



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

EUGENE, OR 97403-1942

OLDER THAN AVERAGE

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Graphic by Lorraine Rath

On Being Average

I'd always heard that returning students did better the second time around. After all, we've tested the waters of the real world, grown in self-understanding and assessment, and clearly defined our long-range goals. At least that's the theory.

And who knows, it might just be true. It's a little early yet to start the champagne flowing, but my immediate circle of mid-twenties-and-up returnee friends and I have survived our first fledgling terms with perfect

grades.

Granted, there have certainly been greater accomplishments in the history of humankind, but nonetheless I thought this worthy of some recognition.

So in the spirit of mutual support and self-aggrandizement, I suggested to my "non-traditional" friends that we form our elitist society: the Straight-A club. Alas, the thought had scarcely been uttered when we instantly knew it was doomed to failure.

Those gosh-darn transcripts

from days of yore, laden with C's and D's and W's (lots of W's) — those good old early college-dazed days in the hedonistic lands of California and Colorado all came back to dash our hopes for that elusive 4.0.

What the hell, it was a good idea anyhow. And it might have spawned an even better one: the B-Average club. Not only is this more realistic than the former cliquish concept, it's also a whole lot more accessible. Why, you can have a "B" average, or

just simply "be average" in order to merit membership. Sounds great on paper, doesn't it? Except for yet another pernicious catch.

Aside from the foreboding question of just what does it mean to be average in this day and age, I am faced with the startling realization that I am not.

Average, that is.

Me and all the other 25-years-old-and-up attendants of this institution of higher learning discovered this sobering fact in a recent Admissions Office mailing: We have a label. We are (are you ready for this?) OLDER THAN AVERAGE.

Now I suppose that should be taken as a compliment. After all, "older than average" does sound a lot like "above average." And then there's the old adage, "You're not getting older, you're getting better." Whether that was the hook line to a Geritol ad or the one for Miss Clairol Conditioner eludes me just now, but the sentiment is there anyway.

At any rate, as the famous bard once said, a title by any other name is still a title (or something like that). So on to definitions.

Webster's (ah, authority personified) states that average is an adjective "...containing a

mean proportion; ordinary; normal..." and so on. Well, I'm not of the sort to advocate meanness, and being ordinary does sound rather blase, so maybe I'll just make up my own definition. "Average — (adjective) all-encompassing, all-inclusive; the good, the bad and the ugly, and everything in between." Or to put it more simply, here's the Latinate motto of Lake Wobegon: Sumus quid sumus (we are what we are).

But don't get me wrong. I realize that we are heading swiftly into the 1990s, and having it all is more "in" than being average. I mean, I drink Michelob Light as much as any good American, and I'm hip to the Army's theme song of being all that you can be, but people, believe me, it's OK to be average.

Or to get straight A's, or straight D's. "Life is hard," says my current favorite song. Can't get to heaven on roller skates, but at least we can all walk that way together. Us and the rest of the average world.

— JOSHUA HAMILL

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Spectrum

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