

Opinion

Royko explained

A few times in the last few weeks people have poked their heads in *The Collegian's* door to say: "Hey, I really like that new Royko guy. Is he a professor here or something?"

No, he is not a prof, but he is a staff member. Well, kind of.

Mike Royko is a syndicated columnist from Chicago and he is also the best newspaper columnist in America according to The last three years of the Washington Journalism Review Readers' poll. He is also the best columnist according to the Editorial staff of *The Collegian* and that's why we run him.

We also feel that most Behrend students no longer subscribe to large daily papers and perhaps do not have access to prominent opinions on national issues.

Royko is an odd man with a rich history. He is tough, cynical, and always knowledgeable in his observations about people.

Royko is not afraid to write about any issue of importance from Abortion, to Eastern Europe to bad driving in Chicago. Royko points out the small points of universal events and the universal points in everyday events.

Along with his many awards and achievements, Royko is a Pulitzer Prize winner. He served in the Korean War, has been a reporter/columnist since that time and has written five books.

We hope that you enjoy the column and we invite your response to Royko and his views.

Rob Prindle - Op/Ed Editor

Letter to the Editor Response to Dr. George's Response

Dear Editor:

Chris Spanos, who seems to be a serious student and a good writer, would benefit greatly from studying the masterly rhetoric -- especially of style and argument -- of Professor George's letter in the last issue of *The Collegian*.

I am not talking about the issues, as nearly all agree that students would benefit from a broader and more rigorous liberal education. Certainly, Ms. Spanos does. The only disagreement seems to lie in the methods for achieving it.

George's letter is beautifully calculated to cut off opinion dissenting from the establishment view, even as she calls, ostensibly, for more debate on the battlefield of ideas that is supposed to be a university. Here's how.

The style has all the

condescending sweetness of a candybar laced with arsenic and presented smilingly to a toddler on Halloween. Even toddlers, once poisoned, will not visit that house again.

The argument must be viewed with a similar skepticism, for its method is precisely that of the brilliant attorney who gains acquittal for the client, a rapist, by persuading the jury and the victim that, by objecting to a violation of her rights, the victim actually encouraged it. The victim, unless she is very brave, will be silent next time.

With fans like Professor George, Ms. Spanos should be wary lest the spirit of free inquiry move her yet again.

--Chester L. Wolford
Associate Professor of
Business and English

Mike Royko

Why be a writer? Think of your feet

by Mike Royko

The letter began with a question: "Do you recall an event from your childhood that first inspired you to write?"

The question was posed by a worthy organization called Child's Play Touring Theater. It's a professional theater company promoting writing literacy among children.

To raise funds, they're asking writers: "Will you please take a few minutes to help the cause of literacy by sharing your own memory with us?" They plan to hold an auction and sell the writers' responses.

I'd like to help their cause. But I have a conflict.

On my wall there is a quotation from Samuel Johnson that I try to live by. It says: "No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money."

So if I write something free for this cause, I will be a blockhead.

On the other hand, I'd like to help them out. The solution is to answer their question in my column. That way, they will have their answer, and I'll be paid.

To answer their question: Yes, I recall several events in my childhood and young manhood that inspired me to become a writer.

When I was a child, my father was a milkman. Most of his customers lived in three-flats, so he would grab a couple of metal trays, load them with bottles, and run up the back steps. During the summer, when school was out, I went along as his helper. Because I was only 7, he had me handle light first-floor deliveries.

Watching my father dashing up those steps at 5 a.m., sweat pouring down his face, I learned two things: 1. Being a milkman was hard work. 2. I didn't want to be a milkman.

A few years later, when I was about 12, I became my grandfather's helper. He was an independent house painter.

So I spent another vacation going with my grandfather on jobs, helping him with the dropcloths, ladders, putting on masking tape and doing some painting myself.

This was before the days of rollers and paint that could be washed off brushes with water. Painters prized their brushes like the fine tools they were. They had to be thoroughly cleaned with chemicals.

Working with my grandfather, I learned several things. Painting walls wasn't bad, although it could be tedious. Doing woodwork and floors was murder on the knees. Ceilings got paint in your face and a crick in your neck.

I also discovered that painters drank a lot. My grandfather and his cronies said that was because fumes from the paint were hazardous but shots and beers were an effective antidote. However, one day my grandfather had too much antidote and fell off a scaffold and broke his leg. So I decided that I didn't want to be a house painter. Besides, I was a sly scamp and knew that you didn't have to paint ceilings to drink antidotes.

After that, I had other jobs setting bowling pins, working on a landscaping crew, in a greasy machine shop, a lamp factory and pushing carts around a department store. I learned one thing from these jobs. They made my flat feet hurt.

So I decided that if I was going to find my life's work, it would have to be something that wouldn't make me run up and down steps, get paint in my face, or give me aching feet.

Then, while still a young man, I read a magazine article about Ernest Hemingway, the



Mike Royko

great novelist. It described his typical workday.

He would arise, have a bit of breakfast and write until about noon. Then he and a pal or two would get in his cabin cruiser and spend the rest of the afternoon sipping tall cool ones and fishing.

Except on days when he didn't feel like fishing. He would write until noon and go sit at an outdoor cafe with his pals and sip tall cool ones.

This impressed me as a sensible way to earn a living, and that was when I began thinking about becoming a writer.

But I almost changed my mind. I later saw another article about Hemingway, and there was a picture of him in the act of writing. His typewriter was on the mantel and he typed while standing. According to the article, he always stood while he wrote.

While that wasn't as grueling as running up three flights with six quarts of milk and two pounds of butter, I knew that standing over a typewriter all morning wouldn't do my fallen arches any good.

So I gave up thoughts of becoming a writer and set a new career goal. I would become a disc jockey. I knew that they sat while jockeying their discs. And one of my teachers told me I had a natural gift for that sort of work. Actually, she didn't say I should become a disc jockey. But she mentioned that I often babbled like an idiot, so it amounted to the same thing.

Fortunately, I read still another article about Hemingway. And that one said that he wrote while standing only because he had hemorrhoids and they hurt more when he sat.

That clinched it, and I set out to become a writer. And while I haven't achieved Hemingway's success, the job has never given me aching feet.

On the other hand, I can modestly say that I've been compared with Hemingway. Well, sort of. Readers sometimes tell me that I'm a real pain in the whatchamacallit.

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