

OLY/WA VS. TESC [Revision 1]

Dear surviving colleagues:

By fits and starts, I had written out a few anecdotes from the early days. Randy Stilson, Archivist, assembled these for me under the heading *Tales of the Young Evergreen*. Since last summer, motivated by the awareness that we are approaching our 50th anniversary and then by the deaths of Charles McCann and Rudy Martin, I have not only added further anecdotes but also become concerned with more serious thinking and writing about major crises in the first ten years. Possessing neither the stamina nor the expertise to produce full and professionally responsible historical accounts, I have adopted the heading, *Notes to a Future Historian of The Evergreen State College*. So far I have retrieved some items written earlier and added lengthy pieces about (1) the collision of our Dedication/Inauguration Day with a national student strike, (2) the sad events which led to the creation of the dragons in the stairwell, and (3) the drastic stunting of our growth by the Legislature in March of 1973. Currently I am immersed in the legislative crisis of 1977, as Dan Evans took over the Presidency from Charles McCann. We came close to being shut down or turned into a run-of-the-mill institution.

It has struck me that the Future Historian will also need to be aware of and to deal with the more general problems of: (1) misunderstandings about, (2) prejudices against, and (3) hostilities toward Evergreen in the Greater Olympia community and the State beyond. Granted, we suffer from the same town-gown hostility which has been held against universities and colleges since the Middle Ages. Such history can lead to the formulation of a Law: "The positive reputation of an academic institution increases with the distance away from the campus." But we, somewhat more idealistic and committed to improvement than most faculties and staffs, have experienced all the more virulent opposition. Why?

In order to get discussion started with the intention of stockpiling suggestions in the Archives for the Future Historian about what to look for, I present to you a rapidly assembled, highly personal, and obviously incomplete list of what I remember about the attacks from outside (and a few from inside), which served,

ironically, to increase our solidarity. Please send your additions and corrections to Randy, with copies to me. If you are curious about what I've written so far, you can find the materials by entering <Tales of the Young Evergreen> in the "Search" window of the www.evergreen.edu homepage and then clicking on the Accession link.

Having been granted in 2014 a few more years of life after St. Pete hospitalization, six weeks of Panorama convalescence, implanting of a pacemaker, and two months of Providence Home Health Care, I feel that I should use the time to get something done, and I encourage you to make what contributions you can to our collective memory. All will be useful.

One of my idols, Eubie Blake, who lived past 100, was asked in his late nineties what it felt like to be functioning at such an age. He responded that it was just great: he could tell the most outrageous fibs about the history of jazz and his own career, and there wasn't anybody around to contradict him. For my part, however, I try to follow Mark Twain, who said that he was a more moral man than George Washington: "Washington said he could not tell a lie. I can, but I won't."

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- (1) general disappointment about not getting a "real" college [with major-sports teams, departments, major requirements, distribution requirements, letter- and- number-grades, multiple courses regulated by bells, fraternities and sororities, and so on]
 - (2) specific disappointment: disruption of financial assumptions [Developers and investors had bet on potential sites for the College and were left hanging; later, the commercial exploitation of Cooper Point was inhibited by collaboration between residents and the College in the Cooper Point Association and Plan]
 - (3) ill-feelings lingering in other communities which had competed to be the site of the new college and had lost
 - (4) fear of students, perceived as threatening political unrest and even mob

violence [When Evergreen was chartered in 1967, the only campus disruptions which had been reported nationally were the Berkeley Free Speech riots. In the next years, before our first students arrived in October 1971, there had been numerous anti-Viet Nam War demonstrations, sit-ins, confrontations of students and police, acts of arson, bombings, occupations of administrative offices, and the killings at Kent State. The President of the University of Washington, Charles Odegaard, had appeared on Seattle network television to plead with an increasingly hostile public that his students were not aliens, but their own children. On the Saturday after our own students, who had begun their college experience off-campus, had come to the campus, I was shopping at Peterson's Food Town at the northwest corner of Harrison and Division Streets. The owner, Art Peterson, who was an early supporter of the College, said: "Well, they've been here for a week, and the town is still standing." He was only half kidding.]

- (5) invasion of the downtown scene of relatively conservative Olympia by the hippie, flower-child uniforms and in-your-face behavior of some of our early students, including suspected drug use; not a majority of our student body (average age twenty-six), but sufficient to form a negative stereotype of "Greeners" [regional joke: Q. "Why did the Evergreener cross the road?" A. "To get four hours of credit."]
- (6) perceived arrogance of early claims about the college [Dick Nichols, in his excellent presentation of June, 1971, "A History of Evergreen from Newspaper Headlines," reports on an address made in Centralia by Vice President Dean Clabaugh, who said that someday people would be talking about Evergreen and Harvard – in that order. Clabaugh went on to say that it would be Evergreen's job to drag Olympia, kicking and screaming, into the 20th century. These remarks may have been extreme, but many of us did feel more than a touch of fervor.]
- (7) no grades, no requirements: perceived as permissiveness or anarchy. "What employer is going to hire or graduate-school officer is going to admit someone who hasn't 'taken' any subjects he recognizes, has no grades in

anything, and so has no GPA?" [Easier to say what we weren't going to do than to explain our innovations.]

- (8) State funds and policies would be supporting out-of-state students [It was true that after one year of paying higher tuition, such students could establish residency for in-state tuition. Few of our critics bothered to ask why, in the absence of any formal advertising, so many out-of-staters found their way to us.]
- (9) anti-Viet Nam War sentiments = anti-American sentiments; sedition [E.g., see "The Uncertain Glory of an April Day."]
- (10) "If going to a regular college was good enough for me, it should be good enough for them. Is TESC saying I was educated wrong?" "If I had to go through it, those little so-and-so's should have to go through it too." [Comments made at my information sessions.]
- (11) "Look at some of those faculty members they're bringing in – just as scruffy and more radical than the students." [The dedicated and fiercely courageous Dean Clabaugh dared at an early faculty-and-staff retreat to tell the story of the Two Cannibals, who had learned English from a missionary before eating him. Younger Cannibal: "I've been reading in one of those newspapers in the jetsam that washed up on our island about college problems and about administrators and faculty members. Have you ever eaten any administrator?" Older Cannibal: "You wouldn't like it – stringy, lots of gristle, rancid fat." Y.C.: "What about faculty member? Have you ever had any faculty member?" O.C.: "Can't say that I have. And as a matter of fact, I don't know anybody who has." Y.C.: "What's the problem? Can't you catch them?" O.C.: "Oh, you can catch them ... but **cleaning** them"]
- (12) "Liberal arts college? Are the tax-payers supposed to pay for a bunch of liberals who are artists?" [Ignorance easy to dismiss, but symptomatic. More serious: Representative James Kuehnle's (R-Spokane) attack in a floor speech on us for using tax-payers' money to teach poetry. His colleagues informed him that the two universities and the other three senior colleges

offered course-work in poetry. He changed his focus but kept up his attacks.]

- (13) "Co-ed dorms? Sounds to me like a recipe for orgies."
- (14) editorial stance of *Olympian* , including bias of headlines and assignment of stories : suspicious and even hostile from the start [In our one encounter, Editor Dean Shacklett introduced himself to me as "the guy who raises all that hell about your college."]
- (15) [from inside – some students and some faculty members] "They said that this place was going to be different. It should be different in exactly the way I want it to be different. "
- (16) [from inside] "Black Mountain College, with its faculty of stars and high ideals, went under. That was a sign of its virtue, because any institution that can survive in a corrupt world must have compromised with the corruption."
- (17) Many Democrats: "Evergreen was spawned by a Republican administration and governed by Republican trustees." Increasingly conservative>reactionary Republicans: "Evergreen was the brainchild of Dan Evans, a 'Rockefeller Republican' -- that is to say, not a real Republican." [Sometimes it seems you can't win.]
- (18) "Minorities who want to go to college and people who will be the first in their families to go to college will want to go to a real college, where they can learn what they need to get jobs." [Explanation of our programs and goals might work, but we rarely got to talk to the people worried about our being "different."]
- (19) "They are just using our money to fund some crack-pot experiment that assumes the whole rest of the educational system is wrong." [A negatively slanted way of describing us. Charles McCann and some of the rest of us disapproved of the terms "experiment" and "experimental" as suggesting that we were running some academic guinea-pigs for a brief

time in order to write our book when the experiment concluded. We believed in what we were trying to do as a valuable alternative and had come to stay.]

- (20) "What is so bad about the regular system that causes these Evergreen people to want to make such large changes?" [Even before Merv Cadwallader had the Planning Faculty working on Alexander Meiklejohn's *Education between Two Worlds* and Joseph Tussman's *Experiment at Berkeley*, some of us early administrators were aware of the results of Daniel Coit Gilman's well-intentioned 1876 imposition -- in founding Johns Hopkins -- of the German university system on top of an English college system not meant to connect with it. By mid-20th-century, the graduate-school tails were wagging the undergraduate-college dogs all over the US. Mention of higher education for a full life and responsible citizenship was relegated to the beginnings of catalogs, and the students' experiences were fragmented. The divisiveness of departmental organization and premature specialization ruled, as did the necessity for teachers to publish or perish. But we dared not, in making our case for Evergreen's principles and for change, attack the other Washington State institutions and so give critical weapons to the political forces opposed to higher education in general. We could talk about alternatives but not about deficiencies and corrections.]
- (21) "You're not accredited." "But we can't be fully accredited until we've passed through the 'correspondent' and the 'candidate' phases and then have graduated our first four-year class." "See? I knew you weren't accredited."
- CODA: In the spring of 1974, having compiled a lengthy self-study, we were visited by an eleven-member evaluation team investigating whether we were ready for and worthy of full accreditation. The officers of the accrediting agency, at that time known as the Commission on Higher Schools of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools, appreciated what we were trying to do and recognized that there would be

doubts about us. Accordingly, they had sent in two investigators a year early (late October, 1971) so that we could move from "correspondent" to "candidate" status. Now we were having our crucial visit a year early, before we had graduated our first four-year class.

- The team met on a Sunday to work out their schedule and discuss the report which we had prepared in the last year. They spent the next four days interviewing Greeners and examining facilities and resources. On Friday morning, they held a closed session to share their conclusions. On Friday afternoon, they held a "press conference" to present an early, unofficial summary of what they would be reporting to the Northwest Association. We-the-Deans had a full schedule of appointments, so we asked one of our secretaries to attend the meeting and tell us what had happened. She came back with the good news that in the official report, which would be published in June, we would receive full accreditation and a number of glowing commendations. The only admonitions were: that we should try to do a much better job of explaining to our various constituencies our goals and the workings of our curriculum, and that we should stop acting so defensive in our dealings with the public. We were doing a good job and should say so.
- On my short drive home to the Green Cove development, close to the northern edge of the College property, I resolved, "I will not act defensive, I will not act defensive," Feeling so good on that sunny late afternoon, I strapped my sixteen-month-old younger son into our piggy-back-pack, and off we went for a pleasant walk along the road through the development. A car pulled up beside us -- a sedan carrying a middle-aged couple. The husband rolled down his window and said, "You obviously live out here. How do you like it?" I said, "It's a nice, woodsy place to build, and there are still sites left, though you have to put up with construction sounds during the day." He said, "Yeah, I heard that there were some burglaries -- breaking and entering of homes under construction, and stealing of tools. Of course, I'm not surprised, with that college so close." I said, "I beg your pardon. I am an administrator at 'that college.' The police have discovered

that the burglaries were done by a few high-school kids. You shouldn't be so quick to rely on hearsay prejudices."

- My resolution had lasted less than two hours. And even now, over four decades later, the old scars act up once in a while.
- -- Charlie Teske, 2016 <teskecb@aol.com>