

CHRIST COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

THE SPILLIKIN

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A Hopeful Beginning

As one of the youngest and the smallest colleges at Valpo, Christ College has always nurtured and cherished the interaction that develops among students and faculty and the accompanying *esprit de corps* that characterizes the CC membership. Sufficient years have passed, however, since the inception of the Directed Studies Program and the subsequent founding of the College that this sense of devotion and camaraderie can no longer be taken for granted. One of the primary reasons, then, for initiating a Christ College newsletter is to renew in all CC alums a feeling of belonging to the College.

Individual students have kept in touch with particular faculty, and classmates have, in many instances, maintained contact with each other; however, this newsletter is intended to provide a forum where we can "hear" each other's voices again and discover where CC alums are living, what they are doing, and what they are thinking. This initial issue is devoted exclusively to pieces written by deans and faculty who have been associated with CC in an attempt to inform you about what is going on locally.

But I like to think that CC also remains alive in each of you who has graduated from the program, making the College a national and, perhaps even an international, institution. Consequently, in subsequent issues we hope to include a column of notes describing news and achievements of various alums and short essays on topics and issues that concern you and may be of interest to others. In a future issue we plan to enclose a questionnaire to discover what each of you is doing. In the meantime, please send us news items and thought pieces to include in the next issue.

From the vantage point of the campus, change often seems imperceptible, and one is not aware of the degree of alteration within CC or the gradual change and, in some instances, radical transformation that alums undergo once they leave the safe and sheltered rooms of CC. Yet, as even this "inside" issue of the newsletter makes clear, change is constant. Two pieces note the change in faculty, the retirement of Sue Wienhorst and the appointment of Mark Schwehn. Dick Baepler talks about the evolution of the College. Mel Piehl and Marc Riedel describe the revisions and revisions and revisions of the two longest standing programs in the curriculum. Bill Olmsted whimsically delineates the changing faces and attitudes of CC students, and Dick Lee recounts the shock of unrecognition brought on by a three-year absence. Finally, Mark Schwehn's column on Breaking Bread pays a tribute to the most rewarding kind of intellectual development, the publication of a major book by one of CC's earliest alums.

Hopefully, neither the changes in Christ College nor those in your own lives have diminished or obliterated your memories and recollections of Christ College. We wish you God's fullest blessings in your lives; we trust that you will enjoy reading this newsletter; and we look forward to hearing from all of you.

Arlin Meyer

Super and Never Superannuated

At a special CC Symposium this past April, students and faculty offered a year-delayed tribute to Mrs. Sue Wienhorst "to wish her well in her retirement." Whether she has merely "left" teaching, as she has put it in her relatively young age, or whether she has retired from teaching, as students and faculty have construed it, Sue Wienhorst has made distinctive contributions to Christ College and the University Community.

As part-time and full-time instructor and as director and coordinator, Mrs. Wienhorst has long been associated with the Freshman Program, almost from its beginnings. She has also been the trusted mentor with the Senior T.A.'s in the Freshman Program. She is one of the few professors in the University both interested in and educated in relationships between theology and literature. Her upper level seminars, Comedy and Tragedy and the Imagination, reflected that focus.

Whatever her teaching responsibilities, Sue Wienhorst combines vigorous regard for subject matter with deep concern for students. In her case, moreover, highly directed personal energy and care for the community she serves have come together in such a way that she has always been what she appears to be. What she expects from others has always been met by her demands from and expectations of herself: the woman who makes extensive commentary on student themes (and on faculty papers and curricular proposals one might add) is the same woman ready for late counsel at paper-revision or paper-due time and the same woman we see jogging on Sturdy Road early in the morning.

The results of her teaching have been happy for students and colleagues alike. Students who have worked with her work hard at writing--they revise carefully, understand writing as thinking, have a basic grasp of the rhetoric of the paragraph, and are not only ready for constructive criticism but seek it from the instructor--"like Mrs. Wierhorst."

For her colleagues the caution and objectivity of her scholarship, the restlessness of her productive mind, her sense of teaching as calling, and her forthrightness and charitable opposition--the marks of a true friend--all have made her presence significant during the formative Christ College years.

That she will not be doing nothing is evident from her plans. She will be doing voluntary bibliographical work where needed in the University Community. She will continue to develop her computer and word processor skills, attending to composer husband Richard Wienhorst's work. She may do some teaching in rhetoric. She may not decide to stop smoking. Thus our memory traces will remain faithful to the perdurable pattern of her many-mannered motions.

Warren Rubel

CC — Then and Now

Christ College was the brainchild of Dr. O. P. Kretzmann and was probably the last academic unit in American higher education to come into existence by fiat. There was no apparent consultation with anybody, much less with a faculty committee. He decreed its existence. It was one of the final major creative actions of his administration.

I spent many hours with him trying to discern just what he had in mind, and am still not sure I know. He wanted a college which didn't exist anywhere else, which would combine Christian wisdom with the liberal arts in a kind of Christian humanism, would be an honors college but heavily weighted toward the humanities, and would do away with credits and all the quantitative paraphernalia which is the essential coinage of American higher education. It would have an intimate association with the Chapel, and when he spoke the listener conjured up visions of medieval students walking around in gowns or seated somewhere in meditation.

The Committee on Christ College appointed to give birth to this idea simply had to settle for something a bit different. I was a member of the Committee and shared its difficulty in seeing how we could set up essentially an alternative method of education based on major exams rather than course credits within the context of American higher education. We remembered that Robert Hutchins at the University of Chicago had tried something very much like that, with the result that for a few short years there was great excitement at that University, but graduates were having a great deal of difficulty getting accepted anywhere in the country without normal transcripts.

So we built on the Directed Studies Program, an honors program modeled after a program at Yale. We gave the dean a great deal of authority to experiment. This was most significant in the context of very rigid requirements and a University Curriculum Committee which routinely turned down every newly submitted course.

We experimented with tutorial teaching, with interdisciplinary efforts--and with new learning experiences which took students into Chicago for first hand encounters with great art, a rapidly changing social scene, and fascinating individuals. The sense of the experimental was dominant.

In a few years the turmoil of the late sixties and early seventies hit our campus, and we became something of a counter-cultural force, not in support of the dominant trends but counter to them in what I thought was an intelligent way. In the midst of high and often angry emotion and the discovery of feeling together with a strongly developing social consciousness which often led to action without reflection or consideration of the consequences of action, we emphasized the old traditional arts of critical reading, analysis, and argument. We were not socially unaware, but distinguished the role of the scholar from that of the social activist. We took our inspiration from ideals most clearly represented in the modern university by certain leaders at the University of Chicago and saw ourselves as keeping the lamp of reason burning in the middle of what seemed to be a new dark age. I hasten to add that not all students shared this perception and interpretation of our development.

This approach, however, still is enshrined in the Freshman Program above all. Creative evolution has taken place; the theater has been discovered as a marvellous locus for integrating the arts and for personal involvement as well. And I am pleased to note that the rhetoric we coined for the catalogue in the first years of the College's life is still there and still guides the way: "Above all, Christ College encourages the restlessness of the seeker who desires to know things as they are and whose thought and imagination have been captured by some vision of things as they might be

under the grace of God and the exertions of human wit and intelligence." Thus we sought to celebrate the vocation of the Christian intellectual against the mindlessness of certain views of Christian education and against what we perceived to be the modern barbarism which wreaked havoc with fragile intelligence.

The cultural situation has changed. Many more professional students are now in the College; they were rare in the early days. I see the spirit of the College as unchanged, however, and am watching carefully for its new expression.

Richard Baepler

A Year of Togetherness

The fifty to sixty denizens of the Freshman Program spend 16 semester hours together in their year of plenary lectures and seminars, and in writing, producing, and acting their own dramatic production. In these activities and in the preparations for them, the freshmen work together, suffer together, and celebrate their accomplishments together. Little wonder that after the first semester they have developed an esprit that supports them through four years of college and have formed lasting friendships.

There has not always been a Freshman Program. When CC was first born in 1968 from the Directed Studies Program, freshmen took a rhetoric course and a history course. Since then, the freshman curriculum has undergone a continuous evolution. The first unified Freshman Program in 1971 bore the impress of its evolution from Freshman Rhetoric in its emphasis on a "rhetorical focus" for each week's work. Called Problems of Inquiry: Humanities and Social Sciences, it struck out in the direction of bringing classical thought into contact with modern problems. For the first semester it focussed on analysis of power and values as well as on a variety of humanistic texts. The second semester was given to the study, for the first seven weeks, of "masterpieces."

"Arts of Inquiry" was the title that summed the changes in thinking that underlay the next variation. Instead of emphasis on particular problems, we focussed on the arts involved in inquiry into all problems. Perhaps the title and the rhetorical agenda marked a continuity with the past, but the chief art turned out to be the art of interpretation of diverse types of writing. We experimented with some science writings in the first semester and reinterpreted the notion of systems thinking in the second semester according to different philosophic methods. At about the same time, the second seven weeks of the spring term evolved into opportunities for the staff to do seminars on subjects of current interest.

The integration of the study of history with the rest of the program has always been a vexed problem for the staff. Currently, we are incorporating the study of historical texts into the body of the course. Significantly, the course has changed its name again, to "Texts and Contexts: An Introduction to Western Thought."

Graduates will be glad to know that some texts, or at least authors, have survived all changes. The Gospels of Mark and John have been common to all, though schemes of interpretation have changed. Plato, Luther, and Shakespeare have been there every fall. Past and present CCers will always have some common inheritance to discourse with each other about. But of course they have some from upper division seminars, too.

Marc Riedel

HOMECOMING

Christ College invites you to attend an Open House in Mueller Hall on Saturday, October 6, at approximately 11:30 am. The faculty hopes to see many of you at that time.

Son of Senior Honors Seminar

Historically minded Christ Collegians will recall that CC has always included a common course in the final semester of the senior year. Once called "Value and Judgment," and more recently and generically, "Senior Honors Seminar," this course has provided "an integrative capstone to the Christ College experience" (according to the catalog and the faculty) and a chance to renew the friendships of Freshman Program and exchange notes on applications for jobs and graduate schools (according to the students).

Now, in the CC tradition of continuing curricular revision, comes the "Junior-Senior Honors Colloquium" as the latest and, we hope, best approach to the common upper-division CC experience. Initiated by Dean Meyer two years ago, the new program is not a single course but a sequence of activities extending over the whole latter portion of a CC student's career. In their sophomore year each class, aided by two faculty mentors, selects a common topic for investigation; as second-semester juniors or first-semester seniors they explore that topic in small CC Tutorial classes; and in the second semester of the senior year they share papers written in these Tutorials.

Next year's seniors, the first to undertake the Colloquium sequence, chose as their topic "The Individual in Mass Society." Professors Olmsted and Piehl each taught one section of the Tutorial this spring, using Reinhold Niebuhr's Moral Man and Immoral Society as a common text in both sections (additional texts were chosen by students in each section). Next year's CC juniors, aided by Professor Rubel and Dean Meyer, have chosen the timely topic of "Peace and War." (They thought of reversing the two terms, but that title was already taken.) This fall they will be selecting their core and sectional texts for the Tutorials.

This new upper-division program clearly comes under the "experimental" heading in CC's multifarious mission, and since we are still in mid-stream it is too soon to know how the experiment will turn out. But if the lively activity of this infant "Son of Senior Honors Seminar" so far is any indication, it should grow up to be a vigorous component of the whole Christ College Program.

Mel Piehl

Welcome Back Mark

The most recent addition to the Christ College staff is Mark Schwehn who joined the faculty in September, 1983, as Assistant Professor of Humanities. A product of Valparaiso University (1967) and a graduate of the Directed Studies Program, Professor Schwehn has already had a remarkable academic career.

After graduating from Valpo with a major in History and a minor in Philosophy, Mark won a Danforth Fellowship to study at Stanford University. His dissertation on Henry Adams and William James was awarded the Allan Nevins Prize as the most distinguished Ph.D. thesis in the field of American History in 1978. Prior to joining the faculty of CC, Mark taught for three years at the California State University at San Jose and for eight years at the University of Chicago.

No doubt, some of you have read articles Mark has published in The Cresset during the past several years. He has already achieved an enviable publication record and is currently completing a manuscript for a book on the formation of modern consciousness in America. Mark has enjoyed his first year of teaching in CC, and we are delighted to have him back at Valpo.

Arlin Meyer

Professor Piehl recently discovered that, in spite of all the CC students who have since become eminent alumni, Valparaiso University has yet to become a household word. In 1982, Temple University Press published Piehl's book, Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America. The book quickly won widespread critical acclaim. The New York Times Book Review called it "not only the best study to date of this obscure but important movement but also one of the finest analyses we have of the larger contours of American Catholic social thought in this country." During the first surge of consumer demand for the book (it has already been issued in a paperback edition), Piehl's publisher was informed that Breaking Bread was among five finalists for the prestigious Robert F. Kennedy Book Award. "By the way," the award sponsors asked at the end of their conversation with Temple, "how did you people at Temple University Press find such a fine writer of English prose in Chile?" Of course, we know what such parochial Easterners have yet to learn: Valparaiso, the Valparaiso, is in Indiana.

As you can already see, Piehl's experience proves that when the right person finds the right subject a distinguished book results. Bear in mind that Piehl is himself a CC alum. Consider now that this graduate of "an obscure but important" Lutheran University has written the "best study to date" of an "obscure but important" religious movement. Recall too that in his years at Valparaiso (INDIANA) Piehl was known as a hard-hitting, crusading (as in CRUSADER) Torch editor. Note now that Piehl's book begins with the following sentence: "This first number of the Catholic Worker was planned, written, and edited in the kitchen of a tenement of Fifteenth Street, on subway platforms, on the 'L', on the ferry," stated the little eight-page tabloid that appeared in New York's Union Square on May Day, 1933." Piehl edited the Torch in several Valparaiso tenements, some of them without kitchens. The Christian faith, journalism, social thought and action, war and peace: these grew to be Piehl's deepest interests while he was a CC student, and they turn out to be the controlling themes of the subject he chose for his book.

There are, of course, important differences between Piehl and his subject. The major figure in his book is a woman, Dorothy Day. Piehl is Lutheran; Day was Roman Catholic. Piehl grew up in the farm country of Wyoming and the Dakotas before settling into the comparatively sheltered precincts of St. Louis Lutheranism. Dorothy Day moved from coast to coast, and though she did settle for a time in the Midwest, it was in Chicago and later in the "bohemian life of Greenwich Village" that she came of age. These and other differences between author and book account for the blend of sympathetic engagement and critical detachment that is the hallmark of the best historical studies. The reviewer for America called Breaking Bread "a model of objective and sophisticated scholarship."

Christ College alums should read Breaking Bread because it is a very good book, because it has something of Christ College in it, and mainly because it provides a historical foundation for those who seek to live responsibly as Christians in the modern world. In Chapter II, for example, Piehl supplies his readers with a masterful, brief synthesis of both Protestant and Catholic social thought in the twentieth century. The story that Piehl unfolds thereafter is both instructive and inspiring. Throughout its 250 pages, Breaking Bread addresses issues that have been and should continue to be central to the life of Christ College.

Mark Schwehn

CALLING ALL ARTISTS

We welcome front page designs for the newsletter to include a Christ College logo. Please send entries to the editors.

The Androgynous Christ College Student

We have all heard this one: "Suppose you could be any age you wished on the condition that you never became older; which age would you choose?" The question itself is a kind of moral minefield which permits only a single reasonable reply: "I don't know." There is, however, a peculiar application of this question when it comes to being a teacher. From the standpoint of a Christ College professor, there doesn't seem to be much difference between now and ten or twelve years ago--not because one has resisted the march of time, but because students are always the same age. Which suggests a rewording of the question: "Suppose you could be anyone you wished on the condition that you never became older; who would you be?" A professor? No, my colleagues have wrinkles and baggy pants; they are getting older. A student? This seems plausible. But an ancient bit of French wisdom (cynicism?) reminds us that the perennial freshness of the student may be deceiving: the more things change, the more they remain the same. Or does this mean the opposite of what I think?

In any case, let's imagine an eternally young student who has been taking Christ College classes for the past decade or so. This student probably began as a white male child of impeccably middleclass origins; a Missouri Synod Lutheran from New York or California or Michigan or the great state of St. Louis rather than from the Chicago area; a Republican but suspicious of Nixon; a pre-seminarian but dubious that whales prefer Biblical patriarchs. And this student today? Well, she is still white. But her parents have more cash; and they are Republicans less out of loyalty to their German ancestry than out of respect for the prevailing wisdom of the Chicago suburb in which they reside. Our student is not thinking about getting married, having children and "settling down" into premature middle age; nor is she contemplating ten years of graduate education. Law school looks inviting; she will look for a job if she isn't admitted to the law school of her choice. The statistical odds are slightly in favor of her being a Lutheran but greatly against her becoming a deaconess. Sometimes she wonders why women are forbidden to preach in Chapel or why there are no women on the Christ College faculty, although she is unsure that these matters concern her directly. And so on.

Naturally, these stereotypes fail to convey any sense of the real diversity within each generation of students or of the subtler changes which have occurred over the years. Yet there have been some major changes since 1972. Of these, the gender shift toward predominantly female students is the most significant. And since today's students are less aggressive, more reliable and (in their written work) more articulate, it is tempting to attribute this to the presence of a female majority. The same reason may lie behind the fact that today's student has a livelier interest in high culture--fine arts, poetry, music, etc.--than her male counterpart of the 70s. She is also less interested in politics than he was (will women fight a war in Nicaragua?). And sometimes she worries about her commitment to the humanities. Will it really help her in later life? And why are most of the men in her class so conservative in their politics, so intent upon gaining wealth and power and respectability, so skeptical of her somewhat experimental approach to life?

In the 70s, one often felt like the older brother or uncle of the Christ College students. A deception no doubt; but one which permitted the useful illusion that everyone was striving toward the same goals--toward a Christian humanism, let's say, in which an enlightened religion strove to improve the world. In the 80s, one feels the onset of a certain paternalism toward students. A dangerous attitude, as we know from having read King Lear. But, for better or worse, we have no kingdom to divide among "these our daughters." Their

goals and ours are not the same. And perhaps this is the way things should be; isn't one of the stated purposes of Christ College that it aims "to encourage the restlessness of the seeker"? Let's hope that the search is for freedom, truth and dignity--goals which I like to think are shared by he of the 70s and she of the 80s alike.

Bill Olmsted

Home on the Strange: A Partial Unpacking

I am sure the Dean's best intention was to make me feel at home when he set a Christ College essay deadline for me before I had even unpacked my bags from Cambridge. My best intention therefore will be to write something appropriately transitional for him about the situation of the "homecomer" while I unpack those bags.

When one moves to another country he passes through two and possibly three stages of entry. The first we could call the stage of the "stranger" when he judges his new experience by his past history. The second is the stage of the "immigrant" when he judges his new experience less by his past history and more by the present history of the other country. The third is the stage of the "native" when he judges his new experience by the past and present history of the other country. These stages can be revelatory collisions and the final stage is a kind of conversion.

As Cambridge Program Director I rejoiced when any student could move from "stranger" toward "immigrant" in even one semester. Most students enjoyed the collisions of the "stranger" making interesting judgments of England as Americans, and happily not a few were also able to make the more interesting judgments of England as Americans making some sense of contemporary Britain while neither undervaluing nor overvaluing its way of life. While only a few of my students went crazy, none was able to go "native" in so short a time abroad.

Truth to tell, it was only in my third (sabbatical) year in England when I was traveling to other countries--Poland, Russia, Egypt, Spain, China--that I discovered I was thinking British first and American second. This inversion was no doubt due in part to the fact that those other countries had histories at least as old as England and comparisons were possible, and of course China and Egypt could make even England look tentative. I know my return to England from each encounter of those other countries always gave me a deeper feeling of home than has, so far, my return to upstart America.

Which brings me to the situation of the "homecomer." It is banally true that we can't go home again--we are changed, home is changed--and all of life is at best homesteading wherever we happen to be. But we think we are homecoming when we return to our native land even if we are prepared for the discontinuities. What the "homecomer" discovers, however, is that he must return to his native land through the very stages he passed through abroad. Again he must become a "stranger," an "immigrant," and possibly a "native" in his native land. The collisions are almost as revelatory as going abroad. At this moment of unpacking my bags I am only a "stranger" overcome with underwhelming America, and I also suspect in the exceeding strangeness of the College I shall feel a special kinship this fall with the freshmen.

The "homecomer" of course cannot make judgments of his new experience of his native land without the memory that it all once made sense to him. As I return to America, to the University, and to the College, I know that when I stop wondering how they make sense I'll be home. I think I'll leave one bag packed.

Richard Lee