

## **June, 1994 - William Cole-Kiernan, Philosophy**

Having participated in several Durant seminars, one of the things that I have noticed in each seminar is the quality of the faculty and how much they bring to the seminars through their participation. In each case, with Gail Levin and our exploration of Edward Hopper's art, with Loren Schmidtberger and our investigation of "American Heroes," and most recently with Michael Hillman and our exploration of *The Satanic Verses*, the faculty participants have made a high quality, highly relevant as well as diverse contribution both through their questioning and through their own specific expertise.

For me, the "tip" that is implied by that observation is the enormous resource we represent to each other here at the College. What the Durants have meant for me is the opportunity to learn from my peers in the context of their varying expertise, a tangible and exciting way to tap into that extensive resource. What I have missed once the Durant seminars have ended is some vehicle to continue that "learning experience." So, my "tip" is double pronged. On the one hand, we have much to learn from each other. On the other, there are not too many opportunities to do that at the College. The Durant reaches ten to twelve faculty in one semester, a good beginning, but not nearly enough to benefit a larger number of the faculty. More of what we do in the Durant would be of real value to the faculty here at Saint Peter's.

A second element of the Durants has been the experience of working in a new and unfamiliar area outside of my own discipline of philosophy. This too has been of value, for it challenges me to look at my settled beliefs and strategies. More important to me as a teacher, it sensitizes me anew to what it must be like for my students as they start a course in a new discipline such as philosophy. It helps me to be more aware of the challenges of new learning, to be more patient as my students struggle with unfamiliar and new concepts. Perhaps, I can sum it up by saying that it presses me to look at my learning with a fresh and more open stance, and to be more attuned to the difficulties our students face as they struggle with the challenges of college and its learning demands. Learning is, as we all know, an ongoing and never ended experience. The Durants have heightened my sensitivity and awareness of that, bringing me back to a renewed awareness of my own beginnings.