

The college fraternity on the offensive

By John O. Moseley, '16

National President, Sigma Alpha Epsilon

FRATERNITIES have won their legislative battles on all fronts in our generation and as this is written there is not a single adverse law on the statute books of any state.

This means that the arm of our educational system which we love and serve has for the first time in its history been given a clean bill of health from the political angle. It has won its legislative battles in every section and can now stand up in the muddy trenches and turn and fight enemies far more dangerous, more pervasive, and more destructive.

We have yet to win our battles with educational authorities and with ourselves. What a wonderful thing it is for all of us that we are on the scene and active at the dramatic moment when fraternities are ready to go over the top and for the first time in their history take the offensive.

We have yet to prove the lasting worth of our organization in the eyes of college presidents, college men, parents, and even ourselves. This means that we must use the immortal words of Marshal Foch, who said, "My left is badly battered; my right is giving way; with my center I charge." Paraphrasing the above remark, we can say that in certain rich institutions we are losing out because of a new type of housing system, and in certain large cities we are giving ground because the soil no longer seems as fertile as before for the college fraternity, but in our center, in those schools where we may confidently expect the fraternity system to flower, we will charge, by making it so worthwhile, so invaluable, so vital in the intellectual and social lives of its members that it will remain a useful growing part of our civilization.

▲

THE first question then is "What of the future?" which may be answered only in the light of the past. I should like to quote a few excerpts from a talk made at the Oklahoma University Interfraternity Smoker in 1923. These remarks were based upon a knowledge of the Oxford system of small colleges and seemed far more radical and visionary at that time than they do now.

"Inevitably, a split must come in our great universities, such as has occurred in

EXCERPTS FROM A WIDELY QUOTED ADDRESS TO THE ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE FRATERNITY SECRETARIES

all the great European universities; there will be a breaking up of the large and complex inside life of our already overgrown and unwieldy student bodies into smaller units. In the fraternity of the future the student will develop his athletic ability, will receive instruction, will cultivate his social qualities and abilities for friendship, will find there his old fashioned literary society, and will carry on in a more minute way, all those phases of college life we now call 'student activity.'

"I do not mean that our existing university enterprises will at once, or perhaps ever, be completely supplanted, but the new fraternities will take the place, in a vastly larger way, which the literary society had in the college lives of the old

timers here. It will be a place to work instead of a place to loaf.

"With these remarks as a basis will you permit me to dream a dream of the future? I see upon the campuses of our greatest universities, strong virile fraternities with memberships ranging from fifty to one hundred. Each will have its own home with such additional buildings as it can afford: a study hall, a library, a gymnasium; tennis courts and athletic field. Each fraternity will have its own paid tutor, or perhaps its staff of instructors whose function will be to assist the men in the preparation of their lessons and to train them to study and think. There will be enough fraternities on the campus to take care of every student.

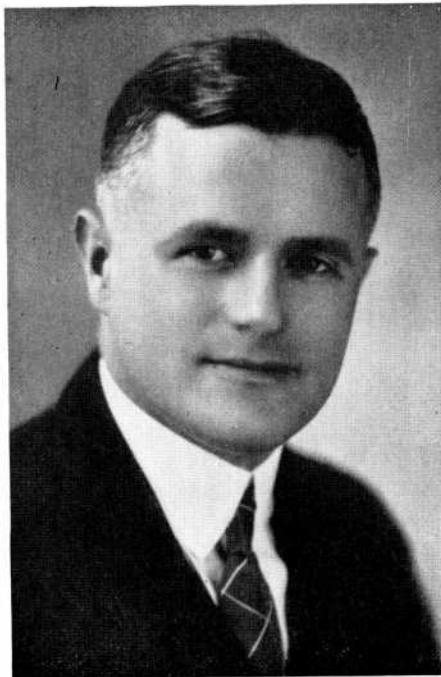
"Training in oratory, in office getting and serving, in student publications and in financial management will be given by the fraternities, from which those with larger talents will naturally gravitate into the larger sphere of university competition. Instead of continuing their present role of spectators, students in ever larger numbers will become participants in their interfraternity contests of basketball, track, tennis, baseball and dozens of other good sports, as yet undeveloped. The graduate will be an alumnus of both his university and his fraternity, and to both in an unconflicting way, he will owe his loyalty and support. This is in essence the Oxford dual system.'

Whether or not you agree with that dream of fifteen years ago, I feel that you must admit by comparing the average chapter of that time with the chapter of today that the college fraternity system is actually going somewhere. The most pronounced trend is toward integration with the college objectives. Most of the features of the chapter of the future which I have just described have to do with the real business of the college.

▲

THE fraternity secretary who doesn't continually in his thinking make the fraternity a part of the general educational system of this country is going to be so far out of step that he will find himself relegated to the file closers. To change the figure, fraternities are either barnacles

(TURN TO PAGE 259, PLEASE)



Dr. John O. Moseley, Central State Teachers College president and a nationally known authority on social fraternity problems.

man's religion is its expression in his everyday life, Mr. Brown believes.

"The religion of any man is best judged by his actual living. I don't believe you could take an equal number of citizens from any community in America and find as high a type of social and personal life as you will find on the average college campus.

"I do not mean by this that I think the college man has a well developed religious life. He does not have. Furthermore, he often turns his back upon religious institutions that conserve the real value of life. But I mean simply that he is a choice reflection of our total American culture and must be judged in such terms. And his religion, evaluated on a basis of its three phases, is by no means hopeless. I personally feel that it is distinctly encouraging.

"I have come to believe in the college man and his religion. I believe in his attempts for the enrichment of life, and I respect his personality. For his religion, whatever its weakness, is motivated by the restless and impetuous search for the realization of his fondest dreams."

▲ ▲ ▲

The College Fraternity on the Offensive

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 246)

or beams on the old ship and if they are barnacles they are going to be scraped off or in due time will slip off of their own accord when the ship gets a chance to rest in clear water.

▲

THE Chapter Advisers are the backbone of a college fraternity. They are the real sergeants of the order to whom the buck is ultimately passed. It is to these heroes on the firing line—alas! too often unnoticed and unsung—that the fraternity should look to to fill places of leadership and responsibility.

I believe that the strengthening of this vital unit of fraternity administration should be given careful consideration by all our organizations. At the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Leadership School in August, 1937, the theme study will be the Alumni Advisory System and at our next National Convention all Chapter Advisers of long and faithful service who can be persuaded to be there will be given full recognition and honor.

In any event, nature's best law is working overtime for them; for they are getting the most out of fraternity anyway because they are putting the most into it. They are the ones who have discovered that the only Fountain of Youth is Youth.

They are the ones who see in fraternity a glorious adventure in corporate living and have made it their magnificent obsession.

▲

ONE of the most marked characteristics of a machine age is the tendency to glorify the commonplace and exalt the trivial. Education has suffered under a regime and the fraternity is doomed to perish unless it is allowed to exist only because of its ideals and spiritual qualities and to become disassociated from all forms of sensual pleasures.

One obligation of all fraternity secretaries is to help place the Founders' Day banquets and other public functions of the fraternity on a higher plane. Their task is to get the leadership of these affairs out of the hands of the perpetual adolescents of the order. Too many of our most substantial brothers—leaders in their community and potential workers for our organization—have been alienated because they have been brought to these parties under the guise of loyalty to their fraternities and then given cheap stuff for entertainment. It is a poor fraternity party where the members cannot entertain themselves.

▲

ANOTHER combination opportunity and duty of the fraternity secretary is to preserve and strengthen the ritualistic aspect of the college fraternity system. Ritualism has always been the distinguishing feature of college fraternities. College fraternities rest upon two broad foundations—gregariousness and idealism. The latter is super-imposed through the medium of a ritual upon the former which is a natural instinct of most members of the human race. Granting then that the first foundation is safe, the task of the organization which is to endure is to uphold its ideals of loyalty, integrity and brotherhood which some day, who knows, may become as instinctive in man as gregariousness.

Without ritual, dormitories and college halls will ultimately drive us to the wall. With it, fraternities will last as long as ritualism strengthens character, and character is the basis of friendship, and the bonds of friendship prevail.

▲

MY whole theory of fellowship is built upon the Oxford system of man in association with his fellow man. It is essentially a give and take relationship. Everyone knows and admits that the social life among men in the various colleges is the distinguishing characteristic of the so-called Oxford training. It is some sort of relationship such as this that I covet for the men of the chapters of our fraternities.

Goodness knows, the men of America

need it badly enough. In their childhood they are tied to the apron strings of their mothers; in the public school system they are dominated by women teachers; during their college lives their spare time and much of the time they cannot spare is taken up with afternoon dates, morning dates, dates to the library, dates to classes, dates between classes, and a lot of other dates that are not on the dean's approved list, and as soon as they get out of college and get a job they get married. They never have one brief period in their lives when they can seriously study their fellowman and learn to associate with him and to appreciate all the splendor and goodness that can be drawn out of a man's character. There is nothing finer in the world than a deep-rooted friendship between man and man, but it takes time, toil, and thought to establish it and it is done most effectively during the college years.

Let us strive to the end that we can motivate all of our chapters with the true ideals of fellowship. The silly high school type of chapter, loosely organized, carelessly existing, believing that the badge and a good time is all there is to fraternity, is the barnacle on the great ship in which we are all riding.

▲

NOW this matter of vision which is so important for all fellowshippers, and especially the navigating officers, is not some elusive Holy Grail to be sought for in bright and shining armor with emblazoned banners held high aloft and trumpets sounding the call; but like the vision of Sir Launfal has to do with the every day, close at home, personal acts of living which assures getting the most out of life.

If a boy comes out of your chapters without having heard that it is bad form to swear in the presence of ladies, that a clean handkerchief is a good pocket accessory, that certain combinations of food and drink do not mix well, that daily exercise is healthful, that cheap literature like a shoddy suit of clothes not only lacks initial value but also brings later embarrassment, that you can get more exhilaration out of your dancing by gliding rather than toddling, that you ought not to pile tomato catsup on certain meats and that cigarettes between courses deaden the taste of food, certain advertisements to the contrary notwithstanding, then he has missed the "follow through" of corporate living.

Those superficial examples are chosen to suggest that before the young knight rides out into the cold hard world, the fraternity is his last chance to learn the subtle technique of far more consequential acts upon the successful performance of which depend the issues of happiness.

"Mountain Men"

by

STANLEY VESTAL

The story of the days when the Old West was New—daring deeds, high heroism of the Indian fighters and fur trappers

Keep your library of Oklahoma Items up to date with these:

Mountain Men
Vestal

They Carried the Torch
Ferguson

101 Ranch
Collings

And many other important contributions to regional and American literature

The University Book Exchange

In the Union

I contend that the great opportunity of the fraternity for the present age is to create a new caste system for collegiate America.

In all times a caste system has been essential to progress. Man may dream of equality and try to legislate an equal division of the spoils, but the hard truth is that we take out of life in proportion to what we put into it. Men will not toil, will not learn the technique of life, will not play the game according to the rules unless their industry, honesty and perseverance are acknowledged and marked as superior by their fellow men. The old nobility of this land of ours has been a nobility of great wealth. This caste of bullion is in some disfavor just now and seems to be passing out into the discard just as former castes based on brawn, birth, brains, bullets and ballots have done and we may even be glimpsing a new social order whose noblemen draw their code from the Beatitudes.

Will this rule of the law of *noblesse oblige* ever come to the fraternities? Very decidedly I think so. Biology teaches us that a child in its mother's womb recapitulates the history of the human race. So in our fraternity chapters we have seen prevail every type of snobbishness and artificial standard of hero worship. But in this rapidly changing world of ours very brief has been the tenure of the bruiser and the boozier, the selfish and the self-elect, the big shots of athletics and campus politics and finally those who based their superiority on being good at nothing at all.

One by one we have seen them demounted and debunked and their places in the chapters taken by a very earnest group of young men who are at the head of things because they are doing things and their acts are deeply tinged with the spirit of service and the fervent desire to make their fraternity a vehicle of self-improvement by conscious self discipline.

In the light of this interpretation of the American college fraternity system let us make the membership badge a mark of great superiority. Let it connote a new order of nobility whose ranks are open to all who will pay the price. Let the fraternity pin mark a man who seeks happiness as the ultimate aim of the temporal life, who knows and has acquiesced in the rules of the pursuit of it, and who by actual living together with his fellow men in the close bonds of an organization vitalized by a high ideal, has demonstrated successful procedures and a sound technique in the great art of living happily and well.

My prayer for all of us as fraternity workers is that before we pass from the stage of life we may see coming on the scene in great numbers of these new aris-

tocrats of life, many of whom from the badges they wear will be recognized as the inheritors of your interpretation and philosophy of the great adventure of corporate living called fraternity.

▲ ▲ ▲

In the Mail . . .

From a letter to Dr. V. E. Monnett, director of the School of Geology:

I'm sorry that I omitted in my letter the facts about what I was doing down here. The reason I am in Colombia is that after circuitous wanderings and strange adventures I happened to be working for the Texas Company last year when the Texas Company and the Socony-Vacuum obtained control of Barco Concession from the Gulf Oil, and was sent down here on a three-year contract as one of the geologists. (I was working for the Texas Company in California).

While in New York City I met a fellow by the name of Jess Price who was also coming to Colombia from the Texas Company. He graduated from O. U. in 1931 as a petroleum engineer and had been working in Texas. Although we were not acquainted in school we had many mutual friends, and needless to say we ran around together in New York City, and had a hilarious time. We also traveled to South America together and had a very nice trip.

I have been doing ordinary geology work down here, catching well samples and also quite a lot of microscopic work which makes me wish that I had taken more micro courses under Prof. Harris when I was in school.

The production developments of the Barco are very unusual and it's impossible for me to give the details as well as they have already been given in the magazine articles that have been written about the Concession. An exceptionally good article was published in the December 21 issue of the *Oil Weekly*, "The Barco Concession, One of the Three Most Interesting Production Developments in the World." No doubt you have already read it.

Price and I have received letters from Lawrence Vittrup who is working in Texas for the Texas Company. He had an opportunity of coming down to the Concession but evidently changed his mind in order to find out about the living conditions here. Personally, I think the living conditions are o.k. The company pays our expenses and the food is exceptionally good. I can't say much for the girls here, as they range from lemon-tinted to coffee-colored.

I have to close now as the mail boat is about ready to leave. At present time I'm at our Puerto Barco camp in the northern part of the Concession. It is located on the banks of the Catatumbo river and shooting alligators is one of our main sports.

Jack Gardner Schoonover,
Puerto Barco, Colombia.

▲

Ralph V. James, '18, send, along with a \$10 check to apply on Life Membership, word that he is purchasing and contracting officer for the Oklahoma City district of the CCC. He is a first lieutenant, quartermaster-reserve.

▲

Dr. V. G. Presson, '21, '23med, of Tucson, Ariz., says he has no news but would like his address on the Life Member Page changed from "Tucson" to "Tucson."
"This a sort of ticklish thing with us Tucsonities," he explains.

It shall be done forthwith, Doctor.