

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

A Publication of the Empire State College Mentoring Institute



EMPIRE STATE
COLLEGE

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Issue 1, Fall 1993

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From the Editors

The "Real Thing": A Visible Culture to Honor Our Work

It's late summer, early fall, start of a new academic year at the University of Heidelberg, approximately the one thousandth academic year. In hallways and quadrangles students are walking to class, chatting, beginning to pore over books. Professors are resuming their places at lecturns and heads of seminar tables. On the ground floor of the library - whose walls and arches are the foundations of a medieval abbey, whose atrium skylight is made of hi-tech "low-e" glass - the card catalogue, database terminals, and illuminated manuscript collection, each comfortably next to the other, are already busy.

Maybe you've never been to Heidelberg and don't understand German. But you know exactly what's happening, just as you would if you were on campus in Tokyo or Paris, Jakarta or Beijing, Albany or Middletown. In the perfect light of a seemingly eternal present, the academic gyre completes and begins another spin. You know because you see it. An idea is made visible with signs - a campus, a library, classrooms, clusters of younger students tended by older professors. Their familiarity surpasses the strangeness of languages, races or canons. This is the world-wide material and public culture of learning. You are comforted; you are awed. You know what's going on, that you are part of a community with which you share ancient collective memories and constant purposes. You know this is honorable work, the "real" thing.

What signs of ESC can we show to visitors, students or to fellow workers? Where are the classrooms, the libraries? Where are the houses of mentoring? Where are its honorable signs, the things which require no explanation and seem to abide of themselves?

Upstairs, above a bank, in a couple of rooms nestled in a warren of former law offices now transformed into the Nyack learning satellite of Rockland Community College, lies an outpost of SUNY Empire State College. Here, an administrative assistant and five or so mentors bring a college into being. A student has travelled many hours to this "campus" to meet with the two mentors who are tutoring her contract. She says she feels so energized and stimulated when she comes to this place. The mentor realizes that for this student, "college" means mostly sitting home reading books. The Nyack Unit is her "Heidelberg," however remote and however transformed from the "real" thing.

The near ubiquity and brilliant flexibility of this College make our work nearly invisible, even to each other. For powerfully good reasons we lack classrooms and libraries. It's to our honor that at this College one can't tell the teachers from the students. The intense, wondrous encounters between mentors and students, shining four, five, six times a day, every day in our offices, flicker and wink across long dark distances. How shall we make a visible posterity?

The Mentoring Institute is about all that is connected with mentoring. It's about our lives, especially the parts that have to do with creativity. It's about how we are fashioning ourselves as thinkers, practitioners, writers and colleagues. The

Mentoring Institute is about collecting our separated and diverse work, done mostly in the privacy of our offices, and making it visible and accessible to each other. *All About Mentoring* is a medium for telling our stories and finding each other in our shared yet intangible world.

Through collaborations between individual and small groups of faculty, help for "new" mentors from "old" ones, workshops at every center and collegewide, the Mentoring Institute exists to connect and sustain our work. *All About Mentoring*, the Institute's newsletter, is a place to share your stories, to write about what you do, your scholarship, your interactions with students, your participation in conferences and other projects. Interview one another about yourselves and what you do; tell your stories; try out mentoring ideas; write down your work in progress. *All About Mentoring* will publish them. *All About Mentoring* is ours to make our culture visible, a thing as real as a campus centuries old but perhaps not so distant after all. As editors and the first cochairs of the Mentoring Institute, we are pleased to present this first issue.

-Lee Herman, Miriam Tatzel

The editors wish to thank Kirk Starczewski for his help in designing and publishing this newsletter. And we wish to thank Debra Clark for her help in proofreading it.

Reflections of a Retired Mentor **Rhoda Wald , Long Island Center**

I began working at ESC in 1972 when the Long Island Center opened and took the retirement incentive January 15, 1993 - a little more than twenty years. What were the highs, the lows, the challenges, the limitations? What characterized these twenty years? How did I remain professionally stimulated and personally satisfied during this long tenure?

From the start, I was intrigued by the Empire model and its particular student constituency. This interest took various forms over the years as my colleagues around the College and I clarified our setting and added new insights to our understanding of the adult learner. During my first years, I conducted research on the learning contract process. Last year, I completed my final research, a study of the teaching-learning process. It seems I have come full circle.

Building on two themes - my interest in the nontraditional model and the limits set by the lack of teacher certification - I sought diversity, both in the subject matter I taught and the roles I took on. Over the years, supported by reassignment and sabbatical leaves, I gained expertise in a range of subjects including gerontology, adult development, women's studies, and multicultural education.

At the beginning I was very involved in governance, and served on the first APLPC committee. Its lasting contribution was the integration of a student-centered curriculum with the curriculum evolving from the areas of study - shaping not only our academic programs of today, but also many of the political and personnel issues that evolved. Subsequently, I served as acting associate dean in Suffolk County, was heavily involved with the Center for Individualized Education, and fulfilled a variety of roles with International Programs.

Several turning points proved to be peak experiences. The first, in the early 70's, was a period spent at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. It was there that I first became familiar with the area of psychology, adult development. Second, was my participation with the Center for Individualized Education, conducting workshops for faculty both within and outside the College. These experiences strengthened, expanded and clarified ways I could use adult development theory and research with my own students both in the individualized mode and in group studies.

The early 80's were a difficult, often lonely, time for me. The College was changing directions, some funding had ended, and two colleagues of particular importance to me, Arthur Chickering and Tom Clark, left. I missed them personally, but even more importantly, I missed the educational philosophy we shared.

And then I became involved in International Programs, a third phase and series of peak experiences. I was offered a three-month visiting professorship at a university in India to work with faculty and administrators designing programs for adults. John Jacobson, then vice-president, was supportive and helped me find the resources to go. Subsequently, Ken Abrams invited me to serve in Israel, Cyprus and Greece. Each of these experiences was personally and professionally rewarding. I learned to understand the universal themes of adult students in terms of access and curriculum as well as the cultural differences.

Now, in summary, I can say that my career at Empire was, on the whole, interesting, rewarding and very challenging. I had more diversity both in subjects taught and roles than I could have had at a traditional institution. There were many surprises and much satisfaction. Perhaps, if I had to do it all over again, I might have concentrated more on research. But all in all it worked. The ad hoc model of taking one step at a time provided the diversity, interest and challenge I relished.

The model of Empire is intense, requiring a great deal of energy, flexibility and knowledge. What helped me most during the inevitable burnout periods was my own initiative, identifying a new area of interest, taking on a new role, developing a group study. But I could not have done this without the possibilities of reassignments and sabbaticals,

periods to study and gain new ways of working. My one word of advice to faculty is to apply for as many of these opportunities as possible and to make sure that they are maintained despite shrinking financial resources. They are necessary to keep the model alive and the faculty vital.

Finally, there were the students. There was always that eager, new person who walked into my office and reignited my imagination and interest. As one student in my recent research study said, "Suddenly the light goes on, it is so satisfying." I agree.

July 6, 1993

Reflections of a New Mentor

Laura Weed

SUNYESC can be a scary place for a new mentor. Of course, I anticipated the expectant assault of a small army of new faces; students, colleagues, tutors, deans and staff folks. And, I appreciate their tolerant forbearance with my confusion. The paperwork is a bit more foreboding; learning contract proposals, learning contracts, evaluations, tutor worksheets, tutoring requests, CBE requests, CDL course registrations, crossregistration forms, this proposal for this and some other guidebook for something else. The spatial and institutional dispersion of resources, information sources and charges d'affaires becomes still more foreboding. Bella Perry, chief guru in charge of cluing me in on these matters, is getting quite used to "Who does this?" and "I get it where?????" Worse still, is the dispersion and diversity of types of programs; Van Arsdale what??? Residency who??? But, for sheer capacity to really confuse a new mentor, nothing matches the pure chaotic dispersion of points of view within the College on what this College is, anyway, and how we ought to do whatever it is that we do.

It's not the case that I knew nothing about the College before my hiring in February. I'm a card-carrying alumna of the Syracuse Unit, class of '77. When that unit opened in the early seventies, I moved in with the furniture. But in those days, I had little appreciation for the awesome complexity of the juggling act that John Spissinger performed to get me all those wonderful tutors and internships. When I needed them, they materialized. No problem!

Nor is it the case that I was really naive about the process of producing learning experiences from scratch. I'd worked for New York State as a contract manager on "learning contracts," counting everything from pens and peg boards through operationally defined learning outcomes. But, the state is a rigid bureaucracy in which policies dictated from the sky determine how, when, where, and why trainers, or their bean-counters, can sneeze. If there are any such dictations at ESC, I have yet to trip over them.

In contrast, it seems that to mentor at ESC is to join a riot of happy anarchists who daily re-invent the wheel. A new student is a fresh continent to explore. We must individualize. Ask mentor one what this means, and the answer is "Change the rules." Ask mentor two, and the response is, "Rules, what rules? There aren't any rules!" Ask mentor three, I get, "You need the dean's written permission on form 546A to do that." Mentor four: "Do it by CBE." Mentor five: "Do it over, you didn't do it right."

At first, I worried that my lack of agility with this choreography was a result of my inexperience; there was some essential, unifying theme in this dance that I was not picking up. But, since the All College meeting, I've become convinced that happy anarchy is standard operational procedure in this place. We are a group of people who are deeply committed to creative democratic construction in all phases of work, life, learning and art. If this means rebuilding life from scratch on a daily basis, so be it. I think that I am even beginning to develop a sense for what might be the reasons behind the disagreements. ESC is a nontraditional college. Vacuously, this means we don't do things the way most people do them.

But, there are reasons why most people do things the way they do. For instance, the tradition is easy to follow, is clear and specific, meets most peoples' needs, is efficient, or is effective. And, there are reasons why students or teachers would choose to avoid a traditional institution like the plague. For instance, it's too restrictive or too ambiguous, too small for someone's big ideas, or too big for someone's homey needs, too much like Big Brother watching you, or too much like a huge, indifferent, machine, too lock-stepped and rigid, or too diffuse and unfocused.

I think that I see a trend in the configurations of reasons for which someone might reject traditional institutions. On the one hand, a very personally focused, restrained and affective person, who wants and needs close, directive, human relationships in order to draw learning out of him or herself, would find the traditional institution an intimidating and threatening machine. ESC is, of course, the individualized and personal antidote to a traditional institution. On the other hand, a self-directed, expansive, entrepreneurial enfant terrible finds the traditional institution oppressive,

dictatorial, restrictive, narrow-minded and past-bound. This anti-traditionalist, however, cares very little for personal attention and cares a whole lot for being left alone to do his or her own expansive thing.

Can this marriage be saved? Of course it can. For one thing, we live in a very big house. It's a long walk from Jamestown to Hauppauge, and All College, like the family reunion, only happens once a year.

For another thing, since we all oppose dictatorships and favor democracy, we can live with whatever compromises might be necessary to jointly satisfy our conflicting needs for expediency and personalization. And, these compromises would still take place in an environment that promoted the needs of all of us. Besides which, our off -spring, our students, our *raison d'etre*, are just like us. Any given two of them are likely to be non-traditional for diametrically opposed reasons, too. So, unless we house both kinds of anarchist in the faculty and administration, some students of the College would be ill-served.

Meanwhile, what's a new mentor to do? Follow directions? Throw out the rules? Write it down? E-mail it to Saratoga? Ask the secretary? Call the student? Call the evaluator? Call the dean? Call the fire department?

As I tap and spin from hither to thither and back to yon, I'm beginning to catch the rhythm of the place, and the beat of the dance. It's Cacophonous Democratic Variations: Edmund Burke might lay a brick over this choreography, but I rather like it.

June, 1993

Core Values of the College

Jim Case

At the 1993 All-College Conference, one of the discussion tracks was devoted to the College's core values. The tracks were so structured that four different groups discussed the same topic in four separate sessions, the discussions deepening (or progressing) each time because the last three groups had the benefit of the prior discussions, and because there were several conveners who were present at all sessions and who pushed towards a resolution. It was important to reach a resolution because the design of the Conference called for a product, a recommendation or a set of recommendations to be presented to the College Assembly. Not surprisingly, some of the "final" core values (and they are not final: they are for College-wide discussion) emerged on the first day, and were not substantially changed: the centrality of the student, for example. Others (the mentor role, e.g.) were substantially changed in the course of the discussions. The particular advantage of the discussion format was that it encouraged close examination, and often deletion, of values that the College supposedly believes in but does not exemplify in its behavior.

The conveners of the session were Keith Elkins, Walt Frykholm, Bob Carey and myself. The 11 core values presented to the College Assembly on the last morning of the Conference are as follows:

- 1. The student is at the center of all educational decisions.**
- 2. Mentoring is the best way to implement these decisions.**
- 3. The quality of the mentor/student relationship largely determines the quality of the student's education.**
- 4. We believe in making ourselves and the College accessible to students in terms of place, time and programming.**
- 5. The College works collaboratively with students in a variety of programs and studies and on a number of levels: we believe in serving individual students in a manner appropriate to their needs.**
- 6. Our goal is to foster the development of self-directed learners who are intellectually curious, open to new ideas, own their own learning, and have the academic skills to continue learning beyond college.**
- 7. The College should be a diverse academic community which serves a diversity of students.**
- 8. We believe in the mentor as an adult learner, in collaborative learning, in collegiality and mutual support. We need to be reflective practitioners.**
- 9. We believe in recognizing learning wherever it occurs and however it is acquired, and in the community as a learning resource.**
- 10. The College should serve the community and the broader society both directly and, through its graduates, indirectly.**
- 11. We should be open to new ways of learning and teaching, and innovative in pursuit of achieving these core values.**

From Howard Gardner to ESC:

My belief in the importance -indeed, the necessity -of individual-centered education derives from two separate but interlocking propositions. First of all, it has now been established quite convincingly that individuals have quite different minds from one another. Education ought to be so sculpted that it remains responsive to these differences. Instead of ignoring them and pretending that all individuals have (or ought to have) the same kinds of minds, we should instead try to ensure that everyone receive an education that maximizes his or her own intellectual potential.

The second proposition is equally compelling. It may once have been true that a dedicated individual could master the world's extant knowledge or at least a significant part of it. So long as this was a tenable goal, it made some sense to offer a uniform curriculum. Now, however, no individual can master even a single body of knowledge completely, let alone the range of disciplines and competences. The period of the Renaissance Man or Woman is long past. Inasmuch as choices of emphasis and scope MUST be made, it becomes an issue only to choose which path the individual should follow.

from Howard Gardner. *MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES: THE THEORY IN PRACTICE* (1992, NY:Basic Books)
-contributed by Xenia Coulter

Interactions

Miriam Tatzel, Hudson Valley Center

Back from the August break and I start calling students I've been out of touch with for a while. I reach one and the first thing she says is, "How was your summer?"

In that moment I decide not to tell her that my mother is dying and the family had to stay around the house but that I enjoyed the summer anyway. Instead, I say "Terrific" too cheerfully, and add, to bring in an element of the truth, "I love the summertime." Then, reciprocally, "And your summer?"

"It's been just so bad. My father is gravely ill and we don't expect him to last more than a few days."

Then she goes into a long explanation of how of course she had to stop all her Empire work, there was no way she could concentrate, and, as a matter of priority, "My family comes first."

I think about how I have kept up everything I'm doing along with caring for my mother. I really don't understand why her father dying should keep her from doing Empire work, but I know from experience that her response is not unusual.

When she says how difficult it is to see him dying and to care for him, I add, "I know. My mother is dying. And she's living with us. I know what it's like."

We end with agreeing to extend the contract, and I call the tutor to let her know it's OK with me to extend it, actually to postpone it.

I think back to my earlier meeting of the day with a student who is finishing her first contract. She's doing two study groups, so she and I have practically no experience working together. I sense a certain wariness or reserve from her which I attribute to her uncertainty about whether I'm a good mentor and whether she can trust me.

At our very first meeting last spring she told me right off that she might be getting a divorce, that her life was in transition, and this might affect how much money she has for school. So after we take care of Empire business I ask, "What's happening in your life?"

At this, she opens up and warms up. Yes, she's decided definitely to divorce. This decision has strengthened her commitment to her studies. She explains that she imagines others might say they're too upset, or their lives are too mixed up, to continue. But hers is the opposite reaction.

Her deeper involvement with Empire is more than the resolve to become financially independent. Rather, the studies help her emotionally.

We get into a very interesting discussion about the use of academic study as an "escape" from personal difficulties. This pattern has been true for me since childhood, really. We come to the conclusion that reading is not so much an "escape" as it is an "entrance" into a wider world. For her, as for me, working is calming and "centering."

This discussion puts me in mind of a parallel one from the day before .

The student arrives for a tutorial meeting. She announces. "I should tell you what's been happening in the last month. My husband and I have separated. I am not unhappy about this. I am relieved. But it has increased the pressure on me to take care of the children, the house, the animals."

During this tumultuous month she completed not one paper for me but two. We have a discussion, my first in two days, about how satisfying it can be to have work to get into during trying times.

I am aware of my values. I understand and approve of those who keep on going through thick and thin. I don't understand and disapprove of those who fall behind and stop working because of personal problems. I can sympathize with their suffering, and I can "problem solve" about how to make the best of their Empire situation, but I can still feel disappointed in them.

I have the thought now that how one feels about oneself as a student and a learner has a lot to do how crisis affects one's schoolwork. For those of us who can lose ourselves in work, our anxiety goes down. We find solace, stimulation, hope. For those who are stopped by crisis, it makes sense to suppose that their anxiety increases as they get near their schoolwork and so they pull away.

[EDITORS' NOTE: We plan "Interactions" to be a regular feature of *All About Mentoring*. If you have an "interaction" with a student to share (or a comment about an "Interaction" you've read in this column), e-mail it to the editors, LHerman or MTatzel. We'll publish it in an issue of *All About Mentoring*.]

Book Review

*Effective Teaching and Mentoring:
Realizing the Transformational Power of Adult Learning Experiences.*
Laurent A. Daloz (1986 San Francisco: Jossey-Bass)

Judith Gerardi , Metropolitan Center

When I recently came across Daloz' *Effective Teaching and Mentoring*, I was surprised that I had not heard about it. Asking around, I found that several long time ESC people had not heard of it either. This book was such a natural for us that I decided to write a piece for *All About Mentoring* so that experienced and new mentors alike would be introduced to this fine and useful book. At the outset, I wish to emphasize its value to both experienced and new mentors; that is part of why I recommend it.

Daloz writes about adult learners returning to college, presents theories and case material, and weaves a readable, rather delightful narrative and analysis. His work is based primarily on his experiences with rural adult students in Vermont. Theories of adult development and learning are included and applied continually, but the book's main draw, I believe, is the liveliness, detail, authenticity, and openness that Daloz communicates in discussing mentors and students. In language and contexts that are familiar to ESC mentors, he creates a true portrayal of the world that we as mentors know. The book is of interest and value to experienced mentors in providing insights that are both fresh and familiar. It is of interest to new mentors in providing an excellent detailed description of what mentoring is really like, of what to expect.

In the Preface, Daloz writes: "Education is something we neither 'give' nor 'do' to our students. Rather, it is a way we stand in relation to them (p. xv) ." This perspective is apparent throughout the book. The author examines the term "mentor" within this perspective, describing mythical mentors such as Mentor and Virgil and theoretical mentors, as described by Bruno Bettelheim, for example. "Mentors are guides. They lead us along the journey of our lives. We trust them because they have been there before. They embody our hopes, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, warn us of lurking dangers, and point out unexpected delights along the way...As teachers of adults, we have much to learn from the mythology of the mentor (p: 17)." There follows a good deal of examination of the educational journey of adult learners with the mentor as a guide, drawing on myth and legend as explanatory models.

As myth and legend are offered as explanatory models of mentoring, theories of adult development and broader educational theories are offered as models within which to reflect upon and guide adult learning. Such efforts are sometimes seen as stilted, obvious, forced, trivial, or, even, irrelevant. It is very doubtful that the reader would have one of those reactions to Daloz' discussion. He sees developmental theory, for example, as more like a language than a body of knowledge, a perspective that allows mentors to see beneath the surface to the structures of growth.

Throughout the book, detailed rich apt examples are provided of ways in which theory guides one's work with a student. For example, reasons for introducing a student to a given concept or idea is discussed in terms of anyone of several developmental theories (Kegan, Loevinger, Erikson, Levinson). What I like best in the book is Daloz' constantly interweaving theory and practice. One is never left not knowing the author's rationale for a given approach or comment with a student. The book is both chatty and scholarly, friendly and professional.

New mentors will be especially excited about Daloz' detailed presentations of practice. I believe that experienced mentors will enjoy this, too, perhaps as confirmation, perhaps as a reminder, perhaps as stimulation for growth. There are many accounts of mentoring sessions. The reader is given a clear picture of a mentor's use of questions, probes and silences and of the mentor's thoughts about the student and questions about how to proceed, what to say next. This sort of detailed presentation of mentoring is rare. The reader gains an excellent sense of the need for alertness and acute awareness in mentoring. Daloz fully describes the decision making required of mentors at each student meeting. An

example is offered; it occurs in a meeting of mentor and student during which the student reports on a photography course that she is taking. The mentor is concerned that the student is focusing on the instructor's teaching technique instead of on her own learning. Why this concerns the mentor and how he handles it with the student are discussed in detail.

In ways familiar to ESC mentors, Daloz provides life details when describing his students. Doing so is embedded in his belief that an individual student's life provides the context for learning.

"Knowing what is important to our students as individuals, we can more readily help them find connections between the lives they live and the subjects we teach. ...it allows a more complex and dynamic understanding of living phenomena in flux, a grounded and contextual grasp rather than the abstract and conveniently frozen vision of a cadaver on a table (pp. 113-114)."

How are we to put into practice the belief that attending to students' whole lives provides the context for learning? Daloz offers many suggestions. First, there are guiding principles in Chapter Four. Second, there is a consideration of parallels and tensions useful in understanding the mentor-student encounter in Chapter Five. These include growth, transformation, dialectic; theorists and thinkers include Gilligan, Piaget, Freire. Third, there is a chapter titled "Strategies for Guiding Adults Through Difficult Transitions" in which the author provides several models of mentoring. Fourth, there is a chapter, the last, titled "Teaching as Care: Achieving Quality Education for Adults" in which Daloz summarizes his book's themes and offers guidance in more effective mentoring.

I shall end where Daloz begins. He suggests that what is critical for us as teachers is how we influence our students. "Where are our students going, and who are we for them in their journey? (p. 3)" The reader will be informed, comforted and delighted by this realistic and full account of what we do.

Lester and Me

James Robinson (c. 1992, first serial rights)

When E. Lester Levine died of a sudden heart attack in the summer of 1991, I did my best not to feel it. I was already grieving my father's death, and my divorce, and the end of a recent relationship. I didn't want any more losses.

At the first faculty meeting of the fall, someone suggested our each saying a few words in Lester's memory. Those who had known and worked with him took a moment to recall his contribution to the College. One by one, my colleagues paid their tribute. I was having real trouble with the ease with which everyone seemed able to speak their lines. Had they rehearsed this? By the time my turn came, I was in turmoil. I sat silent, afraid of what might come tumbling out.

When my turn finally came I muttered an apology and passed.

That fall I went abroad, hoping to get out of the turbulence for awhile. I had applied and been accepted for an opening in the College's extension program in Nicosia, Cyprus. The assignment was for seven months. It looked like an opportunity to change my luck. My travelling companion was Elizabeth, my eleven-year-old daughter, whose reasonableness has always been a blessing.

Trying to make the most of our opportunity, I decided we would spend a week in London seeing the sights before we continued on to the Middle East.

A friend had recommended a small private hotel in Kensington for our stay in London. It was quiet, friendly and efficient, and except for a porridge that tasted like wallpaper glue, perfect for us. Our hosts had the knack of making us feel welcome without disturbing our privacy. We soon discovered the value of English reserve: we were able to scurry in and out of the shower at the head of the hall stairs without embarrassment.

For three days running we ate our English breakfast, hopped the Number 9 bus on Kensington High Street and rumbled to the center of town. We toured Westminster, saw the guards change at Buckingham Palace, froze at the Tower of London, and even managed to zip through one floor of the Royal Portrait Gallery in a spare half hour before returning home. Lunches were sandwiches in parks or Picadilly Circus, then onward to more sightseeing until, exhausted, we would stumble home for supper, debating the merits of the local Italian place.

Elizabeth, a petite but resilient girl, finally called a halt. "Don't you ever get tired?" she asked matter-of-factly. I laughed. "I've been trying to keep up with you." "We've got to slow down," she told me.

I agreed immediately, chagrined at having pushed her into the role of the responsible adult.

That night I found it hard to sleep. The tension of the journey still filled my system. Since our arrival had been waking regularly at three in the morning, my internal clock refusing to accept the time change from America to England. My refuge had become the vending machine located just outside our room. Slipping the required 15 pence into the slot, I was rewarded with a watery, but pretty good imitation of hot chocolate.

After returning to bed I tried using my walkman with a favorite tape to soothe myself back to sleep. This had unexpected results. I found myself suddenly in tears, with Lester Levine on my mind, as present to me there in the dark as if he had been riding the bus with us all afternoon.

Once uncorked, the tears came easily. I found myself weeping quietly but fully in sorrow and rage at Lester's death.

Why rage? We all get our allotted time, and no more. No one of my acquaintance knew that better than Lester, or spoke of it so lightly and so often. Perhaps it was the abruptness of his departure that angered me, leaving me with a childish fury at having been tagged one last time before my playmate ran indoors for supper.

Our friendship was an on-and-off business, a typically male dance of closeness and separateness over the years. Our conversations were first face-to-face, as colleagues in Long Island. In later years they were long distance telephone calls between Old Westbury and Buffalo.

"How are you?" I would ask. Lester would pause dramatically, emit a low, half-musical moan and respond. "And how can I be in this vale of tears, where life is brief, happiness fleeting and every step leads but closer to the grave?"

Having thus thrown me off balance, he would shift abruptly to a tone of wry professionalism.

"But to what do I owe the pleasure of this call?" he would ask sardonically.

I never figured out how to avoid this gambit. If I took his philosophical opening seriously, I felt accused of being a small-minded drudge. What was I doing worrying about paperwork while Lester was busy contemplating the vanity of human ambition and the meaning of last things?

However, if I responded by sticking to business, it was no better. Whatever trivial favor I might be calling to ask suddenly appeared for what it was, a crude imposition on a man of high principle and distinguished sensibility.

Having successfully captured all the conversational high ground, Lester would wait another half measure, give a short, affectionate chuckle and ask, in his best Minnesota baritone, "Waal?"

My only chance was to bluff, to pretend I hadn't heard all the innuendoes and implications. "Hello, 'E'," I would parry, using his first initial.

He didn't like his first name, Emmanuel. He thought it was too archaic, I suppose, for a man who was a modernist and a lifelong Humphrey Democrat. He tolerated my calling him "E" as he tolerated my tennis serve. He liked to complain about the unpredictability of my serve, which usually brought him from the back line to front court more rapidly than he liked.

"It isn't right," Lester would say, "For a man of my age and condition to be forced to run." "Running is the whole point of the game, Lester," I argued. "Besides, you could afford to lose a couple of pounds." "You enjoy insulting me, don't you?" he would leer, and pound the ball back at my toes.

As we went on with our game Lester would continue to editorialize, firing imprecations as he stroked his long base shots.

"You're a sadist," he would propose, his chubby knees pumping with exertion as he hustled for a lob. "You expect me to fall down and break my leg. Then you can come to the hospital and pretend to feel sorry for me. You ought to have more respect for your elders." "I lost my respect for you last game, Lester."

In reality, however, I was almost too full of respect for him. Even in my mid-thirties, when I first met him, I experienced an almost adolescent awkwardness in his presence. My most childish behavior presented itself, making me more self-conscious, presumptuous and defensive than ever. Lester, in turn, seemed comfortably suited to his role as my deflator.

One spring night when I was engaged in a particularly nasty (but I thought, necessary) piece of academic politics, we met for our usual tennis game. After huffing and puffing for the better part of an hour, we gave it up. As we fumbled the balls into the can and swallowed our last drops of water from the thermos, Lester fixed me with an avuncular glare and let me know I had grown unpopular with my contemporaries.

"James," he said blandly, wiping his forehead with the tail of his undershirt, "The word is that you have become a running dog hyena and paid assassin of the ruling class."

I was unnerved. I didn't know he could talk like that. I had hung around with a pretty gritty crew in graduate school. Even the most renegade of us didn't take such language seriously enough to repeat it. "Lester," I pleaded.

He nodded affably, switched vocabularies and proceeded. "You have obviously pledged yourself to the destruction of all that is decent in this College," he explained. He let this second salvo have its effect. then added, "I am merely reporting what I have heard. Running dog hyenas don't usually have many friends. I thought I would be the exception."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome," he bowed slightly. "Now, I would like you to carry my bag to the car for me. I am an old man, and my back is tired."

"Carry it yourself," I huffed. I was still trying to digest the news that my colleagues didn't love me.

"You see? You are a capitalist." "Okay. I'm a capitalist. When I'm rich enough I'll hire someone to carry it for you." "No," he said, "I know you. If you were rich, I'd have to carry your bags for free in the hopes that some crumbs would fall from your table."

"I believe in what I'm doing, Lester." "You think it would be immoral to carry my bag?" "No, I meant about the College." He smiled again. "I hope so. I would hate to think you were gaining infamy by accident."

I was pissed. Who was Lester to be giving me homework? I had imagined myself as a worthy, if not altogether blameless, knight and here was Lester telling me that people considered me the dragon. I went home to reexamine my profile and nurse my pride. In the end I decided to stick to my course, but to tread a little more gently. Maybe I wasn't St. George.

My ego just wasn't safe with Lester around. My neuroses were so finely attuned that he need hardly do anything deliberate to upset my equilibrium. A word, or a phrase, and I was sunk in the bog of self-examination.

I remember finishing a long and exasperating curriculum meeting in Manhattan, furious at having lost the better part of a sunny cloudless day in pointless debate. Hour after hour dragged by as my colleagues and I threatened one another with irrelevance. We would have had better luck talking to the granite paving stones on the streets below. No one had budged. Nothing had been accomplished except to confirm our remarkable lack of creativity.

When we finally stopped, I was hungry and tired, and all I wanted was to go home. I threw on my coat and stalked to the elevator feeling dispirited and abused.

As I jabbed irritably at the elevator button, I glanced back into the room we had just left and saw Lester settling himself on a hard metal folding chair. He was diving into his functional black briefcase for his notes, beginning a conversation with a student. It was after five o'clock, and Lester was no fresher than the rest of us, but he had reserved energy for this appointment. His student seemed eager, elated really, at having this meeting. Lester was all attention, focused on their work.

I was instantly envious. Envious of the student, for being in so loving an embrace, and envious of Lester for being so capable of loving. Lester expressed his affection in a patient, manly and consistent fashion. I didn't have that quality, I sensed, not from so reliable a source, a moral center that was grounded in both humility and self-assurance. I would have preferred it to my own instinct for survival.

I admired Lester, but I also resented his unflinching mid-Western goodness. There was a terrible irony for me in our friendship. Most of my adult life had been a struggle against the simple-minded righteousness of the small town

Western moralism of my childhood. Now here was city-bred Lester, as much a preacher as any I had ever rebelled against, confronting me with his tenacious belief in the good.

He didn't enjoy the usual ethnic or sexual jokes that victimized both the teller and the audience. The tales he told involved his own, not someone else's, humiliation. His favorite story was of the time he lost his pants when he was mugged in Manhattan. In their zeal to relieve him of his wallet, his attackers had managed not only to rip his rear pocket, but to pull his trousers entirely down around his ankles. As Lester later told it, this gratuitous insult was really his own fault. "I should have just given them what they asked for," he reasoned, "but I got so darned mad at having my evening ruined that I just didn't think."

In his book, most of the world's problems were created by people who didn't think. Maybe that's why he was a teacher. It gave him the license to run a kind of one-man war against thoughtlessness.

Was E. Lester Levine a paragon? Hardly. He drank, although not copiously, sufficiently. He ate too much, and often badly, I thought. I once watched him open his refrigerator to disclose half-dozen boxes of Kentucky fried chicken waiting for him.

He could be petty, fussy, absurdly encumbered by minutiae in discussions that required broad vision. Since he was a stickler for detail, and for fair play, he had held up his share of parades. He could get paranoid, and picayune. But as Lester liked to say, "It's not paranoia when they're really out to get you."

I never knew much about his private life. He had a married sister and a young nephew about whom he worried, and he loved his brother Maurice deeply, I gathered. He never told me much about his brother, except to praise his work in promoting the Classic Theater in Manhattan.

Lester was not married. Around women, he was courteous beyond reason, a copybook gentleman. But at a mid-town deli he once asked me to take care of his umbrella and raincoat, saying he didn't want to be encumbered in his progress as a rake. It was an idea I found improbable and yet impressive. He seemed the elder brother, the man of many parts, the fellow who knew. And as older brothers sometimes do with younger siblings, he never explained himself, and I never had the temerity to ask what he actually meant. I had married young, without much experimentation, a fact which made his single life seem to me both romantic and lonely. That we were both lonely never occurred to me.

It took me ten years to produce a lumpy, indigestible layer-cake of a dissertation. It was awful, the product of years of theory and no experience. My own advisor was repelled by it. I had become one of those students you dread to see, a name in the appointment book that casts a pall over an otherwise delightful afternoon. Before I handed in the final draft, Lester had agreed to read it. We met afterwards in a coffee shop where he asked me practical questions about footnotes and sources.

My need for approval was running pretty high. My wife was sick of hearing about the Socialist Party. My friends had no idea what a dissertation was, or were jumping from ledges because of their own. "I'm not sure it's any good," I fished, hoping for a small sign of acceptance.

Lester sighed, put down his coffee cup and thumbed the bulky draft. He had never completed his Ph.D., and despite our occasional theorizing about the data he might revise, we both knew he never would. Now mine was finished, however misshapen it might be. "I wish I knew that much about anything," he smiled.

After I sweated out my defense, he started calling me "Dr. Robinson," to remind me of my accomplishment, refusing to let me denigrate it.

In the end, it was not geographic distance that separated us, but petty politics. I was doing my best to assert my authority in our graduate program, and Lester was a significant player. Our collaboration went well enough at first, because everyone's participation was voluntary, which meant I couldn't demand too much control. Then one term Lester decided to teach at the "state facility" at Attica, and would not contribute to a faculty panel I had been trying to

set up.

I was instantly enraged. How could he run out on me like this? Never mind that I didn't always do what he wanted, or that we all had the right as colleagues to decide where to put our energies, where was his loyalty?

Had our positions been reversed, Lester would have recalled my brilliance as a speaker, or bragged on my keen insight into public issues.

Then he would have looked away morosely, as if staring at some priceless gem that was slipping slowly and permanently out of reach. He would have blinked those somber brown eyes and said, "Well, you do what you think is right," and sighed, until I began to feel the massive disappointment of those great hunched shoulders.

It was a classic collision of styles, with generations of rabbis, cantors and merchants on his side and county tax assessors, sheep farmers and hop growers on mine. I took a more narcissistic approach.

"How could you do this to me?" I asked him. "I'm not," he pointed out, "doing anything to you. I have decided not to work in the program." "It's the same thing," I insisted. "All right," he demurred. "I'm doing this to ruin you. Feel better?" "Not exactly," I sulked, and hung up the phone.

After that he got more active in the faculty union, and I got more involved with my ego. For a long time I refused to call him. If he wasn't going to help me, I decided, then we couldn't be friends. I was busy being important, because it seemed to me that being important was all I had. If I weren't important, who would bother with me? My reasoning was sadly inverted, the product of an insecurity I had taken years to perfect. Every step I took to create a powerful image drove people further away. As a friend told me later - as gently as he knew how - "None of us liked you very much then."

In response, Lester remained maddeningly decent. He never took me off his mailing list, or refused to return my infrequent calls. I still received cards reminding me of the performances of the Classic Theater. At our annual college meeting he still waved to me in the bar, or drawled ironic greetings at me in the hotel corridor, propped against the wall in his dark blue suit, his wide, effusive smile shining like the Minnesota sun.

If we ended up at the same dinner table we rehearsed our old routines with one another over rubber chickens and limp broccoli. He regularly reminded me that the one thing I couldn't stand was to be treated too nicely.

Since he never threatened me with the loss of his friendship, Lester remained a friend. Looking back, I can see that I needed to separate from him at that point, and indeed from everyone to whom I was clinging for support. I was fumbling to find myself, and the more I stayed hooked up to anyone, the less likely I was to succeed.

And even that statement is wrong, because it implies a self-awareness I didn't possess. My world was simply coming apart, as it needed to, for me to survive a psychological crisis. It was a frightening and lonely period. One by one my connections with friends and family fell away, leaving me to grapple with my own sense of inadequacy and loss. It was the beginning of a difficult journey, one I could only make by and for myself.

Now that I was finally steering toward clear horizons, I looked up to discover that Lester's star suddenly had blinked out, leaving me with only a memory of its approximate size, location and brilliance.

On our next-to-last day in London, Elizabeth and I climbed onto the double-decker bus going to St. Paul's Cathedral. Our progress was easy until we reached Trafalgar Square, where the conductor announced a "diversion" due to police operations. The Irish Republican Army was playing cat-and-mouse with Her Majesty's security forces, and we would have to find another route. We hauled out our map of the underground and searched out the nearest station.

St. Paul's was enormous, larger inside than out. I found its lavish interior unnerving. As we joined a platoon of tourists ambling beneath its cavernous arches, I felt awkward. This was the highest church I had ever seen, and I am a long-lapsed Presbyterian. We walked to the end of the nave where a large golden cross hung suspended in midair between

tremendous white candles. The cross itself was lit by spotlights. I found the pageantry both fascinating and repellent. Walking around the altar, we encountered a small block of engraved marble, a memorial to Allied servicemen lost in the Second World War. A group of young Japanese were talking in hushed tones in front of it.

Elizabeth snapped photographs of the cross and the vaulted ceiling, and we passed onward into the calm of a small public chapel. It was a very simple place, with sturdy wooden chairs set out in rows on the hard marble. I was more comfortable here. A woman kneeled in prayer at the chapel railing. Her hair was covered with a plain bandana, her hands were folded, the soles of her fashionable shoes showing. I felt a tightening in my chest, a deep emotional stirring. Lester was back.

On impulse I joined the woman at her prayers. I felt self-conscious, but once on my knees, I stayed put.

"After all," I told myself, "this is a church."

Kneeling there, I tried to guess what Lester would have thought of London. I imagined he would have admired the calm forbearance of Londoners in the face of the multiple bomb scares the city was enduring. And he probably would have applauded my discomfort at prayer as a sign of my increasing moral integrity.

Who had said kaddish for E. , I wondered? Who had thrown the handfuls of earth into his grave, where he had finally left this vale of tears, where life is brief and happiness fleeting?

I tried to focus. I didn't know what to say. What message did I want to send after him into the void? In the end I let my imagination take hold. All I asked was that someone take care of Lester. I didn't know what that meant, exactly, but I had an image of him being taken up and held by someone, held and comforted, wherever he might be in some undefinable or even non-existent heaven. After that I let myself cry .I had to admit, my life wasn't turning out as I had planned, and I was tired of the struggle.

Elizabeth watched respectfully from her seat. She wasn't comfortable going to the rail, she told me afterwards, but she had prayed for a friend's father who had cancer.

I walked from the chapel on a cresting wave of grief. A sign near the exit announced the availability of a priest to counsel those in need. I was certainly in need, but it felt absurd to look for comfort in such a public place. I slid quietly past a young cleric as we descended the steps of the cathedral. Was I being rebelliously Scotch-Irish, or did I simply need to do this alone?

I saw my daughter staring upward. She looked worried at the sight of my open hurt. Her presence steadied me. There was no reason to drown in a teaspoon of pain.

As if Lester's life were a lens, I looked back to my own childhood. His demand for moral progress might have come from my mother's pioneer grandfather, a mill owner from Thief River Falls who had pushed on to the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Winter was hard, but the timber was thick and the country still young. If a man's strength lasted, there was nothing he might not accomplish once he set his mind to it. I had spent most of my adulthood considering these ideas criminal nonsense. Now I wasn't so sure. "Pick it up," I told myself, not quite knowing what I meant.

I took Elizabeth's hand and squeezed it. "How are you doing?" I asked her. "Okay," she replied bravely. "You want to get a pizza?" She had been after me to return to the Italian restaurant all afternoon. I had been resisting because the prices were as high as the Romano cheese they kept in little tin containers on the tables.

"Where?" She looked suspicious. I was obviously not going to get away with anything.

"At Little Vincents, in Long Island. We'll fly back tonight." "Oh, right, Dad."

"Say the word. If London doesn't have pizza, we'll leave." "It's not that," she shook her head. "I like London. It's just..." "You're missing your mom." "Yes." "Good," I said. "I'm glad you told me. Because as fantastic as fathers are,

and especially as I am..." "Oh, God..." "...mothers are also pretty important." "More important," she corrected. "They serve a purpose," I admitted. "Huh," she said. "What about the pizza?" "I was just kidding about the pizza." She shrugged. "I thought so." "Don't do that," I told her. "Don't shrug like that. It gives me the creeps." "I know," she grinned, pulling a strand of blond hair away from her face.

"Okay," I conceded. "We'll go back to the hotel, you call home and we'll see what the Italian place can do." "If they can't make a pizza, I want spaghetti with meatballs." "That means more than one meat ball." "Three," she insisted.

We hugged, startling a passerby, then turned and ran to catch our train. As we clattered down the steps to the underground I imagined E. Lester Levine panting beside us, a London restaurant guide clutched to his breast, protesting the indignity of being hustled down such a steep flight of stairs.

MI NEWS

Mentoring Institute Advisors - The Mentoring Institute advisors and cochairs will meet in Albany, 9/30 - 10/1. They will be planning MI activities. The advisors are:

Bob Carey -Metro
Jay Gilbert -Hudson Valley
Susan Hallgarth -Labor
Marjorie Lavin -Academic Affairs
Tim Lehmann -NCAL
Sylvain Nagler -Albany
Susan Oaks -CDL
Irene Rivera de Royston -Genesee Valley
Bob Rodgers -Niagara Frontier
Chris Rounds -Central New York
Paula Silver -Long Island
Evelyn Ting -Corporate College

They, along with cochairs Miriam Tatzel and Lee Herman, can be reached at @[maillist]miadvise.

Center Workshops - This fall, the MI will be doing mentoring workshops at Buffalo, Rochester, Labor and Corporate College. Topics will include individualization and student-centered education, working with differences in student and mentor values, and videotaping your mentoring. To plan a workshop for your center on any aspect of mentoring, contact your center's advisor. The MI will help you design a workshop and arrange for a facilitator.

Collegewlde Conference on Mentoring - Working with APLPC, the MI will sponsor a collegewide mentoring conference in the spring of 1994. Please send ideas for workshops and other activities to @[maillist]miadvise.

Mentor Development Learning Contracts - The MI arranges faculty development "learning contracts" for all mentors, "new" and "old." We try to arrange for "companion mentors" within and beyond your center on any aspect of mentoring, including scholarship, working with students, and managing ESC work life. To be a mentoring "companion" or to find one, contact your center's MI advisor or the MI cochairs.

In Upcoming Issues of *All About Mentoring* - AAM will appear every two to three months. In our next issues will be articles by Wendy Goulston on "Spirituality and Academic Work," by Xenia Coulter and Sylvain Nagler on the conference of the International Mentoring Association, and by Carolyn Shadle on "Outplacement and Educational Planning." There will be interviews with mentors, such as Tom Hodgson, about their work at ESC and, in every issue, an "Interaction" - a column reserved for mentors to describe and comment on encounters with students. AAM will publish articles, letters, interviews, scholarly work-in-progress, editorial comments, descriptions of and suggestions for learning activities and resources on any aspect of mentoring. Send your contribution, preferably via e-mail, to either of the cochairs (LHerman or MTatzel).