

EDITORIALS

On MLK Day:
Immutable declarations

Barely one year ago, this student body rallied with a vigilance and impetus epitomizing all that the Davidson community stands for.

Students from varied and diverse backgrounds united with faculty members, administrators, and the local community to issue a decisive rebuke against the type of insular hatred embodied in those two stinging words adorning the infamous flyer last autumn.

Their efforts were momentous, and their immediate legacy nearly epic—Charlotte news crews swarmed to small-town Davidson to headline the story of our decision to honor Martin Luther King's birth. But one year after our first ever Martin Luther King observation, an unfortunate calendar orientation threatened to undermine the fledgling tradition.

Admittedly, the conflict was unavoidable—the nationally-celebrated Martin Luther King holiday happened to fall on the first day of the spring semester (as established by the faculty executive committee years in advance). Nonetheless, this year's calendar threatened to turn Martin Luther King Day into just another day tacked on to the winter break.

But the students, faculty, administrators, and community leaders behind these vigorous efforts refused to let that happen.

Thanks to their efforts, MLK Day 2000 was a "day on," not a day off. Over 50 Davidson students served 200 community children at King Day For Kids a week ago Monday. And that afternoon, a seminar series offered fascinating opportunities to learn about the Civil Rights Movement and continuing civil rights issues. Finally, Dr. Marian Wright Edelman, of the National Children's Defense Fund and this year's Reynolds Lecturer, addressed the community in a jam-packed Love Auditorium.

To the organizers behind MLK Day 2000: We at *The Davidsonian* would like to offer our utmost commendations on behalf of a grateful community. You honored a heroic movement with vitality and community-consciousness upholding the greatest of Davidson traditions.

To the students who returned to campus for these festivities: The immutable declaration against divisive hatred offered by your presence will echo throughout this campus for months to come.

To the faculty executive committee: We urge you to champion this cause by making Martin Luther King Day a cornerstone around which to plan future academic calendars. The observance is an integral part of our ongoing efforts to heal the wounds caused by centuries of hate. Just as importantly, though, it is an opportunity for students to embrace some of the core values of this institution: it is an opportunity to lead, an opportunity to learn, and an opportunity to serve.

On Self-selection Night:
"How close?"

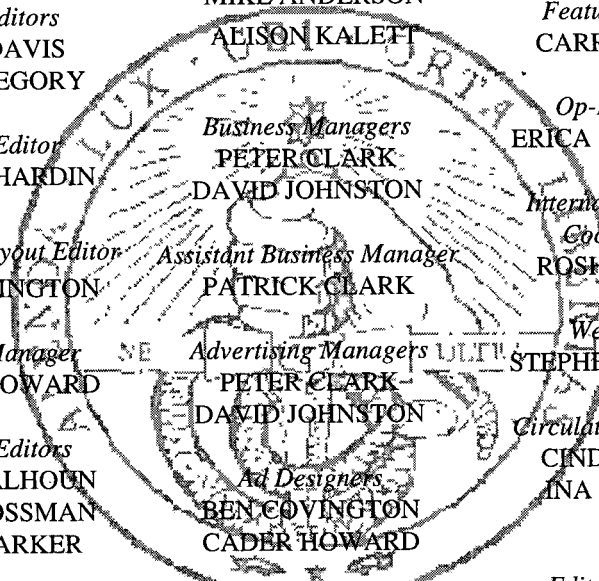
Friday night's self-selection festivities marked, for most people, the highlight of Patterson Court life at Davidson, as upperclassmen and -women joined their new members in a frenzied celebration. Clearly, there was cause for such celebration. For many students, at Davidson and across the nation, a social affiliation is an integral, defining component of the college experience.

And for the overwhelming margin of Davidson students, the late-night revelry was an enjoyable experience. But for some others, it was darn near tragic. Two students were hospitalized that night, according to Residence Life sources. "Any time a student goes to the hospital because of overconsumption," said Dean of Students Tom Shandley, "that's frightening and it's something to worry about." And those close calls left some wondering, "Just how close did we come? How close did we come to adding Davidson to the long list of colleges that have recently lost students to binge drinking?" An estimated 50 college students each year will plummet from jolly inebriation into untimely death, adding their names to the likes of Scott Krueger at M.I.T. and Leslie Anne Baltz at the University of Virginia. We can wait until one of our own makes national news, and then mourn about how "We never could have expected this..." Or we can take some responsibility for ourselves and our friends and respect the fact that alcohol is a pastime with potential for tragedy.

With just a little caution we can maintain the popular tradition of self-selection night. If we fail to exercise that discernment, we could easily become the next campus to learn that when binge drinking of alcohol is involved there's a fine line between revelry and sorrow.

The Davidsonian

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OPINIONS

Grace from the Grande

Exposure, vulnerability and desire. These three nouns describe the two wild experiences I had the first two weeks of January: traveling for nine days along the Rio Grande by canoe and re-entering "civilized society." I am both deeply grateful and frustrated by the wildness I encountered through those experiences.

Exposure: As we completed our 30 hour drive from Davidson to Big Bend National Park, we finally got far enough away from the light pollution of large cities to see stars that we had forgotten existed. The passage in Genesis, when God is talking to Abram about his descendants numbering as many as the stars, made sense to me. The temperature dove to a crisp 14 degrees Fahrenheit, and we were warned not to leave toothpaste in our tents as the smell entices javelinas. We hiked 12 miles in the Chisos mountains, created by long-extinct volcanoes, and fervently searched for unique bird species. We approached the rim of the mountains looking out into what appears superficially as vast desolation. A smog hung reluctantly to the mountains in the vista — a visitor from a coal plant in Mexico.

We got on the river to begin our desert odyssey. The river was low. Large U.S. cities, ranchers and farmers drain the water before it has the opportunity to travel on the last leg of its return to the sea. Greeting us at the put-in was an abandoned, U.S. owned Union Carbide plant in Mexico. That was the last sign of human construction for the next week as we journeyed to return to a place that many in our generation have never been: a place of hard, physical labor, as well as submission to and respect for nature's power.

The days were filled with paddling down the river despite the frequent up-river wind, avoiding being pulled into the river's eddies, collectively preparing food, and sitting around a campfire with our heads heavenward. We waited for celestial signs and were occasionally rewarded with a shooting star, always grateful for the earth shine of the moon, moon shadows and the challenge of retrieving the names of various constellations. Conscious of our inherited tradition of naming particular collections of stars, we humbly pondered the diversity of humanity when we recognized other cultures' identification of the same distant, perplexing, awesome spots of light. We set up camp and took it down — perpetual creation and destruction, incessant motion... just like the river with its tracks observable in the canyon walls, just like the mountain sides with rock slides and stone atrophied by the desire of the river to push through creating a new path.

When we saw the glimmering sun light off a stop sign near the river, we knew our return to "normality" was immanent. The take-out road was arduous — 22 miles of roughly hewn road complete with jack rabbits, the size of medium size dogs, that would scamper across the pathway. The sign that graced a fork in the road stated that "All trespassers would be shot on site." Better watch out, we thought, though we had paid the fee for using the rancher's road. The drive back to Davidson went quickly. Not much had changed it seemed — still the predictable truckers competing with our van and canoe filled trailer, omni-present Golden Arches in the distance, gas stations, radio stations — it all seemed the same, in a way.

Upon my re-entry, I noticed the lack of stars in the sky and their replacements with radio and cell phone towers, fluorescent street lamps, and planes' lights. We tried to identify the military planes that soared far less gracefully than the white-tailed hawk and pre-mature bald eagles we noted. These testaments to humanity's creativity and will soared nonetheless. At the same time, we used our binoculars to spot birds from I-20 at 70 miles per hour. Not quite the same experience as

when paddling at about 4 miles per hour but still fun. I noticed a change in my *site* as we drove along.

Desire: I had a desire to know what type of bird captivated my mind for a few passing seconds. I wanted to know what types of trees created the blur in my peripheral vision; I wanted to hold on to the sunset I saw in the rearview mirror. My desire for the knowledge of names was not in order to subdue those creatures that danced through my limited perceptions. Rather, it was in order to gain familiarity with those creatures. What are you? How do we, as users of a finite language, attempt to describe you? Like in the second creation story in Genesis when God places Adam and Eve in the garden for the purpose of maintaining it — to have familiarity with other beings, human, animal and plants, is a method of increasing awareness and appreciation.

In the desert, my desires were simple and perhaps more basic. I desired to get through the day with as few cacti spines planted in my epidermis as possible. I desired physical challenge on the white water; I desired relationship, familiarity and knowledge of other humans in the group; I wanted to know where the hot springs were in which I could soak my dirty body and find relatively clean water; part of me wanted to know where the river was going around the bend and how long the river would remain viable.

Vulnerability: Along with desire comes vulnerability. In the Rio Grande, we experienced vulnerability on the most basic levels: a flash flood could come and wipe out our campsite, a rattlesnake could be in the reeds we waddled through, exposure to the temperature differential, the risk of infection from the polluted Rio Grande water, boulders tumbling from the mountain side, and cacti; living prickly reminders that we had visited their habitat. This second wilderness in which we struggle to survive and so much of which humans have constructed I am also struck by our vulnerability.

I struggle to turn off the omni-present voices telling me to desire perfection through possessing the latest you-name-it: hairstyle, book, computer program, experience, etc. The vultures of culture, as the Indigo Girls sing, squawk that the good life can be bought with money or intelligence or connections. I yearn for invulnerability as I am reminded that the commoditization of life is tragic and denies the reality of being. As this is my final semester at Davidson, I am filled with desires and hopes for the future.

What can one make of the wilderness experiences — the wilderness of the outside, the wilderness of our lives and relationships? The trip to the Rio Grande affirmed my creaturehood. I lie on a predators' food chain, though I successfully shield myself from the predators of nature but undoubtedly succumb more than one should to the predators of culture. I left the Rio with different eyes; this change of sight (albeit small) is justly described as grace. I leave humbled by the complexity and diversity of creation as I experience it — on an arduous path, never sure of what tomorrow holds and trying (often futilely) to be prepared. I recognize the false dualism of human civilization and nature; we are creatures, part of nature, though we are frequently blind to the reality of our creaturehood. I run on Grey Road and view the oaks and pines, the cleared fields with goats, horses, chickens, and cows and know that I am immersed in nature and nature immerses me.

Just before we took out our canoes, I remarked joshingly that we would return to our human state after getting off the river and cleaning up. Another trip member remarked: "Funny, I feel most human when I am out here."

Joslyn Ogden '00

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