

Let's Make Honor Tradition Work

The Honor Tradition is something we hear a lot about at Salem. Every fall the officers stand up and publically assure us that here at Salem our Honor Tradition works. But privately they admit that socially our Honor Tradition does not work. But until last year, we assumed that the Honor Tradition did work academically.

Then last year, for the first time in two years, Salem had a case of cheating, and another case, and another case. These were the first cases that we had had since one case in 1957. Already this year we have two cases of cheating. In the years that Dr. Gramley has been at Salem, there had been only three cases of cheating before last year. In the last two years there have been five cases of cheating before the Judicial Board.

Five cases of cheating and one case of lying seem to be grounds for re-evaluating the effectiveness of the Honor Tradition as it is now set up. Does the Honor System really work?

We fear that it does not. Salem's Honor Tradition has become something that we talk about once a year and then ignore. The Honor Tradition now covers everything from cheating to drinking in Winston-Salem to walking in the halls barefooted. Technically, if we violate any rule, no matter how trivial or how important, we are breaking our Honor Tradition. This is dangerously overloading our Honor Tradition. Disrespect for some trivial rule now means disrespect for part of our Honor Tradition. A new student will soon realize that our Honor Tradition does not work socially, and she will assume that it does not work at all.

The Honor Tradition, as it is now set up, is ideal, but it is too idealized to work well with ordinary human beings.

Therefore, we would like to propose that Salem study a plan for setting up a new Honor Tradition. We propose that a clear distinction be made between social regulations and the honor offenses of lying, stealing, and cheating. This would mean that the Honor Tradition would cover only lying, stealing, and cheating, but it would cover these offenses in any area of life at Salem. All social regulations should be designated as such and should be handled separately from honor offenses.

We realize that this seems drastic at first. But we have taken our Honor Tradition for granted for so long that something must be done.

The distinction made between honor offenses and social regulations would only recognize a situation which already exists. We are given call-downs for breaking house rules or social regulations. We turn ourselves in for academic violations. The two types of violations are handled differently now—why not make it official?

And any effective Honor Tradition must be based on the honor of the individual student. Lying, stealing, and cheating are universally accepted as wrong — they involve ethical standards which would apply to any society in which we might find ourselves at any time.

But does walking in the halls barefooted violate your honor? Of course not! Even drinking, which is a major social violation, may be breaking a rule but often it does not mean that a student's sense of individual honor is violated. This is especially true if it is not considered dishonorable for her to drink at home or at another college on a week-end. This double standard of "it's wrong here but all right anywhere else" is not really based on honor but on a rule. Placing the social regulations under the Honor Tradition at Salem has just become a convenient way to get rules which apply only to the Salem campus enforced.

We are not advocating that the student body either change or abolish rules. But they should not be placed under the Honor Tradition. We propose that all social regulations be handled exactly as they are now, with two exceptions. We feel that a list of major social violations should be set up—perhaps to include drinking within the metropolitan area,

unlocking doors after hours, falsifying sign-out information, and smoking in dormitory rooms. These violations would still be subject to penalties of suspension, probation, or expulsion.

Then we also propose that a trial system be set up to cover both social regulations and honor violations. One astute observer remarked that here at Salem we deny that such a thing as lying exists. Students do not easily or lightly turn another student in for a violation. Yet even if several students report a violation, if the girl says that she is innocent, the Judicial Board must accept her word as final. And so some students feel that they can do anything and get away with it; all they have to do is lie to the Judicial Board, which will have to accept their word. This is an unrealistic approach for dealing with violations.

Then, we also feel that a separate Honor Court should be set up to try only honor violations. (Social violations would still be handled by Judicial Board.) This body, we feel, should be composed of people elected by the entire student body specifically for the Honor Court. We do not feel that membership on such an Honor Court should be a bonus to being elected to another office. Honor Court members should be the personification of honor—they should be the best representatives we could have. Therefore, we propose that membership on the Honor Court not carry points. Since the Court would meet only on call to try honor violations, we do not feel that it would involve enough work to justify carrying points. In this way, Honor Court members could also hold other major offices.

As a basis for discussion, we should like to propose that the Honor Court consist of seven students. It would probably be advisable to have the President of the Student Government and the Chairman of the Judicial Board as members. Then there would probably be two other seniors, two juniors, and one sophomore. We do not feel that the members of the freshman class would be known well enough for the student body to judge their qualifications. Also they would not be familiar enough with Salem or the rules to be qualified for such an office.

In order for this new Honor Tradition to work, we must be required to turn in other students for honor violations of lying, stealing, and cheating. If we know of an honor violation and do not turn the student in, we should be considered as guilty as the student who did the deed. For major social violations we should stress the fact that you can and should turn students in, but this should not be a responsibility or a requirement.

As a part of changing the Honor Tradition, we should also consider changing the way that our Honor Pledge is signed. Herding everyone across the stage is an efficient way to get a book signed—but it does not really mean anything. A student should not sign the Honor Pledge until she is ready to assume the responsibility both for turning herself in and for turning others in for honor violations. And we suggest that perhaps this pledge should be signed by every student each year to remind us of our responsibilities and privileges under the Honor Tradition. And we might consider pledging our individual work, not as a preventive measure but as a constant reminder of the importance of our Honor Tradition.

This should follow an intensive program of teaching students what kind of an Honor Tradition we have and what is expected of them. This educational phase should stress the positive values of having an Honor Tradition instead of the negative attitude that "here are the rules we have to follow."

We do not feel that these proposals would be a perfectly working cure-all for the ineffective Honor Tradition which we now have. But it would go a long way toward improving conditions. Let's hear some discussion and let's set up a committee to study the situation. The spring of the year is when changes can most easily be made.

M. L. N.



Beyond The Square

By Janet Yarborough

"I don't think Jack Kennedy is doing too much" and "He's settled down after the campaign" are a few of the remarks heard here and there. And from the headlines, it does appear that one of the quietest places on the world scene is Washington, D. C.

Remembering the campaign last fall and the tremendous energy that Kennedy exhibited in it, one would think that JFK would, with "vigor", meet Congress head on and fight for his legislative suggestions as a valiant liberal should.

But President Kennedy is a politician, and from his apparent success, is a good politician. There are a few facts that he has to remember: that he was elected by a narrow margin; that there is the possibility of a Southern Democratic-Republican coalition; and that Congress, because of its structure and organization, is a basically conservative institution.

What then can Kennedy do in the legislative field? What he seems to be doing right now, as I understand, is acting moderately and waiting. He is waiting, first of all, until April when he reviews the condition of the national economy to see if any more measures should be taken to boost it. If more economic reform is needed, then Mr. Kennedy will be faced with a real test of his prestige in Congress.

Secondly, President Kennedy is waiting for public opinion to solidify in his favor before attempting to get Congress to act on the controversial parts of his program—as minimum wage, aid-to-education, and the medical bill.

In broadening his base of public support, Kennedy seems to have been successful. He is using every line of communication with which to contact the people. His televised news conferences, which he uses to make dramatic announcements, his letting the Council of Economic Advisors have open sessions, are ways and means of informing the public. Even the recent establishing of the Peace Corps, which has been applauded over the country, is another way of attracting the public eye.

In the mean time, the President is "asking little of Congress and letting the pot simmer". As seen in the article from *The New Republic*, "Hurrying Slowly Forward", many of Kennedy's liberal supporters are concerned that he is backsliding too fast and compromising too early. However, he is slowly acquiring momentum in making small gains. He is attempting to let the public and their representatives know what his program is.

More than ever before, the President is putting more confidence and responsibility on the electorate. Popular government in the twentieth century can endure if the people accept this responsibility.

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