Fellow 1971 classmates and Belmont Hill community,

It's hard to believe that when we graduated in 1971 there was no 50 year alumni class of 1921 wandering the halls looking for their panels. It seemed like Belmont Hill had been around forever. Their panels might have cerebrated the end of WW1, prohibition, jazz, Babe Ruth's pitching exploits, and, of course, the championship BHS hockey team. Some things change, and some things stay the same. One thing for sure, the panels are a wonderful way to gauge the mood and spirit of an age. My panel is no exception, though edgier than most. The image was copied from an album cover of Blodwyn Pig, an English rock band in the mold of Jethro Tull. In the center of a bullseye is the head of a pig wearing ear phones, sunglasses and smoking a small, hand rolled cigarette. The fact that I thought it was so "cool" says a lot about where some of us were at in 1971- our love of rock music, the experimenting with new forms of "stimulation", the strong, bold graphic appeal of new styles, daring imagery and lifestyles was "rolled" into this one image. It surprises me that not once was I encouraged to change my design. Mr. Tonieri (Mr. T, our shop teacher, and the only visual art teacher art the time) did forbid my putting a metal ring in the nose of my pig. No "accessories" are allowed. "Keep it pure" being the guide line, a rule I now heartily endorse. I loved my panel so much I made two, and gave one to my Mom, who somehow "misplaced" it after a couple weeks. I'm not surprised the original was moved from center of a wall in the dining hall (being an "M") to a dark corner in a stairwell, although I like to think it has elicited a knowing chuckle or two over the last 50 years!

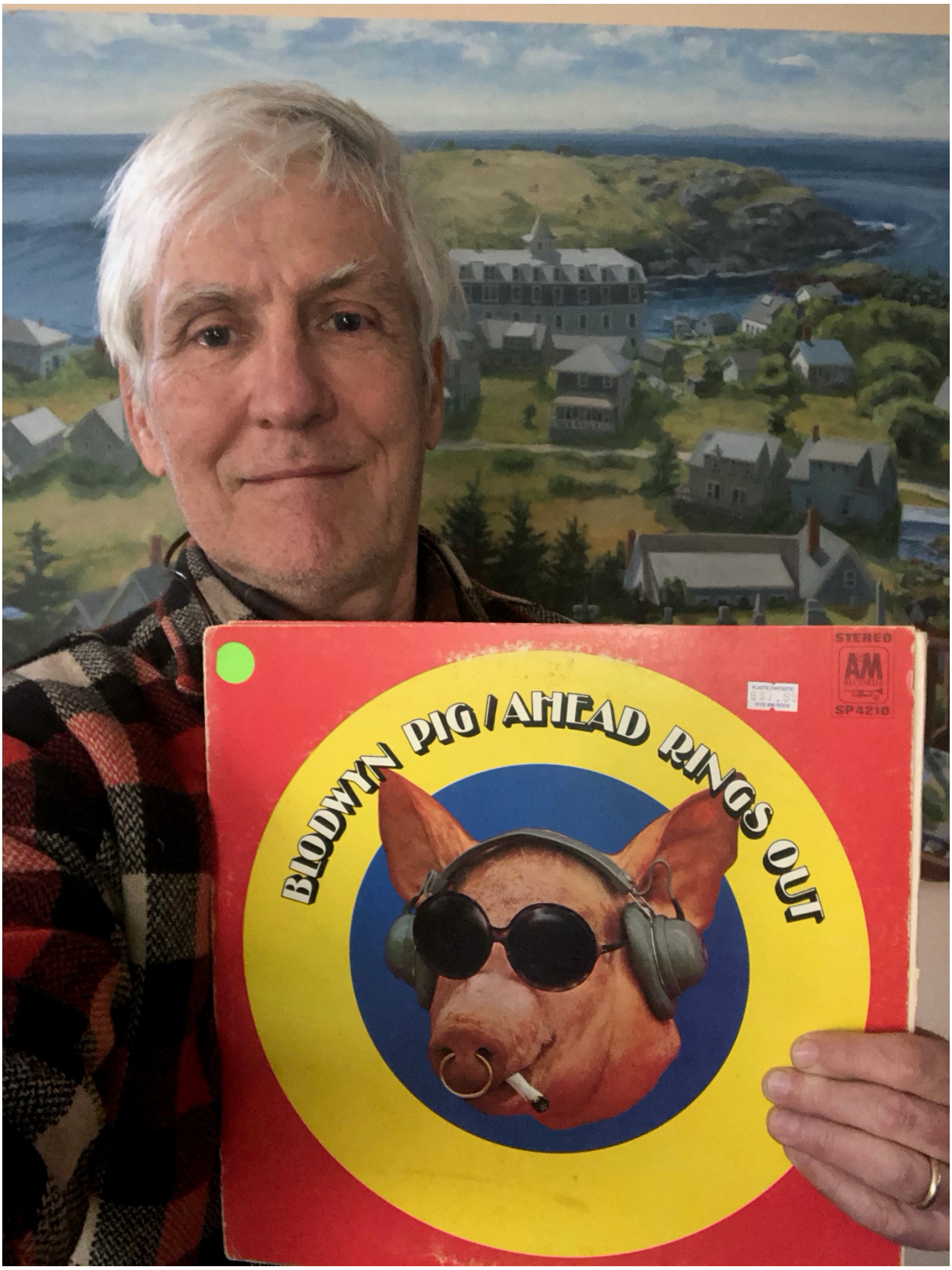
As fate would have it, the panel turned out to be a decent predictor of my future life's path. After majoring in Geology at Vassar College (in the second class to accept men), thanks to Mr. VanBeaver's geology class, I discovered art my junior year after going to the University of Wyoming for a semester and finding out geology was more than wandering around mountain tops looking at landforms. It was love at first stoke of charcoal and I have been making art ever since. What I didn't realize at the time was the love, care and effort I put into my panel(s) was a foreshadowing of my life's journey. It sounds like a cliche but it's true, Belmont Hill gave me a firm scholastic foundation so that I had the confidence and ability to change paths and achieve anything I chose to do.

I say all this to support the BHS educational philosophy. Teaching core learning values, a conservative approach, best supports ones future choices. I came out of Belmont Hill with the tools to try things, fail, try again, and finally settle on a path that fulfilled my soul. I plan to keep on making new "panels" as long as I possibly can.

I look forward to seeing my classmates, all friends, and celebrating our lives and BHS fifty years after graduating as soon as that is possible.

Cheers!

Max Mason III '71


BLODWYN PIG / AHEAD RINGS OUT
STEREO
AM
SP4210