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Dec 86

To Sec. Bennett

Bill - an article on P. 168 -
I think you'll find it interesting
& maybe very surprising.

RR

HIGH SCHOOL DIARY WHAT YOUR KIDS ARE REALLY LEARNING
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Los Angeles

BEN STEIN'S HIGH SCHOOL DIARY

In October 1985, at the tender age of 40, I went back to high school. As part of a project intended to gauge the impact of mass popular culture upon our youth, I sat in on classes at Birmingham High School in Van Nuys.

Birmingham is a sprawling complex of one-story buildings originally built as a veterans' hospital after World War II. It draws upon a multitude of economic, religious, educational and ethnic springs. There are children of wealthy Jewish families from the Encino Hills, working-class Wasp families from Van Nuys and immigrants from Afghanistan, black students brought in under the voluntary busing program and Hispanics from East L.A. bused in because their schools have reached capacity.

Through the intercession of a friend on the school board, I was allowed to sit in on classes for as long as I wished. I originally expected to observe school life for about one week. But I

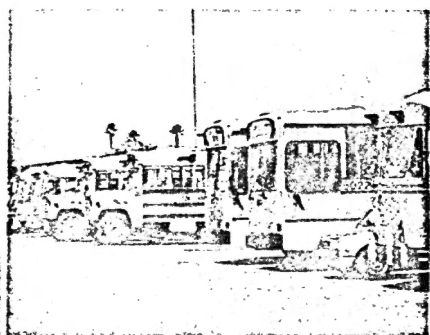
By Ben Stein

What are our teachers really dishing out to our kids? The author sat in on a full semester of classes to find out... and what he heard may astound you!

"Now, Democrats are high-school dropouts, Mexicans, blacks, Catholics; Republicans are well-to-do, college grads, almost all male . . . everyone get that?"

stayed for the rest of the school year, until graduation, and even now stay in touch with students and teachers.

I stayed for so long because I was able to learn about life in another country: the nation of high school. By staying for so long, my presence became innocuous. I blended into the lime green walls and could see what was going wrong with the teaching process, why the students came out of school knowing so little and why so much of what they knew was wrong.



I stayed also because I could see the good things about high school. From a vantage point very different from that of the students or of adults on the outside, I could see how students and teachers were not at war, as they are in movies, but have banded together as a single unit against the oppression and indifference of the outside world—as they see it. I saw genuine sweetness and love among the students, and between students and faculty, and this fascinated me as well.

I kept a voluminous diary as I sat in the classes. I offer here an abbreviated but representative fraction of the whole. As you read it, please remember you are reading a condensation. Also keep in mind that you are reading what went on through my eyes, which are steadfastly critical of intellectual errors and notoriously softhearted about human feelings. At the request of all of the teachers and some of the students, I have changed their names.

Finally, I urge you to try, as I have done, to think hard about what you read before you draw conclusions. High school is a dense and contradictory place. It has been oversimplified in movies and TV

comedies for so long that when we see it as it is we may not recognize it. We may also mistake heroes for villains and villains for heroes. Try, if you can, to look at Birmingham High School from your vantage point and then to imagine seeing it through 17-year-old eyes. Then try to reconcile the views. Remember, high school, and youth itself, are distant countries. They do things differently there.

November 8, 1985

A visit with Mrs. Cooper's 12th-grade advanced-placement English class. Before the class starts, Mrs. Cooper, a fiftyish, intense woman, pulls me aside and whispers to me urgently. "This is what you have to know," she says. "The whole system here is imploding. We have literally illiterate teachers. Literally. We produce no worthwhile product. No product at all in many cases. If things go on like this, in eight or nine years we're looking at real illiteracy. The teachers don't have any idea what they're doing, so why should the students?"

She looks around at the students taking out their copies of *Vanity Fair* (the book, not the magazine). "There won't always be old-timers like me here. Then what'll happen?"

November 12, 1985

Miss Silver is an "applied economics" teacher. She is about 31 years old, with a ready smile. Today, she wants to discuss adults on campus.

"I just want you to know," she says to her class, "that we did have a narc on campus last year pretending to be a student, and it really upset a lot of kids, so you should be aware of the danger."

This is an honors class, and the kids are smart. What's more, they like to talk. They especially like to talk back. "What's wrong with narcs on campus?" asks a smart boy named Jeff. "If you're not into drugs, you have nothing to worry about."

"Yes, but they're *undercover*," Miss Silver says.

"I heard about this one narc who went so undercover that he had a girlfriend at the school who was a junior and he got her

pregnant, and then he busted her," a winsome girl named Jamie says.

"That's a little farfetched," says Miss Silver, "but I did hear that Mrs. Cooper told a boy that another boy was a narc, and the kids beat him up really bad, and he turned out not to be a narc at all."

"Did he sue?" asks Chris, a sharp boy sitting two seats from me. "That's a sure winner."

"I don't know," says Miss Silver. "I guess I'm just a little bit '60s in my thinking, but I don't like having narcs on campus."

"Hippie!" several students sing out, and Miss Silver blushes.

"Now let me see a show of hands," says Miss Silver. "How many of you approve of having undercover cops on campus?" About two-thirds of the students raise their hands. Miss Silver is obviously disappointed.

Having exhausted this topic, Miss Silver turns to her lesson plan, which is apparently committed to memory. She talks about the Federalists and the anti-Federalists, how they evolved, and then asks, "What would be an example of a one-party state?"

"Maybe royalty," a student ventures, "like in England."

"That's right," Miss Silver says. "Royalty could be a one-party state. Even a dictatorship might. You have to remember that not all dictatorships are mean and nasty." She offers no examples.



Miss Silver then traces the evolution of the Democratic and Republican parties, something she obviously has done before. She hits her stride when she gets to the Great Depression. "The Republicans,"

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she says, "like to help out with money up here, with the rich people, and then they think it'll trickle down to the poor people. The Democrats believe in helping the poor people directly. That's why they were so popular during the Great Depression.

"Now remember this," she says, helpfully writing it down. "Republicans, trickle down. Democrats, help the working man. Any questions?"

November 15, 1985

Another day on political parties. Miss Silver passes out cartoons by Paul Conrad, the L.A. *Times* cartoonist. She laughs with glee at each new zing at Reagan. Her particular favorite trinket this morning, though, is a pin that reads REAGAN—BOMBS, BULLETS AND BULLSHIT.

As Miss Silver talks, the students also talk nonstop among themselves. Two are listening to music on a stereo headset. One is eating giant rice cakes. Another is reading a Stephen King book.

"All right," Miss Silver says with a smile, "show-and-tell's over. Today we're going to talk about the demographics of the parties."

The students keep talking, so Miss Silver says *shush* in a loud hiss. "*Shush!*" several male students say back to her. No one bats an eye.

"Now, Democrats are usually high-school dropouts, Mexicans, blacks, Catholics, working-class. Republicans, on the other hand, are well-to-do, college grads and almost all male. Everyone get that?" The students take sparse notes or none at all.

"Now, what's an example of a third party?" "Tupperware party," shouts Chris, and everyone, including Miss Silver, laughs. Miss Silver goes on to talk about Theodore Roosevelt and the Bull Moose party, then about John Anderson. "He was sort of between the wimp Carter and the warmonger Reagan," she says, but no one in class is listening.

The students have a happy, sunny attitude, absolutely not crimped by any notions of taking notes or worrying about what Miss Silver has just told them. It is a

beautiful day outside, and Miss Silver looks at a shy girl named Rebecca in the first row, bent over her notes. "You don't have to bother with notes," she says. "This is just details."

After lunch, Mrs. Cooper, the advanced-placement English teacher, is in a frantic mood. "I have so much to teach you," she says. "Does anyone here know about stream of consciousness? Anyone? Anyone?"

No one answers, so Mrs. Cooper says, "Let's talk about structure versus substance. Anyone know the difference?"

A male student says confidently, "I know. Structure reveals who the author is. Substance reveals who the characters are."

Mrs. Cooper nods approvingly at this dense ball of nonsense and then moves on to explain existentialism. "Existentialism means that man is waiting for the moment to make something great out of it, that life is full of huge possibilities, and man only has to work to make them happen." (By the way, this won the prize for the single wrongest statement by a teacher in my small contest.)

Mrs. Cooper explained her own existentialist attitude to the class. "I'm in my mid fifties," she says. "By statistical chance, I only have about 8,000 days left on this earth. I have to make something out of them." She then shifts to an even more personal mode. "I'm older now," she says. "I get scared more easily. It's harder for me to do things. I'm scared of the people I see on the freeways. I'm scared of the people I see with shopping bags on the sidewalks. I get scared really easily."

It's a genuinely touching moment until a male student pipes up. "I'm not scared of anything," he says. "*Soldier of Fortune* is offering a million dollars to anyone who captures the guys who blew up the marine barracks in Lebanon. I think I'm gonna go for it."

"Why not?" Mrs. Cooper asks with a sweet smile.

November 21, 1985

Miss Silver is exercised because White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan has

been quoted as saying women are not interested in missile throw weights and arms control. "Now, see, this is the way things go at the summit," she says. "Reagan apologized for Regan. Gorbachev said that men and women together built this world and together will build peace. Who do you like better? A man like Reagan who apologizes for a sexist, or a man like Gorbachev who condemns a sexist?"

Chris answers in a flash. "Are you kidding? Reagan, of course. He's our President."

Miss Silver looks disappointed. "All right," she says. "Will someone turn off the lights? Today we're going to watch the film *The Candidate* so we can learn about how political campaigns work."

November 25, 1985

It's raining, and the students in Miss Silver's class are frantic because of the rain. There are also only about 25 out of 40 here today. I ask Jamie, sitting in front of me, why there is so much absenteeism.

"Well, it's raining," she says.

"Yes, but do these kids have to walk to school?"

"No, but they get up in the morning, and they look out the window, and it's raining, and they think it's a drag to go out in the rain, so they might as well stay in bed, have a cup of coffee, watch soap operas and then maybe get up to work at their jobs after school."

"But what about their parents? Don't their parents make them go to school?"

"No, because almost all of the parents are at work, and they don't know what their kids are doing."

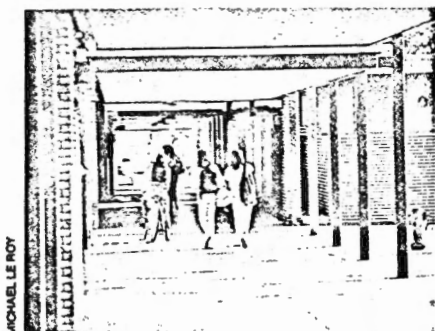
Class begins, and the students finish watching *The Candidate*. When the screen goes dark, Miss Silver asks, "Now, how many of you think this is an accurate picture of our political system?" About half of the students raise their hands. "How many think it's not accurate?" she asks. The other half raise their hands.

Miss Silver nods. "Now, about polling. How many of you think it's a good idea to use polls to help candidates form their policy positions?" Again, after a moment's hesitation, about half of the kids raise their hands. For the converse propo-

"Mr. Footman raises a subject, then he asks for opinions, then he moves on—at no time does he compare the students' views with a preexisting standard"

sition, the other half raise their hands. Miss Silver nods silently.

(This, I have noticed, is a general practice in several classes. The teacher talks briefly about a subject, then asks the students how they feel about it. There is no effort to measure what the students think against observed fact or even against a logical construct. The intellectual value of reading, viewing, then employing analysis and differentiation is simply absent. The class is conducted as if the students were simply *born* knowing all the right answers, had nothing more to learn and had only to raise a hand to discharge their obligations to educate themselves.)



Miss Silver then goes on to discuss the 1982 campaign between George Deukmejian and Tom Bradley for governor. "Why did the polls say that Bradley would beat Duke, and then why did Duke win?" she asks. The students all look at her expectantly. "Because," she answers to herself, "the voters didn't want to seem to be racists when they were polled, but they really were racists, so they voted as racists at the election."

"I don't buy that," says Kevin, a lively student who sells plastic ties. "I think that maybe Bradley was beaten because the black-voter turnout was so low."

"That's a good point," says Miss Silver. "Now, do any of you know why the absentee vote is usually so heavily Republican?" Again, the students look blank.

"Because rich Republicans are the kind of people who go on long vacations and plan ahead enough to get absentee ballots," she says blithely, and no one contradicts her.

For the day's final note, there is the

briefest of discussions on what distinguished Federalists from anti-Federalists. Chris, an excellent history student, starts to give a detailed answer in terms of states' rights and slavery and trade, but Miss Silver cuts him off. "Okay, all you advanced-placement history students, stop showing off. All we need to know is that some of them liked the Constitution and some didn't."

December 2, 1985

Mr. Footman's 11th-grade sociology class is discussing teenage suicide. Mr. Footman's classroom walls are covered with the signs of his concern over the human condition. There are antismoking signs, warning posters about drinking and driving, lists of the warning signs of cancer. There is also an article by a doctor titled "What It Feels Like When a Patient Dies." Mr. Footman, a man in his early forties, has turned the classroom into a virtual situation room in a war, which is, in a way, how he sees it.

"Today, we're going to start a unit on teenage suicide," he says. "Does anyone in the class know anyone who's committed suicide?" About half of the students raise their hands. Mr. Footman points at one student, a long-haired blonde. "How did he do it?"

The girl looks straight down at her desk and whispers, "With a shotgun." Mr. Footman is silent for a moment, and then he asks, "What's the worst thing you can do to someone?"

"Ignore her," says a girl.

"An attempt at suicide is an attempt at attention," adds a boy.

"Suicide has nothing to do with what's in your pocket," says one boy. "It has everything to do with what's in your head."

Mr. Footman nods. He, too, has the same habit as all the other teachers I have seen; he raises a subject, asks for opinions, then goes on to another part of the lecture. At no time does he compare the students' views with some preexisting standard or force the students to use either knowledge or logic. The students just say what's on their minds, and then the class goes on.

A black student says, "Really, you don't have to be crazy to commit suicide.

You only have to have things go wrong, and then you can easily feel as if you want to die."

Mr. Footman himself is reading about suicide from a 25-year-old chart from the Public Health Service. "This proves," he says, "that suicide is very democratic and crosses all class lines. This chart proves it."

December 3, 1985

More on teenage suicide in Mr. Footman's class. Some of his students have been assigned to read *The Bell Jar*. The entire class is watching a film strip about Sylvia Plath. The students show absolutely no interest until a photograph of Janis Joplin is projected on the screen. Then a few students cheer.

"What was Sylvia Plath's problem?" Mr. Footman asks when the film strip ends. He answers himself. "She had low self-esteem. Everything she touched turned to 'ka-ka.' Everyone had a better life than she did." The teacher makes frequent references to movie stars who have died young, lyrics of rock music about suicide, TV movies about suicide. Interestingly enough, the teacher makes no reference at all to books or plays or poems, except for *The Bell Jar*.

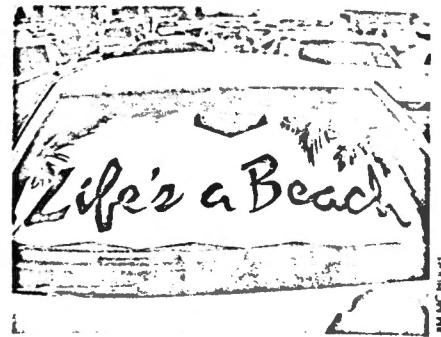
Mr. Footman then turns to the situation at Birmingham High School. "We've had some suicides here at Birmingham," he says. "What were the causes?"

"Competition," says one student. "Sure," says the teacher enthusiastically. "When you foster competition, you separate people and make them separate from each other. When schools foster competition among students, to some extent, they are fostering suicide. When you tell kids that they're good or bad depending on the grades they bring home, you're encouraging suicide."

"To be part of the right crowd here at Birmingham is really important," another boy says. "If you're not in the right crowd, that could lead to suicidal feelings."

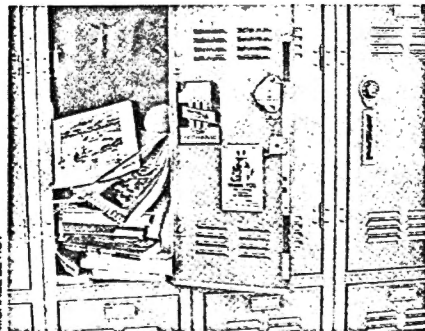
"That's right," Mr. Footman says with genuine feeling. "There is a group for everyone, but what about newcomers? Do teachers ever concern themselves with

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helping students to know each other? No. Teachers want discipline and do not really want the students to know each other. Maybe they're better off talking during class than listening to me teach."

The students seem to have completely tuned him out, but Mr. Footman's soliloquy continues. "It's not like it was when I was in school, when we had all kinds of activities and we all felt plugged into our school more than to our families. Now, when school ends, you go to your jobs, or watch the soaps, or go to the beach. The only time you're with people is when you're in class. And some of you are really isolated, with no one at home when you get home, or maybe not until late at night."



As I look at the students, I can see that they have not really tuned Mr. Footman out. Instead, they are in the particular state of "cool" that students enter when an adult tells them something about themselves that is true.

One pockmarked boy raises his hand. "I just wonder," he says, "why everyone's always telling us to be individuals. Isn't being an individual the same as being isolated? If you want us to stop being isolated, why do you keep telling us to be individuals?"

"Good question," Mr. Footman says, "and I don't know the answer."

December 10, 1985

"This is going to be a relaxed day, sort of casual," Miss Silver says to her students. "I have a few cartoons to show you, and a few buttons, and some other things to take us to the end of class, so you won't have to

take any notes," she adds. First, she shows Conrad cartoons. Then she shows a T-shirt showing Ronald Reagan in the White House with the legend RAMBO'S RESTAURANT. "I really like this one," she says. "Isn't it fun?"

Then Miss Silver has antismoking cartoons and posters to pass around. "I hope you know," she says, "that drugs are bad, but smoking is even worse than drugs." The students roar with approval. "Yuck," says one girl, "smoking is for losers."

"I don't really feel like teaching today," says Miss Silver, "so let's talk about this editorial in the *Daily News*." The editorial is about a ghastly new kind of T-shirt that has been showing up in the Valley that says such things as BELSEN IS A GAS. Another one says HITLER WORLD TOUR—DACHAU, BUCHENWALD, BRITAIN—CANCELED.

"Now what would you do if you saw someone wearing one of these T-shirts?" she asks.

"I'd kill him," says Carlos, whose family were refugees from Nazism. But oddly enough, many students say that people have a right to wear the T-shirts, and a few even say that the T-shirts are funny. Even a few Jewish students offer that opinion.

Miss Silver looks perplexed, but she goes on to the next subject: whether the age for drinking should be lowered. As usual, there is brief discussion, consisting of opinions and anecdotes, and then a show of hands. There is no introduction of any kind of factual data, no reading materials or lectures about drunk-driving deaths in states with different legal drinking ages. At no point does Miss Silver step into the discussion to say, "Well, your opinion is x, but the following facts contradict you. Now, what do you think?" There is just the show of hands, and then class is over, which is just as well, because Miss Silver does not really want to teach today.

December 13, 1985

Mr. Holland is a blast from the past. He teaches advanced-placement U.S. history. He is an athletic man in his late thirties. His class of 11th graders is quiet and

attentive, and I soon learn why.

As he returns the previous night's homework, he says, "Now, some of you were marked down for sloppiness. When I get an assignment back, I don't want scratch-outs or spelling errors. These are not rough drafts. This is what you are turning in to your teacher."

A student in the back row whines, "I didn't get my paper back. You must have lost it."

"No way," Mr. Holland snaps. "You didn't turn that paper in. It's not my job to chase after your papers. You make sure I get your papers. That's your job. Now here's your assignment for tonight." He then gives the students an assignment involving careful annotation of the legislative-powers section of the Constitution.

Mr. Holland assigns homework every night. His class is the first class I have seen in which written work is required on a regular basis. In fact, it's the first class I have seen in which any homework at all is required in written form.

Today's class will discuss whether any form of private mail carriage within a city might be legal under the Constitution. The students divide themselves into two equal groups. Then they have 20 minutes to study the Constitution. One group of students acts as plaintiff's counsel and one group as defendant's counsel. The issue is a hypothetical trial of a man in Buffalo accused of illegally delivering mail, which is "supposed" to be a monopoly of the U.S. government.

The students are required to cite the Constitution specifically by paragraph and clause to prove their points. When they make any argument, they are required to read the part of the Constitution that supports their point of view.

The kids do it—and do it well. There is no talking in class and no fidgeting. The students make their arguments about states' rights and equal protection, and while they would not impress a federal court, the arguments are impressive indeed for the amount of time allowed for research. The kids' brows are furrowed with concentration and excitement.

The only mistake the students repeatedly make is that they apparently genuinely believe that there is a specific

"It is a beautiful day outside, and Miss Silver looks at a girl in the first row; 'You don't have to bother with notes,' she says, 'this is just details' "

amendment to the Constitution conferring a "right to free enterprise." Each time Mr. Holland tells them that there is no such amendment, they are shocked and do not quite believe him.

"How can that be?" asks a student in the back of the room. "Free enterprise is the backbone of the nation."

For tonight, the students will have to read and summarize *Marbury vs. Madison* and *Roe vs. Wade*, as well as *Miranda*. Not only do they express no resentment, but two girls ask, "Can we read other cases, too?"

Then there is Miss Wesley's U.S. history class. It's not advanced placement, not honors, not anything but ordinary. As the class begins, there is widespread talking. Miss Wesley, a pretty blond woman, wants the class to be quiet. "If you don't pay attention in class," she says, "I'm going to assign you homework."

For these students, homework is penalty, a far cry from the treat that Mr. Holland's students saw in reading Constitutional cases.



The students quiet down, stare at the ceiling or at their nails, and Miss Wesley begins. "Yesterday, when we left this exciting class, we were talking about immigration in the 19th century..." Miss Wesley means the word *exciting* in a way that mocks her own class, but, at least to me, her lecture is interesting. She makes the connection between a large labor pool of immigrants and mistreatment of labor, between the great technical breakthroughs of Morse and Goodyear and the ability to use a larger pool of unskilled labor, even the connection between the

sewing machine and the drastic fall in the cost of clothing.

But the students are not moved. The black students, especially, fidget in their seats, make jokes, are an island of utter disinterest in an already lackadaisical class. A few students come to attention, however, when Miss Wesley turns to questioning. "If we have mechanized agriculture," she asks, "what will we have?"

"More food and lower prices," says one boy.

"More unemployment among rural workers," says a girl.

"A larger labor pool for city industry," says a third.

The students get their answers from a textbook on U.S. history in this class. They are not simply saying whatever is on their minds. By the simple expedient of reading the textbook, the students actually seem to have learned a major lesson in economics and history and, more basic, what a logical construct is and how it applies when real data is put into it.

However, almost no students take notes. When the teacher resumes her lecture, the fidgeting in class becomes more generalized until Miss Wesley reaches the Irish potato famine. Her description of the suffering of the Irish under English rule is genuinely touching, and the students are moved by it. When the teacher goes on to discuss how the influx of immigrants at the end of the last century drove down wages, she asks how that made native Americans feel. "Dirty foreigners," says one student.

"Exactly," says Miss Wesley. "The Americans who were already here didn't really think the Irish would ever be 'good Americans,' and they didn't have any use at all for ideas like 'the melting pot.' They wanted to keep a lid on immigration, which is exactly what's happening now."

When Miss Wesley's class ends, no students linger to talk to her as they often do with Miss Silver. Miss Wesley has been struggling diligently to impart knowledge and to make the students learn. She has maintained discipline, and some of her students have definitely learned important concepts. But the students do not seem to me to be engaged. They lack the lively quality that those in Miss Silver's

class have, even when nothing in particular is being taught. Miss Wesley's class may be the more traditional teaching forum, but the familiar glazed look of the students is also traditional.

A word about lunchtime at Birmingham High School. Lunch is served at 12:30. It is served in a huge outdoor space with a roof but no walls. The students eat at large tables with benches, on the grass in a giant quadrangle, along rows of outdoor lockers. In contrast to my own memories of high school, there are no fights, no pushing matches and, most of all, no smoking in secret nooks and groves.



In an orderly way, the students divide themselves up into racial and ethnic groups. The blacks eat in the back of the eating room, near the soft-drink vending machine. The Mexicans eat on the grass and on benches near the grass. The prosperous white girls and boys eat nearer the center of the quadrangle or else sprawled on the cement near the student-activities room. There is also a row of blind, crippled and sad-looking students who eat by themselves along a wall of lockers near the faculty dining room, usually with a well-behaved Seeing Eye dog nearby.

The different groups rarely eat together. On the other hand, individual members of each group know each other and greet each other cheerfully as they pass by to get their trays or drop off their trays.

Jim Jameson, a fiftyish man who has been principal of Birmingham for about four years, walks through the cafeteria to make sure there is no butting in line and that occasional spats do not degenerate

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into anything worse. As Jameson walks by the students, they greet him and he greets each of them back, by name. Incredibly, he knows the name of almost every student among the 2,500 here. He also knows basic facts about each: "He's had a lot of trouble ever since his father died." "He's our best mathematician." "He's planning to go into the army." "She was out last week because she had a bad flu."

Jameson has been voted principal of the year by the board of education repeatedly. He walks around the campus not only as if he were in charge of it, but as if it were one large child of his own. Many events at Birmingham are occasionally touching, but the rapport between the principal and his students is always moving.

Seniors are allowed to leave campus for lunch. As far as I can tell, most of them do. They get into their cars—Rabbits and Toyotas and also a few Mercedes and Cadillacs—and head for the Round Table, Naugles, McDonald's and Bagel Nosh. A few go home if they live nearby and watch *The Young and the Restless*.

Generally, there is a relaxed, cheerful mood around lunchtime, as if the students lived in a world from which adult concerns had been permanently banned.

December 18, 1985

Miss Silver is in a bad mood. "It's class progress-report day," she says, stamping her foot. "I'm in a really terrible mood, so don't even talk to me today."

Outside, the sun is shining and the air is crisp and dry. The students are absent in droves. I ask Debbie, a diminutive girl with curly hair, where all the students are. "Well, it's a beautiful day, so they're probably at the beach," she says.

"But I thought they didn't come when it was raining."

"I don't know," says Jon. "I think maybe kids don't like to be here when it's raining and also when it's sunny. Also maybe when it's cloudy, because when it's cloudy, kids like to go to the tanning salon."

Since Miss Silver is at her desk making out progress reports, I gather a group of

the more talkative students about me and ask them about their career plans. For example, have any of them considered going into teaching?

"No way," says Chris. "There's no money in teaching. Business is where it's at. That's why we have so many lousy teachers. I want to be a tax lawyer. People will pay anything to not pay taxes."

"I think international banking is pretty cool," says a boy named Randy.

"I'd like to go to law school," says another student. "Lawyers make good money, plus it really helps with your vocabulary."

"Is there any one of you who might want to go into a field where there's not necessarily any big money, but you might be helping people?" I ask.

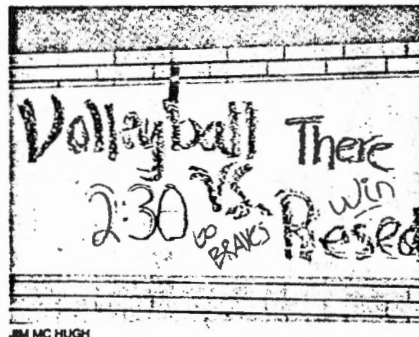
"I'd like to be an eye surgeon in Beverly Hills," one student says.

"I don't think that counts," I point out.

"I knew a girl in English class who wanted to be a doctor and work with poor people in Ethiopia," Chris says. "But I talked her out of it."

"You talked her out of it? Why?"

"Because there's no money in it," Chris says. "Why should she go to school for all those years just to go to Ethiopia to treat people who probably can't even afford an office visit?"



I talk to the students about how amazing and frank their worship of money is. They look abashed, and then one girl says, "I'd like to live on a kibbutz and help people grow oranges."

"I'd like to be a veterinarian, even if people couldn't pay me," says another girl.

"I want a family by the time I'm 24,"

says Jon, one of the three Jons in the class. He wants also to be an actor.

One boy says, "If you don't have a lot of money in America, you can't do anything. That's what America is all about."

"I don't agree with that," says Jeff. "If you're satisfied with your work, that's what counts. A world full of bankers wouldn't do anyone any good. Satisfaction should not be counted only in money."

"I'd put family ahead of money," says Jon, the future actor.

"I'd rather have money and no family than a family and no money," says Chris.

There is a momentary pause, and then the bell rings for the lunch hour.

December 19, 1985

Mr. Holland appears in class today wearing jeans, a white T-shirt and sandals. Still, he is strict. "A requirement of my class is that you must be here on time and in your seats when the bell rings," he says to two latecomers.

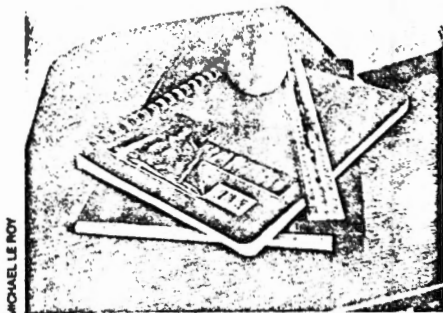
Today the students are going to discuss early important Supreme Court decisions on the basis of whether the Federalists or the anti-Federalists would have approved of them.

In a detailed way, the kids go through *Marbury vs. Madison* and explain why the Federalists would have favored Marshall and why the anti-Federalists would not have liked him. The class even gets into the lineal connection, as Mr. Holland sees it, between the Whigs and the Tories in England at the time of the Revolutionary War and American political parties.

After half an hour of this aggressive teaching and learning, the teacher calls a halt for the next exercise. "Tomorrow, we're going to have you break up into groups, and one student from each group will pretend to be a famous historical figure, and the students in the other groups will have to guess who you are. Now, break up into groups and decide who's gonna be the actor and who you're gonna play."

The students decide to be Jefferson, Monroe, Madison. One boy wants to be

HIGH SCHOOL DIARY



William ("the Refrigerator") Perry. Another wants to be Leon Klinghoffer.

"Sorry," Mr. Holland says. "Figures from the Constitutional era only. No jokes and no recent figures, even if they're important. This is school."

January 6, 1986

Miss Silver is talking today about the Selective Service. "I just want you to know that when you're talking about Nicaragua or El Salvador, you boys who are 18 or almost 18 are the ones who are going to be drafted. If things happen, you'll be the first to go."

Then Miss Silver goes into a lecture about the various ways young men avoided the draft during the Vietnam War. "But it's not the same now," she says. "There aren't as many deferments, so you might want to go to a lawyer to help you maximize your chances of avoiding the draft."

Several male students look at her quizzically. "What if we don't want to avoid the draft?" one asks.

Miss Silver smiles and throws up her hands. "Then you just go into the army," she says, shaking her head at youth.



February 13, 1986

Miss Silver is not feeling well again today. "I'm feeling sick," she says. "Please cooperate with me." The class begins by talking about the Philippines.

"Is the Philippine Republic a two-party system, or what?" a student asks.

"I don't know," Miss Silver says. "Does anyone know?" No one knows, but an un-

dercurrent of talking begins in the class. "Hush," Miss Silver says. "Don't make me shout."

As if on cue, the whole class erupts with the lyrics to a popular song:

"Shout, shout, let it all out . . ."

Miss Silver laughs. The class goes into a long discussion of United States foreign policy, which Miss Silver thinks is selfish and hypocritical, but "nations almost always just do what they feel they have to do anyway," she says. "Nations rarely act out of altruism, even if they pretend to."

Randy adds, "Almost no one ever acts out of altruism, but then why should they? Where does it get you?"

"You're right," says Miss Silver. "People expect altruism, and they hope for it, but it rarely occurs in a pure form."

"Robots are going to be the only ones who survive," says one boy. "They don't expect anything in return."

February 19, 1986

"I have to warn you," Miss Silver says, "I've just read that the Selective Service has a policy of stings in which students are promised a trip to Hawaii and then when they show up to claim their prize, they get busted and sent to jail."

The students are stunned into silence, and then one asks, "When you get out of jail, can you still get your free trip to Hawaii?" Miss Silver looks dazed.

From here, the class moves on to the Philippines again. "The U.S. has just promised Marcos more military aid," Miss Silver says. "It's either \$87 million or \$87 billion, I'm not sure which."

"What language do people speak in the Philippines?" asks one boy. "I'm not sure," says Miss Silver. "Maybe Filipino? Spanish? English? I don't know."

From here the conversation goes to the Cuban missile crisis. "Kennedy took a stand and got us out of a jam," Miss Silver says. "But if he had gotten us into a war, we would have an entirely different impression of him. Then he failed trying to topple Castro at the Bay of Pigs. It's really embarrassing to try to bring down a foreign government, but it's even more embarrassing to fail."

Now the conversation goes to China.

"The Communists took over and kicked the people off to Taiwan," Miss Silver says. "Then there was the Korean War. Who here knows about the Korean War?"

"Yeah! *M*A*S*H!*" several students say, and that is the end of that subject.

By coincidence, the "Great Peace March" is encamped, prior to beginning its hike, in the park right across from Birmingham High School, and Miss Silver wants to talk about the marchers. So do the students.

"A lot of these people demonstrated against the Vietnam War," Miss Silver says. "Unfortunately, very few of you know much about the Vietnam War . . ."



"Yes we do," a student interrupts. "We've seen *Rambo*."

"Well, that wasn't the Vietnam War," says Miss Silver. "I'm going to show a documentary about Vietnam. But in the meantime, you might want to go over to talk to the peace marchers . . ."

"We already did," one girl says. "They're like overage flower children. They're really weird."

"They're scummy hippies," another student says. "Use napalm on 'em."

"They smoke cigarettes," another girl says, "and use four-letter words and believe in free love. They give me the creeps."

Miss Silver turns off the lights and begins to show a videotape of a condensation of the PBS documentary *Vietnam—The Ten-Thousand-Day War*. It is as if an electric current were being passed through the class. The students stare at the screen as if their lives depended on it. But when Westmoreland comes on the

"When you foster competition, you separate people; when schools foster competition among students, to some extent they are fostering suicide"

screen, Miss Silver stops the tape and asks, "How many of you know who William Westmoreland was?"

"Westmoreland vs. CBS," says Chris, and the tape resumes.

When the tape gets to photos of Nguyen Cao Ky in his aviator's outfit, the students laugh. When the tape shows the police chief of Saigon shooting a young Vietcong on the streets of Saigon, Miss Silver again stops the tape. "This is the kind of tragedy that the Vietnam War brought out," Miss Silver says.

"I don't think it was that much of a tragedy," Jackie says as she eats a rice cake. "That guy got shot, but he also made it to the cover of *Life*."

February 25, 1986

It is a beautiful, gorgeous, crisp day, and about one-third of Miss Silver's class is absent. The ones who are here are watching more of the Vietnam documentary. When Nixon comes onscreen, Miss Silver stops the tape again.

"Nixon claimed to have a secret plan to end the war," she says. "In fact, he had a secret plan to end the war twice."

"Was Nixon a good President?" one girl asks innocently. Miss Silver virtually gags. "You expect me to answer that?"

One boy says, "Yeah, he was a great President."

"Yeah," says another.

Miss Silver looks at the students in stunned silence. Then she starts the tape again. As the monitor shows American B-52s dropping bombs on Hanoi, several students cheer. Others gape with admiration.

After class, Miss Silver talks about the students' reaction to photos of the bombing. "They're so young," she says. "All they've ever seen is America getting beaten, hostages being taken, America losing. They get a thrill out of seeing America bombing someone. It makes them feel good. At least America's doing something."

February 26, 1986

Miss Silver shows the final portion of the excerpts from *Vietnam—The Ten-Thou-*

sand-Day War. On the monitor in Room 19, a few feet from the intersection of Victory and Balboa, there are newsreel shots of Americans hauling down the Stars and Stripes over the U.S. embassy in Saigon. There are also pictures of Vietnamese begging to be allowed to leave, of women begging U.S. Marine guards, of helicopters flying away, of Vietcong marching onto the grounds of the U.S. embassy.

In the back of the room, two girl students who never talk are crying, and Miss Silver appraises the class. The boys and girls look stony, angry, disconsolate over the image of U.S. defeat. Miss Silver seizes the moment and asks the students to write essays right then and there about their feelings on the Vietnam War. After class, she lets me read them. Some excerpts, as I recall them:

"If there were another war, I doubt if my parents would let me go fight, even if I wanted to."

"We had no business being there in the first place, but if we did go there, we should have just bombed the hell out of them and then left."

"My dad says we should have just dropped an atom bomb on the Communists, and I think maybe he was right."

"I wouldn't want to fight anywhere but right here in America. Otherwise I'd go to Canada or somewhere, unless I really had to go to protect my family."

"I wish we could have sent in Rambo."

February 26, 1986

Miss Silver is back on the subject of Vietnam. She is trying to explain it in a non-partisan way, but her rage about the war comes through, and so she changes the subject. "What if there really are POWs in Vietnam or Laos?" she asks. "What do we do then?"

"Send in Rambo," says a student. "There is no Rambo," Miss Silver says. "That was just a movie."

The class looks downcast. "Well, somebody like Rambo," says a girl.

"There's nobody like Rambo," says Miss Silver.

"I know," a student chirps. "That's why we should send him in."

Miss Silver sighs. "What if there really

were MIAs in Vietnam? Seriously. Do you think our government would do anything to get them out?"

"No," say the students in a chorus. Miss Silver looks surprised.

"The government doesn't really care," says Chris. "If they don't go after the MIAs, they save a lot of time and money."

"Look," says Jeff, "if we won't help the homeless on our own streets, why would we go in for the MIAs?"

"Well, if the government did do anything," Miss Silver asks, "what should we do?"

"Bomb the hell out of them," say the students in a variety of ways.

"Luckily, as far as we know there aren't any POWs still being held," Miss Silver says.

"Yes, there are," says Ginny. "There was *Rambo*, and *Uncommon Valor* and *Missing in Action*, and there wouldn't be that many movies if there wasn't something real behind them."

Miss Silver asks how many of the students have seen *Rambo*. Everyone in the class has seen it at least once.

Snapshot #1

What you've just read are a few of the actualities I saw and heard in Miss Silver's class and in other classes. Here are some things I never saw:

There was a wide variety of students in the classes I visited—rich ones, poor ones, kids from famous families, kids who did not know their fathers. I never, not once, saw one student tease another about being poor or being rich or not having a car or not having the right clothes. It might have happened, but I never saw it.

There were many times when teachers were clearly aggravated and tired. I never saw a teacher sharply criticize a student or try to belittle him or her because of a mistake. I never saw or heard a teacher even address the students in an angry voice. I never saw a student leave a classroom feeling ashamed or upset or humiliated.

The teachers were all busy with their life adjustment or their teaching or with something at all times. Yet I never saw a

HIGH SCHOOL DIARY

"I want to be real in class and be a good human being, and I want my kids to know that they can be themselves and I'll still listen to them"

teacher turn away a student who wanted to talk or share a problem. I never saw a teacher who was unwilling to stay after class or after school to hear a child's tale of woe.

In a word, I never saw a teacher who was not working his or her heart out either to teach or to make the children feel better. The teachers were and are onstage all day long, struggling with extremely difficult audiences. You can wonder at what they taught or did not teach, but you could not seriously question the sincerity or intensity of their efforts.

Snapshot #2

From a conversation in June with six students from Miss Silver's class at a hamburger place in Van Nuys:

"What did you learn in Miss Silver's class that you didn't know before?" I ask.

The students look thoughtful, and then Sandy says, "I learned that I can't possibly be a Republican, because you have to be rich and college educated and I'm neither of those things yet, although I hope I will be someday."

"What else did you learn?" I ask.

"I learned that in the Vietnam War, North and South Korea fought against each other, and then there was a truce at the 38th parallel, and that Eisenhower had something to do with it," says another boy.

"Would it bother you to know that the things you learned are wrong?"

"Not really," says Jeff, the smartest student in the class. "Because what we really learned from Miss Silver was that we were worth listening to, that we could express ourselves and that an adult would listen, even if we were wrong. That's why Miss Silver will always be our favorite teacher. She made us feel like we mattered, like we were important."

"It doesn't matter that you didn't learn much about the world or how it works?"

"Not really," says Jamie. "Because Miss Silver gave us confidence to say what's on our minds and made us feel that the way we felt about things could make a difference. That's probably the only thing I'll remember from high school."

"Would you have liked to learn more?"

"Sure," Jamie says. "That would've been the best, if we could've learned a lot about the world and also learned that some adults respected us. If maybe you could have put Mr. Holland and Miss Silver together and gotten a teacher who cared about us the way Miss Silver did and also taught things the way Mr. Holland did, it would be great. But I never knew a teacher like that, and if I had to choose, I'd take Miss Silver any day."

Snapshot #3

From a conversation with Miss Silver in early August about her motivations as a high-school teacher:

"I like them, my students," she says. "When school is over for the summer, I get very hard to talk to. I miss them. When school starts again in the fall, I look at my new class, and I say to myself, 'Wait a minute, you're not my kids. Where are my kids?'"

"I want to be real in class and be a good human being. I try to make an example of myself. Plus, I like to have a good time. I want to set an example of being a good human being. I don't care if I'm not like the other teachers. I want to be like myself. And I want my students to know that they can be themselves and I'll still listen to them. I want every one of them to have a chance to express himself or herself. Those are my priorities."

Epilogue

A whole school of thought about education appeared in the late '60s and early '70s that said school failed because of too much discipline, rote and boredom. Slater and Roszak and Reich said that high school needed a new ethos of creativity, freedom and individuality. To a large extent, but by no means entirely, those views have captured the high school I saw.

The results are mixed. The students seem to be much happier, freer and more confident than they were in 1962, when I left Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland. The students are incomparably kinder to each other, far more tolerant of diversity, far less ready to pass on their parents' or teachers'

prejudices except in rare instances. The students seem to me to be more comfortable with themselves and with each other.

On the other hand, the students know precious little about how their society is organized, why a free society under law is unique and why the society is worth preserving. They also know little in the way of organized thought processes or even basic ways of solving intellectual problems. They often struck me as computers without programs or any clear way to be useful, even to themselves. This is probably what the '60s education critics intended, but it is a dangerous kind of human being to entrust with the future of society. A human being who has not been taught to think clearly is a danger in a free society.

Certainly, students who leave school knowing as little of thought or facts as the students I saw are going to have difficulty maintaining either the way of life they covet or a technologically advanced society. Still, there was a winning, ebullient cheerfulness about the students that consistently blew away negative thoughts. The boys and girls were so likable, so enthusiastic, so flush with the power of youth that it seems cruel even to guess that they will not get whatever they want.

In any event, my observations are those of an adult looking in for a few hours each day on the wholly separate and distinct country of youth. As my year in their world wore on, I became convinced that high school was not so much a system of teaching or learning as a state of mind—the magic state of mind of the last, fullest measure of youth. To try to understand more than bits and pieces of high school is like trying to understand youth. It cannot be done. All I could do, in my own way, was two things; first I could take snapshots and send them home to the land of adults, where we can look at them and marvel. And there was one other thing I could do: I could and did learn to love the students at Birmingham High School as if they were my own children, to respect all the teachers I saw and to actually love Miss Silver. Whatever the shortcomings of the school and of the people in it, taken day by day and in person, they are as irresistible as youth itself. ■

End
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PR014-06

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No Reply

Dear Mr. President:

The Country is filled with a majority of devoted and concerned citizens who recognize that this entire current crisis is based on the blood lust of the Washington press corps, the opportunism of the opposition Party and the machinations of America's enemies.

That the result of this uproar is the conduct of the most delicate of international operations under klieg lights is well within the grasp of the average man. That this constitutes yet another destructive assault on our intelligence community is realised by a smaller number.

But through it all there is one constant factor... the unshakeable faith of the people in you, the greatest President in our history.

It has been an immeasurable privilege to know you, over the years, even before the days of the steering committee of the Citizens for the Republic. I speak for many in saying that there is no sacrifice whatever that I would not make to be of help to you who are giving so totally to our Country. My personal gratitude to you is unbounded and there are few moments in the day when you are not in my mind and prayers. I am speaking as an American citizen who like so many others loves her Country more than anything else in life.

The confidence of the people of the United States in you, in your ability to govern wisely against any handicaps, to maintain your courage and your buoyancy, remains unchanged.

With heartfelt best wishes I am sincerely

Connie

Connie Armitage Antonsen

448356

End
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466662
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December 1, 1986

Dear Kate and Brooks:

Thank you very much for the Thanksgiving basket and the wine. Your basket was the centerpiece on our dinner table for our family Thanksgiving.

Nancy and I tried to call you but there was no answer so we decided you must have spent the holiday elsewhere. You were more than kind, and we are deeply grateful for the gift and for your kind words.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Brooks Firestone
The Firestone Vineyard
Post Office Box 244
Los Olivos, California 93441

RR:KO:AVH:emu 12PMNA

Mr. & Mrs. Brooks Ferestone - P.O. Box 244
Los Olivos Calif. 93441

Dear Kate & Brooks Ferestone

Thank you very much for the Thanksgiving basket & the wine. Your basket was the center piece on our dinner table for our family Thanksgiving.

Nancy & I tried to call you but there was no answer so we decided you must have spent the holiday elsewhere. You were more than kind and we are deeply grateful for the gift & for your kind words.

Sincerely RR

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TO: Anne

FROM: KATHY OSBORNE

DATE: 12-1

Can you please
have typed. Thanks -



November 24, 1986

President and Mrs. Ronald W. Reagan
Rancho del Cielo
Solvang, California 93463

Dear Mr. President and Mrs. Reagan:

Kate and I continue to give thanks that you are our
President.

With our best wishes for a pleasant Thanksgiving
visit, we hope you will accept this Santa Ynez Valley
wine harvest.

Most sincerely,

Kate and Brooks Firestone

ABF/pt

End
case
File

466664
C0071

December 2, 1986

Dear Bill:

What the h--l are you doing wasting your time as our Ambassador in Kabul when you can write such glowing, eloquent prose? Why don't you devote yourself to writing? You very well might become a columnist and someday even write a book.

I shall treasure the essay you sent to me and I thank you. Love to Pat.

Sincerely,

WON

Mr. William F. Buckley, Jr.
National Review
150 East 35th Street
New York, New York 10016

RR:AVH:pps

RR Dictation

NATIONAL REVIEW • 150 East 35th Street, New York, New York 1001
Tel. 679-733

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR.
Editor

November 21, 1986

Dear Mr. President:

Gee it was nice being with you for a little while on Tuesday. Obviously I'm sorry you weren't able to stay through the dinner. I managed to say a few things that would not offend you. I am as always struck dumb by your generosity to me, and will never forget the lengths you go to document our friendship. ...Not entirely unrequited, I hope. I enclose a copy of today's column, which I hope will cheer you up... I certainly envy the Ayatollah, having an autographed picture of himself in your office! (that was a nifty crack). My love to Nancy and tell her how sorry I am not to have seen her while she was in New York and I was wasting my time with you. Pat joins in affectionate regards to you both.

As ever,

Wm
Wm. F. Buckley Jr.

The Hon. Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

466663
C0071

December 2, 1986

Dear Dolores:

It was good to hear from you to know how much you have come to love the West. I'm a midwesterner (Illinois) but I became a westerner after a short time and know how you feel. I guess the poet Robert W. Service said it when he wrote the line, "The land of gold held him as if in a spell."

I'm sorry campaigning doesn't provide time for visits but it was great to see you. If I didn't look like I recognized you, put it down to self-consciousness. I'm always aware that I'm facing the crowd and they'll wonder what I'm doing if I appear to be communicating with someone they can't see.

Thank you and Paul for all you did in the effort to get us a Senator. You have every right to be proud because I'm convinced you made the difference in your precinct.

You are right about the media in this Iran thing. I've told them the absolute truth and they just won't accept it. I think, however, we are moving on a couple of fronts that will put out the fire and break up the lynch mob.

Please thank Sabrina for me for her letter and tell her she is still in our prayers.

Sincerely,
RON

Mrs. Dolores M. Ballachino
586 Lake Huron Lane
Boulder City, Nevada 89005-1048

RR/mlc

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TO: Biff Henley

FROM: KATHY OSBORNE

DATE: 12-2-86

RR had this attached to a recent letter to Dolores (he hasn't signed yet). You should probably keep it in your handwriting files.

Thanks.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Hi - GREETINGS FROM NEVADA!
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT WE
HAVE BEEN IN NEVADA ONE WHOLE
YEAR ALREADY, BUT - THE CALENDAR
DOESN'T LIE!

FIRST OF ALL - I WANT TO
THANK YOU AND THE WHITE HOUSE
ADVANCE TEAM, BOTH IN RENO
AND LAS VEGAS, FOR MAKING IT
POSSIBLE FOR 'PAUL AND I
TO HAVE GOOD SEATS TO SEE YOU
SCOTT LANE IN RENO AND
WALT MCCAY IN VEGAS, WERE
SUPER. THANKS, AGAIN.

IN RENO, WHEN YOU WERE
CHECKING OUT THE CROWD - I
WAS IN THE FIRST ROW TO YOUR
RIGHT. I GAVE YOU THE THUMB-UP
SIGN - YOU ACKNOWLEDGED BY
WINKING AND NODDING AND GIVING
ME THE THUMB-UP SIGN, TOO.

T. Wm. F. Buckley Jr. 150 East 35th St. N.Y. N.Y.
10016

Dear Bill

What the h-e-l are you doing wasting your time as an Ambassador in Kabul when you can write ~~so~~ such glowing, eloquent prose? Why don't you devote yourself to writing? You ~~could~~ very well might become a columnist & someday even write a book.

I shall treasure the essay you sent to me and I thank you. Love to Pat.

Sincerely Ron

To

~~Mr. & Mrs. Paul~~ Mrs. Dolores M. Ballachin
586 Lake Huron Lane Boulder City Nev.
89005-1048

Dear Dolores

It was good to hear from you and to know how much you have come to love the West. I'm a mid-wester (Ill.) but I became a westerner after a short time and know how you feel. I guess the poet Robert W. Service said it when he wrote the line, "The land of gold held him as if in a spell."

I'm sorry campaigning doesn't provide time for ~~leisure~~ visits but it was good to see you. As I didn't look like I recognized you, put it down to self consciousness. I'm always aware that I'm facing the crowd & they'll wonder what I'm doing if I appear to be communicating with someone they can't see.

Thank you & Paul has also said in the past

What the h-l are you doing wasting your time as an Ambros. in K about when you can write ~~so~~ such glowing, eloquent prose? Why dont you devote yourself to writing? You ~~could~~ very well might become a columnist & someday even write a book.

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Thank you & Paul for all you did in the effort
(over)

to get us a Senator. You have every right to be proud because I'm convinced you made the difference in your present.

You are right about the media in this Iran thing. I've told them the absolute truth & they just won't accept it. I think however we are moving on a couple of fronts that will put out the fire and break up the lynch mob.

Please thank Salma for me ~~and~~ her for her letter & tell her she is still in our prayers.

Jimmy Ray

I HOPE YOU KNEW IT WAS ME!
WE FELT SO BAD THAT TIM
DIDN'T GET ELECTED, BUT IT
SEEMED TO US THAT HE JUST
COULDN'T GET OVER THAT
HURDLE OF "SWITCHING PARTIES".
MAYBE, IF HE HADN'T RUN FOR
NATIONAL OFFICE SO SOON
AFTER MAKING THE SWITCH,
HE MIGHT HAVE HAD A CHANCE.
THOSE OF US IN THE CAMPAIGN
WHO WALKED THE PRECINCTS,
GOING DOOR-TO-DOOR, MET UP
WITH MANY DISGRUNTLED
DEMOCRATS WHO CALLED HIM A
"TURNCOAT". PAUL AND I WALKED
OUR BUNS OFF FOR HIM. AND
WELL HAVE YOU KNOW, OUR
PRECINCT #3 WAS THE ONLY
PRECINCT IN BOULDER CITY
THAT CARRIED HIM! SO WE

WIMPY HARRY REID WITH
ING US IN THE SENATE. HE
CERTAINLY NO PAUL LAXALT.
WE WISH NOW PAUL HADN'T
RETIRED. OH, WELL!

SORRY YOU'RE CATCHING SUCH
FLAK OVER THE IRAN THING.
PAUL AND I WANT YOU TO
KNOW WE SUPPORT YOU IN
THIS. IF ONLY THE PRESS WOULD
HAVE EASED UP MAYBE THINGS
WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT.
BUT THEY GET LIKE MAD DOGS
READY TO MOVE IN FOR THE
KILLAR. I KNOW THAT'S
THEIR JOB, BUT SOMETIMES
THEY'RE A PAIN. RIGHT? I

KNOW YOU AGREE WITH ME,
YOU KNOW PEGGY SAY SISTER
OF HOSTAGE TERRY ANDERSON
IS FROM BATAVIA, N.Y. - NOT
FAR FROM WHERE WE USED
TO LIVE! WELL, SHE'S BEEN
RUNNING ALL OVER CREATION
TELLING THE WORLD YOU'RE NOT
DOING ANYTHING. THEN
WHEN YOU TRY TO DO SOME
THING - ZAP - THEY CRITICIZE
YOU FOR IT! BOY, I DON'T
KNOW - IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE
A SAINT! BUT, AS ALWAYS WE
SUPPORT YOUR DECISION. TELL
NANCY I KNOW HOW SHE FEELS.
I HATE TO SEE YOU CRITICIZED
TOO! I CAN'T STAND IT SO I
KNOW HOW NANCY FEELS. TELL
HER I UNDERSTAND WHOLLY -
HEARTILY.

I'm also enclosing a note
from our daughter-in-law,
SABRINA. SHE WAS THRILLED WITH
YOUR LETTER AS WAS CHERYL.
CHERYL WILL BE SENDING YOU
A NOTE ALSO VIA ME. SHE
HAS NOT BEEN FEELING WELL
OF LATE SO SHE'S NOT BEEN
IN THE MOOD TO WRITE BUT
AS SOON AS I RECEIVE IT
I'LL SEND IT ON TO YOU, OK?

MY MOTHER AND SISTER WERE
HERE FOR TWO WEEKS. THEY
JUST LOVED IT HERE. I'M
TRYING TO LURE MY MOM
OUT HERE TO LIVE WITH
US. SHE'S 83 NOW AND S
ARTHRITIC - SHE NEEDS TO
GET OUT OF THAT CLIMATE

I know how much Paul & I feel here.

BUT, my mom still lives in
HER LITTLE HOUSE - WITH
ALL THE MEMORIES - SO, IT'S
NOT EASY TALKING TO HER
ABOUT IT. I DON'T LIKE HER
LIVING ALONE. DON'T WANT
HER TO "JEG" OUT THE HOUSE.
NEEDS A LOT OF MAINTENANCE
NOW. BUT, ULTIMATELY WE WANT
HER TO MAKE THE DECISION
TO SELL, IF SHE CAN.

WELL, TIME TO CLOSE. WRITE
SOON! BE SURE TO SEND OUR
XMAS CARD TO THIS ADDRESS. SINCE
WE MOVED LAST YEAR, I'M AFRAID
WE WON'T GET IT, OTHERWISE.

Stay well! BE HAPPY! TAKE CARE
Cuz we care. LOVE YA'

P.S. PAUL SAYS HI AND
"HANG TOUGH!"

AS ALWAYS
YOUR PHILIP
DOLores

October 22, 1986

Dear President Reagan,

Thank you so much for your recent letter on my illness. It means so much to have such great support.

Your words of wisdom and prayers along with family support are a good base for the incredible strength needed to continue a fulfilling and useful life.

Your words will not only be remembered but will be shared with others facing the same kind of challenge.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Ballachino

Katey - did you notice their
new address? She wants us to
have it so she will get
their Christmas card o.k.

RR

Dolores M. Ballachino
526 Lake Huron Lane
Boulder City Nevada
89005-1048

End

1958
File

444546
p12003

December 3, 1986

Dear Bill:

Just a heartfelt thank-you for your letter of November 26. You were more than kind to write as you did, and I'm proud and grateful for your generous words.

Sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN

The Honorable William J. Bennett
Secretary of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202

RR:AVH:pps

RR Dictation

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 1, 1986

MR. PRESIDENT,

Secretary William Bennett
asked that I transmit this
letter of support to you.
It reflects, I am sure, the
sentiment of the entire
Cabinet.



Alfred H. Kingon



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

November 26, 1986

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I, like you, have been deeply saddened by the turn of events over the past few days.

I was proud and happy for this nation when, six years ago, you were first elected President; you have always been for me the image of what a leader should stand for, and what he should be. It is a great personal honor to serve as a member of your Cabinet.

It remains so today, and it will remain ever so. As a leader, as a boss, you will always hold my highest esteem, my highest regard. More importantly, I believe that through thick and through thin, you will always hold the hearts and the confidence of the American people. They're with you; I'm with you. Brighter days are ahead.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bill", is written over the typed name.

William J. Bennett

466670
60071

December 3, 1986

Dear Jack:

Thanks for your kind letter and warm words. I'm truly grateful. Thanks, too, for sending the copy of your letter to Jerry. I know it will be helpful to him.

I keep telling myself the lynch mob will move on to other fields. They better, because I'm not about to let them tighten the rope around my neck. I think I've taken some steps that should speed the process -- asking for an independent counsel etc. Actually, there is no case and no laws were broken or even bent. They just don't want to believe I've told them the "whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Thanks again for your letter and your faith.
Love to Betty.

Sincerely,

RON

Mr. Jaquelin H. Hume
Suite 1000
550 Kearny Street
San Francisco, California 94108

RR:AVH:pps

RR Dictation

JAQUELIN H. HUME
550 KEARNY STREET, SUITE 1000
SAN FRANCISCO 94108

December 1, 1986

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In six short years you have done so much to address successfully America's major problems which your media critics always said were insoluble. Listening to the media, one would think that our country is rapidly going to the dogs under inept leadership when nothing could be further from the truth.

It is time that the voices be heard of the millions across our country who admire and trust you and are tremendously grateful for all you have accomplished as our leader. Citizens for America is undertaking an all-out effort to put the present brouhaha in perspective. You will find attached my letter to Jerry Carmen about this program.

Kind regards.

Sincerely yours,



J. H. Hume

JHH:s

Enclosure

JAQUELIN H. HUME
550 KEARNY STREET, SUITE 1000
SAN FRANCISCO 94108

November 26, 1986

Ambassador Gerald P. Carmen
Chairman
Citizens for America
214 Massachusetts Ave., NE
Suite #320
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Jerry:

The current problems faced by the Administration must be put in perspective by comparison with the accomplishments of the Administration during the last six years. During this time:

1. The worldwide position of the United States has improved to a point where we are generally recognized as the effective and responsible leader of the free world. All of us can again be proud to be American citizens.
2. Russia has been brought to the bargaining table and is finally discussing seriously major reductions in armaments.
3. Our country is working intensely on defending ourselves from nuclear missiles.
4. Our armed forces have been greatly strengthened in the quality of personnel, the quality and quantity of equipment, and the quality of leadership.
5. The recent reorganization of the military command and supply systems seem certain to give the country a much more effective defense force.
6. Inflation, which was 12½% per year when Reagan took office, has been reduced to less than 1% at present.

Ambassador Gerald P. Carmen
November 26, 1986
Page two

7. The top marginal tax rate for individuals has been lowered from 70% to between 28% and 33%. The corporate rate has been reduced to 34%. A large portion of the tax avoidance loopholes have been eliminated from the Tax Code.
8. The prime rate has been brought down from 20% to where the cost of money is no longer a controlling factor in business or personal plans for the future.

Our country is much stronger, healthier and more effective in domestic and foreign affairs than it was six years ago. In view of the vastly greater importance of the progress we have made under President Reagan's leadership, we must not let the crescendo of media and political talk about the current problem cause us to lose our perspective. The current imbroglio becomes a petty affair when compared to the accomplishments of the Reagan administration.

Kind regards.

Sincerely yours,



J. H. Hume

JHH:s

~~To Send Don H. Hume - Dept. of Justice~~

A note to Lee. Wm. J. Bennett

Dear Bill

Just a heartfelt thank you for your letter of Nov. 26. You were more than kind to write as you did and I'm proud & grateful for your generous words.

Sincerely Ron

To Mr. Jacquelin H. Hume 550 Kearny St. Suite 1000
S. F. Calif. 94108

Dear Jack

Thanks for your kind letter & warm words I'm truly grateful. Thanks too for sending the copy of your letter to Jerry. I know it will be helpful to him.

I keep telling myself the lynch mob will move on to other fields. They better because I'm not about to let them tighten the rope around my neck. I think I've taken some steps that should speed the ~~the process~~ process - asking for an independent prosecutor etc. Actually there is no case & no laws were broken or even bent. They just don't want to believe I've told them the "whole truth & nothing but the truth."

Thanks again for your letter & your faith.
Love to Betty.

Sincerely Ron

To Mrs. Helen Sawton 610 Center - Dixon Ill.

Dear Helen

61021

Thank you for your Thanksgiving Greeting

letter of Nov. 26. You were more than kind
to write as you did and I'm proud & grateful
for your generous words.

Sincerely Ron

To Mr. Jacquelin H. Hume 550 Kearny St. Suite 1000
S. F. Calif. 94108

Dear Jack

Thanks for your kind letter & warm
words I'm truly grateful. Thanks too for
sending the copy of your letter to Jerry. I know
it will be helpful to him.

I keep telling myself the lynch mob will
move on to other fields. They better because
I'm not about to let them tighten the rope around
my neck. I think I've taken some steps that
should speed the ~~the process~~ process - asking for
an independent prosecutor etc. Actually there is
no case & no laws were broken or even bent. They
just don't want to believe I've told them the "whole
truth & nothing but the truth."

Thanks again for your letter & your faith.
Love to Betty.

Sincerely Ron

To Mrs. Helen Sawton 610 Center - Dixon Ill.
Dear Helen 61021

Thank you for your Thanksgiving Greeting
& your good wishes. Thanks too for your
(over)

prayers, Nancy & I are both grateful.

The worst thing about this press uproar is that it prevented the remaining hostages from being released. Well we'll just keep trying.

Again our heart-felt thanks and we hope your Thanksgiving was a happy one.

Sincerely Dutch.

466669
00071

December 3, 1986

Dear Helen:

Thank you for your Thanksgiving greeting and your good wishes. Thanks, too, for your prayers, Nancy and I are both grateful.

The worst thing about this press uproar is that it prevented the remaining hostages from being released. Well, we'll just keep trying.

Again, our heartfelt thanks, and we hope your Thanksgiving was a happy one.

Sincerely,

DUTCH

Mrs. Helen Lawton
610 Center
Dixon, Illinois 61021

RR:AVH:pps

RR Dictation

THE PRAYING HANDS

The "Praying Hands" are much, much more
than just a work of art,
They are the soul's creation of a deeply thankful heart.
They are a priceless masterpiece
that love alone could paint,
And they reveal the selflessness of an unheralded saint.
These hands, so scarred and toilworn, tell the story of a man
Who sacrificed his talent in accordance with God's plan—
For in God's plan are many things man cannot understand,
But we must trust God's judgment
and be guided by His hand.
Sometimes He asks us to give up our dreams of happiness,
Sometimes we must forego our hopes of fortune and success—
But any sacrifice on earth, made in the dear Lord's name,
Assures the giver of a place in heaven's hall of fame.
And who can say with certainty
where the greatest talent lies
Or who will be the greatest
in our heavenly Father's eyes!

Helen Steiner Rice

Dear Dutch & Nancy:
Just a few lines to wish
you both a Happy Thanksgiving.
My thoughts are with
you at this trying time
& pray that everything

Mrs. Helen Lawton
610 Center
Dixon Ill. 61021

At Thanksgiving
and all year through,
may God be very close to you...
May He answer every prayer
and keep you in His
loving care.

Happy Thanksgiving
will work out for you &
our country the way you
are hoping it will be &
praying for these problems
to be solved, so the rest of
the hostages will soon be
home.
God bless you both.
Your friend, Helen Lawton

The Praying Hands

BY
HELEN STEINER RICE



The verse featured in this greeting card is drawn from the works of Helen Steiner Rice, known throughout the world for her Inspirational writings.

A stylized, cursive signature of Helen Steiner Rice, written in dark ink.



74720 00626

End
case
File