

Search for Purpose

By PERRY ROBINSON, '57

IT'S A STRANGE CONDITION, this lack of purpose that grips so many college students today. Purpose is the highest achievement of all, for with a recognized intent, man may take advantage of his abilities and skills to prosecute and obtain, achieving "peace of mind," and "security," and "happiness," all of which we talk and read and hear about but never seem to experience except in some fleeting form.

A senior at O.U. is surrounded by brilliant individuals, both in the teaching ranks and in his own element, the student body. He may pick from a thousand and one courses; he may choose any one of hundreds of vocations. Finally, he chooses, and he studies and "sweats" tests. He makes grades and his folks are proud and smile benignly when he comes home. They display his finely-clothed body and his stock of clever sayings, expertly shaped by psychology and philosophy courses, to relatives and friends.

He progresses satisfactorily, and in four years he is approaching graduation. And then, the present, which always before has been secure in academic progress and the parental pocketbook, is now, and it is time for him to decide how and what he is to do when he receives the piece of paper that says he has a college education. Suddenly, the reality of adulthood stares him in the eye. And then he asks himself, "What do I want to do?" and then perhaps, "What do I want out of life?" and "Will I be happy doing that?" This agony of self-analysis is more than he can bear, for he realizes, perhaps, that he really doesn't know what he wants.

This happens to someone every day at the University of Oklahoma.

More frightening than physical pain is the gnawing urge for something indefinable. College men and women are not always the blithe, sophisticated products they seem to be. In many cases, their attitude and posturing is a shield thrown up to cover the fear that people will recognize that they have little faith in anything, including themselves. And when the shell cracks, a relentless honesty comes pouring out.

The question goes much deeper than the choice of an occupation. One must carefully discern between cause and effect. Random questioning reveals that most students are searching for security. Yet, the majority fail to examine why they want security and what will ultimately bring security.

There are no ominous overtones to the student's lack of intent. Each person must find himself before he "finds" anything else. At times, it appears that the average student regards thinking about such personal abstractions a waste of time, a weakness, a condition to be stifled before it has a chance to break the happy sequence of each day on the campus. But one wonders, when students are alone at night, unable to stem thought, whether they place personal motives before the glare of honest examination.

Students have a horror of being referred to as "fouled up" or the stronger, "really fouled up." For when a person reveals a chink in the armor of blase, party-going sophistication he has built, he is in imminent danger of being described by his fellow students as "fouled up." Perhaps, the choice of a vocation is but a shallow indication of the real indecision that lies beneath. But it is an outward indication, one that can be seen on the puzzled faces of enrolling students.

Today's college student lives at a pace that defies normalcy. Convention is not a word but a wall. When everyone buys pants with buckles on the back or flat, golf-type hats just because someone got it started, then convention is a real discipline.

Beset by the fast pace of modern living, a world of specialists, the unsettled international situation, economic pressure and a world where success is mandatory, the modern collegiate tends to dismiss all with an airy wave of the hand and attempt to forget. But he can't forget, because he knows then that the pressures are destroying his ability to understand himself.

All this and more, and young men and women will continue to graduate and live happily ever after, in vine-covered cottages or condemned tenements, whichever is their destiny. And a new generation will undergo the vagaries of maturation.

'55ms, Norman), Irvington, New York, selected the name Eve Lynn Atkinson for their daughter born December 4.

Henry Washenfelder, '51bus, and Mrs. Washenfelder (the former Iowana Price, '51ed), Casper, Wyoming, selected the name Marc Henry Washenfelder for their son born early in August. Washenfelder is employed in the accounting department of the Stanolind Oil and Gas Company's offices in Casper.

James F. Snyder, '51bus, and Mrs. Snyder, Wichita, Kansas, have chosen the name Howard Thomas Snyder for their son born December 28. The couple has another son, James Frederick Snyder III, 1½.

1952

James F. Jarrett, '52pharm, is working as a medical service representative for the A. H. Robins Company in Wichita Falls, Texas.

C. G. Cunningham, '52eng, is currently employed in the guided missiles division of the Hughes Aircraft Company in Culver City, California. He was formerly associated with Gilfillan Brothers, Inc., in Los Angeles.

Harrison L. Hays III, '52ba, has been promoted to senior buyer for the Owens-Corning Fiberglass Corporation. Hays, his wife and two children live in Newark, Ohio.

MARRIAGES: Jean Louise Cooper, Denton, Texas, and Joseph Seymour Christian, '52bus, Yukon, were married December 27. They are living in Maywood, California, near Cheli Air Force Station where he is stationed.

Miss Jackie Bentley, '52h.ec., Muskogee, and Ruben C. Cornelius, '53bus, Dallas, were married in early autumn and are now living in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he is employed as an accountant.

Miss Jeanne Rosalie Harrison, '52bfa, Tulsa, and Thomas W. Smith, Wichita, Kansas, were married recently in Sapulpa.

Miss Betty Marie Elmborg, '52bfa, El Dorado, Kansas, and Lieut. Frank James Dorsey, Anaconda, Montana, were married January 7 in El Dorado. Mrs. Dorsey was affiliated with Chi Omega sorority at O.U. Lieutenant Dorsey graduated from the United States Naval Academy and is now stationed at Camp Pendleton, California, near Oceanside, where the couple has made a home.

Miss Janis Claire Richardson, Beaumont, Texas, and Eugene Algernon Whittington Jr., '52bfa, Oklahoma City, were married December 29 in Houston. Whittington was a member of Kappa Alpha fraternity at O.U. Mrs. Whittington attended Briarcliff College and the University of Texas. The couple is living in Paramaribo, Surinam, Dutch Guiana.

Miss Orvetta Nolen and Clarence Eugene Scott Jr., '52bus, both of Oklahoma City, were married Christmas Day in Oklahoma City. The couple has established a temporary home in Bloomington, Illinois.

BIRTHS: Robert T. McLain, '52bus, and Mrs. McLain, Norman, have selected the name Thomas Lachlan McLain for their son born December 15 in Norman.

1953

William A. McMahon, '53eng, has been transferred from Denver to Oklahoma City as production engineer for the Gulf Oil Company.

Llewellyn O. Ward, '53eng, is now engineer of the Delhi-Taylor Oil Corporation's Kansas-Oklahoma production office in Tulsa.

Buck McPhail, '49-'53, stationed with the Army at Ft. Sill, was recently named "most valuable player" on the All-Army football team. McPhail was an All-American fullback at O.U.

Thomas M. Robinson, '53bus, is now a landman