

Campus Extras

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Founder of Earth Day expresses continuing concerns

GAYLORD NELSON
The Wilderness Society

For today's college students, there has always been Earth Day. Growing up, almost all of you participated in school, scout or community activities that marked this occasion.

But as recently as 1969 there was nothing called Earth Day. As a U.S. Senator, I was dismayed the Senate and the rest of the political establishment were simply blind to the environmental deterioration all around us. I could count on one hand the number of Senators who would have described themselves as "environmentalists," and I was searching for

some way to change that.

From my travels around the country, I knew Americans were much more aware of and concerned about the state of the environment than the political establishment. Finally it occurred to me that if we could organize a huge national demonstration on behalf of the environment it might force the issue onto the nation's political agenda.

After proposing the idea in a 1969 speech in Seattle, I sent a letter to every major college newspaper and took other steps to spread the word and wondered if it would catch on.

The public response was

overwhelming. On the first Earth Day—Apr. 22, 1970—some 20 million Americans took part in a wide range of activities. Just as remarkable was the fact that I did not organize all this; students and teachers and other citizens felt strongly enough about the planet's condition that they rushed to support the cause. American Heritage Magazine called Earth Day "one of the most remarkable happenings in the history of democracy." I never dreamed that 29 years later Earth Day would still be going strong.

Will the new millennium be good—or bad—for our plan-

et's health? The answer depends in large part on the generation now on our college campuses. I believe most young people understand the importance of environmental protection and what we need to do to be responsible environmental citizens. The key question, then, is: Will your generation act on this knowledge and commitment? If you do, you will be remembered as the generation that made the critical difference.

The key challenge for you is to forge and maintain a sustainable society: one that meets its own needs without depriving future generations of the

chance to meet their needs. No country has managed to achieve that goal. We are all consuming our capital and counting it on the income side of the ledger. That is not sustainable. What is our capital? It's our resource base: air, water, soils, forests, rivers, oceans, minerals, scenic beauty and biodiversity. Take that base away—all that is left is a wasteland.

We have only one planet. Nothing could be more important than making sure it is a livable planet. Through community work, political activity and lifestyle decisions, you have the power to save Earth.

Opinion: My grades are my business

KATHY W. BAILEY
Guest Writer

Have you ever noticed that the only time some students stop to talk to you is when they are interested in your grades? How does that make you feel? How often do you ask other students about their grades? You may be wondering what harm there is in asking. For one thing, grades are a private matter between the professor and the student, and, for another, asking others about grades is rude and demonstrates a lack of concern for their feelings.

Posing questions about a person's grades puts that per-

son on the spot; she must decide how to handle the situation. Many of us hesitate to say, "I don't share my grades," because it sounds snobbish. However, it is rude to put someone in that position in the first place, regardless of whether she made an A or a C. It is, in fact, an invasion of privacy. No one else besides the student and professor should know—unless, of course, a student volunteers to share her grade.

Asking the insensitive question contributes to a competitive atmosphere. If one student asks another about her grade,

she is probably making a comparison. By asking, the questioner makes herself look insecure in her own performance, or, even worse, eager to feel superior. Asking fellow students is not necessary to make such comparisons.

If a student wants to know where she stands in relation to her classmates, she can ask her professor to provide her (or the class) with high, low, and median scores; many professors already do this. This information allows students to see where they stand without compromising other students' privacy.

Perhaps you are thinking, "If someone doesn't want to tell me her grade, then she doesn't have to." If so, consider that not all people respond to questioning as you would, and some may feel pressure to share. Sharing grades should be strictly voluntary. And if you choose to share your grade you shouldn't expect the other student to reciprocate.

You may wonder why I care so much about privacy of grades. I developed this conviction after a few students whom I barely knew began to ask me, "What did you make?"

In my days at Meredith, I

have been made uncomfortable several times. Although I like to share my accomplishments with a good friend, these students never bothered to get to know me. They only wanted to know my grade.

If you are in the habit of asking other students about their grades, please be aware that your questions can be embarrassing and even painful to others. If someone asks you about your grades, don't feel you must apologize for refusing to share.

Nosy students need to learn that the question "What did you make?" is rude.



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