

They've Taken the Rah Out of College

By LOUISE BEARD MOORE, '27ba

SOMEONE'S always writing a piece about what's become of collegiate pep since students grew up.

It is hardly a gauge of contemporary student spirit to cite three-alarm seasonal outbreaks such as the annual madness in "Big D" or the 1952 spring panty raid.

Where has the rah-rah gone? Into the same limbo, we presume, with eating goldfish for a gag. Almost nobody dies for dear old Siwash on Saturday afternoons anymore. The martyrs are mostly down on the playing field or in Bud's dressing rooms, unless you count the sweating bandsters and the stadium knots of supercharged alums, running their blood pressures past safe middle-aged diastolic points with yells for another touchdown.

Few college students wave, or pin on their walls, felt pennants any more, and only a handful screeches around campus corners in absurdly lettered jalopies.

Which is not to say students now are any less loyal to their alma mater than their moms and pops were in their day. They're simply a quieter breed, unless we miss our guess.

The editor of the school newspaper here at O.U. said this fall in an editorial on school spirit, "If there are any more loyal students anywhere than those who are enrolled, or have attended, the University of Oklahoma, we have never seen them. We have seen a number of students and alumni from other schools throughout the country do a magnificent job of making fools of themselves in rah-rahing their alma mater, but it didn't prove much to us."

He pointed out the GI bill and the state of the world and the nation have brought older, more serious students to the campus and "people of this type are not as likely to strain themselves in rousing cheers."

The editor is, incidentally, a four-year navy veteran himself, with a wife and baby, and dead serious about school. His punch line in the editorial wrapped it up, "Whether it's athletically or scholastically, we think Sooners are mighty proud and loyal. How we wish to show our enthusiasm is, after all, our own choice."

There you have it . . . "our own choice."

Students today, we observe, are making choices for themselves, sooner and oftener, than we did a generation ago. Getting an education is so much more, these years, a methodical business than it used to be. It may be a little sad, but the sophomore today is often more mature than the senior of 20 to 25 years ago, especially the men. You can hardly spot a freshman, by appearance, on the campus now—by midterm anyhow. We don't even call them college boys anymore. It is inaccurate and sloppy to call a young man who fought in Korea, here to get an education, a boy. And the coed in love with him has grown up faster, too.

IT is somewhat like being a female Rip Van Winkle, this return as a faculty member to a campus one left as a graduate nearly 30 years ago. Some buildings and a few oldtime faculty members remain invincible, but so much is changed, stepped up, automated, and IBM'ed.

Admit you attended the University of Oklahoma in the "Roaring Twenties" and today's crop thinks you Charleston-ed to class, either in a bucket hat and four-inch spit-curls, or in a belt-backed suit with peg top pants. In a recent faculty take-off skit, a coed burlesqued a lady prof (O.U. '26) in a costume straight out of a Charles Dana Gibson drawing. What's a half century off, when you are looking backard from 19?

A student asked the other day, when he glanced at a mid-'20 diploma from O.U. on my office wall, "Were you a flapper?" No, but we knew some jellybeans. Nobody, if we recall, admitted SHE was a flapper, or HE was a jellybean, at the time. But other people were. F. Scott Fitzgerald said so and the appellations still echo down the corridors of memory, as ill fitting as the garments we wore. That's it, in the middle of an era everybody thinks it is somebody else who's typical and one's own self remains intrinsic.

Dropped from the activity list today are some endearing old customs of the campus "back when." Hazing freshmen, for instance. I don't suppose there is a fraternity man currently in Norman who knows

The author, a campus wheel in the mid-Twenties, considers the school spirit of then and now from post as faculty member.

there used to be a taxi driver with an accurate count of the planks in the late unlamented, wobbly old Canadian River bridge south of town. Sharp pledges used to beat the system during hell week if they knew the right taxi man.

Haven't seen a coed in the contemporary layout who looks like she is wearing all her clothes backward for a week prior to the sacred Greek rite of initiation. A keen stunt in the '20's was to require a girl pledge to wear a hen's egg intact in her bosom, as a hell week penance. Failure to proceed with caution resulted in exactly what you are thinking.

Last spring some 800 pledges of the men's and women's Greek letter groups at O.U. staged a mass work day at Central State Hospital. They put in a full, fat Saturday washing windows, cleaning the grounds, painting, and making curtains. Somewhere along the line since our day they've left hell week foolishness to the junior high kids. It's been years since we heard rumors of the charming old custom of staging a "murder" in a frat house, with two bottles of catsup for blood on a victim's white shirt, a plant for a scared freshman after studyhall.

On the other hand, who today bakes a lemon pie with meringue as tall and fluffy as Quong's at the Sigma Chi house in about 1925? There isn't a Cadillac on campus today that can wow 'em like Katie Dean's white Packard (wasn't it?) she drove down from Guthrie for rush week in 1923. If you recall, student automobiles went home, totally, with the opening of classes, to comply with the no-car rule.

In 1955 they're talking, come full circle, a version of the same with so many student cars congesting traffic on campus streets and packing parking lots that authorities foresee a not-too-distant edict banning cars from campus proper. Not a few students today, mostly veterans with a wife and budget, ride bicycles to classes and make better time than their compatriots on four wheels.

Speaking of transportation, what student in his convertible today has anything like the fun and panic of riding from Oklahoma

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City through Moore to Norman on the old Oklahoma Railway Co. interurban? They used to rock it, remember, and get the guy-wire trolley off-current to devil the combination motorman-chaperon enthroned on his wicker seat up front. It used to cost 45 cents to ride the conveyance, or was it 45 minutes to "the City"? They commute a four-lane highway nowadays and can almost catch a first run movie in Oklahoma City between afternoon labs.

Whatever became of Blue Pencil, the English club which allegedly limited its

membership only to those enrolled in the University who could write their name? A cartoon in an old Sooner yearbook limned the club about 30 years ago with a drawing of a pledge line that reached from campus to outlying Norman. And when, since 1923, has there been a furor on campus to equal the date boycott propelled by *Oklahoma Daily* editor Mike Monroney?

You'd be surprised, alums, how few students now on campus ever heard of the *Whirlwind* humor magazine. Lev Edwards and Lynn Riggs and Buff Burtis and Hal Crouch made it whirl for sure, you will recollect. The late and reasonably unlamented *Covered Wagon* was its modern

counterpart, but got put in the deep freeze about four years ago for financial woes and being overzealous with word and cartoon.

Speaking of the old days, it pegs you a has-been, I reckon, to remember we had a whale of a time staging the annual Sooner Burlesque show. Today's neon lit, smooth variety show, Sooner Scandals, bears singularly little resemblance to the old skit which roasted the pants off the faculty. One girl student almost got suspended for her raw imitation of the dean of women, caricatured in plowhand boots.

We started out to say they are more serious students now than we were. But we doubt they have half the fun. It is not solely that so many are veterans or will be shortly.

We saw a young man student the other morning in the Union cafeteria. He had his two preschool children along for breakfast while his wife made her 8 o'clock. He met her at 9, swapped off the kids, and ran to his own first class.

If you're measuring student school spirit these days, you may have to count the cheers minus the above young father who doesn't make it to the stadium because his wife has a Saturday job and he babysits while he works on lab papers.

One thing for sure, the college student today, while facing an altered and tensely geared world, has considerably less uneasiness about landing a job after his degree than his father had. Nobody in the '20's published page ads in national magazines about the crying need for engineers. There weren't any teams of industrial interviewers with heavy on-campus schedules of interviews for prospective graduates. Tell a fresh graduate today that \$25 a week was a respectable starting salary for an inexperienced, though college trained, hand about 30 years back, and he won't laugh, but he may think you are kidding.

Come to think of it, why not assume that, conceivably, one of the peripheral reasons the current college man or woman is of such fine stripe, by and large, is that he or she had some pretty fair folks at home who steered him around some of the foibles and fallacies they lived through when they were young.

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within an hour, a battalion of red bereted paratroopers, the government's crack troops, appeared on the scene as reinforcements. Firing continued until about five the next morning, when dawn revealed a victory for the government forces; the first victory of an untried army.

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