

Thoughts on Wandering Thoughts

Making the classroom scene:

Scene one: "Ohh! Excuse me—I guess I wasn't following very closely. (Nervous giggle.) What page are we on?"

Scene two: (another class and another student, equally embarrassed) "I know, I know, but I just don't understand it. Could you go over that just one more time?" (He hadn't bothered to read "it" before class.)

Scene three: (A professor reading a term-paper to himself) "Other books by Shakespeare include 'A Tale of Mid-Winter' and 'Hamlett', which everybody agrees is his best play. I agree too." (Exit prof, whimpering, to his wine cellar.)

These are some vignettes taken "from life" at the University of Oregon. They were selected to illustrate what is probably one of the most damaging hindrances to effective college education.

Lack of concentration is this hindrance, and the scenes above are some of its symptoms.

You think you can concentrate? Maybe you have this invaluable ability (most folks do), but ask yourself this: in how many classes this term have you been able to absorb yourself completely in the subject at hand? There always seems to be something distracting conveniently nearby: the lesson not completed for the next class-hour, the brunette two seats left, tomorrow's house-dance, the professors halting lecture-style.

Concentration in school is something like having your teeth filled: it's immediately more convenient not to.

But the three examples above show pretty clearly what lack of concentration in school means: wasted time for both student and his academic partner, the professor.

For a student to come into a class, say, of French, and lose his place and/or stutter and hedge around a question he should be able to reason out, is a waste of time. So is a term-paper that shows no more "concentrated" effort than a hasty reading of a few sources, and no personal examination to speak of.

Why can't these (us!) "distracted" students come to closer grips with their class-

subjects? As we've already suggested, part of the answer is no further than the nearest distraction, whether it's an open window or the professor's "startling" tie.

But part of the problem may well lie in an academic system that requires most students to attend six hour-long classes two or three times per week, with as many as five in a row in one day. To spend just fifty minutes on History of Philosophy and then to rush on to Math 101 for a similar period requires some furious mental gear-shifting. Most students, in fact, can't make such a full-range shift in topics and approaches fast enough to get up much "mental speed" before the next class arrives.

They either strip their gears, or stay in low throughout the whole trip.

This might be a partial solution: students and professors who have had connection with seminars and other two-hour-and-longer courses are pretty well agreed that they can concentrate on and go much deeper into the subject in such "jumbo" classes, than they can ever do in the traditional class-hour.

By the same token, perhaps the traditional five- or six-class class term's schedule could be replaced (particularly in non-professional areas) with fewer classes, of two hour or more duration, and of course more general and "surveying" in approach.

Yogi mystics advise their disciples that Nirvana can be approached by concentrating on one's navel. Oregon's students might well replace that mystical object with the classes on their schedule.

Footnotes

There was much talk at last week's Senate meeting about previous Senate attempts to stir, and to depend on, interest in student government: "We've had our hands burned trying this kind of thing before."

Comment: how can you get burned in a region where there literally is "no fire?" In line with this, Senate faculty member Prof. Howard Dean had one of the best quips in ASUO annals: "Will the Senate rove, while hands burn?"

More Class Distractions

(SEE LEFT)



"I don't know why it's so hard to turn."

John Lengel

Prediction: Senate Ransomed For Indian, Pioneer Retired

Here is a roundup of predictions (in capsule form), for the next year. Technically predictions for the new year should be made at the beginning of the year. However, we didn't think of it. But here they are, who knows, this prediction idea might catch on.

The ASUO Senate will put the show on the road with one night stands slated in 19 major U.S. cities and 53 foreign countries. The University will take 40 per cent of the gross with the remaining profits ticketed for Kwama. They (Kwama) in turn will build a memorial to the now defunct bunion derby. The statue (a ten-story life-like replica of a bunion), will be erected on top of Friendly Hall.

The co-op and Student Union will switch buildings. The library will be converted to a student activity center (the Order of the O will burn all the books).

The new swimming pool will be closed to the student body. Instead it will serve as a health spa for honorary members. This is planned to serve as an incentive "to get more kids in activities."

The roving Senate will miss its plane connection at Guam and will cancel its appearance in Beirut.

The Pioneer Father will retire on pension. A statue of Frank Sinatra (holding a scotch on the rocks), with Dean Martin will be substituted in its place. The pioneer mother will be replaced by an abstract of Bess Truman.

Tommy Manville will turn down a Dad's Weekend invitation.

Chris Conner will "come back to Serrento." More and more English soldiers will "go you back to Mandalay."

With the Senate on the road a vigilante student judiciary board will be set up. Its first action will be to expel three students on grounds that "they are intellectuals!"

The Senate will spend the summer on the Riviera. University accountants will eye this move suspiciously.

Ford will reveal plans for a sports car that will seat 11 six-footers.

The Co-op will merge with the Eugene Water and Electric Board, General Motors, and U.S. Steel.

Relative's Weekend will take the place of Homecoming. The student with the most relatives bivouaced on the campus for the weekend is the winner. The winner will be treated to a round of applause on Friday at Four.

A newly elected queen will say, "this is not a great honor—but I'd like to thank all the people who voted for me just the same."

Boris Pasternak's "Doctor Zhivago" will be condensed to one page by Reader's Digest.

"Hurricane" Jackson, Art Argon, and Eddie Fisher will conduct a coaches' clinic on the Oregon campus come late August.

The Senate will wind up its world tour next December with a whistle stop campaign through Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. Through a lack of planning they will wander into the Great Salt Lake Desert. Weakened by starvation, they will be captured by a remote tribe of Nez Perce Indians. They will be held for ransom until the University returns Chief Joseph.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Emerald Editor:

To William W. Quesinberry,

In my judgment, the book review of "Doctor Zhivago" offered by Miss Treece in Friday's Emerald was an excellent piece of writing. It reflected sound organization and analysis.

It's excellent also that you challenge her opinion, but your rude manner of so doing left much to be desired.

You recognized, I hope, that Miss Treece was careful to label her review as "opinion." We all have a right to our opinions, and mine is that Miss Treece should be commended for a job well done and that you, Mr. Quesinberry, should learn how to disagree without being disagreeable.

Graduate in Journalism
Ronald Abell

Emerald Editor:

Although Mr. Quesinberry is entitled to his opinion on what the function of literary reviews should be, his rather personal attack on the review of "Dr. Zhivago" was far enough beyond the bounds of good taste and good sense to call for a reply.

The review was written in a tone of humility and modesty as that of a student reading the book for the first time. It wasn't offered as "sterling critical analysis."

Whether or not it was ac-

curate in its most headlineable conclusion, the review was well written and penetrating. It would do credit to any college newspaper or student reviewer.

Mr. Quesinberry didn't mention his own opinion of the book. What the Nobel judges say is good enough for him. If he was living in Russia, he could with a conscience equally at peace accept the position of established authority there that it is a poor book and not worth reading.

It isn't the function of a reviewer, or any journalist simply to bow to authority. The first duty of the reviewer was to her judgement. Mr. Quesinberry was entitled to disagree with the evaluation, after reading the book itself. He accomplished little by pointing to the glaring "heresy."

Ken Robison
Graduate in
Journalism

Emerald Editor:

It is highly gratifying to learn that the campus is possessed of at least one fearless critic who is unafraid to loose his thunderbolts and let the chips fall where they may.

I have reference, of course, to Willy Quesinberry's courageous attack on the shocking book review that brazen Pat Treece had the audacity to write for Friday's Emerald. It is equally gratifying to have one's

faith in the infallibility of the Nobel Prize Committee restored after it had been shaken to its very roots by a mere wisp of a (gasp) girl.

Let's face it Willy, it's just remotely possible that Pat didn't mean to subvert the literary taste of the campus, although on face value that seems to be the case. Maybe we should take a milder tack and give poor presumptuous Pattie the benefit of some of the vast wisdom of the ages that we graduate students have stored up during the course of our endless search for knowledge.

The first thing for you to learn, Pat, is never to express your opinion unless you're sure it will find favor with the Mob. No matter how well thought out and honest your opinion may be, and how tastefully it is presented, you're a heretic if you don't conform. The very idea of a girl reading such a book is bad enough, but that she should have the impudence to hold opinions contrary to those of the omniscient majority (who doubtless haven't bothered to read the book) is intolerable. By the way, Pat, thanks for the best piece of critical writing to appear in the paper this year.

Speaking of tending to your knitting, Willy, why don't you read the book instead of writing nasty letters?

Arthur P. McDermott
Graduate in Journalism