

Insideout

Mike Livingston
Copy Editor

President Clinton's "Read My Lips" line from his inaugural address is: "There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be fixed by what is right with America." That's comforting. Um... Bill, what's right with America?

Relax — I'm not going to say "nothing." Careers in cynicism went out with the Bush regime. But the President, perhaps wisely, left this pivotal question to others anxious to clarify the electoral mandate — e.g. legislators, activists, and (happy happy joy joy) newspaper columnists.

No, seriously: the mandate is garbled, and beyond broad themes like "political reform" and "health care" and "sustainability," the new government must rely heavily on public discourse as a thrasher of specific strategy.

I call public attention, then, to the beginning of our public discourse — not just for pinstriped eggheads anymore, Alexis de Tocqueville and his accidental primer on how to be a meaningful American citizen.

We complain about interest groups and PAC's as if they're a plague of modern avarice, but it was de Tocqueville who first observed that Americans (and not just Quakers) form new committees and civic organizations with obsessive-compulsive frequency. He also recognized that, with a little self-discipline and a committed sense of purpose, citizens' groups have as great potential to achieve as to annoy.

Revisiting this thesis, *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry and Minneapolis pundit Ned Crosby suggest that government, overcommitted by nature (for every thousand points of

light, five hundred wishbones), find new ways to listen to people. Assemble panels, they suggest, of expert — or even non-expert — folks, private citizens who aren't responsible to any mandate or constituency, and listen to them. These "citizen juries" could make the Hard Choices the Clinton administration keeps not-quite-talking about, free from the spectre of political repercussions.

Of course, it remains the power and duty of the elected to take such panels' recommendations or leave them. It raises touchy questions of legitimacy and accountability, going back to another early influence on our brand of democracy: Edmund Burke. (He argued that legislators should not only listen to their constituents, but also think for themselves. It's risky, but it's worth a try. Some voters make sense; others advocate Randleman Dam.)

These are classical ideas taking on a timely importance. For the first time since 1982, the White House and the Capitol are on speaking terms, and The People are, conditionally, supportive of both. The scenario makes the government unusually powerful — its potential to fix things is magnified, as is its potential to screw up.

Freedom of expression — in particular, freedom to criticize the government — is "what's right with America," and the success or failure of the new government hinges on our collective exercise of that freedom.

The *Guilfordian* received more than the usual number of letters to the editor last week, and it's not because there's more to complain about than usual. I'd like to think it's due to a rekindled interest in community dialogue, and the start of something big.

Discrimination in the military

Bernie Smith
Staff Writer

If you were a homosexual, would you enjoy being denied your rights? Would you enjoy not being hired, or dismissed from your job on the basis of your sexual preference? This is something most of us don't even think about, yet it still occurs today in places we think least likely.

I am specifically referring to our military services which have not quite provided the ideal role model concerning treating everyone equally. They may boast that women were not discriminated against during the Gulf War, but

what about the Navy sailor in San Diego who was recently discharged because of his sexuality? This sounds as if it involves just a tad of discrimination. What do you think?

The sad part is that his performance was just as good as anyone else's. Were he not gay, he would have been treated just like everybody else because nothing about him stood out.

However, it was soon learned by his fellow shipmates that he was different from the others, and they immediately ostracized him. They wanted to have nothing to do with him, for fear of running the risk of being called gay as well. Soon top military officials heard



Leigh Kramer(L) watches as Bradley Aldous(C) gets a slap from Kristen Kopcsak(R) in the production of "The Fox," Feb. 3-6.

Photo by Sara Karpenke

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Meredith Drum
Staff Writer

On Tuesday evening, the 26th of January, I went to a program called *Voices For The Earth*, hosted by Theater of Understanding director Andy Fraenkel, as part of Religious Emphasis Week. I came into the program feeling very skeptical. Yet I left feeling like a child — not foolish but rather more wise.

I walked into the Gallery, where the event was held, and sat down. I noticed a man without his shoes sitting on a Persian rug surrounded by various instruments, mostly rattles. I noticed he was burning sage.

So I felt skeptical because I tend to be very apprehensive when I encounter certain forms of ritual that remind me of the Sixties. I think many of my peers feel this way. Why? Probably because we feel that *this* certain type of behavior, *this* certain type of belief, identified by such ritual as burning sage, did not work for our parents' generation; so we disregard and

mistrust it.

I soon had to confront my mistrust, for Andy Fraenkel asked us all to take a piece of sage to represent our weapons of defense, of attack, of deception, of destruction, etc... He asked us to put that piece of sage on the fire to burn away our "weapons" and allow our selves to relate peacefully to one another. Thus my weapon of defense, namely "I don't like this hippie crap," was called out and laid on the fire.

But this wasn't an exorcism. And I did not get rid of my apprehension so easily.

Yet when Andy began to tell us the story of the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, quoting passages from Coleridge at length, I began to notice the man's talent for telling a story. I began to respect him and listen to what he was teaching.

Then he told us a Native American story about a white beaver who was the healer in an animal lodge. And I realized that my own values were being expressed here: love

for the earth and all her creatures.

Then Andy and his friend put on a skit about an Indian holy man who meets a hunter. The holy man teaches the hunter about the bad Karma which the hunter has gained through killing animals. The hunter understands his wrongs when he sees a vision of all the animals that he has killed coming back to haunt him — a la *A Christmas Carol*.

Then I remembered a time that I was vacuuming out my car and I was destroying webs and sucking up the spiders who lived there into that angry and loud modern-floor-cleaner. In the midst of my cleaning I had a vision that a huge spider, the size of a Mack truck, was approaching me. It slowly lifted up its leg and tapped me on the shoulder. I turned to face it, and while staring into one of its many eyes, I apologized.

Seriously, though, I felt something like this when the program came to a close. The mama spider had come to tell me that I have a few things to learn.



"I just had the most existential experience I've had all semester. A sixteen-year-old girl just tried to pick me up at Taco Bell."
-Matt Levy

"What we have now that we didn't have before is a future."
-Mike Livingston on the number of first-year students in campus organizations

"I'm convinced this is what drove Manson insane."
-Eddie Pike on early Beatles songs

The *Guilfordian* is always looking for amusing quotes. If you hear anything that strikes you as particularly poignant then submit it to us: Box 17717 or in the boxes in Founders Lobby or the Underground.