MICHAEL LANE, ONE OF THE PRIESTS FROM MY PARISH AT HOME, ONCE GAVE A HOMILY ON THE WEDDING FEAST AT CANA OF GALILEE IN WHICH HE SAID THAT THE CELEBRATIONAL ATMOSPHERE OF THAT FEAST WAS AN INSEPARABLE PART OF A PRIEST'S MINISTRY. TOO OFTEN, HE SAID, A PRIEST'S LIFE AND WORK ARE CHARACTERIZED AS UTTERLY SOLEMN, SERIOUS, AND SEVERE. THE TRUTH, ACCORDING TO FATHER LANE, IS THAT A PRIEST, WHEN HE REFLECTS ON HIS GREAT PRIVILEGE OF TEACHING THE MOST WONDERFUL, LIFE-GIVING WORDS EVER SPOKEN OR WRITTEN, CANNOT HELP BUT BE DOMINATED BY AN ENTHUSIASM WHICH WELLS UP IN HIM TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT IT SPILLS OVER INTO THOSE WITH WHOM HE SHARES HIS MESSAGE, AND THOSE PEOPLE ALSO COME TO SHARE IN THE HONOR AND JOY WHICH ARE THE PRIEST'S CONSTANT COMPANIONS.

THIS "SPILLING OVER" IS SOMETHING LIKE WHAT HAPPENS TO STUDENTS WHEN THEY COME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS. IT BECOMES MOST APPARENT WHEN WE GO BACK HOME FOR CHRISTMAS AND TEND TO SEE OUR OLD FRIENDS FROM HIGH SCHOOL. ALTHOUGH REUNION WITH FRIENDS ALWAYS ENJOYED, IT GRADUALLY BECOMES APPARENT THAT OUR SCHOOL MAY BEGIN TO CHANGE US IN A WAY IN WHICH THEIR SCHOOLS HAVE NOT AFFECTED THEM. FOR ONE THING, OUR FRIENDS TEND TO WANT TO PLAY IOWA COLLEGE, PREFER TO TALK ABOUT OLD TIMES. WE, THOUGH, CANNOT KEEP ALL THAT WE HAVE LEARNED INSTEAD OF US, AND THE KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE GAINED HERE STILL OVER INTO MOST CONVERSATION ON EVERY SUBJECT.

A FOOTBALL GAME, FOR INSTANCE, IS NO LONGER JUST A FOOTBALL GAME. WHEN SOMEONE ASKS US WHAT HAPPENED IN THE LAST GAME, WE NO LONGER SAY, "SAID OF FOUR YARDS. STUPID DOWN AND SIX TO GO." NO, WE NOW SAY, "SPEED-FOOTED PAUL IT, AND THAT FATHER OF CITIES, JONES,
MET IN SINGLE COMBAT. THE FORMER RECEIVING A MORTAL BLOW. HE FELL TO THE GROUND AND HIS ARMOR CLATTERED ABOUT HIM. A DARK MIST COVERED BOTH EYES." OR IF WE ARE DEPRESSED AND A FRIEND ASKS US WHAT'S THE MATTER, WE DON'T SAY WE'RE DOWN IN THE DUMPS. NO. WE REPLY THAT IT'S A "DAMP, DRIZZLY NOVEMBER IN (OUR) SOUL." [Melville, Moby-Dick, ch. 1, "Loomings."

AT FIRST, OUR FRIENDS HUMOR US. BUT SOON WE REALIZE THAT THEY ARE BECOMING QUITE ANNOYED. IT MUST BE THAT WE LACK PRIESTLY HUMILITY AND WE PUT OUR FRIENDS ON THE DEFENSIVE WHEN WE EXHIBIT SUCH PRIDE IN OUR OWN EDUCATION. AND THEREBY CHALLENGE THE FAITH WHICH THEY HAVE IN THEIRS. OUR FRIENDS WRONGLY THINK THAT WE NOW CONSIDER OURSELVES SUPERIOR TO THEM. AND FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW, WE MUST APPEAR TO HAVE GROWN ARROGANT. MANY OF US NO LONGER WRITE AS MANY LETTERS AS WE DID FRESHMAN YEAR. WHEN WE TRY TO ABOLVE OURSELVES FROM GUILT, WE TEND TO THINK, "I DIDN'T CHANGE: EVERYBODY ELSE DID." ALTHOUGH WE TAKE COMFORT IN THIS SENTENCE, DEEP DOWN, SECRETLY, SOMEWHERE. WE KNOW IT IS NOT TRUE. EX-UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS PRESIDENT DONALD COWAN UNDERSTOOD THIS. OF US, HE SAID,

THEY WERE NOT BORN DIFFERENT; SOMEWHERE ALONG THEY HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED. [Donald Cowan, U.D. Cent. Bulletin 1979-80, p. 8]

THIS TRANSFORMATION MIGHT BE CALLED A REBIRTH IN KNOWLEDGE.

IN AN AWARENESS OF OUR DEEPEST ROOTS IN THE WESTERN TRADITION.

WE OFTEN THINK OF A REBIRTH AS THE SENSE OF A RENAISSANCE. A RECOVERY OF THAT WHICH IS NOBLEST IN MAN. THE BEAUTY AND GLOW OF THIS RECOVERY ARE SO REMARKABLE THAT IT CAN ONLY BE COMPARED TO THE ENTRY INTO THE WORLD OF A NEW HUMAN LIFE. BUT, WHEN WE ARE TOLD BY OUR OLDEST FRIENDS: "ENOUGH OF DANTÉ AND NEWTON. WE DON'T CARE WHAT THEY'RE TEACHING YOU DOWN THERE," THEN WE REALIZE THAT WE ARE THE AGENT AS WELL AS THE PRODUCT OF OUR OWN HISTORY, AND THAT THIS REBIRTH CANNOT BE HAD WITHOUT THE SUFFERING OF MANY YEARS.
ALL AT ONCE, WE SEEM TO HAVE BECOME HEIRS TO AN INNOCENT RESPONSIBILITY. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO WONDER IF THE TASK MIGHT NOT BE TOO GREAT FOR US. ON THE FIRST DAY OF PHILOSOPHY OF BEING CLASS THREE YEARS AGO, EX-UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS PROFESSOR MARK JORDAN CAME INTO THE CLASSROOM, LOOKED AROUND AT THE STUDENTS, AND SAID,

YOU PEOPLE ARE RARELY TWENTY. IF THAT; I'M NOT EVEN THIRTY. WE'RE NOT NEARLY OLD ENOUGH TO BE HERE,

HE PAUSED.

BUT LET'S GIVE IT A SHOT ANYWAY.

NOT ONLY ARE WE NOT OLD ENOUGH TO BE HERE, BUT SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER JUST HOW WE ENDED UP HERE AT ALL. SOME CAME BECAUSE OF A FAMILY TRADITION. SOME ARE HERE BECAUSE U.D. IS CLOSE TO HOME, SOME BECAUSE IT'S FAR AWAY. THE BEST REASON I'VE EVER HEARD IS THAT U.D. HAS THE SHORTEST APPLICATION FORM. MOST OF US, THOUGH, HAVE BEEN LURED INTO PURSUING TRUTH BY VARYING AMOUNTS OF SCHOLARSHIP MONEY.

THE HAPPY ACCIDENTS WHICH BROUGHT US HERE MAKE IT SEEM THAT PROVIDENCE, RATHER THAN OUR OWN WILL, IS RESPONSIBLE. STILL, THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR ENDEAVOR MAKES US DOUBT OUR CAPACITY. IT WAS NOT WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION THAT ARISTOTLE CALLED PHILOSOPHY SOMETHING FOR WHICH,

THE YOUNG ARE NOT FIT TO BE STUDENTS... FOR THEY HAVE NO EXPERIENCE OF LIFE... AND MOREOVER THEY ARE LED BY THEIR FEELINGS.

{Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, bk I, chap. 11, 1095a}

THIS IS READILY SEEN NOT ONLY IN THE QUESTIONABLE REASONS WE HAI FOR COMING HERE, BUT ALSO IN THE FACTORS WHICH CAUSE MANY OF US TO DOUBT THE CHOICE WE HAVE MADE.
Despite strong opposition from many fronts, student support for our annual Groundhog Day festivities has never wavered. Nevertheless, some students wish for more than one bona-fide social event per year. Others of a more studious bent long for the day when U.D. gets its very own library. Still another group was shocked and outraged to arrive here and to learn that U.D. lacked the one indispensable aid to spiritual growth in college, namely, a football team.

All of these considerations seem to rush down upon us when our relatives leave us here alone for the first time freshman year. This gives rise to the first utterance of the question, "What am I doing here?" The summer before college, I remember thinking about how exciting Dallas was going to be. (Sic!) I was going to a school I had never seen in a region I had never visited. This excitement quickly turned to terror when I realized that it was much more apparent that I was stuck in the middle of nowhere than that I was about to begin an exciting adventure in the great American southwest. Nearly all of us who did not heed the urge to turn and run were doomed to ask ourselves the question "What am I doing here?" every two or three weeks for well over a year.

After Rome, fortunately, an answer very slowly begins to appear, and from then on, we only ask the question once or twice a semester. Nobody has a rightful claim to call himself a U.D. "er if he has not seriously considered transferring out of here at least once. For many of us, this seemed like a good idea on a number of occasions, and it is hard to remember even one time when the dust was allowed to settle on our suitcases for one full semester.
WITHOUT US TEARING IT OUT OF OUR CLOSET, THROWING RANDOM BELONGINGS INTO IT, AND VOWING TO LEAVE U.D. AND NEVER LOOK BACK. WE DO NOT DESERVE TO CLAIM TO HAVE MADE ANY PROGRESS TOWARDS THE UNIVERSITY'S PROFESSIONAL GOALS. UNLESS WE UNDERSTAND THE SACRIFICES ENTAILED IN THEIR ATTAINMENT. THE ATMOSPHERE OF A SMALL SCHOOL MAY SEEM ESSENTIAL TO THE PURSUIT OF LIBERAL EDUCATION, BUT SOME CONDITIONS HERE SEEM INCORPORATE WITH OUR CHRISTIAN ORIENTATION. WE DO NOT REALIZE THE Destructiveness OF The Gossip WHICH HAS BECOME SO PREVALENT ON OUR CAMPUS. HOPEFULLY, THOSE WHO REMAIN BEHIND US WILL LEARN FROM THE WORDS OF VIRGIL,

RUMOUR GOES, NIMBLE AS QUICKSILVER AMONG EVS.

MONSTRUOUS, DEFORMED, TITANIC... WITH... AS MANY TONGUES AND BUZZING MOUTHS AS EYES... SHE NEVER TURNS HER EYE-LIDS DOWN TO SLEEP... BRINGING GREAT CITIES PEAR.

HARPING ON LIES AND SLANDER EVENHANDEDLY WITH THE TRUTH.

[Ven. 11, 11, 112-30]

OTHERS HERE, CONFIDENT IN THEIR PURSUIT OF TRUTH, BECOME EQUALLY CONFIDENT THAT THEY HAVE FOUND IT SIX WEEKS AFTER THEY ARRIVE. THEY CLOSE THEIR MINDS TO NEW IDEAS AND BECOME BASER TO CRITICIZE AND CONDEMN. ONCE OPEN MINDS COLLAPSE IN ON THEMSELVES UNTIL THEIR SCOPE IS SO MINUTE THAT IT CAN ONLY FOCUS ON THE SPECS IN THE EYES OF THEIR FELLOW STUDENTS. ALL THE WHILE IGNORING THE PLANKS IN THEIR OWN EYES.

GIVEN THESE DIFFICULTIES, ONE MUST BE SYMPATHETIC TO THOSE WHO TRANSFER AWAY. IF SOME ARE ABLE TO FIND OTHER ENVIRONMENTS MORE COLLECTIVE TO THE PURSUIT OF THE GOALS WE RECOGNIZE, THEY, LONG THAL, SOME OF US, MIGHT FINALLY DESERVE THE NAME OF U.D. ERS.
HAPPILY, ALL OF US HAVE FOUND NO BETTER PLACE THAN THIS TO PURSUE OUR EDUCATION. STILL, THE QUESTIONS REMAIN. "HAS OUR TIME BEEN WELL SPENT? WHAT ARE THE FRUITS OF OUR EDUCATION?" IT MAY BE WELL THAT FEW OF OUR PARENTS ARE HERE TODAY, FOR IF THEY HEARD THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR EDUCATION, WE MIGHT VERY WELL BE DISOWNED BY THEM WHEN WE, LIKE Socrates, BEGAN TO TAKE COMFORT IN BEING ABLE TO SAY THAT, AFTER FOUR YEARS HERE, THAT WHICH WE KNOW IS THAT WE KNOW NOTHING. THIS IS HARDLY THE KIND OF STATEMENT TO ASSURE PARENTS THAT THEIR TUITION MONEY HAS BEEN A WORTHY INVESTMENT. SO PERHAPS IT IS BEST THAT NEXT SUNDAY'S WORDS BE LEFT TO THE POLITICIANS.

SOMEONE WAS ONCE ASKED WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE FINISHED WITH U.D., HE THOUGHT FOR A LITTLE WHILE, LOOKED UP, AND, DIPLOMA IN HAND, SAID,

YOU KNOW, I THINK NOW I'M FINALLY REALLY READY TO READ THE ILIAD AND THE CONFESSIONS.

LEST THE FEW PARENTS HERE-PRESENT RUSH OUT AND SUE OUR PROFESSORS FOR MALPRACTICE, LET THEM REST ASSURED THAT OUR EDUCATION ACTUALLY WILL CONFER PRACTICAL BENEFITS UPON US.

A GOOD FRIEND OF MINE IN THE SENIOR CLASS BELIEVES THAT DIPLOMAS FROM RENOWNED STATE INSTITUTIONS MIGHT BE COMPARED TO TICKETS FOR A BOAT RIDE. THEY OFFER THE SECURITY OF A DRY PLACE IN THE OCEAN OR POST GRADUATE LIFE. SINCE OUR SCHOOL DOES NOT YET POSSESS A HUGO, PROTECTIVE, WORLD RENOWNED NAME, WE LEAVE COLLEGE WITHOUT THE SECURITY THAT OTHERS HAVE. EVEN THOUGH WE ARE NOT GUARANTEED PLACES ON ANY OF THOSE BOATS, WE ARE NOT THE ONES AT THE DISADVANTAGE, FOR THOSE BOATS. THOUGH THEY OFFER SOME SORT OF SECURITY, WE AGREE. ALTHOUGH OUR DIPLOMAS OFFER NO IMPLIED GUARANTEES OF EMPLOYMENT, THEY ARE SYMBOLS OF OUR EDUCATION WHICH CAN BE HONORABLE.
TO A Rudder, by which all boats are steered. We are guaranteed no place on any boat, but we can be certain that there will be many more boats in need of being steered than there will be those of us with rudders.

Although this is a comforting and important consideration, it is still not our greatest reward. Former University of Dallas English professor Kent Emery once defended his strict demands to a freshman class by saying,

Believe it or not, some day when you're up in your high rise office trying to figure out how many jars of peanut butter your company makes every year, you'll look back longingly to your days here at the University of Dallas when your mind was concerned with the pursuits of wisdom, beauty and justice.

For those among us who have not already begun to long for U.D., let us look at the condition of the ocean which we are about to plunge into alone with our rudders.

When we look, we see that even those who hold the positions reserved for the best men have come under suspicion. The president's involvement in the Iran arms affair has led to his embarrassment and to the demoralization and mistrust of those over whom he has been chosen to rule. Even his most ardent supporters can, at best, only absolve him from guilt by admitting either his senility or his incompetence.

And what has happened to the men upon whom so many Americans rely to preach the word of God? "Christian minister" is turning to mean little more than a subset of millionaires, indeed.
DIVERTED FUNDS AND POWER STRUGGLES HAVE BECOME THE HALLMARKS OF THOSE WHO REACH MILLIONS THROUGH OUR MOST POWERFUL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

ALL OF THESE MEN, HOWEVER, ARE OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS THAN OUR OWN, AND WHAT WOULD A VALEDICTORY BE WITHOUT A FIRM CONFIDENCE IN OUR GENERATION'S ABILITY TO CORRECT THE WRONGS OF THE PREVIOUS ONE? LET'S CONSIDER THE GENERATION OF WHICH WE ARE MEMBERS.

IN THE PAST WEEKS, THE ACTIONS OF YOUNG, WELL-TRAINED AMERICANS IN OUR AGE GROUP HAVE BECOME WORLD FAMOUS. WHY? BECAUSE THESE, OUR ALLEGED PEERS, HAVE ENDANGERED THE DEFENSE OF OVER TWO HUNDRED MILLION OF THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS IN EXCHANGE FOR THE GRATIFICATION OF THEIR OWN SELFish AND DESTRUCTIVE PASSIONS. THESE YOUNG MEN, MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS, HAVE, IN EXCHANGE FOR SEX, DIVULGED DEFENSE SECRETS. THERE ARE NOW PROPOSALS TO ALLOW ONLY MARRIED MARINES OVER THE AGE OF THIRTY TO PROTECT OUR EMBASSIES. THE WISDOM OF THIS PLAN IS WELCOME, BUT THE NECESSITY OF IT IS DISGRACEFUL. BOTH TO OUR COUNTRY AND TO OUR GENERATION.

OUR REBIRTH IN EDUCATION IS, ABOVE ALL ELSE, A TRANSFORMATION TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF VIRTUE. IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT OUR GENERATION MAY NOT BE ABLE TO BE TRUSTED NOT TO COMMIT TREASON, AND IN LIGHT OF OUR INABILITY TO FIND EXEMPLARY CONDUCT IN THOSE WHO SHOULD BE OUR BEST MEN, THE EXTENT TO WHICH OUR EDUCATION IS SUCCESSFUL, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE BECOME DISPOSED TO VIRTUOUS ACTION, TO THAT EXTENT, ARE WE ATTEND TO BECOME VERY, VERY ALONE IN THIS WORLD. INSOFAR AS WE ARE REBORN, IT APPEARS, WE ARE ORPHANS. THAT IN US WHICH FORMERLY MIGHT HAVE ACTED THE ASSERTION THAT YOUNG AMERICANS ARE INCAPABLE OF THE RESPONSIBILITY
NOT TO COMMIT TREASON--THAT PART OF US VANISHES WHEN WE ARE REBORN AND WHEN WE RECOGNIZE THAT SUCH AN ASSERTION IS APPALLING.

FEW OF US WILL HAVE THE PRIVILEGE TO PROVE OUR VIRTUE IN THE WAY THAT THESE THREE YOUNG MARINES HAD--A CHANCE WHICH THEY SQUANDED--BUT ALL OF US MUST PROVE TO OURSELVES, EVERY DAY, IN THE SMALLEST TESTS THAT OUR EDUCATION HAS TRULY TRANSFORMED US.

SOMEONE RECENTLY ASKED ME,

DID YOU EVER THINK OF GOING TO GRAD SCHOOL AND MAKING SOMETHING OF YOURSELF, INSTEAD OF GOING TO LAW SCHOOL AND MAKING MONEY?

LAST WEEKEND, A SENIOR CLASSMATE ASKED ME IF I WAS GOING TO "GO THE CORPORATE LAW ROUTE" AND FORGOT ABOUT THE TRUTHS OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY WHICH I HAVE LEARNED HERE AT U.D. I CAN ONLY ANSWER THAT I ASPIRE TO BECOME A GOOD LAWYER AND A GOOD MAN, A GOOD AMERICAN AND A GOOD CATHOLIC; AND I REST MY HOPES OF SUCCESS UTTERLY ON MY ABILITY TO RETAIN WHAT I HAVE LEARNED FROM THE PRIESTS AND PROFESSORS WHO HAVE SERVED ME HERE.

DANGER WILL BE FOUND, NOT IN CHALLENGES TO OUR PRINCIPLES, BUT IN THE REMOTE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY WILL NOT BE CHALLENGED. AND THAT WE MAY BE RELIEVED OF THE NEED TO REASSERT THEM CONSTANTLY.

ONE OF MY ROOMMATES GRADUATED FROM U.D. LAST YEAR, AND HE NOW ATTENDS A GRADUATE SCHOOL NOTORIOUS FOR THE "RELAXED" VIEWS OF ITS STUDENTS. THIS THREATENING ENVIRONMENT HAS DEMANDED THAT HE CONSTANTLY REAFFIRM THE PRINCIPLES OF HIS LIBERAL EDUCATION. AS I SPEAK, HE IS HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY, BUT I DO NOT DOUBT THAT, IN REALITY, HE IS EVEN CLOSER TO U.D. NOW, THAN HE WAS ONE YEAR AGO AT HIS SENIOR CONVOCATION.
A DIFFERENT FRIEND OF MINE—ONE FROM HOME—IS A PHILOSOPHY MAJOR AT A CATHOLIC COLLEGE MUCH BETTER KNOWN THAN U.D. I WAS THEREFORE SHOCKED AND DISAPPOINTED WHEN, DURING CHRISTMAS BREAK LAST YEAR, HE MADE THE CLAIM THAT WE CANNOT REALLY KNOW OR JUDGE ANYTHING OR ANYONE. IT IS TRUE THAT WE CANNOT JUDGE MANKIND'S SOULS, BUT IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY THAT WE REALIZE THAT WE CAN AND MUST JUDGE THEIR ACTIONS. AS CHRISTIANS, WE MUST REALIZE THAT GOD MAY VERY WELL ALREADY HAVE FORGIVEN THOSE MARINES WHO BETRAYED THEIR COUNTRY, BUT WE MUST ALSO REALIZE THAT GOD'S LAWS DEMAND THAT WE RECOGNIZE THEIR ACTIONS AS WRONG.

LIBERAL EDUCATION IS JUST WHAT IT CLAIMS TO BE: THE EDUCATION APPROPRIATE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE LIBERTY TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN ACTIONS. THE ONLY HOPE FOR LIBERAL EDUCATION, AND ALSO FOR MAN, IS IN MANKIND'S ABILITY TO JUDGE RIGHT FROM WRONG. THAT THERE ARE KNOWABLE LAWS OF MORALITY SEEMS SO CLEAR TO US NOW. IN TWO WEEKS, HOWEVER, WE WILL BE DISPERSED AND WE WILL NO LONGER BE A PHYSICAL PART OF A CONSENSUS WHICH RECOGNIZES MANKIND'S ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND UNCHANGING LAWS GOVERNING MANKIND'S PROPER ACTION. THIS, OUR DEAREST AND MOST FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE WILL BE QUESTIONED, DENIED AND RIDICULED. AND WE WILL BE HATED FOR OUR CLAIM TO POSSESS IT. THE GREAT REWARD OF OUR EDUCATION, IN THE END, IS THAT IT ENABLES US, IF WE CHOOSE, TO SAY ABOUT OUR LIVES TRUTHFULLY WHAT MR. LINCOLN SAID ABOUT HIS ADMINISTRATION. HE SAID,

I DESIRE TO SO CONDUCT THE AFFAIRS OF THIS ADMINISTRATION THAT IF, AT THE END, WHEN I COME TO LAY DOWN THE REINS OF POWER, I HAVE LOST EVERY OTHER FRIEND ON EARTH, I SHALL AT LEAST HAVE ONE FRIEND LEFT AND THAT FRIEND SHALL BE THE FUTURE OF AMERICA.
Shortly after commencement, we may find ourselves alone. But if physical aloneness is necessary to keep us in a society of good men, then God will make it bearable for us, and He will have prepared us for it through our education.