

The SALEMITE

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Morrill With A Capital M

Education With A Capital "E"

Like the other freshmen in this great class of 1983 I'm having a lot of fun exploring the campus and learning about these lovely old buildings. On the second floor of the office building is a simple but pleasant place called the Trustee's Room. On its walls are pictures of all of Salem's presidents. These august gentlemen peer out solemnly from every corner of the room, and as I've shared with

several of you, I've discovered something peculiar about the mathematics of presidential tenure at Salem. The last four residencies go like this -- President Rondthaler was in office an extraordinary 40 plus years, followed by President Dale Gramley for over 20, then by President Chandler for five and President Cuningim for three. You can see what this means for me. Now I'm taking it to be my job to reverse this iron law of mathematical succession.

This fall you will have the dubious opportunity to hear me ramble on about Salem on several occasions. In October there will be an installation ceremony. I'm a great believer in a new president using that occasion to address questions of institutional purpose and mission -- to offer, in other words, some thoughts and proposals about the Salem of the future. Now, though, it seems much more fitting to begin with the wider view and to concentrate less on administrative and institutional matters and more on intellectual ones, to place Salem in the context of educational trends and possibilities.

My topic is an incessant and universal one, and nothing less than the aims and worth of education itself. As is often the case, though, the occasion for its coming to the surface is a concrete exchange of ideas -- a conversation, and a debate. Early last spring the provost at Penn State and I had a chance to get to know a

senior who was participating with us in the miseries of the annual academic budget hearing process. Andy was a venturesome young man with lots of spunk, and a certain proper disrespect for authority. For some reason we began to exchange ideas on education, his goals, and some of the articles that the provost and I had co-authored on values in education. Besides telling us rather pointedly but politely that we hadn't had a new idea in ten years he told us how hopelessly out of touch he felt we were with him and his compatriots. We were fluffy-minded idealists. We talked to the capacity of education to change lives and values, to nourish and enlarge the human spirit. According to Andy, this was, as he put it, a misplaced belief in education with a capital "E." And it was decidedly not a belief in which he shared. Andy was a realist and a rather grim one at that, a proponent of starkly small and practical "E'S" in education. In a way he was proud of his education because he had beaten the system by finding a comfortable way to enter it. He held in his hand one of several handsome job offers from a high technology company. He had supplemented a major in the social sciences with training in electrical engineering. He compared with a touch of smugness his bright career prospects with what to him were the dismal and frightening prospects of his friends who had only majored in one of the basic disciplines.

Two things hit me hard. First was the intensity of his goal. Not to have that job would have meant virtually a total loss of self, a feeling of utter abandonment. All sense of possibility for the future, any bright allure it might have, seemed to turn on that position. Second, there was the striking fact for Andy that education had worth simply and only to the extent that it provided him with the skills and tools that he wanted and needed to pursue his private purposes. The university was a great storehouse of skills among which he could choose to make his way in the world.

The narrowness of Andy's vision is to me lamentable, but let me hasten to add that it is understandable. He and you the students here have heard nothing but a grinding vocationalism from parents and national leaders and teachers and the rest of us. There is no point in trying to make students feel guilty about it or in railing against them because of it. The depths of the feeling surrounding the necessity for education to lead to a specific job needs first to be truly heard, then understood, and only then challenged. What seems finally so difficult to accept is not Andy's strategy, for he combined work in a basic academic discipline with study in an applied field. No, most troubling is the complete loss of the vision and consciousness about what education can be, and probably in some measure had been for

him. His sight had become so fixated on the future, that he failed to see whence he had come.

I submit that what has been lost from view and the humanizing powers of education. This is the capital "E" that should not be diminished. If this "E" has been downsized, we can look toward ourselves as much as to external forces, to explain it.

In many ways higher learning in general and liberal education in particular have become their own worst enemies. We -- and I mean much of higher education at large -- have lost confidence in ourselves. Liberal education's greatest present danger is to indulge in feelings of self-pity. This deadly emotion throws us into isolation and cuts us off from new possibilities. In silent ways we have let Andy's criteria of instant utility capture our birth-right. It then becomes easy and tempting to become technicians ourselves -- wrapping our wounds protectively in the methods and jargon of our fields and forsaking the human meaning and power of what we teach. It then becomes easy to say, if I can't see a given facet of human life from where I stand, with my tools, -- it's not there or it can't count for very much.

As a result, most of us in higher education live now with a dispiriting set of education separations and fragments. We have split feelings from thought and thought from action. We have separated knowledge from teaching, learning from living, and

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photos by Pam Snyder

"Going That Extra Mile"

During the short summer I spent a great deal of time thinking about my hopes for Salem's Student Government this year. Of course I had the usual ideas of working on a more effective budget, emphasizing the need and use of the Student Center, improving publications, organizing clubs and more. But I found at the heart of all my hopes, was the sincere desire for all the students at Salem to play a major part in all of the activities at Salem. Involvement was the byword. Taking the initiative and going that extra mile.

I remember 3 short years ago when I sat where the class of '83 sits today. As topsyturvy as you feel after Orientation. I thought I was in pretty good shape. Dad had made sure our room wouldn't blow-up because of overloaded extension cords and Mom had taught me the secret of keeping an organized and neat dorm room. My sister brought a plant to make the room cozy. I liked the girls on my hall and was beginning to feel quite at home - then Convocation came. I was totally taken back by the administration and faculty in their academic regalia, the seniors seemed so sophisticated and

mature, everyone but me seemed to know the Alma Mater, but the most impressive part was that there seemed to be a real sense of belonging here. I was ready to jump in and take over Len Brinkleys job as President of the Student Government, so I could be involved and belong, too - but I didn't. Because of that my freshman year left alot to be desired. Sophomore year I found my niche - got involved and that made all the difference in the world. I truly felt that I belonged at Salem. Since then I've been a firm believer in Mark Twain's statement. "I never let schooling interfere with my education."

I'm not saying that the only way to "belong" in Salem is to be involved, but I am saying that it helps. At Salem we have opportunities galore and this year is going to prove to be exciting one and full of newness. add to salem editorial

Involvement can be stopping by your favorite professor's office and probing further into an interesting issue he or she brought up in class. Involvement includes helping uphold the Honor Tradition or distributing exams. Participate by going to SGA meetings and

speaking your mind. Involvement can mean running for a class office, joining Publications, or dancing for Dansalems. Involvement is helping paint decorations for your class's Fall Fest skit. Involvement is reading your assignment over one more time so you can actively and intelligently participate in the class discussion. Involvement is having an idea, speaking up and putting that idea to work.

I can't see this year as being anything less than exciting and full of opportunities for growth and change. As you know our Student Government touches every aspect of life at Salem College. Salem's SGA is an active and effective organization that gets things done, but it needs the support, ideas and participation of all Salem's students. While an education is our common main objective for being here, don't "let schooling interfere with your education." Speak-up, do that little bit more, strive for quality - get involved.

Salem's SGA is going to have a great year, because all the doorways are open for total student participation. And with all of that - we can't help, but get the job done!

Diana Jolliff
President of SGA

