

Academic Mountainbiking

PROF. CHRIS CRAIG, ENGLISH DEPT
Guest Writer

This August, eight new first-year students, a sophomore, and I went mountain biking in West Virginia, a four-day outing event. Up there in the clean, almost heavenly air, I realized how amazingly well we know our physical limitations. It's hilly there and difficult climbing, but we already knew how to climb these physical mountains. We proved it to ourselves on that trip.

The trip was part of Avanti, a Guilford-organized, pre-orientation program for incoming freshmen. In addition to many other day-long jaunts, Avanti offered multiple-day trips that gave total strangers a safe situation, bringing them together to tackle a common (and usually fun) difficulty. One option was to go whitewater rafting, another took folks climbing. The mountain bike trip proved particularly challenging. It made me realize that climbing and coasting through the Appalachian mountains seems a good metaphor for the academic mountaineering that occurs each semester at Guilford.

You see, physical success awaits at the top of the hill. We envision the goal and then work hard to enjoy ourselves on the way up. If during the trip our bodies said "slow down," we stopped, we slowed down, we walked instead of ran. Bodies won't be ignored. Unconsciousness is hard to argue down.

So when the ten of us tried to tackle those West Virginia rises, those of us with the energy and impetus pedaled straight up, but the ones with singing muscles saw the hills and stepped off their iron horses to walk. Everyone had their limit—the group respected that—and so everyone, ultimately, did fine. We already knew how to climb physical mountains because we understood our muscles; we respected the strength of our lungs. Muscles are muscles, we say, and they only stretch so far.

But when it comes to academic hills, we tend to think differently. We treat the brain

like a machine. Rather than acquiesce to the hills, we try to macho and grunt our way through difficult semesters and confusing papers.

When it comes to climbing physical mountains, we understand the threat of physical collapse. But we don't necessarily recognize its mental counterpart. We, the academically excited, the mentally masochistic, abuse our intellectual limits. We don't know when to climb off the bike to walk.

What I'm saying is that when its three A.M. the morning before the final paper is due, and you're juiced on No-Doze and burnt Wilco coffee, feeling a little yellow but awake, most of you will experience brain bonk. That doesn't mean you'll miss the paper deadline. On the contrary, you might turn it in on time, but the paper itself will be dead, a corpse, DOA. Your professor will notice.

We're all tempted to treat our brains, by sprinting our way through the academic projects at the last minute. I have done it too. But imagine the head as a muscle, and think of the abuse we're putting it through. Isn't it time for group brain massage?

Most of us learn sooner or later to respect the wisdom that we can solve some of our homework problems all of the time. Why, even Guilford physics professor Rex Adelberger admitted the other day to his class that he couldn't, at the time, solve a perplexing problem; he got off the bike to walk. Later on, his brain refreshed, he worked the problem again.

The moral of this story is that you, Guilford students, need to slow down when the work gets overwhelming. You'll need to start your projects earlier, but you'll ultimately get addicted to that too. When your brain becomes brutalized from producing discrete connections, from finding powerful implications, when you're lost, go walk in the woods. Get off the metaphorical mountainbike and stroll—let your cerebellum chill. You'll climb higher and have much more fun doing it.

McNemars returned to Boston. She began teaching English as a second language to immigrants in the Chelsea area, then became an adult literacy teacher in a family literacy project.

This made me realize how empowering literacy it is to people, particularly women," McNemar says.

With a history degree from Connecticut College and a Master's in Urban Education from the University of Pennsylvania, she had begun her Ph.D. work with Boston University's Literacy, Languages, and Cultural Studies program.

She soon became interested in adolescent literacy, and this led her to a pregnant and parenting teen program. "I walked in," she laughs, "and in five minutes had one hand on a stroller and another on a protractor."

She continues, "I began to watch and lis-



The President's Corner

by Steve
Marasco

Problems are actually opportunities. The larger the problem is, the larger the opportunity." -Ron Smothermon

The Guilford College Community will face numerous problems this year. As a student, you are an essential part of that community. I want to encourage all of you to join together to face the issues that face Guilford and its students on a daily basis. Take advantage of the opportunities presented to you. Take advantage of the fact that AT THIS SCHOOL PEOPLE WILL LISTEN TO YOU. Talk to your Senate representative(s). Ask what is going on and give your opinion. That's what they're there for. Do NOT just complain about things. DO SOMETHING about it. It doesn't take much. Simply talk to the people who will listen.

If you want to do more than that go to a Senate meeting Wednesdays at 3:35 p.m. in Boren lounge. Voice your opinion. You will not be turned away. We will listen. If you are interested in joining one of the Senate committees that change the way Guilford is

run just ask. It's that simple. (We Quakers wouldn't have it any other way...)

This week in Senate we discussed a proposal that would switch the quiet reading space in Dana Lounge with the recreation room downstairs in Founders. We also approved several appointed positions on Senate.

Thank you to everyone that participated in ROCK THE VOTE this week! All the help and support is appreciated. Now just remember to vote on November 5th.

Also, thank you to everyone who contributed to the discussion on Marriott food services.

Organization leaders take note: there will be a Leaders Meeting on Friday, October 4th (next Friday!) in Boren lounge at 3:35 p.m. We will be discussing what we are all up to and what resources are available to organizations. We will also be serving PIZZA! Please send one representative of your organization.

As always, if you have any questions, comments, concerns, ideas or if you would like to join a Senate committee or just help out, please call the Senate office at x2310. We are ready to listen. Thank you.

The Union Vox

CARA SKEAT
union president

The Guilford College Student Union would like to take this opportunity to introduce itself to you! Union exists to bring students here entertaining and enlightening events. You probably have already taken part in one or more of our events, like Welcome Weekend, the Family Weekend Student Coffeehouse, the trip to Emerald Pointe Water Park, Jay Friedman's "Sex Matters," or the Christine Kane coffeehouse.

Union has even more fun events planned for the rest of the semester. There will be dances, a homecoming bonfire, films, more student coffeehouses, and even a concert! We invite you all to come to these events. We are also producing a poster calendar with all of our events on it, so you can stay in-

formed and decorate your room at the same time.

We also invite every Guilford student to become involved with Union on an individual level, by attending our meetings on Tuesday nights at 9 pm in the Passion Pit upstairs in Founder's Hall. We are always looking for more student input, and this is your chance to tell us what you think about what Union is doing.

Tuesday night meetings are also your chance to help put on events, because that is when you can become what we call a production assistant. You can help publicize events, set up for a concert, hand out free goodies at athletic events . . . the list of what needs to be done goes on and on! Simply talk to one of our event coordinators at the meeting.

See you on Tuesday!

The Power of Language

CORY BIRDWHISTELL
staff writer

You probably take the use of print as a given. You read these words, as most of us do, without effort or thought. But for many people in this country, this newspaper would act as another barrier to our culture.

Britta McNemar works for them.

It was really sort of life-changing," McNemar says about her family's 1989 stay in a Siberian town. Raised in Pittsburgh and educated throughout the Northeast, she discovered the importance of literacy while teaching English to teachers at the local science and math high school.

I came away with a tremendous appreciation for how hard women in Russia have to work to balance home and their jobs," McNemar explains. "And for them to give an hour each day to learn English. . . well it made me think about the power of language."

This thought stuck with her when the

"The process has a lot of challenge and pain," but she has hopes for its success.

ten and realized I never saw anyone reading to their child." This made her see the gap between adolescent literacy programs and family literacy programs. While the family literacy field recognizes the importance of families reading and learning together, it doesn't include teenage parents.

McNemar concluded that the adolescent programs should coordinate with family lit-

eracy programs, and since then worked toward making this reality. The process has included a lot of challenges and pain, she says, but she has

hope for its success.

Meanwhile, she documented everyday literacy behavior for adolescents, interviewing and visiting five teenagers in Boston for her doctoral thesis. As an observer it was hard to see things she may not agree with. "It was

hard to sit and watch things go on," she recalls.

Now McNemar has finished with her research and faces writing her conclusions. As for the students on which her research is based, she says, "It was harder to leave them than I imagined, but I'll be back to see them this semester."

When she finishes the writing, she smiles, "I'll be ready to jump into family literacy here. I have lots more to learn but I'd like to do some writing and advocacy work for adolescent women."

It is interesting for McNemar to be here, where Shirley Bryce Heath has done a great deal of literacy work. "If I had a hero in literacy, it would be her," she says.

North Carolina has lots of good work going on in literacy," she explains, "and I can't wait to get involved. This is a wonderful location."