

Bits from Butler

NANCY

BUTLER

Last month I, apparently, wrote a chocolate column. That is, it seemed to have the same effect as chocolate. When someone devours a chocolate bar, he can expect one of a variety of reactions. If he has an allergy, he'll break out in a rash. Or if he's like me, he'll just plain break out! And so this column last month was chocolate-coated, and the reactions sprouted up into a garden of rashes. Some were rather becoming, and others mighty ugly. All kinds of faces broke out. There were laughs and sneers and approving nods and disgusted "tch-tch"'s. I was puzzled the whole month. And the other day I asked a guy why he thought there were so many different reactions to what I'd written. He said, "Guess it depends what side of the fence you're on."

Well, that was even more amazing. After he'd said that, I took my books and went to one of my "correspondence classes" (that's a class in which you get all your letters written). Anyway, instead of corresponding, I thought about the whole idea of fences. The particular fence he had in mind was a student-faculty-administration, three-way job. So who's ever heard of a three-sided fence? It was true that the reactions to last week's column can be categorized pretty well like that. But it just didn't seem to me that it should be that way. What I mean is, there's no sense in building fences or taking sides. It's all a matter of discerning truth from untruth. And there are so many truths here that are accepted by most everyone. For instance, it's true that some students aren't students, and it's true that some classes are intollerable. About everyone I talked with agreed on that. It is also true that I was not sympathizing with class-cutters (no matter what it appears to be), just as I'm suggesting NOT now that we all run to classes and write letters. But some things are entirely true at Elon, no matter which "side of the fence" you're on.

The third lecture in the "Last Lecture Series" just about summarized my point. It's a shame if you missed it. The topic was apathy. And if that always-hanging shadow, lack-of-school-spirit, has been haunting you, apathy is the cause. It's not really the school spirit that's apathetic; it's the means, apathy causing the end---no, and I do mean no--school spirit (and Jay you're wrong that no one cares about it.). There's a lot of talent here, I know there is. And there's always something wrong when a student in college won't develop his talent and make it do something for the school and, ultimately, himself. I've seen it in the pitiful response to pleas for COLONNADES material. Good grief, I know more people here write than submit to it. But to return to apathy and its source. Apathy cannot be filtered out and separated into test tubes. There is so much that causes it, and I couldn't even infer at half the causes.

Recently I discovered that there's a very active committee on campus working for faculty improvement. I'm mentioning that because from most students' standpoints, this thing about certain members of the faculty is the only source of apathy readily visible. There are others, as I've said. But this one is particularly close to the student. So, there are teachers at Elon who really aren't teachers, just as there are students who aren't really students. And I want to know what they're all doing here. I just can't see how it's possible for a professor or a student to bob along like a buoy from day to day not really giving a darn, without inspiration or interest, without a love for what's going on around him, without some sort of pedestal on which to build something a little bit holy.

What can we do? We can ask ourselves the same questions that Dr. Muldrow asked in her lecture last Tuesday. And as for those few sorry professors who are smothering so much of Elon's potential---maybe they have consciences, too.

Apathy--a sort of living oblivion. --Greely

There are some men formed with feelings so blunt that they can hardly be said to be awake the whole course of their lives.--Burke

The long mechanic pacings to and fro; the set gray life, and apathetic end.---Tennyson

The lazy man aims at nothing and usually hits it. --Ellis