

# American University Life

EDITOR'S NOTE—The following article, written by Gustav E. Mueller, associate professor of philosophy who spent the last year on leave of absence in Switzerland, appeared recently in the magazine *Deutsche Rundschau*, a widely read general magazine in Germany. The article was translated into English for *The Sooner Magazine* by Daisy I. Byler, University student from Oklahoma City.

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**I**F we wish to understand American universities, we must first put aside any idea of a fixed comparison: questions as to whether or not they stand on a level with our own, or whether they tend more to the practical than to scholarship, are idle because they oversimplify the situation; they presume a rigidity of educational system which is not conceivable in that country.

In the flexible democratic life of the States many things stand side by side which here are kept scrupulously apart, and there is no rule by which one can determine which is the better system. Prominent institutions like Harvard or Chicago are private. I should like to discuss here, however, the state university, about which I am the best informed.

Each state supports its state university, which is usually built near a small town on a site possessing the advantages of the country. . . . The states are proud of their campuses, real cities of light, clean buildings situated among tall trees, scientific establishments, the stadium, swimming pool, courts and rooms for sports and games, blooming gardens and shady parks. . . .

The American people have a belief in education, which leads them even to self-sacrifices to obtain it. How rapidly the university develops is well illustrated in the case of the University of Oklahoma. One of the youngest states in the Union, it was not admitted until 1907. Since that time, its university has grown from a small unassuming college to one of the leading schools of the Southwest, numbering 6,200 students. Its scholarly publishing house has made a name for itself through publications furthering knowledge of the Indian, for whom Oklahoma was the last refuge; and the Art School of the University has worked in the same direction to a revelation of the great artistic abilities of the Indian, and both have had their share in the changed Indian policy of the Roosevelt administration.

In contrast to the European, American universities have no theological faculty. However, university life is outwardly conducted according to religious forms. Each academic year is opened and closed with a public religious service. Also, the churches are associated in the maintenance of a School of Religion, which is loosely bound to the university. . . .

The student body is organized in groups. Not until the last semesters can one live alone, and study undisturbed. Thousands of the college students, however, belong to so-called fraternities and sororities. Aside from these private organizations, there are, of course, open clubs: in these students enjoy music, singing and games; questions are discussed, budding writers come together to read their literary efforts to others. A personal relationship between students and their professors is characteristic of university life. Many professors hold weekly "open-house" for their students.

The entire social life of the campus is under the supervision of two officers, high-salaried advisors of students. These counselors iron out conflicts between employers and student workers, for it is frequently the case that students do some sort of work to earn their own way. Even the most personal problems are often taken to the adviser. He rounds out the practical education on the moral side.

Among the professors there exists more good fellowship than in Europe. Every campus has its faculty clubhouse, where they meet on various occasions, for scientific and political lectures and discussions as well as for teas, dances and the like, or they drop in to play tennis or billiards or to read magazines. The club extends hospitality to famous speakers or artists who are guests of the university.

The heart of the university is the college. It goes back to the tradition of the middle ages. In that period there were three faculties which were concerned with the welfare of the body, the welfare of the community, and the welfare of the immortal soul: the faculties of medicine, law and theology. Preceding these was the school of the so-called seven free arts, where one acquired the necessary preparation. This plan of the middle ages is the basis of the duality of English and American universities. As we have seen, in the States theology falls back on the various churches. Besides the remaining faculties of law and medicine have grown up a number of professional schools combined as the graduate school, and the earlier college is maintained as a common preparation for graduate study. Mathematics, science, ancient and modern languages, journalism, social and political science, which in America is strongly emphasized, psychology, sociology, history, theoretical and practical economy, philosophy and the various arts give an idea of the extraordinarily rich and varied picture the college presents. . . .

It is an American joke that the university is a playground, with incidental opportunities for study for those who are bodily weak. However, one must not take

this too literally. Sport is pushed no farther there than it is here in Europe, and when one considers that America has no compulsory military service, one is inclined to the heretical conclusion that European youth have more physical training than the young Americans. Purely physical training is not at all over-emphasized. Any one-sided development would be contrary to the American conception of life, which strives for full expression of all a man's capacities, as far as they can be freely developed side by side.

I think I can assume that the growing importance to the world of American science is well-known. But it does seem as if the cultural activity of the American university is still unrecognized. The dramatic department of the university sees to it that the drama takes living form. Creative writing is encouraged in the English department. Foreign languages have their clubs which foster conversation in German, French and Spanish. At the University of Oklahoma the department of foreign languages conducts an unusual quarterly "Books Abroad," which is published by the University Press and is circulated throughout the entire world.

The ideal of the American university is no longer that of the university of the middle ages, whose four faculties encompassed universal knowledge. This idea is replaced by the conception of the complete man. This conception is the unifying principle in the diversity of phases of the man's development. It is the bridge which spans his contradictory life-interests.

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#### Boat ride

The O.U. Association of St. Louis, Missouri, planned a boat ride on the Mississippi River Sunday night, June 19, with dancing, bridge, singing and plain visiting scheduled for entertainment.

The committee in charge consisted of Robert M. Sayre, Ralph G. Harder, Mrs. Gaylord Epperson Landau, Mrs. L. J. Woltering, Mrs. Bessie Weaver Way and W. B. Cram. A mimeographed announcement with clever illustrations was sent to all St. Louis Sooners whose names were available.

"I am proud to remind you that we are in our third year of complete organization," said Mrs. Woltering in a letter to Alumni Secretary Ted Beaird. "The new officers are most enthusiastic and I feel that we will carry on for another year."

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Miss Leota Davis, '38, now working toward a master's degree in speech at the University of Wisconsin, has been awarded a \$450 scholarship by that institution.

GIBBS-MALTBY: Miss Marjorie Gibbs and James Rockwood Maltby, Jr., '38bus, were married November 13, 1937, in Dallas, Texas. Mrs. Maltby was a member of Chi Omega sorority at Oklahoma A. and M. College, and Mr. Maltby was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity at the University. They will reside in Bartlesville.

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