

Excalibur

Everything secret degenerates; nothing is safe that does not show it can bear discussion and publicity
—Lord Acton

Excalibur, founded in 1966, is the York University weekly and is independent politically. Opinions expressed are the writer's and those unsigned are the responsibility of the editor. Excalibur is a member of Canadian University Press and attempts to be an agent of social change. Printed at Newsweb, Excalibur is published by Excalibur Publications.

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Final chapter

Editor's notebook

Perhaps it is fitting that this is being written, in a manner of speaking, at a strange hour under the pressure of a deadline. It sort of typifies a most unusual year in which the newspaper finally obtained a board of publications to act as a buffer with CYSF; a year in which CYSF's president actually said nice things about us from time to time; a year when so many assistants quit — usually to take better jobs, or to catch up on missed studies — we thought we were running a Canada Manpower relocation centre.

Michael Mouritsen, the soon-to-be retired CYSF president, was the best one we've had in four years — at least in terms of intelligence and effort, if not politics. We found him to be unusually articulate for a student politician and courageous in defence of his opinions, public stands and policies.

The accusation of the year award goes to the former YUSA executive member who charged that I had been hired by CUPE to bring about the downfall of the voluntary staff association. This was followed by a statement by a member of the CUPE local at York accusing Excalibur of being muzzled by the administration. We won't even tell you what some administration people were calling us.

There's only one sure rule for a journalist who wants to fend off such nonsensical charges of partisanship. Be as fair and honest as possible in every report.

Speaking of reporters, I would like to say this year's staff is the best I've ever seen at Excalibur. We had more people willing to cover more assignments than at any time in this paper's past history. At least a half-dozen staffers, and maybe more, showed real interest in learning technical skills like headline writing, something which augurs well for the future.

Among the staff's unsung heroes — and there were too many to list — were J.W. Beltrame, who totally ignored his inability to spell while doing a large portion of Excalibur's proof-reading; Honey Fisher, who did the layout of a lot of news pages on a lot of late Tuesday nights, and Warren Clements, who, in addition to his regular entertainment duties, wrote some news stories and filled in for me on two occasions as acting editor. Next year he doesn't have to act, since he was elected real editor this week.

Then there was Michael Forman who has an interesting singing voice, and Michael Hollett who doesn't, and Bob and Lerrick who do our paste-up. Hey, what d'ya mean I'm out of space, I just got started...



Michael Lawrence

My regards to lucky old Lorenzo

My Dear Lawrence,

Please excuse me for waiting so long before replying to your last letter, but things have been hectic. Between the housepainter and my wife's broken leg, I have had very little time to myself, as you can well imagine. I still haven't decided what's worse, the smell of the paint or that nine pounds of plaster I've had the pleasure of sleeping with lately.

The weather on the continent has been wetter than usual this year, and for the last two weeks it's been raining les chats et les chiens, as they say in these parts. In fact, only yesterday I ruined my new shoes by stepping in a large French puddle. Excuse me for this unusual lightheartedness, but ever since receiving your letter and the news it brought, I've barely been able to contain my excitement.

I had read in an American journal some months ago of your early research efforts and I must admit at that time I was a bit skeptical. The procedure seemed too complex to me, too many factors that might go wrong. Forgive me for that lack of faith, for after hearing of your latest success I'm almost embarrassed about these early doubts.

I know that the actual technique must still remain secret for security reasons, but there are some questions I have concerning some of the already known facts of your procedure. If you could help me here a bit, I would certainly appreciate it, as my own work on the subject seems to have gone into a stall.

Let me begin with the question of colour, which you seemed to have stressed in all your reports. At the moment I'm using both red and magenta in the first phase, but I have had only limited success up till now. I noticed you encountered similar difficulty in your early work but your latest report leads me to believe

that you have solved this problem. I am curious if you could forward me some information re your success in circumventing an obstacle that still confronts me.

My second question concerns the choice of pattern that remains so crucial to all these trials. Both the fantail and concentric ellipse patterns seemed to have been widely accepted among our colleagues, but only you (as far as I know) have avoided both patterns, choosing parallel lines instead. This remains most mysterious to those of us in the field and some clarifications would be appreciated by all of us.

Of course, I mustn't neglect the most basic ingredient in the procedure. You mentioned in your letter that you have decided to continue using plaster walls in lieu of linoleum counter tops, and at this point I must express my personal disagreement. Excuse me for what might seem to be an ungracious remark, but even our friend in Lisbon has discarded walls as an inferior ingredient in the procedure, and I would suggest, as a concerned friend, that you consider following suit.

In return for the information I await so anxiously, let me in exchange elaborate on some of my own success, which you might in turn find valuable. My latest innovation in this mutual fetish of ours (our friends think it is, you know) is the abandonment of the hands in favour of the toes, elbows and nose. Though some precision seems to be sacrificed in this exchange, the results are on the whole exciting. My wife can vouch for this and in fact this latest injury of hers was due to this very innovation. After lending a hand (actually her foot) in a recent experiment, she slipped off the table in a manner I'm sure you can well imagine.

But, after all, a plastered bedmate is a small

price to pay in the advancement of this crucial work. History remembers the untimely death of the likes of Madame Curie, one whose devotion to a life's work caused her early demise. In the fact, the painter (an elderly Italian fellow I met last week) will not likely forget my wife after falling off his ladder and breaking his nose on her cast. The cast itself remained unmarked.

So, Lawrence, forgive me for the ramblings of an old man, so old it might surprise you. My biographer was well paid to trim some years from my mortal calendar, perhaps the only thing he did properly in that overblown description of an underwhelming man. And for those pictures, they were the invention of some counterfeiter in the basement of an unscrupulous New York publisher.

Continue your work and succeed if you will. I'm old enough to know the foolishness of that. But never forget, my fellow scholar, that all these questions of colour, of balance, of pattern, even of limb; these questions and their answers are in the end as meaningless as the paint under our nails.

Call these musings senility if you will and I confess I wish it was just that. Hope is the reserve of you relative youngsters as cynicism is the domain of the old. I was like you once, I admit, but that all passed too quickly. Yet things may be different for you; I hope so anyway.

The wife's calling now, so let me be off. Good luck in your work, whatever that means. I will continue mine too, if only to pass what little time I have left. Regards to old Lorenzo, whose drunkenness probably makes him luckier than both of us. Expecting to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
M.F.

Final
STAFF MEETING
2 P.M.
TODAY

Editor-in-chief Brian Milner
Ass't editor Michael Forman
News Editors S. Jennifer Hunter
Michael Hollett
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Entertainment editor Warren Clements
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Graphics Peter M. Hsu
CUP editor Rosemary McCracken
Sports editor Rick Spence

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