

Letters to the Editor

Open letter to Freshman Class

While most of you are more or less scared, uncommitted, and otherwise unsettled, I'd like to offer my two cents worth of non-pep-talk-type Suggestions on Assimilating Yourself into Mercer University.

Now, granted that Macon is pretty dreary and that Mercer has no football team, it does not follow that zero is going on around here (the illusions of various lazy upperclassmen notwithstanding).

People like Dean Hendricks, Bobby Potter, Peg Malott, Tommy Maddox, Bill Ingram, Gary Johnson, etc. — plus a host of their sublimaries — are accessible and responsible to you. They have plenty of things to tell you about what's happening at Mercer. This does not mean they will seek you out in your tiny little cubbyhole — none of you qualify as shut-ins as yet. Their counsel might spare you from the fate of allowing your particular idolatry — be it first-quarter-Dean's-List-status and/or a fraternity of sorority pledge pin — to blind you to your real education. By that I mean the other people here, and the experiences that groups of such people share together. Access to such experiences requires toning down a bit the Mr. Cool routine, a denial that fear will control every last bit of your behaviour.

Open up as often as possible, and you'll discover that (1) one sometimes is punished for openness (2) that it's worth it (3) that much of your happiness depends not on your distance from others, at all, but on your capacity for honesty with them. (I am talking about understanding.)

Cent #2: Don't begin wasting a great deal of time complaining about Mercer. You will encounter here a great deal of injustice, dishonesty, misunderstanding, ineffectiveness, apathy. Your expectations for many areas of your life here — your courses, your social environment, etc. — may be to some extent contradicted by your experience. Your predecessors were somehow content to simply bitch, or were able to come to terms with such disappointment. Rarely was anything done to transform Mercer to a significant degree. "Adjust or get-the-hell-out" was a plausible argument for other freshmen before you.

Naturally the bag has fallen into your laps. If you are any different, you will do something about the unsatisfying conditions you encounter; otherwise, your apathy will allow such conditions to remain.

Lots of things in Mercer's future sort of remain, then, in your hands. Refuse to be complacent, and we perhaps can begin to take seriously the immense and complex task of learning.

—Cal Gough

Dear Editor,

The number one criteria for criticism, in my opinion, is to know what you're talking about and after looking over the list of SMOGG ministers, I'm not sure that they fit this category.

Several of them are not even Georgians and only a handful of them are Mercer graduates. One of the most vociferous of the Riverdale insurgents has only been in Georgia three years. He has a small church but talks big. Now, suppose you lived in Kentucky and a Georgian went in there and started trying to save Georgetown College, the leading Baptist college there, from the evil fellow, jolly old Uncle Sam, you would probably ask

him if he didn't have enough problems back in his own state. I know that I would.

Now the Hon. Lester Maddox has added his shrill voice to the feisty chorus. King Nutty I doesn't know exactly what he wants and is barking just because he's a Baptist. He's also the first governor of Georgia to be publicly ridiculed by a Broadway show although he probably isn't the only one who deserved it. We must reserve our right to elect a mountebank now and then, but that doesn't keep us from being a great state. Lester predicts a "police state" if Mercer gets a government loan. I have news for the great cyclist. Mercer has been doing business with the Federal government

ever since Yankee General George G. Meade sent twelve GI's from his army of occupation in Atlanta to Penfield in 1870 because Mercer was the only Georgia college that had stayed open during the Civil War.

At last reports, sleepy little Penfield wasn't having any trouble with the police. Only disturbers of the peace were hoot owls.

Sincerely,
James H. Jones '28

P.S. I hope that the Cluster will really go after these people when it resumes publication. Prayer is fine — and I believe in it — but it doesn't fit computers and won't always meet faculty payrolls.



From the Tower

Mercer Needs Perspective

by Allen Wallace

A college education can no longer consist of mere rote memorization of certain pre-established "essential" facts and formulas. Students are asking for more than simply being prepared for the 8:00 to 5:00 business routine, in which they feel they are never given the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to society.

The liberal arts curriculum has come under fire from many sources in the last few years, perhaps rightfully so, since many of the concepts taught in such a curriculum may not be immediately applicable as would be courses in Electrical Engineering or Industrial Management offered in technical curriculums. Many students are insecure in that they suddenly discover they are not being taught with a particular goal in mind: in junior high school that goal was high school, in high school it was preparation for college. But since most college freshmen will not go to graduate school, they are concerned with why professors are teaching what they are. The idea of education for education's sake is understandably disturbing.

The major difficulty lies in the inability to reach a consensus on definitions of terminology. The College Study Steering Committee in its Position Paper of October 1968 wrote: "It is the mark of a liberally educated person to be able to view his culture and his society with critical and heightened awareness, and to possess a trained rationality that can address itself with perspective to the real problems of human meaning." (Page 12) It is regrettable that undue emphasis has been placed on the phrases "critical and heightened awareness" and "trained rationality" (as though rationality could ever be "trained"). A critical, analytical mind could devote years of scholarly research in an attempt to determine whether Shakespeare crossed his t's from left to right or from right to left, but to what avail? It is interesting, if disheartening, to look at the table of contents of various scholarly and professional journals and to note what topics people are considering: "Nonlinear Constrained Optimization by a Nonrandom Complex Method" Engineering and Implementation, LXII-C, October-December 1968, p. 249. "A study of Alexander Tales as Found in a Hitherto Unpublished Medieval Hebrew Manuscript and Earlier Hebraic Sources and a Comparison with Parallel Alexander Tales Appearing in Middle English Literature" (Dissertation Abstracts, Vol. XXVIII, p. 2655A). "The Influence of Ancient, Medieval, and Early Renaissance Stylistic Theory on Practice Concerning Prose upon the Style of The Hurt of Sediton (1569) by Sir John Cheke" (Dissertation Abstracts, Vol. XXIX, p. 252A).

and one of my favorites "The

Coquette-Prude as an Actress's Line in Restoration Comedy During the Time of Mrs. Oldfield" (Theatre Notebook, Vol. XXII, pp. 143-156). I think that further comment on the title just listed would border on being ludicrous.

In the excerpt from the Position Paper quoted earlier the term "perspective" should be the one stressed, for only if the student can acquire (and note that I do not say "can be taught") a framework in which he can assimilate what he has learned of mathematics and philosophy, literature and psychology, history and science can he be rightfully considered liberally educated. Artificially juxtaposing Avogadro's Law and the rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet and other assorted facts within an education prepares a person to be a panelist on College Bowl and little more. It is much easier to obtain facts than it is to acquire a perspective by which to view the accumulation of facts. Students are seeking direction for their lives, and they (as are educators) are beginning to realize that mere "book learning" does not offer the answer.

This leads to the logical query: How can the student at Mercer attain a level of perspective required of the liberally educated; Mercer operates on the premises that "the Christian faith (is) the true basis for understanding all of human experience" (Bulletin of the College of Liberal Arts 1969-70, p. 7), and students by their selection of Mercer tacitly acknowledge this philosophy. Education in a Christian context is an essential part of the structure of Mercer University; whether this is "liberal" or "fundamental" Christianity should be of little consequence.

The University has found the perspective it will use in seeking to educate the students, but even this does not mean that each student is forced to accept that particular one. However, how is Mercer incorporating that perspective into the curriculum and helping the student in his search? Now that Chapel has been declared irrelevant by a majority vote of the students, faculty, and administration the Mercer student must seek other avenues in attempt to build a

philosophical foundation which his classroom education can further develop. Contrary to the belief of many students I do not feel that the Psychology Department contains the answer either. The prayer groups that meet at the homes of various professors degenerate into heated arguments between those of different religious outlooks all too often with each side becoming more strident and recalcitrant, or the groups disparage and belittle the "non-retreaters", generalizing to an extreme just as perhaps I am doing here. The introductory Christianity courses are too concerned with the critical, analytical approach to religion; and they offer little help to the student seriously concerned with the philosophical and cultural aspects of theology and how it can aid development of a personal philosophy.

While it is true that a student can develop a meaningful *Weltanschauung*, it is unfortunate that Mercer provides very little in its formal structure to assist him. This seriously detracts from Mercer's academic standard, but at the moment few students appear greatly concerned, and this apparent unconcern is reflected in the faculty's approach to teaching. I wish that I could be optimistic and write a concluding paragraph telling how this situation will be drastically changed in the coming year, but my pessimism prevents me from doing so.

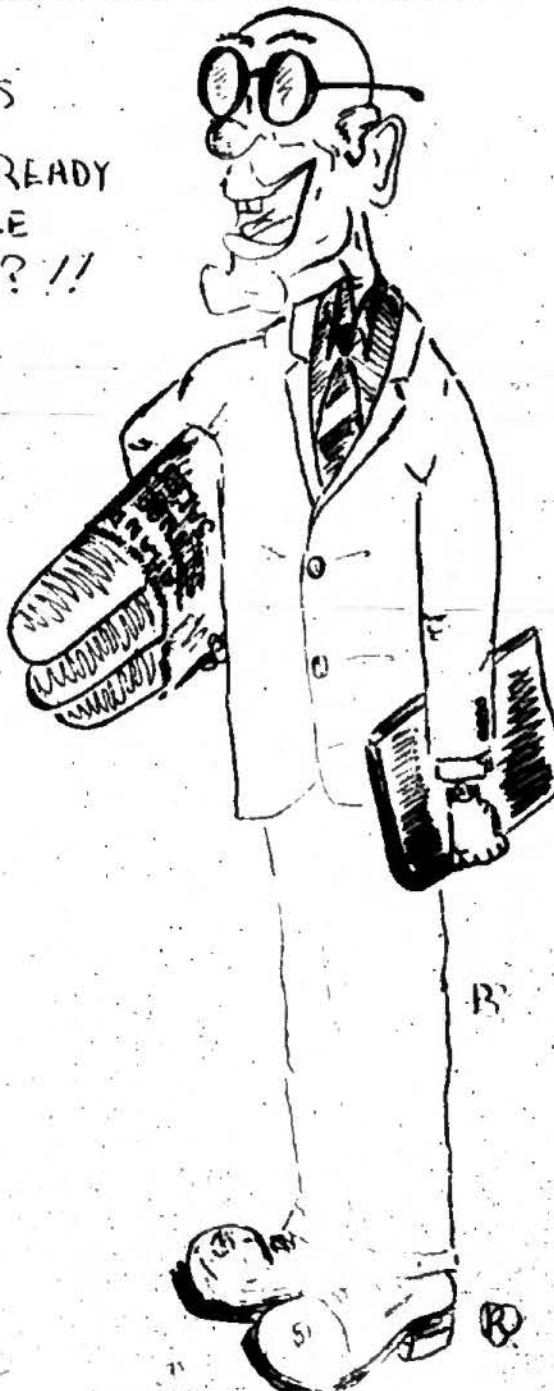
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an eventual reward in that Great Watermelon Patch in the sky. They've organized; they've decided to get freedom now, and they've started taking it.

Students, like black people, have immense unused power. They could, theoretically, insist on participating in their own education. They could make academic freedom bilateral. They could teach their teachers to thrive on love and admiration, rather than fear and respect, and to lay down their weapons. Students could discover community. And they could learn to dance by dancing on the IBM cards. They could make coloring books out of the catalogs and they could put the grading system in a museum. They could raze one set of walls and let life come blowing into the classroom. They could raze another set of walls and let education flow out and flood the streets. They could turn the classroom into their own "field of action" as Peter Marin describes it. And, believe it or not, they could study eagerly and learn prodigiously for the best of all possible reasons: their own reasons.

They could. Theoretically. They have the power. But only in a very few places, like Berkeley, have they even begun to think about using it. The California Aggie, Davis, California, Wednesday, May 31, 1967 (Reprint).

OK STUDENTS
ARE YOU ALL READY
FOR OUR LITTLE
QUIZ TODAY? !!



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