

The Quiet Ones

In an attempt to analyze the 1955 Senior, the author has concluded that he is a "Silent Senior." Silent. Smart and Scared. Perhaps you won't agree, but his analysis should prove interesting reading.

By ROBERT TALLEY, '55

YOU WATCH him stroll along, books slung carelessly under an arm, hundreds of times a day. But do you know him, this Silent Senior? Do you understand him? What fears make his heart pound and his stomach clench into a dry knot? What makes him chuckle—tremble? Do you know why he is the Silent Senior? Perhaps you should.

Perhaps you should see behind the casual shell that takes, on the outside, the world in one long stride, and, on the inside, wonders if the step seems firm or faltering.

This Silent Senior may be man or woman; their problems are much the same, their fears, too, and their hopes and their ambitions. The man, however, faces the worst, and conversely probably the best, so let's consider him.

He's bright. He's had to be. Four—or is it five years?—he has been grinding in the grist of mass education, knowledge fired in staccato at a brain that often moved in slow beat. He's smart and he's scared. But then, maybe he's scared because he's smart.

At the end of May he steps over his point of no return, graduation; he will grope past it, unsteady.

In his thoughts the senior can look back and understand his past; through its lacings he can watch the world beside him, yet even in the brightest sunlight, what is ahead shows only as dark webbing. He may strain to penetrate it; nothing comes back, nothing ahead reflects.

Only darkness. Once there may have been a day when a man throwing off the medieval gowns that let his family know he had attained something at college could stand back a moment, swell his chest with one deep breath, and pile in and make a way for himself, Horatio Alger style. Days when he might plan ahead, days when his gaze had only a thin gauze shading out the details.

Days when a West lay waiting for conquest, instead of straining under a panting, overcrowded California. Days when towns boomed on desert land, where \$50.00 and credit could be seeds for a million. The 20's when stocks sailed and the raccoon coat spelled a new Stutz for the College Man. Or is this true? Did those times ever live or are they drawn by pens dipped too deeply into imagination?

If they were alive, they have passed now with the glory of exploration. American professions and business opportunities have taken on the more settled look of a throne held down by a big man.

To be king you have to move him, but he's heavy and he's been there a while and he likes it and he gets bigger at every meal. The college man then has to suppress his ambition and become a subject and wait until the big man stands to stretch and can be shoved off

balance. Or he must sit by until the king grows too large for the chair and heaves himself into a larger one. It is a long time for the college man to wait, especially since he has to keep strong on food the big man cares to leave on the plate.

Pessimistic? Maybe, but such pessimism is the stuff a senior's thoughts are made of. He wonders, and speculation finds a gloomy trail easily. Dreams once nourished lie forgotten, those mirages that showed that every man who desires can work hard and marry the boss' beautiful daughter. His dreams gone, the senior edges his way into the reality of pragmatic life; he has seen the signs.

"That sociology class," he remembers, slumping into a chair. ". . . everybody can't be successful . . . or happily married, not with these divorce rates . . . skid row—somebody goes there . . . one out of 12 end up in mental institutions . . . only one in a handful go to college . . . !"

His questions and his thoughts draw lines at the corners of his mouth, and bunch usually smooth eyebrows. "What about war, and when will some goof with his finger on a button decide to push it? And who's going to get killed in this one? And what about the military if there *is* peace? What happens when I get out—go in again when a shooting match does start?"

And the senior, now the very Silent Senior, questions: "Should I go out on my own for a living, or work for somebody else? Should I gamble on joining a new operation or spend 30 years working up in an old one? Which, the ulcer struggle for wealth or the moderate income with a guaranteed pension in Florida?"

He pushes deeper into the chair, suddenly uncomfortable. Quickly he stops words from forming, but the question hammers out anyway, unworded. . . "Would I live long enough to get to Florida?"

He questions, his mind retracing four years and 40-odd courses and he wonders. "Is this what I've learned? Is this hodgepodge of vague ideas my education?" Grimly he looks back for facts, dates, something to tie onto, something he can say he knows when the time comes to compete. "Chaucer—*Canterbury Tales* . . . the amoeba-protzoa . . . monoliths, batholiths . . . buenos dias . . . Malthusian theory—starvation."

The facts flood into his consciousness jumbled, only a general haze of what he is supposed to know. He questions: "Can I be a success? These things I've been planning for for so long. Will I get them: the house, the maid to help my wife with the kids? That summer cottage. . . ?"

He questions. He questions himself, everyone

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include all allied fields. Not only are adequate courses given in acting, but the requirements are such that the student receives training in lighting, make-up, scene design, and costuming. Since the professional theatre is a highly competitive and overcrowded field, the student is equipped to find expression in what he thinks is his secondary interest, but what may prove to be his primary interest.

It is interesting to note that the art students are often more adept in make-up than the drama students, just as the drama students are sometimes more imaginative in interpretive dance than the dance majors.

The annual opera which is presented by the combined departments, shows the student, as no series of lectures could, the interdependence of the arts. The Drama Department executes the costumes and the sets, many of which have been designed by the Art Department, and the leading roles will be sung by students in the Music Department.

In regard to the drama school specifically, it has a very thorough laboratory system. Throughout the four year period, the student is given opportunity to appear in five major faculty-directed plays per season which require rehearsals every night for a period of four or five weeks. No credit hours are received for this work. It is all extra-curricular.

More than one semester I have been in rehearsal almost every

night, and have had the opportunity to appear in plays by Eugene O'Neill, Shakespeare, and Sophocles. I have run the gamut of roles from a nun in Sierra's *The Cradle Song* to a "shady lady" in O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness*, and from the fat, bawdy nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* to the noble, martyred princess in *Antigone*.

In addition to these five major productions a year, the student may also appear in plays directed by graduate students and three one-act plays that are given weekly. These one-acts serve a dual purpose. Not only do they furnish acting roles, but they are directed by juniors and seniors. Each upper class student is required to direct two for the class in production.

In this class the student not only learns what goes on back stage and on stage, but also the front of the house business. He is required to make up a hypothetical case in which he must figure the gross, loss, tickets, rental copyright law, royalties, salaries, etc.

A University teaches where a small private school or stock company only coaches.

The time is slowly passing when a child must be born in a trunk and grow up in the theatre to become an actor. Many theatrical employment sheets now inquire about college training.

The old argument about whether the purpose of a degree is to gain a cultural education or to learn to earn a living has been solved. I feel that on June 5 when I receive my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, I will be qualified in both respects.

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around him, his place in the world. Right now he thinks he's pretty well set. Girl, maybe a car and if not, prospects of buying one, some clothes, friends—and a college education, whatever that means. And he goes about his life, eating, catching a few hours sleep, his thoughts mostly occupied by the University and the slow haste that is college.

Most of the time he's light hearted. Yet underneath—and you can spot it in the Union when he drinks his coffee alone, or when conversation lulls—there is that emptiness, that uncertainty, and he wonders. At such times, withdrawn into his own thoughts, he thinks he can fathom a little of what is ahead. He is not sure. He can see the girl in the telephone company office, seated, eyes smiling at him through rhinestone covered glasses.

He can visualize her saying, "That's for the installation, and we'll need the \$10.00 deposit, of course." She smiles then around teeth that only yesterday were freed of their braces, "And you can easily give us the three references, can't you?"

He can visualize the banker, too, the vice president in the dark blue suit, engraved nameplate on an oversized mahogany desk. "Glad to have you with us. You can be assured that your account will receive our closest attention." He grins his best Kiwanis grin, "And by the way, we'd like you to remember our friendly loan service—a low seven per cent, with . . . ah, of course, the usual small service charges."

And with a chuckle, he can see the garage mechanic, grease on his chin, wiping heavy-knuckled hands on his coveralls, "So this is your first car—that's fine!" He pauses thoughtfully, "You know, just to be on the safe side we *should* pfnarfle that gubodnik. I'd hate for it to go out on you."

And the apartment manager, "Just fill out this application . . . now, you did say you don't drink, didn't you?"

And the suit salesman, "After all, this is Stratford-on-the-Glop worsted and you know, as I do, that every successful man. . ."

And he can picture the job interviewer, a smiling grey-haired man who would rather be called an employment counselor, the smile fled now, muttering, "And experience. Besides college, what *experience* have you had?"

And before his vision fades out into other thoughts, the Junior Chamber of Commerce membership chairman, rubbing his hands and giving a dentist's view of all but his wisdom teeth. "You *are* just the kind of man we want—young, intelligent, energetic, you know—the man on his way up." He pauses for inspiration, laying a friendly hand on the senior's shoulder, adding confidentially, "Say, I know just the spot for you. We've set up a committee that if you play your cards right and work hard could lead you straight to the presidency."

The senior gets up from his chair, and wanders about the room. He knows those are trifles, the parsley on the pork chop. The meat of life remains hidden—the successes, the failures, the time when he may have to realize for him glory will never come: the time he must restudy his text of life, with emphasis on the chapter concerning how to live with himself.

Already he's perused the first of that chapter and he's gotten a reasonable idea how far his energy and brainpower will carry him. Perhaps he doesn't admit it, but he knows all things being somewhat level, if not equal, he will do about as well outside of school as he has in. Again, he may not admit it but his mold has produced all it's going to produce—unless, he's an Einstein concealed, and that hope is a little too vain for him to cling to.

So his form is his, and he puzzles what he can do with it. He must leave the security of four years of relative gravy, four years on a treadmill, and he wonders, and he wants to find out.

He is challenged by something vague called the world outside, the one people tell him he's going to have to run, the one he's supposed to conquer. And school has not been all free beer.

If the family has supported him, he wants out from under;

support has not been without control: "No, I don't think it wise that you spend for that. Are you sure you would do well in that major? And how have your grades been coming, not letting classes slide are you?"

If he has pulled his way hand-over-hand up the college rope, along with it juggling books and enough cash to eat on, the senior craves to catch onto the supporting rafter and work his way along that for a while. The edges may be sharp but his load has been heavy and he, at least, would enjoy a change.

Too, the student-professor relationship has lost its thrill. He has found them men, some greater, some less. And he's tired of

sitting, of receiving, absorbing; he wants to give out some of it—he wants to *do* something! Build something. Tear down something. Make something—anything—happen!

But he must wait out graduation, military service. So you watch him stroll along, books slung carelessly under an arm, hundreds of times a day, but do you know him, this Silent Senior? Do you understand him, what fears make his heart pound and his stomach clench into a dry knot? What makes him chuckle, tremble? Why is he the Silent Senior?

Why is he the Silent Senior?

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we are on that subject, that 93 per cent of the lettermen since Coach Wilkinson has been here have been graduating. Many of them are in the Business School, Geology, Engineering, and there are several of them in the Education School. On the average I think you will find most students are taking fairly hard courses. And I might point out that you have to be passing 60 per cent with a C and you have to be making normal progress toward a degree also to keep eligible.

ED: Do you carry a reduced course load most of the time?

CARL: No, I don't think that is true. I have been carrying 18 hours during football season and I think that most of the other boys have. There are some boys on our baseball team this year that are carrying 19. They need it to graduate and so they are taking that number. But I think you will find that most carry at least 16.

ED: Do most of the athletes graduate in a four year period?

CARL: Well, I wouldn't say most of them. A large percentage of them do but there is also a percentage that need an extra semester.

ED: With all the hours that you carry and all the time you spend on the field and off the field, what sort of grades do you make?

CARL: Well I have a little shy of 3.00 average.

ED: Just for the record what is your major field of study.

CARL: I'm one of the boys that is in the Education School. I plan to teach history.

ED: How about some of the other athletes that you know—do we have any outstanding scholars?

CARL: Yes we do. Bob Hillis is a boy that has had a 4.00 average for just about as long as I can remember. And he, I might point out, also, is a pre-med student. Robert Bell, a freshman on this year's

team also has a 4.00 average. We have had several boys since I have been at the University go to the Med School. We've had Kent Braden, Chet Bynum, George Cornelius, and several other boys that have made Med School since I have been here.

ED: What do most of the players major in? Is there one particular field?

CARL: No. We have a large percentage of our boys in the Geology School. We've had several in Engineering. Frank Silva was a boy that was in the Engineering School, and he made very high grades. We have a large percentage in the Business School. There is a smaller percentage in the Education School than one might imagine. We have them in just about every school on the campus.

ED: Do many boys drop out of athletics if they feel that sports are affecting their grades?

CARL: Well, we have had several boys drop out, and like I pointed out a while ago, if a boy doesn't make his grades to be eligible, he will be dropped from the squad.

ED: What about a boy that has exceptionally good grades and is so conscientious that he feels that athletics is hindering him?

CARL: We've had several boys do that. I pointed out Bob Hillis. I don't think that he could have improved his grades any, but he did drop off the squad.

ED: Walt Morrison—wasn't he one?

CARL: Walt Morrison was another boy. He was on the basketball squad, and he dropped out.

IS THERE A 12TH MAN?

ED: Carl, you hear a lot of talk about school spirit. From your personal standpoint at the games how does the student support or lack of it influence your performance.

CARL: Well, I think that student support is very important. I might point out that a few years back Texas A&M was

playing the University of Texas and the male student body was in the game so much that they called it the 12th man. We went to Texas A&M my freshman year and it was a constant roar the whole time. We were beaten. I think that school spirit and student participation really helps. I definitely feel that here at the University that the students are beginning to take part more and more every year and I think that it is a good deal.

ED: You are playing football and baseball here. Because support is stronger in football and less in other sports, how would that affect the fellows in each of the different sports?

CARL: I think some of the boys in sports other than football probably feel that the sport is treated like a minor sport. Myself, I feel that we are given support in both sports I play. I don't think that we are supported as much in baseball as we are in football. But I do feel that baseball is a major sport here. And I might point out that Oklahoma has been winning the "All Sports" trophy in the Big Seven for several years and football is only a minor part of what it takes to win. You take ten sports, I believe, and if you win first in any of them you are given a zero and on down till last place counts six points against you. So you see that football is only one-tenth of it, and we have been winning it every year. I think that we have the best over-all sports program that is available in the Big Seven.

ED: Do the players feel like the student body will only support a winner?

CARL: I think you will find throughout life that people want a winner. Myself, I like to be on a winning team and I like to go out and support a winning team. However, a team that is losing needs more support than a team that is winning. And I feel that we all should support a team that is having a little tough luck and maybe try to help them get back on a winning streak.