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Letters

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This Slacker Seized the Day

As the father of a prospective Colby '15, I (perhaps on our visit to your campus last summer) came into possession of your summer 2010 issue. One of your articles stunned me and took me back to a time in New Hampshire many years ago, when the magazine of which I was editor-in-chief created a new assistant-editor position. We advertised nationwide and garnered 100 or so résumés, half of which we discarded because of some typographical or grammatical slip. Disqualifying others for various reasons, we whittled the field to about 20.

To these 20, we administered our Killer Editorial Test—scores of technical questions about English, brain teasers, questions in doublespeak, multiple choice questions with no correct answer, and so forth. We interviewed the top 10 test takers and combined their scores.

The top two candidates were separated by just three hundredths of a point. My managing editor and I decided late that Friday afternoon that numbers were numbers, so it was decided that I would call up "John" and make him the offer. I made the call: "John, congratulations, I am pleased to offer you the position." He responded: "How long do I have to make my decision?" Now, this was not what I had expected—or wanted—to hear. We needed an infusion of energy and excitement, not hesitation or tentativeness. Taken aback, I said: "How about until Monday?"

But I started thinking about it and it really bothered me. I called up my managing editor, who shared my concern. So I called John and explained that I was withdrawing the offer because we needed someone who was more eager. With his girlfriend screaming invective in the background, John tried to make a case for himself,

but the deal was done.

It was well after 6 p.m. when I reached Mary. I offered her the position, and she responded: "How long do I have to make my decision?" Not a little aghast, yet somewhat teachable, I replied: "We really need someone who enthusiastically wants to fill it, so I am afraid I am forced to renege on the offer."

Number 3 was a sleeper. He had finished almost two points behind the first two, but everyone liked him and his can-do attitude. Though less than a year removed from what appeared to have been a rather lackluster college stint, he had pretty good technical skills. A check of his résumé showed that he was working for a suburban shopper weekly outside Boston. Apparently he and his dog were living with his parents or out of the back of his car as he stayed with friends.

Somewhat miraculously (I thought), I was able to reach him at about 7:30 p.m. and offer him the job. "Wow," he said. "I can be there in two hours." "That's not necessary," I started to say. "I'll be there first thing tomorrow," he interrupted. "I can put my dog and everything I own in the back of my car — what time should I be there?"

After I finally got him calmed down and focused on showing up the following Monday, I called my managing editor and told her that number 3 was on board. He went on to spend a number of valuable years with us, valuable not just for him as learning opportunities, but especially for us.

This person was Chris Schmidt '83, author of your Last Page column, "For This Slacker, Lessons Learned" in the summer 2010 issue. I am nominally the editor-in-chief who "taught me the hard lessons deflected at Colby," although I am sure Chris was referring to our managing editor, Susan

Philbrick, who really ran the show.

Chris has produced some "Lessons Taught," too, as I have told his story many times, particularly to young people about to launch their careers. How it's crucial to jump in with both feet and then some. How extra energy can be the differentiating advantage.

Some folks might say that Chris was lucky—and there is no doubt that Colby prepared him exceedingly well, too—but in reality he made his own luck by following what I always refer to as "The Laws of Chris": 1. Carpe diem. 2: Show some enthusiasm!!! 3. If possible, bring your dog.

Jack Burnett
Peterborough, N.H.



Spread the Hardy Girls Message

Regarding "The Girls Are Alright," (winter 2011 Colby) the message that girls and women are capable, strong, and complete by themselves—not just the sum of their eyeliner, lip gloss, and attractiveness to boys and men—needs to be brought to young girls of all races and economic classes, and to young men, too.

As a teacher in a private co-ed middle school, I see many young girls who have a strong sense of themselves in the younger grades but who start to see themselves much differently by sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. Many lose interest in their studies and hobbies and acquiesce to their male classmates. We need the Hardy Girls Healthy Women curriculum in all schools. I also hope your organization can groom some very strong lobbyists to scream in Washington's ear.

Mary Duffy
Avon-by-the-Sea, N.J.

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