

Features

College at 56: an experiment in re-learning



Lynne Fox
columnist

It was a Thursday, and, not having much to do but paint my nails, find a full time job or watch TV, I opted for another route. I would go back to college.

Of course, it was possible I was suffering from a brief bout of hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, but knowing my eating habits, I doubted it.

My friends reacted as if I'd been temporarily booted off the Internet of my mind, but they hoped that I'd sign on again and go for the job or, at the very least, start a new quilt.

I wanted adventure, but adven-

ture without tying a bungee cord to my ankle. Still, I wondered whether a woman of 56 years belonged in such a setting.

I already had a degree in English, but that was from back when trees were invented. I thought I might like to write, so I looked for classes that might show off my spectacular skills. I might even learn something.

My ultimate goal was to write in the mornings, collect lots of money from the postman for my brilliance at noon, go to the fabric shop in the afternoon and then watch TV at night. Throw in a dinner out, occa-

sionally, and I'd have a comfortable life. I searched the UNCA catalog for anything I might like and it seemed that I should be in mass communication. Going for that degree necessitated that I take several required courses.

That seemed okay to me, so I carefully selected my classes by the position of the stars and sometimes by their titles.

I soon found that course titles can be deceiving, but decided I would enjoy whatever they led to because, after all, I'd never studied courses like these before. Whatever I learned could be applied somewhere. Hopefully I'd learn something on Tuesday and apply it on Wednesday.

The first day of classes was exciting. I had my fresh, new, clean notebooks and my pens. My only problem was in forgetting to write down the room numbers, so I was a little delayed in getting to classes.

The second day I had that problem solved. I had room numbers memorized.

But about a week and a half into

classes, I began to have doubts about my decision. I had very tiny ones, though. A couple of days later they had grown a bit. Actually, they had grown to the point of total Internet control.

I called my teenage son in Hawaii and, crying enormous tears, told him about my terrible situation. I speculated that I was having the onset of Alzheimer's because my mind had been booted.

I wanted him to know where my will was and where the insurance papers were. What was I to do? It seemed only fair to ask him, since I'd potty trained him and told him what to do with his boogers all those years ago. Now was payback time.

After listening to his irrational mother spew her insecurities, he calmly produced a solution. He said that I had two directives. One, I was to talk to the teacher for more information, and, two, I was to get over it.

Less than a day later, I had already taken his advice and, miraculously, it seemed to work. I wondered where he got all that wisdom.

In one class we have studied the philosopher Jurgen Habermas. He says that communication leads to truth. Well, maybe it does, but I don't think he ever had teenagers.

In our family, communication leads me to laughter and a lot of Clairol moments for yet more gray hair. "What would you think about co-signing for a Harley? It's only \$19,000." Then there was the proudly delivered news that "I've got three surfboards now, Mom."

My mind saw my beautiful 6-foot-3-inch baby on the largest wave ever filmed, with lots of sharks. Maybe I should go for a darker brown this time.

Communication from my side of the table leads to deafness and glassy stares from other members of my family. Maybe I need to communicate like the philosophers do. You know, the kind that uses the big words that I have been trying to absorb, but that I can't even find in my dictionary.

My handsome son at home heard, "Perambulate your inner existence toward your enconscience because

there exists a categorical imperative that you pragmatically transcend your environment into an empirically immaculate existence." He still had the deafness and the glassy stare.

One might quibble over my invention of the word "enconscience," but I think some of these philosophers invent words of their own, too. Anyway, that didn't work any better than when I said, "Clean your room."

Oh well, education can only do so much. Perhaps I should wait a couple of days for the benefits of my education to blossom.

I am still struggling with the assignments, but I have certainly learned some important lessons along the way. For starters, don't read philosophers backwards, as they are hard enough to read from front to back.

I think the biggest lesson remains that, while I may have been booted off the Internet of my mind, this college thing certainly has led to one great adventure. Sometimes even feels like I have bungee cord tied to my body.

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UNCA Jazz Studies and Tim Haden present

Student JAZZ Ensembles

performing in the

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Tuesday, April 25 at 7:30 pm

- UNCA Jazz Lab Big Band (16 piece)
- Spain Jazz Ensemble

Directed by Greg Alewine

Wednesday, April 26 at 7:30 pm

- Jazz Ensemble I
- Jazz Ensemble II

Directed by Mike Barnes

Great Jazz in an informal setting-no charge

(This is an Arts 310 event)

You'd have to ask eight UNCA students for a cigarette before you'd find one.

Of the UNCA students surveyed in the spring of 1999, 68% of the respondents said they had chosen not to smoke.

Don't really want to smoke? Contact Health Services at 6520.

For more information about the survey, contact:

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