

Delighting in the diversity of Andrews University

When we moved to Harbert, Michigan from Chicago in 1987, we thought we were beached on the dull side of Lake Michigan.

But then I began writing for the New Buffalo Times and took an assignment from the editor to, as he put it, "Go out to Berrien Springs and check out that Adventist university there. Report back."



Charles McKelvy
Opinion Maker

I reported back with a full-length feature and lots of photos about Andrews University, which, by its own admission, is the best-known Adventist educational institution in the world, and has been described by U.S. News and World Report as one of the most culturally diverse universities in the nation.

As a result of my research trip to Andrews University, we became devoted listeners to the campus radio station, WAUS 90.7 FM. Wow, we thought, a classical music station with no commercials. How cool is that?

And how cool is Andrews University?

Way cool.

Allow me to explain:

Our friends Jerry and Jane

Thayer recently invited us to tour the Andrews Treasures Exhibition on the sylvan campus of Andrews University, and we are glad we did because we got to spend some quality time in Price Hall with the Prillwitz Mammoth, or Parelephas Jeffersonii, that was excavated from a peat bog near Eau Claire in 1962. Farmer Wesley Prillwitz discovered the old bones while digging an irrigation pond, and alerted Andrews, and biology students from said university assisted in removing the mammoth remains and later in erecting the skeleton for display.

And that was just one stop on a tour that included Sutherland House, which was built in 1902, one year after the campus was established in Berrien Springs. The restored house became home to Andrews University Press in 2005. We were impressed.

Likewise, we are always happy to attend concerts at the Howard Performing Arts Center on campus. Friends, who journey to Chicago, Kalamazoo, South Bend and Grand Rapids to satisfy their cravings for classical music, are always amazed when we tell them that we had but to journey a relatively short distance within Berrien County to experience the

very best classical music in the very best setting at affordable prices and with plenty of free parking to boot.

We were thrilled to be at the Howard on opening night in 2003 to salute John and Dede Howard for their generous gift, not only to Andrews University, but to the community as a whole.

Attending concerts at the Howard Performing Arts Center, and exploring the university's treasures, and, yes, even taking private clarinet lessons at Hamel Hall from teacher Jason Gresl, have enlightened my mind, body and spirit.

At Andrews, they are fond of saying: "Seek knowledge; affirm faith."

Well, I can faithfully say that my knowledge of the clarinet has expanded exponentially at Andrews University under the expert tutelage of the aforementioned Jason Gresl. And what a pleasure that is for this 63-year-old musician.

Having delighted in so many wonderful musical programs at the Howard Performing Arts Center, I admit that I did daydream about one day making some music of my own at Andrews, which, for me, is the home of serious music.

So when I was struggling to find a clarinet teacher last year,

my wife took it upon herself to hasten my search. Her efforts lead her to Lake Michigan College, which was offering a course in clarinet. Registration was closing that afternoon, and off we went to enroll me in college under the direction of – you guessed it – a teacher named Jason Gresl.

Jason and I hit it off from the git-go, and, as he promised, I began to truly explore the instrument that had intrigued and frustrated me as a child. Well, long story short: the semester with Jason Gresl at Lake Michigan College ran its course, and I said: "I'd like to continue taking private lessons from you."

"Not a problem," Jason said, noting that he could offer me such service at Andrews, where he also teaches.

And thus began my musical education on the campus of Andrews University.

Granted, I am far older and grayer than the other students playing away in the studios at Hamel Hall, but I am oh so happy to be among them.

Yes, I am making music at Andrews University.

And speaking of diversity, Jason Gresl is Jewish, I am Catholic, and Andrews is Adventist, and we all get along just fine.

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