

COLLEGE GUILD

Fall 2014 Newsletter

*RESPECT
REDUCES
RECIDIVISM*

My Adage by Paulus P.

Here is a truth: Few realize the true extent of their strength before the instant life tests them. Weakness, however, doesn't harbor such mystery. We all know we can be as weak as we want to be.

Sage insight there. Simple. Succinct. Honest. I'm almost tempted to say that it's mine, since I wrote it down the instant it popped inside my head. But it's not, not really. That maxim entered my life via a question from College Guild's Creative Language course. Yet it still serves me well today, some eight years later, the same way College Guild does.

It is no secret that many of College Guild's volunteers admire our strength in facing the burden of prison, (and yes, one must be strong here to survive... to remain human). I could rail against the depravities, wanton abuse, horror and violence that I not only witness meted out to others, but suffer personally myself at times. I could illustrate the last ditch efforts survival has forced me to resort to when all attempts at reason and compromise failed. And I could point out the mistakes I made that led me to such desolate places: being friendly to yahoos who equate kindness with weakness; being articulate and using "big words" like compassion and understanding in casual conversation; or just committing the unpardonable crime of wearing a smile because even here one can enjoy a good day from time to time.

But how would that rewrite one nanosecond of the past? Nothing I could say would change this reality. Make no mistake about it: there is evil in the world and there will never be a shortage of eager hands willing to work it, simply for evil's sake. This is prison. Bad things happen here.

Make no mistake about this either: I drifted into College Guild's orbit because of prison. Yet you,

the College Guild volunteer, remain in my orbit simply because you care. There is a difference there – a stark one. It takes a special kind of commitment, a special strength to really make things better. That is rare and won only at great cost. You inspire and challenge me to reach higher, dig deeper, try harder. If it weren't for your courses, I probably never would have been offered a place in PEN Prison Writers' Mentorship Program, and never would have earned all A's in Ohio University's Long Distance Learning Program for Prisoners.

My most recent acquaintances through College Guild are Joan, Paula and Julie. Probably like many other CG students, I save all of my returned units in a manila envelope and pour over the comments my reviewers have scrawled over the pages. Often this is all the mail I receive. Sometimes I learn more about what my reviewers are trying to show me about my writing the second or third or fourth or fifth time around. I never realized there are so many nuances to writing. I never would have guessed that anyone, (besides perhaps my mother), would appreciate my stumbling attempts to express myself clearly, and genuinely want to hear what I have to say.

Since this is about honesty, sometimes the reviews I receive from my readers are so complimentary, I'm dubious about the validity of the advice. (I realize there will be a reckoning later for what I just wrote!) Seriously, if I wrote that well, these cell walls would be plastered with awards – Pulitzers, Nobels and Newberys. It would be impossible for me to glimpse even a trace of this roiling sea of pale gray cement I am set adrift upon that drowns the less vigilant so easily. Still I realize why you readers do this. Encourage first, then mold -- the hallmark of Great teachers devoted to august works.

I drifted into College Guild's orbit because of prison. Yet you, the College Guild volunteer, remain in my orbit simply because you care.

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continued from p.1

It goes without saying that College Guild's mission - *To stimulate in prisoners an interest in life-long learning by providing a selection of free, non-traditional correspondence courses* - changes the trajectory of lives behind these fences. Yet it remains you, the volunteer, the donor and all of the other untold Julies, Joans and Paulas who labor tirelessly and humbly in the trenches of good works that make College Guild's mission real to us. It is your commitment that shows us, even here in this darkness, we are not alone. It is your sacrifice that demonstrates to us that in all worthy efforts, there is more "do" than "say" in helping others. And at least for me, it is through your example that I have learned that the greatest gift I can offer anyone remains the most underrated: to simply share a moment of my time with someone who really needs it.

I'll close with a final truth, another one I learned through College Guild. You can always be as strong as you want to be.

NEW RESOURCE FOR PRISON FAMILIES

Just published, *The Unvarnished Truth about the Prison Family Journey* was co-authored by Carolyn Esparza, a College Guild volunteer. The book begins with that first life-altering phone call telling a family that their loved one has been arrested. The book discusses all that follows, including looking for an attorney, going to court, bail bonds, plea bargains, sentencing and much more. It's a valuable resource for anyone who wants to know how the criminal justice system works, and a sobering look at how much injustice prevails.

The section on communicating with a family member in prison discusses visits, phone calls and letters. Within that section is the following:*College Guild [is] an organization that provides non-credit life enriching curriculum to prisoners across the country. We are mentioned later in the book as having courses that are stimulating and enlightening and are completely free to the prisoner!*

STUDY GROUPS

Every week College Guild receives many letters from prisoners asking to enroll. Huayna A. is incarcerated in a maximum security prison in Virginia. His letter came with a different request: *I have put together a study group made up of a few members who are sincerely dedicated to the betterment and empowerment of ourselves as we struggle to take control of our lives while living in these atrocious conditions.* "King" was looking for study guides and resource materials. There are four members of the study group; King is the only one who has graduated from high school. They pick a subject, study it, discuss it, quiz each other and critique each others' papers. *Right now we are studying the philosopher Aristotle... we're writing about do we agree or disagree with Aristotle's idea that "things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites"?*

King had obtained an old course list from College Guild; one course he asked about was The History Scholar (U.S. history 1900-1950). This course was discontinued five years ago when its creator, Clem Biddle died. It was taught exclusively by Clem, and is College Guild's only course in a seminar-like format. Students did not move on to the next unit until Clem felt the questions had been thoroughly discussed. The History Scholar seemed a perfect resource for King's study group.

He is not the only prisoner to have the determination and initiative to gather other prisoners into groups dedicated to educating themselves. Given the lack of resources available to prisoners, this is something College Guild applauds. We can support these groups by providing course units for discussion or peer tutoring. Unfortunately, due to our long waiting list, we are not able to provide individualized feedback to study groups the way we do for our students. However, in addition to course units, we can, at least, provide encouragement.

Before he received The History Scholar-Unit 1, King's next letter arrived. The group had moved on to Plato's "Allegory of the Cave". Their study questions are worthy of those found in a college classroom! He also explained that a prison counselor is helping by providing copies of short sections of texts. These are delivered via inmates on the yard to those in other cell blocks, so King's study group is helping to inspire and educate other incarcerated Virginians!

CG's Newest Course

This summer, a University of Rochester student volunteered in a new area – curriculum development! Although we have had about 20 courses over the last year, some of our students have been with us for so long, they are beginning to run out of courses to take. College Guild is happy to announce we finally have a course in science, specifically Marine Biology. The course is made up of five units: Ocean Environments, Ocean Mammals, Fish, Sea Birds and Sharks.

⇨Reminder⇩

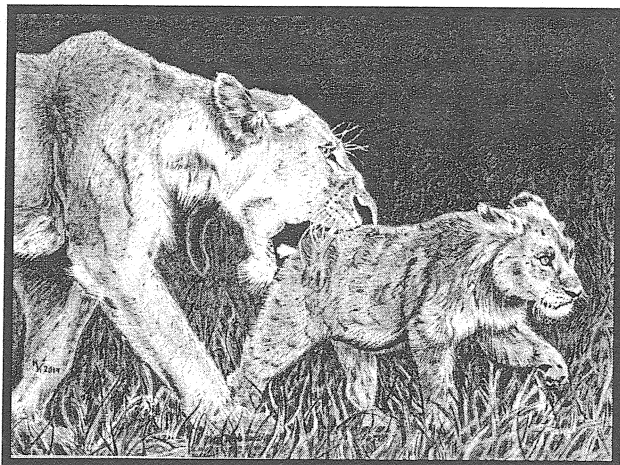
Amazon Smile is a simple and automatic way for you to support College Guild every time you shop—at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as amazon.com with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to College Guild.

Donations have been made in memory of the following:

June Snow	Clem Biddle
Susie Moran	Kathie Biddle
Fritz Kempner	Mollie Schmidt
Barbara Cady	Ann Malin

Donations have been made in honor of:

George & Ann Levinger



Chastising Love

Ken K.

Lil boy cool was always up to no good
Always ditching school to hang out
On the corner with the fellas slingin' dope,
and sippin' on 40's and puffin' on free.

Then one day a car zoomed by,

With four bald heads inside.

One stuck his baldness out the window and asked:
"Whatcha vatos lookin' at?"

16 slugs earned their wings that day.

Lil boy cool was unscathed
though Billy the kid had his wig split—

Losing his friend sent lil boy cool
into a tailspin

beginning with the end of going to school.

Ray R.

Tossed to the tempest's terrible tide,
In trepidation doth the seaman ride;
Desperately to the helm he clings—
Racing with Death on the ocean's wings.

Nicholas S.

BLACK AND WHITE

CHISELED LONG AND SQUARE;
DEVELOPED TO SOOTHE THE SOUL,
GENUINELY EACH ITS OWN,
BEETHOVEN'S AND BACH'S
FORMULATIONS WERE UPON
A PIANO'S SWEET IVORY KEYS.

WILLIAM A.

Many men, small cell
All with epic tales to tell
Of when they first fell

Samuel B.

In My Attic

I hide from dad when he drinks
And beats my mom until she faints
He beckons me with plans to taint
So, I hide, I hide, I hide

I hide from life so I can think
I have no friends for I am quaint
They are nazis, I am Anne Frank
So, I hide, I hide, I hide

I hide, I hide, I hide

Matthew J.

Current College Guild Courses

Art of the Masters

Biography

Captivities

Creative Language

Dogs

Drama Club 1 & 2

Exercise & Relaxation

Families

Gardening

Greek Mythology

Histories

Journalism Club

Logic & Puzzles

The Numbers Game

Philosophy

Poetry Club 1 & 2

Precision Drawing

Sampler

Short Story Club 1 & 2

Sports

Travel

▶ Now offering our newest course—Marine Biology ◀

Artist: Matt Matteo



Frontiers of Justice, Vol. 3: The Crime Zone ©2000

OUR MISSION

*To stimulate in prisoners
an interest in life long learning
by providing a selection of free,
non-traditional correspondence
courses.*

HELP US SURVIVE!

___ My donation of \$14 provides free dictionaries to two prisoners.

___ My donation of \$49 buys 100 first class stamps.

___ My donation of \$75 supports one prisoner for one year.

___ My additional donation of \$___ helps us to continue offering the respect that can change prisoners' lives.

___ I would like to become a "Sustaining Friend" with an annual contribution of \$_____.

contact us at collegeguild@gmail.com

___ Please send me more information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Many thanks on behalf of College Guild volunteers and student-prisoners for your generosity!

Your donation may be tax-deductible.

For more information go to www.collegeguild.org



College Guild can now accept donations via PayPal. Just go to our web page and choose the donate button.

