25 March 1998

TO: Jane Jervis, Barbara Smith, Ruta Fanning

FROM: Burt Guttman

SUBJECT: Humanity and community at Evergreen

About 6:00 yesterday, as I was preparing to leave, my friend and colleague Betty Kutter called me in a panic. Her car was missing. She had suddenly remembered that she had left it at the Lab I loading dock while bringing things into the building and had forgotten it as she got involved with her work. She was afraid it had been towed. I waited while she went to Police Services, learned that it had indeed been towed to the west side of Olympia, paid a fine of $110, and waited while Evergreen authorities contacted the towing service and told them to release the car. So by about a quarter to seven I was able to take her to get her car.

We talk about Evergreen as a community. We talk about how we work together and support one another, how we treat one another as people with individual differences and rights. But this kind of action belies the myth. I calculate it would have taken someone at Police Services approximately two minutes to determine that the car left at the loading dock belong to a faculty member and to call Betty to say, "Did you forget that you left your car at the loading dock? Please move it or we'll have it towed." But that simple humanitarian, communitarian way of thinking doesn't seem to be a part of Official Thinking at Evergreen. Instead, we are subjected to Bureaucratic Thinking, and I hear the inhuman voice of a mindless computer intoning, "THERE IS AN OBJECT IN A FORBIDDEN PLACE. REMOVE THE OBJECT. CALL TOWING COMPANY NOW. END."

For 25 years I have been complaining about the mindless bureaucracy that underlies this institution, a mindless ostinato figure that stands in weird counterpoint to the free-form melodies we play in our teaching here. It baffles me that Evergreen continues to have two such different personalities. I suggest that a little conversation among high-level administrators might bring routine operating procedures more in line with our teaching procedures and create a college with a single human personality.