

# Progress, Faith, and Future

by pat miller

Still trailing after my own beginnings, close on the heels of a conversation about UNCC: the nature of this institution. It is a very young establishment, and youngest when one comes to the realization that it's all future and no past. The past is the story of a one-woman miracle now sacrificed to growth, to ever re-producing plans for the future. Yes, listening to talk about the future of UNCC IS a little like having bees live in your head.

Still again this year there are more students than ever, a greater number of people with lives involved here. Stumps are being pulled out and over for a science building: progress. A hole in a cafeteria wall is becoming a site for entertainment: beginning of a residential community? And a basketball team finally responding to the dollar-massage will bring God-knows-what-here: publicity, a Name, more students...two or three years of more basketball will bring more building plans.

But what is there now? What is

there besides projections and the feeling that UNCC is not real yet? Architecture. A trusted source in Architecture practically defies the department, raising its novel ways. People do hang around the studios late at night, a lot of interest there, and every once in a while some curious on-campus manifestations: geodesic domes, cardboard shelters. Fascinating reading material seems in evidence there. Indeed there are rumors of flexibility in Architecture. Is there any structure to the rumors?

A confidant from Religion assures me that this department is really where it is. Some professors inhabit the area with an evident willingness to examine themselves and their methods, and an equal desire to approach the things new that might work. Manifestations? Don't know -- have you seen any? I've heard of some interesting conflicts in religion classrooms: open-eyed exploratory professor meets glassy-eyed christian-fundamentalist student. What a strange revolution this is,

when the student covers his ears and says "Stop! Stop! I'm not here to learn anything new or different!"

The BCA is a leap of faith, and it would be a good question to ask it what it's doing here. Many free universities across the nation operate with essentially the same philosophy, but with an added struggle for survival. At UNCC the struggle is all paid for. If Religion is inching toward the future, the BCA is already there, and who can deal with that? This leads to suspicion everywhere, and difficult times generally. Unless the BCA program is taken over somehow from the inside out, it could all go down the progressive drain.

There's a lot of talk out of HDL, and a fair measure of rhetoric too. Students zero in on the 201 course because it is reputedly crip, and all you have to know is about human potential and self-discovery. And all that's explained in those sweet books passed on by HDL, that tell one

how to charge forth and smash open education against the guard-dog mentality of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools. Of course they don't tell you that. It would be better if they did. It would be better if the maxims of John Holt and A.S. Neill were not taught as techniques to "use".

Too many stories are coming back, of misguided UNCC initiates withering in local classrooms. I saw one whose final method amounted to kicking over desks and yelling a lot. All this because he disbelieved the philosophy of open education but tried to fulfill it in the classroom because that was what they taught at UNCC. Perhaps it is a sign, that HDL is growing too, toward some realization of the contradiction in the term "teacher education". Perhaps after that change the department will find something to do that makes sense.

What about everybody never heard about? What with all the business majors inundating this campus, why are they all

uniformly inanimate? Who gets excited about their English professor? Who is enthralled in the halls of Political Science? Who's so obscure that the name's not even recalled?

There's something distasteful about writing this. Somehow it seems that it's not quite acceptable to discuss UNCC as a place to be. It's like Eckerson's drugstore: everybody's gotta be somewhere. A bumpersticker says, "I'D RATHER BE IN HELL THAN CHAPEL HILL", on a car in the UNCC parking lot, indicating that one person has already made the choice. Why can't the existence and future of UNCC be discussed, as if it were something interesting? Surely it's not because it's something notorious. Maybe it's because everyone is here by second choice and everyone is bored. Are we all bored by UNCC?

Are we all infinitely bored by the notion of a future for this place, and what that would ever get us?

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