

Editorial

Guilford's family

Jim Shields
Editor

In the spirit of trivia, someone starts to name married couples on the college staff. Suddenly, it occurs to someone else to tabulate the results. As they run out of fingers, they mutter "Wow," shrug uncomfortably, and the conversation turns to how many hours of sleep people are averaging per night.

Apparently, many feel that people have been merely shrugging their shoulders for too long and failing to really address the issue. There is an unusually high proportion of couples on the college staff. This reflects a discontinued policy which encouraged the hiring of husbands and wives.

The problem is a difficult one to get a handle on. Most of us know several couples on the faculty, and count some of them as close friends and mentors. How does one weigh the cost against the benefits of this hiring practice?

There are those who argue that the staffing pattern at Guilford is justifiable on the grounds of guaranteeing "equal opportunity." Presumably, these argue that the practice of hiring couples is in line with the Quaker tradition that recognizes the contributions both men and women can make.

It is not at all clear to me, however, that the mentioned commitment leads to the hiring of spouses. Employing a person more on the basis of their credentials and less according to the employment status of their spouses would be a more effective way to guarantee that competent qualified men and women are given an opportunity at Guilford.

Some defenders of the hiring of couples also argue that the college's willingness to employ husbands and wives has enabled Guilford to attract faculty of a higher caliber than it could otherwise afford. There is some truth to this. However, "wheeling and dealing" to get competent faculty sets a dangerous precedent, for it "normalizes" a decision making style that does not rely on rationality, but on personal influence and patronage. No one should be naive enough to think that most bureaucracies are free of influence peddling and political string pulling, but to undermine the principles of logical decision making in such a blatant fashion and defending it under the guise of "Quaker values" is not something that should be allowed to continue. Such shallow, short-sighted, and self-serving defense raises questions about how much confidence we can have in any of the administrative functionings.

The suspected results is that the policy making network has become a convoluted morass. The tendency to make loyal allies and intense enemies on personal grounds is strong enough at a small college to warrant careful attention, and the addition of a familial variable can only further knot the tangle.

I agree with Bruce Stewart that the possibility of conflicts of interest should no longer be ignored. A system of rigid criteria and challenges which would encourage people to disqualify themselves when a conflict of interest might exist is the best way to bring credibility back to the system. The first step, recognition of the problem and encouragement of the questioning of such conflicts of interest, will do a lot to domesticate the sacred cow.

As the crisis hits the small college in the coming years, its chance for survival and growth lies in its ability to make clear sighted, rational decisions. Failure to establish a logical basis for making these decisions runs counter to the college's interests.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Editors | Dale Easley, Jim Shields |
| News editor | Barbara Phillips |
| Features editor | John Mottern |
| Layout editors | Steve Harvey, Susan Ide |
| Sports editor | Mike Van Wagoner |
| Business manager | Mary Merritt |
| Circulation | Frank Merritt, Mary Merritt |
| Copy editor | Carolyn Welty |
| Notebook editor | Sue Hubley |
| Writers | Edwin Bass, Stan Givens, Iso Cheren, Mark Gurley |

The Guilfordian reserves the right to edit all articles, letters, and artwork for taste, veracity, and length. The dead line for all copy is 3:00 p.m. on Saturday preceding the Tuesday of publication. Material may be left on the office door in upstairs Founders, or mailed to Box 17717. The opinions expressed by the staff are their own and not necessarily those of the paper or of Guilford College.

Slapping those helping hands

By Constants Erving

The more alert and verbally selective of you may have noticed a few embarrassing mistakes in my column in the past three weeks.

In the January 27 issue, a well-meaning and possibly more tasteful proofreader than I took my sentence, "I feel as though I'd just passed a millstone," and untwisted it into, "I feel as though I'd just passed a milestone." Why? It was a poor but honest pun that ought to have been left alone. After all, I feel my readers have the right to hate my work on its own merits.

Worse, in the February 10 issue, when I wrote "Learning... was generally proscribed for women and minorities," someone incorrectly altered it to "prescribed." There is a great deal of difference between "proscribed," meaning, "prohibited," and "prescribed," meaning, "recommended." This is no trifling blunder, fellow literary fussybudgets; it completely reverses the meaning of the phrase. I found the alteration somewhat distressing, and felt no better after proscribing myself two aspirins.

One assumes these people had good intentions, but this was a bit like helping an old lady halfway across the street. I do appreciate the effort, but I feel capable of making enough such mistakes without assistance.

In the broader sense, we all get such "help" from time to time. A friend told me of when she was learning to walk; "I was doing just fine until my sister tried to help me stay up by holding my hand. She knocked me off balance, I fell down, cut my head on a record bin, and had to have stitches." (It seems music made a deep

impression on her at an early age. Sorry.)

That, for me, is the archetypal "Some Help" episode. With minor variations, we can all fill in our own: the three-year-old who wipes up his own spilled milk while holding another full glass, the fourth grade teacher who tells us about the Mo-Jave Desert, the swimming instructor who almost drowns us, the sixth grade teacher who teaches us the pronunciation of the word "mis-cheevy-us," the guidance counselor who nearly keeps us out of college entirely. Time after time we are swept over by the oversized paw of misguided assistance.

It is hard to know how to react

Had a Helping Hand," one of the cleverest poems in his very clever children's book, "You Know Who," puts it thusly:

Someone Had A Helping Hand
Someone I know had a helping hand.
He was helping himself to beat the band.

Yes, he was being a help to me:
He was picking the pears out of my tree.

I wanted to help him do it up brown.
So I took my saw and sawed it down.

On one hand, one is touched by the thought behind the disastrous deed; on the other, one very much wants to run after the klutz with a heavy blunt object.

to such abortive acts of kindness.

On one hand, one is touched by the thought behind the disastrous deed; on the other, one very much wants to run after the klutz with a heavy blunt object.

One is torn between, "I need all the friends I can get," and "with friends like that, who needs enemies?"

One would like to say that well-intended harm is less harmful because it was backed by beneficent thoughts, but often it is just as unpleasant to cope with as the most spiteful attack. In fact, since "kindness" is less well meant, it does its damage less efficiently and is often only messier. But I am wandering into distractions.

John Ciardi in, "Someone

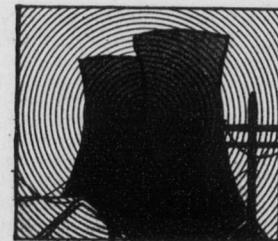
He fell from the tree right onto his hat.
"Not why," he said, "did you do that?"

"That tree," I told him, "was very tall.
I was afraid, sir, you might fall.

"With your sack stuffed full of my pears - do you see?
I wanted to help you down from the tree.

"For helping me was so kind of you
That it made me want to help you, too."

John Ciardi,
You Know Who,
J.B. Lippincott Co.
Copyright 1964



A glowing report

From page 1

surreptitiously kicking a young man who had fallen asleep in his chair.

Indeed, there were several lights flashing on that part of the complex panels that surrounded the large room. Tweadle continued, "some of our people are in jobs new to them, after a very minor radiation release last week. I'm sure the others will soon be back, glowing with health, ha-ha. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is investigating, and all is well."

Somewhere in the room behind us a voice said "Ohmigod!" A group of engineers began frantically working switches and buttons.

My acolyte notices the activity, and asked Tweadle, "What about safety adjustments you've said you made since the Three Mile Island accident? Will they really work?"

"Certainly, certainly," said Tweadle, who was looking behind us and apparently beginning to sweat. "The chances of being killed in a nuclear accident are less than the chances of being killed by a meteorite."

My acolyte continued, "I've read that your containment dome here would crack from the pressure that actually developed at the Three Mile Island plant during the accident there, and would thereby release huge clouds of radiation."

"I think it's time to go back," said Tweadle, pushing us through the door out of the control room. "Don't worry. That kind of thing can never happen again." Men in radiation suits had come into the control room and were gesturing toward the reactor room.

"I thought that's what you said last time," said my acolyte.

"Everything's under control," responded Tweadle, as two engineers dashed past him in the direction of the front gate. His smile had become a little lopsided. "The next thing I know, you'll be talking about meltdowns, ha-ha."

"Speaking of which," interrupted my acolyte, "have your safety systems been tested?"

"Soon" said Tweadle. "I'll meet you at the visitor's center." He turned and sprinted for the exit. I looked around for Abdul, but he had already left - maybe to make a deal for some spare fission products that were just lying around giving off heat and gamma rays.

My acolyte grabbed me by the clerical collar and began to run after Tweadle. "Come on, boss" she said. "Let's get out of here before the meteorites hit."