

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.

Vesper Services

One of the most valuable religious contributions which Mercer has to offer has been neglected by the new V-12 students. Either the sailors here are not interested or they have not been made sufficiently aware of the fact that each evening in the Chapel at 7:15 a well-planned and entertaining Vesper program is given. Although the time of the sailors seems to be already filled, the object of a college student ought to be a well-rounded and balanced schedule. In order to reach this goal, Mercer provides various religious activities of which Vespers is certainly one of the most gratifying. Vesper services are non-denominational and are for everyone. Their whole object is to fulfill the needs of the student, who through regular attendance at Vespers can find not only enjoyment and pleasure but also satisfaction.

—Pat Bledsoe.

Mercer's Failure

From the beginning of time people and institutions have been changing to meet changing conditions. Whenever they did not respond to new ideas they were left by the way. Never could their hesitancy stop the progress of civilization.

Mercer University should wake up to this fact. She should adapt herself to the present times so that she can have an important part in the world of tomorrow.

Mercer has been good to her students in many ways. However, in one particular matter she is failing her loyal sons and daughters. We are speaking of the old-fashioned ban on having dances on the campus.

We are now engaged in a war that is testing whether or not the American form of government shall endure. Mercer has been given the responsibility of preparing Naval officers for our armed forces.

It is her responsibility to give these men a wholesome, well-rounded college education. As long as dancing is frowned upon, and the Mercer students, both naval and civilian, are forced away from the campus to dance, this education can never be complete.

Mercer, give these students the opportunity to enjoy dancing on the campus. You have failed in your responsibility to them if you do not give them this necessary phase of American college life.

In Other Words

By Mike Warr

SWOONER CROONER—

Feminine moans and groans are getting more and more audible, since it was announced that Frank Sinatra would probably be inducted by the Army in December. The manufacturers of smelling salts, I understand, have appealed to the Draft Board, lest their sales dwindle. Doubtless, Swoonatra's induction will release several nurses, who have been handling the fainthearts at the Hit Parade. Thus the Army will profit in more ways than one.

I still can't understand the emotional makeup of a crackpot dame who will sigh and cry and squeal and squeak until she become completely exhausted and collapses. He must be terrific! If he can only be sent overseas soon, he may be the deciding factor in winning the war. Think of the effect he would have over the Nazi women working in munitions factories! If by some miracle the wonder boy could be smuggled into Germany, he would have all the frauleins and fraus swooning, thus impairing the Huns' war effort.

POSTAL-PACKING MAMA—

News has reached me that Mrs. Nell Marshall will be leaving the campus post-office soon. Since coming to Mercer, Nell has endeared herself to the hearts of everyone in the college. If she has ever been the least bit cross, I have not been able to detect it. And at times she has had enough to do to make a saint ill-tempered. A more lovable character has never smiled through the little post-office window. Uncle Sam and Cheerful Charlie will lose the best employe they ever had. We'll not forget you, Nell.

ARMISTICE DAY—

In a quiet little Serbian city back in 1914, a shot rang out which was destined to plunge the entire world into a bloody war. It was a faint sound, but it grew louder and louder, until it could be heard around the globe. It was the spark that set Europe on fire.

For four long years the world was mad, then it found surcease from the catastrophe on November 11, 1918. The Armistice brought to an end the wholesale killing of tens of thousands of mothers' sons. Yet, twenty-five years later, as soon as another generation comes on the scene, the killing is resumed.

That was the war to end wars. This is the war, we say, to end wars. Will we be wrong again? Let us pray that the next Armistice will be a permanent one and that the lives sacrificed for truth, liberty, and freedom shall not be in vain.

Madder Music

By Joe Harrison

The only spot of originality in a very run-of-the-mill fair was Mr. Carew Rice of Wiggins, South Carolina. In his words: "My work has gone practically all over the world. I've taken it a lot of places myself, and my friends have taken it a lot of places. I have wonderful friends all over the world. You could probably address me, South Carolina, and I would get it. I'm known all over the United States and most of the world, I guess, but everybody in South Carolina knows me. Of course, now, there might be a new clerk in one of the post offices who wouldn't know where to send my mail, but otherwise, everybody knows me."

Mr. Rice is a silhouette artist. He cuts silhouettes, freehand, from small pieces of black paper, with a small, worn pair of scissors.

"I bought these scissors right here in Macon, Georgia—Peeler Hardware Company, Macon, Georgia, ten years ago. Macon is a fine old town. There are some wonderful people here in Macon. Yes, many wonderful and important people have sat in front of these little scissors—President Roosevelt, Julia Peterkin, Jimmy Braddock, Booth Tarkington . . . Mrs. Lawrence Tibbett was just as nice to me as you people are here in Macon—and now this nice young man from Texas is in front of these same scissors. Hold your head still, son. I want this to look just like you. I have one son in the Army and one in the Marines.

"I like to go where I please, when I please. When I'm not travelling around the country cutting silhouettes and meeting wonderful people, I stay on my farm in South Carolina, fishing in the Savannah river and hunting. I always tell folks that I couldn't cut these pictures if I hadn't drunk a lot of that Savannah River muddy water when I was a boy. A lot of folks believe this.

"Now when you people see me again I might not recognize you right away but I'll remember you. The trouble is that I am always meeting so many different fine people, and people are always changing. Have you ever noticed how people are always changing? Why, just the other day a soldier came up to me and said we were old friends. I knew I knew him as soon as he told me his name. He's from another old South Carolina family and our families have been friends for generations. The reason I didn't recognize him was that he had a new set of teeth. Honey, you certainly have pretty long eye lashes. Yes, people are always changing."

Mr. Rice was a fiftyish, fatherly looking gentleman. A rakish, weather-beaten brown beret was the only outward sign of the artist, and his imaginative work does rank him as a true artist. His colorful patter makes of him an interesting Southern gentleman who, I am certain, would be at home fishing on the Savannah River.

Strictly From Hunger

By Floyd Wade

The match burned brightly for a moment, revealing the faces of Paul and George. Then it went out, leaving them in total darkness.

The big ship rolled with the waves, carrying them steadily toward their destination. "Tomorrow is Armistice, George. Are you going to celebrate?"

"Hell yes. I'm going to face the East and give three cheers for that part of European soil grown richer with the bodies of Americans."

"It does seem like it was a futile war. But why so bitter?"

"Oh it was such a useless struggle. Just like this one. War is crazy. It seems utterly stupid that men who possess any intelligence whatsoever would be capable of mass destruction. Here I am, a reasonably sane American college graduate, on my way to participate in wholesale slaughter."

"Yes, but you're a victim of war, not a perpetrator. The men who make wars don't fight them."

"Paul, that sounds just like something Gerald Nye would say in Congress. It's probably true, but what the hell? Plenty of smart men saw the present war brewing right after the last one, but they weren't able to do anything about it, or at least didn't do anything about it. Why weren't they? Is war a sort of calomel which the people of the world must take regularly to try to rid themselves of the poison in their systems? If so, then certainly those who are killed in the process are waste products."

"That's a rather morbid way of looking at it. America likes to think of her World War I dead as heroes who gave their lives for an honorable cause. At least, that's what the people will be saying all over America tomorrow. I can see the little square in my home town now—the main speaker is saying that twenty-five years ago American doughboys brought the Huns to their knees, and that with the help of God they will do it again soon.

"But was it a just cause? If I could see something worthwhile come from war, then it would be a different proposition. As it is, thousands of men are killed, then those who are still alive when it is over try to forget it as quickly as possible, with no thought to the future.

"Well, I look at this war as a continuation of the last one. We didn't win the last one, but we kept Germany from overrunning Europe. In this later stage of the war, if we can defeat our enemies in combat, and afterward not negotiate a peace but set up a successful world federation of nations, then those who died for 'the cause' will have contributed to it, and in no way conceivable can be looked upon as suckers."

"I suppose so. Still, I never did like days of commemoration. They all seem so dishonest. People say the things that are expected of them, not what they honestly feel in their hearts. Armistice Day in America tomorrow will be like that."

"Some of it will be, yes. But Americans like to kid themselves about everything they do. Their true feelings are usually masked. The people know each other's thoughts, though, and that's what counts. Their common denominator is freedom. They all love freedom more than anything else. It's gotten them into a lot of trouble, but still it's wonderful. I believe that's one reason you and I hearly always have the reds out here. In any military organization, a certain amount of freedom is sacrificed of necessity."

"That's putting it very, very mildly." "I may sound like an enthusiastic war bond salesman but freedom is certainly fine. I'd rather die today, after having been exposed to FDR speeches, football games, Time Magazine, American girls, Jimmie Lunceford, The New Yorker, Thomas Wolfe, and Christmas at home, than live the rest of my life in a totalitarian state. So I think I'll be there in spirit tomorrow when the Armistice Day speeches are made, bull or no bull."

"Shall we pray?" "You jerk. Your trouble is that you have read too much of 'Das Kapital' and not enough of the Bible."

"Oh, I'm an atheist, thank God. Let's hit the sack."