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Letters to the Editor

Stephen R. Douglas

James I. Wisner

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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Dear Raymond,

I was very surprised to see this issue of *Conversations* devoted to reading. I am a sixty-four year old man who is a staff person at Creighton University. I was able to attend a liberal arts college in Indiana for two and one half years back in the sixties and I am ever grateful for that opportunity. But the subject of reading really hits close to my heart.

When I was a farm kid attending high school I remember my Dad yelling at me late into the evening to "put those damned books away and go to bed." He did not believe literature was ever worth reading. If it was not directly school related my Dad was down on it. I remember reading the *National Geographic Magazines* cover to cover many many times I was so starved for interesting print. This was in grade school. Not that my Dad was totally ignorant. He graduated from Perdue University in Ag Engineering. But he was not too taken with the idea of Liberal Arts.

In college I thought the Great Books course was manna from heaven. The Christianity And Culture course was endlessly fascinating. Later, philosophy and history moved me ever deeper into literature. When my low grade averages and deep financial debts forced me from school I felt I had lost a precious way of life. But I lucked out. I enlisted into the navy and after two years of electronics training in San Francisco I was assigned to the *U.S.S. Columbus CG-12*, a heavy guided missile cruiser. The beauty of this assignment was that this ship

would be going on two years of foreign travel to many European ports and the Mediterranean. It was a military version of a vacation cruise boat. But I was slow to realize what was to come.

While in San Francisco visiting the public library I happened upon a book, *The Tower and the Abyss* by Erich Kahler. He was fundamental in helping me come to a deep understanding of reading. He showed in so many ways that the 'Life of The Mind' was just as important if not more so than any kind of ordinary endeavor. His aim was to show how history and events were reflected in the arts and in literature and how it all ties together in the comprehending mind of a good student. I owe this great and humble man my deepest appreciation. He died in 1970 at Princeton University.

While at sea for two years I ordered hundreds of books to read in my spare time. I read up on historical sites that I would be visiting. The two year odyssey of travel was a capstone to my way of reading and understanding. When the military life came to an end, I returned home for a while. Moved around the country some and finally went to work for Frontier Airlines for the next eighteen years. I still read and traveled as best I could.

Now that I am older I have watched the cultural tenor of our country slowly degrade into a coarseness that reflects the low value placed on the Life of The Mind. When I first saw this issue of *Conversations* I immediately wished that you could repackage the issue in a way that any high school student would find interesting. You have something here in this issue

that could be the kernel to a new approach on reading that could allow a young person to find comfort and knowledge in the concept that almost anything worth knowing could be found in a good book. I know that is a stretch, but it could be worth the effort.

Just consider how lousy the intellectual environment is in many homes and schools today. I know a lady who is a school teacher and all the books in her house I can count on the fingers of one hand. Think of that! I am just put out with so many citizens that pass through our national life without the benefit of deep reading. There is something very wrong with this picture. I think our politics reflect this situation in so many ways. One lady I know has her sibling's lives programmed for almost every moment of their waking lives. Especially outside of school. Sports activities and movies and on and on. There is no room for pleasure reading. Without pleasure reading there is little comfort any kid will find in a book. It has to start somewhere.

Anyway, I have gone on long enough. I hope you find a way to keep this dialog going. Reading is so fundamental to all we hold dear. Good luck.

Sincerely yours,
Stephen R. Douglas

Katrina Correction

To the Editor:

Thank you for the corrections in the Fall issue of *Conversations* regarding the listing of Jesuit institutions that admitted students who were displaced because of Katrina last fall. Unfortunately, the number for the University of San Francisco is still incorrect. USF actually enrolled 110 total students from Loyola University New Orleans, Xavier, Dillard, Tulane and the University of New Orleans. Four of the 110 were graduate students and the rest were undergraduates.

It may be that the number 70 listed for the USF in the article is meant to represent only the students from Loyola University New Orleans who enrolled here. However that too is incorrect since we admitted 76 students from LUNO.

We at USF were pleased to be able to respond to the needs of these students and thus support the schools damaged by this tragic storm. I appreciate your effort to document the solidarity of the AJCU institutions regarding the impact of Katrina.

James L. Wiser
*Provost and Vice President for
Academic Affairs.*



Students on the campus of Seattle University.