

## GRADUATION DAY

It has been quite some time since last I wrote to this blog. It's not for want of things to say, but rather because my last two years as a B.U. student was hectic indeed. The higher you move up, the more you feel compelled to assist those just coming in. I hosted study groups, spent weekends in the library, where I would share what the professors had developed in me.

Earlier this year I graduated, with honors, and had invited my dear sister to attend the graduation ceremonies to be held here at MCI Norfolk. All was well, until the night before graduation. At 3:25 in the morning I awoke with this overwhelming feeling of dread. I suddenly did not want to take part in any of the graduation ceremonies. I lay awake in my 'rack' thinking that I could conceivably just go to work, claim that I forgot or something. I just did not want to do this. But I had invited my sister, and an old friend, I could not just leave them hanging.

I knew that I had to go, that I would go, so to while away the remaining hours (there was no way that I would be going back to sleep) I started to imagine an ironic outcome for the day. When I arrived at the visiting room, where the graduation was to take place, I spied my guests across the room, but made my way first to the table where the caps and gowns were laid out. As I selected the appropriate gear, I was approached by my favorite English professor, Dr. Anne Blackwill. She seemed to be so genuinely delighted to see me there, one might think that it was one of her own children who was about to graduate.

I was a bundle of nerves, though I tried not to show it, and I decided to tell her of my earlier day-dream (as a Lit. professor I thought she would appreciate it). I said to her; Wouldn't it be funny if after all the classes that I've attended, the lectures I heard, books I read, and papers that I've written. That now here at this ceremony, with cap and gown, and all of this pomp, when they at last call my name to receive my diploma, I rise, walk to the podium, there is the flash of a camera, as I turn to look out over the audience, they dissolve, only to resolve themselves as the audience in the viewing room at Florida State Prison's death chamber. That in fact this has all been an elaborate fantasy dreamt up by my imagination as it sought to escape the harsh reality that I was still on death row. My graduation was in fact, my execution. Another flash of light, then fade to black...

Dr. Blackwill looked at me and said: "You have a strange sense of humor." But I did not mean funny ha ha, I meant funny strange - ironic.

Well I did graduate, and in the audience (aside from Dr. Blackwill and my guests) were none other than my favorite science professor, Dr. Jeffrey Racippi, my favorite math professor, Dr. Robert Seeley, the newly minted Dr. Jamie Hillman (a new professor who teaches music), and my Latin professor, Dr. Paula Verdett. (just to name a few standouts)

The P.E.P. director called upon Dr. Verdett to assist in handing out the honors, and diplomas, it was riotous. We had not lined up in alphabetical order, and so as the names were called out, the poor dear had to scuttle back and forth in search of the recipient. When at last it came for my turn to receive honors, even before my name was called, Dr. Verdett seen the name on the award, and in here Parisian accent called out: "I know this one! I know this one!! This is my student." I was so pleased to hear this that I realized something important, very important.

Remember when I said that Dr. Blackwill was as excited as if one of her own children was about to graduate, in a sense they were. We are all the offspring of our professors, and this graduation is as much for them as it is for those of us graduating. There is no way that I ever could have denied them this honor, the honor of seeing their progeny fledged.

I am glad to have been under their instruction, all these years. As I am glad that a part of them will live on in me, and everyone I touch. Dr. Blackwill once told me that higher education dose not only grow ones' mind, but it also grows their heart. It is good to have a part of her in my heart.

*Thank you,  
George Luis*