MUGWUMP

The lighter side of being stood up

Dedicated to all the men I've scorned before

by Aime Phillips

Guess what happened to me last Saturday night, ladies and men. Yes, while everyone else was thinking about their upcoming holiday dinner or enjoying a night on the town, I was sitting at home, waiting.

I've been stood up twice in my life. The first time was such a long while ago, it is but a distant blur in my social book of memories (April 28, 1990). The second incident occurred on October 10.

The day started out innocently enough, without a hint of the tragedy that was to become the center of my thoughts and the inspiration of my column. I was called to the phone in the early morning hours of Saturday. An old friend was contributing to our own "keep in touch" mentality. After catching up, we made plans to see each other that night to say good-bye before he left the country to "be all that he can be". The last words we shared were:

"Why don't you call me after work" -myself

"Okay, I'll see you later." - him.

Little did I know those words would return to haunt me as the evening progressed and the telephone didn't ring.

I'm hardly an innocent. I stood a guy up once, when I was 16. It was my first date. I didn't want to go out with this dude to begin with, but my girlfriend wanted to double date (and besides-free dinner). I already had unalterable plans for the rest of the night, so when, after an uncomfortable meal (and we ended up going dutch) they suggested a movie, I declined graciously and slipped away to another friend's place. He didn't follow me there. He didn't attempt to dissuade me as I walked across the restaurant parking lot. I thought I'd managed to escape until... he called me at my friend's from the theater, and announced that he had purchased my ticket in anticipation that I would readily succumb to his charm and gall and head straight to the cinema to meet him. Normally, receiving a telephone call from a strange boy at someone else's home wouldn't have irked me, but my previously made plans consisted of throwing my friend a surprise birthday party, and quite frankly, explaining in hushed tones that it would be quite impossible to leave at such an inopportune time would have destroyed the atmosphere, especially after his third call, so I resorted to the next best thing. I told him I would be there. Consequently, I spent the next year listening to him remind me of this one night of personal hell that he suffered through.

Isn't it remarkable that he couldn't recall the two previous phone calls where I specifically told him where he could shove that movie ticket? I thought to myself on Saturday as I reminisced about that insightful time and waited for that darn phone to ring.

Within the confines of my mind, I began to rationalize. Perhaps he hasn't finished working yet, thought I. Or maybe he just got a better offer. In times like that, every minute lasts an hour and all the possibilities and probabilities were accounted for.

Just for the record, this is the guy who accompanied me on the dreadful occasion I massacred thousands of helpless frogs in Green Valley (that rainy night during my Drive from Hell) and if memory serves me correctly, he forbid me to get out of my car to see if I could offer any assistance. If only then I'd realized my man was one without compassion.

After awhile, my doting roommates began to suspect that something was amiss. I grudgingly admitted my predicament, and I was whisked away with them as they continued their ritualistic Saturday night bar hopping. Being sober at a club is one thing, but being sober and in a real foul mood is quite the experience. With an obvious scowl on my face as I watched everyone waltz, it is beyond my reasoning what the men who approached me thought they would accomplish.

Is it some kind of a challenge thing in which once I've turned down someone the rest of the eligible bachelors jump at the opportunity to show the last guy up by asking me to dance? And what do they expect to gain by following their first proposition with "Why not?" Do they think I'll change my mind? Don't they realize that I need to save my voice for the next guy? And isn't it always embarrassing when you accept after turning someone else down, and the first guy cuts in and starts cursing at you?

I agreed to dance with the third man who came up to me, partly because by this time the song was almost over, but mostly because I couldn't find any of my roommates except one who was on the dance floor anyway. I can't remember what this man looks like, but I do remember his name, which is more than I can say for buddy who stood me up. The first night we met he was sure my name was Amanda. If only I'd realized. If they don't bother to remember your name, they probably won't bother to call. With that in mind, I'll take this minor set back in stride and write it off as one of those things I have to experience while I'm blossoming past young womanhood. At least it wasn't my birthday.

OPINION

The opinions found in this column are not necessarily the views of the Brunswickan

Fairness is all we ask for

The University Administration must act promptly in order to indicate its willingness to curtail racial discrimination at UNB.

by Kwame Dawes

I first became aware of the problems with discrimination in the Business Faculty at UNB in July of 1992. I was disturbed by the information I was receiving concerning allegations of racial prejudice by a professor in the faculty. However, I was certain that the students in question would have had a fair hearing. What I was not prepared for was the fantastic conspiracy of silence and collective security perpetuated by the "old boys" network of professors in that faculty which sought to bully, coerce, and intimidate the students into silence. I was not prepared for the blatant disregard for university protocol and the callous lack of concern for the rights and interests of the students who appeared to have a strong case.

It became clear that the University of New Brunswick's failure to instate a procedure of coping with complaints of racism, allowed those with power in the system to carry out a series of vindictive and frighteningly unprofessional acts of aggression which left many of the international students disoriented and clearly victimized. I met with some of the faculty involved and became convinced that honest and sincere concern for the students was not a high priority for them. Instead they made every effort to protect the negligence and gross unprofessionalism of their members.

The UNB Administration has been aware of the problem in the Faculty of Business for months. I myself spoke with both President Armstrong and Vice President Traves about this issue. Several letters have been written to the administration concerning the obvious lack of judgment and trustworthiness inherent in the Faculty of the Business school, and yet, despite this, the University has allowed that faculty to continue to "investigate" the issue. It is time the University administration stepped in.

An investigation is necessary, but this investigation must be carried out by a team of individuals who will see to the interest of the students as well as the faculty. This is an issue of racism and it is only fitting that whoever does the investigation be someone of colour- a minority- preferably someone who's not a white native-born Canadian. There should be student representation on this committee of investigators along with a high-ranking university official. A member of the faculty should be included as well. Ideally, this investigative commission should include at least one woman who will bring to the discussion a sensitivity developed from dealing with gender related battles.

I studied at UNB for five years. During that time, I became an integral part of university life and I found my time at the school profitable. As a black man, however, I was constantly aware of the need to ensure that the University recognize that racism exists on the campus, and that some faculties are guilty of racist behavior. An investigation of the issue- one that is not dependent on another appeal by these beleaguered students -and other concerned people- is the only way for the university to show that it takes these issues seriously.

The silence of the administration on this issue has appalled me. If there is any doubt that the Business Faculty has flagrantly disregarded the rights of the students, a simple look at the facts of the case could prove otherwise. If the University is unwilling to act now, then I would strongly advise the students to go to the Human Rights Commission for recourse. The fact that they are still being asked to defend themselves about issues that are clearly a product of the Business Faculty vindictive response of being accused, indicates that they continue to be grossly mistreated and harassed.

This incident has made me feel ashamed of this University. This issue means a great deal to my sense of self and my sense of identity. If nothing is done soon, what can people like myself say to other international students who are considering entry at UNB? Could I honestly encourage them to attend a school in which the Administration drags its feet about dealing with such blatant abuse of justice? I think not.

I think it is the responsibility of the university administration to make a public statement indicating what it intends to do about this issue. The administration's silence gives no assurance to those who are currently victims of racism at this university. If the university is seriously interested in curtailing racial discrimination at UNB, and if it expects students to come forward with complaints of such behavior, then it must indicate through forthright and prompt action that such students can trust that they will not become even more victimized because of their willingness to speak out. Fairness, *fairness*, is all we ask for!

Kwame Dawes is a former editor-in-chief of the Brunswickan and a UNB Alumni member.