

The Mercer Cluster



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Without sacrificing editorial independence, or their right to make independent judgments, editors and staff members of this newspaper agree to unite with all college newspapers of the nation to support wholeheartedly and by every means at their command, the government of the United States in the war effort, to the end that the college press of the nation may be a united voice for victory.

CLUSTER POLICY

"We are the sum of all the moments of our lives . . ."—Thomas Wolfe

It shall be the policy of the Mercer Cluster to record these moments honestly, focusing upon them without distortion.

Benny Has Gone

Benny has gone. That lovable guy who has endeared himself to the entire Mercer faculty and student body is no longer with us. He has been ordered to report to Norfolk, Virginia, so that he may be more fully prepared for the specialized duties of a Naval deck officer.

Benny has indeed become an integral part of Mercer. His unflinching sense of humor and thoughtful consideration have made true friends for him at his every turn.

Benny's short time as editor of the Cluster was preceded by three years of capable and conscientious work as a lesser member of the staff. Fate has indeed robbed Mercer of her outstanding literary and journalistic genius.

We hope that we may in some small way live up to the high standards that Benny has established. Perhaps a stranger will wonder why we refer to him as "Benny" and nothing more. The reason is simple—to all Mercer men and women there is just one Benny—and that one is Benny Griffith.

Cluster Changes

The "Cluster" staff will remain largely intact. Ramsey "Shorty" Trimble will no longer be with us as business manager. He has been forced to resign because of poor health. Catherine Harwell is taking over the job which Shorty has done so capably.

You will notice that Floyd Wade's column "Strictly From Hunger" now occupies the space formerly taken by Benny's humorous sketches. Joe Harrison has been included on the editorial page with his clever column.

The poll taken two weeks ago on "Lem Libel" has been checked. We now see that the student body wants a gossip column. We realize that such a column is not in the interests of best journalism, but we wish to make the "Cluster" as enjoyable as possible to the student body. Under the title "They Say . . ." you will find the new scandal column of Mercer.

Thus the "Cluster," under a new editor, makes its initial bow to you. With the help of our outstanding staff we shall try to please you to the utmost.

In Other Words

By Mike Warr

LOVE VS. HATE—

One of the better chapel speakers we have heard this year occupied the rostrum for three days last week. He is the well-known Southern Baptist missionary, Dr. M. T. Rankin. Displaying both insight and foresight concerning the Orient, he held the interest of the students every moment.

I liked Dr. Rankin's opinions concerning the post-war world, too. He advocates a peace built on Christian ideals. Yet, such hopes are a bit Utopian, as much as we would all like to see it come to pass. Granted that we can dismiss hate from our minds and hearts and love the Japanese as brothers, will they return that love to us? After we take Manchuria, the Philippines, and other newly-gained possessions of Nippon, are they going to love us for it? It takes two to make love successful—people or countries.

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"DIRTY" DEAL—

Last week I visited my home town, Atlanta, and found that several of the laundries were on strike. With the threat of soap shortage staring us in the face, it looks like a long, dirty winter ahead for Atlantans. The backyard clothes-lines were sagging plenty, and tired business men with aprons tied up under their arms were carrying tin tubs of wearing apparel to and fro. One route man told me that he was afraid people would discover their laundering talent and would not give him any more business when the strike is over.

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INTERNATIONAL ITEM—

Of course it's none of my business, but I cannot quite understand Russia's clamor for a second front. They need to be reminded that the RAF and American air forces are bombing the cities and industrial centers of the Reich day and night. And the Russians haven't yet set foot on German soil! Nor do USSR planes bomb Nazidom.

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BAD BOYS AND GIRLS—

Every now and then I hear some sage sayings from some farmer in the dell. We were talking about juvenile delinquency. Said the tanned and bewhiskered plowman: "I figure that a lot of this juvenile delinquency could be settled out of court, if the woodshed hadn't gone out of style in the city!"

Madder Music

By Joe Harrison

" . . . I cried for madder music and for stronger wine . . . "

Home was wonderful. Even after such long absence there was still such a naturalness that I could feel completely relaxed. There was only one thing missing—Boots, our dog, had chased one car too many. This is the first time I can remember that we haven't had at least one dog at home. I have always been sympathetic and lenient towards boys who, because their parents wouldn't allow them, or because there was no place to keep them, were unable to own dogs. I can tell, almost always, if a man has never had a dog of his own, especially if, as a boy, he didn't have one. You know, a person can learn much from a dog—tolerance, faithfulness and an infinite understanding. A man who has known the love of a good dog has, I think, a sort of earthly wisdom that is helpful in his understanding and judgment of other men.

One of the many old friendships I renewed during my stay home was one with "Pop" Summitt, a very colorful character, who has been longer in the office where I used to work than anybody else can—or he would care to—remember. I was delighted he had obtained a hearing device. He "tuned in" on me and I was able to tell him a "sea-story" or two—without arousing the whole village from its pleasing lethargy. "Pop" is wont to losing his temper, which is manifested in a terrific slamming of books. I heard, from another inmate of this same office, that the first time he slammed a book down (as only he can do it) while wearing his new hearing device, he almost burst an ear drum. And I might add, now he knows how we suffered for years.

If I may be redundantly trite, "home is where the heart is." Why, I was even glad to see the swamps and the thick, wet, cough-provoking fog. The most magnetic and commanding sight of all, though, was the old, shiftless Suwannee, dark and subtly powerful, sticking her damp hand into the lives of all who get in her sight; not like a meddling old witch, but more like a mysterious, charming woman of intrigue. While at home, a friend of mine told me of a letter he had just received from an old Army general who, after making a tour of a camp near there a year or so ago, went with him on a fishing trip on the Suwannee. This worldly and travelled old general, now retired, wants to build himself a lodge and live as close to the heart of this old river as possible . . . love at first sight.

Strictly From Hunger

By Floyd Wade

Ernest Hemingway, probably the only writer America has produced who writes of war as if it were one of the emotions the men of every generation are forced to experience, has compiled an anthology of military writing titled *Men At War*, which contains some very good stories of wars in all ages.

Excerpts from the introduction written by Hemingway are printed here. The book is published by Crown Publishing Company, 419 Fourth Avenue, New York, and the price is six per cent of an Apprentice Seaman's salary.

"This book will not tell you how to die. Some cheer-leaders of war can always get out a pamphlet telling the best way to go through that small but necessary business at the end. PM may have published it already in a special Sunday issue with pictures. They might even have it bound up as a companion piece to the issue I read in November, 1941, entitled 'How We Can Lick Japan in Sixty Days' . . .

"No. This book will not tell you how to die. This book will tell you, though, how all men from the earliest times we know have fought and died. So when you have read it you will know that there are no worse things to be gone through than men have been through before . . .

"When you go to war as a boy you have a great illusion of immortality. Other people get killed; not you. It can happen to other people; but not you. Then when you are badly wounded the first time you lose that illusion and you know it can happen to you. After being severely wounded two weeks before my nineteenth birthday I had a bad time until I figured it out that nothing could happen to me that had not happened to all men before me. Whatever I had to do men had always done. If they had done it then I could do it too and the best thing was not to worry about it . . .

"I was very ignorant at nineteen and had read little and I remember the sudden happiness and the feeling of having a permanent protecting talisman when a young British officer I met when in the hospital first wrote out for me, so that I could remember them, these lines:

"By my troth, I care not: a man can die but once; we owe God a death . . . and let it go which way it will, he that dies this year is quit for the next."

"That is probably the best thing that is written in this book and, with nothing else, a man can get along all right on that. But I would have given anything for a book like this which showed what all the other men that we are a part of had gone through and how it had been with them. As nearly as it is possible to do so with only a thousand pages this book tells you how it was for all those who came before us from the shepherd boy who used his sling that day on a certain scrubby hillside to the moment when Admiral Fitch turned to Captain Sherman on the deck of the aircraft carrier 'Lexington' and said, 'Well, Fred, I guess it's time to get the men off' . . .

"A writer's job is to tell the truth. His standard of fidelity to the truth should be so high that his invention, out of his experience, should produce a truer account than anything factual can be. For facts can be observed badly; but when a good writer is creating something, he has time and scope to make it of an absolute truth. If, during a war, conditions are such that a writer cannot publish the truth because its publication would do harm to the State he should write and not publish. If he cannot make a living without publishing he can work at something else. But if he ever writes something which he knows in his inner self is not true, for no matter what patriotic motives, then he is finished. After the war the people will have none of him because he, whose obligation is to tell them truth, has lied to them. And he will never be at peace with himself because he has deserted his one complete obligation . . .

"Everything is very simple in War, but the simplest thing is difficult. These difficulties accumulate and produce a friction which no man can imagine exactly who has not seen War."