

Are Gazebos Threatening Our American Education

Editor's Note: This is the entire speech which Dr. Byers gave in Chapel on Honor's Day.

Dr. Inzer Byers

There is not much doubt about it—this year should go down in Salem history as the year on the analyst's couch. From the moment last fall when the little do-it-yourself psychoanalysis kit arrived from the Southern Association, Salem College has been engaged in studying every aspect of college life from the needs for a Fine Arts building to the structure of student government to the answer to the new Jacobin cry, "Sauce for the broccoli." The final report for the Southern Association is not yet ready, but thus far I have heard nothing about the problem I would like to discuss today, the problem of Gazebos.

As you will perhaps recall, in the recent movie, *The Gazebo*, the item in question was a turreted summerhouse in which George IV had reportedly dallied with his mistresses. For a mere \$1900, the happy couple could buy and install this particular gazebo in their garden. And, of course, the implication of the story is "What is a home without a gazebo?"

College Gazebos

I suppose the same question might be raised about a college campus. As a matter of fact, gazebos can be extremely useful fixtures on a campus. For example, the Arboretum at Chapel Hill might be taken as a gazebo of sorts. Certainly no college in the United States can boast a higher percentage of students with an overwhelming interest in botanical studies than the University of North Carolina. At my own alma mater, Randolph-Macon Woman's College, there is also a gazebo of sorts which goes by the name of Engagement Tower. No one is supposed to enter said gazebo until she can enter it with her fiance. Now this Engagement Tower stands about fifteen feet from a well-lighted dormitory front porch, about an equal distance from an extremely well-lighted library courtyard. It is about two feet away from the most heavily used walk on campus, one leading to the Science Building, to Main Hall, and to the Music Hall. Under the circumstances, a couple's entry into the Tower has all the secrecy of a Hollywood star's arrival at the Academy Award Banquet. Needless to say, there is little need to send formal engagement announcements to anyone on that campus.

Salem Gazebos?

The question is, "Are there any gazebos on Salem Square?" Obviously, if one means physical gazebos, the answer is "No". To be sure, there is the area felicitously described in the Student Handbook as "The Upper Pleasure Grounds." However, there is really nothing which a self-study committee can list as a gazebo among the physical facilities of Salem College.

This does not mean, however, that the student of Salem need feel herself a second-class citizen. There are gazebos and gazebos. And if one's college has no physical gazebo, there is always the possibility that one may be able to turn one's education into a sort of gazebo, a summerhouse in which to dally away four years of college until the real business of life begins. This sort of gazebo does not depend upon any gift from alumnae. Without any investment other than the payment of the normal tuition

and board fee, the individual student may embark on the building of his own private gazebo. And throughout America today, the sound of gazebo-building is heard in the land.

Actually, the more obvious forms of such gazebo-building are no great problem to a college. . . . Build the gazebo high enough, and at some point the exclusion law will probably remove one from the scene. It is the disguised forms of gazebo-building that are the real danger to the life of the college. The signs of their existence are many. It may be the plaintive cry of the first-year student: "I don't want to stay in this course. You have to think." From the sorrowful sophomore or the jaundiced junior, it may be the bitter vow, "Five term papers a semester. It's time I had a crisp course." From the weary senior, it is probably the advice, "Play it cool. Take things you already know you can pass, preferably all meeting Monday, Wednesday, and Friday between 10 and 11 a.m."

"Acceptable" Education

What that sort of gazebo building involves is not an outright rejection of education, but a perilous discrimination in the kind of education that is acceptable. The gauge of success is the fulfillment of the letter of the law—obtaining the exact number of quality points needed, the exact number of semester hours, and all with the least possible expenditure of effort. Today throughout America this form of gazebo-building goes on apace. No college is so poor that it cannot possess gazebos of this sort. No college is rich enough to afford to have them.

In opposition to this concept of education as gazebo-building is the idea which I wish to discuss today, the concept of education as a venture in independent study. By "independent study" I do not mean an honors program, a formal program of individual research carried on by students of proved ability in particular fields, though I certainly do recommend such a program to Salem College. The kind of independent study which concerns me today, however, is one which is open to every student in every area of study. In this sense, education as independent study means education in which the initiative is in the hands of the individual student.

"Do-It-Yourself"

What is involved, basically, is a "do-it-yourself" approach to education and to judgment-making in general. Now it is true that the fetish of "do-it-yourself-ism" may be carried to ridiculous extremes. For instance, a local bookstore advertised a "do-it-yourself" book for the making of antiques. And a *New Yorker* cartoon of several years ago showed a small granite shop outside the cemetery wall with a "do-it-yourself" tombstone kit, complete with granite slab, hammer, and chisel. "Do-it-yourself-ism" can obviously be carried beyond the point of no return. There is much to be said, however, for the cultivation of a "do-it-yourself" approach to education. Such an approach encourages respect for the intellectual material with which one works, the appreciation for the labor involved in the finished product, and the understanding of creative techniques. It promotes

confidence in judgment independently arrived at. It shifts the emphasis from an external to an internal standard of achievement.

This is Honor's Day. To you who have met Salem's standard of excellence, congratulations are due. And certainly the faculty and administration are pleased to extend these congratulations to you. But Honor's Day involves basically success of an external standard of achievement, the gauge of academic success set by the college itself. The crucial competition, however, is essentially within you. And the real gauge of achievement is not how well you fulfill the letter of the law, but how well you fulfill the potentiality within you. Actually this Honor's Day will have missed its point if sometime today each of you does not pause long enough to compare what you have attained with what is within you to attain.

Independent Study

Education as a venture in independent study not only means accepting individual responsibility for intellectual growth. It also means the accepting of individual responsibility for reassessment of values. If education really fulfills its obligation, college life should contribute in a vital and determinative way to the growth of values and beliefs. This is one of the major areas of college responsibility. But, according to the survey by Philip Jacobs, this is the area in which American colleges are most seriously failing today. The mind of the student is being informed, but as Jacobs notes, the college experiences are barely touching the students' standards of behavior, judgment, and fundamental beliefs. In part the responsibility is that of the college. As Dr. Wallace M. Alston, President of Agnes Scott College, put the case:

College can contribute to the growth of a student's values only when it penetrates to the core of his life and confronts him with fresh and often disturbing implications, which are different from those which he and his society have taken for granted. This means that if the college is to fulfill its responsibilities, it cannot commit itself to the ideal of education as "adjustment". It must present the student with fresh insights and challenges to old ways of doing things. If the college fulfills its responsibility, the student will be brought face to face with the necessity for a reappraisal of values.

Critical Reappraisal

But this does not mean that such a reappraisal will occur. There must also be a willingness on the part of the student to submit his accepted standards of behavior and beliefs to critical scrutiny. It is certainly possible to close one's mind and to go through college unaffected in any important essential of judgment by what is said

and done. If so, no matter what the degree acquired or the honors attained, one's education has failed. If education has really succeeded, there will be a growth not only of knowledge but of values, not only of facts but of insight.

All this is well and good, but in the world of the gazebo-builders the question is, "Why bother? Ten years from now what difference will it possibly make what grades I got?" To be absolutely honest, ten years from now it will probably not matter in the slightest what grades you got, as far as the grades themselves are concerned. But insofar as the grades are an outward and visible sign of an inner attitude to education, it does and will make a great deal of difference.

Commitment to the First Rate

For one thing, it makes a great deal of difference to Salem College whether or not you accept the challenge of education as independent study. For the measure of an academic institution is the degree of its commitment to the first-rate. The most valuable gift that you as students or you as alumnae can give to your college is your individual commitment to this ideal. For it is out of the sum total of individual commitments that the tone of the college is derived. As President Jordan of Radcliffe College stated:

This intellectual climate—the fact that it is smart, it is respectable to be interested in things of the mind—is a resource that cannot be purchased. It is one of our

imperishable assets. This is not an indorsement of pseudo-intellectualism. It is simply the recognition of the importance to a college of the individual's acceptance of the responsibility for intellectual self-fulfillment.

Not only does it matter to the college, it also matters a great deal to you as an individual whether or not you will accept education as a venture in independent study. Such commitment helps to provide the inner resources with which to face the private personal crisis of one's life. A statement in the old "Aims and Purposes" of Salem College describes this function well. "Higher education should equip people for the society of which they are a part, but it must also prepare people for their own inevitable solitude." The last phrase of that sentence, "their own inevitable solitude", has haunted me since I first encountered it. It may be true, as John Donne suggests, that "No man is an island entire of itself." But it is also true that only too often in life one reaches the point of isolation Rilke spoke of when he asked, "Who would hear me if I cried out, among all the angelic hosts?"

It is particularly at this point of inevitable interior solitude that one's education comes in for severe testing. Education, even education as a venture in independent study, cannot solve the problem of inner serenity. Such work can help, though, to build up inner resources

(Continued on Page Four)

TOWN STEAK HOUSE
TWO FINE RESTAURANTS TO SERVE YOU
NO. 1—107 LOCKLAND AVE.
NO. 2—300 SOUTH STRATFORD RD.



Telephone PA 4-1551

Beauty Salon 3rd Floor

It's
"shear"
sorcery!
Our exclusive
magicut
1.50



- * That wakes up your wave
- * That coaxes the curl
- * That's shaped to swirl
- * That's fun to wear... pretty to look at... and so easy on care!

Farmers Dairy
BAR

Fountain favorites for co-eds

PAY A LITTLE MORE . . . LOOK MUCH BETTER
For finest quality beauty work . . . For designed hair cuts . . . For styling and permanent waving to suit you and your features try

THE HAIRDRESSERS BEAUTY SALON

Downtown at 416 N. Spruce St. Phone PArk 4-2411



shampoo
fashion set
magic cut
magically priced

3.50 complete

Want To Go
When You
Want To Go

CALL



Phone PA 2-7121