

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.

Representation

It is our understanding that all V-12 men are supposed to have an equal footing with civilian students. One of the primary reasons for their being at school is to get a complete background in college life. This is meant to include all campus activities as well as academic work. To help this plan Mercer has collected an activity fee from the Navy men.

However she is not giving these service men the same privileges that she accords the civilian students. Several days ago the freshman class held elections for its class officers. Yet not one Navy man was given an opportunity to vote. They did not even know that an election was being held.

We ask you frankly if this is fair. We wish to say that we are not opposed to those students who were selected to fill these positions. It's not who was elected, it's just the principle that the whole freshman class did not even know about the election.

Another place that Mercer has failed to let her Navy students have equality is on the student council. The Navy has been here since last July but not one man has been selected for the student council. How can this be a truly representative council when a group of over one-third of the student body does not even have one member?

The Navy men have paid their activity fees just as civilians have done. They should definitely be allowed to participate in these activities. What does the Administration think? And more important: What is the Administration going to do to remedy this? Or will the Administration be "too busy" to take action?

Bible Study

On January 3, 1944 everyone living on the first floor of Sherwood Hall was invited to attend a Bible study meeting which was to be held that night at 9:45 in Room 141.

Sixteen sailors responded to the invitation on that first night. Since then the attendance has grown steadily until now, with over forty men from all over Sherwood Hall attending regularly, the capacity of the room has been reached. The idea is spreading to other rooms in the dormitory.

Gene Avery, John Butler, Wyatt Grant and Fred Hardwick, all of whom live in Room 141, are the originators of the plan. They have always insisted that attendance be on a strictly volunteer basis.

The purpose behind these meetings is to give everyone who attends a spiritual uplift after a trying day. The meetings last only fifteen minutes and are held Monday through Thursday at 9:45 P. M., and on Friday at 11 P. M.

Each night a different man is in charge of the program. He reads one of his favorite Biblical passages and then reads the comment of some famous person on that particular passage. No discussion is permitted in order that the meeting will always remain absolutely inter-denominational.

How wonderful this whole idea is. Here we have a group of service men who have at their own initiative begun a course of study of the Bible. No one forced them to do this and by the same token, they do not try to compel other people to follow their example.

They have proved that if you have something worthwhile, people will flock to it of their own free will. It is a pity that everyone cannot realize this.

In Other Words

By Mike Warr

BEDUCATION—

He was to become a bridegroom the next day. And I was sleeping in the same bed with him on the night before. It was to be my duty to unite this good brother with a sweet young thing in holy matrimony come high noon on the morrow.

I prepared myself for the ordeal. Exercising extreme mental concentration, I tried to recall memories of my boyhood when I would sleep with a large, soft teddy bear. With a tremendous stretch of the imagination, I pictured my sleeping partner, weight: 214, as a quiet and gentle teddy bear. But something kept telling me that this was just wishful thinking.

And so to bed. My first thought was to get to sleep first by all means. I had already subtly inquired whether he snored. He did. Of course, he was the first to slumber. I was the victim of acute insomnia.

My friend got off to a good start. He began with the stove wood. I am sure he sawed up a winter's supply before midnight. He was in rare form.

Several times I asked my bed-mate—kindly, at first—to turn on his side. He was obliging, but immediately after falling asleep he flopped over on his back and started snoring again. It grew louder but not funnier.

Despite this brother's weight, he had absolutely no padding on the shoulders, elbows, hips or knees. Several times a below-the-ribs punch almost knocked me out. And my backbone has never been the same since he dreamed of doing a ballet dance, and smacked me in the small of the back with his knee. Upon awakening him, he would mumble about "tossing a little in my sleep."

My bed-fellow had another objectionable habit. At intervals he would grab all the bedclothes and wind them around himself like a cocoon, leaving me bare. With chattering teeth, I would snatch the covers away from him with murder in my eye but a smile on my face. (I had to be nice to this human caterpillar until I collected my wedding fee.)

Came the dawn. This long-suffering, persecuted parson had been butted, gouged, slugged and otherwise maimed for six gruelling hours. But he wasn't through with me yet. He became restless and decided to gradually encroach upon my territory. Closer and closer he would come in my direction. I would groan helplessly and move over. Instantly, he would occupy the vacated space. Soon I found myself precariously balancing on the edge of the mattress. I thought about climbing over him to the other side, but the temptation would have been to stand up, jump high, and come down in the pit of his stomach. Fortunately, the alarm went off before I did. We shook hands, and I congratulated the winner.

The ceremony was performed. Through half-closed eyes, I gazed with pity at the bride. Just think, I thought, she'll have to go through with that 365 nights a year!

Madder Music

By Joe Harrison

As I walked into Columbus Roberts Hall returning from noon chow I was greeted with a snappy salute from a little three and one-half foot stack of smiles wearing a sailor hat. Assuming the role I thought I was to play, I returned the salute and bellowed an officious "Carry on!" which seemed to please the little imp.

"Well," I said, "We lose Edna, the pup, and look what we have now! I certainly hope this one's house-broken. What's your name, mate?"

"Bobby."

"Where did you come from?"

"New Jersey."

"You must have caught the wrong bus!"

The crowd in unison: "Show Joe how you whistle at the girls, Bobby."

A suggestive and wolfish whistle.

In amazement I asked, "How old are you?"

"Foive."

"You're from New Jersey, all right, and learning fast."

"Well, I'm really fifty, too."

"Are you?"

"Sure, fifty is just a foive with a zero added on."

"Quit trying to convince me of your precocity, and let me decide for myself."

Enter more well-fed sailors, and the salute and whistle act is repeated, causing tumultuous laughter.

"Where did you learn to whistle like that?"

"From my dopey cousin. He's teaching me jui jitsu, too."

"Maybe you are precocious."

"I'm Bobby—from New Jersey."

"I'm Joe—from Florida. Glad to know you, Bobby."

He gave me a handshake like a fraternity rush-chairman. Suddenly he saw Woody on the bed, ran over, threw his arm around his neck and said in a stage whisper, "Do you know what my mother does when she sleeps?"

Woody: "Frankly, no."

Bobby: "She snores like a horse!"

"Young man, young man, please," I censored, "You're telling tales out of school!"

"I don't go to school. You can't go to school when you're just foive yeerrrs old."

"Oh well, in that case it's all right then. Tell me, what is your name besides Bobby—what's the rest of your name?"

"RobertFrankGeorgeBrightenfelt."

"What?—and not so fast."

"Robert—Frank—George—BRIGHTENFELT!"

"That's as big a mouthful as George Creighton Fleetwood Hale. How do you spell your last name—Brightenfelt?"

"R—O—B—No, no, Oi can't do it."

"Well, I'll guess at it."

Woody, always the master of the situation, spoke: "All good sailors hit the sack about this time of day, so if you're going to be a sailor you better hit the sack too. You can take Buck's, or shall we lash him a hammock?"

But the Little Charmer, probably with the horror of afternoon naps still fresh in his memory, and the thought of this big world to explore on his mind, laughed and sped away.

Strictly From Hunger

By Floyd Wade

Art in this country has finally reached the common man. The problem of finding an outlet for the paintings of American artists has resulted in an attempted merger of the aesthetic and the pragmatic. Heretofore, artists have had to content themselves with a very limited group of buyers—usually esthetes in Saks clothing. And because the odds were so great against their ever attaining the status of a Benton or a Curry, most of them had to run a barber shop or grocery store to keep paint and brush together.

But not so now. Because of a brilliant scheme originated by someone, probably a debtor or a relative, the horizon has suddenly assumed a brilliant couleur de rose. No more chili and beans, no more dodging the landlord, no more society painting of debutantes and do-vagers, no more painting of tobacco advertisements. The real thing at last—free and uninhibited expression of the soul.

What is it that wrought this marvelous change? Was it the clamoring of the art-hungry masses? Was it the high wages at Lockheed? Was it the pressing need for housepainters? Did the potential Rembrandts strike?

The explanation is much simpler than most of the canvases turned out by the artists, but more complicated than most of the intellects of the new patrons. Large department stores over the country have agreed to make room for displays of the works, and to sell them over their counters like fur coats or crow's foot cream. The canvases will simply be merchandise, neatly stacked and placed on the shelves.

The idea is probably a very sound one. In the first place, the market for the wares of American artists has suddenly assumed unlimited proportions. And in the second place, the financial condition of large groups of the people is very good, and they are ripe for new means by which to spend their money. Then too, interest in art will be stimulated by the new wares. Whether or not it will be stimulated to the degree that housewives and their plumber and shoe salesman husbands will seriously study it remains to be seen. But at least the artists will get an idea of the tastes of the laymen. They may decide that it is not worth trying to satisfy them. At any rate, both groups will have learned something.

Art is something that has to be studied just as astutely as mathematics. Of course there have always been two schools of thought along this line. One contends, like Plato and Plutarch, that art is based on aesthetic judgment. The other, like Kant and Dewey, contends that art is based on aesthetic experience. The truth probably lies somewhere between the two because they are clearly interconnected. To quote DeWitt H. Parker, "If beauty be a sort of unique flavor, a 'je ne sais quoi', it would not be susceptible of formulation, but only of immediate apprehension; while if, on the contrary, it be no different in kind from other values, it would be as capable of rational estimation as they are. Some students of aesthetics have contended that only the first type of scrutiny is revelant, but by far the larger proportion have recognized that since art is of man and for man, it cannot be held exempt from criticism according to the principles by which other activities are judged. If the religious or metaphysical values are the highest, then those works of art which give them expression in perfect intelligible form, are the greatest. Hence, although the narrowly artistic is a necessity, it is not a sufficient criterion of excellence; and if the validity of a second, philosophical criterion is admitted, aesthetic criticism becomes an application of the general theory of value to works of art."

So readers, to that small group of you who do not know a Picasso from a Cezanne, if you are sometime in the near future browsing in Goldberg's among slips and sox or furniture and furnishings and suddenly are confronted with a counter of paintings by American artists, look them over carefully and study your own reactions, asking yourself whether they convey something to you, or whether they look as if the artist put all his tubes of oil on the canvas and sat on them roughly. Then go to the nearest library and read A Complete History of Art, by which to test your judgment.

Chacun a son gout!