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Don't Overestimate Rank's Value

This material was written by Dr. Larry C. Cohen, vice president for development and professor of religion at Wofford College. It was provided free to newspapers by the Spartanburg, S.C. School.

"Rank" is an ambiguous word. "Rank most often indicates levels of distinctiveness in a series. Military rank, university faculty rank, athletic team rank, and pop music chart rank are good examples. All sorts of Top Ten lists make interesting rankings boxes for newspapers and magazines: Ten Best Dressed, Ten Sexiest, Ten Best Places to Live, Ten Worst Dressed, Ten Outstanding Young Men of America, Ten Best Restaurants.

The normal function of rank is to set apart selected examples as some sort of authoritative standards or models in any field of endeavor. If one reads Deuteronomy, with its hundreds of rules and regulations, one is happy to have Ten Commandments as a Top Ten guide to the most important.

Ranking, of course, is a form of elitism. It is a confession that, even in a democracy, all things are not equal. It is an attempt to find norms by which democracy can establish and pursue goals. The democratic pursuit of happiness depends upon an elitism of rules and regulations, one is happy to have Ten Commandments as a Top Ten guide to the most important.

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high and low ranks don't quite resolve the ambiguity. Giving an army general high rank shouldn't mean that a rank of private is for scum. It merely means that high rank has been earned by long and often appraised service. Low rank is but a prelude to higher rank in theory it carries little implication of low worth.

In practice, however, military rank demonstrates the ambiguities of the word "rank" in dozens of ways. Because there are so many privates, and because they are usually the front-line troops in battle, their rank makes them more "expendable" than others — implying that they are less worthy of preservation or of privilege. Much as we would like to believe that each one is precious and important to us, the implication of rank is that they are

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If you bite into a spicy, home-cooked Buffalo wing and wonder why you're ill the next morning, there are at least two culprits that could be responsible. It might be that your stomach couldn't handle the whopping amount of cayenne pepper in the hot sauce. Another reason could be food poisoning caused by the bacterium Salmonella.

If Salmonella is at fault, it may be due to poor refrigeration and cooking at home. Without proper precaution, salmonella can contaminate chicken and turkey, as well as a number of other food products.

U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists have been doing research to minimize the risk of salmonella — even before the consumer buys a poultry product. A new study has found that a federally-approved treatment called irradiation does the job.

Scientists in USDA's Agricultural Research Service showed that 99.99 percent of salmonella cells die at the maximum dose of irradiation approved for poultry last year by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. "Irradiated poultry is completely safe to eat," said Donald W. Thayer, a microbiologist at the ARS Eastern Regional Research Center in Philadelphia. "It offers a means of substantially reducing the risk of food-borne pathogens."

far less important than they are. Historians follow the paths of rankings in writing history. The lives and decisions of generals are scrutinized in detail; those of their troops are usually lumped into numerical boxes of troops in combat, casualties, and missing in action.

It is often difficult to decide what definition of rank to apply to rankings we encounter. David Letterman has rankings of things on his show, but they are for purposes of comedy. A comedian's ranking of "ten most frequent reasons for not eating broccoli" to get a laugh differs in intention from, say, a news magazine's ranking of the ten best colleges in order to sell more copies of that magazine.

Another example may help see this problem with rankings. What do weekly sports page rankings of

the best football and basketball teams really show about evaluating handlings or determination to play well or following the rules or whether student-athletes are really students?

The millions of troops who hold the lowest rank and the American colleges and universities ranked beneath the top ten, in the bottom 3,300 higher education institutions, and the NCAA teams that have high distinctions that can't be translated into win-loss statistics, don't deserve the put-down implied by rankings.

Most rankings suffer from their very nature of being reductions to the simplest terms. Serious ranking has to take what is being ranked very seriously.

All privates are as important as generals. All teachers are as important as tenured full professors

Workshops Planned For Educators

"The Big 6," a special series of science and math workshops for teachers is presently being planned by the Arts and Science Center, Iredell County Schools and UNC-Charlotte.

The workshop, which represents a new approach for training science teachers, is scheduled for each Tuesday and three Sunday afternoon sessions. Topics for each mini workshop were designated by a committee of teachers based on interest and need and instructors were recruited by Dr. Ken Burroughs of UNC-C based on their knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject areas.

Teachers wishing to make the workshop a family affair may register to bring their families to the Arts and Science Center on the Sunday dates for a special pioneer cabin program for children during the teacher's workshop.

Mini workshop topics include: "Environment and Human Ecology," "Projects for Earth Day," "From Time and Space," "To the Earth," "Mathematical Play and Doing Elementary Math," and "Integrating Science and Art in the Classroom."

Teachers may attend any mini workshop for interest or all six mini workshops and receive 12 hours of renewal credit. Registration is limited to the first 45 teachers. The Arts and Science Center will provide free Science Activity Packets to those who register.

To pre-register, call Dr. Tom Watts at 873-7288.

Girl Scout Meeting Scheduled

The Catawba Valley Area Girl Scout Council will hold its annual meeting April 21 at the Old Rock School in Valdese at 3 p.m. Some 100 delegates, elected based on the number of registered Girl Scouts in each county, will represent the council's seven county service area. Included on the agenda is election of officers for 1991-92 and election of several members of the group's board of directors. The meeting is open to the public and dinner will be available for \$6.50 per person. For information or to make reservations call the council office at 328-2444 or 800-328-8888. Office hours are M-F from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. The Catawba Valley Area Girl Scout Council is a United Way agency serving girls in Alexander, Ashe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Iredell and Watauga Counties.

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CECNC competitors, from left, Dickerson, Davies, Russell, Sloop, Jackson

Junior High Students Take Part In District Career Competition

Mooresville Junior High School recently in district career exploration competition. Five students in Junior High's

Educational Guide

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