

Graduation '90

On facing the 'dreaded question'

Over spring break, my parents had a party to which they invited many of their neighbors, most of whom they had never met before — nor had I. But because I was home for vacation, I had to hang out and talk to these people and appear hospitable.

Unfortunately, every time my parents introduced me to one of these people, they would start out by saying, "This is our daughter, who is graduating from the University of Oregon in June."

The inevitable response would be: "Oh! How exciting! What are you going to do after you graduate?"

So many people asked me that question that I've resorted to giving unorthodox answers to confound these curious types, in the hope they will leave me to wallow alone in my own confusion over what direction my life will take after I step out of Autzen Stadium on June 10. They just can't take "I don't know" for an answer.

I told one man I was planning to move to Alaska to grow poppies in the tundra. He looked at me as if I'd had too much to drink, which I had, but still, it wouldn't have mattered what I told these people. They wouldn't believe

anything I told them unless it was something as sensible like planning to go into real estate acquisition and development.

My friend Adam seems to have discovered the same thing. One day I found him sitting on the curb in front of the University Bookstore staring off into space while eating a slice of pizza. Out of curiosity, I asked him the dreaded question: "So Adam, what are you going to do with your life?"

He looked me straight in the eye and said without a blink, "I'm going to Africa to gather frogs."

Have you ever noticed how grownups have a never-ending supply of advice for you when they discover you are getting out of college and going into the so-called real world?

Back at my parents house, one woman who recently sent her "perfect child" off to Portland's Lewis and Clark College, where the library is open 24 hours a day, asked me what I was going to do after graduation. I told her I planned to run a chairlift at a ski resort for a while, so I could perfect my slalom technique without having to pay for lift tickets.

Rather than do the polite thing and accept my answer, she reacted violently and in-



Stephanie Mencimer

formed me that my parents did not pay for me to go through four years of college to run a chairlift!

While I was using most of my energy to avoid grownups of this sort at my parents' party, I had a sudden flashback of Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate*. I kept waiting for some guy in a pin-striped suit to pull me aside and whisper in my ear, "Plastics, my girl. Plastic is the future."

But the only thing people felt inclined to tell me was that awfully surprising fact that there is no money in journalism. No, really?

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