

# the Houghton Star

FEATURE: →

tradi-  
tion

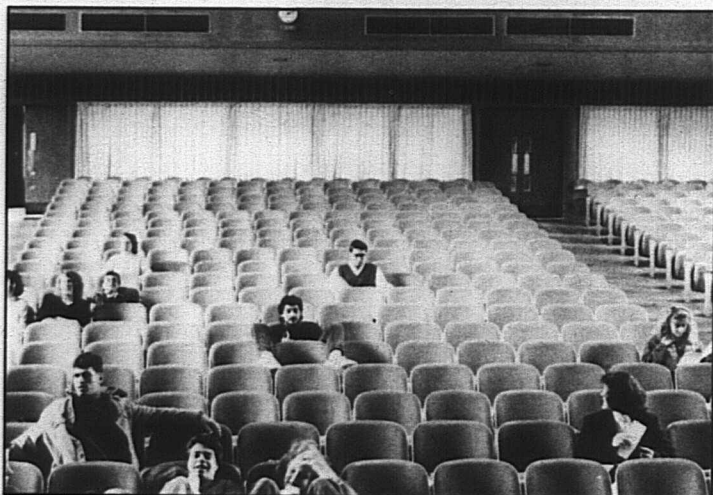
Founders  
Day

21 Oct

unveiling:  
oct. 28.

issue

3



*The scene at Founder's Day*

## A spectator sport?

helmut kostreba

Friday, October 7, 9:30 a.m.  
The College Choir assembles in the front right corner of Wesley Chapel. Less than 100 students are scattered all over the hall, mainly in the back (ready for escape); they arise to welcome the procession of colorful gowns and strange hats worn by the faculty of Houghton College. It's Founder's Day. After a short introduction by President Chamberlain and two pieces by the choir, the rest of the program matches the gowns: long and broad. After a speech, the appraisal of the new Honorary Doctorates, and presentation of the alumni of the year, one is not quite sure what the purpose of all this is and why it is called "Founder's Day."

### Rock bottom

Student attendance is impossible to take, since the faculty is assembled in the center of the chapel. Most students know that. Thus,

Founder's Days are notorious for low student attendance. This year attendance hit rock bottom: the choir almost outnumbered the students in the audience. Many students apparently preferred to stay in bed or prepare for the tests that day; most of them knew what was up that morning anyway: Houghton celebrating itself and former community members, most of whom the students don't know. But instead of simply assuming that students lack interest in Houghton's past, it is important to ask the question: what else may have kept students from filling the auditorium?

### Stumbling stones

Making attendance mandatory is one way to provide incentive to attend, but all too often the incentive is not to go (remember: "Do not eat of this tree. . .").

Also, having to take tests right

after the celebration, and late nights building class floats are not helpful ways of encouraging students to get to the church on time.

Tradition, especially church tradition (even at Houghton), is all too often related to stuffiness and boredom—and not only by today's generation.

Traditions are patterns established by past generations that work to serve the goals of the founders. When these patterns become detached from their goals or when they are performed as though we had reached the goals, tradition is separated from its purpose.

Further, the present generation of students becomes alienated from tradition when they are no longer participants but merely spectators.

### Death sentence

Founder's Day concentrated on glorifying Houghton's past and those who have come out of it. Although students are the present and future of this institution, the Founder's Day service did not actively involve them. This decision pronounces the death sentence on a tradition which is most important to Houghton.

Too often, there seems to be an unbridgeable gap between those on stage and those in the auditorium. "They" make "us" listen and do things in a way which does not indicate that the goal of our gathering is to be in fellowship. The same can often be said about the audience's eagerness to participate.

Focusing on the goals set by the founders of Houghton College will make Founder's Day the place for all to experience the process by which these goals are coming to be realized. If tradition at Houghton excludes the student from active participation, then we need to find a way of including them again.





# Boredom

heather torrey

October 7 was the traditional Founder's Day chapel service; the chapel looked like a deserted island. In the past few years, the number of people attending this chapel service has steadily decreased. This year, the number of students attending hit a low of approximately fifty.

Most students said either that they had heard of past years being boring or that they knew from experience that it was "a waste of time."

Some students had more original reasons for not going. One freshman, who asked not to be identified, stated, "I went to the Current Issues Day chapel on Tuesday and it was longer than the two hours it was supposed to be. I gave Tuesday a chance, but there was no way I was going to sit through another two-hour chapel on Friday."

Others decided that they had too much work to do. Junior Sue Howe was one of the few people who regretted her decision to catch up on some studying rather than to go to the service. She explained that she was having a busy week and knew that her weekend would be filled with homecoming activities. Although she "really enjoys the Founder's Day chapel," she found it necessary to study instead.

Some of the freshmen who did attend the chapel went to support their friends who were in the College Choir. "The music was very nice," they said, "and we enjoyed it, but the rest was pretty dull." A sophomore who is currently a PACE leader said that she went to this chapel for two reasons: out of respect for the people who were receiving awards, and because it was a required chapel service. She thought it was sad that

not much interest was shown by other students, and she is planning to attend next year.

Perhaps the tradition of Founder's Day needs to be emphasized more in order to increase participation. The comment of one other student indicates the main reason for the lack of interest: "It never seemed to excite me and I don't have two hours to waste on being bored."

We have to explain something: there is no sports coverage in this issue, because we want to print good coverage and we need another week in order to do so. Soon, we will be organized.

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The Houghton Star is a weekly publication dedicated to printing news of consequence. The attention of the Star is turned inward upon Houghton College. Naturally, neither the editors nor the college espouse every opinion found in the Star, since the articles often present opposing viewpoints. The editors recommend dialogue among faculty, staff, and especially students. Signed letters must be submitted by 9:00 a.m. Tuesday. They may not exceed one double-spaced page in length; the editors reserve the right to edit all contributions. The editors are not hurt by the fact that Kristina Perkins does not read the Star.

# To You, The Parasite

brian sayers

I attended Founder's Day chapel this year. You most likely did not. I think I know why you didn't—and I consider the reason a serious problem. Please read on and tell me what you think of my speculations.

We engage in many structured activities here at Houghton and elsewhere. We do research papers, we eat in public, we play intramural floor hockey, we court one another, we criticize policy, we ornament our bodies, we ignore strangers in a crowd, we attend church, we listen to lectures, we negotiate with our parents, we balance our checkbooks, and so on. Some of these activities have endured long enough, and have become a significant enough public phenomena that they are now considered *traditions*. However, I shall refer to any of these structured activities as a *practice*. Insofar as we engage in any of them, we are participants in that practice.

We are not able to live socially without practices in this sense, and it is through our participation in practices that we give meaning, significance and direction to our lives. We can choose to accept some practices and reject others, we can participate in few or many, we can be halfhearted or enthusiastic, we can even join in practices which are themselves dying out; but so long as we live in society, we cannot fail to participate in a great many practices, any more than we can fail to breathe so long as we live. We all depend utterly on the prior and continued existence of a host of practices.

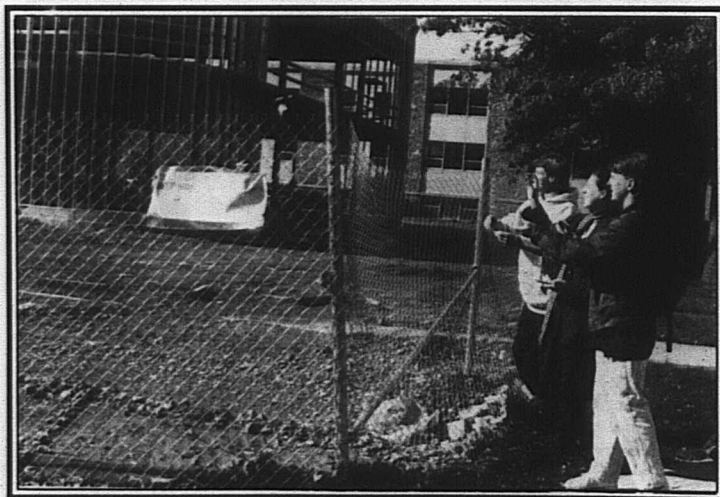
Not surprisingly, though, the continued existence of these practices in turn depends upon us. As we participate in it, a practice becomes more significant and able to provide its benefits. As we become indifferent to it, or support contrary practices, it loses its power to sustain its

dwindling members. Furthermore, it is possible—indeed, it is quite easy—to be a parasite upon most any practice. The liar, for instance, depends for her success on the continued existence of the practice of truth-telling. In short, the parasite needs the practice and enjoys its benefits even while she is undercutting its very existence.

This brings me (finally) to the issue at hand: Founder's Day. No doubt you thought that your absence from these ceremonies was no more than an individual preference for some extra free time. I am willing to be corrected on this, but I think the real reason is much deeper. I think that you were merely doing what comes naturally to most Americans these days. That is, as members of an individualistic society which emphasizes rights and minimizes responsibilities, you simply exposed the extent to which you have already devalued most practices. Put bluntly, you were being a parasite.

I see two ominous likelihoods in this.

First, insofar as uniquely Houghton practices erode from lack of support, then this college will cease to provide those benefits which brought you and me here in the first place. That is, there seems to be something about Houghton College practices that induces me to teach here for less money, prestige and free time than I could have elsewhere. Similarly, since most students could obtain a good education from some other school (such as the University of Buffalo) for a lot less money, I infer that you also remain at Houghton because you want to participate in those uniquely Houghton practices which provide some values not available elsewhere. Undermine enough



"Ooo, look at the big one over there. Isn't he clever?"

(continued)



of them, however, and the benefits will disappear along with those Houghton practices.

Second, if you are uninvolved in Houghton practices, you will most likely diminish your participation in practices in general. While this may seem advantageous to you now, ultimately it will be quite harmful. Quite clearly, a participant in a practice accepts certain demands (such as a two-hour chapel on a Friday morning) which take time and energy. It may seem, then, like a very good idea to minimize these demands by the simple decision to minimize your participation. However, I suggest that if you minimize your participation in practices, you will automatically minimize a number of other effects as well. You will minimize your acquisition of various skills, you will minimize your social identity and your sense of belonging, you will minimize your possibilities for friends with common cause—in short, you will minimize your potential, your abilities and your options in life. To the extent that you become such a “minimalist” you will doom yourself to an impoverished life. When times become difficult your resources will be meager, you will be dependent upon yourself almost entirely, and you will probably be quite confused as to why you feel so alone. A “minimalist” is a very small package.

I know! This blithe attitude toward social practices describes a good portion of my own life until recently.

And that is why I have bothered to submit this relentlessly serious harangue. I am not arguing that we need to participate in all Houghton practices or that we must support all its tra-



ditions. I am merely attempting to attract attention to my suspicion that Houghton is graduating parasites. I am not quite sure what to do if we are, but then I thought that you might have some ideas on that. Please let me know what you think.

For now, should it be the case that you do not feel any need to participate in Houghton's traditions, I suggest you consider Hegel's aphorism: “By that which suffices the soul one may measure the extent of its loss.”

## The Minefield

whitened sepulchres  
and dead men's bones

mick williams

Tradition and Houghton are almost synonymous. We are an alumni-oriented institution which glories in its past. We must face the fact, however, that while we honor tradition in spirit, we as a corporate body dishonor its substance.

This college was founded by evangelicals of the old school, whose beliefs and ways of life would today be categorized as fundamentalist and pietistic. We kid ourselves about being “world Christians,” having a broader vision than those old-timers. As Dean Bence said in chapel last semester, the battle lines have changed. Yes, the battle lines have changed, but the combatants have gone from clearly defined spiritual trench warfare and machine guns (versus men like Harry Emerson Fosdick and the “modernists”) to vague and insidious spiritual guerrilla warfare and theological neutron bombs delivered by our own brethren (leaders, claiming the title “evangelical,” who utter doctrines more applicable

to secular humanism). Who would have believed even twenty years ago that faculty who disbelieve the Bible on significant points would be teaching? Or that 90% of 133 students on the 1987 ethics questionnaire would say that drinking was okay? Or that approximately 5-10% of the students at Houghton would surreptitiously smoke marijuana? Answer: no one.

Yes, folks, the seeds of apostasy have been planted by Satan at Houghton. We can be a godly people again, but not so long as we refuse to admit our corporate sins or make excuses for them. The Lord Almighty can rescue Houghton, but not unless we follow a course similar to that set down in II Chronicles 7:14: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”



## letters

### Dear Thom, about last week's editorial...

Your call to Christian action is admirable. At least you do not call for Christian inaction as some do. Some of your assumptions about our relationship to God, however, seem to me to be unbiblical.

You say, "The ground shifts under every human project. And to bring the Bible into it seems only to darken things." But, Thom, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that the ground shifts under the projects of unbelievers. Those who build projects in obedience to Scripture have assurance that their endeavors will withstand all crises (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk 6:46-49).

"Those who build projects in obedience to Scripture have assurance that their endeavors will withstand all crises"

I agree with you that "all our actions...are as filthy rags." The worth of our actions is not the issue. The issue is about the worth of Jesus' actions. God sent His Son into the world to SAVE it (Jn 3:17) and is accomplishing this through His Church (Mt 28:18-20). To say that Christian action (assuming it is truly Biblical) is "doomed to failure" does not reflect well on our King. Jesus said that the responsibilities He burdens us with are light (Mt 11:28). He does not mention that our "legs are bound to buckle."

Perhaps you should reconsider the nature of "the stones and the plagues." Both are from God. The stones exist to give us something to do (Gen 3:17-19; Dt 28:58-63; Ac 12:21-24; Rev 8:10-11). Because our environment is completely controlled by God (Eph 1:11) we have every reason to hope for the success of our endeavors to accomplish God's will (Rom 8:28).

mark horne

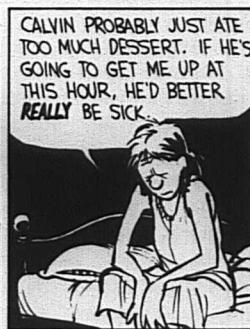
### Dear Mark, about your letter about last week's editorial...

My editorial last week took a dim view of our potential to make a lasting difference on the conditions of the world we live in. You disagree. You say that a believer's projects will meet with success.

Well, which one of us is right? I wish we could tell; but, by my terms, any project that you call a success today may crumble tomorrow; and for you there is always the hope for success the day after. We each have an escape, and neither has proof.

I submit this: God doesn't make success the criterion for our faithfulness. Instead, we are to try. Anything beyond our effort is also beyond our knowledge.

thom satterlee





We want the arguments that appear in the *Star* to be organized: easy to read and easy to follow. Two things often blur letters and make them frustrating to read: 1) A flippant or sarcastic tone (if all you have to say is "I don't like you" and you don't intend to generate discussion, keep your word processor off); 2) Spelling and grammatical errors. Since we want clear, articulate discussions, we are going to edit letters in respect to these two problems. If a letter is longer than one page double-spaced, we'll try to cut it while preserving its main point; if we can't, we'll send it back to its writer for editing.

## Jack speaks from the grave

So, in the first issue of the *Star* I read that you guys are forming an "activist" newspaper. Oh, that sounds sooo exciting. I wonder if either one of you has any conception of what you are thinking of, or if you think you are up to it.

Activists take stands. They march on state and national governments. They protest. They sail their boats in front of grenade-tipped harpoons aimed at whales. They build homes for the homeless. They play big brother/big sister. They feed the hungry. They burn bras and draft cards. They go to war, and they go to Canada. They get beaten up by cops outside political party conventions. They get their presses shut down. They go on hunger strikes. They raid nuclear missile silos. They die by an assassin's bullet, or one belonging to a National Guardsman. Activists are very biased. Activists do not turn their newspaper into a pseudo-intellectual, esoteric platform for a bunch of uptight, white, middle-class college students who spend their time between issues of the now-activist *Star* worrying about their grades and their future career mobility. If you are going to call the *Star* an "activist" newspaper, I hope you both are prepared to make serious sacrifices in living up to what you set before yourselves.

If you're not up to it, and your great "activist" paper turns out to be so much toilet paper, then you can at least settle for dirty looks, dirty names, anonymous pranks and a lot of unsigned "Jesus loves you" letters. I did. That is, if you are actually going to take a stand on something. The universe shudders in anticipation.

giocchino jack urso

new column!

## Dork on the Street



What do you think of this year's *Star*?

"I think it's **stupid**. If I wanted arguments, I could have stayed home."

## And we reply

Since the pages of the *Star* would make lousy toilet paper, I hope, along with you, that we are prepared to make sacrifices. I doubt we'll get shot, let alone catch the attention of the universe. "Activist," then, may be too strong a word.

I do think that this paper has irritated some people on this campus: some don't like the fact that our policy is to promote controversy, others don't like the colored flower on the cover. But we have taken a stand on these issues, regardless of whether we irritate people. We will promote controversy, and, by George, we will print the colored flower.

I suppose that the most we can expect is dirty looks. We have not received any "Jesus loves you" letters. Part of me wishes that we would. I'd like to know who's awake out there.

dave perkins

## A tale of tradition

thom satterlee

Chief Techemon stepped out of his tent, careful that the door, a flap made of bear skin, did not upset his headdress. He walked slowly to the ancient worship area; his legs and body seemed heavy, but it was not the drag of age that made him sluggish. He remembered last year at the time of ceremony how awful and embarrassing it had been for him—the day of their most important tradition, to look out and find only half the tribe present. Techemon carried this memory like a boulder.

Ahead, preparations for *The Praise of Small-Boned Animals* were finished, and this lifted the Chief's spirits some. To see the pile of white bones glistening in the daylight, and the furs of rabbit, squirrel and chipmunk hung along the wooden poles dispelled his gloom momentarily. He remembered when his father was in charge of the service and led the tribe in ceremonial songs and dances.

As Chief Techemon moved into the worship area, he looked over those who had seated themselves on the logs around

the pile of small bones. Only two faces, old and wrinkled as his, looked up at him. Then he heard footsteps, and turned to face Teku and Gawa, his young messengers. They had been running toward the Chief, and, now that they had caught him, stood rigidly, working to catch their breath and trying to show respect at the same time. Teku was the first to relax enough to talk and he spoke directly.

"Chief Techemon, we have done what you asked. Early this morning we arose to announce to all the members of the tribe that attendance at *The Praise of Small-Boned Animals* was mandatory. We went to every tent."

"Yes, your Chiefship, sir, we did," Gawa joined in, "and we were as surprised as you will be. I took your letter, which I practiced reading all last night and nearly memorized, so I hardly needed it. I was perfectly ready to recite its contents to any who wavered about coming. I thoroughly mastered the sections about how the original tribe depended on small-boned animals for food, because their weapons were unsophisti-

cated, and all seven points that illustrate the need to remain connected with our past. I can recite the points now..."

"What did you find when you visited the tents?" Techemon interrupted.

Teku spoke over Gawa, who muttered about threads that weave people together and circles that must remain unbroken. "All the tents were empty."

"Why? Where was everyone?" asked the Chief.

"They had gone to the river. There they gathered for songs and dances to a new ritual."

"What new ritual?" Chief Techemon asked.

"A ritual *In Praise of Bear and Other Large-Boned Animals*," said Teku.

After Teku said this, the Chief looked up, not puzzled and not hurt. The sound of singing rose from the waterfront.

"How long ago did this begin?" he asked with an air of relief that Teku understood, though Gawa rambled on to the fifth point about connecting past with present.

"About an hour ago. But they say it will last all day," Teku replied.

"Then leave me, and take Gawa with you. These two and I have our singing to do here—yours is down by the water."

With that, Teku and Gawa ran off toward the voices.

### **Men's Soccer : 7-5-1** coach Doug Burke

L	Canisius	0-1
L	Nazareth	1-2

### **Women's Field Hockey : 3-9** coach Connie Finney

L	Eastern	1-2
L	Phil. College of Bible	1-2

### **Women's Soccer : 3-10-1** coach Paula Maxwell

L	Mercyhurst	0-6
W	Roberts	2-1
L	St. John Fisher	1-6

### **Women's Volleyball : 18-7** coach Skip Lord

L	Eastern Mennonite	9-15	6-15
W	Eastern	15-9	15-8
W	Geneva	15-8	15-9
L	Eastern Mennonite	6-15	7-15
		15-11	3-15