

ARE THEY WILLING TO IF NOT, THEY ARE NO DIFFERENT AND THAT IS REALITY

Part one

I'm very happy to be here, but also in some ways very nervous.

I'm nervous because I'm looking at a lot of you and thinking back to when I was a freshman. And I'm thinking that a lot of the things I would like to say would be platitudes.

I would say things like "welcome" or "I'm sure you'll have four happy years at the university of Windsor", "that these are going to be the four happiest years of your life", and a lot of the other things people say when you come in as a freshman.

One of the reasons I won't say it of course, is because I don't believe it. And another reason I won't say it is because it was said to me and it wasn't true.

And so I start out with a certain amount of trepidation. There is another reason why I'm worried about speaking tonight. This is that I have very mixed feelings about speaking to a group of mixed people, many of who won't agree with a word I say. Now, in one way I guess that's a little o.k. because some of you probably won't agree with anything anyone tells you in the next four years, and you'll have about as little choice as you do this evening.

Now, you at least have some choice this evening because there are no grades begin given, but if you walk out, try to walk out quietly. I'll try and being by talking about what happened to me, and try and explain what I think may happen to you. My parents never went to college. They spent a lot of time, probably from the time I was twelve and thirteen, talking to me about college. Now, they've probably never even seen the inside of a college, but they knew a lot about what it was like.

QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE?

They told me that if I went to college that that would be a place where I would really meet people who are getting together in quest of knowledge, people who are interested in knowledge for its own sake, a place where I would really broaden myself, where I would learn a lot about the world, where I would make the kind of friendships that I could not make in high school, where, though I didn't like the work in high school, I would find college different, you're really going to like your work in college.

Essentially, in a lot of ways, college was described to me as being very, very different from the lives that my parents were leading, and very different from the kind of life I was leading. College was being held up as a very practical utopia. And so I went to school, I remember being very happy, and walking into a dormitory, at Cornell.

Cornell is built on some hills and valleys, and I remember standing at the top of the hill feeling very much alone, looking into a valley. I said to myself "I'm going to really make it at this place. This is going to be the place where I'm going to find myself." What an expression! Finding yourself.

Well, I don't know where it started to go downhill. Maybe I could talk about the fact that six weeks after the school year started, some of the people got mid-term grades. And at the end of mid-term, a very small percentage of the people were asked to leave. And so the dormitory I was in, became, in some way, a very scary kind of place, in some way maybe like a jail.

Ed Hogue, class of 64, left after six weeks to go back to Kingston, New York. I thought, well, somebody else will fill that room. We don't need him. We've got a lot of students here. He couldn't cut the mustard. Maybe somebody else can. Goodbye Ed, have a nice life. Then came first semester grades.

I remember first, grabbing my books and running into the library. Man, I was studying 5,6, maybe 7 hours a day, taking so many notes. I would write 7 pages of work and then write 10 or 11 pages of notes...

I remember trying very, very hard to do well, and having the sense that this was the place where I would prove that I was intellectual, if not superior, at least talented.

But many problems started to develop. One of the problems was that six or eight weeks into the school year, I found out something; something that took me four years to acknowledge. What I found out was that I didn't like to read and write too much.

Now, for those of you coming here, I hope you like to read a lot, and I hope you like to write a lot, because that's what college is. Stripped of all the rhetoric. You get your books, you read a lot, you listen, and you write. You get some more books, you read them, you listen, and you write.

Once in a while, you're not even allowed to talk. But the main thing, is that you'd better like books a lot.

REALITY FOUND IN BOOKS?

You'd better be committed to the idea that reality is found in books, because the whole university system revolves around that concept.

If you like to sing, if you like to speak, if you like to organize, you can do that. But it's called extra-curricular. ...it's things you do in your spare time. It's not essentially valuable, you see, it's something that's needed in a certain way to keep you busy and interested enough to go back to that essential task of more reading and more writing.

Now, to start with, I think a lot of us wouldn't want to be here, if that was the definition of four years of our life. If you went up to the average person on the street and said "Hey, I've got something really good for you. Wanna come to a place where you spend four or five hours a day reading and writing? Sound great doesn't it?" How many people would spontaneously say "Wow" "That's exactly what I've been looking forward to doing for four years. How do I join?" "Oh, you don't join, you have to pay." "Oh, that sounds good. I pay to read and write for five or six hours a day. H-MMM that really sounds exciting."

Clearly the university was not based on a voluntary system. We weren't there because we found it rewarding. We were there for a whole series of different reasons. But very few of those reasons came from inside ourselves.

At Cornell, the reason was pretty clear why you went there, because when you got out you could say you went to Cornell. It really didn't matter what the hell you did for four years. You were paying to say you went there. And people competed to see how they could go there with the least amount of effort.

Cornell, you see, is a big fraternity school. And I remember sitting with one of my friends in the dormitory saying "We don't want to join the fraternity because fraternities limit your

You can identify yourselves in many ways. But the main point is that these labels allow people to avoid having to be somebody. And in a certain way this makes it easier, because we don't have to worry about each other.

individuality. Fraternities cut you off from other people. Fraternities are racially selective, they're economically selective. They're against everything we stand for." My friend said, "You're absolutely right."

We walked home together arm and arm and two days later we were both in fraternities. The reasons were somewhat clear. We did have the option not to join--at least at Cornell, again, the analogies are not quite the same here, but I'm trying to get at some basic points.

There were 53 fraternities. Most guys joined fraternities, and so, you joined. You joined for a very basic reason.

PROTECTION FROM HUMANITY?

Joining a fraternity protected you from the job of being a person. Instead of saying "Who's Eric Mann" and hearing "Well, I'm a lot of different things. I'm rather complicated. You'll have to get to know me", by joining I could say "Tah Delta Fi". Now Tah Delta Fi may not mean anything to you, University of Windsor may not mean anything, I.B.M. may not mean anything, and yet when you think about it, Buick, such and such a church or such and such a street mean something--they are ways we define ourselves.

They avoid the problem of being somebody. In fact, they say, "Don't you want to know who I am?" I drive that car. Don't you want to know who I am? I wear silk ties... Don't you want to

know who I am? I wear work shoes.

You can identify yourselves in many ways. But the main point is that these labels allow people to avoid having to be somebody. And in a certain way this makes it easier to worry about each other.

Like, I know you by, "That's my girl" or "That's my guy". Or she is going out with that guy. And of course, looks are very important in a society where things are more important than what things are.

And so we see how certain things affect how we look at people, how we

Well, that's o.k. If you're not doing work, at least enjoy your afternoon. I'm three weeks behind on my work or leisure.

O.K. I went back to a second semester. "Well, if I get a 90 in this semester, this, no a 90 in this and I can do an average of 85. Boy, that's good this semester.

So I would work out my program that this time things were going to be my first average was 79.8.

Now at Cornell, 79.8 was a good grade because 80 was the lowest passing grade made you sort of smart. Withing run of this mill. At 80 they say, "student". Now I went through college should tell people that my average was very different from 80. Start at

So sometimes I would say "80" and sometimes I would say "80" and sometimes either way I felt that I lost.

And either way I felt that I was not developed to define who I was not defined. I was now Eric Mann, the first semester was worse than the first

In the second semester, it was an into that 5 or 6 hours a day. So in springtime. I really like to work with that 5 or 6 hours if you're not finished. of the most amazing things a col

There's no such thing as leisure fact tread-mill. So that you find, it's not find, that there's no such thing

EXPERIENCE

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This is an edited version of a book given Orientation at the University of Windsor former national secretary of the Student Society and is now affiliated with the SD S.

Plus there's always additional material and often the course material read in one week.

You're always ahead in this behind caught up on this and you find that when you get caught up in this. You have to figure out, "Well, I see this, and I say I'm sick, then I have that," and the process continues and it happens frequently, you find that you can

You find that when you take a break hanging over your head. "I'm tired"

Well, that's o.k. If you're not doing work, at least enjoy your afternoon. "Sure, I'm