

SOONER MAGAZINE

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The Veteran Can Help

"You're telling us what to do now, but some of these days there'll be enough of us here to tell you what to do."

This statement was made last fall by an ex-serviceman to the faculty co-ordinator of the veterans program on a southern college campus. It indicates the friction which developed in some schools between the veterans and the faculties when the first of the students returned under the G.I. Bill and the Rehabilitation Bill.

Happily such friction has not arisen at the University of Oklahoma, for its administration has welcomed requests, suggestions and criticism from the men who have come back from the war with specific needs and definite ideas about what they want in the way of a college education. It would be misleading to imply that the University is re-vamping its set-up to meet the whims of a small portion of its student body. But gradual change and modernization of methods and practices must be inherent in a vital educational program; and the ideas of a mature, serious and hard-working group of undergraduates cannot, in fairness, be ignored.

The GI's on college campuses represent only a small percentage of the veterans who have returned to civilian status in the United States. Likewise, the hundred or more veterans at the University represent a small portion of the total student body; yet they qualify to pass judgment on the situation in which they find themselves.

Although they have been out of the classroom three or more years, and the majority of them were beginning their college courses, they completed the spring term at the University with a grade average of 1.38. This represents a tremendous lot of hard work. They are older, by three or more years, than the average pre-war student, and the maturity they have gained in long months of training and in the crisis of combat cannot be measured in years. They have had ample opportunity during their three or four years of waiting to pick up the threads of their interrupted education, to think about the place they will take in society.

One out of every four men coming back from service is married, and half of them have small children. These obligations have added to the seriousness of their attitude toward their University courses. There have been almost no incidents among them for the conduct committee to worry over.

With this background, the veterans have not been backward about expressing their opinions. What is the University going to do about housing for married students? What about health safeguards? Vocational advisement? Refresher training for the student who has a hard time getting back into study routine? Training for the man who has hearing, sight or speech defects because of training or combat injuries? Emergency loans when subsistence checks are delayed? What about training in widely separate fields to prepare for a career that will permit this particular veteran to hold his own in a competitive world despite his handicaps?

Individuals and committees representing the campus post of the American Legion have talked with President George L. Cross frequently, and he has listened eagerly to their comments and suggestions. Fundamentally, their questions involve the welfare not only of ex-service men and their families, but of all students. Later generations of married students in low income brackets will benefit by the housing program through which the University will meet the needs of veterans this fall. The faculty is acting now on a long-contemplated testing and vocational guidance program. Veterans, and other students, during the past term brushed up on their math and sciences and languages in a revived tutorial program. Speech and reading clinics are past the planning stage. Advise-ment is being re-vitalized, and teaching methods are under close scrutiny.

Far from proving a source of conflict on the campus, the veteran, with valid suggestions, is proving to be a real help in building the University of Oklahoma of the future; and he is encouraged to keep on talking. —FAYETTE COPELAND

Paris Celebrates

Maj. Reginald Williams, '42law, Bethany, was stationed in St. Germain-en-Laye, a suburb of Paris, when V-E day came. The following passages are quoted from a letter to his wife as a Sooner's description of the festivities in Paris when that momentous day came.

On the night before the official announcement of V-E day, and while Paris was buzzing with the news of the premature Associated Press break and announcements over the German radio, Major Williams went into Paris. "I walked down the Champs Élysée a way, and sat at a sidewalk cafe table, and watched the people of Paris emerge from the sidestreets onto the Champs to promenade," he wrote.

"About 9:45 a huge roar went up from the assembling throng as a flare, arching a high trajectory, fell squarely atop the Arc de Triomphe, which immediately burst into full floodlight. That was the second time the Arc had been lighted since France fell. The first time was the day of the liberation of Paris.

"I expressed regret that I should have to take an early train back to St. Germain that night, but a Frenchman comforted me with the assurance, 'never mind, this celebration will last at least two or three days.' . . . It was after I got home that I heard B.B.C. say definitely that the news of the surrender would be broadcast at 3 o'clock the following afternoon. Sleep was easy the rest of that night."

The next night Major Williams went back into Paris to join in the celebration with a friend who had a car. "We got in his car and made the side streets until we got to Avenue Friedland, which we followed to the Place de l'Étoile. . . . I had to stand on the running board to keep people off the hood, the top, the fenders and the bumpers. . . . They thought I was a stuffy piece of brass, because I wouldn't let them pile all over the car like they did the jeeps. But when I'd yell, 'Monsieur! Quelle route à Tokio?' they'd laugh, make way and wave us on and say, 'tout droit!'"

At Notre Dame scores of people stood in small, quiet groups, occasionally singing in low tones.

Wrote Major Williams, "Along the rail at about five-yard intervals, soldiers, some in combat field uniforms, were standing looking alternately at the Cathedral itself and at its ghostly reflection rippling in the night-blackened Seine. . . . One soldier finally breathed an involuntary stage whisper, and broke into an audible sob. We brushed our eyes unashamedly and walked back to the car."

By the next evening the holiday spirit still prevailed, wrote Major Williams, though with some restraint. Crowds and traffic were better controlled. "Paris was beginning to settle down."

The Cover

Maybe summer school isn't really this idyllic, but Mary James, freshman from Oklahoma City, ensconced in the clover of the South Oval, makes it look pretty nice. Photograph by Richard Meek.

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