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What is the Essence of Truth, or Things I've NEVER Seen in My 4 1/2 Years at Concordia

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A person from PPS sprinting to get a job done.
Students staying more than ten minutes if a prof is late.
The printers in the computer lab working for an entire week without breaking down.
Traditional students out-talking non-trads in a humanities class.
President Schlimpert.
The student union room getting any bigger (it actually shrunk.).
Any sense of unity except maybe in chapel or a soccer game.
All the sex and drugs that goes on behind doors in the middle of the afternoon or any time for that matter.
A lunchtime in the cafeteria in which every table is desegregated and all the Asian students are having intense conversations with the athletes.
A freshman who does not skip at least one class a week, in the first month, due to the hangover from the night before.
A sophomore who doesn't go through an identity crisis.
A junior who doesn't consider a serious relationship that might lead to marriage.
A senior who is not burnt out and skipping classes left and right.
President Schlimpert.
Bars (yet).
E-Mail.
Professors getting as excited about teaching their students as they do about drinking their ten-thirty coffee.
The Concordia Cavalier. What the heck is he anyway? And what are the women called? Cavalettes?
Dr. Hill teach an entire class period without saying, “let me see if I think I hear what you are saying. . . .
Pastor Norm taking five steps outside without breaking into whistling Mozart or Wagner.
Dr. Wright use a simple sentence.
Dr. Edwards talk without using her hands.
A student leave Concordia without owing a thing.
Professor Spalteholz end a class on time.
Christian Life Ministry go a whole year without feeding the homeless, running retreats, or volunteering in the community.
A student take more than a passing interest in the life of a prof.
A prof take more than a passing interest in my personal life.
A young student living with vision.

These last few are the ones I want to talk about. After all, there are excuses for our lack of unity—we come from so many different places. There are excuses for Schlimpert not being here—he’s “making friends” for Concordia. There are even excuses for the profs. enjoying their coffee—it's often more interesting than their students. But I still haven’t found an excuse, or reason if you like, for the lack of relations between the older and younger generations. Whoever is to blame (and that is not my purpose here) I think the result is pretty evident in Gen. X’s lack of vision—what my grandfather calls “rudderlessness.”

This is how I see it: When I arrived as a freshman, I began to realize that in higher education, the mind is considered a toilet bowl. The filling begins as soon as you sign the $3,000 loan your freshman year. And the crap goes in for a long time. I do believe I’m full now. Now it isn’t that all of it is worthless. It’s just that most of it is. And I don’t mind being
a crap caretaker so long as I know how to tell the difference—after all, there really is no escaping human nature and the toilet.

Did you know there are two kinds of crap? The first type is what farmers call "manure"—it actually enriches the soil, strengthening plants. The second type is what is best left un-looked at; it is the hardy log in the toilet that confronts your guests. Where am I going with this? Well, this is the essence of my search at Concordia: I've been shown the "what"—and there's a lot; but the "where" and "how" escape me. How do I learn to tell the difference? Where do I find meaning in my life; how do I find a vision to live by?

These are not answers that I find among my peers. They are in the same mess 'o manure. I have a friend who complains to me often, "I wish I knew what to do with my life. I feel aimless. I could join the Peace Corps, but I don't feel like it's worth it. Do I have something to give? I wish I could have a vision. . . ." My friend knows I can't help. I'm one of him. We tremble to say this, but we really need the older generation. My friend and I share this aching hope, that someday, someone here at Concordia will yell at me, "For God's sakes boy, flush it!"

Of course, yelling implies that you have a close relationship with someone. Yes, I know, "we're all trying our best." There have been times when people here have reached out to me. And everyone knows, you say, that we're much better than the impersonal State colleges. Well, I say that's a sorry excuse for not trying harder.

I don't know about your generation, but mine is the computer-controlled sports car of the 90's. There's a lot of torque and horsepower and chrome and turbo-charged fuel-injection, but the driver is a twenty-something-year-old and has never learned to drive. Someone's got to start the process of teaching him. Or he'll never be able to use the vehicle at his disposal. Someone must share a moral judgement without being afraid of sounding like he or she is being close-minded. Someone must mentor. Someone must father. Someone must mother. Something must be passed on, not information—we have enough of that—but the power to use it.

We live in a decade where truth is beyond relative, it is nonexistent; the idealistic hippies are the cynical boomers—still looking. We feel proud if we pass on the existential belief that "life is a search for meaning." Come on. I knew that in kindergarten when I peed in my pants and all the kids laughed. I believe the answer is much closer than we think. It's right here in front of our believing noses: Relationships.

And right here, as I sit, striving to create a gleaming work of art, Dan walks into the computer lab and tries to talk with me. Immediately I tense; my brain slides off the road. Can't he see I'm really busy? I face the screen and hear my voice scratch with tension, "Look, I'm really focused here. Can't you see I'm working? Can I talk to you later?" As he walks away, I realize I've screwed up my own thesis. So! Relationships: it's a painful thing.

It's painful crossing barriers, painful sharing yourself with someone thirty years younger than you. It is painful for professors, staff, students, all of us! But it is much more painful watching the walls build up on both sides. It is painful living in the toilet all your life.

Dustin Kunkel