In Case of Insomnia –

Nerds, Phreaks, Tools, Turkeys, and Other Fools

By Steven Kaufman

One of the more intriguing aspects of living at the Institute is getting to know the characters—or characterizationsof the various living groups.

As one wanders about the non-fly-covered halls of Technology (where the preppies used to call this god forsaken place more than thirty years ago), one hears all manner of new and wonderful insulting epithets. Nerds, toolies, turkeys, and tools are all restrictive to the Institute housing. The reason is unknown, possibly the Deeds’ Office maintains such a list of fresh meat (something like the non-existent grades kept by World War I era Jews, possibly they use FBI files) which permits them to screen out the cretins and the assholes.

So much of the gregarious process of the fraternities is a process of self-destruction. To outlaw the cretins and assholes get control, you don’t have a chance: they can find one of their kinds in a multitude of the turkeys (if geese come in a multitude of turkeys come in gaggles and quail come in coways (and five people in one intersection) then do what turkeys do (etc.).

Jocks are somewhat of an exception. While jocks come from everywhere, only a few jocks come from fraternities. For some reason, these types are everywhere, no one ever says you are cliche unless they are from a fraternity. (At this time, I could also make a statement about steward’s, but I won’t).

Besides the overall system labels, specific living groups receive their own handles. For instance, no one has heard of the “Nerd” since (in 1946). Although some of the straightforward people you would never want to know. It is the way that any self-respecting Harvard student that Redley is the honcho of the Thetas. Then, MacGregorites have acquired their titles and nicknames from the U of M teams after themselves (Turkeys).

Of course, these types are everywhere, but a dozen years ago it was a veritable Bonnie Larkin in his day room and night. He made his living by occupying only the lecture halls. His only companion is his electronic calculator (as the wonders of modern science read theslides rule to the happy (looking) grounds. And a very select few, those that plan to graduate after five years, have the title of honor Tool. Power Tool.

Just a better attempt to get myself off this hook on which I’ve impaled myself. I point out that I am not saying that all these fine people have the qualities that are so often attributed to them. It is merely an observation that most of the dorms off campus are called nerves, tools, turkeys, tools, or freaks (by other people, not me) and never cretins or assholes, and the opposite is true for fraternity members. This is only true as long as a discerning newspaper type, honest, no offense fella, felt free to say all I can always move to Swampscott.

The Wizard of ID

The action taken Sunday by President Ford in granting unconditional pardon to former President Nixon for his activities as President represents the first major blot on the so-far promising Ford Administration.

President Nixon, who resigned under Congressional pressure in time to escape becoming the second American president ever to be impeached, has released evidence that supports serious charges of obstruction of justice for his actions in the cover-up of the Watergate scandal. He was impeached by the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives with obstruction of justice, misuse of the powers of his office, and contempt of Congress in his impeachment inquiry—charges supported by more than 35 volumes of evidence.

Yet President Ford feels that to bring the former President to trial would challenge “the credibility of our free institutions . . . at home and abroad,” and would result in polarizing the American people in their opinions.

We propose the opposite. To fail to punish Mr. Nixon for his actions is to make a mockery of our system of national justice.

Most of Nixon’s former advisors have been convicted or plead guilty to crimes involved in the Watergate affair, many of whom will serve time in prison for their offenses. Is it fair to punish them, and not the former President, when evidence exists that shows Mr. Nixon was aware of, and participated in, their felonious actions?

As for polarizing the American people, what could be more divisive than to allow Mr. Nixon to escape without any punishment for the crimes which he committed?

Mr. Ford says that it would be impossible for the former President to receive a fair trial in the post Watergate era. Maybe so; but that is a matter for the courts to decide, not the President who reached his present position through the actions of the man he is pardoning.

President Ford has declared that bringing Mr. Nixon to trial would split an already divided country irreparably. Yet to ignore the crimes perpetrated under Mr. Nixon’s administration will do even more harm, further alienating the citizens of this country and driving their traditional faith in government—already dangerously low—down further.

Equally important, an American public which welcomed the Ford Administration, and its accompanying rhetoric of openness and candor, with open arms has been given reason to doubt Mr. Ford’s devotion to the attributes he has championed. Coupled with the President’s request to Congress for large sums to support the ex-President in the style to which he became accustomed while he was living richer at the public expense, one wonders what other sympathies Mr. Ford has with the discredited Nixon Administration.

And it is consistent for the President who insists draft evaders and deserters “must work their way back” with acts of contrition to pardon Mr. Nixon, who has expressed regret only for going more quickly to contain the Watergate affair.

The only action possible, now that Mr. Ford has precluded criminal prosecution through courts, is further Congressional investigation of the former President’s role in the Watergate scandal. We urge the MIT Community to act in support of such investigation, and to protest in every open way to them Mr. Ford’s pardon of the former President.

Simedia Nu to Epsilon Theta: why?

By the Members of Epsilon Theta Fraternity

The MIT living group Sigma Nu is changing its name to Epsilon Theta. This is occurring as a result of our present suspension from the national fraternity of Sigma Nu. The suspension was caused by disagreement arising over the role women play in a group affiliated with an all-male fraternity.

In the past six months, the roles of women with respect to the chapter, and the chapter with respect to the national fraternity, have been questioned by some members of the national fraternity. As a result of unfortunate publicity about the election of a woman as president of the living group, the High Council (the executive body of the national fraternity) suspended the charter of the MIT chapter, Epsilon Theta of Sigma Nu, pending clarification of these issues.

The publicity began with a human interest story in Tech Talk about the election of Carol McGuire ’75 as the commander of the living group. At Tech Talk’s suggestion, the article was released to the Associated Press, with the na"e assumption that the distinction between houses and chapter would be preserved. Careless editing reduced the article to a caption that said that McGuire was commander of the chapter.

This appeared in newspapers all over the country.

From the time that women were admitted into the living group, there have been two distinct groups: the chapter, Epsilon Theta of Sigma Nu, and the national organization, Sigma Nu. Having been separated, the male-initiated fraternity, and the "house," consisting of only male members, will be known as Sigma Nu.

It is not clear whether the group, which is currently known as Epsilon Theta, will continue to use this title. But whatever the name, the group, which has adopted the principles of Sigma Nu: love, truth, and honor, is free to continue to practice these principles.

Nonetheless, we are suspended, and that has certain implications to the members of Epsilon Theta.

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