



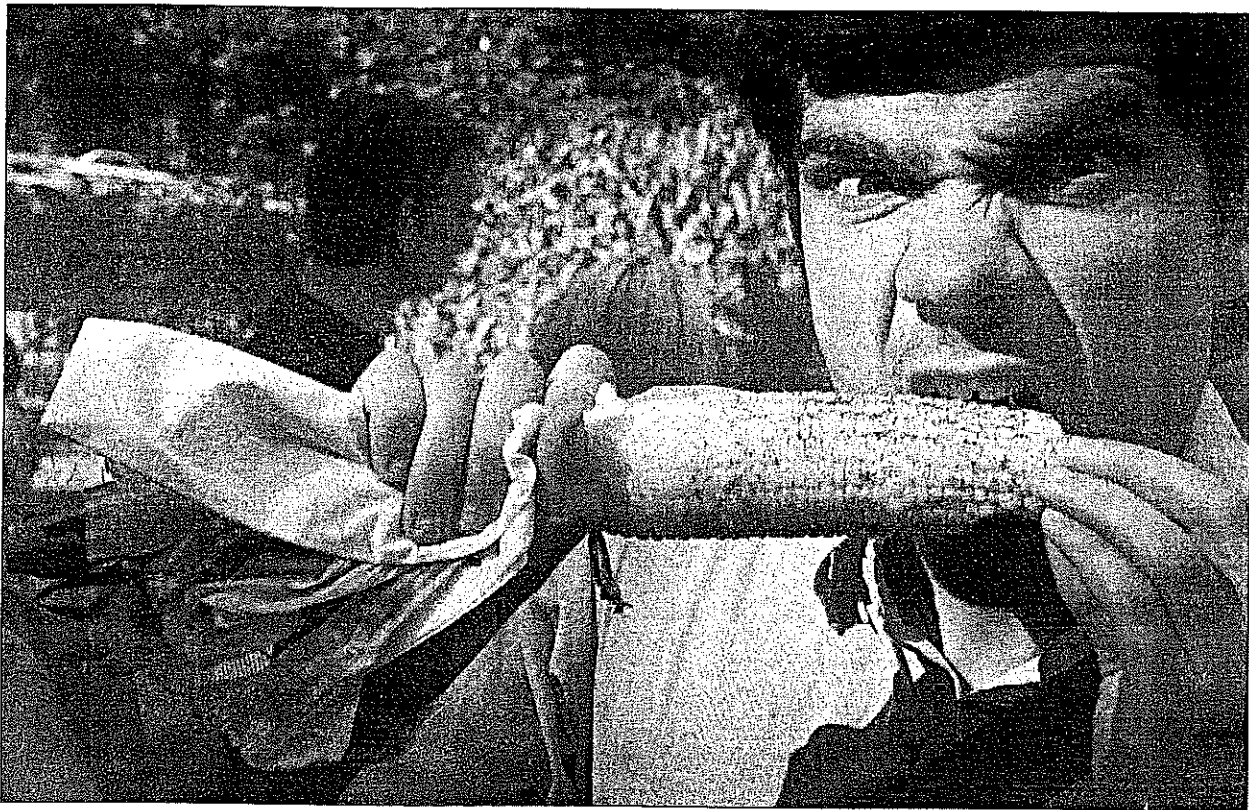
If you plant it, they will come

Ron Benner hosts Harvest Day on the front lawn of McGreer; dancing ensues

Page 13

'The whole thing is like a dream' - Benner

Harvest Day comes to Bishop's



BY AMANDA McALPINE
ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR

The corn in front of McGreer is art. I didn't understand it at first either, but all it was, was a lack of knowledge on Ron Benner and his amazing life of agricultural art. You can't judge something when you don't know anything about it; that's what I've learned.

Sunday September 19th was Harvest Day; the late after-

noon sun shining warmly on our faces, listening to Appalachian old tyme music and munching on sweet corn. My friends and I were enjoying life to the fullest.

Benner himself was there, roasting the corn topped with lime, chili pepper, salt and butter and handing it to everyone. There was no way we couldn't get up and dance to the music, so led by Drama student Robert Tracey, that's exactly what we all did.

Spinning in circles, kicking up our heels and do-si-doing with each other, we realized that planting corn in front of McGreer was the best idea anyone has ever had.

The whole premise behind Benner's work is that art is a form of dialogue. The wonderful afternoon festival consisted of people coming together and making conversation over art. There were 250 corncobs roasted, family games and even origami.

Before the festivities began on Sunday afternoon, I had the chance to talk with Benner, who told me captivating stories of his travels and his work. He's always worked with food; he started making garden projects in 1987 and has created about fifteen, located all over Ontario, Spain and Mexico.

In September 2009, Bishop's own Foreman Art Gallery asked Benner if he would consider doing a garden project on campus. Benner visited Lennoxville at that time to get an idea of the site. Over the winter he worked on different ideas and finally by May 2010, he had the drawings done and the plants picked out. On May 21st the work began and, with the help of twelve volunteers (including Bishop's students), everything was planted in five days.

Benner has traveled extensively in Mexico and Spain, learning Spanish, soaking up the culture and creating art out of agriculture. He is originally from London, Ontario and earned a degree in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Guelph.

In this particular project, /10 (as in the year 2010), there are four different types of corn: pollinated corn, industrial corn, hybrid corn and finally, the open pollinated corn. Benner's favorite part of the whole project was when everything began to grow. Watching corn shoot up from six inches to 18 feet tall is amazing.

Benner commented that creating /10 wasn't difficult.

"This was the first time I had ever done a garden project where I didn't have any problems. It's the best experience I've had and the volunteers were amazing. Usually people are really territorial about their lawns but Bishop's was willing to let me do this project. I saw that students walk across the lawn, so I designed a pathway between the corn for them."

You can't comment on something you know nothing about, and you can't judge art if you haven't done your research. Benner's /10 and Harvest Day brought a feeling of tranquility to the Bishop's community after an insane two weeks of Frosh and Homecoming partying. It makes you really appreciate the small things in life: the sun (although I guess that's not so small), corn and good friends.

PHOTO BY MEL HATTIE