

Unfulfilled goals, ambivalence part of graduation

## Consequences cause difficult decisions

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This column was first printed in the April 1980 Graduation Supplement. It is being reprinted because of its author's excellent insight into the hearts of many graduating seniors.

By Peg Sheldrick  
Staff Reporter

This really is more about consequences than decisions, but consequences are part of what makes decisions difficult, and so are related.

First, let me say that I always have been a "good" student. I never worked particularly hard at it, or at least never felt like I did, but I always was a good student.

I always figured one of these years they'd find out I wasn't as smart as they seemed to think I was. But they never did. The good student image persisted.

It carried me along from kindergarten through elementary school, to junior high and high school, and even into college. Through four years I held on, giving me a safe, familiar role to play.

I still was playing the second semester of my senior year -- 365 days ago -- when the end of that particular stretch of road came into sight.

That I immediately should pass

into graduate school and further scale the heights of academia was manifestly clear to some members of my family. But for me, for the first time in a long time, the answers weren't so clear.

I put off inquiring about grad schools 'til it was too late. I took my GRE on the last possible date and looked at my scores only once when they came back. Little by little the knowledge grew inside me that I would not be going to graduate school.

I felt guilty about family and friends' unfulfilled expectations even before the last ceremony.

I remember my graduation in snatches; mostly I remember the unspoken tensions of that day. The woman in the robe that strode to the stage, head bowed to hold the mortar board in place, seemed then, and seems now, like another person, the quintessential paper chaser, keenly aware of being all dressed up but having no place to go after stepping off the garlanded platform.

That figure in the robe has followed me through the year since, and even now lingers in a cardboard frame on my desk.

The face in the picture smiles but the muscles are flexed just a bit too tight, the eyes squint too far closed, arm is tightly clasped around a friend who will be leaving too

soon and a moment that will not last.

After the day of that picture, the woman in the robe would reappear every now and then, silently summing up what I had left behind.

She chased me through the summer, to Minneapolis, to Winnipeg, Canada. I found her waiting in my parents' home when I came for a visit. She lingered in odd corners of my old apartment when I returned from traveling. At night in the shadow of her black robe, I would search my ceiling through wet eyes for the answers I still lacked.

Gradually, I found that I could put her from my thoughts by focusing on work and people directly in front of me. If I didn't look too far ahead or back, she left me for a while. And I found the "real world" was the same place I always had been, that activity and inactivity are only as empty as you allow them to be.

I found myself shying away from commitments, taking work as a temporary secretary one month, a warehouse worker another.


After long thought, I re-entered classes -- as an extension student, studying at night things I never tried to learn the four years of days before. I found my way back to the

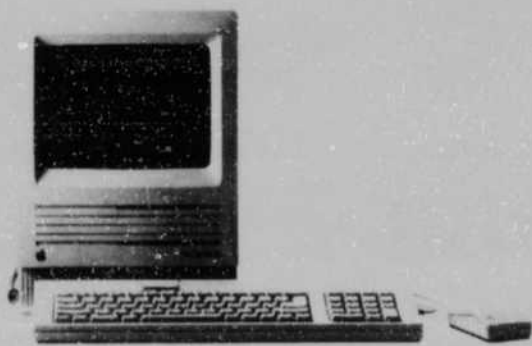
See DECISIONS on 7



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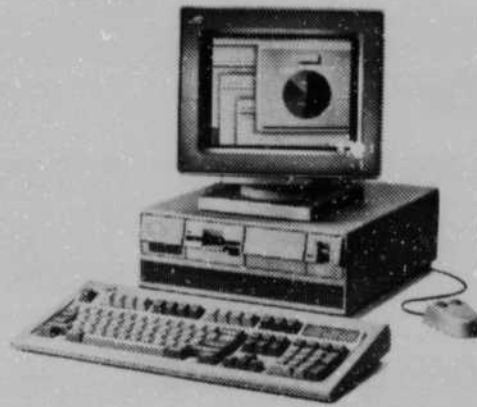
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## Real Life

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In "I'll Take One In Every Color: The Value of An Occasional Splurge," Kleinman notes the psychological benefits of sporadic splurges, saying that a first-run movie or dinner out shouldn't break the new graduate's bankbook -- but should provide a desperately needed mental break. Items such as posters and books also make Kleinman's splurge list.

Kleinman lists how to deal with life, stress and what to do when life isn't going well. She also explains that "your first year won't last 365 days. It may take eight months and fourteen minutes, or fourteen months and eight days. You'll know you've made it through when you realize that you almost like working and have stopped spending your weeks wondering what you'd be doing 'at this very second' if you were still on campus."

Simple recipes are included (in "WHAT Did You Call That Room With The Fridge? Ah Yes, The Kitchen") for the graduate that never learned to cook, and Kleinman advises new cooks not to worry about their cooking skills or repetitive menus.

"Most people," she says, "would rather eat duck à la orange at your house for the fourth time rather than a tuna melt in their own kitchens."

"Real Life 101" provides a well-rounded view for the graduate, and the book gives the student tips on every aspect of the first year out of college. The information contained within its covers will most likely reassure many about-to-be and recent graduates.

## Moving

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these booklets include ways to use bubble wrap and Styrofoam "peanuts" in packing and how to balance the load in the truck.

Morey said it is important to put heavier items in the front of the truck.

Besides graduates, Morey said, Ryder gets a lot of business during the summer because children are out of school, and it's a good time for families to relocate.

TAKE A BITE OUT OF