

WHAT REALLY MATTERS

by Faith Hunter

Well, this last paper of the year has extra significance to me because, barring a return for upgrading or a second degree, this is the last column "Faith Hunter" will write for the *Panther Prints*. And so, since the title of my column is "What Really Matters," I feel obligated to leave you with things that, in my opinion, really DO matter.

I have recently debated, with various others, the relative importance, or lack thereof, of time spent at UPEI. There is a spectrum of opinions, ranging from those who think it has been the most important influence in their adult lives, to those who really feel it has done almost nothing for them. Personally, I know my time here has changed me in many ways, and I believe that what I've achieved here is important.

I came to UPEI as a nervous freshman; I thought making it at UPEI would be impossible. During frosh week, a fellow frosh told me that in order to survive, I would need to develop a "tough skin." I took that to mean that I had to become Miss Toughie overnight, but I didn't have to do anything at all. The change was not something I had to work on; it was a process which would naturally unfold over the next four years.

Between term papers, lab reports, and oral presentations (which I dreaded; I am quite shy, believe it or not), I developed that tough skin. I realize now that UPEI did not get the best of me -- it fostered and improved the best in me. **YOUR TIME HERE IS IMPORTANT!** If you put in an effort, you will learn many things, just as I have. Not just facts and theories, but qualities and traits that will serve you indefinitely.

What UPEI Has Taught Me

1. I learned to set goals and achieve them, to believe in myself and my abilities. I couldn't decide between 2 separate majors, so I became a double-major with a minor! Sure, it was a lot of work -- but I did it!

2. I know how to use "formal academic language", how to speak and write in ways people respond to and respect. I still break the rules, but when I do, it's a choice, not a mistake!

3. I know the difference between

surviving and thriving at UPEI. (What you put into your years here is directly related to what you get out of them.)

4. I became very independent. No one has been on my back to get things done or find things out. Everything I've done I've done because I decided to do it. Self-confidence soars under such conditions, and one cannot help but gain a sense of pride.

5. I developed that "tough skin." I practically used to faint at the thought of oral presentations. I still get nervous, but I know that I CAN do them. And unlike the old me, who would take whatever was dished out to her by professors, I now speak up when I see infringements of my (or others') rights.

Take Care & Dream Big

Even socially, I have evolved. I constantly introduce people within the English Lounge, something I cannot imagine doing just a few years ago.

6. Professors often say that the value of a university degree is not the knowledge gained but the expansion of thinking skills. I used to think "So what?, I need a job," but I now know, in spite of still needing a job, what an important statement that is. I weigh all the available options when faced with decisions, and I try to see things from all possible perspectives. (After all the Corruption Quiz commotion, however, I think we could all use an extra lesson in tolerance.) My critical and analytical habits come from studying literature, but they allow me to understand much more than books: people and situations, religions and lifestyles. The world is a richer place now that I recognize its diverseness.

7. I have explored my REAL beliefs and morals. Through such courses such as Ethics (Philosophy) and Controversial Issues (Psychology), I

have discovered what I truly feel strongly about. I am tolerant of views that I disagree with (most of time), but I have discovered my own sense of right and wrong, one which will probably last me a lifetime.

8. I have learned patience. Circles around the parking lots alone have taught me this, but computers (oh, I also learned to use computers!) have certainly helped by systematically showing me every single thing that could possibly test my composure!

9. I know that there is no big gap between US (students) and THEM (professors). I used to feel inferior to professors, thinking they were so "above" me, but I now see them as

people rather than status figures. They may have more formal schooling than we do, but they get frustrated, inspired, tired, sick and even in the Christmas spirit just as we do. There is nothing wrong with us just because we don't "feel" academic or scholarly. Sometimes they don't either -- and, in both cases, that's just fine.

10. Finally, I learned the joys and sorrows of writing for the UPEI newspaper, one which often tries so hard and yet is given so little credit. On the surface, this column has given me a chance to write (something I love), to express -- under the safety of a pseudonym -- my views on anything I felt like addressing, and it gave me one more thing to get done every week. However, it has also given me something I didn't expect: a motto.

This brings me to the next thing that matters, one I believe in and which has true meaning to me. I began writing this column because I was myself searching for faith (faith-hunting). And as regular readers know, I sign-off each

time with my motto, "Take Care & Dream Big." It started as a nice way to end my rambling, but it gained significance to me which rises far beyond the pages of the *X-Press* or the *Panther Prints*.

The "Take Care" part is what we all need to do. A professor of mine expressed earlier today her feelings regarding Respect Day. She thought it was degrading that we had to be reminded to respect each other. Yet look at the world: We kill each other, fight wars everyday, sue our neighbours, abuse our land and children, compete for jobs and money instead of cooperating, and watch sadly (yet inactively) as third world countries -- not to mention our own -- slowly deteriorate. We are certainly not respecting each other. As for ourselves, we students demand perfection in everything and consider ourselves lazy failures if we take even a few unproductive moments to smell the roses -- no lack of respect there, eh? Yes, folks, Take Care. Take care of yourselves and of each other, because (as Dolly Parton says in Straight Talk) "If you don't toot your own horn, who will?"

Well, this is the end of the end of Faith Hunter (try to contain yourselves, or at least use Kleenex instead of your sleeve). I will leave you with two small information bits. First, I decided that, to really stand by my convictions just once in my columning career, I ought to reveal myself: My real name -- or so my parents tell me -- is Janette Callbeck. Some of you may know me from the English Lounge where I hang my hat (and stash my Shakespeare book). Second, since I have always tried to make my column a mixture of true insight and bland amusement, I will leave you with something (odd) to think about. Heads up, folks, here is your last bit of wisdom from 'ol Faith Hunter:

Y iz it that speling has 2 b so perfekt? I think whe shud b abul to rit thengs xactle as whe fel tha shud b spelt. After al, what wud b tha problum whith that?

And so, for the last time, Take Care & Dream Big

(And by the way, bless every last one of ya!)