

The Courage To Grow

Graduating To Understanding

By JOSEPH W. GAULD

LAST WEEK I said that while whites tend to be more academically developed, blacks tend to better understand people.

Like Jim Grasty, a black from Harlem.

Jim came to summer school with reservations. He had left two other summer schools the first week because of homesickness. He tried the same thing at Hyde but this time I stopped him. After a talk failed, I brushed aside his "real" reasons for leaving with sarcasm and a lecture about "guts". He wasn't used to it.

"Man, are you calling me plastic?"

"Jimmy, I've heard all the 'reasons', it still adds up to a quitter."

Next, I cut off his escape route by bolstering up his parents, a very strong influence in Jimmy's life. "If Jimmy is ever going to find his best, you must demand he stay and face up to things." I also had some help from Barry, a white student counselor, who got to know Jim by playing him, one on one, in basketball. I managed to keep Jim at school, although our eyes seldom met and his pet name for me in the dormitory was "warden".

BUT JIM gradually began to accept both Hyde and me. Later he even came to me when he was upset by overtones of racial prejudice in

school. After investigating, I found the source to be Mark, a Southerner, so I called both Mark

"Mr. Gauld, people think Harlem is just all

"You both must realize that your feelings toward each other are not of your doing. I was brought up in a segregated Washington, D.C. and was shocked to find a black in my high school when we moved up north. But I knew my prejudice was wrong, and making black friends helped me face myself."

I heard nothing more until a year later. Almost by accident, Jimmy told me he had invited Mark to visit him in Harlem after school let out.

"Mr. Gauld, people think Harlem is just all drugs and muggings and I wanted Mark to see it as a place of real families."

Jimmy told how Mark had planned to spend only two days, but stayed a week, with only one anxious moment: "I did some errands and when I came home Mark was gone. My sister said Bobby — a friend — took him somewhere. I nearly panicked, imagining Bobby, a militant Black Panther, with a prejudiced Southerner. I rushed out to the neighborhood, but found them talking away, practically arm in arm."

When Jimmy became a Senior, Barry called from college: "I got thinking, Mr. Gauld. I'm making money on my job, so I want to help Jimmy go to college. I know there's something important in that kid." I was able to tell Barry that



Jimmy had been accepted to Brown on full scholarship. Barry was so choked up, his "that's incredible" was barely audible.

When I told Jimmy what Barry had tried to do, he broke down and cried. The depth of their relationship became even more obvious to me later. A teacher recalled Barry's shortcomings in Jimmy's presence and brought fire to Jimmy's eyes as he came to Barry's defense. It reminded me of the only time I "lit into" my grandmother — she had unfairly criticized my brother, Tom.

JIMMY GRAUDATED last June and his classmates and teachers voted him the Hyde Award for outstanding development of courage, integrity, concern for others, curiosity and leadership.

After his Commencement speech, he burst into tears and came over to where I was sitting to embrace me. (Jim is an old-fashioned kid who still kisses his father). Our relationship had come a long way from when Jimmy was an "inmate" and I was a "warden". I had helped Jimmy understand the best in Jim Grasty and he had helped me understand the best in a black.

We read a summary of a student's career when they receive a diploma. After reading Jimmy's, I said to the audience: "Maybe you can begin to understand what Jimmy taught me to know: 'Black is beautiful.'"

Joe Gauld is headmaster and founder of the Hyde School of Bath. The intention of this column is to discuss parent-child relationships. If you feel Joe can help with your problem, write to him in care of this newspaper.

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