s what I’m opening with: “Los Angeles is like an expensive proctologist’s office; there are so many bleached assholes here.”

It feels good to get things off our chests. Not just painful underwires, but feelings, too. Bringing the inner life to light, however, is scary. How do we let people in without pushing them away?

We’re all familiar with the initial stages of getting to know someone: eagerly bobbing our heads like we’re Cain in the land of Nod, demonstrating our pertinent and versatile facial expressions, asking questions which require more than one word answers; think, “What does it mean to be a generous person?” as opposed to, “Can I borrow \$1,000?”

Then, the dangers of ease emerge. You’ve made fondue together, acted like tourists in your own city, and of course, you’ve gone on “The Coupon Date,” where you only eat or do activities that you have tokens for. And after you hand Ms. Chesty Sweetwhip your voucher at the Golden Dragon, you turn to your partner, smile, and say, “You know my mom used to have to pick me up from school on several occasions because I was convinced I was lactating.”

And that will be that. Another bridge burned, another lap dance poorer. If he had waited just a second, he would have learned that you have never, in fact, lactated. Jeesh.

On most mornings, from the moment I get on the Bouncy Bridge, to the moment I get off, I’ve had roughly thirty unwanted thoughts. My friends — may they rest in peace — used to find them amusing, but lately, I’ve been getting new and somewhat rude feedback:

“Have you ever thought about journaling?”

“It’s an ancient tradition, dating back to at least 10th century Japan.”

“I think it would be really beneficial to reducing your stress.”

To which I say, “Make like a hockey player / Robin Goodfellow AND GO PUCK YOURSELF!” Telling someone to write down their intrusive thoughts is not helpful. It is a bullshit, New Age way of saying, “I am so sick of always having to listen to you talk about yourself. Since it doesn’t look like your tongue will cramp up any time soon, why don’t you get a fucking pad and pen and leave me alone!”

And I guess they have a point. Our friends are not our therapists, though they might as well be considering how expensive they are, and both seem to always pull the “boundary” card when you advocate for a little *Midnight Needle Threading*, if you know what I mean. *Buzzing The Brillo. Cleaning The Dryer Lint Trap. Insulating The Windows For The Winter*, if you catch my draft...

So, I got a diary, OK?! And there’s a fucking koi fish on the cover, with a speech bubble that reads, “Water you thinking about?” I will fill it with *biting* humor.

Here I am, at Commons alone, scrawling away. My by-gone buddy, Maddy, cautiously approaches:

“Hey, Grace! I can come back if you’re. . .you know, at inspiration’s doorstep.”

“No, Maddy. If anything, I’m still in the car on the way to inspiration’s house, and the GPS fucked up and has led me down a dark and dank back alley to the den of humdrum ruminations.”

“On the second thought, I actually better head to class.”

Maddy sprints about 300 meters. If the distance was over 400 meters, it would not classify as a sprint, after all....

I shut my diary, and examine Mr. Koi. “Oh, Mr. Koi. Why did everyone stop taking the bait?” 🐟

# Cultural Calendar

By CHARLIE C. WILCOX

## October 31

### Concert — Fat White Family at Bunk Bar (21+)

Possibly the grossest band now touring, Fat White Family is known to get naked (and when I say naked I mean naked) and let loose ejaculations of various forms of viscera both tangible and sonic from the stage. They are touring the US re-release of their great (and greatly/offensively titled) 2013 album “Champagne Holocaust.” Come to this show if you wanna get down and dirty with a fun and freaky band on Halloween night. Stay far, far away if you have an aversion to penises. There will be a lot of them, I’m serious.

## November 2

### Concert — Pissed Jeans at Doug Fir (21+)

I saw Pissed Jeans at last year’s Pitchfork Music Festival and they were by far the funniest group there (except for maybe R. Kelly, but he walks a fine line in regards

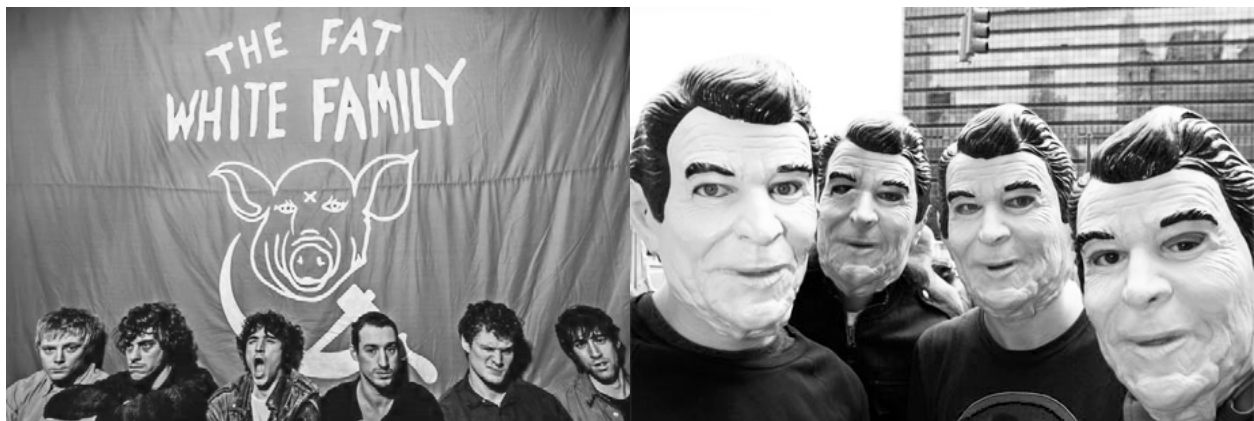
to his self-awareness [and, ya know, that sexual assault/child porn stuff isn’t funny despite how many jokes are made about it]). Pissed Jeans’ frontman Matt Korvette has some major David Yow vibes, strutting the stage and flinging his arms in some middle-aged appropriation of a toddler’s hissy fit. When I saw them last, he tore through three Jack Daniels tank tops, two of which he was wearing over each other and the third which flew from some assistant (whom I assume only has one job, which is to keep Korvette in Jack Daniels tank tops) offstage. Pissed Jeans music is angry, crushing punk that yelps about the pains of being middle-aged (Korvette & co. confirmed their middle-agedness by looking backwards and reissuing their first albums this year, which is what I am assuming they are touring on, besides 2013’s Honeys). Even if you aren’t 45 and working a dead end middle-class job, it’ll be worth it to

come out and mosh your feelings out to this show.

## November 7

### Concert — United Nations at Holocene (21+)

Lotsa hardcore music this time ‘round. United Nations is a powerviolence/screamo supergroup of sorts, collecting members from Thursday, Planos Become the Teeth, Lovekill, Acid Tiger, and more. Their 2014 album, *The Next Four Years*, sounds kind of like a really aggressive storm cloud rolling overhead, but there are strains of beer-doused fist-pumping not far off from Titus Andronicus and their bar-band ilk, too. It’s a dark, angry, pessimistic record, but I can’t help but noticing that, for all of its negativity, it’s pretty fun too. This show should reflect that nicely. Also a fun fact: The United Nations sent a cease-and-desist letter to the band and got their Facebook page deleted. Take that, punks! ▼



*The Grail's new website and the Cultural Calendar has a new page ([www.reedthegrail.com/calendar](http://www.reedthegrail.com/calendar)) with pictures and videos of the events listed. You can preview upcoming events before they show up in print and add them to your calendar directly from the site. Check it out!*

“The Faux Museum: Anything but Phony,” of the October 9 (volume II issue III) issue of *The Grail* as published stated that after the first Faux shut down, Tom “had to go back into the insurance business.” It should have read that Tom went to work for Kinko’s, which gave him insurance benefits. ▼