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The Honors Envoy

Alfred University's Honors Program Newsletter 1986-1987

Dinner and Theatre With Affiliate Artist, Michael Morin

by Christopher Miller

After Strong's third or fourth reminder, I decided it was time to turn my notes into something presentable. It has been about three weeks since Michael Morin's visit, but the memories are vivid --- I hope.
On Wednesday, November 12, Kim Donsbach, Trish Nilsen, Chris Moore, Dr. Strong and myself dined with Morin at The Big Elms. Fortunately, the country-style turkey, shrimp and salads were all free of whatever pepper it was that the Rochesterian Chinese cooks use. The dinner was excellent, and the conversation, enlightening. We discussed everything from Ceramics in Cleveland to sit-ins and pot smoking at Villanova, Morin's Alma Mater.

I was curious to find out what an "Affiliate Artist" is. He explained (his pamphlet also explains it if you are forgetful like me) that the Affiliate Artists is a non-profit organization which supports the career development of performers while building new audiences for the arts; this is accomplished through residencies, recital series, and other special events. Morin's residency was from November 3-14 during which he performed at area high schools and hospitals as well as here at Alfred.

Another question for Michael Morin which came up at dinner was, "How old were you when you decided to become an actor?" To this he replied that he did not decide to be an actor on any one day; it was something he felt his whole life. He added that this was how acting differed from careers like engineering. I was silenced by that one.

Among the other interesting dinner topics, besides, of course, his play, "Tallahassee", was the "Strong-Morin Forum" on University life during the Vietnam War era.

Now for the performance! The one-character play, "Tallahassee", is Morin's chronicle of John Spenkelink's life on death row. The predominant feature of this play was its reliance on the character speaking his inner thoughts directly to the audience. I found our first-hand involvement more captivating than other theatrical styles in which the audience is simply a passive group of observers. The performance required more thought than many plays I have seen and was perhaps not as invigorating as a musical. However, it gave me insight into the mind of a man in solitary confinement, and made me wonder what it would be like. For this reason I label the experience "different" - a hiatus.

When I entered the room, no one introduced himself, they knew who I was, and that was all that mattered. I told myself to remain bold and self-assured. Even if they refused to smile and greet me, I was determinned to be friendly.

I was escorted to my designated seat in the middle of a long table around which the five interviewers were seated, with five feet between each of them. The questions began. At the end of the table, a professor fromm Haverford College who knew of my interest in science writing asked me to describe my work last summer at Sandia National Laboratories--in the words of a science journalist, of course. No problem, I thought. I had rehearsed that precise question. An enthusiastic, energetic and somewhat stressed voice-- my voice -- I heard explain the definitions of a glass-ceramic and a composite material, give details of what my interfacial study did, and elaborate on the chemical reacitons which took place. It wasn't an easy task because the work was in pure reasearch and did not pertain to many things in everyday life. I realized that my audience wasn't totally aware of that fact when a voice asked, "But what can you do with it? Can you cook with it?" The voice was that of a professor from Bryn Mawr College, and the "it" was the composite material which had its main application in a nuclear weapon. Apparently I had led her astray when I mentioned that corning ware is an example of a glass ceramic.

The five of them alternated with more questions, many of which pertained to my honors thesis. What exactly was I doing to the letters of Dora Carrington and David? Why? How are the letters important? What can they teach us? What literary value do they have? Why is the Bloomsbury group such a popular topic of study? Why do you like the Bloomsberries? The Prof. from Bryn Mawr had the tendency to slip another question in each time I paused in my answer to a question.

Their goal was to determine if I would be one of the four recipients of the Marshall Scholarship from the Mid-Atlantic Region. The Marshall Scholarship is given to 30 American Students each year by the British Government. It pays for transportation, living expenses and tuition to study for two years at the British University of the applicant's choice. This good deal is a thank you from the Brits for the efforts of George C. Marshall and his plan in aiding them after the devastation of World War I.

The interview did not tap my memory banks for facts and dates, but instead probed my creative and analytical faculties. These people wanted to know how my mind worked and what my tastes were. They asked me what advice I would give President Reagan in handling the Iran-Contra Affair, which wasn't an overly-burdensome question. But then one of them asked why the President had not already done what I had

suggested. I wasn't sure why not, and so I said so. Then the persistent questioner from Bryn Mawr chirped in. "Can't you speculate? Can't you imagine why he is doing what he is? Don't you have any idea?" Now if I said no, all of them would think I was a cement head and so, as prompted, I speculated.

On the plane trip home from Washington (the interview had been at the British Embassy), I came up with dozens of clever, bright responses. Of course, by then it was too late.

When I came back to school in January, I received a letter from the embassy saying that it was with deep regret that I was not selected as a Marshall Scholar.

One of the interviewers did not speak during the entire 25-minute interview. She was a Washington-based lawyer and a former Marshall Scholar (as were the other four). Duriny the interview, I occasionally caught her eye. She half-smirked and half I-don't-know-what. I'm not certain if she was amused by the interrogation if she found me naive or unsophisticated or charming or brash. She just sat there attentively, her sparkling blue eyes fixed on me; the edge of her mouth turned up slightly.

When I found out that I didn't make the final cut for the scholarship, I thought of her once again. I wondered if she had cast her vote in my favor. For some reason I think she did.

Joe Keddie

1987 SENIOR THESES

In my thesis, I will measure the electrical conductivity of alkali germanate glass melts at various temperatures. The measurements will extend below the glass transformation temperature.

Starting compositions will be 5, 10, and 15 weight percent Na_2O. Batch sizes will range from 130 to 140 grams (dependant upon density). Batch volumes must be equal to insure comparable electrical conductivity measurements. The procedure for measuring the electrical conductivity is described by Boulos. With positive results the alkali present will be varied to study the mixed alkali effect on electrical conductivity.

The Glass is first melted at 1100° C. for two hours to produce a homogenious melt. It is then cooled and crushed into a powder. After melting the glass a second time, electrical conductivity measurements are made as the glass slowly cools and once more as it is reheated. In an effort to conserve germanium, the glass is once again crushed and used for the next glass composition.

Electrical conductivity will be measured at room temperature for the same glasses. I believe that by overlaying the two conductivity curves they will not only support each other but also indicate the glass transformation temperature.

Robert J. Sullivan

In thinking this over, I wondered if we might make an already good system even more responsive and decided that we could. To this point, I have no problem in selecting an Honors seminar because I found something each semester that interested me. There are however, statistical laws that dictate that at some point someone will have or has had difficulty choosing a course interesting to him or her. In light of this, I propose that, in addition to Dr. Strong's efforts to solicit interesting proposals from the faculty and having us vote on them, that we might offer suggestions ourselves. For example, we might suggest a parapsychology course to the psychology department, a course on local politics to the political science department, or an intensive writing course which aims at getting student work published to the english department. The point is that a program which allows freedom in choosing seminars might benefit from the freedom in creating those seminars as well.

REVIEWS

Reviews by Moore

There are a few good movies out now. "Heartbreak Ridge," starring Clint Eastwood is a must for Eastwood fans and those interested in the U.S. Marine Corp. The background on this movie is quite interesting. Eastwood first asked the Army for assistance, such as "Top Gun," got from the Navy, but they declined because they felt the script was too rough during basic training and they would lose potential recruits. Then Eastwood, who is the producer and I believe also the director, asked the Marines if they would help; they loved the plot except for its extreme profanity, but Eastwood didn't want to change the script, so he made the movie on his own. My father is an ex-Marine and he still deals with them today. He said the language was right on target except in reality there is more of it. The plot centers on Eastwood as a highly decorated officer preparing to retire, who really should be a General, except that he back-mouths the establishment. He is trying to get a group of weird recruits to become fighting men. He succeeds (just in time) before they have to go to Grenada. As I said before, this is a must for Eastwood fans. If you despise his cocky attitude and only liked "Painted Wagon", then don't go.

Another movie that follows the same rules as "Heartbreak Ridge" is "Assasination", starring Charles Bronson and his real-life wife, Jill Ireland. It's Charles Bronson at his best. The only other movie that he did that was possibly a bit better was "The Evil That Men Do". In "Assasination", Bronson plays a secret service agent who has to protect the First Lady (Jill Ireland). Not a bad plot and pretty good stunt scenes. So if you are a Bronson fan, go for it; if not, then stay home.

Another good movie is "The Mosquito Coast". This stars Harrison Ford and a new-comer, River Phoenix (pretty cool name, huh?) Harrison Ford is an inventing genius who doesn't like anything but American-made products. He feels that America will be involved in a nuclear war, so he takes his family to the jungles of South America. Unlike "Heart of Darkness", the further you go up the river the cleaner and less evil the world becomes. But you know this is too good to last. It first starts out like "Swiss Family Robinson", but then gets deeper. River Phoenix plays Harrison Fords' son and also the narrator. The director, I believe, is the highly acclaimed Peter Weir, from Down Under. He is a very gifted director, who allows the viewer to experience all that is happening. Personally, the film left me with the philosophy that even though our society is not perfect, we should learn to make the best of it.

"Stand by Me", also stars River Phoenix. I realize I was late to see this one, and it may be on video cassette by now, but it is definitely worth mentioning. It's written by Stephen King, and I believe it is based on a real life childhood experience of his. The story revolves around four boys on their way to see a dead kid, who was about their age. It is kind of morbid but they have never seen a dead kid before. Their experiences on their way to and at the site are memorable, particularly the revenge plot. An excellent movie, I give it four and a half stars.

One other note; after watching "Apocalypse Now", in the Fiction into Film Honors class, I would like anyone to see it who has the time. As for the parts you don't understand, ask the students in the class, except Chris Miller. He missed the most important part because he couldn't hold it in any longer, Or you could ask the expert, Dr. Greiff.

Christopher Moore

Half a Book Review

God Knows. Joseph Heller, 1984

I started the month-long Christmas break with every intention of reading scads of things other than textbooks and intercampus mail. The holiday passed quickly though, and, when I finally dragged myself to the library, I had only two weeks in which to accomplish my task. A friend had suggested Joseph Heller's Catch - 22, and, if anything, I figured that I'd finish that.

Unfortunately, my library had no copy on hand. So instead, I opted for another taste of Heller, his 1984 novel God Knows. The jacket looked intriguing, and I have been known in the past to choose my books by their cover.

God Knows is a biographical account of the Biblical figure David (you know, the guy who slew Goliath). Sure, Heller takes liberties, but keep in mind that 30 pages in Chronicles isn't all that much to work with.

Heller expresses the "David myth" in the first person. The words are David's, as are the exagerations and the complaints (which, in themselves, are many). He's got a number of problems: a father-in-law who's trying to murder him, a favorite son who's turned traitor, and a long silence between himself and God. David speaks frankly to his audience - and, with the swagger of any proud and virile king, reveals that Bathsheba was more than just a woman to sing psalms to.

David also has a few words to say about his reputation as an artist and a man. He remarks that he doesn't receive half the credit he deserves for the psalms and suggests that his dull-witted son Solomon pilfered most of his work. With the record set straight, Davis is assured that he'd have his own book in the Bible. The famous Michelangelo sculpture bothers him as well. He claims that the Moses piece bears his resemblance much better and chastises the Italian artist for unthinkingly rendering the King of Israel uncircumsized.

All such remarks scream of sarcasm and what some would consider cheap shots. Heller's approach is highly intelligent though; the novel stands as more than sarcasm and sacrilege. David is a man, a man of our era with the knowledge of thousands of years. The thoughts that he expresses may shock, but they are representative of his stream of consciousness -- thoughts of greed, cunning, calculation, and lust that occur to all of us. Heller's literary gift makes the work readable and believable.

Again, I stress my title, Half a Book Review. I didn't have the chance to finish God Knows, making it only into his thirties (there's a good 50-odd years to catch up on). I checked Herrick, and though they have a copy of Catch-22, I had to go to the Bookstore for God Knows. If you enjoy a historical novel, or a lengthy piece of satire, keep this book in mind. After about 200 pages, I myself wasn't exactly sure that I liked it -- but I know that I can't completely abandon it until I find out the real reason that David didn't get his own book in the Bible.

Michelle Walther

Wait.....there's more —

Spinning the tuner and realizing that all Mr. F.M. has to offer is traffic reports and fast food commercials is kind of a drag. No more shall we search in vain for college radio is the answer at 89.7 FM W.A.L.F. Yes, you too can "Catch the wave and ride with the "Most dangerous station in the nation."" As a freshman, it was a personal delight to have an alternative to the droid syntha music of those top 40 stations. At W.A.L.F. there is a world of music that ranges from Irish folk and country bluegrass to contemporary favorites such as Bowie or the Violent Femmes. Even your Pops from Boston will revel in a classical bonanza that extends through that mellow Sunday morn. Indeed, where else might one have such variety and culture with so little commercial interruption. " What about 60's tunes Man?!" If you've got the time I've got the Beatles on "Early Beatles and Old Roaches Show" every Wed. from 12-3 a.m. Stay up and keep me company or bring a pizza up to the station with a heart of gold. (Look for the cute little castle adjacent to the Bell Tower on the Brick side of campus.) It's great incentive and rhythm to do homework by, and you will find that your pens make superb drumsticks.

"What about Tibetan war marches or Russian aerobic new wave?" Well, the beauty of W.A.L.F. is that it's student run, so bring your interests, time, and records to George Harvey, station manager (587-8018). He can show you what needs to be done to spin your very own vinyls. All it takes is a little of your own time and participation at the station and eventually you may become the D.J. of the hour, too sweet to be sour. If you have bizarre and intriquing friends from another planet tell them, "How would you like to do a radio show with me, bud?" W.A.L.F. is professional, open-minded, and most of all, it's delilirously fun and educational. As a matter of fact, the Music Dept. holds meetings at the Steinheim from 12-1 p.m. every Saturday afternoon, so hip-hop-hippity-hop down and make a few new friends. The hardest part is coming up with a title for your show. Thanks for tuning in, the time is 12 en punto with blue skies overhead at W.A.L.F. 89.7 FM!

Together Forever; Forever-together,
Eric "airbee" Keller

p.s. I Love You- Beatles