

The Mercer Cluster

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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.

State Guard

Georgia State Guard units are within sight for the civilian boys on the Mercer campus. The new position was taken following a conference of student leaders with Major Roland Neel, district Guard Commander, and Dr. Spright Dowell, president of the university, in which Dr. Dowell seemed willing to cooperate in inaugurating the Guard units here.

All that remains to be cleared up before the activation of the units can be begun is the approval of the Trustee executive committee and the acquiescence of the local Naval commanders.

Over half of the civilian boys have expressed the desire to belong to the guard and it is expected that over a hundred men will form a Mercer company.

If the guard goes through Mercer men will be able to gain both military training and service on the campus.

—Kent Christopher.

School Spirit

In 1941, Mercer gave up intercollegiate sports because of the war. At that time it became apparent that sufficient man power could no longer be procured for varsity teams. It was planned to resume athletics after the war had been won.

When Mercer was selected to be in the Navy V-12 training program, it was evident that there would no longer be a scarcity of men to re-enter inter-collegiate athletics with a basketball squad. The players were to be selected from the Navy men and the civilian students who were still left on the campus. This group was to be a Mercer team—not a Navy team.

The Bears have started their season and already several service outfits have been encountered. The boys show a definite promise of developing into a fine quintet. They have played well but something has been lacking. We believe we know what that missing item is. It is support!

Not one of the games has had more than a handful of spectators. How can the fellows possibly do their best if their friends are not there to support them? They need the cheers of the Mercer men and women to give them the added zest needed for victory.

Now is a splendid opportunity to develop school spirit at Mercer—something that has not been here for quite a while. All of the students, both civilian and Navy, have something in common to root for. We should have a cheering section and cheerleaders.

Again we say the team is not a Navy team, it is the Mercer team. We students should be at Porter Gym whenever the Bruins take to the courts and should never let our school down.

In Other Words

By Mike Warr

FOR THE SKEPTIC—

Many people read the Bible exclusively for its literary value. But even in the midst of beautiful language and poetic imagery, we come across incidents that are so human and natural that the skeptic must say, "That sounds plausible; that could happen."

One day an epileptic boy's father came to Jesus and said, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Jesus told him that all things were possible if he could believe.

The father was desperate. He answered quickly, "Lord, I believe." But the man realized he had spoken hastily. His intellectual honesty forced him to add, "Help thou my unbelief."

There are a lot of people like his today. They want to have faith. Sometimes it takes a foxhole, or a flaming Spitfire, or a lonely raft to make them believe. It is difficult to accept some things by simple, childlike faith: That is why the Master implored us to become like little children. It's easy for a child to believe, for his mind and heart have not been calloused and hardened.

These folks do not actually disbelieve, however. Their minds are torn by doubts, placed there by smart-aleck agnostics. And oftentimes they have acquired a smattering of knowledge in the scientific realm, and are unable to reconcile facts with faith, because they have not found out enough about either.

Everyone needs the comfort that comes from an abiding faith. But those who need it most seek it by the wrong method. When they want to believe and doubt pops up, they try to convince themselves by argument. This isn't the way.

One who doubts and earnestly desires to believe must find the solution through humility. After all, who are we to demand that the Creator of the universe prove His existence? Are we God's judge?

Every plan we make in secular living is based on faith. Why, then, should we deny ourselves faith in God?

We cannot force ourselves to believe in God, but we can refuse to entertain doubts. We need to say with that distracted father, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." In trying to have faith, and living by that faith, we develop the habit of faith. And what comfort and peace of mind this faith-habit gives to us!

Madder Music

By Joe Harrison

While reading an account of General Vandergrift's appointment as Commandant of the Marine Corps, I came upon a shocking statement. Major General Charles D. Barrett had been killed. General Vandergrift, on his way to the States to receive his appointment, had to rush back from Pearl Harbor to lead the Marines in the Bougainville campaign. He left General Barrett in command. General Barrett had been killed in an accident. I was saddened to learn of his death, for that man was a general. He happened to be a general in the Marine Corps, but he could have been a general in anything—any time, any where. He would have been a Phelps as a teacher, a Captain Paul as a sailor, a Jefferson as a statesman.

General Barrett was a soft-spoken, courtly, Virginia gentleman, who carried neither his years nor his command on his back or brow—so erect was his carriage and clear his eye. I first saw him the second Sunday we were at sea. There had been a sort of unexplainable unrest the first Sunday we were out, so several of us had decided to have a very informal worship service this second Sunday. The General sent word that he would like to attend. There was no Chaplain aboard, but we struggled through as best we could. Afterwards the General waited to tell us he was quite pleased with the service. Thereafter, each Sunday morning aboard ship and after we were on the beach he was at chapel.

General Barrett knew everything that was being done on that little island, no matter how insignificant the work. Too, he was the only general I have ever seen who could get around without three or four of his staff at heel. One particular incident is very clear in my memory, and is one that shows the General's uncanny ability to judge men, and Barrett, the man.

Our big Deisel engine-generator unit had broken down, and our end of the island was in total darkness. Tommy Thompson, our crack deisel man, was called over, and since I had the key to the tool room I went with him. Tommy and that old deisel had been matching wits ever since we had been down there, and Tommy was determined to win. By the time we picked up the tools and walked over to the deisel there were several officious and important looking people buzzing around the big engine. As we walked up, each of them was ready to give Tommy a detailed diagnosis of the engine trouble—all different. But Tommy was accustomed to this and heard nothing, except, perhaps, a sly chuckle from the old deisel. Tommy went to work with those skillful rough hands; hands he had wanted to be the skillful smooth hands of a surgeon. He only had a small flashlight by which to work, and it was difficult for him to see. Too, he was receiving entirely too much verbal and not enough physical help. Suddenly, out of the rain and darkness appeared a man with a big powerful flashlight. He turned it down on the work and Tommy said, "Thanks," without looking up.

The engine was particularly ornery that night and Tommy was becoming a little vexed. Just at a trying moment the flashlight wavered a little. Tommy screeched, "How about holding that damned flashlight still!" The flashlight was steadied and didn't waver again. In a few minutes the job was finished and the lights came on. Tommy stood up, turned around, and there stood General Barrett holding the flashlight. Before Tommy could collapse or die or run or anything the General gave him a disarming smile and said, "You did a fine job, son." The General turned and strode away—and Tommy is at Tulane and his hands are smooth, learning to be the skillful hands of a surgeon.

Strictly From Hunger

By Floyd Wade

(Because of the fact I am reclining lazily in bed on alley, Hunger is written this week by B. W. Webb, one of my roommates. Mr. Webb, 700 words of wisdom, if you please.)

Since today is the second anniversary of the dastardly attack on our base at Pearl Harbor, I can think of no better way to start a story or column, than by printing a letter. This letter is one which might have been written by any one of a million men, in the service of our country. Where it was found is of no consequence. . . . Anyway, here it is:

December 7, 1943.

Dear Mom:

Today is the second anniversary of our entrance into this war. It doesn't seem possible, to me, that only twenty-four short months ago, I was at home, doing all the things I love to do. Going to church on Sundays, at the little brown church down the street. Going on the weekly fishing trips with Dad. . . . Seeing my girl on Saturday nites, for a stroll in the moonlight. Then there were the picnics down by the creek, with you, and Dad, and Jean, and little Bob. I'd sure like to see Bob now, with his blonde hair and laughing eyes.

It's kinda funny, my thinking of all those things . . . and writing about them. But . . . well, something happened this morning, Mom, that made me want to think about those things, and to talk about them.

This morning, a Polish corvette tied up alongside us here at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. I was sitting on deck, in the sunshine, when she came in. She was covered with ice, and there was a large hole in her port bow, where she'd been hit by a five-inch shell.

Pretty soon, a guy on the corvette put away his axe, and crossed over to where I was sitting, apparently forgetting all about the ice, and the job he was supposed to be doing. He draped himself comfortably over a coil of line, while leisurely filling a large pipe with some foul-smelling Polish tobacco. Having filled and lighted the pipe, he looked me over from head to toe, stuck out his hand, and said:

"Jennings is my name. I'm from Massachusetts. And I'm sure glad you don't have anything to do, just now. I haven't talked to an American in so long that I'm about to go nuts. Hope you don't mind listening."

"Hi, Jennings. Just call me Bill. . . . And don't think I mind listening to you. In fact, I've just been wishing for someone to come along to shoot the breeze with me. C'mon, give out with the story. Tell me what you've been doing since you've been at sea, and around; how much of the war you've seen . . . gimme all the dope."

"Well, four years ago," he began, "I shipped out with a British merchantman, going to Poland with supplies for the army, and got stuck there when Mr. Hitler and his gang overran the country."

"It didn't take me long, after I got into the thick of the fighting over there, to see where I was needed. It seemed that the thing that was most needed, at that time, was a way of getting supplies in to those starving people. . . . People who had given up all of their food, and property, to the army, so that they could keep on fighting the Nazis. . . . Well, after seeing hundreds starving to death, and dying in the streets, I made a "bee-line" for the navy, and joined those who were trying to get supplies into the country for those people. Since then, I've kept on fighting . . . and I intend to keep on, under any flag which stands for the things I have always been taught to love, and which is against Mr. Hitler. . . ."

"Well, Bill . . . I'd better get busy on that ice over there. We are going into dry-dock this morning, and we've gotta get that ice off before we start repairs. Incidentally, they tell me you people are having a hard time here in the states, with your rationing, and everything. When you write home, why don't you tell your folks it'll be over soon, and try to cheer them up. You don't know how they feel, having to sacrifice as they do, so that you'll have enough to eat."

Well, Mom, that's what I was thinking of when I started this letter. And you do understand, don't you, Mom. I really would like to come home for Christmas, to see you and the folks. But, well . . . since that guy told me his story, I think I'm being selfish to even think of home, just now. So when you carve the turkey, on Christmas day, just think of me, and let's postpone my part of the dinner till I get my job done.

Your loving son,
 Bill.