

WHAT REALLY MATTERS

by Faith Hunter

Yes, I know, I know -- I missed AGAIN. I'm sorry, but you have to understand that I lead a very busy life. Each day, I constantly have people to see, things to do, food to eat and schoolwork to throw in the garbage (uh, I mean...). Anyway, the truth be known, I simply missed the deadline -- period. No alien abductions this time, just a common case of Student Syndrome (aka procrastination). But the wait is over; I'm back this week with more inane scrutiny from my endless supply of meaningless thoughts and observations. Alleluia!

Since the paper is currently under fire (more than usual, I mean), I decided that I would not bring up too many controversial issues this week or try to take a stand on anything which might offend people (say, on whether Jane ought to have resigned, which I think is ludicrous. . . uh, forget I wrote that). So my benign topic for this week is papers. Yes, we all have them, and I know the last thing you want is for me to remind you that you have more papers left to do than weeks left to do them in. But I think it's important to get a few things straight. Follow my advice and paper-writing will be easier, if not downright entertaining and enjoyable (okay, "entertaining" is going a little far). Get your pen and pencil ready, ladies and gents, you're the next contestant -- oops, wrong channel -- you're about to get five tips to surviving the dread P.C. (Paper Crunch):

Paper Survival Tips

1. Try to avoid last-minute papers. By the time deadline is the same day as TODAY, you ought to be done of the paper. Point: Start early, at least 3 days beforehand. (Ideally, you should start a whole week in advance, but we students know that time management is impossible without time!)

2. Don't B.S. your way through your paper unless absolutely necessary (i.e. you haven't touched the material). Although some of you are expert BSers, often

getting better marks than us legitimate hardworking schmucks, most of us are just not very good at it. And, unfortunately for us, most professors are fairly good at spotting s---. Do yourself a favour and do the work; you just may surprise yourself.

3. Keep it simple. Students (myself included) are confronted every term with a professor who wants conciseness and 2000 words in the same paper. (Is it just me, or does this seem like a contradiction to you?) Part of our job as students is to use words which people never use in conversation, to fill in blank space with meaningless jargon and pointless examples and quotations, and to deny our very existence by not using the pronoun "I." So what I mean by "Keep it simple" is NOT "make it shorter" (I wish!). Instead, I mean "Don't bite off more than you can chew." Pick a topic that is challenging yet comprehensible, not one that is so complex that Philosophy, Science and Psychology combined cannot attempt to answer it.


4. Do Research. It pains me to write this because, even as a senior, I cannot find pleasure in research. However, although I still think it is overrated, I do realize that research serves a purpose (i.e. it backs up what you write or it is so against what you think that gives you something to write about). So get with action: do it, do it, do it.

5. The most important thing of all -- pick a topic you are interested in -- always. If you cannot find something that you love (or at least like), then pick something you hate. Pick something you despise. If you pick something you feel neutral about, you will find that you have very little to say. (And the worst kind of essay is one that has no purpose.) If you pick something you feel strongly about, positively or negatively, your natural passion and fire will come through in your writing.

So good luck with it all; let me know how you make out (with the papers, you guys -- get your mind out of the gutter!).

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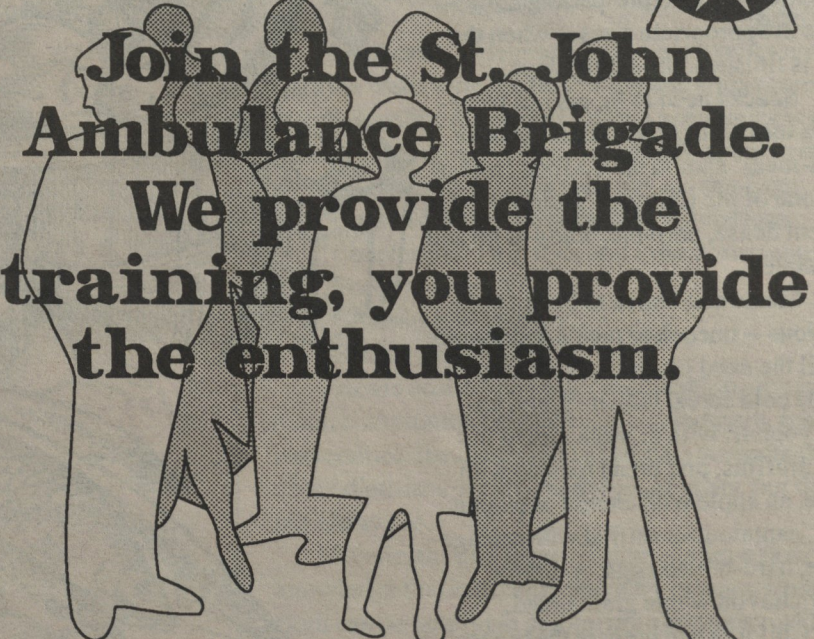
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