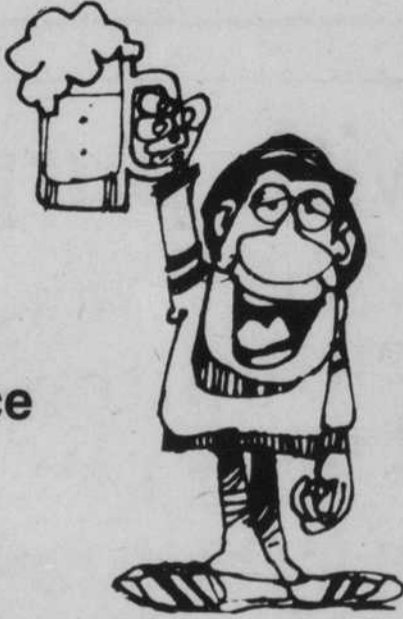


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Reflections on death, meaning

Perhaps it is because I'm now approaching the twilight side of the mountain of life that my thoughts more frequently center on the reality — and irreversible finality — of death. It is not a morbid preoccupation, but rather a periodic philosophic pondering of the "situational meaning" of certain lives which have ended during the past 21 years. Apart from wrenching deaths of nationally visible personalities like John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., — here at the University, there was also the head-on highway collision on June 17, 1969 which claimed the life of acting President Charles Johnson.

comments ron rousseve

From a situational perspective, the 1968-69 campus ambience at the University (my first year on campus, incidentally) was anything but benign. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the atmosphere then — unlike that of 1983-84 — was "politically turbulent." I shall not attempt to detail here the dramatic events of that tense '68-'69 academic year which journalism professor Ken Metzler has portrayed so vividly in his gripping book "Confrontation: the Destruction of a College President" (Nash, 1973). I mention the enormously stressful campus ethos that year in passing, because only by attempting to envision it in some way can one, 15 years later, gain an appreciation for the courageous endurance and principled integrity manifested by Johnson during what turned out to be the last year of his life.

And on what principles did he choose to take his stand? When I remember the man he was, the following convictions invariably surface as

sources of the "meaning" Johnson was able to wrest from his short tenure as acting president of the University:

Steadfast commitment to the concept of the liberal university as "a place where it is possible to bring up for examination all ideas... in the firm conviction that through this process those of value will find ultimate acceptance."

Regarding student dissent, confidence in due process procedures and in "controlled confrontation" — bringing all parties to an issue together for open debate in an atmosphere of relative calm.

Overall, his administrative style was patient and consultative — reflecting an unswerving humanitarian nuance which prompted Glenn Starlin to refer to Johnson (in his moving eulogy in June 1969) as one who may have "cared too much in his desire for right and reason to hurry us to a better world."

I believe that the important legacy of the late Charles Johnson remains intact on campus 15 years after his death. In short, it is an uncommon affirmation of free inquiry and critical questioning in defense of the kind of open university that is indispensable to the vitality of a pluralistic, democratic society.

Such a legacy places Johnson prominently in line with Arthur Flemming, Robert Clark, William Boyd, and now University Pres. Paul Olum — each of whom has also fostered a climate of intellectual openness and appropriate free expression here, when the simple expedient of forcible suppression might have been the easier course to follow.

It is fitting that we keep alive the memory of the late Charles Johnson — for in honoring him we also honor this University.

Ron Rousseve is a professor of counseling psychology at the University.

letters

Look closer

In response to Rick Galliher (*Emerald*, May 24): If you'd take a little care and look at the bar graph painted on 13th Street, you'd see that it represents the proposed U.S. Federal Funds Budget outlays for the 1985 fiscal year. You present figures from last year's unitary budget which included Social Security under Human Resources.

I do not know you. I don't know what sort of politics or politicians you believe in, but to label me and those who painted the graph as Communists is prejudice and clearly thoughtless. We are not Communists. We feel that our action was patriotic.

We cannot believe that a president who chooses to fund suffering, torture and murder around the world over human needs could have compassion for the people of his own country. We expressed the budget in visual form because we want others to comprehend the absurd imbalance of this budget. It symbolizes the hateful policies of the Reagan Administration.

We are not worms and you're not a worm. Please transcend

the "us and them" mentality and let's work together for peace and justice and stable future.

Kathryn Kelly
student campaign for disarm.

Laughing

In regards to the letter written by Ronald Harper:

The only thing "seriously wrong" here, is with his reasoning. Harper claims that the minority of the students are being discriminated against. Very interesting hypothesis indeed. I take it if we gave in to his pleas, and gave the *Commentator* its funding, that the interest of the students would be satisfied. I got a bigger laugh out of this notion than from that issue's episode of "Bloom County." I suppose that the 1,715 students who voted against the funding will be satisfied as well. I don't think so....

The *Commentator* had all year to win friends and influence people, and it obviously (judging from the vote) failed miserably in this endeavor. As for this publication being extraordinary; the only thing I found extraordinary about the *Commentator* was how many

different ways their writers and editors could dream up to put liberals down. Quite an accomplishment.

In closing, I'd just like to say that I actually love the *Commentator*, and that no bottom of a parrot cage is complete without a copy.

John Chandler
senior, telecommunications

Clarify

In reading the article "IFC doesn't challenge Hotchkiss' veto" on May 24 I saw a quotation from Tim Jordan, co-editor of *Off The Record*. He was quoted as saying, "We had to fight for an additional \$200 for a publication that has been on campus for 18 years." What publication and/or which 18 years is he talking about? As the ASUO secretary for nearly two-and-a-half years (November 1978 — March 1981) during the administrations of Ramon Herrera, Scott Bassett and David Eaton, I can attest to the fact that no *Off The Record* or anything even vaguely similar existed during that time. Jordan, please clarify your statement.

Donna Holleran
office manager, English dept.

oregon daily emerald

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