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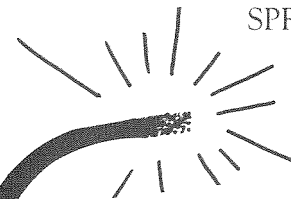
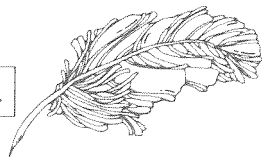
THROUGH TEACHING

A NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTING CLASSROOM PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE AMONG KENNESAW'S FACULTY

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THE EDITOR CONSIDERS...



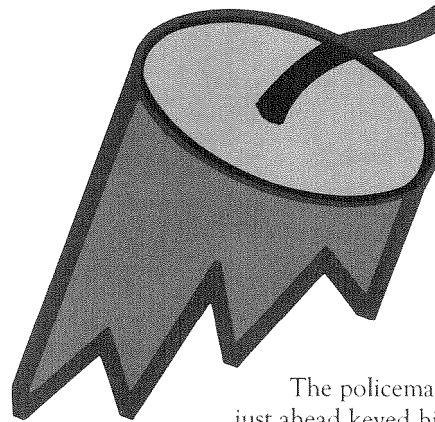
FINDING A BETTER WAY

Don Forrester
Director of CETL

It was a steamy day made worse by the automobile generated heat on I-75 somewhere between downtown Atlanta and the Chattahoochee River. Northbound traffic was moving slowly; it was 4:30 in the afternoon and this stretch of the interstate was being widened. It was a case of long-term progress impeding immediate progress.

As we approached the crest of one of the several hills along that route, a motorcycle policeman threaded his way between two lanes of traffic. Strange. Usually patrol cars work the interstate. Stranger still, precisely on the hill's apex, the traffic officer turned on his blue light and extended one hand, then the other, palms backward. Moses parting the Red Sea appeared no more powerful than this mounted public servant stemming the strain of inestimable horsepower. Traffic stopped.

A clear view across the valley to the next hilltop revealed a duplicate scenario in the southbound lanes. Two "generals" sat mounted at the head of their troops as if prepared to do battle in the valley below. Or so it seems in retrospect. At the time I was both annoyed at the delay and filled with curiosity. What could possibly be happening? Eyes scanned the "no man's land." Not a clue.



The policeman just ahead keyed his mike and spoke a few words. Suddenly a cloud of dust erupted from the face of the granite road bank a quarter of a mile ahead. Sound following sight, a delayed dull thud reached my ears. (Dynamite is much less spectacular in real life than in the movies). Rock and dirt came crashing back to earth. As the dust cleared, the officer engaged his clutch and sped away, motioning for us to continue. We did.

What I wanted to do was to get out of the car and cheer, joined by all the other motorists who observed this scene. So thoughtfully had the operation been orchestrated, and so precisely had it been executed, that traffic was held up for less than a minute. I am impressed by competence, whether by an artist with a fiddle and bow, or by a third baseman stopping an impossible ground ball and, from mid-air, making a rifle-like throw to first base. I

can think of several ways to have planned the job I observed on the interstate; none of them is as imaginative, efficient and appropriate to the circumstances. The officers and road crew deserved, at the very least, to have us sound our horns in one great fanfare of praise and recognition. Of course, nobody did.

This true story could just as well have been about teaching. Notice the parallels:

- Before we step into the classroom, we need to have defined our task well and planned our tactics carefully.
- We are well advised to fit our strategies to the circumstances. Freeway traffic is different from that found on two-lane rural highways; neither are all classes, subjects or topics the same.
- Humans remember better and longer when natural curiosity is part of the learning process. Why do I recall the minute details of an event which happened several years ago, particularly since it involved a subject about which I had little or no interest?
- Students recognize competence (or incompetence).
- A purposeful moment is better than an aimless hour.
- Our rewards may be mostly intrinsic. Even after a "dynamite" class period, students never stand and applaud. ●