

SOONER MAGAZINE

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Riding the Sooner Range

By CAPT. TED BEAIRD

THEY TOOK it over at noon today and even at this late evening hour—some ten hours later—one can “feel” the significance of the move! They (the War Manpower Commission, acting jointly for the War and Navy departments) took over the age-old Yale University.

By a twist of fate and war orders from higher command, I find myself here tonight to watch the early days of the “evolution.” Assigned for special duties in connection with the Army Air Corps for a period of fifteen days some 3,500 miles from my “home base”—Pendleton Field, Oregon—I shall enjoy my tour of duty in New Haven, Connecticut in more than one way. It shall be a privilege to be on the “inside” watching the transition of one of America’s major institutions of higher learning swinging under a democracy to an all-out war effort. With years of civilian work in university activities behind me and with the hope that in the years following the peace to come I may be privileged to participate again in rebuilding for higher education, this drastic move is being studied from every point of view. Throughout all of these United States, as of this hour, the “evolution” is taking place. For the duration, major colleges and universities will use facilities and teaching staffs largely in training men in uniform. Two hundred eighty-one “taken over” in the move of today causes me to wonder at this far distant eastern seaboard point tonight, “How is my own institution, the University of Oklahoma, faring in the change of the day?” She will weather the storm! Reverse after reverse is in store for us—much ground must be given, many points must be taken, but the foundation is strong and out of all this extreme effort will rise a stronger University in the years to come. Just as Yale—whose famous College Green and age-old buildings I see to the immediate left as these lines are being written—the “bulk” of her towers, chapels and halls of learning in this 95 per cent blacked-out coastal city—listen to her chimes (left as a memorial dozens of years ago to a famous son) sound out this Sunday evening. Vesper service with “Onward Christian Soldiers.” Just as she survived, so will many others—though the price will be hard to pay. Yale, which survived seven wars, including the Revolution, Civil War and World War One is tonight on its way to help pay the price of making democracy safe—so is O. U. This afternoon (and so it will be for all hours to come until a permanent peace shall have been established), I observed commanding officers of high Army rank rapidly setting up an Army command where eminent professors and administrators had dispensed routine higher education but a few days before. Young American soldiers (indeed many many) in formation executing routine Army training—Army guards and M. P.s on posts;

America’s young manhood being classified, assigned, and starting into a grim task. Army officers of all ranks busily engaged at their posts of duty. Soldiers from every cross section of American life being assigned their bunks in the age old dorms (now Army barracks) where only “the select” could dare to sleep before. Officers quarters being hastily set up where commissioned men representing every profession in American life will fall into their “trundle bunks” and sleep more soundly than many of them have for years. All this in age-old Yale—that’s America training to defeat the enemy so there may be peace and quiet and homes—unmolested and undisturbed homes—once more!

And—is it not consoling, when the crisis arose; when everything dear to American tradition is involved; when the foundation of our nation is being shattered—higher educational institutions answered the challenge! Out of it all will grow something more lasting than peace—the spirit of American citizenship will rebuild and heal the scars caused by the momentary sacrifice!

It’s a strange path—this Riding the Sooner Range—in recent months! Six months ago tonight, at this exact evening hour, army orders caused me to step off an Eastern airliner at Miami Beach, Florida. There for weeks in the midst of intensive training, I saw this government of ours move with lightening rapidity in taking over famous hotels, lands, golf courses, resorts—saw them taken over one day and before nightfall converted into a training center, hospital or emergency supply station. Some weeks later Army orders again put me on duty at stations of the extreme West Coast—Sacramento Air Depot, McClellan Field, Camp Stockton, California, and Pendleton Field, Oregon. The significant feature along this Range “ramble” has been the realization of what a well balanced education meant to the enlisted men and officers who are contributing their part in the armed forces. Ready adjustment, grasp of situations arising hourly and the spirit of teamwork are only a few of the items in evidence with this group of Americans. The performance of this group of soldiers (hundreds of thousands of them coming from all of our leading universities and colleges) answer the old criticism of too many non-essentials in the educational training of our youth! Indeed, they have answered the challenge in every theater of war today. The interesting items naturally are to meet in person or observe from reports the work of the thousands of O. U. chaps in the midst of this effort. Hourly historical items are being recorded of their contributions. So they are the boys who have traversed a strange path (and never looked back), and I look to the future, when in the hour of peace—more Riding the Sooner Range can be done with them!

The Cover

Representative of the increasing entrance of women into professional fields is blonde Vivian Mills, civil engineering senior and daughter of engineering professor M. E. Mills.

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