



Honor System Explained and Supported

Early in the school year, a complaint from a faculty member that freshmen in his classes were totally unaware that Guilford has an Honor System was forwarded by his department chairperson to the Office of the Academic Dean.

Less than a month later there appeared in the *Guilfordian* Donald Gibbon's Letter to the Editor, expressing his concern over cheating in his classes and requesting responses from students and faculty as to how they felt about the Honor System; whether it works; and, if not, whether it is worth saving.

In the meantime, an article in the September 2, 1975, issue of *The Chronicle of High Education* entitled "Are Honor Systems Doomed?" caught my attention. According to this article, there has been in recent years a significant increase in cheating in colleges and universities because of growing pressure for high grades, crowded examination conditions, inferior or unfair examinations (multiple choice examinations particularly attacked), and a reluctance of students to "rat" on each other. The assertion was

made, "Today, honor codes that depend on students to identify and punish cheaters are limited to the military academies, a small number of private colleges and universities, and a handful of public institutions like the University of Virginia." And we know of the recent scandals at the military academies.

The Guilford College Student Handbook, the Faculty handbook, and the College Catalogue state that Guilford College operates under the Honor System. For most of the fourteen years that I have been at Guilford College, I have accepted these statements at face value. More recently I have questioned their ineffectual and ambiguous nature. I have begun to wonder whether the Honor System is really a viable institution at Guilford or whether we are simply giving lip service to a system which is no longer respected or observed.

Supposedly a college or university Honor System applies to both social and academic regulations. Perhaps today, with the heterogeneous student population and with increased insistence

on student rights, there is no chance that an Honor System can work in a dormitory setting. As a faculty member, I am far more concerned with the operation of the Honor System in academic areas.

I feel that it is essential that an academic Honor System should remain at Guilford College. It is necessary to intellectual inquiry and growth. The alternative is a dictatorial system where in faculty members spy on students to make sure they do not cheat and students make every effort to evade the vigilant measures of the faculty. And no learning is achieved.

In my years at Guilford College, I have assumed the honesty of my students. I am convinced of the honesty of perhaps 90% of those who have enrolled in my classes. I have tried to construct examinations impervious to cheating. I have not been infallible - but cases which I have referred to the Judicial Board have been dealt with fairly and honestly, with full protection of the rights of the students involved.

I have felt that the major violation of the academic Honor Code has not been on tests and examinations but on book reports, term papers and research papers and that these violations have occurred, at least in part, because students do not understand what plagiarism really is. Therefore, I think it may be useful to outline below what I consider the Honor System to mean in its application to academic work.

The individual student is responsible for preparing his own work in every class. He will not copy from another's test or examination paper, nor

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Israel Awareness Week was a very big failure. Of the 5 films which I ordered, only one came in, and that arrived a day late. ("Let My People Go" got good response from the few who saw it.)

As for our Israel information mini-center, about a dozen people showed any interest at all. Those ranged from having no idea of what it was all about (Oh yeah! Isn't this national Jewish week?) to a very few folks very informed on the Middle-east.

The project of silk-screening the Hebrew emblem for Coca-cola on T-shirts also failed, due to runny ink, a stretched screen, and poor quality T-shirts. They were not all of the quality worth selling.

Now we come to our speaker, a professor from Wake Forest, whose credentials were merely that he was one of 15 million Jews. This was to qualify him to speak on "The Mid-east: What's Really Happening There Today?" He proved himself very much in the academic spirit by writing a paper on the subject of Israel, the PLO, and Sadat's visit to the U.S., and standing in front of his **Small** audience (I emphasize the **Small**), read his paper in the best monotone professor-like manner he could muster. The results were a topic loaded with interest presented in a truly boring manner.

However, I can smile and say that the Israeli folkdancing was a success, as it got a relatively good turnout and everyone there just loved the evening.

My friends console me by saying, "Well, Bob it was a start." But gosh/ What's a start which affects so few people? Many have asked me, "How did your week go?" referring to Israel Awareness Week. It's great that they're interested now, but why couldn't they have been then??

will he permit another student to copy from his. The student will not attempt to secure ahead of time nor provide for another student the questions or answers for any scheduled examination. However, once a test or examination has been administered, the questions are considered public property and may be given by one student to another.

All themes, essays, book reports, laboratory reports, or term papers must be the work

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I am reminded of an old cheer that goes: "Apathy, apathy, ree, ree, ree. Give me an A. Give me a P...Aw, forget it." Are all college students really of this apathetic nature? We could counter with a statement that, engrossed in their intensive study experience of college, students are very tired of any extra-curricular learning. They want to be "relaxed and away from it all" when they can. But can students who study 3 or 4 subjects honestly say, "I'm doing my fullest to make myself as educated a person as can be expected of me, and from this narrow experience I can prepare to be a full participating citizen in my society?" I think not. People who turn their backs and look the other way, away from opportunities which may enrich their knowledge and experience, are really limiting themselves tremendously. Perhaps we'd all like to believe that the entire world (as Herb Poole once said) "exists in a 50-mile radius from our own backyards." But this kind of thinking is silly and irresponsible. The world is much larger than that, and evidently all the summer programs and inter-cultural courses aren't succeeding in getting the Guilford students to realize this. I look at all of the foreign students here and ask, "How many have been able to interest any American Guilford student in the situations of his/her native home?" I suspect not many.

Let's look at ourselves and accept some responsibility. As Americans we are called upon many times in international affairs to make very important decisions from 'who gets our food export, arms and money to who we should call our enemies. College is here to provide the opportunity in understanding, multi-various situations in order that we may be able to make these decisions and more.

Can anyone call upon himself to form an opinion without facts and still be fair? Those of you who are still reading this article are going to be those who will be participating citizens who will shape our future. To you I say, "Take advantage of as many of the educational experiences offered here. Be interested and active, and care, so that next time someone asks you, 'What's in Israel?' or 'What's in Africa?' or 'What's your president doing?', you can give an intelligent answer.

Bob Gold