

Gradepoint God

(Editor's Note: Mr. Spann's article first appeared in the North Carolina State "Technician.")

By Bob Spann North Carolina State

"To Him I will bow and pray." This sign hangs above the desk of a prospective engineer trying to learn his craft at North Carolina State. It is hung with as much reverence as a sacred picture might be displayed on a church wall.

Each morning and afternoon the student looks at it and gives it a reverent nod, for the magic number, the grade, is truly his god. He must constantly try to achieve its image. He must constantly conform to the standards the grade-point god sets for him. He must constantly try to please the demi-gods of books, quizzes, assorted facts, test tubes and other heavenly apparatus that will give him the grace to achieve the image of this great god.

Why does a supposedly intelligent young man do such a thing? Certainly an 18 to 22 year old could not have set up such a religious system by himself. It is set up by a much more clever apparatus, namely the great American society, the clergyman of the god's religion.

The student worships society's god because since childhood he has been told that a college degree is the key that will open that golden door called the great America Way. And the God of 2.0 determines whether or not he will be privileged to receive this golden key.

And what does the student get with this golden key? It opens the door to many wonders his parents may or may not have and he almost definitely does not have. It will give him a nice house in a nice suburb or subdivision that looks like all the other nice people's nice houses. It gives him a plain desk or

drafting table in a plain room that looks just like all his plain co-workers' desks. It gives him the opportunity to keep up with the Joneses and buy everything they buy. It gives him the opportunity to marry the girl back home and have 2.7 children and a car he probably can't afford.

Grades, not learning are too often the god of a technical school. The query "How did you do last semester?" is almost never met with a reply such as "I learned a lot," or "I had some real good courses," but rather with a grade point average.

Students become addicted to pleasing the god of 2.0 or whatever magic number may be their particular god. Students are not really concerned with the knowledge gained while taking a particular course, but concentrate on memorizing enough formulas that can be churned out on a quiz to achieve the good grade.

Unfortunately, instructors are not immune from worshipping the grade-point god either. A student usually learns what will determine his grade before his is told what he will learn in a particular course.

However, this worship of grades is not really surprising. Grades determine whether or not a student graduates, they determine whether or not he will be target practice for the Viet Cong, they determine whether or not he can participate in many student activities, they determine whether or not a student can take certain courses and they make many other decisions for the average student.

The result of such a system is inevitable. Learning fades into the background. Students will do anything to achieve the magic grade. The amount of cheating exposed during recent Air Force Academy scandals should not be viewed with alarm or considered uncommon. The only unusual thing about them was the fact that someone was honest enough to blow the whistle.



Our Man Hoppe

The Day The Landlord Quit

Arthur Hoppe

Scene: The Elysian Fields. The Landlord, looking a bit tired is seated on his Heavenly Throne. His business agent, Mr. Gabriel, is standing by, record book in one hand, trumpet in the other.

The Landlord (wearily): There. Now that I have all the galaxies wheeling in their proper courses, is there anything else demanding immediate attention?

Mr. Gabriel: Well, Sir, I've been meaning to tell you about Earth. That's a tiny planet revolving around a third-rate sun out on the fringes of...

The Landlord (testily): How can I forget it? It's more trouble than all the rest. I suppose the tenants are still running down the property?

Mr. Gabriel (consulting his record book): Yes, Sir. More gouges bulldozed in the mountain meadows. More holes napalmed in the forested carpets. More species of livestock exterminated on the fruited plains. More...

The Landlord (angrily): By Me, who do they think they are? Vengeance is mine, saith I. And I think it's high time I wreaked a little around here.

Mr. Gabriel (raising his trumpet): Yes, Sir. But I think you ought to know, before I blow the eviction notice, that...

The Landlord: No need for such a drastic measure, Gabriel. I shall easily teach them the error of their ways by some single awful visitation of my wrath. I know! (He shudders) I shall pollute the waters from which they drink and bathe. Mr. Gabriel (shaking his head): Oh, they've already done that themselves, Sir. The Landlord (surprised): They have? How odd. Well, then, I shall have to be-

foul the very air they breathe. A small foretaste of the fumes of hell should set them straight.

Mr. Gabriel: I'm afraid, Sir, that they're very busy doing just that themselves. The Landlord (frowning): Then I shall invent new diseases with which to plague them. I seem to recall that worked well in the past.

Mr. Gabriel: Frankly, Sir, there's nothing they've become more adept at than inventing new diseases. Hardly a day goes by that...

The Landlord (thoughtfully): It seems most unfair, but I suppose I could visit the sins of the fathers upon the children.

Mr. Gabriel: A well-established practice down there, Sir. They call it "race relations."

The Landlord: Hmmm. Do you think wars and rumors of wars would do any good?

Mr. Gabriel: I don't think they'd notice, Sir.

The Landlord (sternly): They go too far. Blow, Gabriel! I shall rain fire and destruction from the sky upon their cities and teach them that vengeance is mine.

Mr. Gabriel (hesitantly): Yes, Sir. But I think I should point out that they're perfectly capable of doing that themselves. Indeed, if you rain death and destruction on one of their cities, they will immediately rain it on the others, seeking vengeance on each other.

The Landlord: Good Me, Gabriel! Do you realize what you're saying? Gabriel (reluctantly): Yes, Sir. That's what I've been meaning to tell you: There's nothing we can do to them that they haven't already done to themselves.

The Landlord (with a sigh of defeat): Well, Gabriel, at least we now know Who they think they are.

A Crisis In Education?

By KATHLEEN BURKE Collegiate Press Service

Is there a world crisis in education, and if so what can be done about it?

Over 4,000 and seventy educators from more than 50 nations met in Williamsburg, Va. last weekend at a conference sponsored by U.S. government and private foundations to seek answers to these questions. There was little agreement on either question, though the report of the conference co-chairman, President James Perkins of Cornell University, made substantial recommendations which will be presented to President Johnson later this year.

Views of the crisis differed dramatically. Perkins saw it as the fact that "educational systems have been unable to keep pace in the last decade with

their rapidly changing environment."

Another delegate, Adam Curle of Harvard University, described it succinctly as "too many students, too few teachers and not enough money."

Others said there was no world educational crisis, just a world crisis, period. And that, they said, is a political, not educational problem.

Still other noted a wide diversity of problems among nations, suggested that there was no single crisis, but rather crises and asked that each country be permitted to find its own solutions and that the conference not make universal prescriptions.

Through working groups on topics such as management, technology, resources and teacher supply, dele-

gates sought to make the recommendations on a strategy and specific measures for meeting the crisis—or crises—by national and international action.

A strong emphasis was placed on the educational problems of developing nations and their need to tailor education more effectively to society's aims and needs.

Chairman Perkins, in his report on the conference, advocated an increase in the flow of aid from developed to developing countries.

Technology as a means of relieving teacher shortage received a great deal of attention. Delegates agreed that "programmed instruction, team teaching, film, radio and television will be increasingly the tools of the trade."

Sight n... Sound

By Cater Chamblee

"To Sir, With Love" is almost to bad to be true.

A stout-hearted teacher leads a class of Longon slum kids to lower-middle class respectability by the strength of his character, the nobility of his intention and the warmth of his heart. His solution to the Culture of Poverty that haunts America as well as our English cousins? — Convince the kids to call adults, "Sir," the girls, "miss" and to wash.

Sidney Poitier as Super Spade, stemming the tide of anarchy by force of personal example, just as Glenn Ford as Wonder Wasp did years ago when Sidney learned that lesson from him in "Blackboard Jungle." True, Bill Haley is long gone, but an insipid English teenybopper named Lulu replaces him.

"To Sir, With Love" is a dreadful picture. Dreadful in its plastic sincerity, dreadful in its total sentimentality, dreadful in its soft-minded view of the world, dreadful in its deep contempt for its audience. Dreadful, too, in its thorough waste of Sidney Poitier, whose career is becoming a sadly long record of waste.

And this is no small amount of waste, for Poitier is one of the strongest screen actors of our time, an actor who cannot appear on screen without becoming the focus of attention.

His voice is powerful his movements are incredibly graceful for a man so big, his sense of timing is sure and firm and in dramatic situations his entire body seems to become the instrument for whatever emotion he wishes to convey. I know of no other actor who can match him for sheer energy and power, particularly in the expression of joy, the sensual joy of simply being alive.

Then why is he wasted? Why isn't this paragon given the roles his talents deserve? Because no one is writing those roles. Because no one would produce those roles. Because no one would go to see them.

Sidney Poitier is wasted because of one fact. He is black.

He is black and he is wasted. And the tragedy of his waste is a trival episode in the larger waste of millions of lives in our racist culture.

Sidney Poitier is a sop thrown to liberals to convince them that things are

getting better all the time. And liberals are racists who disapprove of racism largely because of the base manners of the cruder more honest racists. Or, if that is unfair, liberals are men who disapprove of racism in the abstract, but refuse to recognize how deeply it is embedded in American society because that recognition would entail far more drastic measures to end it than they're willing to take. They will not fish, yet they will not cut bait, for far too often they profit from the sale of blood-worms.

Let us observe only a few instances of the use of Poitier as a sop for the liberal imagination. In "To Sir, With Love," he makes good citizens out of ghetto kids (sure they're Cockney, but read black) by teaching them manners and respect for authority, even when the authority is admittedly unjust. And that is the answer to Watts, to Newark, to Detroit.

In "A Patch of Blue" Poitier and a white girl fall in love, but it's acceptable because she is blind and can't tell he's black. Her blindness makes it all right to whom, one might ask? Not to flat-out bigots, certainly. The blindness, then, makes it all right to liberals.

In "Lilies of the Field," Poitier charms a passel of white women, but they're all nuns, so no messing around, right? Besides he teaches them spirituals. In "Blackboard Jungle," Poitier is an angry young cat, but teacher's paternalism brings him around.

And who can forget Poitier in "Defiant Ones," getting off that train to freedom to go back to jail with his good buddy Tony Curtis — there he is an escaped convict in a Deep South state going back to the chain gang for brotherhood.

I saw that movie in a theater in a black neighborhood and I can't forget the voice bellowing from the darkness, "Get back on that train you stupid son of a bitch!" Nor can I fudge the burst of laughter from the audience, who never would have thought of getting off that train. Somehow, they missed the point.

But then the point wasn't meant for them. The point was meant for white America. White liberal America. And white liberal America has been missing the point of that audience's laughter for several hundred years.

New Dorm Asked Into IDA Council

The Inter-Dormitory Association Council approved a resolution last week inviting Smith Hall, Schramm Hall and Harper Hall to join IDA. The council heard a report from Tom Briggs, chairman of the standing administrative co-ordinating committee. Briggs said the committee plans to take a poll concerning salaries for executives in dorm government.

The poll will be a random sampling of 200 dormitory residents, he said. Each dorm will have a specified number of participants, and the same questions will be presented to each participant. Briggs reported that the committee is also planning to do research on the parking problem. ASUN is also doing a study on parking, he said, and will try to co-ordinate its efforts. The committee also plans to study the limitations of dormitory recreation facilities, Briggs said. President Brian Ridenour

Grand Sprix by George Kaufman

Two Beards and A Blonde are now a beard, a mustache and a blonde, but their magic has grown.

Peter, Paul and Mary visited Lincoln, Neb. Friday night with a new look and something of a new sound which is more than an extension of their old sound. But nothing can ever change the one-of-a-kind harmony which blends from three voices and echos back from six thousand.

Paul was as ever. The beard, the well-tailored (and now almost mod) navy suit, the poet's eyes that can help his voice reach an audience.

Peter came on minus his famous chin-whiskers but with a full mustache and a pair of cowboy boots which made him look all the world like a sort of small Jewish Mark Twain.

And Mary. Mary was Woman. Mary, for the first time, was Sex. Mary in a miniskirt, moving as ever with the drive or soft weave of the song, Mary with the throaty voice which now seduces.

And Peter, Paul and Mary showing Lincoln, Neb. that seven years of one-nighters in Lincoln, Neb. cannot blunt their magic.

In fact, they have grown, matured; there is no mistaking the voices within their voices now.

They no longer whisper, they shout. And their poetry is harsh now for a harsh world. They still translate Bob Dylan but they are writing their own songs now too, and Paul's haunting "Love City" says as much about love and life — and how sometimes one must deny the other — as any ballad ever written.

And though, as the most prolific writer of the group, Paul denies a conscious attempt to do so, I believe "Love City" and some of his other new songs were only written because a pair of geniuses named John Lennon and Paul McCartney have, as Paul himself says, "changed music... changed the world."

PP&M came alive Friday night as Lincoln or Nebraska had never seen them.

Their songs are no longer subtle. "I'm in love with A Big Blue Frog" left no doubt about the racial message barely hidden there ("And I'm certain that it's plain to you. The value of your property will go straight down. If the family next door is blue.")

And they captured Pershing with probably the most powerful and important song they have ever done: a biting song called "The Great Mandella", written by Peter and Mary. It says more about Vietnam and Any War than all the speeches and protests combined. It has almost as great an impact on their newest album, listen to it.

The trio, especially the men, makes no secret of their admiration of the "stone geniuses", as Paul calls the Beatles.

Two years ago, Peter said of the Beatles, in sort of frustrated tone, "I guess their magic is just bigger than ours." I think he realizes now the truth is that the two cannot be measured and were never meant to compete, but to entwine and to change What Is.

In one of Paul's other new songs (not yet released) Paul sings of a young man, "Yes, he was had by her, and a good time was had by all," which echoes too much of John Lennon's "I once had a girl, or should I say, she once had me." in Norwegian Wood.

But Peter, Paul and Mary do not sing Beatle songs. Why, I asked Paul afterwards.

"Because the Beatles do a song and it is their song. They have done it too well for improvement, all we could do would be to imitate. There is only one of their songs I would like to do better than they did, and that's "I'll Follow the Sun", which is really a folk song."

Peter, Paul and Mary received a standing loving ovation from six thousand world-weary people who immersed themselves in the magicians' therapy for two hours Friday night.

And there was something sad when the lights came on and you realized that the people sitting around you were no longer that chorus you had been loving and singing with a moment ago; they were that guy in English class you didn't like and the Mortar Board that was so stuck up and...

When will Peter, Paul and Mary stop being? I hesitantly asked Paul.

"When we get too tired to go to Kansas City tomorrow night," he replied. "When we don't care. Right now, I think we are still growing up. I hope we will continue to grow."

So do I, Peter, Paul and Mary. For you are beautiful people.

Campus Opinion

Dear Editor: Do your typesetters drink? ... on the job? ... with your proofreaders, maybe? Lenore Barta

Dear Editor: Should We? ASUN is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in dead pastures. He leads me to the polling place where I may vote; he removeth my soul. He guides me along the wrong path for his name's sake.

Although I vote on the issue of Vietnam, I shall fear no evil, for it meaneth nothing. Its ineffectiveness and uselessness; they comfort me. ASUN prepareth a table for me before the eyes of my enemies; It anointeth my head with oil; my eyes become clouded. Stupidity and ignorance will follow me all the days of my life. And I shall live in this world without knowledge forever. S. Lee Sorenson

(The Nebraskan reserves the right to condense letters unsigned letters will not be printed.)

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