

"Would the real Don Porter please stand up"

The hand-made poster on the office wall reads: "To Don-- We Want Your Bod!" Next to it is a picture of a little boy, shoes untied and clothes askew, a look of bewilderment in his appealing big eyes. Below him are the words: "We're All In This Together!"

These posters next to each other seemed incongruous; however, they were very descriptive of the young man I was about to meet.

A smile and a warm handshake while being led into his office along with a continuous stumbling of spilled words from the 19-year-old Associated Student Government President, Don Porter, varified the differing opinions I found while researching this story.

My ears were hearing Porter's smoke-screen of words about what the ASG is planning, doing, hopes to do and when may consider hoping to do. All the while, my eyes and senses were telling me, "Here is a young man who is determined and quite skillful at knowing what he thinks is his best side." I wondered . . . have I met a true politician?

Porter continues his constant flow of words while I settle in, and begin to see his energetic body movements and try to keep up with his thought and speech patterns, which seem to jump around like a scared jack-rabbit. Every-which way!

He is stylishly dressed in a full-sleeved rose colored shirt over which he's added a calf-leather vest. His dark curly hair hangs to his shoulders and frames the brown eyes that appear to see through and beyond me.

He talks non-stop. I had to



interrupt his talking marathon for, as yet, I had not asked him a question. "Don, wait just a minute, I came to find out who you really are . . . Who IS Don Porter?" I asked.

His dark eyes gleamed, his mouth stopped working and genuine pleasure spread over his face as he exclaimed, "You know, no one has asked me that before!"

Because Porter seems as though he has never asked himself this question, and says so. I decide to break the question into parts to try and

find the man who seemed to be hiding behind the ready smile, ability to recall (and use) first names and "back-slapping Porter-style of being the successful politician."

"What do you consider your best characteristics?" I asked. But Porter wasn't ready yet to trust me, as he answered, "I am my own best friend."

"Does that mean you trust no one but yourself?" I pushed on because Porter was stalling for time by rambling something about "how one can't please everybody."

"Do you have many close friends?" I countered. His reply was an almost flippant, "I have many friends, I probably know more people by their name than anyone else on this campus."

With even more determination to find the person who seemed to be hiding

"I guess that answers your question, I have no close friends." We talked of why that might be and he seemed surprised to hear himself saying, "I talk too much and never really listen." This came after several comments about how "I can't allow others to bring me down with their problems . . . not many people know me . . . I date a lot but never seem to really get to know any one person very well."

At this point I ask Porter to describe his idea of what a perfect friend might be. "That perfect friend would be someone who knows my good and bad points and will give constructive criticism and still care about me." He begins to talk of his relationship with his father, of whom he says, "My dad not only asks interested questions, but cares enough to listen to my answers."

Although Porter tells of his desire to get into politics, study law and even become governor of Oregon, he says he dislikes going to classes which hold little interest for him. The irony in these statements reminds me of his relatively tender age. When pressed about his wish to become a successful politician and his dislike for structured learning, Porter replies, "I learn more from working with people than from any class I may attend."

Porter graduated from Milwaukie High School in 1978 and tells of his lack of self-discipline and preparation for college with more than a little anger. He says he was taught little in high school and spoke vehemently about a need for change in public schools.

Don Porter cares very deeply about many things. He enjoys movies, especially the old-

Photos and story by Dea Shepherd-Kent

behind this wall-of-words, I asked, "Do you have one or two close friends to whom you can tell about your fears, your successes and your failures? Are you lonely?"

At this, Porter swung his chair from behind his desk where he had been sitting, to within three feet of where I was and sat facing me as he began to let me see the Don Porter that he says, "only my family knows."

Don Porter is a highly motivated, highly sensitive, impatient and very determined young man. He talks of his hurt and disappointment when he was in high school. He had thought, like many other young men and women, that "having a nice car was the key to being popular." He told of the pain he felt when for a time his car was not running and all of his "supposed friends" essentially disappeared. He continued, "It was the car they liked, not me."

Porter acknowledges his impatience with persons who appear to be apathetic toward what is going on in the College society and in society in general. He sees his impatience as a fault and also an attribute. "After all, if no one tries to make things better, we only slide backwards. But one thing I know after being in this office for six months is that we have to work within the system."

The sensitive side of this gregarious young man shows as he speaks of trying to help handicapped students with their special problems. Porter's throat seemed to tighten with emotion as he tells of a problem he failed to help solve. He speaks of feeling guilty because he is healthy and able to move about as he wishes. This usually talkative young man raises his arms in a gesture of helplessness when words fail him.

timers, he works off excess energy when he skis, he feels useful and pleased with the 20 hours he devotes to manning the telephone at the county Crisis Center each month.

He also is lonely much of the time. He is often afraid to let his emotions show through the facade he's built around himself. He laughs, he cries, he feels proud of his successes and deep disappointment with his failures.

After three hours of probing, listening and watching a Don Porter that, apparently, few people really know, this reporter hurried to the typewriter determined to catch this illusive side of a youth who is struggling to grow into that "mystical-self" we all are striving to become.

Like the posters on Porter's office wall, he is a dichotomy . . . but then, "We're All In This Together"—aren't we?

