

From the desk of your faculty advisor, Joel Glasser --

Baltimore City College has long been known for its creatively different faculty. I once heard the great Otts Helm say to a faculty member that faculty creativity is the finest measure of what makes City the best high school in Baltimore. "We just have interesting people teaching our students." I thought it would be a good idea to describe some of these creative teachers of the class of '65.

GEORGE YOUNG was one of these teachers. As a coach he was the best, and as a teacher the entire faculty respected him. After he left City College to work for the N.Y. Giants, I used to call him and say, "George, I've got a play for you. It is only eleven laterals." I remember him answering, "Look, you can't afford this call, hang up and I'll call you back." Once when he called me back, he said he was drafting the greatest linebacker he'd ever seen: Lawrence Taylor, who starred for the Giants for ten years.

Kurt Schmoke credits George Young with changing his life. I taught Kurt in a year when he led City's football team to a victory over Poly. Kurt was quite an excellent student, but he was not at his best all of the time. One day I was encouraging him to work harder. He resisted, and I then said, "Look Kurt, you're better than you think you are." He was angry and went downstairs to the gym where he met George Young who asked him where he was applying to college. He told George that he was applying to Ohio State. George said, "You're not as good as you think you are." Kurt took this advice to heart and subsequently received an academic scholarship and played football for Yale.

Everybody loved **JERRY LEVIN**. He had a wonderful ethos, related to students very well, and was a great banjo and guitar picker. One semester, Jerry, Bob Moskowitz, and I were teaching at the Talmudical Academy. In those days, Jerry believed that literature was "an introduction to evil." (Fortunately, he no longer believes this.) One afternoon, I had a chance to play a trick on him, one which was quite successful. Now Jerry loved to gamble on the horses, and this particular day he asked me to teach his class "for a few minutes" so that he could go to the track. Jerry said, "I'll stick my fingers down my throat and throw up if you don't let me go." I believed him. I asked him what his class was going to do, and he said that they were assigned to read and to write questions about the story of Wamba, an Indian boy who had run away from home. I gave the students three questions to ask and stressed the importance of keeping a straight face when asking these questions. When Jerry returned and asked for their questions, I was listening from my classroom across the hall. I couldn't believe how well the students performed. The first student asked, "Is Wamba a picaresque character?" The second student followed up with, "How does Wamba compare to the philosophical brigands of Shaw's *Man and Superman*?" After listening to these questions, Jerry ran across the hall to my classroom and grabbed me by the shoulder saying, "Did you hear those questions? I am the greatest teacher in the world." He was so happy that I feared that this joke might do him some harm. When Jerry's excitement diminished, a third student delivered the final question: "Is this story an example of the introduction to evil?" Jerry's body deflated as he recognized what I had done. I did feel bad about it, but, good sport that he was, I knew that Jerry would take it as it was, just a joke.

And here's another "off campus" Jerry anecdote:

Jerry and I found ourselves five days away from being honorably discharged from the service. Jerry was a buck private. (One of his fellow soldiers was a young guy who was once a quarterback at City.) We were at Brook Army Medical Center, and we had very little to do. Unfortunately, my superior officer was a red-necked first sergeant. In order to work in the naval hospital, we were required to wear low quarter shoes. Jerry did not have them, and the first sergeant ordered him to buy them at the PX for two dollars. Jerry refused to do so, and I was ordered to give Jerry the worst assignment possible. So I assigned him to clean the sinks. At the end of the day, which Jerry spent in bed playing his guitar, the first sergeant screamed, "Who in the hell cleaned these sinks?" The sinks were terrible; I was faulted, and Jerry continued to play his guitar.

I'm not sure that Jerry knew the consequences of not following a superior's order. Not following an order could result in jail. The sergeant gave Jerry a choice: company punishment, which wouldn't be too serious, or court-martial that could result in imprisonment. Jerry asked the first sergeant which of the two options would be more trouble for the Army. The sergeant replied, "The court-martial." Jerry said, "Then I'll take the court-martial." The clerical staff went berserk and spent five days generating reams of court-martial documents. Five hours before the trial was to begin, Jerry had second thoughts and walked into the first sergeant's office and said, "I've changed my mind; I'll take the company punishment." The sergeant surveyed the room full of court-martial documents, picked up a stack of the papers, and threw them across the room. With less than twenty-four hours left until his discharge, the only punishment Jerry could get was to guard the phone from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. During this time he took a nap; then he walked out of the office at 6:00 a.m., a totally free man with his discharge papers in his pocket.

JOHN DESCH was an English teacher whose penetrating voice could be rivaled only by the penetrating smell of tobacco (his) in the first floor men's room near his classroom. One day a colleague passing John's room noticed that he was showing his students a film. On closer inspection, he realized it was a film on skiing and so he got John's attention and asked the obvious question: "Why are you showing a film on skiing?" Without missing a beat, John responded, "They were out of *Oedipus Rex*."

BILL EISNER was a French teacher when I was a student at City. I'll always remember him for a story that he told on himself. He told me that he was in France with his wife, and as they were returning to their hotel after a night at the opera, he saw a young American desperately trying to communicate with the desk clerk. Bill went up to the young American to see if he could be of help and successfully got the young man a room at the hotel. Afterwards, the young American noticed Bill's City College ring and asked his name. When Bill gave his name, the young man said, "You were my French teacher at City; boy, I learned a lot in your class!"

LEONARD WOOLF was my hero. He was the English coordinator—the best one around. I'll never forget what he did for Bob, Jerry, and me. Jerry was not doing some of his class assignments, and Leonard came to ask help from Bob and me. We told him that Jerry marched to his own drum and that students liked him and that to do anything to prevent him from going his own way would not help. Leonard thought for a moment and said, "I'll take your advice."

Another reason that I was so fond of Leonard Woolf is the following: I was teaching an early grammar class. Suddenly one of the weakest students in the class jumped up, his face red and full of excitement, and spurted out, "So that's what a compound sentence is." After that class, Leonard, who had been observing me, said "Joel, no matter how long you may teach, you'll never be more successful than you just were."

As I was putting these memories together, I occasionally asked others who had taught at City in the 60's if they had faculty or student related stories to tell.

One who responded was my good friend **BOB MOSKOWITZ**. Here in his own words is Bob's story of a student he will never forget:

I was a relatively new teacher, my third or fourth year at City. There was a student in my homeroom class, call him JB, who had my number. He wasn't vicious or mean, just mischievous. But to me he represented chaos, potential loss of control of the class. Almost every day, I made him stay in the hall during the homeroom period. A couple times I put him out of the room as soon as I walked in:

"JB. Hall!"

"I didn't do anything, Mr. Moskowitz!"

"You will! Hall!"

Time passed. JB graduated.

A number of years later, I'm on my lunch hour. As I walk past the main entrance, I hear yelling and a strange sound like somebody banging on the door. In the doorway is a kid I have never seen before. He has no shirt on and is, to the entertainment of the City students, screaming incoherently and slamming his hand on the door. There was no use talking to him.

Time for Moskowitz, the bartender. With unruly patrons, I use one of two techniques that always work: a hard kick in the shins and then the arm lock and thumb bend, or depending on the size of the patron, just the arm lock and thumb bend. In this case the arm lock/thumb bend seemed called for; he was not that big.

So, arm behind his back, I lifted him very high without doing permanent damage and bent his thumb down without breaking it. That technique has taken the starch out of some very nasty people. Instead of yelling in pain, he starts to run—while I'm holding him. Across the building we go and into the parking lot which is filled with students on

their lunch hour. I should have known from the sound that his hand made when he slammed it against the door that he was a lot stronger than he looked. I have a tiger by the tail. But not for long.

He breaks loose and moves towards me. The students have formed a circle and are yelling encouragement to the kid. "Kick his ass, kid. Kick the old bastard's ass!" (I assumed they were not cheering for me.) The kid pulls his arm back and gets set to throw a punch, but I beat him to it. I aim not at his chin but at a spot about 6 inches behind his chin (as a boxer friend had once advised me) and let loose. It's my best punch. Down he goes. "Great punch, Bob," I tell myself. "A one punch knock out. I'll be fucking famous."

Only it wasn't so great! The kid got up. Actually, he bounced up somewhat unconcerned and came for me again. I now go for my second best punch. Again, he's down and up and still ready to fight. My third punch stops him for a second but he is still standing.

At that moment I remember the prayer in time of danger. It was spoken first by Marc Antony when he saw the conspirators set upon Julius Caesar: "Feet, don't fail me now."

But suddenly, a figure comes out of the crowd and launches himself onto the kid's back. "I got him, Mr. Moskowitz!" It's JB. Together we throw him to the ground and with JB holding the kid's hands and me holding his feet, we carry him into school, down the hall, and drop him on the floor in the office of Vice-Principal Goldsmith, who informs me that we can call the police and press charges in which case I will have to appear in court or we can have security take him off the campus. "Call security," I say.

Then I see JB and without thinking I say to him: "You don't go to school here any more. Do you have a pass to be on school grounds? No! Off the grounds." And he left.

About three o'clock the next morning as I'm coming down from my adrenalin high, I realize what I have done.

Some years pass. I'm taking a graduate course at night at Morgan. I'm on the chow line when someone taps me on the shoulder. It's JB. He's back from a tour in Viet Nam and in the process of getting his degree. I thank him for saving my bacon and apologize for chasing him off the school grounds. He says he was two blocks away before he asked himself why I had ordered him off campus

Time passes. My son is in Pimlico Junior High (1973-1976). One day he comes home and tells me he has a new math teacher and the teacher knows me. It's JB.

Another teacher who responded with quite a few colorful anecdotes was art teacher **OLIN YODER**. Though Olin didn't make it to BCC until just after the class of '65 departed, his anecdotes, I think, will bring a smile to many of you. So without further ado, here is Professor Yoder in his own words:

Anecdote #1

In 1965 I was transferred from Eastern High School to City College. Eastern was all female and was much like a finishing school for girls. Chewing gum was a mortal sin and open toed sandals and culottes were forbidden.

I crossed Loch Raven and entered City. I was now in the castle of masculinity and testosterone. The young men had a respectful swagger and a self-assurance that I had never seen in a high school before. They could wear any footwear of their choice, and chewing gum was a brain enhancer. They didn't like culottes, but they could wear them if they so desired.

I was no longer a teacher, now I was addressed as **PROFESSOR**. The entire faculty was referred to with this exalted title. It didn't take long for me to see that this honorific was well deserved by the teaching staff.

In the second week of school, a young man entered my room and said, "Professor Yoder, I am from *The Collegian*, our school newspaper. Would you have time for me to interview you?"

I replied, "Certainly, it would be a pleasure. What type of information would you like?"

"I am interested in your background, unusual events you have experienced, and anything that you feel is important to your life."

He pulled out a pad and professionally began to ask questions. As I spoke, he began writing.

I discussed my Amish/Mennonite background and my rural upbringing in the mountains of Western Maryland. I explained my teaching history and I glorified my eight year football career. I did a self-promotion on my days at the Maryland Institute of Art and mentioned my painting prowess. At the completion of the interview, he shook my hand and thanked me for my candor and time.

Shortly thereafter, Bob Dale, one of our art instructors asked, "Olin, were you recently interviewed by a young man from *The Collegian*?"

"Yes," I replied.

“I thought so. A young man came into my room and asked if I knew you. I said that I had known you for some years.”

“Well, I was wondering,” he said, “do you know if Professor Yoder has ever had anything interesting or exciting happen to him?”

Anecdote #2

It was the middle of November and my first year at City College. The school day hadn't started and I was in my room awaiting my homeroom class. All at once from outside I heard shouting, bells ringing, and horns shrieking. The clamor continued, but it was now inside the building. Slowly the racket grew louder as it ascended to the third floor. I was alarmed and startled, wondering if this could be a riot.

Above the ruckus I began to distinguish words and phrases. The students were describing gross things that Poly boys ate and they used foul derogative adjectives about the tropical parrot. Some booed the Poly name and others sang “City Forever.”

The bell rang for school to begin as the boys entered the room. They took their seats, put down the noisemakers and class began. When the bell rang for dismissal, the bedlam began again. For five days before the annual Thanksgiving City-Poly football game, this spirited ritual continued. I had just experienced my first pre-game celebration.

Anecdote #3

I soon discovered that City College was saturated with excellent traditions. The school paper, *The Collegian*, came out every Friday. At the yearly Hall of Fame assembly, six distinguished graduates were installed in six areas of importance. School election campaigns were boisterous and held in the auditorium. Plays were performed in the same area. City is the third oldest continuing high school in America; thus tradition was abundant.

One tradition was that during school assemblies, the seniors received the front seats. The middle rows were for juniors and the back rows for sophomores.

On one occasion, **BILL FARLEY** brought his junior homeroom to a school music presentation. For some reason, a tenth grade class was seated in front of his class.

Bill stood up, looked at his boys and said, “Do you see what they have done to us? That group in front of us is in our seats. We will not take that!” They got up and walked back to their homeroom.

Anecdote #4

In the sixties the hippie movement was in vogue and the first hippie at City was Jonathan P. The older faculty asked me why I kept showing his art work in the foyer.

They didn't think I should display it because it was giving too much attention to a non-conformist. Jonathan had long hair, unconventional clothing, and a laid-back personality. He didn't seem to fit the mold of the City student. He was talented in the visual arts and music and one of my favorite students.

In sculpture class, Jonathan cast a large plastic rectangle in a good sized cardboard box. He wanted to sculpt a kneeling figure from it. I had a vacant room next to mine and I moved Jonathan into it. It would become his own studio and keep his constant chiseling and plaster chips out of the main room.

I would constantly check on his progress and critique what he was creating. One day I entered his room and there he sat with earphones on both ears, chisel in constant movement, and a cigarette in his mouth. He was startled when he saw me and stepped on the cigarette. He looked at me and said, "Well, I guess I'm in big trouble! I assume that I will be meeting the principal again?"

"No, Jonathan, I am not sending you to the office. I don't want them to know that I am simple enough to place a dumb ass like you alone in a room unsupervised."

Jonathan seemed surprised and swore, "Mr. Yoder, I promise never to smoke in here again."

"I think as smart as you are you could find a spot in this big castle that would be safe enough for you not to get caught!" He did.

Anecdote #5

NORMAN BURNETT was head of the Art Department. He was a dapper old timer with a grand mustache and a multitude of double-breasted suits. He painted portraits and Civil War generals. He was trained in the brush strokes of the old masters. He would cook a paint medium from linseed oil, wax, and only God knows what. The aroma from his concoction would linger for days.

He controlled the key to the art storage room and like a den mother he would dole out the supplies that you needed. The art staff could never get into the area without his presence. Much of the paper had dry rotted and tubes of paint had hardened. The brushes wilted and bottles of ink had hardened. Each year he would stack the new with the old. His attitude was that one should save materials for a rainy day. A good supply sergeant would never allow the troops to select their own ammunition.

City was crowded and put on a morning shift and one in the afternoon. Norman and I were on the early one. I went to the custodian and discovered that he also had a key to the magic supply room. When I needed materials, I would check Norman's parking space and, if it was empty, would borrow the janitor's key and re-supply my classroom needs. There was so much on the shelves that I knew Norman wouldn't miss what I pillaged.

One afternoon I checked Norman's parking space and it was empty. I was in the area collecting my needed supplies. I filled my pockets, put materials in a bag and with large items under my arms, left the room and started up the hall. To my shock and surprise, Norman came up the steps and fortunately turned right instead of left. I was near Bob Dale's room, and seeing that his door was open, I threw everything into his room. I saw the students startled by the supplies that rolled across their floor. Bob thought that manna from heaven had descended into his space. Meanwhile, Norman had gone into my room and when we met I was greatly relieved that he had not found me out.

Anecdote #6

LUTHER DITMAN, a math teacher, always taught with his doors open. **CAWOOD HADAWAY**, an art instructor, was around the corner from him. Cawood was born on the Eastern Shore in the old town of Betterton by the Chesapeake Bay.

He loved the country landscape and enjoyed the Bay. He knew every bird that existed in the area. He could mimic and create the songs and sounds of all the avian inhabitants. Cawood would peer up and down the hall and if it was empty he would warble the birdsong of his choice. It could be a Canadian goose, a mallard duck, or a crane. He would vary the calls and sometimes even imitated the croaking of frogs.

Hearing these sounds, Luther would appear confused and he would peer out his open door and try to locate these feathered singers. Cawood would do this a couple times a week, and Luther never did find out why he was the only Professor to be constantly serenaded by the chirping and hooting of the wild fowl of Maryland.

Anecdote #7

I opened the letter that came through the inter-school mail addressed to Mr. Olin Yoder, Art Instructor, City College and found that it was from a man I had never heard of. I immediately named him "Dr. Safety." It stated that he had visited my art room and it was a fire hazard.

Our Vice Principal, **DAVE KAUFMAN**, called me into his office. He had received a copy of the same letter that I had just opened. I assured him that I had read it.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

I said, "Dave, I teach printmaking. It could appear to be untidy because I have printing inks, rollers, and wiping rags on one table. The prints are hanging on stretched wires drying. Each year a couple of students and I go along the Chesapeake Bay collecting textured wood to create woodcuts. The wood is stacked in the corner with scrap lumber from building supply stores. When I do intaglio prints, I have trays of acid and jars of hard ground to do etching and dry pointing."

"Is it messy?" he asked.

My reply was “Yes.”

“Then don’t do it,” was his suggestion.

“I also do sculpture, and we use plaster and zanolite. We carve from wood and soapstone and it is placed in boxes under tables. The vices are always full of work underway. I have rolls of wire and an area for paper mache and wheat paste. There are plastic containers full of found materials that can be used in an assortment of ways.”

He repeated, “Is it messy?”

I had the same answer, “Yes.”

Again he said, “Then don’t do it.”

“Did Dr. Safety look at the finished prints and sculpture and say anything about the finished work of the students?”

“At this time we are only interested in the clutter and debris in the room!”

“Did he explain what the other dangers might be? Could it be the Bubonic plague or maybe venereal disease?” He didn’t laugh. “You know you are reducing me to crayons and finger painting?”

A week later I walked into the faculty lounge where a group of teachers and Mr. Kaufman were sitting. I questioned, “If I keep myself clean, may I come in and join you?” The faculty had heard about my letter and understood my attempt at humor.

Mr. Kaufman knew the meaning of my entrance.

“Yoder, you know one can live without art!”

I looked at Dave and agreed with him. “You are probably correct, but I have done some research and read about old civilizations. For example, take Egypt. Books discuss the pyramids, sculpture, hieroglyphs, and frescoed walls. The historians seem to think that their approach to the arts classifies them as highly advanced. I have analyzed their social system and the education program, and never have I seen the mention of the good Vice Principals of Cairo.”

The faculty roared with laughter, but Dave didn’t. The next time I saw him he said, “Yoder, I don’t think we should discuss your room again.”

I agreed.

Anecdote #8

One year Bob Moskowitz and I team-taught a humanities course and were showing the documentary *The Titan* about the life of Michelangelo. At one point, the film included some nude female sculptures. The boys whistled and hooted. Bob requested, “Mr. Yoder; stop the film.” I did and he continued. “Men, I’m sorry and please forgive me. Had I known that stone tits turned you on, I would have forewarned you that they were going to appear.”

And finally—from an unexpected but most welcome source—I received the following remembrance of Professor **CHARLES (CHARLIE) CHERUBIN** from his daughter, Jan Cherubin. Jan writes:

My father was an English teacher at City from 1953 until 1968, and also advisor to *The Collegian*. My father loved City and everything it represented—intellectual curiosity, high academic standards, diversity, fraternity. He was devoted to his students, particularly the editors of *The Collegian* who would lay out the paper on our dining room table. These were the sons he never had. Not everyone loved him. He came home with piles of confiscated water guns. He called everyone *boy*. “You, boy! Get over here.” He said he had to scare the kids, and believed in the adage, “if you don’t intimidate them, they’ll intimidate you.” He ate peanuts in the classroom because he wasn’t allowed to smoke, and threw the shells on the floor. One graduating class gave him a burlap sackful that he kept in his car. He’d go out to the driveway, open the trunk and load up his suit pockets. Of course he wore a suit, a white shirt, and a tie everyday. You either loved Mr. Cherubin or hated him, but he was devoted to his profession and brought it home with him in the best way. He’d go around the house shouting “The will, the will!” when he was teaching *Julius Caesar*.

The excellence of many of City’s teachers was brought home to me every week when Jerry Levin, Bob Moskowitz, John Desch, Harold Levin and others came to dinner on Friday nights. There were lively discussions, some arguments, and meantime, they’d help me cut my roast beef. My father was lucky. Few get to work for the common good in such a rarified atmosphere.

Well, that’s it, guys. I hope these memories stirred a few of your own. If they did, why not share them with your fellow Collegians—and, if you’re feeling ambitious, jot them down and send me a copy via Michael Glick.

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